

Hoopa Valley High School Student Listening Session Executive Summary

On March 24th and 25th, a series of student listening sessions were conducted at Hoopa Valley High School grades 9–12. These conversations were facilitated by staff from the Hoopa Tribal Education Department, alongside representatives from Hoopa Valley Tribal Council, Two Feathers, NCIDC, and trusted school-based support staff.

Students participated in small group discussions designed to create a safe and open environment where they could share their experiences honestly. Across all groups, students were candid, thoughtful, and solution-oriented. The purpose of these sessions was to better understand students' perspective about their experience at school and their transition into young adulthood and to gather direct input on how both the school district and the broader Tribal community can better support them.

Key Findings

Across all sessions, several clear themes emerged:

1. Safety is the Top Priority

Students identified school safety as their most urgent concern. They described frequent fights, bullying, and fear related to threats, including gun-related concerns. A major issue is not only the presence of these incidents, but a lack of trust that reporting them leads to action. Students perceive inconsistent enforcement of rules and limited adult intervention. They are calling for stronger supervision, clear and consistent consequences, anonymous reporting systems, and greater transparency in how incidents are handled.

2. Students Feel Unheard

A strong theme across all groups was that students do not feel taken seriously. Many shared that when they report concerns, “nothing happens.” This has led to frustration and disengagement. Students want adults—especially leadership—to listen, communicate openly, and demonstrate follow-through. They are not seeking control, but meaningful partnership and visible responsiveness.

3. Mental Health Needs Are Not Being Met

Students reported high levels of stress, anxiety, and trauma, paired with limited access to support. Counseling staff are seen as overextended, and barriers exist to accessing services like the

wellness center. Students emphasized the need for more counselors, easier access to support, and safe, judgment-free spaces with trusted adults who understand their experiences.

4. School Climate is Mixed

While students value friendships, supportive staff, and cultural connections, many described the overall environment as stressful and conflict-heavy. Concerns about respect, fairness, and favoritism were common. Students emphasized the importance of consistent expectations and stronger relationships built on mutual respect.

5. Staffing and Stability Matter

Recognizing high staff turnover and limited staffing levels negatively impact student experience. Students reported needing more teachers, counselors, and consistent leadership presence. Instability disrupts relationships, reduces trust, and affects both learning and safety.

6. Engagement and Learning Need Improvement

Students want more engaging, hands-on, and relevant learning experiences. There is strong demand for more life skills education (e.g., financial literacy, job readiness), career-focused programs, and more academic support.

7. Lack of Preparation for Life After High School

Many students do not feel ready for adulthood. They want more guidance on college, careers, and financial literacy. Students emphasized the importance of access to internships, job opportunities, and real-world learning experiences.

8. Limited Activities and Opportunities

Students expressed a need for more extracurricular options, clubs, and events beyond sports. They want opportunities to stay engaged, develop leadership skills, and feel connected to their school community.

9. Lack of Safe Spaces Outside of School

Students described a lack of safe, supervised places to gather outside of school—a “third space.” This contributes to boredom, disconnection, and sometimes negative behaviors. They want more community events and youth-centered spaces to connect and belong.

10. Facilities and Basic Needs Require Attention

Students raised concerns about bathroom conditions, access to hygiene products, drinking water, and food quality. These unmet basic needs directly impact comfort, dignity, and readiness to learn.

Overall Insight

Despite the challenges, students expressed hope. They value supportive relationships, opportunities to connect to culture, and spaces where they feel heard. Students want a school environment that is safe, supportive, engaging, and responsive.

Conclusion

This report highlights a critical opportunity for school and Tribal leadership to work collaboratively to improve student outcomes. Students are asking for consistent safety measures, stronger relationships, expanded opportunities, and meaningful inclusion in decision-making. Most importantly, they want adults to listen and take action.

By addressing these priorities, there is a strong foundation to create a more supportive, connected, and successful environment for all youth.

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