R.J. *Mabanta*

Chief Operating Officer · Regional Principal · Strategy, Design & Innovation

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MFA **MAEd** **CSM** **CSPO**

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Founding school and program leader with 15+ years building student-centered learning environments, data-driven instructional systems, and the staff cultures that sustain them. Currently Chief Operating Officer of DÕA Academy of the Arts and Regional Principal at Heritage Peak Charter School, leading operations, branding, and regional supervision across homeschool, independent study, and arts-integrated models. Proven record, with the teams I lead, of dramatic improvements in student outcomes, staff retention, and school culture across charter and district contexts. Experienced with WASC accreditation, charter governance and renewal, CTE pathway design, and leading organizations through turnaround. Doctoral student in Leadership & Innovation at University of the Pacific.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Chief Operating Officer · *Sep 2026 – Present*

DÕA Academy of the Arts · Sacramento, CA

- Lead operations, governance, and organizational systems for an arts-integrated school, aligning finance, staffing, and facilities to one instructional vision alongside the founding team.
- Co-developing the Artist-Storyteller Framework™ and Craft Mentorship Framework™ and embedding them in the school's design, hiring, and professional learning.
- Build the school's brand, partnerships, and community-facing systems in collaboration with artists, educators, and families.

Regional Principal · *Jul 2026 – Present*

Heritage Peak Charter School · Solano County Region · Vacaville, CA

- Supervise the Solano County region and its Vacaville Learning Center, serving homeschool and independent study families.
- Directed the school's rebrand and led the Made to Soar 2028 campaign supporting charter renewal with the authorizer.
- With my team, overhauled dated systems and implemented a new dashboard, data visualization, and AI strategy for tracking and decisions.

High School Associate Principal · *Jun 2022 – Jun 2026*

San Diego Unified School District · San Diego, CA

- Led, with the site team, a full turnaround producing a 65% reduction in suspensions within one year; rebuilt operating model, behavior systems, and school culture through restorative practices and a structured coaching cadence, supporting LMEC's exit from Continuous School Improvement (CSI) designation.
- Designed and launched four community-authored CTE pipelines — Public Health, Patient Care, Engineering-Design, and Animal & Veterinary Science — with UCSD, SDCCD, and Vertex Pharmaceuticals; 98% of students on track as pathway beginners with scalable dual-enrollment infrastructure in place.
- Led WASC accreditation from inception, coordinating governance structures, cross-functional evidence workstreams, and multi-team documentation to achieve initial 6-year accreditation cycle.
- Coached and evaluated teachers and instructional leaders — including intensive, resistant, and struggling practitioners — using Elena Aguilar's *Transformational Coaching* & *Art of Coaching Teams* and Brené Brown's *Dare to Lead* frameworks (Bright Morning LLC trained).

- Designed Phase 1 of a district-wide paraprofessional workforce revamp on special assignment; advised district senior leaders on policy, equity strategy, and multi-site governance.

Site Leader & School Designer · *May 2019 – Jun 2022*

Pacific Charter Institute (PCI) · Multiple Sites · Sacramento & Yolo Counties, CA

- Founded and designed New Pacific Charters (Rancho Cordova) and New Pacific School (Roseville) simultaneously, securing governing board approval, navigating divergent community contexts, and sustaining multi-year partnership investment.
- Drove site's College & Career Indicator from 21% to 93% over three years through systemic instructional redesign and data-driven strategy; built and presented the multi-year impact narrative that sustained and expanded governing board investment.
- Built organizational learning infrastructure from the ground up: onboarding academies, competency frameworks, coaching structures, and adult learning systems that developed team leads into independent instructional leaders, increasing staff retention from 37% to 88%.
- Co-led charter renewal and WASC accreditation simultaneously, coordinating cross-department workstreams and presenting evidence of impact to governing boards across state and federal compliance frameworks.
- Managed daily site operations across finance, HR, academics, and communications with full accountability for student caseloads, staff evaluations, family communication, and compliance reporting.

Mentor Teacher & CTE Lead · *Aug 2015 – May 2019*

Rio Valley Charter School (Pacific Charter Institute) · Lodi, CA

- Secured $350K state grant to design and launch a statewide model CTE program; built implementation systems, performance metrics, and advisory structures for replication across multiple sites.
- Designed curriculum adopted statewide through UC Curriculum Integration (UCCI); served as primary relationship manager across a multi-organization stakeholder network with reporting accountability to state funders.
- Coached and developed emerging teacher-leaders in instructional design and facilitation practice; built adult learning culture supporting program replication and sustainability.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

EdD, Leadership & Innovation · In Progress
University of the Pacific, Benerd College

MAEd, Advanced Studies: School Administration
California State University, Stanislaus
With Distinction (4.0) · Phi Kappa Phi

MFA, Theatre, Acting
University of Delaware
Polly Russell Dowling Fellow

BA, Theatre · BA, Media Industries
University of California, San Diego
Provost's Honors · ArtsBridge America Scholar · E.C. Mort Award for Excellence in Leadership · Stewart Prize in Theatre

RECOGNITION & SERVICE

National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Awards — Program Finalist · *Obama's Committee on the Arts & Humanities*
21CSLA Advisory Board · Gintong Lahi Lifetime Award

CERTIFICATIONS & CREDENTIALS

CA Administrative Services Credential (Clear)
CA Single Subject: English (Clear)
CA Designated Subjects: Arts, Media & Ent. (Clear)
CSM · Certified Scrum Master — Scrum Alliance
CSPO · Certified Scrum Product Owner — Scrum Alliance

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Art of Coaching Teams · Bright Morning, LLC
Dare to Lead · Brené Brown / Brave Leaders Inc.
Leading for Equity · National Equity Project
Restorative Practices & Conferencing · IIRP · Liberatory
Liberatory Leadership Design · LA Education Partnership /21CSLA