

A public service publication presented by



Sonoma County

Office of Education

Back to School **2011-2012** in *Sonoma County*



PUBLICATION SPONSORS



Snapshots of School Success

Sonoma County has some of the best schools in California! From Petaluma to Cloverdale, Rincon Valley to the Sonoma Coast, our county's excellent teachers and school support staff are preparing to welcome nearly 71,000 students back to the classroom and provide daily instruction to support their future success.



Our public schools excel in meeting their educational mission. Test scores in this county are consistently above state averages, as is the high school graduation rate. Over 75 of our schools have been named California Distinguished Schools and 10 have earned the highest honor available: recognition as National Blue Ribbon Schools. Every one of our school districts offers special and unique student programs, many of which have earned awards and garnered grant funding. Our county is home to exceptional teachers, administrators, and support staff and we have forged strong partnerships with the community to benefit our students.

In recent times, the high quality and excitement that characterize Sonoma County schools has been overshadowed by budget cuts and financial uncertainty. These are real issues affecting schools today, but our commitment to educate

Sonoma County's children continues despite the challenges we face. Our goal and purpose is to provide a high-quality education for every student in this county.

This publication is designed to showcase the good news in Sonoma County schools and to welcome students and their families to another year of learning. Please take a moment to celebrate the success of your local public schools as we begin the 2011-12 school year.

Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D.
Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools

About the Sonoma County Office of Education

The Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) fosters student success through service to students, schools, and the community. SCOE is a strategic partner to the county's 40 districts and their 174 schools, providing service and support to help them meet legal mandates, operate cost-effectively, and raise student achievement. SCOE provides fiscal oversight to districts and operates schools for special education and alternative education students not enrolled at district sites. SCOE's career technical education programs, known as ROP, are offered as elective classes at every comprehensive high school as part of the county's commitment to graduate college- and career-ready students.

The Sonoma County Office of Education operates under the direction of the elected Superintendent of Schools and is supported by the Sonoma County Board of Education. Alex Bantis, Karen Bosworth, Pat Hummel, Jill Kaufman, Helga Lemke, Ray Peterson, and Kathleen Willbanks serve as members of the County Board.

- Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D., *Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools*
- Denise Calvert, *Deputy Superintendent, Business Services*
- Nancy Brownell, *Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Services*
- Jeffrey Heller, Ed.D., *Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources and Services*
- Ron Whitman, *Assistant Superintendent, Special Education Services*



Photo by Kathryn Hill

Aaron Leon was one of 70 students who graduated from SCOE's Alternative Education programs in May, 2011.



These SCOE Special Education students won first place in the Sonoma County Farm Bureau's 2011 Ag Day mural contest for second-graders.

On the cover: Nicholas Derr, Sam Diggs, Laycie Taylor, Megan Gromm, A'anna Ortiz Gaitan, and Drew Hansen attended the KinderSKOR program at Mattie Washburn Elementary School in Windsor during 2010-11. Photo by Patty Bernstein.

South County

55 schools ★ 23,096 students

School Districts

Cinnabar · Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified · Dunham · Liberty · Old Adobe Union · Petaluma City · Petaluma Joint Union High · Sonoma Valley Unified · Two Rock Union · Waugh · Wilmar Union

Two Rock School named National Blue Ribbon School

In 2010, a small school in rural western Petaluma earned the highest honor that a school can receive. **Two Rock School** was named a National Blue Ribbon School, one of only 21 in California and 304 in the nation to win the designation last year. Since 1990, ten Sonoma County schools have been recognized as National Blue Ribbon Schools, including two that received the award twice.

Two Rock was recognized for its consistently high performance on state standardized tests, while also showing dramatic gains in achievement among students who are learning English or living in poverty. Among the school's 187 students, over half are considered economically disadvantaged and one-third are English learners.

The school credits its success to strong intervention and English language development programs, a veteran teaching staff, and an outstanding parent community.

Two other schools in the South County area have earned National Blue Ribbon School designation: **Liberty School** and **Meadow School**.

Noteworthy programs in Petaluma City Schools

Two programs in Petaluma City Schools caught the attention of the California School Boards Association and its Golden Bell awards program, which recognizes exemplary programs across the state.

The Engineering Design and Apprenticeship Trades Skills program at **Petaluma High School** gives students real-world learning experiences in engineering and manufacturing. Teacher Dan Sunia created this innovative program, which helps prepare students for college and careers as they apply their academic skills to hands-on machine manufacturing, metalworking, and AutoCAD projects. The program was recognized for its strong community partnerships, connections that have led to job shadowing, internship, and apprenticeship opportunities for students at local engineering and manufacturing firms.

The “revitalization of recess” is what earned **Penngrove School** a 2010 state Golden Bell award and 2011 Jack London Award from Sonoma State University. To re-engage students who were withdrawing from group interactions during lunch and recess, principal Kathleen Larson and her staff began infusing adult-supported activities into these time blocks. The result? All students are involved, younger students are building social skills, and older students are learning leadership skills as they serve as student ambassadors. Recess Renaissance has engaged and supported every Penngrove student.



Photo by Paul Bunting

At El Verano School, students Natalia Valdez and Jaren Kneeland examine snails as part of their inquiry-based science lesson.

Learning science and English— together—in Sonoma Valley

Last August, the U.S. Department of Education awarded a \$3 million grant for a project that teams Sonoma Valley schools with the Exploratorium in San Francisco to blend science instruction and language learning. The federal grant, one of only 49 funded from 1,700 applicants nationwide, extends a successful project at **El Verano School** to the four other elementary schools in the district.

El Verano has been working with the Exploratorium to integrate inquiry-based science lessons and English language instruction since 2008, thanks to local grant funding from the Vadasz Family Foundation and Sonoma Valley Education Foundation. Seventy percent of the school's students are English learners, so teachers constantly focus on building language skills. At every grade level, teachers build on students' natural curiosity about the world to shape science lessons that also teach conversational and academic language.

But what draws students in and makes them want to speak, listen, read, and write are the science experiments. Discovering what snails like to eat or exploring light and shadow happens in hands-on investigations. Students work in teams to test their ideas, make notes, gather evidence, and present their findings.

Teachers from El Verano are serving as peer mentors as their successful project expands across the district.



Photo by Paul Bunting

El Verano third-graders launch a rocket using air and water pressure. Pictured are Ava Burk, Bella Lorenzini, and Brenda Bustamante.

Santa Rosa Area

62 schools ★ 29,401 students

School Districts

Bellevue Union · Bennett Valley Union · Kenwood · Mark West Union · Piner-Olivet Union · Rincon Valley Union · Roseland · Santa Rosa City Elementary · Santa Rosa City High · Wright

Santa Rosa's high schools earn accolades

Three of the five comprehensive high schools in Santa Rosa received awards of special distinction this year. At the top of the list was **Santa Rosa High School**. It was recognized as one of the state's most outstanding secondary schools when it was named a California Distinguished School in April. The school was also one of five Distinguished Schools to earn the Exemplary Career Technical Education Program Award based on the breadth and quality of its career-focused educational programs.



Photo by Patty Bernstein

Santa Rosa High School is home to ArtQuest, a specialized program for students interested in careers in visual and performing arts. Pictured are ArtQuest students Cody Villa, Justin Bates, Cleo Malone, Emily Barber, Kaitlin Jahn, Kian Sherwood, and Anita Savell.

The University Center at **Elsie Allen High School** supports students through the college preparation process, develops academic and personal success skills, and offers co-enrollment options in university courses. The program, a joint venture with Sonoma State University, was a state 2010 Golden Bell winner in the annual California School Boards Association's recognition program.

In May, Sonoma State University's Jack London Award for Educational Innovation was presented to the Early College Magnet Program at **Piner High School**. This program gives college-bound Piner High students accelerated learning opportunities at Santa Rosa Junior College during their junior and senior years, allowing them to graduate from high school with up to a year of college credit. This program supports a countywide goal of increasing high school graduation and college participation rates.

Leadership in teaching and learning mathematics

Bellevue Union School District is the lead agency for a three-year grant project designed to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement in mathematics. This innovative program, known as Project LEAD, is involving 125 elementary and secondary teachers from four school districts (Bellevue, Healdsburg, Petaluma City, and Santa Rosa City) in ongoing professional development with a focus on algebraic thinking. Their work is supported by math experts from the California Mathematics Project, Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley, Sonoma County Office of Education, and Sonoma State University.

A key component of the project is the creation of an online portal that allows participating teachers to document and share their professional teaching activities via video posts. They are also practicing "lesson study," a professional development model that engages teachers in working together to write, teach, revise, and re-teach lessons as they collect precise data about student understanding. This powerful strategy helps teachers improve instruction as they learn how the presentation of mathematical concepts is understood by students.



Photo by Annette Murray

Roseland University Prep earned distinction as an AVID National Demonstration School for providing an academic culture that prepares students for college.

New school buildings planned for Roseland School District

With enrollment that has nearly doubled in the last decade, Roseland School District looks forward to expanding its facilities in southwest Santa Rosa. The district secured funding to construct a third elementary school and broke ground at the new **Roseland Creek Elementary School** site on Burbank Avenue this spring. Once the school is completed in August 2012, the district's 1,500 kindergarten through sixth-grade students will be divided among three campuses.

A new high school facility is also in the works, thanks to a \$7 million state grant that will provide partial funding to replace **Roseland University Prep's** current home in a converted warehouse. The balance of the \$14 million building costs will be covered by a long-term loan from the California School Finance Authority.

Roseland University Prep enrolls over 350 high school students, 93 percent of whom are Latino. Boasting an outstanding 98 percent graduation rate, the school was recently named a AVID National Demonstration School for supporting an academic culture that prepares students for college, including students who are the first in their families to advance to higher education. AVID, an acronym for Advancement Via Individual Determination, is a highly regarded program that's designed to increase the number of students who enroll in four-year colleges.

North County

26 schools ★ 9,786 students

School Districts

Alexander Valley Union · Cloverdale Unified · Geyserville Unified · Healdsburg Unified · Horicon · Kashia · West Side Union · Windsor Unified

Healdsburg Junior High earns Distinguished School status

When State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson released the list of 2011 California Distinguished Schools in April, **Healdsburg Junior High School** was the only middle school in Sonoma County selected for this honor. The school joined an elite group of 99 public middle and high schools chosen for the awards program this year.

As part of the state's award selection process, a team of educators visited Healdsburg Junior High and found a consistent schoolwide focus on student success. Two signature practices—Safe School Ambassadors and the AVID program—have helped ensure that all students are supported in reaching their potential. The Safe School Ambassadors program has created a more welcoming atmosphere by reducing the bullying, put-downs, harassment, and fighting that can occur on junior high campuses. AVID, an elective class that helps put students on the path to college, has strengthened the school's positive culture by reaching out to ethnically diverse students and encouraging them to succeed academically.

Windsor provides extra year of school for youngest kindergarteners

The Kindergarten Readiness Act is a new law that will change school entry requirements beginning with the 2012-13 school year. It specifically addresses the needs of kindergarteners with fall birthdays who may not be ready for the academic learning now required in traditional kindergarten classes. For these students, the law establishes “transitional kindergarten,” the first year of a two-year kindergarten experience.

As Sonoma County schools prepare to implement this new law, they can learn from a local model of a two-year kindergarten initiative, KinderSKOR at **Mattie Washburn Elementary School** in Windsor, which earned state Golden Bell recognition several years ago. The elementary schools in Windsor are uniquely



Photo by Pofly Bernstein

The KinderSKOR class at Mattie Washburn Elementary School gets ready for story time. These students have now completed their first year of a two-year kindergarten experience.

organized in small grade-level clusters, with Mattie Washburn serving all of the district's kindergarten and first-grade students. For second and third grade, the students move to a different school, then move again for grades 4-5. In this way, students stay together as a community as they advance through the grades.

With its focus on the youngest students, the KinderSKOR program is particularly attuned to the needs of children who are age-eligible for kindergarten but may benefit from the extra time that a two-year program provides. This additional year of schooling builds the social and academic skills students need for kindergarten success, giving them the critical foundation to keep pace throughout the elementary grades and beyond.

Students benefit from Cloverdale's focus on school leadership

For the past six years, administrators and teacher-leaders from **Cloverdale Unified School District** have participated in the Sonoma Leadership Network, a professional development program designed by the Sonoma County

Office of Education (SCOE). The Leadership Network has garnered national recognition—and over \$575,000 in private funding from the Stuart Foundation—for its success equipping school leadership teams with the tools and knowledge to improve student achievement and narrow the achievement gap.

Cloverdale's school administrators have also benefited from one-on-one coaching through a companion program offered by SCOE's Leadership Assistance Center. Experienced administrators serve as coaches, bringing outside perspective and additional expertise to the complex task of running successful schools and raising student achievement.

The impact of this focus on school leadership is evident in recent state accountability reports. In 2009,

Cloverdale High School earned top-level results in both the statewide and similar school ranking systems, a unique occurrence for North Bay high schools. **Jefferson School**, serving students in grades K-3, has concentrated on improving instruction for its large population of English learners and has raised API scores for this subgroup of students by 155 points over the past three years.



Photo by Pofly Bernstein

The 2010-11 leadership team at Cloverdale Unified School District included Aracely Romo-Flores, LeAnn Henrie, Julie Brandt, Suzanne Gunnink, superintendent Claudia Frandsen, Hank Shaw, and Theresa Burke.

West County

29 schools ★ 7,515 students

School Districts

Forestville Union · Fort Ross · Gravenstein Union · Guerneville · Harmony Union · Monte Rio Union · Montgomery · Oak Grove Union · Sebastopol Union · Twin Hills Union · West Sonoma County Union High

Guerneville School wins California Title I Achievement Award

Guerneville School won distinction in 2010-11 as the only Sonoma County school to receive a state Title I Academic Achievement Award. Guerneville was one of just 209 California public schools to earn this honor.

Two-thirds of California's 9,000 schools receive federal Title I funds to assist in meeting the educational needs of students living near or at the poverty level. To qualify for the award, these schools must demonstrate that all of their students are making significant academic progress—and that their economically disadvantaged students are exceeding the achievement targets set for them. Schools that meet this criteria are effectively closing the achievement gap for their low-income students.

Guerneville School enrolls nearly 300 students in its kindergarten through grade 8 classrooms, and over 58 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged. Yet this school has attained an Academic Performance Index (API) score of 851, well above the state's 800 target, and over 70 percent of students scored proficient or above on the STAR language arts and mathematics tests.

Our state's only LEED Platinum public school building

Although **Harmony Union School District's** environmental education center was completed in 2009, it remains the only public school in California to receive the Platinum level of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, which is the top certification issued by the Green Building Council.

Harmony Union School District has been a leader in its commitment to environmental education and has utilized the unique topography of its Occidental campus to promote student learning. There are four distinct habitats on the 50-acre campus—a year-round creek and waterfall, a redwood forest, perennial wetlands,

and grasslands—and teachers use the outdoors as a platform for standards-based teaching and learning.

Students in the district's two schools, Harmony Elementary and Salmon Creek Charter School, have also benefited from an extensive grant-funded school garden program housed on school grounds. They share tasks in a one-acre working garden and have helped transform school lunches into fresh meals with fewer processed foods. Students study science and nutrition as they grow organic lettuce for the school's salad bar and harvest strawberries for smoothies.

Introducing middle school students to career pathways

"It was awesome!" This exclamation was repeated time after time by middle school students who participated in free Career Technical Education (CTE) mini-classes at **Analy** and **El Molino** high schools. These "step-up classes" are designed to give grade 7-8 students a hands-on learning experience, one that connects them to the programs available at their local high schools and supports their interest in a particular career area. The initiative, part of the countywide Middle School Career Exploration



The Salmon Creek Falls Environmental Center earned the nation's first LEED Platinum certification for a public school district. Among the building's features is a living roof planted with drought-tolerant plants to help reduce storm water run-off, conserve energy, and provide a habitat for insects and birds.

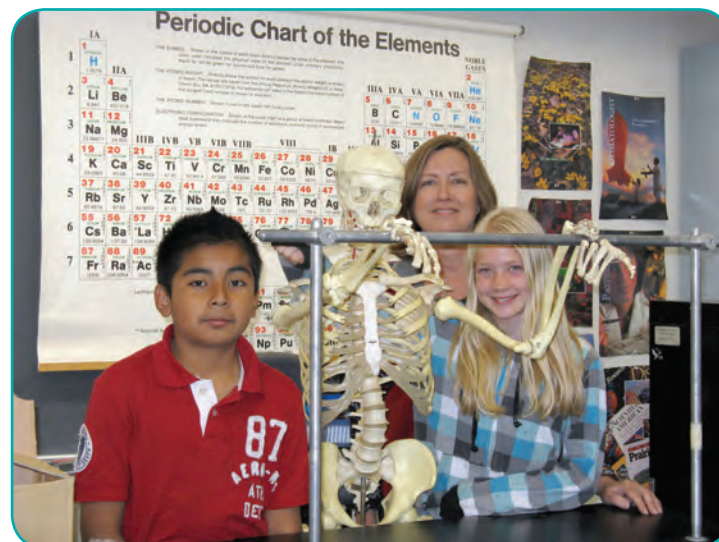


Photo by Patty Bernstein

Guerneville School won a state Title I Academic Achievement Award thanks to the hard work of teachers like Kari Johnson and sixth-grade students Alexis Diaz-Peña and Kristine Daniels.

Program, is funded by state grants and local donations. It supports a county goal of preparing college- and career-ready graduates, giving middle school students a strong positive experience to begin their transition to high school.

The multi-session classes run 12-15 hours, meeting after school or in the summer, and are conducted by high school CTE teachers. For example, the digital media teachers at both Analy and El Molino have hosted step-up classes that take middle school students through the entire video production process, from the development of storyboards to shooting video and fine-tuning their work using professional editing software. High school students already experienced in this process serve as mentors.

Other step-up classes have focused on biotechnology, construction technology, and culinary arts. Redwood Toxicology Laboratory sponsored the biotech class and North Coast Builders Exchange underwrote the construction class. These organizations have formed strong partnerships with schools and are helping prepare students for success in high school and beyond.

Exemplary School Employees

Each year, Sonoma County recognizes the best of its school employees—teachers, classified staff, and administrators. In 2011, two Santa Rosa teachers earned special recognition.

Simone Spearman, an English teacher at Piner High School, was named California's High School Educator of the Year. She's known for inspiring and challenging students, and is strongly committed to supporting their success. She teaches AP English and a double-block section of Intensive English for English learners, advocates for high expectations for special education students in mainstream classes, and maintains a network of opportunities and programs to help all students access college. She leads many student clubs and activities, and continually improves her own skill set.

Wendy Anderson, art teacher at Herbert Slater Middle School, earned regional recognition as the Middle School Educator of the Year for the North Coast. Formerly a history teacher, she became the school art teacher ten years ago and transformed the existing program from good to outstanding. She introduced projects that save money and resources, while also challenging students to think differently. Expired textbooks



Piner High School teacher Simone Spearman was named California's High School Educator of the Year for 2011. She's pictured here with students from her Intensive English class.

become collages; wire and duct tape form modern art sculpture. Students in regular and special education congregate in the art room for classes and clubs.

Hooray for classified employees!

Classified personnel—school employees who don't require a teaching credential or state license to perform their jobs—are integral to the daily operation of our schools. Six classified employees were named county finalists in the statewide Classified School Employees of the Year program: **Silvia Astorga**, Food Service Manager, Miwok Valley School; **Mark Ballard**, Technology Specialist, El Molino High School; **Denise Kirkwood**, School Bus Driver, Sonoma Valley Unified School District; **Mary Lavezzoli**, Library Manager, Miwok Valley School; **Dominic Lazzaro**, Maintenance, Old Adobe Union School District; and **Angel Sanchez**, Student Advisor, Santa Rosa Middle School.

School-Community Partnerships

Highlighting Safe Routes to School

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is one of the many partnership activities that bring essential community support to Sonoma County schools. SRTS provides schools with resources and technical assistance to make it safer and more convenient for students to walk or bicycle to school. The organization teaches pedestrian and bicyclist safety to students and helps organize fun opportunities to inspire families to walk, bicycle, carpool, and/or ride the bus.

SRTS also assists schools by identifying opportunities for improvement in school neighborhoods, such as adding crosswalks or bike lanes, and determining ways to reduce traffic congestion and mitigate barriers to walking/biking to school.

One of its signature programs is the annual Walk and Roll to School Day, a countywide event that motivated 10,000 students from 75 schools to walk or ride their bikes to school last year. Scheduled for October 5 this year, Walk and Roll to School Day is a great way to focus students and families on healthy transportation alternatives—and to support Sonoma County's Health Action fitness goal of reducing childhood

obesity. SRTS provides technical support, small prizes, posters, and other resources to encourage family participation. Schools should register by September 1.

To learn more about Safe Routes to School, go to www.sonomasaferroutes.org. The SRTS staff can be reached at saferroutes@bikesonoma.org or (707) 545-0153.



Students bike to La Tercera School in Petaluma on Walk and Roll to School Day.

2011 Administrator Awards

Eric Backman, Assistant Principal,
Casa Grande High School

Christy Defanti, Executive Assistant,
Petaluma City Schools

Sherry Devine, Principal, McKinley School

Raul Guerrero, Vice Principal, Analy High School

Deborah Hall, Principal,
Healdsburg Junior High School

Debbie Mc Kay, Human Resources Director, SCOE

Sue Nieuwenhuijs, Special Education Principal, SCOE

Joseph Pandolfo, Assistant Superintendent,
Rincon Valley Union School District

Chris Rafanelli, Superintendent/Principal,
Liberty School District

Tony Roehrick, Superintendent,
Bellevue Union School District

Aracely Romo-Flores, Principal, Jefferson School

Maureen Rudder, Principal, McDowell School

Linda Scheele, Principal, Casa Grande High School

Kindergarten enrollment age is changing

This year, children who will be five years old on or before December 2, 2011 may be enrolled in kindergarten, but students with fall birthdays will soon have another enrollment option.

Over the next three years, the cut-off date for kindergarten eligibility will gradually shift by one month per year—to November 2 in 2012, then October 2 in 2013, and finally September 2 in 2014. As this transition occurs, children with birthdays between the new cutoff date and December 2 will have the option of attending a one-year “transitional kindergarten” program prior to enrolling in kindergarten. Your elementary school will provide more information about this new option.

Huckleberry the Helpful Hound



Children entering kindergarten must be immunized!

California law requires children entering kindergarten to have the following immunizations. Please check with your doctor or call the Sonoma County Immunization Coordinator, (707) 565-4573, if you have questions.

- Diphtheria, Pertussis, and Tetanus (DPT)
- Polio
- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (Chickenpox)

Health checkup required in first grade

A certificate documenting that each child has received a health checkup within the last 18 months is required within 90 days of entry into first grade.

Oral health assessment due in first year of school

Before students complete their first year of school, in either kindergarten or first grade, they must submit proof of having had an oral health assessment by a dentist or licensed dental health professional.

Take note of this important school information!

NEW: Grade 7-12 students need whooping cough booster shots

A new law makes whooping cough shots mandatory for grade 7-12 students. All students entering grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 this school year must show proof of having received an adolescent whooping cough booster shot (called Tdap) before the first day of school. *Students will not be allowed to enter school, participate in sports, or receive a class schedule until they have proof of a Tdap booster shot or a signed parental Tdap waiver on file.*

In subsequent school years, only students entering seventh grade will need a Tdap shot. Seventh-graders must also show proof of measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) immunization.

What are the requirements for high school graduation?

To receive a high school diploma, students must pass the California High School Exit Exam and fulfill the following state graduation requirements *plus any additional requirements established by their district:*

- Three years of English
- Two years of mathematics, including Algebra I
- Three years of social science, including U.S. History, World History, American Government, and Economics
- Two years of science, including Biology and Physical Science
- Two years of physical education
- One year of foreign language or visual and performing arts

College-bound students need to fulfill California's a-g requirements

Students planning to apply to a four-year college or university must complete course work that exceeds the state requirements for high school graduation. The California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems expect students to complete 15 high school classes known as the a-g requirements—and earn a C or better in each course. The a-g requirements include four years of college-preparatory English, three years of math (including algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra), two years of history-social science, two years of laboratory sciences, two years of the same foreign language, one year of visual and performing arts, and one year of academic electives.

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