

Parent Project: Changing Destructive Adolescent Behavior

*Los Angeles Unified School District - 4
Los Angeles, California*

Boisterous middle school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District got important attention last year when the Los Angeles Unified School District #4 implemented a program that helped parents curb troubling behavior in their children. The 10-week workshop, called Parent Project by school officials, helped put 60 at-risk students back on the right track.

District administrators initiated the project to help reduce behavior problems in some schools. Teachers noted increases in truancy, gang participation, drug use, and violence. Administrators identified this trend in their action plan and determined that, in keeping with the requirements in No Child Left Behind and to help solve these problems, they needed to increase parents' capacities to become involved in ways that increased student success and good behavior.

District leaders, local school personnel, and parents worked together to find a program that would best benefit this population of students. Some elementary schools had implemented a 10-week program on good discipline for several years. Officials decided that extending that program (with more advanced content) would be appropriate to assist families of middle schoolers. They agreed to implement Parent Project—a course designed to help parents gain effective strategies for identifying and preventing negative student social behavior and improving it.

The group targeted two middle schools and 30 students from each school for the program. District staff then worked with principals and teachers to notify the families of these students of the opportunity to help the children. They used face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and fliers to invite parents to the seminars.

Facilitators from the Office of School Family and Community Partnerships (OSFC) hosted the ten 3-4 hour long workshops. OSFC

staff led parents through a host of strategies for dealing with their troubled tweens. In addition to the presentations by the instructor, parents received activity books. A large portion of class time was dedicated to forming support groups in which parents could discuss their challenges and frustration, network, and gather advice from other parents about dealing with risky behaviors.

Evaluations from parents at the end of the course reflected a positive impact. "I enjoyed the class because it taught me how to praise my child and how to understand her," a parent said.

"It was encouraging to hear the parents speak so positively about what they had learned from the sessions and observe the immediate development of a support group with each other," a district leader said.

The program cost approximately \$5,500. The district used categorical resources to train facilitators, purchase materials, and to distribute activity books to participating families.

Administrators not only plan to continue the program, but also aim to expand it. They will add two area high schools to the program and offer sessions twice next year.

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