

Parent Ed Night: Tuesday, March 9, 7 pm, Gunn Library

Dear Parents,

As part of the Substance Awareness Week at Gunn High School we are organizing a Parent night on March 9th at 7:00 PM. We would like to extend an invitation to incoming Freshman parents.

Gunn students have been participating in the Palo Alto Reality Check survey for the last few years, a tool that gives us insight and understanding of the local teen population's use, attitudes and perceptions of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) along with their related risk behaviors. Becky Beacom of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation has been studying the data gathered and has been active in planning adequate response to the students, and she has agreed to help us understand the findings of the survey and outline a response plan at the parent ed night.

Our children have voiced their opinions and showed specific needs for better communication with the adults, both officials and their parents. Our kids did what we asked them: they told us what they think and what they need. Now it is our turn to respond.

In order to be the most effective and helpful parents to our teens we need to understand the major points of the survey results and need to come up with a plan of action in order to remedy the issues that we have influence on. In order to do this we, the PTSA think that a well-attended and interactive Parent Ed. night is needed. We are fortunate in Palo Alto to have a community-wide organization, PADACC (Palo Alto Drug and Alcohol Community Collaborative) dealing with ATOD related issues, led by school officials, mental health counselors and educators who show their concern for our children. We, the parents think we ought to show as much interest in our own children as they do!

While we all agree that the results show a positive trend in our children's ATOD related behaviors, we, as parents need to address the following crucial concerns:

Our children asked for improved communication with adults around ATOD. The findings show that once in a situation where the safest choice would be to call their parents, our children prefer NOT to call us. A large majority of students want youth voices to be included in future policy and decision-making

The student responses suggest more discussion with students is called for -

possibly focus groups - in order to extract full meaning from their responses and for problem-solving on some of our most serious health risk behaviors. We encourage you to attend our Parents night where Becky Beacom will share her ideas and insights about the survey results and further steps that can be taken in order to respond to our children.

We want to create an environment where we address the issues at hand and where an interactive process among us will create better communication and ultimately a safer environment for our children.

Please RSVP at gunnsafechoices@gmail.com, gdac@gmail.com (Please mention your child's grade in your email)

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Ildiko Ran,
Parent liaison for Gunn Drug and Alcohol Committee