

**PUSD REPORT  
FOR  
THE LWVPA DROPOUT PREVENTION PROJECT**  
03-02-07

**PURPOSE**

The League of Women Voters of the Pasadena Area created an Education Advocacy Committee to develop projects within the framework of the League state and local education positions.

Dropout prevention in the communities/districts within the LWVPA boundaries was selected as the initial committee project, based on the understanding that a public education system cannot be effective when students do not complete the educational process.

This is the report of Findings and Recommendations from the LWVPA Pasadena Unified School District subcommittee.

**PROCESS**

We interviewed PUSD administrators at the Education Center and school administrators and counselors at middle-school and high-school sites and school board members. We interviewed community leaders in the three communities that make up PUSD: Pasadena, Altadena and Sierra Madre. We interviewed students who had dropped out and parents and caregivers of students who had dropped out.

We developed Findings and Recommendations from those interviews that are particularly relevant to the Pasadena Unified School District. The results of the Findings and Recommendations follow.

05/14/2007  
Item I  
Handout by Melody Comfort

## FINDINGS

### District Dropout Plan

1. The definition of “drop-out” is inconsistent; graduation rate and drop-out rate are not synonymous, but are often used interchangeably.
2. No comprehensive plan exists to identify, track and prevent drop-outs.
3. Some special services exist (see glossary for definitions)
  - Center for Independent Study
  - Rose City High School
  - PCC special program
  - L.A. County Board of Education programs
  - Outside options such as Learning Works and
  - Options for Youth
4. Specialized high school academies offer option of career training combined with regular curriculum.
5. Community organizations provide programs for at-risk students
6. The business community has the potential to provide more services but needs added direction from the school district

### Why Students Drop Out

1. Repeated truancy.
2. Money
  - Need to support the family
  - Want to support a desired lifestyle
  - Peer pressure
  - Street culture dealing in drugs and stolen goods
3. Pregnancy
4. Physical and mental health issues
5. Lack support and encouragement at school
6. Inconsistent training of school administrators, teachers, counselors in how to work with students and parents to prevent student dropout.
7. Peer pressure from gangs
8. Socio economic factors of the family
  - Pressures associated with making ends meet
  - Single parent households
  - Limited English
  - Lack of education
9. Parents’ lack of knowledge of how to help their children
10. “Boring” curriculum
11. Remedial programs limit elective options
12. Poor academic performance before high school
13. Limited English, beginning in early grades
14. Fall behind in credits
  - Fail algebra or science
  - Fail to see relevance of curriculum to their future
  - Don’t focus
  - Distracted by pop culture portrayed by various media.
15. Special problems of foster care students and students on probation.

## RECOMMENDATION

PUSD needs a comprehensive district plan to prevent dropouts. The plan should:

- Implement strategic planning that includes coordination with community agencies and businesses;
- Provide consistent, continuous oversight to ensure long-term effectiveness;
- Provide consistent funding sources;
- Develop a clear definition of “drop-out” and use it carefully.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PLAN

1. Every student needs someone on the school site who gives personal attention and guidance --counselor, teacher, other -- starting no later than 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
2. Early identification and intervention is needed for at-risk students.
3. Provide programs for parents when children are in preschool or kindergarten on the importance of education, how to read to their children, how to help with homework, how to work with the teacher.
4. Provide in-service programs to educate teachers how to connect with parents and how to help the parents help their children.
5. Continue and expand to all schools the Epstein model, which develops partnerships of family, school community. It also includes a parent room at each school.
6. The district should consider hiring social workers to work with at risk students and their families
7. At the middle and high school level, every student needs a knowledgeable person who advises the student on what is needed for graduation and encourages the student to complete requirements.
8. Need Center for Independent Study or its equivalent at every high school.
9. A dropout prevention system needs counselors who are trained to connect with special programs. For example: Center for Independent Study at the school; an Independent Study program outside the school, such as Learning Works; Continuation High School; Pasadena City College's program for dropouts.
10. Counselors need to also connect with parents.
11. Recruit and train former dropout students to use their experience to help counselors advise potential dropouts.
12. Provide an enriched more relevant curriculum that includes career/technical education and arts education.
13. Support approved, peaceful conflict resolution programs.
14. Include students in decision-making process about their education.
15. District and City of Pasadena should work together to find more resources to fund the police department's programs for helping kids in trouble and expanding the police department's truancy program.
16. Encourage similar programs in Sierra Madre, Altadena and other unincorporated areas in the district.
17. Educate the community that dropout prevention is everyone's problem.
18. Ensure coordination of the mentoring and tutoring programs identified by this study that are working to prevent dropouts.\*

\*see glossary

## GLOSSARY

### **Center for Independent Study**

Located at Pasadena High School. Serves high school students at risk of dropping out from all district high schools. Serves students without behavioral issues . The program is tailored to each student's needs. Parent and student must sign a contract. Ninety -five per cent of the students enrolled complete the program and graduate. There is a large waiting list.

### **Rose City High School**

A program for students with behavioral issues who are at risk of dropping out because they are so far behind in academic credits. Offers small classes, counseling, mental health services and help with job placement.

### **Pasadena City College Education Center**

PCC has a program designed to assist non-graduating high school seniors in successfully completing their diploma or GED requirements and transitioning into a vocational training, career development or community college program.

This program, held at the PCC Education Center, is called "Stepping UP".

### **Learning Works**

Partners with Center for Independent Study (CIS) to work with students who are already dropouts, almost 1/3 of whom are young women who dropped out because of pregnancy. Program takes place at Learning Works, but the CIS provides the teachers, curriculum and assessments. Learning Work monitors the students, and gives them the personal support they need for success. Trained former dropout students help with the tutoring with the dropout students. The pregnant teens and teen moms have programs in health, parenting and personal development and childcare and taxi services during school hours. All students at Learning Works are offered assistance with their legal affairs and counseling on their progress on credits, attendance and education plans.

### **Options for Youth**

A non-profit public benefit corporation that has charter schools in several places in Southern California; In our League area it has a charter in Irwindale, chartered by San Gabriel Unified School District. No charter in PUSD.

Working with public schools, OFY has developed supplemental services to extend the educational opportunities for at-risk students. Among these services are special programs to help students who drop out of school. PUSD students may apply for entrance .

### **L.A. County Board of Education**

Programs such as the Regional Occupation Program (ROP) plus programs for teens on probation and in residential facilities for troubled youths.

**MENTORING AND TUTORING PROGRAMS IDENTIFIED  
BY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS INTERVIEWS ON DROPOUTS IN PUSD**

African-American Coalition  
Alkebulan  
Altadena Chamber of Commerce  
Altadena Focus Group Education Committee  
Altadena Kiwanis  
Altadena Library  
Altadena NAACP (ACTSO Academic, Cultural, Technological, Scientific Olympics)  
AXEL (advancing entrepreneurs; Back to school: stay in School)  
Altadena Rotary (Gave leadership to developing the Rotary Clubs adopt a school coalition)  
Altadena Town Council  
Armory Center for the Arts  
Black Male Forum  
Boys and Girls Clubs  
City Human Resources Commission created Youth Month in August  
Community Baptist Church at Community Arms  
CORAL  
Deliverance Tabernacle  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority  
D'Veel Family and Community Services  
Done In A Day  
El Centro de Accion Social (summer school; also special programs at Jefferson elementary, Muir)  
First AME Church  
First District California State PTA  
Five Acres  
Flintridge Foundation  
Food Bank  
Foothill Family Services  
Friends of Cleveland School  
Jackie Robinson Center (Quality of Life Center for students, families, parents)  
Jet Propulsion Laboratories  
J.L. Moseley Company  
Journey House  
Latino Heritage Association, Roberta Martinez  
Learning Works and Public Works  
MASH (housing repairs for Seniors)  
McDonalds  
Mentoring Partnership for Youth (Muir)  
Muir Alumni Association  
Muir Football Team  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Mothers Club  
Mothers and More  
Muir High School Community Education Program  
Muir Male Mentoring Program  
Mustangs on the Move (Muir—has a recruitment team, jobs/career team, team of student advisors)  
Neighbor Empowering Youth (computer, job skills )  
Nestles  
Options for Youth  
Outward Bound Adventures  
Pacific Clinics  
Partners in Education (PIE) (Implementing Epstein model)  
Pasadena Chamber of Commerce  
Pasadena Educational Foundation (funds Parent Leadership Academies at 3 elementary and the middle schools)  
Pasadena Educational Network (PEN)  
Pasadena Junior League (Madison elementary)  
Pasadena Learns  
Pasadena Mental Health Center  
Pasadena NAACP  
Pasadena Planned Parenthood (Muir Mentoring)  
Pasadena Police Department Programs (Daytime Loitering, After School Program at Salvation Army, PAL, Explorer, Junior Public Safety Program, Youth Accountability, Citizen Police Academy, Summer Youth, Neighborhood Watch)  
Pasadena PTA Council  
Pasadena-Altadena Links  
Pasadena Plumbing and Hardware  
PCC Child Development Center  
PCC Community Education Center (Muir)  
Ralphs  
Robins Restaurant  
Rotary Adopt-A -School Coalition (adopted Jackson, Edison and some work at Muir)  
Saturday Classes Center, Armenian Community  
Scripps Home

## **PUSD Drop-Out Report page 6 of 6**

Sheriff's department, Sam Estrada  
Sierra Madre Congregational Church (Youth and  
Family Coffee House)  
Sierra Madre Friends of the Library  
Sierra Madre Middle School programs  
Sierra Madre YMCA Summer Camp  
Sierra Madre Youth Activity Center  
Sierra Madre Youth-run Drop In Center  
Sycamores

Tecumsa Shakelford  
Vons  
Villa Parke and Victory Park  
Washington Mutual  
Western Justice Center Foundation (Peaceful Conflict  
Resolution in the schools)  
Westridge, Poly and Chandler private schools  
(Summer School for PUSD students)  
Young and Healthy  
YWCA

\*Additional community resources are described in the City of Pasadena booklet, "Pasadena Area Programs and Activities and After-School Resource Guide-2000-2007, grades: Pre K-12". Also available is "LA County Community Services Guide", Pasadena County District office.

## **PUSD ADVOCACY PLAN**

1. Meet with Edwin Diaz, the PUSD Superintendent of Schools, to present the PUSD report with findings and recommendations.
2. Attend PUSD School Board meeting to present the PUSD report
3. Meet with local representatives of the State of California Assembly and Senate to discuss the PUSD study and report.