

ABSTRACT:
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ABOUT
THE YOUTH FOR POSITIVE CHANGE PROGRAM

Emily Hansen, Ph.D.

Jeffrey A. White, M.A.

Los Angeles Unified School District
Program Evaluation and Research Branch
Planning, Assessment, and Research Division Publication No. 208

June 23, 2004

Purpose: Provide data on issues surrounding the Youth for Positive Change (YPC) program raised by Board Member Korenstein in her April 27, 2004 memo to Ted Bartelli and Hector Madrigal. PERB was asked to determine whether on-campus intervention provided by YPC program recaptures Average Daily Attendance (ADA) by providing in-school, on-campus intervention rather than out-of school, off-campus suspensions, and stems recidivism, as students actively participate in the disciplinary process. We focused on the following data sources: 1) number of suspensions, 2) attendance rates, and 3) crimes per thousand students, enrolled.

The YPC program is being used in three high school in LAUSD. Verdugo Hills High School is the model school site, with Venice High School and Belmont High School being project demonstration sites.

The program is described as:

A 501 (c) 3 non-profit association that promotes healthier living, promotes living physically, mentally, and socially. The organization services youth ages 12-25 in the secondary campuses. The organization achieves this goal by implementing Student-to-Student Assistance Programs: Peer Mediation – Conflict Resolution, Peer Counseling/Peer Mentoring, Preventative Health Programs and Community Youth Health and Leadership Initiative Symposiums that empower youth.

- Basic tenet of the program is to address disciplinary issues through a progressive model of discipline.
- Students are taught to acknowledge problematic behavior, given tools to modify behavior and take ownership of consequences.
- The goal is met by primarily using peer mentoring and counseling, in school intervention and Saturday school instead of out of school suspension.

Verdugo Hills High School began using the program in the 1998-99 school year, and the program is now operating full-time (32 hours per week).

In order to assess whether the YPC Program at Verdugo Hills High School is having an impact on suspensions, attendance, and/or crime rates, we gathered data from LAUSD's Decision Support System (DSS), the School Information Branch, and the Los Angeles School Police Department. We used the School Characteristics Index (SCI) to identify comparison schools similar to those using the YPC Program. The characteristics used to calculate the SCI include student mobility, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, as well as a school's percentage of emergency and fully credentialed teachers, percentage of English language learners, average class size, and multi-track year round educational program participation. The index can be interpreted as representing that part of performance attributable to background variables. Thus, schools with indexes close in numerical value are described as facing similar overall educational challenges and opportunities. Table 2 shows the YPC school SCI scores, as well as the SCI scores of the

two schools immediately above them and immediately below them in a rank-ordered list of LAUSD high schools.

Table 1. School using the Youth for Positive Change Program

School Name	Date of Implementation
Verdugo Hills High School	1998-99

Table 2. SCI scores for YPC schools and Similar Schools

School Name	2003 SCI
Van Nuys	149.9
Kennedy	150.5
VERDUGO HILLS	151.0
Grant	151.2
Cleveland	153.8
Canoga Park	145.4
Carson	147.1
Hamilton	147.8
North Hollywood	150.0

Question 1: Does participation in the YPC Program lead to fewer suspensions and stem recidivism?

- Verdugo Hills High School suspension rate has the lowest rate among its comparison schools from 1998-2003.
 - Cleveland, Kennedy, Grant and Van Nuys
- Not only did the suspension rate decrease, the rate of decrease was the highest among comparison schools.
- Verdugo Hills also has the lowest recidivism among its comparison schools from 2001-2003.

Table 3. Suspensions at Verdugo Hills High School, 1997 – 98 through 2002-03

School	Enrollment						Suspension Rate					
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Verdugo Hills	2097	2136	2157	2112	2338	2481	13.1	4.7	4.9	2.1	1.1	1.3
Cleveland	2395	2591	2731	2815	3080	3400	3.1	3.6	7.7	8.5	6.2	5.6
Kennedy	2785	2672	2683	2665	2987	3023	27.0	33.7	21.7	15.3	18.5	14.9
Grant	3275	3322	3387	3289	3448	3413	16.0	15.0	18.5	18.6	22.9	20.3
Van Nuys	3501	3586	3686	3698	4064	4094	10.4	25.5	25.6	18.5	17.7	22.1

Question 2: Does participation in the YPC program lead to higher attendance rates and subsequently, higher ADA?

- Because a primary focus of the YPC program is on improving attendance with a progressive discipline and attendance program, we would expect to find that attendance rates at YPC schools would increase, as would the ADA funding associated with these rates.
- Verdugo Hills had the highest attendance rate among its comparison schools from 2001-2003.

Question 3: Does participation in the YPC program lead to lower crime?

- Because the YPC model seeks to use on-campus intervention programs to address discipline, tardiness, and truancy issues, one might expect a drop in the incidents of student crimes in and around the YPC schools. A crime is defined as an incident that involves as LAUSD student, employee, or property. For the purpose of this report, the crime rate is defined as number of crimes per one thousand students enrolled.
- Verdugo Hills High School exhibited modest decrease in crime rates (-1), Verdugo Hills was ranked above the median.

Conclusion

The YPC program has been implemented at Verdugo Hills High School since 1998. To date, the school has seen a reduction in out of school suspensions and number of crimes per thousand students, as well as an increase in attendance since the program's inception. The model put forth by YPC, where on campus intervention and suspension are used to address disciplinary and behavior, appears to be effective at this school.