

Berkeley Unified School District

2020 Bonar Street, Berkeley, California 94702

PHONE: (510) 644-6206



City of Berkeley

2180 Milvia Street, Berkeley, California 94704

PHONE: (510) 981-6903

Joint Press Release City of Berkeley and Berkeley Unified School District

California Healthy Kids Survey show Berkeley students resisting health-risk behaviors that include alcohol, tobacco, and drug use

Contacts: Mark Coplan, BUSD PIO 510-472-3811 markcoplan@berkeley.net
Mary Kay Clunies-Ross, COB PIO 510-981-7008 mclunies-ross@cityofberkeley.info

Berkeley, CA (November 19, 2012) – Results out from the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) show Berkeley public school students exhibiting increased resiliency supported by caring relationships with and high expectations from adults. These protective factors and resultant internal strengths are increasingly discouraging students from engaging in health-risk behaviors that include alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.

Sponsored by the California Department of Education, the California Healthy Kids Survey is administered in grades 5, 7, 9, 11 every two years. Students are surveyed confidentially on substance use, violence, safety, and school assets. Participation in the survey conducted in Berkeley public schools in January 2012 was higher than in prior years, and included, for the first time, enough participation from students at Berkeley Technology Academy (BTech) to provide reliable data.

Comparison of responses from the 2010 and 2012 CHKS results show the following positive trends in Berkeley public school student behavior: 1) Overall declines in the use of alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes, 2) Overall declines in violence-related behavior, 3) Lower rates of cigarette use than the State, 4) Higher levels of total resilience traits than for the State, and 5) Feelings of safety at school, higher than reported at the State at every level.

Citing targeted education, prevention, and early intervention programs implemented since the last CHKS results came out, Co-Superintendent Neil Smith pointed to the fact that “youth resiliency assets, and the feelings of safety reported by students all help them to make better choices. These results are powerful because they show us that student attitudes and behaviors are absolutely influenced by the work and teachings in our schools and that we are making a difference.”

The City of Berkeley and Berkeley Unified School District are teaming through the 2020 Vision Collaborative to use the results from CHKS to assess city and school district efforts to promote healthy habits among Berkeley’s youth, to measure the impact of dedicated programs and services, and to direct resources to address specific risk behaviors. The ATOD Task Force, formed at the direction of the Board following the 2008 CHKS report when the levels of student reported ATOD use were higher than the 2010 and 2012 reports, has been working throughout all grade levels to bring recommendations to the School Board for programs and training. Dr. Susan Craig, Director of Student Services indicated “that several of the recommendations made by the Task Force in their 2010 report have been implemented, and have clearly impacted the change in student behaviors reflected in the latest CHKS results.”

Dr. Craig further noted that attendance improvement efforts in the District, improved procedures at schools regarding consequences and interventions for students who use and/or possess ATOD at school, as well as ATOD prevention education and interventions that have been implemented at all middle schools, Berkeley High School,

and BTEch through a 3-year Tobacco Use Prevention Education grant, have most likely contributed to the positive changes seen in the CHKS results.

Concerning trends in the most recent CHKS data include the increased use of marijuana and alcohol from 7th to 11th grades and reported use rates of alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes specifically by BTEch students. Interventions now available to BTEch students include daily ATOD counseling sessions offered at the school and violence prevention education, called the Alive and Free Prescription, facilitated by staff from the San Francisco Omega Boys Club.

Outreach and education for parents and families, and building awareness of support services have been part of the ATOD work for about the last two and a half years, since spring of 2010. Many of these efforts have been implemented through the City of Berkeley High School Health Center with support from the Berkeley High School Development Group.

"The good news is that the 2010 report showed that students were listening to their parents when they warned about the dangers of tobacco, and we had the lowest rate of tobacco use in the state," stated Board Director Karen Hemphill. "Since then we have provided educational opportunities for parents on the impact of drugs and alcohol on teens; they're giving their students a similar warning about marijuana and alcohol, and students are listening."

"The Healthy Kids Survey is an important tool to helping the community improve the health of Berkeley teens," said Lisa Sterner, director of the City of Berkeley High School Health Center, and Dr. Janet Berreman, the City's Health Officer. "The additional focus we've put on ATOD in recent years helps to improve students' educational outcomes, and sets them up for a higher quality of life for the rest of their lives."

Note: The most recent California state-wide data from CHKS referenced above is from 2007. More recent state-wide data has not been made available to date.

City and District staff will be available for interviews on Monday and Tuesday

Contacts: Mark Coplan, BUSD PIO 510-472-3811 markcoplan@berkeley.net
Mary Kay Clunies-Ross, COB PIO 510-981-7008 mclunies-ross@cityofberkeley.info

###