



# Structure Shapes Behavior:

## How One Alternative Education School Changed Systems and Structures to Improve Graduation Rates and Decrease Chronic Absenteeism

### CLIENT OVERVIEW

Client Name: Alessandro High School

Location: Hemet, CA

Timeline: SY 2021/2022 - SY 2024/2025

Service(s): Leadership Performance Coaching

Alessandro High School is a large alternative high school in Hemet, California. When CLS partnered with the school, leadership was entering a new chapter and the graduation rate from the prior year was 70%. The principal was tasked with improving school culture, graduation outcomes, union relationships, and instructional systems to better support credit-deficient students.

### CHALLENGE

Alessandro High School was led by a first-year principal who was also new to alternative education, stepping into the role alongside a new assistant principal. Together, they needed to quickly build confidence, learn the unique context of an alternative setting, and establish effective systems while improving outcomes. The most urgent operational challenge was the school schedule, which contributed to partial-credit earning and limited clear, flexible pathways for credit-deficient students to get back on track. **30% of students were not graduating**, underscoring the need for immediate improvement.

- New leaders needed fast alt-ed onboarding
- Master Schedule limited credit acceleration
- Partial credits lacked clear completion paths
- Graduation outcomes demanded urgent systems change

### PRACTICE

CLS provided monthly, in-person leadership performance coaching that created dedicated space for reflection, sense-making, and focused action planning. Because the principal and assistant principal were new to the alternative education context, coaching included practical examples from similar settings and policy resources to help leadership leverage existing structures to drive change. In collaboration with the leadership team, CLS reviewed multiple schedule models and identified options better aligned to credit-deficient students and partial-credit completion. Each visit concluded with clear next steps and targeted recommendations, along with commendations to reinforce progress and build momentum for sustained implementation.



#### COACHING FOCUS

Built leadership clarity, confidence, and decisions in an alternative education context.



#### TOOLS & SUPPORT

Provided policy resources, examples from similar settings, and structured reflection protocols.



#### IMPLEMENTATION MOVES

Reviewed schedule models and supported action steps to improve credit completion pathways.

**“My work with the CLS coach provided me with guidance, insight, and the ability to confidently make informed decisions as a new Principal. Through this process, change ideas were formulated and implemented that have the potential to sustain their positive impact on the school beyond my tenure as Principal.”**

## TAILORED PROCESS

01

Applied alternative education expertise to a unique school context

02

Aligned leadership coaching to the principal's and district's goals.

03

Monitored school climate and adjusted support through ongoing feedback.

04

Engaged campus stakeholders to strengthen buy-in and implementation.

## RESULTS

81%

### GRADUATION RATE

Up from 70% in 2020–21  
(+11 points)

80.7%

### CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Down from 95.8% in 2021–22  
(–15.1 points)

4.5%

### SUSPENSION RATE

Down from a peak of 6.7% in  
2021–22

## ROADBLOCKS

Roadblocks included navigating union collaboration to develop and approve a new schedule, supporting a first-year principal who was new to alternative education, and addressing students' long-standing patterns of chronic absenteeism.

CLS supported the principal by creating structured space for reflection, helping clarify timelines and processes, and providing ongoing consultation as leadership built confidence in the alternative setting. The principal's strong emotional intelligence and people skills also helped build trust and momentum for change. To address absenteeism, CLS kept the work anchored in clear goals and action steps, provided targeted recommendations and resources, and supported data analysis to guide decision-making.

## IMPACT OVER TIME

Across four school years, Alessandro High School strengthened student pathways and systems to improve graduation outcomes and reduce chronic absenteeism. Results reflect sustained progress during a leadership transition and implementation of schedule and systems improvements.

Source: CDE Dashboard & DataQuest

## ABOUT US

Creative Leadership Solutions is a leading provider of research and evidence-based professional development and coaching for K-12 education. We partner with districts and schools to achieve their goals, impact student learning, and improve performance. Our team of experts is dedicated to delivering personalized and differentiated learning opportunities.

What CLS brings:

- Research-driven approach grounded in evidence and practice
- Experienced coaches with deep K-12 and systems-change expertise
- Customized supports based on context, goals, and stakeholder needs
- Sustained partnership focused on implementation and results

