While the Latinx success data in the recent Half Moon Bay Review article “Latinos 5 times as likely to fail at Cabrillo schools” is disheartening, it is neither new nor entirely surprising. As an educator for over twenty years and an unapologetic advocate for the economic upward mobility of people of color, it is imperative now to give voice to the needs of those who too often are not heard. The shock of the pandemic to our educational system has reinvigorated our commitment to rectifying wrongs and addressing in meaningful ways racial, socioeconomic, and linguistic inequities. Indeed, the lived experience of students and their families, as Cabrillo Unified School District (CUSD) Superintendent Sean McPhetridge astutely notes predicts educational success. Our students themselves are not deficit. Instead, the data is a measure of our institutional effectiveness.

Acknowledging what is statistically predictable, requires the collective action of our community leaders—in education, health, business, civic and local government, philanthropists, non-profits, and community services. Enough is enough. When we know better, we are obligated to do better. A well-known quote I often come back to as a source of inspiration speaks to the challenge before us: “There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in” (Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu).

A vibrant, healthy community serves all, and education is indeed the great equalizer. The important action CUSD is taking in drafting a new Equity Statement reaffirms service to the most vulnerable among us. College of San Mateo (CSM), likewise, has reimaged our commitment to equity with an emphasis on social justice as we design a comprehensive data-informed approach to ensuring liberatory education. Our college’s Solidarity Statement is sedulous acknowledging processes and practices to counter historical, generational inequities. As the college turns 100, we have taken the lessons of the past to shape our course into the future.

CSM stands alongside our community partners and leaders to bolster and further enhance our holistic system of education, kindergarten to College of San Mateo and beyond. Our work begins in recognizing the humanity of those we serve and in celebrating the many social, cultural, and fiscal contributions our Latinx community has made to the benefit of us all on the Coastside and in San Mateo County. It’s time to pay it forward.

We are ready to act in unison with CUSD and our community partners to reimagine teaching and learning holistically for students and families. Currently, through dual enrollment programs, including Middle College High School, technology allocation, enhanced basic needs and social wellness services, and the San Mateo County Community College District’s Promise Scholars
Program (a three-year free tuition program), we are striving to increase access to college while ensuring equitable success outcomes. Additionally, our college’s transportation task force is developing a plan to serve Half Moon Bay students. In working with local non-profits and community services, College of San Mateo strives to help all members of the community realize educational opportunity, from career technical education to the humanities and sciences.

Let’s change the narrative. As an educator and Coastside resident, I believe our Latinx students, like all of our students, are brilliant and possess boundless potential. At the core of it and in the most basic terms, in order for our educational institutions to succeed in their grand missions, we all must care about other people’s children.

How will we write their stories for generations to come?