

3.6.10 DRAFT

Palo Alto Drug and Alcohol Community Collaborative (PADACC)

www.padacc.org

March 8, 2010

Contact: Karin Bloom, Director (650) 380-2571

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PAUSD Students “Speak” Out – 2009 Palo Alto Reality Check Survey Results Now Available

Palo Alto, CA For the 5th year, Palo Alto Unified School District’s (PAUSD) middle school and high school students shared information about their use, attitudes and perceptions of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) and related risk behaviors through a survey known as the Palo Alto Reality Check Survey (PARCS). “More than 5,700 students participated in the 2009 survey says Carol Zepecki, Director of Students Services, PAUSD, and member of the Palo Alto Drug and Alcohol Community Collaborative (PADACC), the organization responsible for conducting this survey. “We are pleased to begin sharing the results with students, parents and the community,” says Zepecki.

Survey highlights include the following information:

- The majority of high school students are making healthy decisions when it comes to alcohol, drug use and related high risk behaviors. However, the number of students that do report regular substance use and high risk behaviors and attitudes (like DUI, binge drinking) is of concern and demands attention.
- The majority of students overestimate the degree to which their school peers are involved in these behaviors (sometimes dramatically), which puts students at risk for higher use in the future.
- The majority of students share school and community values regarding alcohol at dances, driving/riding under the influence or binge drinking, yet they expressed concern about the fairness and enforcement of particular policies (campus and

community).

- A large majority of students want youth voices to be included in future policy and decision-making.
- Middle school students indicated that they are feeling safer physically and emotionally on all three campuses. Parents, teachers and administrators have focused their efforts on decreasing verbal, social, physical and electronic bullying. “We were especially heartened to see these results given our focus on reducing bullying,” says Kevin Skelly, Palo Alto Unified School District Superintendent. “Any bullying is a problem, but our numbers are going in the right direction.”

Concerns indentified by the survey results include binge drinking, drinking and driving, and a need for better parent communication with their child regarding drug and alcohol use. Nationally, 59.6% of adolescents reported they talked to at least one parent about alcohol and other drugs. Only 50% of Palo Alto students report having such a discussion with a parent. “According to SAMHSA, researchers have found that adolescents who have such conversations with a parent are significantly less likely to use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs,” says Karin Bloom, Project Director, PADACC. “Having sit down, family dinners is one of the most effective prevention strategies out there,” says Bloom. Other strategies include car rides, watching your child’s favorite program with them – anything to create an atmosphere where your child trusts that you want to talk and listen to them.

Becky Beacom, a Health Educator from Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF) and a member of PADACC, will be highlighting information shared by students from the 2009 PARCS on Tuesday, March 9, at Gunn High School. Parents, students and the general public are invited to attend. The program will begin at 7:00 p.m. and will be held in the auditorium at 780 Arastradero Road, Palo Alto. Results of the 2009 PARCS can also be found on the PADACC website, www.padacc.org.

PADACC was founded in 2002 to reduce underage drinking and its impacts.

#