

SCHOOL MATTERS

Discussion explores students' role in community

"Teenagers are not as scary as they appear," said Louise Valente, vice president of leadership services for the Palo Alto PTA Council, during a Wednesday presentation to parents of the Developmental Assets Survey.

The 160-question survey was taken in 2010 by more than 4,000 students in the district. The survey showed that while 83 percent of elementary school students are doing well as measured by the Developmental Assets model, the number declines as students get older. The figure drops to 53 percent when students reach high school.

"Only nine of the assets that were measured are directly related to schools," said Michaela Presti, PTAC vice president for health and safety. Much of what the survey measured was related to family and neighborhood relationships; only 41 percent of high school students felt that they mattered to people in their community.



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All the district schools are getting copies of the results and will respond to them differently.

"At Palo Verde, our principal is trained in the Developmental Asset model, and a core (group) of parents is really becoming embedded in the community," said parent Ani Gnanalingam at the Wednesday meeting.

Some parents had taken an eight-session training course by Project Cornerstone at JLS; others cited efforts by organizations such as Positive Coaching Alliance to help parents as well.

The Wednesday presentation noted other work under way, such as the "Question, Persuade, Refer" training given to every staff member in the district, the "Sources of Strength" program at Gunn High School and the ROCK (Reach Out Care Know) program created by Gunn students.

Related programs on way

In addition to such programs, Palo Alto is sponsoring the second annual Youth Forum, which will be held on Saturday at the Cubberly Community Center. For more information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/payouth>.

Also, the last session of "Growing up Asian in Palo Alto" community conversations will happen on May 26 in the boardroom of the Palo Alto Unified School District office at 25 Churchill Ave.

The conversation, "Connecting Family and Culture to Our Children's Voices," will focus on the Developmental Assets survey results.

Palo Alto parents Dana Tom, Becky Beacom, and Vic Ojakian — all of whom are executive committee of Project Safety Net — will speak at the session on May 26.

School Matters is happy to hear your feedback. Please email comments to schoolmatters@palaltopta.org to reach Preeva Tramiel.