

## Strengthening College-Going Culture and Raising Expectations for All Students:

### ▶ Stories from the Front Lines ◀

THE THREE SCHOOLS HIGHLIGHTED in this special supplement are working with the University of California's Center for Educational Partnerships (formerly the Center for Educational Outreach) to help strengthen their College-Going Culture\*. These brief vignettes, describing the work of teachers, administrators, students and their families, exemplify the commitment and creativity we need to employ to ensure a future that is rich with options and opportunities for all of California's students.

#### THE WEBSITE:

<http://outreach.berkeley.edu> has links to college-going resources.

#### REALIZING THE COLLEGE DREAM:

A curriculum and guide, developed with the support of the ECMC foundation, that supports teachers, counselors, and youth-development specialists in their work to increase the expectations of attending college by low-income and first-generation college students and their families. The lessons and workshops provide students with an opportunity to think of themselves as future college students and to debunk the myth that they can't afford college. Powerpoint presentations in English and Spanish are also available on line.

#### FAST FORWARD TO COLLEGE NEWSLETTERS:

Tips and information on college-going and inspirational stories of students who successfully made it to college.

#### A-G POSTERS:

Available to schools and teachers as an aide to help inform students of the college prep A-G courses they must take to be eligible for the University of California and California State University systems or most other four year institutions.

#### COLLEGE-GOING POSTER

A youth-oriented poster that encourages college-going will soon be available.

#### GRADE-LEVEL CHECKSITS

Lists of "to do's" to get ready for college, by grade level, will soon be available.

#### \*COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE IS DEFINED AS:

The environment, attitudes, and behaviors in schools and communities that support and encourage students and their families to obtain the information, tools, and perspective to ensure access to and success in post-secondary education.

For more information on professional learning opportunities and resources to help build and strengthen college-going culture, please contact **Gail Kaufman**, Director of School/University Partnerships, at 510-643-9206, e-mail her at [gkaufman@berkeley.edu](mailto:gkaufman@berkeley.edu), or go to website: <http://sup.berkeley.edu>.



At Think College Now, teachers, administrators and parents work together to create a culture of long-term planning. Every student's educational future begins the instant they step through the door.



ABOVE · Think College Now students listen to their teacher  
LEFT · Student shows class display.

## Think College Now

### A Creative Oakland School Focuses on K through College

By Josh Sens

ON A RECENT SPRING MORNING in Kathy Cho's first-grade class, Jeremy Bun was studying his ABC's. A, in this case, wasn't for "apple." It stood for "admissions." B was for "book." And C was for "counselor," as in college counselor, the kind of person Jeremy plans to meet with one day. "D is for dormitory," Jeremy said. "That's the place where you sleep. It's where I'm going to sleep because I'm going to go to college, too." At age 6, Jeremy is already well on his way, thanks to Think College Now, an innovative Oakland school that lives up to its name.

At Think College Now, teachers, administrators and parents work together to create a culture of long-term planning. Every student's educational future begins the instant they step through the door. "Every decision we make, every action we take, is made with one question in mind," said school principal David Silver. "Is this behavior becoming of someone on his or her way to college?" This philosophy—that preparing for college starts as early as kindergarten—permeates the corridors and classrooms of the K-4 school.

In second-grade teacher Amanda Klein's classroom, banners from Kenyon College and University of San Francisco (Klein's alma mater) dangle from the ceiling. And as one of their class projects, Klein has students design their own college logo, mascot and all. In the hallway, photos capture images of a field trip the kids took to UC Berkeley last year. "We saw a

dinosaur and we saw a frog's heart," said 8-year-old Melissa Sanchez. "It was neat because I want to be a paleontologist. "That's a scientist, you know".

Many students at Think College Now come from financially challenged backgrounds, with parents who never went to college themselves. With that in mind, the school has broadened its effort to bring entire families into the fold. A \$48,000 grant from the Zellerbach Family Foundation, which goes into effect this fall, will help fund Think College Now's Family Resource Center to provide a wealth of information on everything from finding the right college to tracking down financial aid. "Parents want to help their children get to college," Klein said. "But often, they don't know what the path looks like themselves. Once they get to know that path, they can be more actively involved in working toward the goal that everyone wants to achieve."

Those efforts, of course, are complemented by what goes on in the classroom, where the school's college-going culture is intertwined with the curriculum. When it came to teaching the alphabet, for instance, Kathy Cho took the standard first-grade subject and applied a creative twist. She put together a book called "The ABCs of College," a playful text with a lofty theme. "E is for...uh, what's that word?" asked Jeremy Bun, flipping through the pages. "Elective," said Cho, encouragingly, reading the definition aloud. "Oh," said Jeremy, smiling. "I know a lot of classes I'm going to want to take."

## Herbert Hoover Middle School

### Inquiring Students In This San Jose School Want to Know: Where Did You Go to College?

By Josh Sens

At a time when a college degree often makes the difference between a life of choice and a life of limitations, Hoover Middle School is working hard to broaden opportunities.

LATE LAST SPRING, after years of getting quizzed by teachers, students at Herbert Hoover Middle School in San Jose decided to have it the other way around. Notebooks in hand, they trolled the campus, conducting a series of teacher interviews. Although their questions covered a range of topics, it wasn't hard to tell what the kids had in mind. Eighth-grader Ruth Vizcaya asked art teacher, Mr. Hamilton, where he went to college (actually, Ruth found out, he attended several). Seventh-grader Hayley Hua wanted to know how Mr. Chamberlin, her social studies teacher, had paid for school (he offset the cost with financial aid and by moonlighting as a janitor). Elizabeth Gutierrez, also in eighth grade, was shocked to discover that Ms. McMillian, Hoover's assistant principal, almost didn't make it to college at all. "She told us that when she was young, she wasn't a very good student but that she got her act together and turned things around," Elizabeth said. "I was surprised. I thought someone who was a principal would have been a nerdy goodie-two-

shoes who sits in the front of the class. Turns out you can be popular and a good student at the same time."

Elizabeth and her inquiring classmates plan to post their findings on bulletin boards throughout the school. Their plan is to create a series of "talking points" for fellow students as they cruise the corridors, the better to get them thinking about what the future has in store. "One thing I've learned from interviewing my teachers is that you need to start planning," 13-year-old Ruth Vizcaya said. "I want to be a doctor, so if I want to achieve my goal, I have to get to college, get good grades and take a lot of science classes."

At a time when a college degree often makes the difference between a life of choice and a life of limitations, Hoover Middle School is working hard to broaden opportunities. Everywhere kids turn at Hoover, the college spirit is in the air. A "Gallery Wall" just outside the library is given over to an ever-changing "College of the Month,"

with information about the school's location, the makeup of its student body, even the name of a Hoover teacher who attended it ("Ask Ms. Sussman about Smith College!" read a banner on the wall last spring, referring to dance teacher Jennifer Sussman). Posters in the corridors list all the classes that students need to pass to qualify for their high school degree. And "Academic Word Walls," mounted in the hallways, feature lively displays with inspiring messages, like "Imagine Yourself at UC Berkeley," and "College: the Path Starts Here."

To further emphasize the point, morning announcements at Hoover are often read by teachers and "sponsored" by the college where they studied. "It's fun to find out where our teachers went to school," said 13-year-old Hayley Hua. "When you see where they went to college, you start thinking, 'Hey, I can get there too.'" **WFD**



ABOVE · Hoover Middle School students work on project

## Tennyson High School

### A Hayward School Encourages Kids to Take the High Road

By Josh Sens

In the class, students tackle a range of topics. They discuss the importance of self-esteem in standing up to negative peer pressure and making solid academic choices.

Photos of College Prep class exhibition



THE FUTURE, AS SEEN through the eyes of Angelica Lucero, looks nothing like the past she left behind. Now a 14-year-old freshman at Tennyson High School in Hayward, Angelica used to run with a rugged crowd, a group of kids with lots of street smarts but little interest in classroom learning. "I'd tell them that I wanted to go to college and they'd give me all sorts of crap," Angelica said. "They'd say, 'What, do you think you're better than us?' It's hard when you get that kind of peer pressure. But I know what I want. I want a chance to make a good life for myself."

At Tennyson, Angelica now finds herself in a more supportive setting, surrounded by students who share her plans. She is one of dozens of students enrolled in Tennyson's "college prep" class, an enriching curriculum that helps prepare kids for the road ahead. "If you ask just about any young person around here, they'll say they want

to go to college," said Jennie Estrada, one of the Tennyson teachers who lead the college preparation class. "But a much smaller percentage actually knows what it takes to get there. Our goal is to help them see how to get from here to there."

In the class, students tackle a range of topics. They discuss the importance of self-esteem in standing up to negative peer pressure and making solid academic choices. They practice public speaking, a valuable skill in large college classrooms. They learn the lingo of a college campus: the difference, for example, between a seminar and a lecture — what it means to "major" in biology. As part of their coursework this year, Angelica and her classmates took a field trip to UC Berkeley and competed in a scavenger hunt. They tracked down campus landmarks like the Campanile and Sather Gate. They found their way to Sproul Hall to pick up application forms.

By the end of the day, they hadn't just learned how to get around campus. They'd learned what it would take to get into Cal. "I found out that college is more than party central," freshman Linda Nguyen wrote in an essay about the visit. "It's about determination and hard work. It's about putting effort into achieving your dreams."

The college prep class is just one way that Tennyson promotes a college-going culture. Teachers and administrators encourage students to focus on their educational future, stressing college as a link to greater opportunities down the line. "It's backwards mapping," said 9th grade English teacher Melynda Canales. "We ask kids to consider what kind of life they want, then we work backwards from there. What kind of job do you want? What kind of house you want to live in? We look at census numbers and see how a college degree affects your earnings. We're

helping them to think about their future outside of Tennyson." As Angelica Lucero sees it, it's a future that looks just fine. "I know it's not easy," Angelica said. "You have to try, and if you don't get it the first time, then you try again, no matter how difficult it gets. That's the really important lesson I learned: why should I be satisfied to settle for less?" **WFD**

