

# SAN MATEO MIDDLE COLLEGE

## Semester Kicks Off With an Empathy Challenge



During orientation, Middle College students began the Empathy Challenge, a month-long project in which they are employing the steps of design-thinking to address perceived needs in the community surrounding immigration. This challenge requires students to listen to and define the needs of community members holding diverse opinions around an issue and offers students a chance to design an authentic solution.

The design-thinking process was developed in the engineering field as a method for creating unique and practical solutions to complex problems. In using this method, students build imperative 21st century skills, including: embracing ambiguity, facing failure, developing creative confidence, working collaboratively, cultivating self-awareness and self-direction, honing a bias towards action, and developing metacognition and a growth mindset.

Students began the Empathy Challenge by deconstructing the cultural conditioning that informs their own assumptions, biases and prejudices around immigration, cultivating self-awareness before they begin their empathy work (**Notice**). Then, students interviewed community members who have an immigration experience. Here, we encouraged students to pursue opportunities to build "hard empathy" through finding someone whose experience with or views on immigration are radically different than their own. Some examples include an undocumented immigrant from Guatemala; a documented immigrant from France; a police officer who works in collaboration with ICE; and a local Republican politician who is a 3rd generation immigrant (**Empathize**). From these interviews, students identified a unique need of the interviewee (**Define**), which they then used as a compass point for brainstorming possible solutions to help meet that need (**Ideate**). Students were asked to focus on one solution that emerged from the ideation phase and build a prototype that demonstrates how this solution would work in "real life" (**Prototype**). Students then tested, revised and refined their prototype based on feedback from their interviewee, other classmates, and the larger community. They also conducted field research to further inform the logistical details of their solution (**Test**).

This week, students will present their solutions to members of the community who are "experts" on the topic of immigration in order to solicit concrete feedback on the viability, sustainability and possible impact of their prototype (**Pitch**). Additionally, they will submit grant proposals to us for seed funding (\$300) to implement their designs; two groups (one Junior, one Senior) will be awarded this seed funding. Stay tuned - we will announce the grant winners in our next newsletter! This project was made possible through a grant Brittany Redgate received through Facing History and Ourselves.

### IMPORTANT DATES!

#### School

- **Sept 21-24**, Yosemite Backpacking Trip
- **Sept 22**, End of grading period
- **Oct 9**, No high school classes, YES you still have college classes
- **Oct 11**, Community Day
- **Nov 15**, last day to drop a class and still receive a "W" on your transcript

#### College Guidance

- SAT registration: Oct 7 test date must registered no later than Sept 27
- ACT registration: Oct 29 test date must registered no later than Sept 23
- UC applications due Nov. 30
- College Fair, October 16, 6:30 at Mills HS



*Continued from page 1*

Here are some examples of the Middle College Empathy Challenge prototypes:

- A children’s book that highlights the different life experiences of immigrants, while simultaneously illustrating the ways in which we are the same.
- A bill proposal to require community service for new immigrants.
- A website to help immigrants connect with future employers and to help acquire work permits more efficiently.
- An app to help non-native speakers learn English while competing against each other in a community
- A community garden that will shine a light on the significance of immigration and recognize immigrant families in the community.
- A youth pen pal system, to better the general attitude towards immigrants and increase inclusion.

## College Applications are NOW!

For those students who will be applying to four-year universities for the fall of 2018, you need to take a deep breath. Now get organized and get moving. The number of options can be overwhelming but we are here to assist you. The first step is simply deciding to apply. From there, you need to formulate a list of colleges to which you would like to apply. This list should include a few schools where acceptance is likely, a few where you have a solid chance of acceptance and one or two that would be considered reaches. Register with [www.collegedata.com](http://www.collegedata.com) and use their college search tool.

You will most likely need to register for the SAT ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)) or the ACT ([www.act.org](http://www.act.org)) as most schools require one of them. The schools assure us that they do not favor one over the other. The SAT might be easier for you if you are a good reader but not fast, good at mental math, and good at reading between the lines. The ACT might be easier for you if you are good at science, work quickly through most tests, and rely on using your calculator during your math class. Either way, these tests are used as predictors for how students will perform once they are on the college campus. Students can use any test up to December for their 2018 applications.

The University of California’s applications are due on November 30. This is an excellent target date for students to complete all of their applications. This will free up mental bandwidth to focus on the coming final exams and projects. Students can also apply for “Early Decision”. This is a binding choice. Therefore, you must be absolutely sure you would like to attend this school.

Most private schools require letters of recommendation from teachers and other school personnel. It is important that students ask the teachers if they are “comfortable writing and favorable recommendation”. This request needs to happen by the end of September. You want to give the recommender enough time to complete the letter prior to the November 30 date.

Finally, please discuss your financial situation candidly with your student. This will help them make informed decisions about which university is the “right” choice. You will also want to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid at <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>. Most scholarships and schools’ financial aid require that you fill out FAFSA so as to establish your financial “need”.

Many applications can be started now. Please have your student see Ms. Redgate or Mr. Clardy for assistance. You can also call us if you have any questions.

## Attendance

If your child is absent please be sure to:

1. Call or email Angela
2. Have your student email the high school teachers directly for any assignments
3. Have your student check School Loop
4. Submit all work that is due that day via email