

# Hoopa Valley High School Student Listening Session Report



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## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Purpose	3
Themes	4
1. Safety, Violence Concerns, and Accountability	4
2. Not Feeling Heard or Taken Seriously	4
3. Mental Health, Emotional Support, and Counseling Gaps	6
4. School Climate, Relationships, and Belonging	7
5. Staffing, Stability, and Leadership	8
6. On Learning & Engagement	9
7. Students Do Not Feel Fully Prepared for Life After High School	10
8. Opportunities, Activities, and Student Life at School	11
9. Lack of Activities and Safe Spaces Outside of School	11
10. Facilities and Basic Needs	12
Hope and Opportunity	13
Conclusion	
Recommendations	14
Action Items	16
Addendum	19

## **Introduction**

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.

Discussion topics focused on:

- Daily school experiences and sense of belonging
- Safety, well-being, and support systems
- Academic engagement and future readiness
- Student voice and leadership
- The role of school, family, and community in supporting youth

## **Purpose**

This report is intended to support both school district leadership and Tribal leadership in better understanding and responding to the needs of local youth.

The listening sessions were designed not only to gather feedback, but also to provide students with a space where they could feel heard, respected, and valued. Students shared openly about their challenges, their hopes, and the supports they need to succeed in school and in life.

By elevating student voices, this report aims to:

- Inform decision-making across school and Tribal systems
- Strengthen collaboration between education and community leadership
- Identify areas where student safety, well-being, and success can be improved

This effort reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that youth feel supported, empowered, and connected within both the school environment and the community.

Students have made it clear that they want adults to listen, follow through, and work with them—not just collect their input.

Throughout all of the notes collected from the conversations there were many overlapping themes expressed by students. Below is a summary of the recurring topics and concerns.

## **Themes**

### **1. Safety, Violence Concerns, and Accountability**

Safety was the most urgent and consistent concern across all groups.

Students reported:

- Frequent fights and unsafe school climate
- Fear around gun threats and desire for stronger response systems
- Inconsistent consequences for harmful student behavior
- Concerns that serious threats are not always taken seriously when voiced by students
- Desire for stronger security presence on campus

Students also expressed concern that:

- Some behaviors go unchecked
- Rules are not applied consistently
- Adults sometimes do not intervene in conflicts

Student Solutions:

- Stronger safety monitoring and security presence
- Anonymous reporting systems (including for dangerous threats)
- Clear and consistent consequences
- Student involvement in shaping consequences and accountability systems
- Mediation/restorative practices to resolve conflict between students and/or adults

### **2. Not Feeling Heard or Taken Seriously**

Students consistently expressed that:

- Their concerns are often dismissed or minimized
- When they speak up, “nothing happens”
- Adults sometimes advise students to “just not talk to them” during conflict instead of intervening
- Communication from leadership is limited or unclear

Students also noted a strong desire for:

- Adults who listen and follow through
- More transparency about decisions
- Direct engagement from decision-makers (including leadership presence on campus)

Student Insight:

Students feel change often only happens after serious incidents, rather than through proactive listening.

On Safety & Accountability

- “Listen to us when we report harassment... do investigations, check the cameras.”
- “Some people get away with a lot of things because of who they are.”
- “Take threats seriously so we can focus on learning.”

On Being Heard

- “When students speak up, nothing happens.”
- “We want adults to actually listen and take action.”
- “We don’t know who makes decisions—they should come see what’s really happening.”

### **Safety as a Fundamental Concern**

The most urgent and emotional theme across all responses is safety. Students repeatedly describe experiences with bullying, harassment, threats, and physical altercations, and they express deep concern about the lack of consistent adult intervention.

A critical issue is not only that these incidents occur, but that students do not trust that reporting them will lead to action. Many believe that reports are ignored, minimized, or handled inconsistently. This perception creates a culture where students feel they must navigate challenges on their own, increasing anxiety and reducing their ability to focus on learning.

Students are clear about what would improve safety: more visible and engaged staff on campus, consistent enforcement of rules, and transparent follow-through on reported concerns.

### **Feeling Unheard and Disconnected from Decision-Making**

Students consistently express that their voices are not meaningfully included in decisions that affect their daily lives. While they appreciated the opportunity to share input in this process, many noted voicing their concerns in the past have not led to visible change.

They describe a disconnect between students and leadership, with decisions often perceived as being made without understanding the realities students face. This includes policies, disciplinary practices, and program offerings.

Students are not asking for control—they are asking for genuine partnership. They want adults to listen, communicate openly, and demonstrate that student input leads to action.

### **3. Mental Health, Emotional Support, and Counseling Gaps**

Students expressed significant concern about:

- Lack of access to counselors and overwhelmed counseling staff
- Limited availability of mental health support services
- High levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma exposure
- Feeling that wellness services are not always accessible when needed

They also emphasized:

- Need for safe spaces to talk
- Desire for adults who are emotionally supportive and consistent
- Importance of trauma-informed support

Student Solutions:

- More counselors and mental health staff
- Easier access to the wellness center
- Safe, judgment-free spaces for support are needed
- Adults trained to understand trauma and youth behavior

On Mental Health & Support

- “Not enough adults to assist with services.”
- “We need more counselors and people who understand our life struggles.”
- “Sometimes home life makes it hard to get things done.”
- “It’s not easy to get passes to the wellness center.”

Students describe a high level of stress influenced by academic pressure, peer dynamics, and challenges outside of school. While some support systems exist, such as counseling and the wellness center, students report that:

- Access is limited or inconsistent
- There are not enough staff to meet demand
- Barriers (such as needing referrals or permission) make support harder to access

Students want more approachable, available adults who take time to listen and understand their experiences. They also emphasize the importance of privacy, trust, and follow-through when they seek help. If they are denied a pass to the wellness center they don't feel encouraged to continue to seek the help they need.

#### **4. School Climate, Relationships, and Belonging**

Students described the school environment as:

- Stressful and sometimes “heavy” or emotionally draining
- A place with frequent drama and conflict
- Inconsistent in respect, fairness, and kindness

However, they also identified positives:

- Friends and peer relationships are a major reason for attendance
- Certain teachers and staff are highly valued and supportive
- Cultural connection and activities bring hope

Students emphasized:

- Desire for reciprocal respect between students and staff
- Concern about favoritism and inconsistent treatment
- Need for a more welcoming and friendly atmosphere

On School Climate

- “A good day is no fighting, good food, and friendly people.”
- “A bad day is stressful, drama, and too much work.”
- “We feel safe where staff actually listen to us.”

What Keeps Students Coming to School

- Friends and social connections
- Desire for education and graduation
- Family expectations
- Extracurricular interests (sports, activities)

What Gives Students Hope

- Being asked for their input
- Supportive staff members
- Cultural activities and community connection

- Future goals (college, careers, personal growth)

#### On Trust and Relationships

- “We trust adults who listen and follow up.”
- “Don’t call us out in front of others—we make mistakes.”
- “Respect is how you treat someone.”

Students emphasize that respect is demonstrated through how people treat one another, listen, and respond to concerns. They want a school culture where expectations are consistent and relationships are built on mutual respect.

#### **5. Staffing, Stability, and Leadership**

Students expressed strong concern about:

- High teacher turnover and lack of stability
- Overworked counselors and staff
- Lack of consistent leadership presence
- Many shared the desire for trusted past leadership figures to return or remain involved

Students also stated:

- Some staff are viewed as highly supportive and caring
- Others are seen as disengaged or inconsistent

#### The Impact of Staffing Shortages and Instability

A recurring theme is the impact of insufficient staffing and high turnover. Students report needing:

- More teachers to reduce classroom disruptions and improve instruction
- More counselors to support mental health and personal challenges
- More supervision to ensure safety on campus

They also highlight the importance of consistency in staffing and leadership. Frequent changes create instability, disrupt relationships, and make it harder for students to feel secure and supported. Instability reduces trust, disrupts learning, and ultimately weakens relationships.

Students notice when adults are stretched thin or concerned about their own job security, and they believe this affects how effectively staff can support them.

## **6. Engagement and Learning**

Students want more engaging, supportive, and clear instruction.

Concerns include:

- Teachers not explaining assignments clearly
- Excessive independent work without instruction
- Perceived lack of engagement from some staff
- Desire for more interactive teaching styles

Student Requests:

- Hands-on learning
- Classes for Life skills (financial literacy, housing, job skills)
- Better-funded career-focused classes (e.g., culinary, trades)
- More electives and academic variety
- Increased tutoring and academic support

On Learning & Engagement

- “We want more hands-on classes and real-life skills.”
- “Teach us things like budgeting, jobs, and how to be adults.”
- “When teachers take time to help, we actually learn.”

Barriers to Learning and Academic Success

Students identify several structural barriers that interfere with their ability to succeed:

- Falling behind after absences without a clear way to catch up
- Limited time to complete assignments during class
- Unclear instructions or inconsistent teaching methods

Students are asking for clear expectations and adequate support to keep up and succeed.

### **A Call for Relevant and Engaging Learning**

Additionally, students repeatedly express a desire for learning that feels meaningful. They want:

- Hands-on, project-based learning
- Life skills such as budgeting, cooking, and financial literacy
- Career exposure, including internships and trade opportunities

Courses that already incorporate these elements—such as cultural classes, music, and shop programs—are consistently identified as more engaging and impactful.

This reflects a broader need to align education with students’ futures, helping them see a clear connection between school and life beyond graduation.

## **7. Students Do Not Feel Fully Prepared for Life After High School**

### Concerns About Future Readiness

A significant number of students do not feel prepared for life after high school. They express uncertainty about:

- Career options and pathways
- College application processes and financial aid
- Basic life skills needed for independence

Students want more guidance, exposure, and practical preparation to help them transition successfully into adulthood.

Students expressed a need for:

- More career and technical education opportunities
- Financial literacy and life skills training
- Internship and job opportunities

“Teach us real-life skills like budgeting and how to apply for jobs.”

### **Career Readiness and Future Preparation**

Students consistently stated they want more preparation for life after high school, including:

- College tours and application support
- Internship and job opportunities for students
- Career exploration and exposure
- Financial literacy (loans, housing, budgeting)
- Work-based learning and real-world skills

Students want access to jobs and want to feel prepared for adulthood.

## **8. Opportunities, Activities, and Student Life at School**

Students strongly expressed a need for:

- Clubs (debate, speech, leadership, cultural clubs)
- More extracurricular activities and school events
- Better ASB engagement and student leadership opportunities
- Safe places to gather after school

Additional interests include:

- Sports expansion (soccer, swim team, more opportunities)
- Outdoor activities and field trips
- Cultural learning (traditional food processing, language)
- College tours and career exposure

Students highlighted:

- Limited extracurricular options (especially beyond sports)
- Boredom and lack of structured activities
- Need for a safe place to gather (on campus and in the community)

Students want more opportunities to connect, belong, and stay positively engaged.

Students are asking for safety, support, connection, and a voice in shaping their school experience. Providing structured activities and safe spaces can improve engagement, relationships, and overall school climate thereby reducing negative behaviors and disengagement at school.

## **9. Lack of Activities and Safe Spaces Outside of School**

Students consistently described a lack of opportunities to connect outside of class and connect to the broader community. They identified:

- Desire for more positive community gatherings and events
- Limited extracurricular activities (especially beyond sports)
- A need for safe, supervised spaces to gather and hangout

Lack of “Third Spaces”

Students consistently asked for a “third space” where they can hangout. A third space is an accessible place that is neither home (first space) nor school/work (second space), but an informal social environment where people can gather, connect, and belong.

## On Activities & Community Needs

- “There’s nothing to do here.”
- “We need a place to hang out—a safe space for teens.”
- “More clubs, more events, more things to do.”

## Limited Opportunities for Engagement and Belonging

Students describe a lack of activities and spaces that support positive engagement. Outside of sports, options are limited. Many students want to feel a sense of community belonging and be engaged through more community gatherings like Sovereign’s Day and the Block Party.

There is a missed opportunity for positive engagement and community building with the youth.

The absence of these opportunities contributes to boredom, disconnection, and, at times, negative behaviors. Students recognize that structured, positive outlets would improve individual well-being.

## 10. Facilities and Basic Needs

Students identified several facility and environmental concerns:

- Bathroom issues (supplies, privacy, cleanliness)
- Improved access to drinking fountains / hydration stations
- Need for accessible pads/tampons and hygiene products
- Desire for snacks and improved food quality
- Calls for campus beautification (art, flowers, student work displayed)

They also expressed:

- Desire for a more welcoming physical environment
- Increased student artwork and pride in campus space

Students raised concerns about:

- Bathroom conditions (privacy, supplies, vaping issues)
- Food quality
- Broken water fountains and inaccessible hydration stations
- Lack of basic supplies in bathrooms (paper towels, hygiene products)

Basic needs are not consistently met and negatively affect student comfort and readiness to learn.

Students consistently shared their frustrations with access to drinking water and issues relating to the bathrooms. While students are aware there are hygiene products available at the counseling office, they do not always feel comfortable accessing them. Students would prefer if products were readily accessible in the bathrooms.

Students, across all groups, expressed their concern with feeling uncomfortable using the bathrooms because of vape use and lack of privacy.

## **Hope and Opportunity**

Despite the challenges outlined, students express genuine hope. They point to:

- Supportive relationships with specific staff members
- Their cultural identity and desire for community
- Personal goals, including graduation and future careers
- Opportunities to be heard through this engagement process

These moments of hope demonstrate that positive change is both possible and within reach. The youth know what they need and have opened up to share it with us as the adults. They have hope that we will listen.

## **Conclusion**

This report reflects a clear opportunity for both school district and Tribal leadership to work collaboratively in building a school environment where youth feel safe, heard, supported, and prepared for their future. By prioritizing safety, strengthening relationships, increasing opportunities, and ensuring student voices are included in decision-making, there is a strong foundation for creating a more supportive and successful environment for all youth.

Across all groups, students delivered a consistent message:

They want a school that is:

- Safe and accountable
- Supportive and emotionally aware
- Engaging and relevant to real life
- Inclusive of student voice in decisions
- Stable in staffing and leadership
- Connected to culture, community, and opportunity

Students are asking for a more responsive and connected system where adults consistently listen, act, and engage with them as partners in their education.

## Recommendations

### Quick Improvements

- Paper towels and bathroom supplies
- Better communication of events (bulletin boards, announcements, social media)
- Tutoring and academic support
- Beautification and student artwork
- More respectful teacher-student interactions
- Increased transparency about school decisions

### Students On Immediate Fixes

- “Hire more teachers and staff.”
- “Provide bathroom supplies.”
- “Give us a place to catch up on work.”

### Long-Term Improvements

- Expand electives, clubs, and career programs
- Improve lunch quality and food variety
- Increase staffing and retain teachers
- Strengthen counseling and mental health systems
- Provide consistent safety and supervision
- Improve teacher training (including communication and sensitivity)
- Build a more stable and supportive school system
- Increase student voice in decision-making
- Strengthen relationships between students, staff, and leadership

### Students On Long-Term Change

- “Make school more compassionate to what we deal with at home.”
- “Create a better system that actually supports students.”
- “Stability—teachers staying matters.”

Students are not disengaged—they are asking clearly and consistently for support, safety, and meaningful connection. Their responses show:

- A strong desire to succeed
- Awareness of systemic issues
- Willingness to engage when heard

They are asking for:

- Adults who listen and take action
- Environments where they feel respected and protected
- Opportunities that make learning meaningful
- Connection to community

Addressing these areas presents a critical opportunity to rebuild trust, improve student outcomes, and create a more positive and effective school environment. The youth's insights are thoughtful, consistent, and solution-oriented. Addressing these concerns is not only critical for improving student experience—it is essential for fostering a school environment where all students can thrive.

The student feedback already answers what needs to happen. The real issue now is how adults will turn their feedback into visible, consistent, sustainable action.

“When students speak up, nothing happens.”

“We want adults to listen and actually take action.”

“We need more teachers and staff to keep us safe.”

“There's nothing to do—we need clubs and activities.”

“We feel safe where adults actually listen to us.”

## Action Items

The findings indicate a need for system-level response in the following areas:

### 1. Rebuild Trust Through Action

- Ensure transparency and follow-through on student-reported concerns
- Communicate clearly with students about actions taken

### 2. Invest in Staffing and Stability

- Prioritize recruitment and retention of teachers and support staff
- Ensure adequate supervision and student support services
- Identify critical staffing gaps
- Implement incentives or supports for retention
- Improve onboarding for new staff

### 3. Strengthen Student Support Systems

- Expand access to mental health services
- Reduce barriers to receiving help
- Increase the number of counselors and mental health professionals
- Integrate wellness supports into the school day
- Reduce barriers to accessing services

### 4. Increase Engagement and Relevance

- Align curriculum with real-world skills and career pathways
- Expand hands-on and experiential learning opportunities

### 5. Elevate Student Voice

- Create formal structures for ongoing student input
- Incorporate student feedback into decision-making processes
- Regular student listening sessions
- Create anonymous reporting/feedback system

### 6. Formalize Student Leadership Structures

- Sustainable support for the Hoopa Youth Council
- Include student representatives in decision-making processes
- Student presence at school board meetings

## 7. Establish Student Communication

- Weekly student-facing updates (announcements, actions taken)
- Improve communication channels beyond parents
- Establish communication system
- Student awareness of updates

## 7. Launch Pilot Clubs & Activities

- Start 3–5 student-requested clubs (e.g., cultural, debate, arts)
- Add structured lunch/after-school activities

## 13. Expand Academic & Career Pathways

- Introduce or increase:
  - Life skills modules (financial literacy, job readiness)
  - Career exposure opportunities (guest speakers, field trips)
- Expand counseling for college, financial aid, and career pathways
- Increase exposure to careers through field trips, guest speakers, and internships
- Build partnerships with local businesses and organizations

## 14. Improve School Climate & Culture

- Create school-wide expectations (respect, accountability)
- Recognize positive student and staff behavior
- Support ASB and student rallies

## 15. Facilities & Environment Improvements

- Support campus beautification (student-led projects)
- Ensure bathrooms are consistently stocked with essential supplies
- Repair or improve access to water and maintain facilities
- Provide access to snacks or food during the school day where possible

## 16. Provide Immediate Academic Support Structures

- Create a dedicated “catch-up” or tutoring space
  - Ensure learning centers are happening
- Offer structured time and support for missing assignments

## 17. Redesign Learning for Engagement and Relevance

- Expand hands-on, project-based learning opportunities
- Introduce life skills courses (financial literacy, career readiness, independent living)
- Increase access to career pathways, internships, and trade programs

#### 5. Develop Robust Extracurricular & “Third Space” Opportunities

- Establish a wide range of clubs (cultural, academic, creative, career-focused)
- Create safe, supervised spaces for students to gather outside of class
- Partner with community organizations to expand youth and community programming
- Fund the Youth Center staff and operational budget

## Addendum

In a similar style, students at HVHS Fish Fair answered the question, “What would you like to see more of in the community?” Their responses highlighted several key themes, including a desire for more kindness, increased community gatherings, and safe spaces for youth. Students also expressed interest in having more activities, events, and things to do, along with continued opportunities for cultural learning and more jobs for young people. Here are their responses:

Nice People who help others	Skate parks
More fish	Places to go
More Salmon	Physical activities
A track team for 7th and 8th grader	Nature walks
Places to shop	Arcades
Job opportunities for youth	Basket weaving classes
Theater club	Fish net making and demonstrating how to fish
Youth supports	Dirt bike tracks
Kindness	Advanced Placement Classes
No gun violence	Advanced math learning opportunities for middle school
More community events	Jobs at forestry for youth
Basket classes	Utilized buildings downtown
Clothing stores	Stores
More people are ceremony	Restaurants
Cultural events	Unity
Basket classes	Less drama and fighting
More sport opportunities	Community projects
Safe spaces to gather and hang out	Jobs for students
People coming together	Recreational events for youth
Events	Yard games
Salmon on sticks	Basketball
Sidewalks	Community gatherings like Sovereign’s day
not killing dogs	Athletic tournaments like softball and volleyball
Input and teamwork	Streetlights
Youth led activities	People helping others
People being kind	Card games and gambling
People not hurting each other	Places to hang out
Less violence	Positive relationships with the police
More events	
More things to do	
More parks and outdoor recreation space	

Smiles  
Youth Center  
Outdoor activities  
Flag football  
Better batting cages  
Nicer people  
Community service opportunities  
Clean up events  
Kinder environments  
Gatherings and events  
Activities  
Storytelling  
Food gatherings  
Gambling  
Community art  
Events  
Food events  
Community events and get togethers  
Tournaments at the NF  
Support for people who are grieving

Shop classes  
Computing and robotics classes  
A bigger casino  
More people to talk to  
More kindness  
Field trips  
College tours  
Drug and alcohol addition programs  
Resources for families  
Education trips like the Physics trip  
Sport opportunities  
Respect  
Counseling for students  
Places to hang out  
Places to hang out  
Places to hang out  
More things to do  
Places to hang out  
Outdoor community fitness