

# CAHPERD

---

California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

**Journal**

**Fall 2025 - Volume 11 - Issue 1**

---



---

# Table of Contents

---

## **Page 02 - 07**

CAHPERD Leadership

CAHPERD Mission

Editor's Message

Executive Director's Message

President's Message

Legislative Update

## **Page 08 - 14**

Peer-Reviewed Article:

Secondary Peer Buddy Program in Physical Education

By Rose Fernandez, Melissa Bittner, Amanda Young, & Kasia Givenrod

## **Page 15 - 16**

Discover and Disseminate Research Abstracts

## **Page 17 - 23**

CAHPERD Awards

## **Page 24 - 25**

Announcements

- Call for Submissions
- Upcoming Conferences

The header features a dark background with several white paper airplanes flying towards the right, leaving dotted white trails. One red paper airplane is positioned slightly ahead of the others, also flying right.

# 2025-2026 CAHPERD LEADERSHIP

## Board of Directors

---

### **President**

Marci Pope

### **President-Elect**

David Daum

### **Past President**

James Clemmer

### **Members at Large**

Christopher Busch

Lemi Hayashi

Beth Kahn

Gabe Padayhag

Tom Voshell

Margaret Weimer

### **Executive Director**

Brent Powell

### **Financial Director**

Barbara Ann Buckalew

### **Treasurer**

Joanie Verderber

## Council Chairs

---

### **Adapted Physical Education**

Hannah Henderson (Chair)

Leslie Kirui (Chair-Elect)

Nicole Lombardi-Risen (Past-Chair)

### **Dance**

Vacant (Chair)

Vacant (Chair-Elect)

Keisha Clark-Booth (Past-Chair)

### **Diversity & Social Justice**

Li Rivera (Chair)

Victor Hugo Manriquez (Chair-Elect)

Brandi Hobson (Past-Chair)

### **Elementary Physical Education**

Jordan Hurtado (Chair)

Scott Carri (Chair-Elect)

Kalani Hobayan (Past-Chair)

### **Future Professionals**

Alex Pulido (co-Chair)

Maya Wilkins (co-Chair)

Nica Lampe (Past-Chair)

### **Health Education**

Michelle Presley (Chair)

Susana Mercado (Chair-Elect)

Beth Kahn (Past-Chair)

### **Higher Education**

Melissa Bittner (Chair)

David Adams (Chair-Elect)

### **Interscholastic Athletics**

Stephanie Cline (Chair)

Edgar Medinilla (Chair-Elect)

Bailee Holt-Sandsmark (Past-Chair)

### **Leadership & Administration**

Betsy Erickson (Chair)

HK Peterson (Chair-Elect)

Ryan Alvarez (Past-Chair)

### **Recreation**

Vacant (Chair)

Vacant (Chair-Elect)

Kaelyn Gsellman (Past-Chair)

### **Regions**

Will Potter (Chair)

### **Retired Members**

Cindi Chase (Chair)

Vacant (Chair-Elect)

Judith Brooks (Past-Chair)

### **Secondary Physical Education**

Julian Cortez (Chair)

Vacant (Chair-Elect)

Chan Park (Past-Chair)

# CAHPERD MISSION

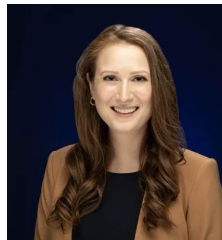
**T**he mission of the California Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) is to promote healthful lifestyles through quality education for all populations and provide leadership to school, community and statewide programs in the areas of health, physical education, recreation, dance and other movement-related programs. CAHPERD is an educational organization which will achieve its mission by supporting, encouraging, and providing assistance to members statewide, as they initiate, develop, conduct and promote programs of health, physical education, recreation, dance and other movement-related programs.

## CAHPERD Journal Editorial Board



### **Co-Editor-in-Chief**

Eric Conrad, PhD  
Department of Kinesiology and  
Public Health Promotion  
Stanislaus State University



### **Co-Editor-in-Chief**

April Karlinsky, PhD  
Department of Kinesiology  
CSU San Bernardino



### **Co-Editor-in-Chief**

Paul T. Stuhr, PhD, RFSA  
Department of Kinesiology  
CSU San Marcos



Melissa Bittner, PhD, CAPE  
Department of Kinesiology  
CSU Long Beach



David Daum, PhD  
Department of Kinesiology  
San Jose State University

# EDITOR'S MESSAGE

**The CAHPERD Journal Editorial Board is proud to present the Fall 2025 issue of our journal.**

As a means to reach as many readers as possible, we are thrilled to announce that beginning in 2026, the journal will be housed on the Open Journal Systems software platform to promote the visibility and accessibility of the journal. Stay tuned for updates on this exciting advancement!

The current issue contains three primary sections: Peer-reviewed articles, Discover and Disseminate research abstracts, and CAHPERD Awards. The peer-reviewed article in this issue presents a practical framework for implementing a secondary peer buddy program in physical education. This paper details the process of navigating a program within an adapted physical education setting, including strategies for student recruitment and training. The article highlights how these programs can enhance social interaction and physical engagement to promote inclusivity among students with and without disabilities. The Editorial Board would like to extend their gratitude to the peer reviewers who help make this section of the journal possible.

The purpose of the Discover and Disseminate section is to provide readers with short abstract reviews of journal articles that have been published in other HPERD journals. This issue includes two abstracts that focus on the area of social and emotional learning. The first abstract is a research study on adventure education (AE) programming and the impact on high school students' social-emotional competencies, resilience, and physical activity levels. The second abstract is a literature review that highlights social connection, particularly peer relationships and school connectedness, as critical factors in promoting youth mental health.

The CAHPERD Awards section recognizes the winners of our association's prestigious awards. Check out this section to learn more about these outstanding members of our CAHPERD community, including some of their favorite teaching strategies.

The Editorial Board is delighted to provide this publication and hope the content within may serve to benefit the readership of the journal. We continue to encourage our membership to consider submitting their own original work, whether it be in the form of a peer-reviewed article, a summary of recently published literature for our Discover and Disseminate section, or responses to prompts within our CAHPERD Voices section. Further information on these types of submissions can be found on page 24. We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.





# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**D**ear CAHPERD Members, Professionals, and Friends,

It is a privilege to welcome you to this latest issue of the CAHPERD Journal. This is a publication that continues to embody our mission to advancing health, physical education, recreation, dance, and wellness across California. Each edition of this journal reminds me of the vibrant network of educators, researchers, and practitioners who bring our mission to life every day.

**O**ver the past year, I've been encouraged by the many ways our members continue to lead and adapt. Whether in schools, universities, or community programs, you're finding new ways to reach students, promote inclusion, and bring movement and health education to life. Your work reminds us that meaningful change often begins in the spaces where we teach, coach, and connect.

**I**want to take a moment to thank our authors, reviewers, and the editorial team for their commitment and care in putting this issue together. As you read, I encourage you to accept the Mission to share with a colleague. The strength of CAHPERD has always come from its members who are willing to learn from one another and move forward together.

**L**ooking ahead, I hope you'll join us at the 2026 CAHPERD State Conference, "Mission Possible," February 26-28 in Oakland. It's a great opportunity to connect or reconnect, share ideas, and celebrate the important work happening across our state.

**I**'m proud of what we've accomplished together and excited for what's ahead. Thank you for being part of this community and for all you do to promote health, wellness, and movement in every setting.

With appreciation,

**Brent Powell, PhD, CHES**  
**CAHPERD Executive Director**



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**Dear CAHPERD Members,**

As I reflect on my time serving as your CAHPERD President, I continue to be humbled by the professionalism, passion, and dedication of those who make this organization so strong. Working alongside so many talented individuals who care deeply about the future of health, physical education, recreation, and dance in California is both inspiring and energizing.

Our Board of Directors (BOD) exemplifies what it means to lead with purpose. Each meeting reminds me how fortunate we are to have a team that consistently keeps the outlook of the organization at heart. They show up – not just with ideas, but with interest, humor, and a contagious enthusiasm that make even the most challenging conversations productive and positive. The collaboration and professionalism within both the BOD and Cabinet make me genuinely look forward to our time together. It is a joy to serve alongside such committed individuals.

If you've ever thought about getting more involved, I invite you to consider joining the CAHPERD Cabinet. It's an incredible opportunity to:

- Build your professional network and form lasting friendships with educators and leaders across the state.
- Grow your leadership skills by contributing to committees, events, and statewide initiatives.
- Make an impact on the direction of our profession – helping shape advocacy, policy, and professional development opportunities for our members. Your voice, ideas, and energy matter – and CAHPERD thrives when members like you get involved!

I also want to take a moment to recognize our CAHPERD Office team – our Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, and Financial Director – who are truly the heart of our operations. They keep our organization visible and responsive throughout the state, take care of member needs with professionalism and kindness, and manage the enormous task of conference registration and venue coordination. Their behind-the-scenes work ensures that our “Mission Possible” continues to move forward smoothly.

Speaking of missions – I am thrilled to invite you to join us at the upcoming CAHPERD “Mission Possible” State Conference. Together we'll connect, learn, and celebrate the power of play, movement, and collaboration. It promises to be an energizing and inspiring event that reminds us why we do what we do – because when we come together, *every mission is possible*.

Thank you for your continued support of CAHPERD and for the work you do every day to inspire movement, health, and joy in your communities. I look forward to seeing you at the conference – and perhaps welcoming you to the Cabinet table!

With appreciation and enthusiasm,

**Marci Pope**  
CAHPERD President



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

**T**he 2025 Legislative Season is in its last couple of months and the 2026 season is nearing. Our committee keeps a chart of all the bills that we decided to address each season. As a member you can request access to our bill chart each year by contacting the CAHPERD Office. The Leadership Legislative Committee is made up of Tim Hamel (Fresno), Ken Dyar (Delano), Kimberly Ohara-Borowski (Mammoth), Gabe Padayhay (San Diego) and Laura White (LAUSD) who work throughout the year on these bills. It's my honor to work with this group of highly passionate educators on our important work.

**D**uring the year we have had several opportunities to partner up and speak to the non profits [Play Equity Fund](#), [LA84](#) and former Senator Josh Newman, who lead the only state report on physical activity, 2024 CALIFORNIA PLAY EQUITY REPORT. You can read that report within this article, <https://kesq.com/news/california/2024/09/27/la84-report-highlights-gaps-in-play-equity-and-barriers-to-youth-sports/>

**2**026 will be an important year for everyone in education in California. We will be asked to vote for a new state Superintendent. This will be a very important vote for educators. CAHPERD will be giving you information on all the candidates so you can make an informed decision on which candidate to vote for. You **CAN** make a difference in this important decision.

**M**any thanks go to Devon Ford of California Strategies (our lobbyist) for keeping our committee informed with thousands of bills and guiding CAHPERD through our work to protect our subject matters.

**H**ere are a few Bills that the Governor has signed this year that are on our chart:

- [Assembly Bill 310](#)
- [AB653](#) (CAHPERD supported)
- [AB749](#) (CAHPERD supported)
- [AB784](#) (CAHPERD supported)
- [AB1005](#)
- [AB1216](#)
- [Senate Bill 744](#)
- [AB1224](#) (Passed through both houses and was vetoed by the Governor)

**I**encourage all who are reading this to join CAHPERD and be a part of educating, protecting, and directing the future of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

**Cindy Lederer**  
**CAHPERD Legislative Committee**



# SECONDARY PEER BUDDY PROGRAM IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

By Rosa Fernandez, Melissa Bittner, Amanda Young, and Kasia Givenrod

## Abstract

Peer buddy programs, where peers with and without disabilities are engaged in coursework together, have demonstrated positive motor and social-emotional effects in school settings. Despite the positive effects demonstrated in research, there is limited information on starting a peer buddy program in physical education settings. This investigation provides information on navigating a peer buddy program and demonstrating the positive effects in an adapted physical education class in a high school setting. Purposive sampling was used to recruit 22 individuals who participated in the secondary peer buddy program (16 students with disabilities, 6 typically developing peers) for 20 weeks. The Peer Buddy PE Survey and Students with Disabilities PE Survey were conducted pre and post intervention. The data from the survey questions were analyzed using frequency analysis. Results indicated students with disabilities had an increased interest in participating in activities with their peers and an increased opportunity for peers greeting them at school. Results for peer buddies found a significant increase in participation in physical activity after the program, an increase of knowing their peers with disabilities, and awareness of disabilities after the program. Implementing and fostering peer buddy programs in physical education settings not only enhances social interaction and physical engagement but also promotes inclusivity and understanding among students with and without disabilities.



### What is Adapted Physical Education?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) mandates that children with disabilities have access to physical education (PE) as part of their special education services. IDEA emphasizes the importance of PE in promoting physical fitness, motor skills, and overall well-being for students with disabilities, specially designed if necessary. According to the National Consortium for Physical Education for Individuals with Disabilities (NCPEID, 2022), adapted physical education (APE) is instruction that is designed to be adapted or modified as appropriate for individuals with disabilities, ensuring equitable access and participation in physical activities tailored to their needs. This ensures that all students have the opportunity to benefit from physical education programs that support their individual growth and development.

### What is an inclusive environment?

According to California Teachers Association (2024) an inclusive environment is needed in physical education class. An inclusive environment is a place where everyone is welcome regardless of their differences, abilities, or knowledge. This environment is usually created by creating a safe and supportive classroom. This can entail from acknowledging students' backgrounds, respecting cultures, and using universal design for learning. Inclusivity in a classroom is ensuring everyone feels a sense of belonging or active participation.

### What are Peer Buddies?

One strategy to help individuals with disabilities reach their maximum potential in PE is to utilize peer buddies. A peer buddy is a typically developing peer (TDP) who is partnered with a student or group of students of the same or similar age with disability and serves as a role model (Carter et al., 2015). Smart et al. (2023) indicated that peer buddies can have roles in leadership, demonstrate tasks, or assist the student in activities. Peer buddies should not simply be placed into the APE setting without training. Pratiwi and Mangunsong (2020) concluded that peer buddies need training in skill acquisition, increased knowledge of disability categories, instructional support, positive at-

titude, willingness, assigned roles, and training in social interaction prior to engaging in a peer buddy program.

### Why use Peer Buddies?

There are many benefits to a peer buddies program. Benefits may include communication between peers, appropriate socialization, assisting with large class sizes in PE, and specific benefits for both sets of students (i.e., students with and without disabilities).

**Communication.** Students with disabilities may communicate in different ways and have varying levels of communication. Some students with disabilities communicate with an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device, while others use gestures. Some students are comfortable with carrying a conversation while other students can respond with short phrases. Using peer buddies can aid in communication by increasing greetings, increasing the preference of communication (e.g., AAC device, gestures, nods, verbal), increase opportunities for social communication, and social support/guidance to carry a conversation (Pratiwi & Mangunsong, 2020).

**Socialization.** Students with disabilities may encounter challenges in social skills, such as experiencing fewer mutual friendships, reduced peer acceptance, and increased internalizing behaviors (Pinto et al., 2018). Social interactions among peers are limited due to a scarcity of individuals capable of facilitating conversations. For example, two students with limited expressive language are unlikely to engage in conversation with each other due to their communication challenges. This difficulty may hinder their ability to initiate and sustain meaningful interactions, impacting their social engagement and opportunities for developing peer relationships. Therefore, a peer buddies program may help facilitate conversations and communication.

Santamaria and Lafuente (2023) examined the emotional variables of students working cooperatively in PE. Overall, the study demonstrated a positive difference in emotions like tension, friendship, and intensity in the experimental group when peer buddies assisted students with disabilities. Meulen et al. (2021) demonstrated similar results with im-

provement for students with disabilities in social skills like providing opportunities for social interactions, and empathy when a peer buddy program was utilized. These findings highlight the beneficial impact of peer buddy programs in enhancing social interactions and emotional well-being among students with disabilities in PE.

**Large Class Sizes in Physical Education.** Peer buddies can significantly support PE teachers in managing large class sizes, a common challenge noted by the California Teacher Association (2024). By incorporating peer buddies, teachers gain additional assistance with various PE tasks, such as demonstrating exercises, setting up and picking up equipment, and providing feedback to classmates. This collaborative approach, when effectively implemented, not only alleviates the burden on the teacher but also fosters a supportive learning environment. Utilizing peer buddies may better help the teacher as additional individuals can assist with PE-related tasks (e.g., demonstration, equipment set up/pick up, feedback). Peer buddies can help ensure that each student receives more individualized attention, which can enhance the overall effectiveness of PE lessons and improve student engagement. This strategy leverages the skills and enthusiasm of students to create a more dynamic and manage-

able classroom experience.

**Benefits for TDP (Peer Buddies).** Research has demonstrated there are several benefits for peer buddies. Pinto et al. (2019) indicated that these programs promote empathy and positive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. By engaging in activities together, peer buddies developed leadership skills, patience, and a sense of responsibility (Lafuente & Maeso, 2023). Peer buddies also experienced enhanced social skills and increased self-esteem as they forged meaningful friendships across abilities (Carter et al., 2006). Moreover, these programs create inclusive school environments that reduce bullying and foster a sense of community (Kurth et al., 2018). Peer buddy programs contribute to a more compassionate and supportive school culture (Liasidou, 2014).

To date, there is limited research on initiating a peer buddy program in PE. The purpose of this investigation was to demonstrate the effects of a peer buddy program during an APE class in a high school setting.

Methods

**Participants.** After obtaining university institutional review board approval for this

Table 1: Participant Demographics

	Factor	n	%
Peer Buddies	Female	4	66
	Male	3	33
	Latinx or Hispanic	5	83
	Black or African American	1	16
Student with Disabilities	Female	7	43
	Male	9	56
	Latinx or Hispanic	13	81
	Black or African American	3	13
Disabilities	Autism	7	44
	Intellectual Disability	5	31
	Orthopedic Impairment	2	13
	Multiple Disabilities	1	6
	Visual Impairment	1	6

investigation, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants with and without disabilities. Inclusion criteria for students with disabilities were having APE on their individualized educational program (IEP). TDP students were selected from an application they submitted with four questions (e.g., Why do you want to be a peer buddy? What qualities or experiences do you have that make you a good peer buddy?), two recommendations (i.e., from staff and counselor), and commit to a semester. The peer buddies were chosen because they had an interest in leadership, and a positive attitude.

There were 22 individuals who participated in the high school peer buddy program. Six individuals were TDP buddies who applied to be in the program. Sixteen were students with disabilities who had APE on their IEP. See Table 1 for demographic results. The program took place in a 45 minute daily self-contained APE class taught by the primary investigator.

**Research Design.** A mixed methods research design was used. The program requires TDP to be recruited and applied for the program. To recruit students, the principal investigator provided a visual presentation to the PE Department at one secondary school in southern California to promote the program (see Figure 1). The PowerPoint informed the program's purpose and defined what a peer buddy was, the application process, benefits, grading, expectations, and contact information.



Figure 1. QR Code for Recruitment PowerPoint

The application to become a peer buddy had four short response questions regarding interest in the program, prior knowledge of disability awareness, and extracurricular activities. The students also needed three recommendations (e.g., counselor, teacher). See Figure 2 for application to become a peer buddy.



Figure 2. QR Code Application to Become a Peer Buddy

Peer buddy participants were trained in-person by the research team, which included the APE teacher, on feedback, behavior management, disability awareness, and routines (see Figure 3). Training was provided during the 1st and 2nd weeks of the program for 30 minutes, 5 days per week. Participants were also given in-person feedback from the research team during the 90-minute APE lesson, 5 days per week, for 20 weeks. The APE lessons consisted of cooperative games, sports, and non-traditional sports to ensure students were meeting their grade standards. See Figure 4 for curriculum plan. The TDP students received PE credit from the counselor as students were meeting their grade standards.



Figure 3. QR Code Peer Buddy Training



Figure 4. Curriculum Plan

The peer buddies were partnered with a new student with a disability every 2 weeks. Rotating peer buddies promotes inclusivity and fosters social-emotional learning by encouraging students to interact with diverse peers, which helps reduce social isolation and builds empathy (Jones et al., 2017; Edutopia, 2020). This approach also supports a collaborative classroom environment and enhances interper-



sonal skills critical for long-term academic and social success (Van der Meijden et al., 2005). Students were paired based on grade level, similar interests (e.g., video games, hobbies), or request by both student and peer buddy. This was done to intentionally promote conversation and connection between peers. The teacher supported this by using purposeful prompts such as, “Hey, did you know that the two of you really enjoy...,” helping to spark shared interests and build rapport.

**Instrumentation.** The peer buddies completed a pre- and post- survey regarding working with individuals with disabilities. The Peer Buddy PE Survey was evaluated by eight APE experts who were current APE teachers or higher education university faculty who had more than 10 years of experience related to APE to establish face/content validity. After updated edits and consensus from the experts, the final Peer Buddy PE Survey had nine total questions. Eight questions used a 5-point Likert response (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree) and one question was open-response. Example questions included: ‘I like participating in PE activities’, ‘I like to work with my peers’, and ‘I know someone with a disability.’

Table 2: Peer Buddy PE Survey Results

Survey Question	Pre survey mean	Post survey mean
I like participating in PE activities.	3.5	5.0
I like to work with my peers.	3.6	4.5
I know someone with a disability.	2.6	5.0
I have previously participated in an activity w/ student w/ disability.	2.1	5.0*
I have played at a unified sports event before.	2.0	4.0
I am familiar with disabilities.	2.3	5.0*
I have received any disability training.	2.0	5.0*
I have heard of inclusion.	2.0	5.0*
I participated in inclusion activities.	2.0	5.0*

Table 3: Students with Disabilities PE Survey Responses

Survey Question	Pre survey mean	Post survey Mean
Do you like PE?	2.3	2.6
Do you like playing sports?	2.5	2.6
Do peers say hi?	2.2	2.8*
Do you like playing by yourself?	1.5	1.1
Do you like to play with others?	2.3	2.7*

Students with disabilities were asked five similar questions pre- and post-intervention with a 3-point Likert scale in the form of emojis (i.e., thumbs down [no], thumbs sideways [sometimes], thumbs up [yes]). The Students with Disabilities PE Survey was evaluated by the same eight APE experts to establish face/content validity.

Example questions included: ‘Do you like PE?’ or ‘Do you like playing sports?’.

**Data Analysis.** The data from the survey questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results were compared based on the pre-survey and post-survey responses. Alpha level was set at .05.

### Results

The Peer Buddy PE Survey results demonstrated that peer buddies found a significant increase in participation in physical activity after the program, knowing their peers with disabilities, and awareness of disabilities after the program. For instance, students with disabilities stated they liked participating in PE activities

with a mean score of 3.8 and increased participation to a 6.0 mean score. See Table 2 for peer buddy results and Table 3 for students with disabilities survey results.

## Discussion

---

**The purpose of this investigation was to demonstrate** the effects of a peer buddy program during an APE class in a high school setting. Based on survey responses, both peer buddies and students with disabilities indicated improvements.

**Peer Buddy Improvements.** The peer buddies demonstrated increased awareness and knowledge of disabilities, facilitating their ability to engage meaningfully with peers with disabilities. This provided peer buddies with more opportunities to participate in activities alongside their peers with disabilities. As mentioned in previous research, Meulen et al. (2021) demonstrated similar results with improvement for students with disabilities in social skills like providing opportunities for social interactions, and empathy when a peer buddy program was utilized. These findings highlight the beneficial impact of peer buddy programs in enhancing social interactions and emotional well-being among students with disabilities in PE.

**Students with Disabilities Improvements.** The students with disabilities reported slight increases in their enjoyment of PE, participation in sports, interactions with peers, and preference for playing with peers. These findings align with Pratiwi and Mangunsong (2020), who observed improvements in social communication skills, peer support opportunities, and overall social and academic skills. Furthermore, peer buddies continued to engage with students with disabilities outside of structured programs, fostering ongoing peer support and social interactions. These outcomes echo Meulen et al. (2021), highlighting the broader benefits of inclusive peer support systems in enhancing social opportunities, acceptance, self-esteem, empathy, and interpersonal connections among all students involved.

**Limitations.** There were limitations that should be addressed within this study. First, there were a small number of participants, from one setting. This decreases the generalizability of the investigation. In addition, there were a small number of survey questions. Some students with disabili-

ties needed support to help read or understand the survey questions.

**Future Directions and Recommendations.** In the future, more responsibility may be placed on a general physical education teacher. For example, the general physical education teacher could be responsible for grading the TDP students. Regarding participant recruitment, speaking at teacher professional development days may help to advocate for the program and help with the recruitment process.

## Conclusions

---

**PE and APE teachers should consider imple-**menting a peer buddy program to benefit both students with and without disabilities. However, it is vital to train peer buddies extensively, covering essential aspects such as skill acquisition, understanding of disability categories, providing instructional support, fostering a positive attitude, willingness to engage, assigning roles effectively, and promoting social interaction. Implementing a peer buddy program has the potential to enhance socialization, manage larger PE class sizes effectively, increase opportunities for inclusion, and promote greater disability awareness among all students involved. These efforts can contribute significantly to creating a supportive and inclusive environment within physical education settings.

## References

---

- Bringing physical education to the lives of every student. (2024). California Teachers Association. <https://www.cta.org/educator/posts/bringing-physical-education-to-the-lives-of-every-student>
- Carter, E. W., Gustafson, J. R., Sreckovic, M. A., Dykstra Steinbrenner, J. R., Pierce, N. P., Bord, A., Stabel, A., Rogers, S., Czerw, A., & Mullins, T. (2017). Efficacy of peer support interventions in general education classrooms for high school students with autism spectrum disorder. *Remedial and Special Education, 38*(4), 207-221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932516672067>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

(2020). Disability and health overview. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html#:~:text=What%20is%20disability%3F,around%20them%20\(participation%20restrictions\)](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html#:~:text=What%20is%20disability%3F,around%20them%20(participation%20restrictions))

Class Size Matters. (n.d.). California Teachers Association. <https://www.cta.org/our-advocacy/class-size-matters>

Demetriou, K. (2021). Intentions of children without disabilities to form friendship with peers with physical disability: A small scale study. *Early Child Development and Care*, 191(13), 2141–2157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2019.1697246>

Edutopia. (2020). How a Buddy Program Can Foster SEL. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org>

Jones, S. M., Bailey, R., & Jacob, R. (2017). Social and emotional learning: A critical component of effective teaching. Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Kurth, J. A., Miller, A. L., Toews, S. G., Thompson, J. R., Cortés, M., Dahal, M. H., de Escallón, I. E., Hunt, P. F., Porter, G., Richler, D., Fonseca, I., Singh, R., Šiška, J., Villamero, R. J., & Wangare, F. (2018). Inclusive education: perspectives on implementation and practice from international experts. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 56(6), 471–485. <https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-56.6.471>

Lafuente Fernández, J. C., & Maeso Santamaría, Á. (2023). Análisis de las variables emocionales experimentadas por los alumnos cuando trabajan cooperativamente en Educación Física con y sin sus compañeros afines (Analysis of the emotional variables experienced by students when they work cooperatively in Physical Education with and without their friends). *Retos* (Madrid), 49, 76–86. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v49.97584>

Liasidou, A. (2014). Critical disability studies and socially just change in higher education. *British Journal of Special Education*, 41(2), 120–135. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12063>

Pinto, C., Baines, E., & Bakopoulou, I. (2019). The peer relations of pupils with special educa-

tional needs in mainstream primary schools: The importance of meaningful contact and interaction with peers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89(4), 818–837. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12262>

Pratiwi, F. D., & Mangunsong, F. (2020). Social support impact on academic self-concept of students with special needs. *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Psicoeducativa y Psicopedagógica*, 18(50), 143–158. <https://doi.org/10.25115/EJREP.V18I50.2404>

Smart, E., Li, J., Becerra, M., & King, G. (2023). Programs promoting virtual social connections and friendships for youth with disabilities: A scoping review. *Physical & Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics*, 43(6), 780–805. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01942638.2023.2199827>

Typical and atypical child development module 2. (n.d.). <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/clts/waiver/county/mod2-matrices.pdf>

Van der Meulen, K., Granizo, L., & Del Barrio, C. (2021). Emotional peer support interventions for students with SEND: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 797913–797913. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.797913>

Veenman, S., Denessen, E., Van den Akker, A., & Van der Rijt, J. (2005). Effects of a cooperative learning program on the elaborations of students during help seeking and help giving. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 11(6), 537–559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803610500254760>

What is APE? (n.d.). [www.ncpeid.org](https://www.ncpeid.org). <https://www.ncpeid.org/what-is-ape->

What is a peer buddy? (n.d.). [https://sms.sumnerschools.org/images/What\\_is\\_a\\_peer\\_buddy\\_-converted.pdf](https://sms.sumnerschools.org/images/What_is_a_peer_buddy_-converted.pdf)



# DISCOVER AND DISSEMINATE

The CAHPERD editorial board is proud to present this issue of Discover and Disseminate. This literary work is designed to succinctly offer original abstracts from previously published articles for the CAHPERD membership to discover research, teaching tips, and other ideas from the HPERD literature. We hope readers are empowered to seek out these full articles and continue to take this meaningful knowledge and apply it to their educational and community settings.

## Abstract #1

**Article:** Albedry, B., Ammons, L., Marenus, M. W., Hammound, D., Jandali, D., Chrzanowski, M., & Chen, W. (2023). The effects of an adventure education pilot study on social and emotional learning, resilience, and physical activity among high school students. *American Journal of Health Education*, 54(5), 329-342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19325037.2023.2234976>

**Background:** There continues to be a growing body of empirical evidence pointing toward the use of adventure-based learning (ABL) as a pathway toward social and emotional learning (SEL) in educational contexts. ABL has been argued to help promote intrapersonal (e.g., responsible decision making, resilience, emotional regulation) as well as interpersonal (e.g., social connection, cooperation) relationship skills; competencies that also have been linked to improved academic performance. The ABL model intentionally sequences movement-centered, experiential activities that typically involve community, cooperation, emotional trust, physical trust, and problem solving. ABL couples activities with bouts of reflection, referred to as group processing. The combination of the experiential activities coupled with the group processing help promote transfer of the SEL skills for the participants. ABL programs have been shown to provide opportunity for physical activity (PA) while performing challenging yet cooperative instructional tasks for participants.

**Purpose:** The aim of this study was to determine the extent to which an ABL program (intervention) could have an effect on high school students' SEL skills and physical activity. The researchers believed that ABL would in fact help promote SEL, resilience, and physical activity.

**Methods:** A total of 95 10th graders participated. Each of these students was enrolled in an ABL course (the intervention) that met for 90-minutes 2-3 times per week over a total of 15 weeks. Three different questionnaires were used to measure SEL, resiliency, and physical activity levels. Qualitative methods were used to capture students' perception of their experience.

**Results:** The quantitative findings indicated statistical significance in improving overall SEL, resilience, and PA over the duration of the 15 weeks. Qualitative analysis highlighted the importance of ABL in contributing to student development of intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship skills.

**Implications:** ABL can be an integral part of any physical education program, as it continues to have a documented effect on creating space for the enrichment of SEL. Effort should be made at all school levels to find creative ways to infuse ABL within the curriculum to help students develop SEL.

Submitted by Paul T. Stuhr, California State University San Marcos





## **Abstract #2**

---

**Article:** Birrell, L., Werner-Seidler, A., Davidson, L., Andrews, J. L., & Slade, T. (2025). Social connection as a key target for youth mental health. *Mental Health & Prevention*, 37, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhp.2025.200395>.

**Background:** A substantial number of young people in our society are feeling socially disconnected, lonely, and without a sense of purpose. Thus, positive social connections (warm, close perceived relationships with others) should be a key target for youth mental health interventions in schools, as these types of relationships are strongly associated with improved emotional well-being and resilience. Social connection interventions that enhance peer relationships and school connectedness hold promise in fostering well-being for students, by creating inclusive environments that strengthen sense of belonging. School approaches that aim to build a positive school climate have been shown to be instrumental for better student mental health, underscoring the importance of supporting young people in establishing and maintaining positive and meaningful peer relationships.

**Purpose:** The aim of this literature review article was to investigate social connection as a variable in improving student mental health. The authors were interested in the emerging research involving peer connection and school connectedness as ways to improve youth well-being and mental health.

**Conclusions:** Schools can offer unique experiences toward improving overall school connectedness among students and be a driving force toward supporting youth mental health. Based upon this review, buy-in from administrators, teachers, and students appear to produce the strongest effect; thus, signaling large whole-school approaches as the most impactful interventions. The authors also suggest that schools can focus on mental health by promoting environments that intentionally support strong sense of belonging with meaningful peer connection, foster prosocial culture through established school norms, and facilitating interventions that can mitigate and reduce harmful behavior such as bullying, conflict, and substance abuse.

**Implications:** Educators should be intentional about designing and facilitating curriculum that supports intentional opportunities for students to develop strong social connection. One such way is with the Adventure-Based Learning (ABL) model. ABL can serve as a powerful complement to efforts aimed at fostering positive social connections within schools, particularly through its documented impact on enhancing social and emotional learning (SEL). As a student-centered model, ABL promotes collaboration, communication, and active listening—key components to promote social connection—thereby contributing to a stronger, more inclusive learning community. Integrating ABL into physical education and across the broader school curriculum provides a creative, experiential pathway to support students in developing meaningful peer relationships toward the aim of stronger school connectedness.

**Submitted by Paul T. Stuhr, California State University San Marcos**



# 2025 CAHPERD AWARDS

**Award:** Verne Landreth Award

**Name:** Wendy Jones; 35 year CAHPERD member

**School/District/SELPA/University:** Health Physical Education Collaborative

**Tell us three things most people don't know about you.**

1. I danced for a semi-professional dance company "Sundance" that was commissioned by the National Park Service to dance in Yosemite. 2. Braved hard shell kayaking and survived class 3 rapids! 3. Some people know that I have 15 grandchildren ages 5 months to 21 years.

**What are unique aspects of your program that you would like to share with CAHPERD members?**

Start with your students. Take time to get to know them, even when you have lots of students. Also, make sure that you include the "why" when you teach... if you don't have a "why", ask your students. They can surprise you!

**What is a favorite instructional tip/technique/activity that you've learned?**

What? Why? How?: Establishing very clear learning targets for each lesson. More manageable for teacher and more engaging for students.

**What is a favorite behavior management tip/technique that you've learned?**

I love "back to the wall" keeping an eye on the whole class while moving about to help specific students.

**What is a favorite assessment tip/technique that you've learned?**

Progressions within a learning target. Students can level up within a lesson as they demonstrate the skill. This is different than having the whole class progress together. This gives more meaning for all students.

**Give a shout out to your mentor(s)! Who is it/how have they helped you?**

Pat Vickroy got me out of my box and guided me to teach with heart. Terri Drain motivated me to really think through lesson planning and make everything meaningful. Kate Cox continues to challenge me with her creative genius. Susan Wilkinson and Dianne Wilson-Graham trusted me with leadership.





# 2025 CAHPERD AWARDS

**Award:** Keith Johannes Honor Award

**Name:** Matthew Bassett; 28 year CAHPERD member

**School/District/SELPA/University:** Former K-8 Physical Education Teacher, Currently a Senior Program Specialist at the Los Angeles County Office of Education, part time lecturer at Cal State Long Beach in the Kinesiology Department

**What benefits do you get from being a member?**

CAHPERD is a great organization that provides professional development for its members. CAHPERD works to keep quality physical education alive through legislative bills and advocating for our profession.

**Tell us three things most people don't know about you.**

My family is a Disney family. I'm a member of the Los Angeles Live Steamers (so are my dad and son). I have developed a Lego addiction.

**What are unique aspects of your program that you would like to share with CAHPERD members?**

I'm grateful to be able to share quality practices with teachers and districts throughout Los Angeles County. I love sharing topics like backwards design, standards based instructional design, social emotional learning/cooperative activities, assessment strategies and technology tools. As a teacher, I was proud of being a standards based teacher and I loved teaching non-traditional activities. I knew that my students were learning when they were in my class.

**What is a favorite instructional tip/technique/activity that you've learned?**

Never stop learning! Be willing to F.A.I.L. (Frequent Attempts in Learning). Surround yourself with greatness, it rubs off on you! You are more capable than you give yourself credit for! Always try to challenge yourself to go to the next step/level.

**What is a favorite behavior management tip/technique that you've learned?**

I loved utilizing stations with my students. They would work in a station for 5-10 minutes before rotating to a new station. This always helped with limited equipment and class behavior as the students wouldn't have as much time in a station to get bored and become off task. This also allowed me to focus my attention at one station. This is where I did most of my assessing and teaching.

**What is a favorite assessment tip/technique that you've learned?**

Assessments is always about knowing what you are going to assess before you start teaching. Knowing how to look at the standard, select the criteria for how to break down the standard and being able to explain it on day one to your students is a game changer. The backwards design process is difficult but it's amazing to use it while teaching to produce quality programming.

**Give a shout out to your mentor(s)! Who is it/how have they helped you?**

This one is hard since there are so many. Many of the people should be in more than one category. I think that some of my first mentors in CAHPERD are from the CPEC group. This is where my service started at CAHPERD and I got to meet people like Cindy Lederer and Eileen Rogers. The people who helped me in



the subject matter project were Dr. Deb Patterson, Jennifer Mettler and John Kruse who helped me become a better teacher. Dan DeJager and Seth Martin while I worked on my national boards. Getting asked to become an EPEW Committee member allowed me to connect with people like Cindi Chase, Frances Medalen, Kris Rogers, Des Thomas, Julie Miller (my fellow rookie), Scott & Willie Wilson, Kate Cox, Stephanie Sandino, Will Potter, Barbara Grattan, Linda McGhee, Jessica Monlux, Andrea Chavez, Kaylah Ailman, Shelby Lozano, Scott Townsend and many-many more. Learning from amazing educators who are on a different level like Terri Drain, Wendy Jones, Kathy Jones and Diane Farthing from H-PEC. Finally, people from CAHPERD who I have served with like Tim Hamel, Julie Kuehl Kitchen, David Daum, and more. They had faith in me long before I had faith in myself. Currently, I've been working with Tonya Moore, Paige Metz and Allyson Reeds while support school and districts. I think this list proves that it takes a village!



**Award:** Phyllis A Blatz Exemplary Leadership Award

**Name:** Heidi Ambrosius; 15 year CAHPERD member

**School/District/SELPA/University:** Moreno Valley USD, CSU San Bernardino

**Tell us three things most people don't know about you.**

My background is in Dance, I've been a vegetarian for 35 years, I love all things Disney - especially Disney Cruises.

**What are unique aspects or characteristics of your program that you would like to share with CAHPERD members?**

We have a centralized preschool program with a motor room shared by APE/OT/PT. We focus on early motor skill development and have a great motor team.

**What is a favorite instructional tip/technique/activity that you've learned?**

Meet students where they are at developmentally and help them move forward.

**What is a favorite behavior management tip/technique that you've learned?**

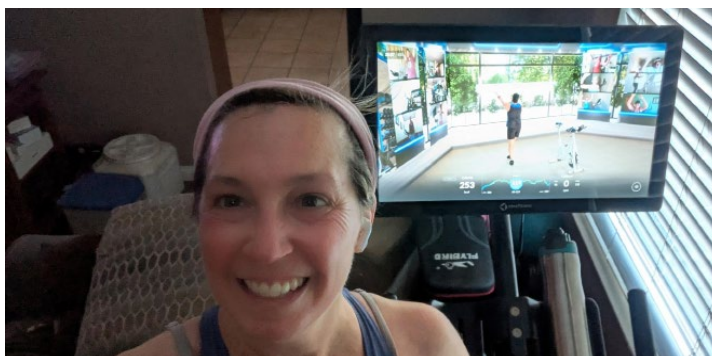
Token boards and picture schedules

**What is a favorite assessment tip/technique that you've learned?**

To take detailed notes immediately after the assessment.

**Give a shout out to your mentor(s)! Who is it/how have they helped you?**

I have so many. Dr. Perky Vetter, Dr. Garth Tymeson, Dr. Barry Lavay. They have supported and encouraged me to advocate for appropriate Adapted PE services in my District as well as APEAA Coordinator.







# 2025 CAHPERD AWARDS

**Award:** Phyllis A Blatz Exemplary Leadership Award

**Name:** Cindy Lederer; 30 year CAHPERD member

**School/District/SELPA/University:** Fairfield-Suisun USD (Retired)

**What benefits do you get from being a member?**

There were two things that attracted me to CAHPERD, #1 - Legislation which is very important to our subject matters. I'm not by any means political BUT... what happens in the CA Senate, CA House, CA Dept of Ed and the CA Teachers Credentialing commission controls what we do. We must pay attention to them. The second benefit, is I love being surrounded by other educators who are very passionate about what we do and it brings the best out in me when I'm with them.

**Tell us three things most people don't know about you.**

I was a scuba assistant instructor, a drill team assistant director at Helix H.S. while in college at SDSU and was at one time a Northern CA High School Baton Twirling Champion

**What are unique aspects or characteristics of your program that you would like to share with CAHPERD members?**

Class management is EVERYTHING. I don't move on until all 700 students have it. They get reminded after winter break and at time Spring Break.

**What is a favorite instructional tip/technique/activity that you've learned?**

I created "Cruz-N-Out" to replace Field Day. So much easier and the most memorable event my students, parents and teachers remember.

**What is a favorite behavior management tip/technique that you've learned?**

Behavior reflection worksheets for those students who need re-directions.

**What is a favorite assessment tip/technique that you've learned?**

Peer assessment worksheets.

**Give a shout out to your mentor(s)! Who is it/how have they helped you?**

Joanie Verderber, Barbara Ann Buckalew, Betty Hennessey, Dr. Robin Resse, Dianne Wilsom-Graham & Keith Johannes, have all shown me how to lead by example. Cliff Carnes, & Mr. Elem. PE Guru... Ruby Benton set me up when I went to the elementary level.





# 2025 CAHPERD AWARDS

**Award:** Elementary School Physical Education Teacher of the Year

**Name:** Ashley Sharp; 10 year CAHPERD member

**School/District/SELPA/University:** Palmdale School District

**What benefits do you get from being a member?**

The benefits I get from being a member are amazing conferences and a network of physical education professionals who I can share and connect with!

**Tell us three things most people don't know about you.**

1. I love musicals! I have seen over 50 shows! I have seen Wicked 4 times, Rent 3 times. My very first Broadway Show was Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat
2. My great Grandfather was a Pitcher for the New York Yankees
3. I have taught Physical Education in 4 different states!! (NY, CA, CT and MA!)

**What is a favorite instructional tip/technique/activity that you've learned?**

Have FUN!!! I find a lot of my students post COVID struggle with fitness. I love to hide fitness concepts into my activities. Students tend to tolerate higher levels of physical exertion when they are participating in a fun and engaging activity!

**What is a favorite behavior management tip/technique that you've learned?**

The best advice I have ever gotten is behavior is a form of communication. When students display negative behaviors the best advice is to not take it personal and identify the function of the behavior or the "WHY".

**What is a favorite assessment tip/technique that you've learned?**

One of the best assessment techniques for elementary physical education is Exit Tickets with a Movement Twist. This involves having students demonstrate a skill or answer a quick question before leaving class. It is a great way to reinforce current or past concepts and skills.





# 2025 CAHPERD AWARDS

**Award:** Middle School Physical Education Teacher of the Year

**Name:** Tyler Kuehl; 10 year CAHPERD member

**School/District/SELPA/University:** Pacific Trails Middle School - SDUHSD

**What benefits do you get from being a member?**

Love the conferences and seeing what's new and up and coming for PE units and classroom management.

**Tell us three things most people don't know about you.**

1) I love to make candles - hopefully start my own candle company one day. 2) Delivered my daughter in our dining room. 3) Love working out in 95+ degree weather

**What are unique aspects of your program that you would like to share with CAHPERD members?**

At Pacific Trails we're always trying to branch out. Some things that we do that has been our Fitness Lab and WODs (Workout of the day). Three times a year we have the students assess different skills in 5 different categories. Each time they see if they improved in those areas. Some of the skills they can choose are, Sled Push, Vertical Jump, 60 yd dash, 100m run, Broad Jump, Jump Rope challenge. We have over 15 different skills for them to choose and lets the students have a choice in what they want to choose and focus on skills that pertain to them and possibly their sport. We also run an amazing SEL program every Monday called Mindful Mondays. Every Monday students bring their SEL journal and we go over important topics throughout the year.

**What is a favorite instructional tip/technique/activity that you've learned?**

I have started to learn two apps that I love that has helped my classroom management. One is "Team Shake". Super easy app with one click of the button you can make random teams with colors and everything. It's made my life so easy when starting PE units to match people together. Also, "Boxing timer". Great for workouts and station work. Goes with music and helps organize time. We all lose track of time this helps keep it steady and consistent.

**What is a favorite behavior management tip/technique that you've learned?**

Getting to know your students names through our WODs (workout of the days). When you start to learn students' names and then saying their name out loud during something challenging for them really connects you and the student. I also do a lot of the workouts with my students so I can get on their level.

**Give a shout out to your mentor(s)! Who is it/how have they helped you?**

My Dad is my ultimate life mentor. My wife is my everyday mentor. And Austin Olsen my coworker is my amazing career mentor. I am blessed.







# 2025 CAHPERD AWARDS

**Award:** Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year

**Name:** Chris Ahrens

**School/District/SELPA/University:** San Diego Unified School District

**What benefits do you get from being a member?**

I enjoy the professional development opportunities that are available to me.

**Tell us three things most people don't know about you.**

1) I competed in the 2012 Paralympic Games 2) I am on U.S. Soccer's Board of Directors 3) I have an Adapted Physical Education podcast

**What are unique aspects or characteristics of your program that you would like to share with CAHPERD members?**

I utilize a team teaching approach where I take students with significant support needs into a general physical education class. We include the students for appropriate activities and then I am available to meet the students' needs as they require. This may be done via 1:1 instruction, small group instruction, and peer models are utilized to assist the students throughout our class.

**What is a favorite instructional tip/technique/activity that you've learned?**

I don't know that I have a favorite instructional technique but I believe in using visuals and peer models to deliver instruction most effectively. Each student learns differently, making it important to understand and utilize strategies that works for each of them.

**What is a favorite behavior management tip/technique that you've learned?**

For many years I have used a money technique with my secondary students. They earn money based on their behavior in class. A thumbs up is \$2, a sideways thumb is \$1, and a thumbs down they do not earn money. They then can spend their money at the end of the week on a variety of things. This approach is effective because it mirrors the approach used in their classrooms throughout the students' school day.

**Give a shout out to your mentor(s)! Who is it/how have they helped you?**

I am lucky to have worked with a number of people that I have learned from throughout the years. Becky Paradise and Katrina McClanahan have helped me grow from being a brand new teacher into the position I am in now and I'm forever grateful. Additionally, Katrina and I share our lead position with Laura Brodfuhrer and I learn daily from each of them.





# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

**CAHPERD issues this call for papers anticipated to appear in the next issue of the Journal.** The Journal contains two types of reviewed articles: (a) peer-reviewed and (b) editorial-reviewed. Peer-reviewed articles are research articles in the HPERD disciplines. Our editorial-reviewed sections include (a) Helpful Tips, (b) Discover and Disseminate, and (c) CAHPERD Voices. Author Guidelines for each of these sections can be found at [www.cahperd.org](http://www.cahperd.org).

Authors who are professionally engaged in the study of HPERD and related fields, including professors, teachers, and others, are encouraged to submit articles for review and potential publication. Authors need not be professional writers. Graduate students in the HPERD disciplines are also encouraged to submit. The editors will give priority consideration to those articles that relate directly to HPERD issues confronting California professionals. This includes articles that provide expert teaching strategies. Authors may not submit the same article to this Journal and other publications for simultaneous review. Previously published content should not be submitted.

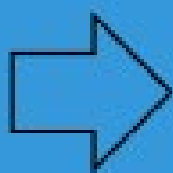




# CAHPERD 2027



Level Up!



Join us February 24-27, 2027 at the Town and Country Resort in San Diego



Experience  
networking, learning,  
and collaboration in  
an unforgettable  
environment

Session proposals and  
more information coming  
Spring 2026