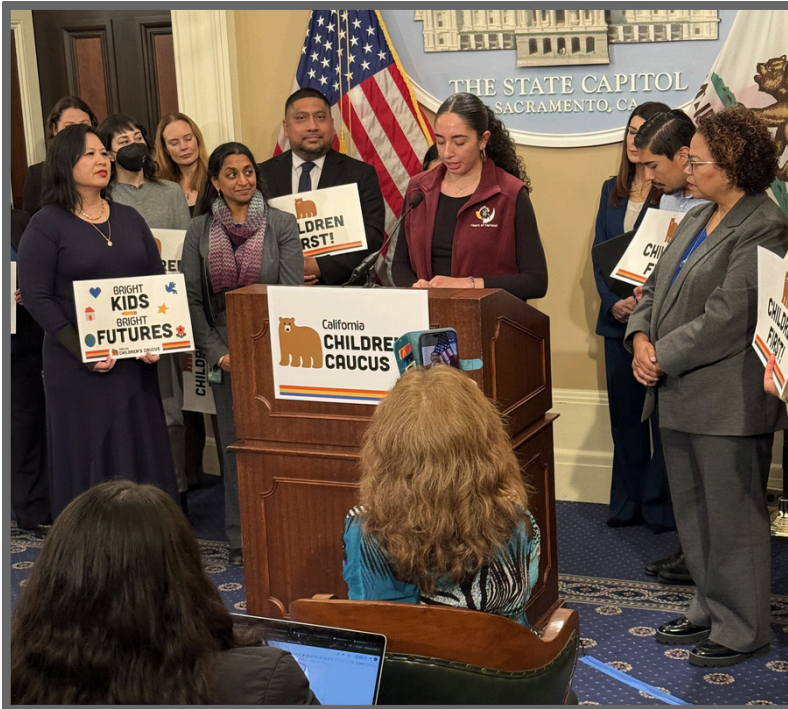


# BRIGHT FUTURES NEWS

## Past Bright Futures Intern Lifts Up CalKIDS at State Capitol



This summer, Bright Futures was proud to work alongside our outstanding student interns who supported families across Monterey County in claiming their CalKIDS college savings accounts. Through outreach, tabling, and direct engagement, they helped ensure more students accessed the funds waiting for them.

Recently, Lupita Nunez brought that same passion and leadership to the State Capitol, where she shared her personal story about the impact CalKIDS has had on her and on students throughout Monterey County. Representing both Hartnell College and Bright Futures beautifully, she spoke with authenticity about how early college savings accounts can change mindsets, open doors, and make higher education feel possible.

She was invited to speak before the California Children’s Cabinet, created by Assemblymember Mia Bonta. This bipartisan body of 40 legislators is working to rally communities around a shared vision for California’s children.

We are incredibly proud to see our local students not only benefit from initiatives like CalKIDS, but also lead and advocate at the state level. This is what cradle-to-career impact looks like in action.

## Bright Futures, Hartnell College, and StriveTogether at Achieving the Dream

March 2nd–5th, Bright Futures along with StriveTogether and Hartnell had the opportunity to share our collective impact story on a national stage at the Achieving the Dream Conference in Portland, Oregon.

Achieving the Dream supports leaders at more than 300 community colleges nationwide, helping institutions drive equity-focused transformation through coaching, data, and innovation. In alignment with this work, StriveTogether brings together cross-sector partners through its Cradle to Career Network to ensure every child can thrive.

At the conference, Tony Amezcua (Bright Futures), Josh Pollack (StriveTogether), Dr. Gayle Pitman (Hartnell College), and Dr. Jackie Cruz (Hartnell College and Hartnell College Foundation) presented “From Cradle to Career: A Collective Impact Approach to Community Vibrancy,” highlighting the strong alignment between higher education transformation and Monterey County’s cradle-to-career strategy.



# BRIGHT FUTURES NEWS

## 2026 March Newsletter

### STEERING PARTNER FEATURE STORY



**Dan Burns**

For more than three decades, I have dedicated my career to public education in Monterey County with one guiding belief: students succeed when we intentionally create the conditions for their success. That belief has shaped every role I have held from classified support, to teacher, principal to superintendent. This is the same premise that drew me to Bright Futures a decade ago.

My involvement with Bright Futures has been deeply meaningful because it reflects how I see leadership for continuous improvement: not as an individual effort, but as shared responsibility. Over the years, I have worked alongside partners across multiple goal areas, bringing both practical district experience and a systems-level perspective to the table. Together, we have focused not just on programs, but on alignment of systems towards short and long-term student outcomes.

Through this work, I have come to understand that a cradle-to-career approach is more than a strategy, it is a commitment to coherence. From early literacy and kindergarten readiness to high school graduation and workforce

development, I have seen firsthand that no single institution can do this work alone. True progress happens when schools, nonprofits, higher education, healthcare providers, business leaders, and local government align around shared outcomes.

Too often, we ask our schools to solve challenges that extend far beyond the classroom. I have spent much of my career working to break down those silos by connecting wellness supports, workforce pathways, and strong instruction into one unified system of opportunity. This work is especially urgent considering our communities are diverse, multilingual, and filled with first-generation college students and hardworking families striving for economic mobility.

Therefore, the cradle-to-career alignment can ensure that opportunity is not determined by zip code, and that strategic alignment of resources results in better student outcomes and higher rates of being on the path to economic mobility.

What I value most about Bright Futures is that it keeps students at the center. It challenges all of us, including me, to think beyond our individual organizations and commit to measurable, collective impact.

When systems align, futures change. This is why I remain committed to doing the work, alongside this community, to ensure every child in Monterey County has a pathway to success. ”

## BRIGHT FUTURES MOVING INTO ONE MAIN!

We are excited to share that Bright Futures will transition to our new office space at One Main Street in the heart of Salinas this month.

As a cross-sector partnership serving all of Monterey County, being located in the center of our community reflects who we are and how we work together. This new space will allow us to more intentionally convene partners, align efforts, and continue supporting the collective impact work that has defined Bright Futures for more than a decade.

In many ways, this move feels like a homecoming. When Bright Futures first launched in 2015, our Steering Partner and Core Convener meetings were held in this very building. Returning to One Main Street is a powerful reminder of how far we've come and the strong foundation our partners have built together.

We've already begun hosting meetings and events here, and it has been energizing to see partners gathered once again at One Main Street and continuing the collaborative work that moves Monterey County forward.



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