



## SDCOE K-12 Project Management Conference 2026



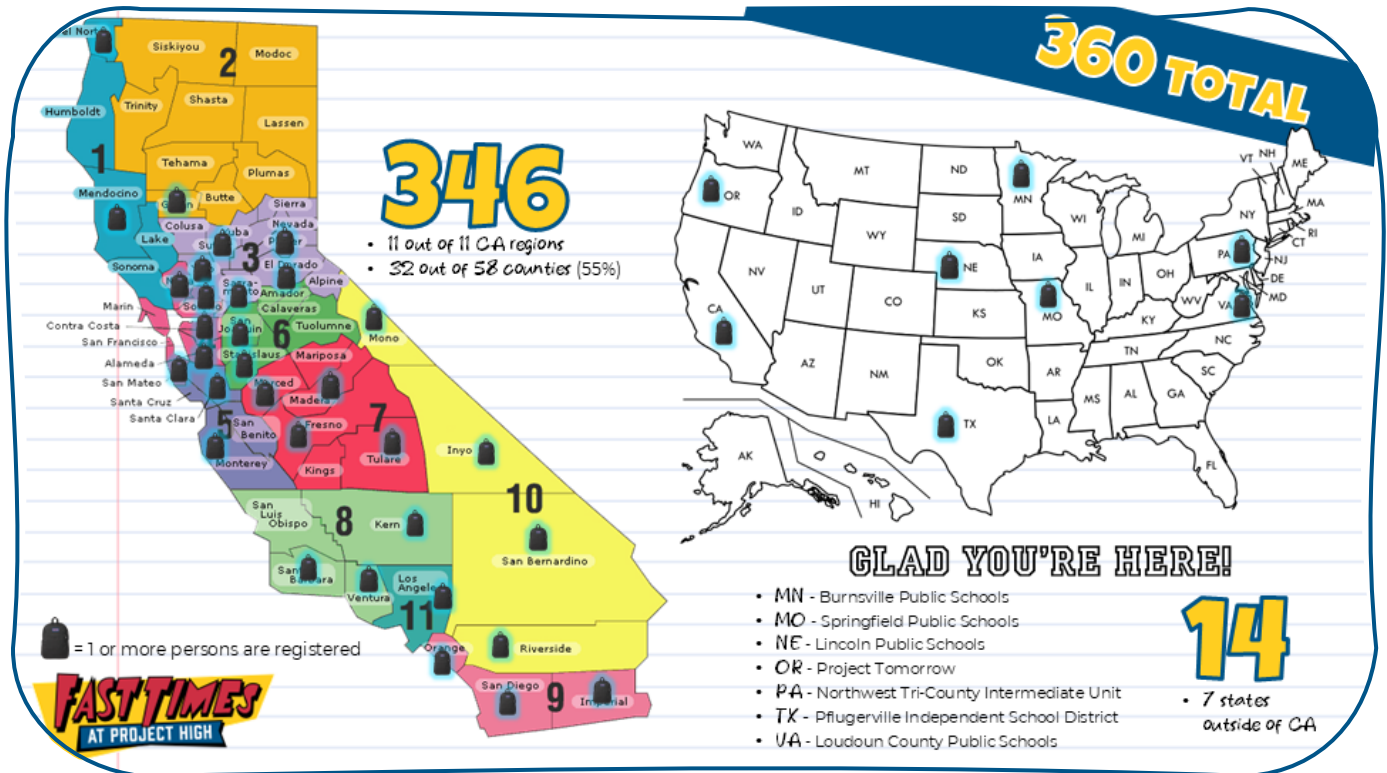
On Friday, June 26, 2026, the Enterprise Project Management Office (EPMO) at the San Diego County Office of Education hosted its 5th annual **K-12 Project Management Conference: *Fast Times at Project High***. This one-day virtual conference brought K-12 staff together to learn practical project management skills, hear real stories from colleagues, access tools and templates, and leave with ideas they could bring back to their own teams.

The conference used a high school theme to make the learning feel approachable, memorable, and fun. Participants selected their “classes,” started the day at a Morning Assembly, joined live Zoom sessions throughout the day, used a printed [Project Management Toolkit](#) (or accessed the digital version), participated in [Padlet activities](#) and lunch games, and ended with a closing Pep Rally.

*SDCOE’s goal?* **Help K-12 staff improve the way they plan, manage, communicate, and complete projects, with tools they can use right away.**

This report summarizes who attended, their feedback, lessons learned, and how to access the recorded conference.

# Our Audience: Who attended Project High?



- **360 registered from 100 K-12 districts, charter schools, and county offices of education** – see the list of participating organizations on the next page
- Most serve in I.T. / Technology, but participants also represented Educational Services, Human Resources, Finance/Business Services, Innovation, Data, Ed Tech, Student Services, Grants, Communications, Facilities, SELPA, school sites, and other roles.
- **67% new** to the conference (first timers) – One participant wrote: “As a beginner to the project management world, this conference was able to be informative and helpful while also being engaging and presenting a big topic in a unique way.”
- **33% returning** – A returning participant shared: “As always, a top-notch conference from start to finish. The sessions were well-organized and packed with practical content I could apply right away.”
- **11 out of 11 CA regions** represented (100%)
- **32 out of 58 CA counties** represented (55%)
- **7 states outside of California participated:** MN, MO, NE, OR, PA, TX, and VA

The virtual conference reinforced that project management is a shared skill set for anyone who helps plan projects, coordinate people, solve problems, manage timelines, communicate changes, and/or deliver results.

## List of participating organizations

 = Served as a Speaker or provided behind-the-scenes support

### Region 1

#### Del Norte

- Del Norte County Office of Education

#### Mendocino

- Mendocino County Office of Education

### Region 2

#### Glenn

- Sequoia Grove Charter Alliance - Lake View Charter School

### Region 3

#### El Dorado

- El Dorado County Office of Education 

#### Placer

- Placer County Office of Education
- Rocklin Unified School District

#### Sacramento

- California County Superintendents
- California IT in Education
- Elk Grove Unified School District
- FCMAT/CSIS
- Folsom Cordova Unified School District 
- Natomas Unified School District
- Sacramento City Unified School District

#### Sutter

- Yuba City Unified School District

#### Yolo

- Yolo County Office of Education

### Region 4

#### Alameda

- Alameda County Office of Education
- Berkeley Unified School District
- Castro Valley Unified School District 
- Hayward Unified School District

- Kidango Inc.
- New Haven Unified School District
- Oakland Unified School District 
- Pleasanton Unified School District

#### Contra Costa

- Contra Costa County Office of Education

#### Napa

- Napa County Office of Education

#### San Mateo

- San Mateo County Office of Education

#### Solano

- Vallejo City Unified School District

### Region 5

#### Monterey

- Carmel Unified School District 
- North Monterey County Unified School District

#### Santa Clara

- Cupertino Union School District
- East Side Union High School District
- Palo Alto Unified School District 
- San José Unified School District
- Santa Clara County Office of Education

### Region 6

#### San Joaquin

- Manteca Unified School District
- San Joaquin County Office of Education 

#### Stanislaus

- Ceres Unified School District 
- Stanislaus County Office of Education 
- Turlock Unified School District

### Region 7

#### Fresno

- Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
- Washington Unified School District

#### Madera

- Madera County Superintendent of Schools 

#### Merced

- Merced County Office of Education 

#### Tulare

- Tulare City Schools 

### Region 8

#### Kern

- California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance
- Kern County Superintendent of Schools 

#### Santa Barbara

- Goleta Union School District
- Santa Barbara County Education Office
- Santa Barbara Unified School District

#### Ventura

- Hueneme Elementary School District
- Oak Park Unified School District 
- Ventura County Office of Education

### Region 9

#### Imperial

- Heber Elementary School District
- Imperial County Office of Education 

#### Orange

- Irvine Unified School District
- Ocean View School District

- Orange County Department of Education
- Orange Unified School District
- Saddleback Valley Unified School District

### **San Diego**

- Carlsbad Unified School District
- Chula Vista Elementary School District
- Del Mar Union School District
- Elite Academic Academy
- Escondido Union High School District
- Escondido Union School District
- Grossmont Union High School District 🚚
- National School District 🚚
- Rancho Santa Fe School District
- Sage Oak Charter Schools
- San Diego County Office of Education 🚚
- San Diego Unified School District 🚚
- San Marcos Unified School District
- Santa Fe Christian Schools
- Santee School District 🚚
- Solana Beach School District 🚚
- South Bay Union School District 🚚
- Sweetwater Union High School District 🚚
- Valley Center-Pauma Unified School District 🚚
- Vista Unified School District

### **Region 10**

#### **Inyo**

- Elite Academic Academy
- Inyo County Office of Education 🚚

#### **Mono**

- Mono County Office of Education

#### **Riverside**

- City of Moreno Valley
- Elite Academic Academy
- Hemet Unified School District
- Jurupa Unified School District
- Riverside County Office of Education
- Sage Oak Charter Schools
- Val Verde Unified School District

#### **San Bernardino**

- Fontana Unified School District
- Moreno Valley City 🚚
- Sage Oak Charter Schools 🚚
- San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

### **Region 11**

#### **Los Angeles**

- Covina-Valley Unified School District
- Los Angeles County Office of Education
- Rosemead School District

- Temple City Unified School District
- William S. Hart Union High School District

### **National**

#### **Minnesota**

- Burnsville Public Schools

#### **Missouri**

- Springfield Public Schools 🚚

#### **Nebraska**

- Lincoln Public Schools

#### **Oregon**

- Project Tomorrow

#### **Pennsylvania**

- Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit (IU5)

#### **Texas**

- Pflugerville Independent School District

#### **Virginia**

- Loudoun County Public Schools 🚚

### **Vendor Sponsorship**

- CITE 🚚
- Info-Tech Research Group 🚚
- West Coast Services 🚚

## **Alignment with our organization's goals**

#### **BOARD GOAL 3**



**INNOVATION**

#### **BOARD GOAL 4**



**ORGANIZATIONAL  
EFFECTIVENESS**

#### **ITS GOAL 1**



**OPTIMIZE  
SUCCESS**

#### **ITS GOAL 2**



**STRENGTHEN  
HOW WE WORK**

# The Project High Experience

## Something for everyone

With 19 sessions offered organized around 4 tracks, there was something for everyone.

## VIRTUAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

|                                 | <b>A</b><br><b>CORE</b><br><b>CLASSES</b>                                                                         | <b>B</b><br><b>AP / HONORS</b><br><b>CLASSES</b>                                | <b>C</b><br><b>ELECTIVES</b>                                                    | <b>D</b><br><b>ASB</b><br><b>SHAREOUTS</b>                                                                             |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Homeroom</b><br><b>9:00</b>  | <b>Opening Session “Morning Assembly” [ALL]</b>                                                                   |                                                                                 |                                                                                 |                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Period 1</b><br><b>10:00</b> | <b>Start Here with Project Management CliffsNotes</b>                                                             | <b>Don’t Be Clueless! Gather Requirements Before You Start Executing</b>        | <b>Sharpies Before Spreadsheets: Sketching Projects Before the Charter</b>      | <b>From Reactive to Proactive: Building Scalable Project Systems in K-12 IT</b>                                        |
| <b>Period 2</b><br><b>11:00</b> | <b>From Freshman to Valedictorian: Advancing Teams and Practitioners with a Project Management Maturity Model</b> | <b>The Vibe Curator: The Honors Seminar on Meeting Facilitation</b>             | <b>The Human Side of AI in Projects</b>                                         | <b>“You Got It, Dude!”: How to Pitch, Partner, and Pilot Project Management in Your District</b>                       |
| <b>12:00</b>                    | <b>Lunch Hour / Game Time</b>                                                                                     |                                                                                 |                                                                                 |                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Period 3</b><br><b>1:00</b>  | <b>Turn Vision into a Plan with a Work Breakdown Structure</b>                                                    | <b>The Project Burn Book: Ending the Rumor Mill with Portfolio Transparency</b> | <b>The CALPADS School Bus: Using a Project Charter to Get Everyone on Board</b> | <b>The Ultimate Glow-Up: How Santee SD Went from Hot Mess to Project Mastery</b>                                       |
| <b>Period 4</b><br><b>2:00</b>  | <b>Fire Drill! Preventing Project Fires Roundtable Discussion</b>                                                 | <b>Project Intake, Workflows, and Multi-Departmental Coordination</b>           | <b>Our PMP Journey: From Frustration to Framework</b>                           | <b>The IT Varsity Playbook: How Madera COE Took Project Management Software from the Sidelines to the Championship</b> |
| <b>Period 5</b><br><b>3:00</b>  | <b>Closing Session “Pep Rally” [ALL]</b>                                                                          |                                                                                 |                                                                                 |                                                                                                                        |

Select one session each hour. All times are PST. “ASB” stands for Associated Student Body.

## More than “just another Zoom meeting”

Fast Times at Project High was intentionally designed to feel like more than a virtual meeting. The theme carried through the full experience: the opening session, session titles, visuals, mailed Conference Kit, Project Management Toolkit, lunch game, prizes, and closing Pep Rally.

Survey comments described the experience as **engaging, creative, organized**, and **memorable**:

- “The material and theme of the conference made this virtual experience exciting and engaging.”
- “From the conference kit to the last session, I was impressed by the planning, innovative theme, and the presentations were engaging and inspiring. It was like you guys cared, and we just felt the love.”
- “The integration of the theme was fun, without being distracting.”
- “The creativity of this conference was unmatched.”

The virtual format also worked because **the event was active**. Participants used Zoom, Padlet, chat, session materials, toolkit pages, music, games, and reflection prompts to stay connected throughout the day.

- “The virtual sessions didn’t feel virtual. It was all set up to be engaging, and I found myself really leaning in to make sure I didn’t miss anything.”
- “Keeping that many people engaged and participating for a full day online is genuinely hard, and the SDCOE PMO team nailed it.”



# Report Card: How did we do?

## What adjectives were used to describe the conference?

Attendees used 128 unique adjectives to describe the conference. The top descriptors were **informative** (used 55x), **fun** (44), **engaging** (35), **insightful** (13), **energetic** (12), **interactive** (10), **collaborative** (9), **exciting** (9), **valuable** (7), **organized** (7), and **well-organized** (6). The graphic below lists them all.



**Author's comment:** The SDCOE EPMO appreciated "fetch" and "legit" as adjectives provided!

### 3.9 out of 4 stars

Participants rated Fast Times at Project High very highly.

Out of 118 survey responses:

- 106 participants (90%) gave the conference 4 out of 4 stars
- 12 participants (10%) gave the conference 3 out of 4 stars
- The average rating was **3.9 out of 4 stars** ★★★★★

### What did participants gain?

The seven report card indicators listed in the illustration below show what the Conference team set out to achieve. The ranked list, based on survey feedback, shows that **participants left with new learning, real examples, tools, inspiration, and ideas to bring back to work.**



Some survey comments:

- "I left my sessions with something I could actually use, not just theory."
- "The toolkit binder is going to be so helpful!"
- "I enjoyed hearing directly from other actual K-12 community members about their PM growth and success."
- "I really like to hear real-world examples of project management in K-12."
- "I gained not only knowledge, but also energy and positivity. The conference vibe is just so incredibly uplifting."

# Voices across K-12



## 1 DATA, RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT

“ This conference had a variety of sessions that were very valuable. It was very well organized, informative, and electrifying. The best conferences leave us excited to share what we learned, and that defines this for me. ”



## 2 ED SERVICES / CURR & INST

“ It was a great experience. The presenters were very knowledgeable and approachable and created an engaging environment. The SDCOE team did a fantastic job in planning and facilitating the conference. ”



## 3 ED TECH

“ This was the best conference I've attended (even though I've only attended maybe 5 at this point in time). It was the most engaging, and fun to be a part of. I also learned a lot because all of the speakers were very knowledgeable and easy to understand. ”



## 4 GRANTS

“ Strong project management training with star presenters. ”



## 5 HR OR FINANCE/ BUSINESS SERVICES

“ I learned a lot in each session. I'm already using some of the tools, templates, and websites that were shared in my sessions. I have a TON of information I'm taking back to share with my team. ”



## 6 I.T. / TECH

“ This conference provides immense value for very little cost. My colleagues got top-tier training and a Conference Kit! SDCOE's printed project management toolkit is also a fantastic resource as well! ”



## 7 STUDENT SERVICES

“ Everything was organized, the materials that were sent were fun and engaging, the speakers were knowledgeable and encouraging. Overall this was one of the best conferences I've attended. ”



# Conference Crew

Fifty Conference Crew members played a major role in the success of the event. They included speakers, Zoom support, notetakers, session supporters, and promoters. Their work helped the day feel polished, supported, and welcoming.



In preparing for the conference, the SDCOE EPMO team modeled the same project management practices it teaches: planning, communication, coordination, teamwork, preparation, flexibility, and care.

- One speaker noted: “This was the most well thought out support system for any conference I have ever presented at.”
- Another shared: “The speaker support leading up to the conference was excellent.”
- A session supporter reflected: “I felt, even though I wasn’t presenting, that I was playing an important role in the message being delivered.”

# Sponsor Support



With the support of [CITE](#), [Info-Tech Research Group](#), and [West Coast Services](#), we were able to incorporate several prize opportunities to support engagement and foster a fun learning environment.

Attendees had several opportunities to win prizes before, during, and after the conference.

| Prizes given for:                                                         | Prizes provided by: | # of Winners |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Early Bird registration incentive, random drawing (cube timers)           | CITE                | 170          |
| Conference Kit Photo Submission, random drawing (e-gift cards)            | CITE                | 19           |
| Game Time - Project High Yearbook Photo Day Challenge (mailed gift cards) | Info-Tech Research  | 12           |
| Game Time - Kahoot Trivia Winner (mailed gift cards)                      | Info-Tech Research  | 8            |
| Matching Game, random drawing (e-gift cards)                              | West Coast Services | 25           |
| Closing Session Awards (e-gift cards)                                     | CITE                | 14           |
| Survey incentive, random drawing (e-gift cards)                           | CITE                | 15           |
|                                                                           |                     | <b>263</b>   |

Also, with CITE's support, 39 crew members were provided with an e-gift card for lunch.

## Where can we improve?

After the conference we conducted internal lessons learned meetings and incorporated survey feedback to identify ways to improve future conferences. All comments were acknowledged. Three themes emerged:

### 1. No hard cut-off time.

Due to the allocation of Zoom licenses, sessions ended at the 45-minute mark because of hard Zoom stop times. We will communicate with our AV team our need for additional Zoom licenses; or we will let Speakers know to begin closing at the 42-minute mark to avoid the hard cutoff that many experienced.

### 2. More hands-on practice.

Several participants wanted more opportunities to apply tools, work through examples, or practice project management skills during sessions.

### 3. Future in-person opportunities.

Several participants expressed interest in an in-person option for deeper networking and collaboration.

# Final Bell



SDCOE's 5<sup>th</sup> annual K-12 Project Management Conference delivered a practical, engaging, and memorable professional learning experience for the K-12 community. Participants learned new content, refreshed existing knowledge, heard real stories from peers, accessed tools and templates, felt inspired, and left with ideas they could bring back to their organizations. It also showed that virtual professional learning can be meaningful, energizing, and community-building when it is designed with purpose and care.

- To access the recorded sessions and slide decks, please go to <https://k12pmconference2026.sched.com> (use the password 'epmo')
- To view the Project High Bulletin Board (Padlet): <https://padlet.com/epmo/PassingNotes>
- For additional resources, please go to <https://epmo.sdcoe.net>