

# R.J. Mabanta

Senior Leader · Strategy, Design & Transformation

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MFA

MAEd

CSM

CSPO

CCMP-I

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Founding leader and ecosystem architect with 15+ years building equitable organizations, career-connected learning systems, and the adult cultures that sustain them across charter, district, and entrepreneurial contexts. Trained actor and director with an MFA from the University of Delaware; began career in professional theatre before transitioning into education leadership. Founder of Searchlight Studio, a narrative strategy consultancy operating at the foundation layer beneath branding, organizational strategy, and culture work. Trained in *Art of Coaching Teams* (Elena Aguilar / Bright Morning), *Dare to Lead* (Brené Brown). CCMP-I and CPCC-I in progress.

## SELECTED IMPACT

21%↓93%

**College & Career Indicator**

Multi-year systems transformation

37%↓88%

**Staff Retention**

Coaching + adult learning systems

65%

**Suspension Reduction**

Restorative systems; CSI exit

98%

**Pathway Beginners**

4 CTE pipelines; dual enrollment

\$7M+

**Competitive Grants**

Designed and awarded; replicated statewide

6-Year

**WASC Accreditation**

Initial cycle, multiple sites

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Founding Associate Principal

San Diego Unified School District, San Diego, CA

Jun 2022 – Present

- ▶ Designed four community-authored CTE pipelines (Patient Care, Public Health, Engineering-Design, Animal & Veterinary Science) with UCSD, SDCCD, and Vertex Pharmaceuticals; CCAP dual-enrollment drove 98% of students on track as pathway beginners.
- ▶ Led full site turnaround: 65% suspension reduction in one year; exited CSI designation; achieved 6-year WASC accreditation.
- ▶ On special assignment designing Phase 1 of a district-wide paraprofessional workforce revamp; strategic advisor to senior district leaders on policy, equity, and governance.
- ▶ Coaches teachers and instructional leaders using Transformational Coaching (Elena Aguilar) and Dare to Lead (Brené Brown) frameworks.

### Founder & CEO · Narrative Strategist

Searchlight Studio, LLC · San Diego, CA · searchlight.studio

Est. 2025

- ▶ Narrative strategy consultancy operating at the foundational layer beneath branding, organizational strategy, and culture initiatives. Proprietary methodology: the Searchlight Method™ — a three-phase framework (Illuminate, Align, Activate) moving from diagnostic narrative read through conditions-building into engagement and structured follow-through. IP protection in progress through the University of San Diego School of Law IP Legal Clinic.

### Service Architecture

- **The Narrative Assessment** — entry-level diagnostic read of the story currently being told: what is working, what is incoherent, what is missing, and what is at stake.
- **The Origin Session** — deep founder engagement beneath pitch language to the core narrative. Deliverable: Narrative Identity Brief.
- **The Narrative Readiness Intensive** — leader-side engagement combining narrative identity work with coaching and preparation for organizational challenges ahead.

- **The Readiness Engagement** — full three-phase organizational methodology for institutions ready to do the foundational work.
- **Studio Services** — brand narrative positioning, web narrative builds, content strategy, and channel development; a la carte offerings of Searchlight Studio's greater, comprehensive engagements.
- **Page 13** — Narrative justice applied to college admissions. Helps BIPOC, LGBTQ+, first-generation, undocumented, neurodiverse, and diaspora students find, shape, and trust the story that is theirs to tell: across college essays, conservatory applications, NCAA recruiting narratives, service academy referrals, and creative portfolios. In development; Berkeley credential pursuit underway..
- **B2B Referral Channel** — specialist resource for branding agencies, PR firms, and strategy consultancies encountering the narrative layer they cannot resolve internally. White-label and co-facilitation available.

### Current Engagements

- **DOA Academy of the Arts, Sacramento** — Executive Board Member; Learning, Narrative, and Operations Consultant. Largest institutional engagement; building learning and youth development frameworks that allow world-class arts training to be transformational for every student.
- **Gravy's Kitchen / Kyoto Japanese Market, National City** — full brand strategy and narrative positioning for a community-based Japanese grocery developing a refrigerated dog meal product, from concept through retail-ready identity.

### Founding Principal & Site Leader

Pacific Charter Institute · Sacramento & Yolo Counties, CA

May 2019 – Jun 2022

- ▶ Founded New Pacific Charter (Rancho Cordova) and New Pacific School (Roseville) simultaneously; drove CCI from 21% to 93%; built CTE and CCAP pathways with Kaiser Permanente, Shriners Hospital, and community college partners.
- ▶ Built organizational learning infrastructure from the ground up; increased staff retention from 37% to 88%; co-led charter renewal and WASC accreditation simultaneously.

### Mentor Teacher & CTE Lead Teacher

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

Aug 2015 – May 2019

- ▶ Secured \$350K state grant; designed Arts, Media & Entertainment CTE program adopted as statewide model; authored UCCI curriculum replicated across California.
- ▶ Program recognized as Finalist, National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Awards (President Obama's Committee on the Arts & Humanities).

### Adjunct Assistant Professor, Theatre

Folsom Lake College · Los Rios Community College District · Sacramento, CA

Aug 2015 – May 2019

- ▶ TA 340: Beginning Acting; TA 300: Introduction to Theatre (Hybrid). Concurrent with Rio Valley role.

### Education Program Manager

Sacramento Theatre Company · Sacramento, CA

Oct 2013 – Oct 2015

- ▶ Managed arts education programming across eight K-12 partnership sites; restructured the Conservatory's College Readiness program. Directed productions and master classes in acting, voice, speech, and classical text.
- ▶ Finalist, National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Award (President's Committee on the Arts & Humanities, 2016).

### Adjunct Faculty Intern, Theatre

American River College · Los Rios Community College District · Sacramento, CA

Aug 2012 – Jun 2013

- ▶ TA 350: Theory & Techniques of Acting I; TA 375: Voice, Diction & Dialects.

### Common Core Strategy Specialist

THINK Together · Capital & Bay Area Regions, CA

Apr 2013 – Oct 2013

- ▶ Developed Common Core implementation strategy for the Capital Region; partnered with district and county offices to align curriculum shifts; formulated quality assurance rubrics for professional development.

### Program Manager & Site Coordinator

THINK Together · Sacramento, CA

May 2011 – Apr 2013

- ▶ Launched five K-12 expanded learning programs across three school districts; managed staffing, coaching, student data systems, budget, and compliance (ASES, 21st CCLC, CACFP).

### Teaching Artist-in-Residence

Visual & Performing Arts Institute · Cosumnes Oaks HS, EGUSD, CA

Aug 2008 – Aug 2009; Jan 2011 – Mar 2011

- ▶ Coached and directed award-winning student performances; led district-wide workshops in acting and audition technique; helped shape departmental curriculum and instituted the voice and speech program component.

## Assistant Course Principal

Oxford in Boston · Harvard & MIT Program · Boston, MA

Summer 2019

## Master Instructor

ChungDahm Institute · Mok-dong & Pyeongcheon Branches, Seoul, South Korea

Sep 2009 – Mar 2011

- Highest-rated instructor of the branch; selected as teaching model for company-wide training. Advised students for admission to international schools and universities; redesigned and piloted Master Literature, Humanities, and Rhetoric courses. Directed Shakespeare, Greek, and American plays.

## Resident Advisor

Revelle College Housing & Dining · University of California, San Diego

Sep 2001 – Jun 2003

- Supervised 140+ college freshmen; provided counseling, crisis management, mediation, and referrals. Received OTM Award (NACURH-PACURH) for campus-wide 9/11 fundraiser programming.

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## CREATIVE & ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURES

### Bridgewalkers · Relearning Beloved

YA graphic novel · Anchor IP · In development

*Intergenerational narrative at the intersection of Filipino/Ilocano identity, belonging, and cultural memory. Central inquiry: what is carried forward, what is left behind, and who decides. Explores global and historical pre-colonized societies and centers young leaders who were once celebrated for their otherness and are now finding their back to the center in this new world.*

### AccidentalAdmin

TikTok-first educational thought leadership platform · Launching Summer 2026 · @AccidentalAdmin

*BIPOC, queer, decolonized, neurodivergent school leader voicing the tensions between institutional expectation and human truth in K-12 education. Content spans classroom culture, implicit bias, leadership identity, and the emotional labor of serving students inside systems not designed to support the adults who serve them. Ecosystem architecture: TikTok as discovery layer, Instagram Reels as professional reach extension, YouTube as long-form archive, podcast as depth destination, with books and keynote speaking as durable IP. Operates as the public-facing media layer of a larger formation — feeding Searchlight Studio's visibility, EdRebel's community, and serving as pre-launch infrastructure for Bridgewalkers: Relearning Beloved. The doctoral arc threads through all of it.*

### EdRebel HQ™

Educator merch brand and movement · edrebel.etsy.com · edrebelhq.com · edrebelhq.com

*Built on a single animating word: permission. Designed for the educator who no longer needs institutional approval to live their full professional identity. Long-term content and community play; recurring "permission" construct connects to a developing TED Talk concept.*

### Megan Nacho™

Consumer lifestyle brand · Launching under EdRebel umbrella @megan.nacho

*Lisa Frank for brown girls and QPOCs in 2026. Maximalist, queer, brown, joyful aesthetic. Targets the kids EdRebel™'s educators once were. Shares the permission-to-exist ethos with a distinct aesthetic universe and audience.*

### Grumble Lo-Fi™

Lo-fi YouTube music channel · [youtube.com/@GrumbleLo-Fi](https://youtube.com/@GrumbleLo-Fi) · grumblelofi.com @grumblelofi

*Featuring rescue pugs Roly and Mabel. Core creative insight: stillness as differentiator in a saturated, high-energy niche. Production pipeline: Midjourney → Pika Labs → Suno → DaVinci Resolve.*

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## EARLIER PROFESSIONAL & TEACHING ARTIST EXPERIENCE

### Actor / Assistant Stage Manager

Pushcart Players · Northeastern Musical Tour, NJ/NYC

Jan 2008 – Jul 2008

*Performed in Dear America; loaded and rigged electric, scenic, and audio elements.*

### Actor

Contemporary American Theatre Festival · Shepherdstown, WV

Summer 2006

*World premiere of Happyslap; understudied Mr. Marmalade, Sex Death and the Beach Baby, and Jazzland.*

### Substitute Teacher

Cecil County Public Schools · Cecil County, MD

2006 – 2007

### Actor / Instructor / Director

Montana Shakespeare Company · Helena, MT

Summer 2005

*Led roles in King Lear and The Comedy of Errors; taught Shakespeare's Clowns and Fools; directed student production.*

## Actor / Director

Grandstreet Theater School · Helena, MT

Summer 2005

Designed seminars for college-bound students; developed studio courses in acting, improvisation, movement, voice, and text; conceived and directed ensemble showcase.

## Teaching Artist

La Jolla Playhouse · Education Department, La Jolla, CA

Summer 2004

Taught playwriting and solo performance in the Young Performer's Workshop (grades 2–9) at a Tony Award-winning LORT theatre.

## Actor

Shakespeare Santa Cruz · Santa Cruz, CA

Summer 2003

Performed in *The Comedy of Errors*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Trained in Linklater voice and Stella Adler / Morris Carnovsky-based acting.

## Actor / Facilitator

UCSD Intergroup Relations · La Jolla, CA

Jan 2001 – Jun 2003

Ensemble tour exploring diversity, race, religion, gender, and disabilities; facilitated post-show dialogue.

## Intern in Building Community

Columbia University · Office of Continuing Education, New York, NY

Summer 2002

Supervised gifted youth in a residential setting; trained in conflict management, counseling, and youth development.

## ArtsBridge Instructor

ArtsBridge America / Albert Einstein Academy · La Jolla, CA

Sep 2003 – Jan 2004

Integrated acting, public speaking, and reader's theatre with English Language Arts instruction for 3rd/4th grade.

## Undergraduate Theatre Representative

UCSD Department of Theatre & Dance · La Jolla, CA

Jun 2003 – Jun 2004

Bridged communication between students, staff, and faculty; organized departmental events and conferences.

## Humanities Tutor

Revelle College · University of California, San Diego

Sep 2003 – Jan 2004

Selected by interdisciplinary faculty in Philosophy, History, and Literature to hold writing and proofreading workshops.

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## ARTISTIC CREDITS (SELECTED)

### Direction & Production

2015	Director	Imaginary Invalid — Molière	Sacramento Theatre Company, CA
	Producer	Superheroes — Ian McWethy	STC School of the Arts, CA
	Producer	Much Ado About Nothing — Shakespeare	STC School of the Arts, CA
	Director	The Brothers Grim Spectaculation — Dan Zolidis	STC School of the Arts, CA
2014	Co-Director	The Servant of Two Masters — Goldoni	Cosumnes Oaks Performing Arts, CA
	Director	The Taming of the Shrew — Shakespeare	Sacramento Theatre Company, CA
	Voice & Text	The Tempest — Shakespeare	Sacramento Theatre Company, CA
	Director	Charlotte's Web — E.B. White / Robinette	STC School of the Arts, CA
	Director	The Comedy of Errors — Shakespeare	STC School of the Arts, CA
2013	Director	A Christmas Carol — Dickens	STC School of the Arts, CA
	Dialect Coach	A Flea in Her Rear — Feydeau / Shapiro	Cosumnes Oaks Performing Arts, CA
2011	Dialect Coach	Guys and Dolls — Loesser, Swerling & Burrows	Cosumnes Oaks Performing Arts, CA
	Voice & Text	Romeo and Juliet — Shakespeare	Cosumnes Oaks Performing Arts, CA
2010	Director	Oedipus Rex — Sophocles	ChungDahm Institute, Seoul
	Director	Our Town — Thornton Wilder	ChungDahm Institute, Seoul
2009	Director	A Midsummer Night's Dream — Shakespeare	ChungDahm Institute, Seoul
2008	Director	Play On! — Rick Abbots	Cosumnes Oaks Performing Arts, CA

## Performance

2016	Actor	Macbeth Project	Shakespeare's Globe, London, UK
2008	Actor	Dear America (TYA Tour) — as Nils & Others	Pushcart Players, NJ/NYC
2007	Actor	PTTP MFA III Showcase (dir. Sanford Robbins)	Signature Theatre, NYC
	Actor	The Taming of the Shrew — as Grumio (dir. Drew Barr)	University of Delaware, PTTP
	Actor	Christians, Savages & Other Homo Sapiens (dir. Adrian Hall)	University of Delaware, PTTP
	Actor	Life of Galileo — as Little Monk (dir. Heinz Uwe Haus)	University of Delaware, PTTP
	Actor	A Streetcar Named Desire — as Pablo (dir. Edward Stern)	University of Delaware, PTTP
2006	Actor	Mary Stuart — as Amyas Paulet (dir. Joseph Hanreddy)	University of Delaware, PTTP
	Actor	Peter Pan — as Tootles (dir. Mark Lamos)	University of Delaware, PTTP
	Actor	Happyslap — as Remy (dir. Melissa Crespo) WORLD PREMIERE	Contemporary American Theater Festival, WV
	Actor	Mr. Marmalade — as Larry (u/s, dir. Ed Herendeen)	Contemporary American Theater Festival, WV
	Actor	Arms and the Man — as Nicola (dir. Steve Tague)	University of Delaware, PTTP
2005	Actor	King Lear — as Fool (dir. Kim DeLong)	Montana Shakespeare Company, MT
	Actor	The Comedy of Errors — as Both Dromios (dir. Kim DeLong)	Montana Shakespeare Company, MT
	Actor	Much Ado About Nothing — as Dogberry (dir. Sanford Robbins)	University of Delaware, PTTP
2004	Actor	The Three Sisters — as Fyodor Kulygin (dir. Jewel Walker)	University of Delaware, PTTP
	Actor	I Ain't Yo Uncle — as Singer (dir. Bill Fennely)	UCSD / La Jolla Playhouse, CA
2003	Actor	Hamlet — as Guildenstern (dir. Risa Brainin)	Shakespeare Santa Cruz, CA
	Actor	The Comedy of Errors — as Jailer/Executioner (dir. Bill Partlan)	Shakespeare Santa Cruz, CA
	Actor	Romeo and Juliet — as Capulet (dir. Bonnie Mill)	Shakespeare Santa Cruz Fringe, CA
	Actor	Tape — as Jon Saltzman (dir. Sierra Fiske / Les Waters)	UCSD Cabaret Theatre, CA
2002	Actor	Stage Door — as Frank (dir. Todd Salovey)	UCSD / La Jolla Playhouse, CA
2001	Actor	A Midsummer Night's Dream — as Snug (dir. James Winker)	UCSD / La Jolla Playhouse, CA

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## EDUCATION

### Degrees

Master of Arts in Education, School Administration · California State University, Stanislaus

*With Distinction (4.0) · Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society*

Master of Fine Arts, Theatre, Acting · University of Delaware

*Polly Russell Dowling Fellow*

Bachelor of Arts, Theatre · Bachelor of Arts, Communications · University of California, San Diego

*Provost's Honors · ArtsBridge America Scholar · E.C. Mort Award for Excellence in Leadership · Stewart Prize for Theatre*

### Certificates & Training

Certificate in Building Community · Columbia University, Office of Continuing Education

Faculty Diversity Development Program · Los Rios Community College District

Youth Development Education Series · California School-Age Consortium (CalSAC)

Strengths Based Leadership · Gallup / Clifton Youth Development Network

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## CERTIFICATIONS & CREDENTIALS

### California Teaching & Administrative Credentials

Administrative Services Credential (Clear)

Single Subject Teaching Credential: English (Clear)

Designated Subjects Teaching Credential: Arts, Media & Entertainment (Clear)

### Professional Certifications

CSM · Certified Scrum Master · Scrum Alliance

CSPO · Certified Scrum Product Owner · Scrum Alliance

CCMP-I · Certified Change Management Professional (*In Progress*) · ACMP

CPCC-I · Co-Active Professional Coach (*In Progress*) · Co-Active Training Institute

### **Professional Development**

Art of Coaching Teams · Bright Morning, LLC · Elena Aguilar

Dare to Lead · Brené Brown / Brave Leaders Inc.

Leading for Equity · National Equity Project

Restorative Practices & Conferencing · International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP)

Adult & Youth Restorative Justice Conferencing · Yolo Conflict Resolution Center (YCRC)

Liberatory Leadership Design · Los Angeles Education Partnership / 21CSLA

Youth Mental Health First Aid · California Department of Education

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### **RECOGNITION & AWARDS**

Shakespeare Globe Fellow · UC Davis School of Education

National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Awards — Program Finalist · President Obama's Committee on the Arts & Humanities

Excellence in Teaching Award · ChungDahm Institute, 2010

Gintong Lahi Lifetime Award · Philippine National Day Association

Filipino American Youth Leadership Fellow · Filipino Community of Sacramento, 1999

Ernest C. Mort Award for Excellence in Leadership · University of California, San Diego, Revelle College

Stewart Prize for Theatre Excellence · University of California, San Diego, Dept. of Theatre & Dance

ArtsBridge America Scholarship · University of California, San Diego

Polly Russell Dowling Fellowship · University of Delaware

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### **AFFILIATIONS & SERVICE**

#### **Professional**

Administrators Assoc. of San Diego City Schools (AASD)

American Federation of School Administrators, AFL-CIO, Local 134 (AFSA)

California Association of Asian and Pasifika Leaders in Education (CAAPLE)

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)

Association of Change Management Professional (ACMP Global)

Actors' Equity Association (AEA)

Theatre Communications Group (TCG)

Educational Theatre Association (EdTA)

California Educational Theatre Association (CETA)

21CSLA Equity & Belonging Advisory Board

WASC Accreditation Visiting Committee

UC Curriculum Integration · Course Developer & Author

#### **Alumni**

UCSD Alumni Association

University of Delaware Alumni Association

Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society

#### **Community**

Gintong Lahi Lifetime Member · Philippine National Day Association

Filipino Community of Sacramento

Pug Rescue of San Diego

A New Life Rescue Charitable Foundation

Soulmate Animal Rescue

Logan Memorial Educational Campus Parent Teacher Student Association

Mission Bay High School Black Student Union Co-Advisor

#### **University Service**

UCSD Revelle College Council  
UCSD Cultural Awareness Network  
UCSD Admit Ambassador  
Leaders of the 21st Century Graduate  
Inter-College Resident Association  
UD Haven LGBTQ Alliance

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**LANGUAGES**

**Proficient:** English (native) · Spanish

**Conversational:** Korean · Ilocano · Tagalog