Summit Shasta’s XQ Super School Journey

Founded in 2013, after a group of parents approached Summit Public Schools about opening a Summit school in their community, the district designed Summit Shasta to shift the understanding of what constitutes post-secondary readiness. The Summit network defines a successful high school as a school that helps students obtain the content knowledge, cognitive skills, and habits of success necessary for acceptance to a four-year college or university. As one of the original XQ Super School grantees, Summit Shasta embraced an expanded definition of a successful high school by adding an emphasis on every student graduating with a Concrete Next Step.

Summit Shasta is fundamentally rethinking high school with a new, highly self-directed program that helps every student discover a sense of purpose and an aligned pathway to lifelong success.
Discover Summit Shasta

Summit Shasta creates an expanded definition of success by developing the quality of purposefulness to persist to and through college and beyond. To do this, Summit Shasta leadership designed an integrated, purpose-based curriculum and portfolios that culminate in an oral defense to a personal advisory board of student-selected mentors. These projects help students create life plans. By offering year-round support and teaching, students explore and develop skills for life after high school. Summit Shasta staff challenge students to consider what their academic journeys look like and the school provides systems to get them where they want to go. Since its founding, US News & World Report regularly ranks Summit Shasta as one of the nation’s best high schools. In 2020, the entirety of Summit Shasta’s graduating class was accepted to a 4-year college or university.

Summit Shasta is a public charter school that opened in 2013 and serves over 400 students in grades 9-12.
Summit Shasta Design Features

1. Students on a path to purpose

Summit Shasta strives for every student to graduate with a sense of purpose—an understanding of their interests, values, and skills—and a credible path after high school for translating those interests, values, and skills into a life of well-being. As students move through their time at Summit Shasta, they convert this sense of purpose into a concrete next step. Through a course called Life After Shasta that was piloted in 2017-18 and expanded in 2018-19, educators in the Summit network researched how a strong sense of purpose is a crucial dimension of post-secondary success. By supporting students in their search for purpose, the team at Summit Shasta strives to help students become lifelong learners who persist in the face of adversity, challenge themselves to explore new opportunities and see and commit to making the most of the opportunities they find.
2. Pioneers of self-directed learning

By nurturing students’ curiosity and expanding their capacity for self-directed learning, the Summit Shasta community produces graduates who are tenacious, audacious, and capable of achieving their educational, career, and personal goals. To accomplish this, every Summit Shasta student has a self-directed learning plan, a way to view their current academic progress across all classes that includes a daily time to set and calibrate goals and regular opportunities to check in with their advisor. The school’s leaders and teachers work to ensure that every student’s personalized journey is built on a foundation of enriching learning experiences that engage students academically, develop cognitive skills, and build habits of success.

3. Caring relationships that support social-emotional learning

Relationships are at the heart of Summit Shasta team’s efforts to support students in their personal and academic growth. Their Habits of Success Framework focuses on challenge-seeking, persistence, strategy-shifting, and appropriate help-seeking. It was designed with an understanding that skill development happens on a pathway that integrates cognitive, social, and emotional skills. To accomplish this, educators founded Summit’s curriculum on individualized weekly mentoring, self-directed project-based learning, home-to-school connections, and restorative practices. Each student is part of a mentor group of about 20 students that meets at the beginning of every day and dedicates time every Wednesday to building community. Mentor groups focus on group bonding, academic belonging, and habits of success. Mentors also engage families. In the 2020 school year, 100 percent of families held a meeting with their child’s mentor and 89 percent of students feel that there is at least one adult at their school that they trust.
4. Investing in teacher development

Educators at Summit receive some of the professional development in the country. One key to the success of their strategy is the Marshall Teacher Residency program which is designed to build a long-term, sustainable, and diverse pipeline of teachers prepared to lead high-quality, personalized learning classrooms at learner-centered schools. The residency program’s innovative and rigorous design mirrors the school’s goals for students’ experiences, and embeds one to one coaching, authentic projects, and self-direction opportunities into the curriculum at Summit.

The 2020–21 school year marks the Residency’s fourth year within the Summit Network. To date, more than 70 residents work in Summit’s network and meet the needs of diverse learners. Beyond the Summit network, the residency program is a new model for exemplary teacher preparation. These teacher residencies are lauded as the gold standard in educator preparation because of the focused time, guidance, and practice that comes with an apprenticeship model. Previously, residency programs in California have only operated through institutes of higher education. In March 2020, Summit Shasta became the first Local Education Agency (LEA) authorized to operate a residency program available to educators across California. Additionally, every teacher at Summit participates in 40 days of professional development each year, identifying their own goals for growth and collaborating best practices with their peers.
Alexa Estoque, now a Summit Shasta graduate, plans to major in agricultural and environmental plant sciences. When she had the opportunity to intern at The Heal Project, a farm/garden dedicated to teaching kids about where their food comes from and why it matters, she jumped at the chance. “I want to have valuable experience in my future work field, expand my network, gain insight into the career options available to me, and learn about sustainable agriculture methods,” she said. Through her work of managing projects and performing hands-on farm maintenance and development tasks, she honed important skills such as self-direction and cemented her passion for agricultural science. Check out the full project.

**Competencies Met:**
- Designing Processes and Procedures
- Multimedia in Written Production

**California State Standards Met**
- ANR 10.4 - 10.4 Collaborate with industry experts for specific technical knowledge and skills.
- HS-ESS3-4 - Evaluate or refine a technological solution that reduces the impacts of human activities on natural systems.
Anti-racism and social justice

Every single element of the Summit model is grounded in what science tells us about how students learn best. In the Science of Summit, Summit Shasta translates the science of learning into the intentional design of our schools. This integration helps students achieve success in three outcomes: cognitive skills, content knowledge, and habits of success.

Student data

Purdue Polytechnic High School serves 545 students in grades 9-12 this school year.

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Blogs and Media

- How to Find Internships in High School (Advice From a College Intern)
- From the Classroom to the ‘Real World’
- How Schools Can Clear the Path to College
- How to Get the Most Out of Student Internships
- What Happens When Students Decide How They Learn?

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