

SCHOOL MATTERS

Cornerstone study meets survey goals

Project Cornerstone, a county nonprofit organization helping communities build asset rich environments for the students, conducted in October a survey of Santa Clara County students in fifth-, seventh-, and ninth-through-12th-grades.



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Amy Drolette, coordinator of student services for the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), called the district's student participation in the survey "outstanding."

"Our elementary goal was 95 percent, and most of our schools reached it. And some sites had close to 100 percent participation. Our middle-school goal was 85 percent, and we came close, if not surpassed that. Our high school goal was 75 percent, and both sites met that mark," she said.

The results will be combined with other Santa Clara County student results. Ann Ehresman, executive director of Project Cornerstone, collected data from 51,000 county students. "I just packed the last box," she said.

The results will be compiled in Minnesota at the Search Institute, www.search-institute.org.

Palo Alto's Project Safety Net adopted Project Cornerstone's framework this July.

Drolette credited Sunny Dykwel and the PTA Council's parent education committee with how well the PTA programs fit with the district's goals.

"Student connectedness is one of the focus goals for PAUSD," she said. "I am utterly impressed with how aligned the PTA is with their individual schools and how aligned they are with the district," Drolette said.

Daisy Zook, PTA president of Terman Middle School, said she felt the school had the highest participation of the three middle schools because of the PTA's hard work. "We had to do a lot of parent education," she said.

There was confusion about what Project Cornerstone and the 41 Developmental Assets were, and why a survey was needed.

"Project Cornerstone is the organization conducting the surveys and giving training sessions for Asset building," she explained. "Results of the survey will help us improve the lives of our children by community development of these 41 assets."

The assets are experiences and qualities that help young people grow up to be caring, productive adults.

Zook convinced her high school age son to take the survey by explaining that the survey results will be used to improve the lives of Palo Alto students.

"Our kids are just surveyed out to the hilt," Zook said, "but having the knowledge that the results will be shared and we will be proactive definitely helped."

The survey results will be released in February and come back like a report card. "We will bring that out to the community as a midterm check," Drolette said.

The school district and the city intend to work together to fill in gaps found by the survey.

A discussion of the 41 Developmental Assets will be broadcast on Channel 28 on Saturday at 4 p.m.; Nov. 3 at 7 p.m.; and Nov. 6 at 4 pm. The channel is streamed over the web at www.communitymediacenter.net/watch/stream.

Project Cornerstone will present the survey in March and give courses on the 41 Developmental Assets in the spring. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org/index.htm.

School Matters is happy to hear your feedback. Please e-mail comments to schoolmatters@paloaltopta.org to reach Preeva Tramiel.