

## WHAT IS UNCONDITIONAL EDUCATION?

Unconditional Education begins with **LOVE AND COMPASSION**. It is the belief that every student deserves to experience success within their neighborhood school community and the faith that every student will experience this success when provided with an inclusive learning environment and the necessary supports. Love and compassion is taking the time to get to know how students' prior school and life experiences affect them as learners and making every possible adjustment to match the style of our teaching to their individual needs. Unconditional Education extends loving care and support to the families of students who are struggling and knows that only through developing genuine partnerships with students' larger networks will our efforts produce transformative results.

Unconditional Education holds an absolute **RESPECT** for each and every member of the community. Unconditional Education is the belief that students, families and school professionals are doing the best they know how. Unconditional Education means supporting growth while assuming best intent and believing that our genuine collaboration and partnership are at the heart of our capacity to affect change for students.

Unconditional Education is the acknowledgment that some students will struggle with the demands of school. It brings with it a team of experts, the power to access networks of community resources, and the know-how to identify just the right services for each individual. Since every student, family, teacher and school is unique, sometimes even the tried and true tricks of the trade will fall short. In these instances, Unconditional Education is the process of engaging in relentless **CURIOSITY**, the willingness to revise previous notions of what a student needs and ingenuity to develop out-of-the-box solutions when initial efforts have not produced the desired results.

When student struggles are at their greatest, Unconditional Education holds an endless capacity for **HOPE** and the belief that existing barriers can be overcome, even when they seem insurmountable. It is also the knowledge that significant change takes time and that **COURAGE** is required to meaningfully engage with both adults and students in the difficult process of learning something new. On the days when sustaining this learning seems more than can be endured, Unconditional Education delivers **JOY**. By intentionally building on strengths, commending successes, recognizing effort and engaging in celebrations of each other Unconditional Education can revive the persistence needed to sustain the work of educating all students.

*"We have never had such a fruitful partnership as the one we have with Seneca and Unconditional Education. Not only does it help to achieve our mission, but it allows us to innovate a **truly novel approach** that can be replicated throughout the country."*

- HAE-SIN THOMAS, CEO EDUCATION FOR CHANGE  
FOUNDING PARTNER 

# THE ORGANIZATION BEHIND UNCONDITIONAL EDUCATION



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Since 1985, Seneca has partnered with families, communities, schools, and districts to provide innovative care at the most critical point of need. As a statewide provider of education, behavioral and mental health services in more than 12 counties, Seneca understands the power and considerable impact of providing a continuum of care from early interventions and community based services to high level Special Education and mental health care.

Seneca was founded in 1985 because several caring, visionary people saw a tragedy unfolding: Far too many children were failing in group homes and foster family care. In response, Seneca set out

to develop mental health treatment and support services on the principle that troubled youth do not themselves fail, but are instead failed by systems unable to address their complex and specialized needs. Seneca has dedicated itself to becoming a “system of care” agency providing a comprehensive continuum of community-based and family-focused treatment services for children and families. Seneca’s continuum of care now includes: in-home wraparound services; foster family-based treatment; mobile crisis response services; integrated day treatment and special education services; after-school therapeutic recreation services; public school-based mental health services and special education, and residential treatment.

Through its Unconditional Education partnerships, Seneca seeks to transfer the lessons learned from its 30 years of experience serving the state’s most troubled youth to ensure that all students receive the supports they need to achieve ongoing and sustained educational success.

## PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

### BELIEF IN PARTNERSHIP

1

Seneca understands the tremendous value of creating unbreakable partnerships that thrive on shared values, common goals, and effective collaboration. These partnerships are the vehicle that enables Seneca to successfully implement a continuum of care service delivery model that appropriately identifies and intervenes for our most vulnerable children. Seneca develops deep relationships with *all* of its partners and believes that these partnerships are the foundation for program success.



### CONTINUUM OF SERVICES AND EXPERTISE

2

Seneca was built on the principle that coordinated and integrated services lead to a more meaningful experience and more fruitful outcomes for students and families. All-In! leverages this experience to build programs that engage in shared problem solving across disciplines and integrate academic, behavioral, and social emotional services into a single plan for success. In addition, Seneca brings to the table the backing and collective expertise of 1,000+ staff, as well as access to agency services when confronted by barriers to students’ success. Supporting this expertise is the nationally recognized, accredited Seneca Institute for Advanced Practice, which provides evidence-based and best practice trainings for Seneca employees, local service providers, and public agency staff to bolster system-wide capacity to effectively serve youth and families involved with the child welfare, juvenile justice, behavioral health, and special education systems.



### UNCONDITIONAL CARE

3

Seneca is founded on the belief that kids don’t fail, but that systems fail kids: successful outcomes can occur when systems are adjusted to fit young people’s existing needs. The most essential mission is to apply this lens of unconditional care to the most struggling students in our schools, prompting out-of-the-box thinking to remove barriers to school success. The willingness to “do whatever it takes,” even when doing so proves to be a tremendous challenge, is a cornerstone of the Seneca service philosophy.



"The Seneca team has a strong background and understanding of behavioral health issues and academic support and are able to provide ideas and resources that focus on student growth and support. They have also been an integral part of providing support to teachers who need coaching, consultation and/or individualized student support in and outside the classroom."

- PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER , SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



## THE NEED FOR UNCONDITIONAL EDUCATION

Throughout California and across the nation there is a significant educational crisis for our most troubled youth. Forty-two percent of youth across the nation do not graduate from high school, and many of those that do are unprepared for the educational or vocational endeavors to follow. The picture for our nation's youth is bleak, and it is particularly troubling for young people who face additional barriers to accessing a quality education, including:

### STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Across the country, 40% of children with learning disabilities drop out of high school. This is twice the rate of students without learning disabilities. Of those who do graduate, less than two percent attend a four year college, despite the fact that many are above average intelligence (Bost, 2008).

### STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE CHRONIC STRESS AND TRAUMA

Children who experience complex trauma are three times more likely to drop out of school than their peers and have a greater tendency to be misclassified with developmental delays or referred for special education services (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network).

### STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The percentage of students in our schools who are English Language Learners is growing. In the 2009-2010 school year, this student population represented 10% of all students, an increase of 2% from the previous year (The Condition of Education, 2012). Statistics in California show that during the same 2009-2010 school year, 56.6% of ELL students dropped out of high school (California Department of Education, 2012).

### STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

Youth in foster care graduate at relatively low rates and are less likely to complete high school than their non foster care peers (National Working Group on Foster Care in Education, 2011).

### STUDENTS WHO ARE ALREADY BEHIND

Students who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma when compared to proficient readers. The number rises when those kids also come from poverty (Hernandez, 2012 ).

Attempts to improve outcomes for our nation's most struggling youth have often been piecemeal and uncoordinated, leading to a system full of inefficiencies and producing limited results. As a broad based mental health provider and education agency, Seneca Family of Agencies aims to fill this gap by establishing meaningful partnerships that together weave a continuum of service offerings throughout a school that will ultimately target the individual needs of students and families while overall benefitting all members of the school community.

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## PROGRAM GOALS

### 1 TO INCREASE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF THE *MOST STRUGGLING* STUDENTS AT OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS

Effective school turnaround requires that schools make systematic changes that emphasize campus-wide achievement while targeting student subgroups that have been underserved as a result of gaps in school services. Unconditional Education focuses on improving learning outcomes for all students, while specifically targeting students who face additional barriers to success.

### 2 TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF PARTNER SCHOOLS IN DELIVERING EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS TO ALL STUDENTS THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A MULTI-TIERED FRAMEWORK

The Unconditional Education model is designed to improve the overall instructional capacity and school culture and climate that serve as the foundation for targeted, early investments in students' educational progress so that more students remain on track and referrals to higher levels of service (such as special education) are minimized.

Key differences between traditional special education/mental health and the Unconditional Education model are summarized in the table below.

## TRADITIONAL VS. UNCONDITIONAL EDUCATION

Services are separated	Services are integrated and coordinated
Specialized staff are responsible for providing interventions to students	All staff are responsible for providing interventions
Students must be referred to Special Education or a Mental Health Clinician in order to receive services	Any student can receive intervention services
Students must fail in order to receive extra support	Data-driven progress monitoring is employed to catch students before they fail
"Cookie cutter" approaches to intervention are often implemented	Interventions can be creatively designed to meet the needs of each student

"I appreciate Seneca staffs' communication with teachers and parents about individual students and their efforts to support me in modifying expectations and content for students with IEPs."

- PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL TEACHER

# Unconditional Education Logic Model

- 1 Increase capacity of schools serving high poverty communities to deliver effective interventions through the implementation of a multi-tiered framework
- 2. To increase the academic performance and social-emotional well-being of the most struggling students, including students with disabilities

## Goals

## Input

### Multi-Service Lead Agency

- Strong belief in collaboration and partnership
- A continuum of services and expertise including established partnerships with systems of care (social services, child welfare, mental health, behavioral health, probation, etc.)
- Training capacity and expertise

### Educational Organization

- Strong belief in collaboration and partnership
- System-wide commitment to providing Unconditional Education for all students
- Organizational sustainability and commitment to the process of school transformation
- Leadership capacity including the ability to develop a shared vision, and to promote relational trust and stakeholder investment

## Strategies

### KEY COMPONENT: System Efficiency

- Work collaboratively with leadership to assess the current system of student supports and to create a responsive intervention plan
- Assist leadership in creating a customized braided funding structure

### KEY COMPONENT: Coordination of Services

- Coordinate support services through the creation of a multi-disciplinary coordination of services team (COST) and the use of data management and analysis
- Facilitate collaboration with county mental health, child welfare and probation
- Establish a protocol for parental engagement during the referral process

### KEY COMPONENT: Universal Supports/Tier One

- Provide staff with a set of tools including differentiated instruction, School Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and trauma-informed practices, to address the general variance of needs of all students.
- Provide responsive professional development for staff that will enable them to better support students within the classroom setting
- Promote active involvement amongst family and provide training and workshops for parents and caregivers

### KEY COMPONENT: Targeted and Intensive Supports/Tier Two and Three

- Provide high quality intervention services by credentialed and licensed professionals
- Provide responsive and specialized training for academic, behavioral and/or mental health support staff
- Provide responsive training for targeted parent groups experiencing similar challenges/needs

## Short-Term Outcomes

- Resource allocation at each tier is aligned with demonstrated need

- Staff report that services are more coordinated, responsive, integrated, and data driven

- Schools are more responsive to students who have experienced trauma
- School has a consistent system of PBIS
- School has a differentiated approach to classroom instruction
- Staff and parents report increased knowledge and skills in their ability to support the diverse needs of their students

- Students in special education meet IEP goals
- Students in T2 and T3 interventions experience growth on social emotional and behavioral benchmark measures
- Students in T2 and T3 interventions experience growth on academic benchmark measures
- Students in T2 and T3 interventions experience a reduction in discipline incidents
- Staff and parents report increased knowledge and skills in their ability to support the diverse needs of their students

## Long-Term Outcomes

- Improved school climate as demonstrated by an increase in School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) scores
- Increase in academic achievement as measured by progress assessments and standardized tests
- Improved behavior outcomes as demonstrated by a decrease in disciplinary referrals and suspensions
- Increased time in school as demonstrated by increased attendance rates
- Services are more cost efficient, as demonstrated by cost per pupil rates and an analysis of local contribution

## CORE SERVICE ELEMENTS

### ➤ SCHOOL INTERVENTION ASSESSMENT

In collaboration with school leadership, Seneca's team administers a variety of measures to assess the school's overall culture and their tiered intervention practice. The assessment process includes structured observations, stakeholder interviews, and the administration of the PBIS Tiered Fidelity Index, the Trauma-Informed Matrix, and the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI).

### ➤ TIERED INTERVENTION MASTER PLANNING & LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Seneca's program administrators collaborate with school leadership to develop a strategic plan to address gaps identified in the school assessment process. The plan details how the team and school will create, schedule, deliver, and monitor interventions at each of the three tiers. Seneca's experienced administrators then provide regular support for school leaders to engage their school teams in the effective delivery and monitoring of these tiered interventions.

### ➤ TARGETED AND INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS

Seneca's credentialed education specialists, licensed service providers (such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and low incidence disability specialists), licensed therapists, and certified behavioral analysts oversee and/or provide key interventions to those students in need of additional support. The Seneca team oversees referral, assessment, and service delivery, and ensures compliance with related professional, state, and federal educational requirements.

### ➤ UNIVERSAL DESIGNS FOR LEARNING

Seneca's multi-disciplinary team provides collaborative planning and conferencing with teachers to support the learning needs of all students. Experienced trainers and instructional coaches lead teacher, team, or school-wide cycles of inquiry to analyze student data, differentiate needs, and intervene as needed.

### ➤ COORDINATION OF SERVICES

Seneca's team structures and facilitates a data-driven process to support integrated service planning. Seneca also develops school-wide procedures to ensure the identification of students requiring additional intervention.

### ➤ INTERVENTION DATA MANAGEMENT & ANALYSIS

The Seneca team builds upon the school's current data-based practices and integrates the use of data systems to track service delivery and monitor student progress. In addition, the team helps foster information sharing networks between school staff, partner service providers, families, and the greater school community.

### ➤ RESPONSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In collaboration with school leadership, the Seneca team selects, designs, and presents professional development on a wide range of topics aimed at supporting the effective implementation of tiered interventions. Training may occur during planned professional development sessions or through ongoing consultation, coaching, mentoring, and reciprocal teaching opportunities.

For more information about Seneca Family of Agencies' Unconditional Education Partnership, please contact Robin Detterman at [robin\\_detterman@senecacenter.org](mailto:robin_detterman@senecacenter.org) or (510) 872-2046.

