



(above) Students at East Palo Alto Academy High School participating in classroom teaching.

**“Since the return to in-person learning, teachers have struggled to deal with students who lack social skills and the ability to regulate their emotions.** A lack of exposure to peers during critical learning months and years has put many teachers in the situation of having to teach social and emotional skills before they can teach academics. A buddy program is a way for teachers to accelerate learning crucial social and emotional skills,” writes Assistant Principal Gina Robles. (Edutopia, 8/11/22)

A recent EPAK grant gave East Palo Alto Academy High School teacher, Caren M., the opportunity to support both cross-cultural literacy and student-led, cross-grade social and emotional learning (SEL) programs:

**“I deeply appreciated the flexibility of the EPAK grant this semester. It felt reassuring to know that I had a healthy budget to support my students as well as my classroom library.** Half of the grant was used to purchase new YA books for my classroom library. I specifically struggle to find Tongan and Samoan writers. This year, I learned about a bookstore in New Zealand that supports a lot of Tongan and Samoan writers who are only published in New Zealand. I ordered books from this store, and while it took a long time for the books to arrive, I am excited to introduce these books to my students.

Our annual 'Compassion in the Community' project for 12th graders also benefited from the EPAK grant. The benefits trickled down into the EPA community because two of my groups completed their projects at the Boys and Girls Club. One group focused on teaching 5th graders social skills. These seniors have observed that their younger siblings lost a lot of SEL time during the pandemic, so the seniors wanted to support 5th graders especially to better prepare them for Middle School. One of their projects was to make stress balls. I purchased the materials for this project, and now we have some happy 5th graders in EPA! Thank you, EPAK."

EPAK grants assist motivated teachers such as Caren M. to provide the best learning tools and experiences for students. Thank you to our EPAK supporters for making these efforts possible.

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East Palo Alto Kids Foundation (EPAK) believes that all students deserve an inspiring, engaging, and tailored classroom experience. For nearly 30 years, we have provided grants to teachers to enhance educational opportunities for students in the Ravenswood City School District (RCSD) and public charter schools in East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park.

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