

From Science to Success

Chartwell's Mission to Reach Every Learner

By Elena Mueller | Photos Courtesy of Topher Mueller



One in five people has a learning difference. That's not a fringe issue—it shows up in nearly every classroom, family, and workplace.

Across Monterey County and beyond, many students are capable of far more than traditional instruction allows them to show. The difference often comes down to how they are taught to read.

"Too often, students are held back not by a lack of ability, but by the way reading is taught. Our goal with Chartwell Teaching Institute is to give teachers the tools to unlock every student's potential, so learning differences become strengths, not obstacles," says Jodi Amaditz, Interim Head of Chartwell School and Director of the Chartwell Teaching Institute (CTI).

The Gap That Holds Students Back

Through CTI, public school teachers are receiving training in structured literacy—a research-based approach that teaches reading in a clear, systematic, and explicit way.

While it has been shown to significantly improve outcomes, especially for students with dyslexia, it is still not a standard part of most teacher preparation programs.

"I was struck by how much I didn't know about reading, even though I've spent my entire career teaching kids to read," one educator shared following a training.

That gap matters more than most people realize. Students who are not proficient readers by third grade are significantly more likely to leave high school without a diploma. When reading instruction doesn't work early, students can fall behind year after year.

Structured Literacy: What Changes When Instruction Works

Structured literacy offers a practical, research-backed approach grounded in decades of cognitive science. It builds essential skills step by step—phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

And importantly, it works for all stu-

dents—not only those with identified learning differences—giving every learner a stronger foundation to build on.

In California, this approach is gaining momentum through Assembly Bill 1454 (AB 1454), signed in 2025. The law strengthens teacher training and aligns reading instruction with evidence-based science-of-reading practices, moving schools more broadly toward structured literacy.

From Campus to Community

Chartwell Teaching Institute is an extension of Chartwell School, an independent school in Seaside, California serving students with dyslexia and learning differences in Grades 1–12 on a 60-acre campus. Chartwell has long been guided by a mission to unlock the potential of every student by supporting the whole child—academically, socially, and emotionally. CTI carries that mission into public schools and broader education systems.

Today, CTI partners with schools and organizations across 20 counties, reaching 219 schools, supporting more than 1,700 teachers, and impacting over 42,000 students.

"Chartwell students are always at the heart of what we do. Every success here inspires us to support teachers and students beyond our campus," says Amaditz. "Seeing this work make a difference across Monterey County and California reinforces our belief that literacy is a human right—and that every student deserves access to it."

Scaling Success in Public Schools

Monterey Peninsula Unified School District's recent gains in literacy rates show how quickly focused support can make a difference. As an early partner in this work, CTI helped lay the foundation by training all TK–3 teachers in structured literacy—ensuring students build strong skills from the very



beginning. Alongside the district’s focus on foundational literacy, investment in teacher training, and implementation of structured practices, these efforts have led to measurable improvements in reading outcomes and stronger classroom instruction. In the most recent state assessments, MPUSD reported the percentage of students meeting or exceeding English Language Arts standards increased from 38.89 percent to 41.57 percent, with fewer students falling into the lowest performance band—an early indicator of meaningful progress.

Reflecting on this shift, Superintendent PK Diffenbaugh shared: “Chartwell has helped us by expanding our knowledge and improving our practice, and by showing us that there is a systematic approach to teaching literacy—and once we know that, we as educators have a responsibility to give our students the very best.”

Opening Doors for Students

CTI also partners with Rancho Cielo in Salinas, which serves high-need youth by combining education with life and career training. Many students enter Rancho Cielo reading several years below grade level, often because they didn’t get the support they needed early on. Over the past two years, CTI trainers have worked directly with students while coaching teachers in real time, building lasting instructional capacity. Even in short intervention blocks, students have shown meaningful gains in reading, demonstrating how quickly progress can happen with the right support.

“CTI’s work with our students has led to remarkable progress in reading skills,” says Chris Devers, CEO of Rancho Cielo. “By

teaching students directly and training our teachers alongside them, our faculty are now empowered to sustain this instruction. This work complements what we’re already doing to build confidence, life skills, and career readiness—ensuring our students are prepared for meaningful pathways into the workforce.”

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Catching Challenges Early

Recent California legislation is bringing renewed attention to early identification of reading challenges. With updated screening requirements for all students in grades K-2 and AB 1454, schools are better positioned to identify students who need support.

But screening alone is not enough. Teachers need the training to interpret results and respond with effective instruction.

Through partnerships like the University of California San Francisco Dyslexia Center’s Multitudes Project—a statewide effort to improve early literacy screening—CTI helps schools understand screening results and apply them in the classroom, so students get the support they need right away.

Changing Trajectories, Unlocking Potential

As more schools adopt these practices, and the results are becoming clear: stronger literacy, greater confidence, and more students fully engaged in learning.

Many students with dyslexia have strengths in problem-solving, creativity, and visual thinking that are often overlooked in traditional classrooms. When instruction aligns with students’ strengths, those abilities can come forward in meaningful ways.

“When we equip teachers to support how students actually learn, we do more than improve reading,” Amaditz reflects. “We affirm a simple truth: learning differently is not a disadvantage—it’s a strength.”

Access CTI Training for Your School:

Chartwell Teaching Institute is committed to making structured literacy training accessible to all educators. Through its Structured Literacy Access Fund, more than \$100,000 is available to support professional development for teachers and administrators.

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