SAYS focuses on student, teacher, and community empowerment through culturally relevant common core instruction and lessons that nurture the whole student: socially, emotionally, and academically.

**CRITICAL LITERACY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

SAYS is an innovative critical literacy program of the UC Davis School of Education CRESS Center. SAYS services support the improvement of schools through teacher professional development, classroom instruction, and after-school programming. At the core of our model is a commitment to equity—SAYS utilizes evidence-based best practices to narrow the achievement gap.

SAYS engages in three domains of work, all centered around the empowerment of students, teachers, and families. First, SAYS trains poet-mentor educators from the neighborhood to work alongside teachers and after-school providers, building a critical bridge between the community and the school site. Second, SAYS provides direct instruction to students (helping youth write and share their stories). Third, SAYS conducts large-scale professional development both in and out of the classroom through our residency programs and training of SAYS “Write Now” teacher leaders.

The SAYS pedagogy has three key components:

- Learning how to authentically reach students is a precursor to successful teaching.
- Knowing who students are and where they come from allows educators to create meaningful and thought-provoking curricula.
- Reading, writing, and speaking are the foundations of academic achievement, critical thinking, and social justice within and beyond the walls of school.
OUR SERVICES

SAYS specializes in kindergarten through university-level literacy education. The director, coordinator, poet-mentor educators, and Write Now teacher leaders have extensive expertise in both culturally relevant instruction and spoken word performance poetry.

Services include (and are not limited to):

• Consultation on SAYS curriculum and culturally relevant instruction
• Designing and producing school-wide assemblies and spoken word poetry events on/off campus
• Delivering instruction and support through the SAYS classroom residency program
• Providing after-school writing support to students
• Professional Development – providing training in effective practices to engage at-risk and high-risk students; overall strategies to create student-centered learning environments
• Instructional Methodologies and Coaching – aligning curriculum to meet the goals of the Common Core State Standards

MEETING THE NEED

Many urban school districts are in crisis, and despite various reform efforts, the failure rate of students, disproportionately low-income students of color, continues to rise. The lack of strong literacy skills is an indicator that the education system continues to leave millions of children behind. Researchers and practitioners agree that children, en masse, need better reading and writing skills as well as opportunities to use literacy practices in school and community contexts. Yet, there is less agreement about how to do it. As a solution, the SAYS pedagogy engages participants in critical literacy: reading the world, the word, and one’s self in a new way. Building upon best practices, SAYS continues to find that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the frame of reference of students, learning becomes more personally meaningful, students have greater interest and engage in school-based practices more readily, and achievement levels increase.

“SAYS is a life-changing program.”
- District Administrator, Sacramento City Unified School District

“SAYS is the glue that holds learning together.”
- Teacher, Twin Rivers Unified School District

LEARN MORE

For more information and to watch videos of SAYS in Action, visit our website at http://says.ucdavis.edu

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