Collaborating with High Schools to Address the CDC Recommendations to Reduce Tobacco Use on Campus: A Pilot Project

Diane Reed, MPH, Consultant, Richmond, CA
Isabelle Barbour, MPH, Youth Mobilization Coordinator, and Denice A. Dennis, MPH, Manager, Tobacco Prevention Project, Community Wellness & Prevention Program, Contra Costa Health Services

June 30, 2004

This case study was made possible by funds received from the Tobacco Health Protection Act of 1988-Proposition 99, under Contract Number 01-7-0, with the California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section
Introduction

Each day, young people are faced with making choices that will impact their health. Because adolescence is such a pivotal period, high schools have a key role to play in supporting youth to make healthy choices by developing and implementing policies that guide and provide healthy and safe options. In 1994, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) acknowledged the crucial role that schools play in healthy adolescent development in their publication “Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction.” Recognizing that the majority of smokers begin using tobacco before the age of 18, the Guidelines stated that school programs designed to prevent tobacco use could become one of the most effective strategies available to reduce tobacco use in the United States. Equally important, for youth who have already begun to smoke, as well as for the estimated 4,400 teens who try cigarettes for the first time every day, is assessing tobacco problems at school and reducing pro-tobacco influences in the environment.

The CDC Guidelines are based on an in-depth review of research, theory, and current practice in the area of school-based tobacco-use prevention. They were developed in collaboration with experts from 29 national, federal, and voluntary agencies, and with other leading authorities in the field of tobacco-use prevention, to help school personnel implement effective tobacco-use prevention programs. The CDC guidelines recommend that all schools:

- Develop and enforce a school policy on tobacco use;
- Provide instruction about the short- and long-term negative physiologic and social consequences of tobacco use, social influences on tobacco use, peer norms regarding tobacco use, and refusal skills;
- Provide tobacco-use prevention education in kindergarten through 12th grade;
- Provide program-specific training for teachers;
- Involve parents or families in support of school-based programs to prevent tobacco use;
- Support cessation efforts among students and all school staff who use tobacco; and
- Evaluate the tobacco-use prevention program at regular intervals.

Contra Costa County Tobacco Prevention Project (TPP) has a long and successful history of working with youth to change local youth access tobacco policy and partnering with schools to change community norms. When developing its 2001-2004 TCS-funded scope of work, TPP was required to include one objective that focused on countering pro-tobacco influences and planned to continue its work with young people in reducing outdoor tobacco advertising. Just weeks before the plan was due, however, the Supreme Court issued a ruling declaring that advertising content was protected by the First Amendment. With advertising blocked as an issue to pursue, TPP began to explore possibilities of reducing pro-tobacco influences at a school site.

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1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Guidelines for school health programs to prevent tobacco use and addiction. MMWR 1994; 43 (No. RR-2).
3 For a copy of other case studies on other Tobacco Prevention Project youth-centered work, go to http://ccprevention.org
A survey of Tobacco Use Prevention Education (TUPE) coordinators conducted as part of the 2001 tobacco prevention assessment found no evidence that the CDC Guidelines were consistently implemented in any of the county’s public high schools. Four of the Guidelines fall within the Tobacco Control Section’s countering pro-tobacco influence priority area. TPP thus decided to create a pilot project that involved working with one high school to reduce pro-tobacco influences using the CDC Guidelines as a framework to develop an action plan that would be implemented by a group of school stakeholders.

In its past experience, TPP learned that working with a committed and supportive school administration was the single most important factor in advancing policy shifts or programs on a school campus. The second most important criterion was the student body's need for tobacco programming. Based on those two criteria, Olympic/Alliance High School was selected as the school best suited to develop and implement an action plan to address tobacco use on campus. Leadership changes at Olympic within the past five years had resulted in a renewed commitment to enforcing no smoking on campus, and the school’s principal enthusiastically welcomed the project, stating: “Smoking is the worst problem on the campus.”

The goal of the project was to work collaboratively with a school to develop and implement a tailored action plan to reduce pro-tobacco influences through working with the campus community to establish policy on two specific components of the CDC Guidelines. The purpose of this case study is to describe the process used and lessons learned in promoting the adoption of the CDC Guidelines in a school setting.

The Project Site: Olympic/Alliance High School

Olympic/Alliance High School is located in Concord, the largest city in Contra Costa County. Olympic is a continuation high school that enrolls students who have experienced chronic difficulty in a traditional high school. The requirements and schedules are usually more flexible at continuation schools than at more traditional high schools. The Alliance program, housed on the Olympic campus, is a special education program for youth with behavioral and academic problems. TPP worked to involve both Olympic and Alliance since they share the same

<table>
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<th>Continuation Schools in California</th>
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Continuation education has been a part of California’s education system since 1919 when legislation was passed requiring school districts to establish and maintain part-time classes for minors, 14 to 18 years old who did not attend school full time. In its early years, continuation education provided a more flexible schedule for students who needed to work but still wanted to finish school. In response to large numbers of students dropping out of school before graduation, regular high schools became more comprehensive in scope, adding vocational and special education curricula, and featuring tracks like college prep and non-college bound. Yet, still too many students were leaving school too early, leading to changes in how continuation high schools were used. By the 1960s, school districts had begun placing students with behavioral and attendance problems in continuation high schools and, in just 20 years, the number of continuation schools jumped from 12 in the 1963-64 school year to over 400 in 1981-82.

Today, more than 500 continuation schools serve approximately 70,000 students, representing 10%-15% of all secondary students in California. Continuation schools are characterized by a wide array of students: some are employed, some are poorly behaved, unmotivated, and alienated, while others choose continuation school because it offers more flexibility and less regimentation than regular high schools. Some continuation schools have special programs and facilities for pregnant teens and adolescent mothers. Continuation high schools typically provide smaller class sizes, additional counseling, and more individualized attention, instruction, and self-paced learning.
administration and campus. One of the largest continuation high schools in the state, Olympic annually enrolls a culturally and racially diverse student body of about 300 students (approximately 250 are Olympic students and 50 are Alliance students).

The stated mission of Olympic High School is “to help students achieve academic goals, to develop appropriate interpersonal skills, to make intelligent independent choices, and to become self-directed and responsible citizens.” To prepare students for the diverse, constantly changing world of the 21st century, the vision of the Olympic community is “to offer and develop a variety of special programs, resources, and alternative learning opportunities which encourage all students to live and work peacefully and collaboratively with others.”

Olympic students come from six traditional high schools and alternative programs in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District, as well as from other districts. Students may choose to meet graduation requirements and receive a diploma or earn credits and return to their home school. Students earn credits by completing standards based instructional curriculum. Credits are based on hours of class attendance or completed individual "units" or "contracts." Students are required to attend five classes a day.

As in all California public schools, smoking or possession of tobacco on school grounds is prohibited. However, students, teachers, and administrators agreed that smoking was a big problem at Olympic and the perception on campus was that most of the students were smokers.

Building Bridges and Assessing the Campus Environment

The methods used to conduct a campus assessment and recruit stakeholders for a tobacco planning group were deeply intertwined. Isabelle Barbour, the TPP Youth Mobilization Coordinator (YMC), identified building relationships and establishing trust with the staff and teachers at Olympic and Alliance as her primary goals. She worked to have a great deal of "face-to-face time" with adults on the campus and took every available opportunity to meet and speak with staff as well as create space for a student voice in the project. Barbour conducted a student focus group, key informant interviews, and a student survey as part of her initial campus assessment, and used these tools as opportunities to get Olympic and Alliance stakeholders interested and invested in the project.

In September 2002, Barbour addressed faculty and staff at an Olympic High School staff meeting. She explained her purpose on campus and admitted that she was not sure what the final project would look like. She answered difficult questions from skeptical teachers who wanted to know if she was bringing money to the school. Uncertain about how best to sell the project to a highly experienced and overworked faculty, she decided on the following message: "Rinda [the principal] has told me that smoking is a big problem on campus. I don't know what the answer is but I'm here to try to make things better, if only a little bit. You are the experts. You know this campus better than anyone and I want to talk to you."

Seven Olympic/Alliance staff members signed up to be part of a tobacco planning group. Barbour visited these faculty members informally after school. She conducted key informant interviews with planning group members to find out what they felt the problems were on
campus. She asked them what they thought the solutions to the problems were and kept reminding them: "You are the experts." Barbour set up an informal friendly network of teachers, staff, and administrators at the school. She respected their time, asked them about their opinions, and validated their frustrations. Over time, staff members referred Barbour to other teachers and the network grew. She continued to listen to the experts on campus and gather their ideas and concerns.

One of their ideas was to meet with students in the Leadership Class. This class was made up of about 16 students who had themselves elected (rather than been selected, as in traditional high schools) to take the class. The Leadership Class serves as the student voice about what is happening on campus and regularly meets with administration and staff to talk about concerns and suggestions for change. Leadership Class students also plan and implement some campus activities, such as the annual Thanksgiving feast, Olympic Day in the spring that includes games, barbecue, and dancing, and lets the student community know about special speakers coming to campus.

As with the adults, Barbour made it clear to the youth that she considered them to be experts from whom she needed information and ideas. Her approach with the youth was grounded in youth development theory. This approach has been found to be both powerful and effective in the resilience research literature – interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, developmental studies of youth growing up in adverse environments that document how most of these youth become healthy and successful despite trauma and adversity.4

In October 2002, Barbour conducted a focus group with Leadership Class students. When asked why students leave the campus during school hours, every single student said “to smoke,” or “to smoke and buy food.” Nine students said they thought that a lot of people smoke tobacco on campus, and everyone said a lot of students smoke tobacco or marijuana off campus. Four participants said they know a student who wants to quit smoking tobacco, but most couldn’t think of anything that would help Olympic students to actually stop. None of the participants said that students are rewarded for following school rules. When asked what changes they thought should be made at Olympic, five students said to have an open (unlocked) campus. Other suggestions were to have better food and more activities to get students more involved with school.

With students and staff represented in the early stages of her assessment, Barbour then attempted to reach parents. At the invitation of Principal Rinda Bartley, Barbour attended several meetings that included parents, and in late October she presented the project to parents and staff at the Olympic Site Council meeting. In November, Barbour met with the fledgling Parent Teacher Student Association. The three parents present signed up to join a workgroup. Barbour conducted a key informant interview with the mother of an Olympic student, and this parent attended early tobacco planning group meetings.

Barbour believed the tobacco problems on campus existed within a larger context and that these problems could not be successfully addressed in isolation. She worked to become a member of the school community, walking the halls after school, and talking with teachers and students. Barbour volunteered at the November 26th Olympic Thanksgiving celebration. "They have had people come on their campus before and they have been let down. I felt that consistently showing up and following through was the only way that I would develop credibility," she later reported.

Through her conversations with adults and youth on campus, the YMC realized that tempting youth to be involved in a tobacco project that met outside of class would be very difficult. The culture on campus was one in which youth did not stay after school unless they were in trouble. In addition, some of the youth had after school responsibilities, such as jobs. As a result, Barbour began to meet with youth and adults separately. Sensitive to the power imbalance between the adults and youth, Barbour believed that before the two groups could be mixed, each needed its own time to talk openly and honestly about problems. With the youth, she visited classrooms to talk with and survey youth about tobacco issues on campus.

**Key informant interviews**

Smoking is a complicated issue at Olympic and Alliance High School because it is connected to so many other factors that impact education. According to Principal Bartley, tobacco use and addiction to nicotine make it difficult for some students to concentrate on their schoolwork for a sustained time or cope with challenges during the day. Smoking was a huge distraction for students and staff. A great deal of staff time is spent trying to keep students on campus, in class, and not smoking. Once inside school grounds on this locked campus, there is no legal place to smoke, so it is not unusual that students needing a cigarette simply go over the fence and do not return. When this happens, the school loses the student along with the money it receives (based on daily student attendance) from the district. Teachers reported feeling like "jailors" monitoring the school’s perimeter to prevent students from scaling the fence between classes.

Barbour interviewed teachers, staff, and parents during October and November 2002. The interviews provide a fuller picture of complex and difficult issues facing some students. These issues, according to Principal Bartley, include depression, drug use, low family income, health issues, learning disabilities, probation, gang involvement, homelessness, risky sexual behavior, lack of parental involvement at school, and being behind with the school credits they need for graduation. “A lot of kids use drugs because they are self-medicating and have no space to deal with pain,” said one teacher. Another key informant noted that youth lack tools to deal with addiction, including tobacco, and may get little support at home. “For a lot of them, their families are heavily into tobacco,” said one key informant. “If someone in the household wants to quit, it’s almost impossible … they’re around it all the time.”

Teachers talked about how destabilizing tobacco dependence is in a classroom environment. “Sometimes you’ll be working with a kid in your class and they’ll say, ‘I don’t get it, I just need a cigarette right now.’ And the tardy problem – it all revolves around getting their cigarettes…They keep saying that if they’re allowed to smoke on campus they won’t be late.
They constantly are telling us that they need to get off campus to have their cigarette because they can’t function without it.”

Teachers were frustrated about not knowing how to handle the smoking problem. “It’s not my job to deal with this stuff, but I have to,” complained one teacher. “I see stuff I’m not supposed to see, like lighters and matches and I tell them I’m not supposed to see it and they put it away. I’m impacted by the tobacco problem because they are not in class. I wish we didn’t have to work so hard on the smoking issue.” “Smoking got a lot of kids here behind [in their schoolwork],” said another teacher. “I tell kids not to smoke, but I don’t turn them in.”

When asked for their ideas about solutions and changes, half of the key informants suggested having a place where youth could smoke. Others suggested developing a reward system for good behavior and attendance, and not punishing students when they are late or come back to school after leaving.

“Speak Your Mind” Student Survey

Barbour needed a starting point, a way to create youth interest in the project, and increase the visibility of the program for the students. She wanted youth to feel ownership over the tobacco-related planning that was to take place during the school year. Toward this end, she created the "Speak Your Mind” survey". This survey was part assessment instrument and part recruitment tool. She conducted the one-page, youth-friendly survey in December 2002 and January 2003. Students were asked about their relationships with adults, their use of tobacco and other drugs, consequences of getting caught using tobacco on campus, sources of worry, and types of topic areas and activities they would like to learn more about. Barbour let the students know that she would work with their teachers to come back to the classrooms and share the findings. "I think that if someone wants to take your time to give you a survey then you are owed the results. So we're going to make that happen," she told them. Barbour hoped that students' curiosity about the survey results would create a foothold for her to talk with the youth about the project. "Everyone is interested in themselves," she reasoned.

A total of 134 students in 12 classes completed the questionnaire, including 93 students from Olympic and 41 students from Alliance. Survey highlights, which provided important direction for the project and were key to informing the action plan, include:

- Although 82% of respondents stated having learned about the impact of tobacco on their health in school, 56% of Olympic students and 39% of Alliance students reported smoking a cigarette within the last two weeks (Table 1). While these represent very high smoking rates, the survey dispelled a prevalent belief on campus that nearly all students smoke.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Students Who Used Tobacco and/or Other Drugs in Last Two Weeks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of use</strong>                                      <strong>Number (percent) of students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoked a cigarette in last 2 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Used chew in last 2 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Used other drugs (i.e., weed, cocaine) in last 2 weeks</td>
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</table>

The name of this survey was created by Christine Iovannicci of The Contra Costa County Teen Age Program.
The 26 students (17 from Olympic and 9 from Alliance) who reported that they had been caught using tobacco on campus by an adult identified a number of consequences that resulted. Detention (47% for Olympic students and 56% for Alliance students) was the most common outcome. Warnings and being told to stop were the next most common results, while nothing happened for nearly a quarter of students caught smoking (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of consequence</th>
<th>Number (percent) of students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>6 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warning</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told to stop</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention</td>
<td>13 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given information on ways to quit tobacco</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given information on health</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While nearly 80% of students reported feeling that adults on the campus do care about them, conversely 72% of students did not feel that they are rewarded for following school rules. These last findings became the “hook” by which Barbour was able to get adults and youth to meet together and talk in February 2003.

The Planning Process

Early in 2003, some 15 individuals representing school staff, faculty, administration, students, and parents, along with the Center for Human Development and the County Office of Education signed up to join a stakeholders workgroup called the Olympic Tobacco Action Group (TAG). This group met 11 times throughout 2003, with both the principal and assistant principal participating regularly.

The first TAG meeting was held in January 2003 and was facilitated by three TPP staff, including Charlotte Dickson, TPP Policy Coordinator, who provided support and back-up throughout the project. Barbour explained the goals of the project and charged the workgroup with creating and implementing a campus tobacco action plan. TPP staff then conducted a training session in response to the needs of faculty and staff that had been assessed earlier in the school year. TPP described effective youth tobacco intervention and prevention strategies, changing norms in tobacco use among youth, and strategies used by TPP in previous successful projects aiming for policy change that involved youth in fundamental and meaningful ways. “As you know,” Barbour encouraged participants, “Young people are hungry to do good work, to see themselves in a positive light.” Dickson described some of the beneficial outcomes from youth participation in past tobacco control projects. “Some quit [using tobacco] or made a commitment to quit…One young woman who became a leader had been doing very poorly in school and improved her grades and became motivated to think about higher education.”

The purpose of the second TAG meeting held in late January was to build consensus on key campus issues through sharing information from the student survey and key informant interviews. Based on other TPP work involving youth participation in changing policy, and
because Olympic staff were committed to involving students, Barbour announced that she would be recruiting youth to attend the February meeting and urged teachers to spread the word about the meeting in class.

From October 2002 through May 2003, Barbour conducted 26 classroom presentations to involve Olympic and Alliance students in helping to assess the campus environment and to recruit youth to participate in the project. The first round included administering the survey “Speak Your Mind”. Barbour then returned to the same classrooms to share survey results with youth that had completed the survey. She invited students to come to TAG meetings and work on the campus tobacco plan. Barbour told students that their responses to the survey would be discussed at the February meeting. “The next tobacco action group will focus on the fact that you don’t feel rewarded for following school rules,” she told them, creating what she hoped was an incentive for students to participate in the planning process.

The February TAG meeting was the first joint youth and adult meeting, with six Olympic teachers and administrators and four students in attendance. The group focused on two key survey findings: that the majority of youth feel that adults on campus care about them and, conversely, that most students do not feel that they are rewarded when they follow school rules. The group brainstormed about the positive things youth do in school, how to create meaningful rewards, and the issues involved in setting up and implementing a rewards system.

That meeting resulted in establishing and implementing two types of rewards for following school rules:

- Students who had 100% attendance and no tardies for one week were dismissed five minutes early from second period before brunch and given freedom to use the time any way they wished as long as they did not violate school rules or norms. This is a meaningful reward because it allowed the selected students to get in line for brunch

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6 Students were also notified of TAG meetings through the Olympic Daily Bulletin, which is read during homeroom periods.

7 Other incentives included class credit, and pizza, juice, and other foods.
before the rest of the student body was released from class for brunch. The brunch line is usually very long. A two-week pilot test as held in March 2003.

- An honor roll was implemented to acknowledge students who had accumulated a certain number of credits that were earned by attendance, homework, and not leaving early.

The workgroup also talked about how to better handle smoking problems on campus as it was clear that addressing the need for cessation was essential so that the group could move forward into the area of campus policy. Plans were made, in collaboration with the Center for Human Development, a community-based agency participating in TAG meetings, to establish an on-campus cessation class for students who wanted to quit smoking. The class was set up by the Center for Human Development in March 2003 and continued through the end of the school year but was not renewed in the Fall for lack of funding.

After the rewards and the cessation class were in place, the group, fueled by these early successes, was ready to do some longer term planning. In March, TAG participants completed a “Comprehensive Tobacco Quiz” (adapted from a tool developed by the Wisconsin Department of Instruction) to assess the extent to which the campus had implemented any or all of the CDC Guidelines (see Attachment A). The TAG met a week later to review the results. Barbour facilitated the group in choosing and ranking areas for improvement that were: 1) most important to the campus, and 2) would be possible to complete by the end of the school year. The YMC then took the list to five classrooms and engaged students in a similar facilitated process of prioritizing options before the next TAG meeting in April. Barbour told the students that the group would be drafting the tobacco action plan for the campus at the April meeting and that faculty and staff wanted youth to have a voice in the plan. Two students attended the April TAG meeting and participated in developing the action plan.

Using an abridged version of the Wisconsin Department of Instruction tool based on the CDC Guidelines, the Tobacco Action Group, made up of Olympic/Alliance teachers, staff, and administrators answered 54 tobacco-related questions pertaining to school policy, curriculum, instruction, training, family and community involvement, cessation, and evaluation issues. The
results (listed below) provided data about the campus that helped guide the workgroup as they next proceeded to select priorities for the action plan:

**Policy**
- Olympic had policies prohibiting students, teachers, and visitors from using tobacco on campus, prohibiting tobacco advertising on campus, and providing prevention education.

- Olympic did not have policies focusing on reducing tobacco-related health risks, requiring that all students receive instruction in avoiding tobacco use, enforcing school tobacco-related policies consistently and equitably, or offering help to student who violate the tobacco use policy, rather than using solely punitive consequences.

**Curriculum**
- Olympic had curriculum on the physical and social consequences of tobacco use, accurate social norms regarding tobacco use, reasons students say they smoke, influences that promote tobacco use that include adults, peers, and media, and skills to communicate knowledge and personal attitudes about tobacco use.

- Olympic did not have curriculum covering advocacy skills applied to tobacco issues of skills to cope with tobacco use by parents and other family members.

**Instruction**
- Student services staff does present consistent tobacco-free lifestyle messages through counseling and educational materials.

- Olympic does not integrate tobacco instruction as part of comprehensive health instruction within the broader school health program and trained peer educators do not assist with classroom instruction.

**Training**
- Olympic does not involve youth in developing school tobacco programs and policies.

**Family and Community Involvement**
- Olympic personnel participate in a local tobacco-related community coalition or partnership.

- Olympic curriculum does not promote discussions at home by assigning homework and projects involving families, does not provide parent education on tobacco use prevention, community smoking cessation resources, and parent/child communication, and a school-community committee does not provide advice on school tobacco programs and policies.

**Cessation**
- Olympic does offer tobacco-use cessation services at school for students but not for teachers.

**Evaluation**
- Olympic regularly or systematically assesses the effectiveness of its policies and student cessation program, but not its tobacco related curriculum and instruction.
The Action Plan

Using the CDC Guidelines as a framework, the Olympic Tobacco Action group developed and finalized a short-term action plan during the April and May 2003 meetings (Figure 1). Throughout the assessment and planning process, and as the action plan was being developed, Olympic faculty and staff continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to the project through their attendance at meetings and active participation. The TAG planned to continue meeting in the Fall to develop and add long-term activities to the plan. This was not to be, however, as the Youth Mobilization Coordinator went on extended medical leave related to her pregnancy, which left the project without the consistent staffing and leadership that had helped it to flourish.

<p>| Figure 1. Olympic High School Short Term Tobacco Action Plan, April 2003 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDC Guideline</th>
<th>Action Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td>By 9/03, the Olympic High School tobacco policy will be changed to include the following: ▪ A clear rationale for the policy focusing on reducing health risks related to tobacco; ▪ Clear procedures for communicating policy to those affected by it (students, staff, parents, and visitors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td>By 10/03, tobacco-related policies will be effectively communicated to students, staff, parents, and visitors through a variety of means including: ▪ Signs posed in visible places; ▪ Written statements in student and faculty handbooks; ▪ Pamphlets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td>By 10/03, students in violation of the tobacco use policy will be consistently offered help in the form of education, counseling, or referral to cessation resources, rather than purely punitive consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cessation</strong></td>
<td>By 10/03, Olympic High School will offer smoking cessation services or referrals to students and teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cessation</strong></td>
<td>By 10/03, teachers will have tools and information related to cessation available to students in their classrooms. This information will include the 1-800-NOBUTTS help line number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>By 10/03, community resources related to tobacco use cessation will be taught at Olympic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implementation

In September 2003, at the beginning of the school year, TAG looked for ways to communicate campus tobacco successes to parents. To this end, the assistant principal made a brief presentation to parents attending the October 2003 Back to School Night. At the beginning of the school year the mood at Olympic was low. Barbour, back from her medical leave, easily reconnected with the faculty and staff at Olympic and listened to their concerns. Class sizes had increased from 17 to 25 students, further overwhelming already exhausted teachers. “Even though 25 doesn’t sound like a lot compared to traditional high schools, it’s way too many,” explained one key informant. “They are different kids and the whole Olympic model is being eroded by budget cuts.” The plan to have the Tobacco Action Group develop longer-term goals for the tobacco action plan was delayed and, due to the lack of consistent staffing, ultimately was not pursued further.
The reimbursement awards

The focus of the project during Fall 2003 was to get the group to a place where they could continue to work on the action plan with the YMC temporarily absent on maternity leave. TPP made $1,000 available in reimbursement awards to continue to support tobacco prevention work on campus and to provide an incentive to get the school to continue the work during a particularly stressful and low energy period. The funds could be used to reimburse expenses such as purchasing and translating educational materials, production costs, training, travel, and other activities related to integrating tobacco education and prevention into the campus.

In applying for the funds, the school had to address implementing one or two of the seven CDC Guidelines (previously listed on page 1). The intention of the awards was to help Olympic further the assessment goals related to their action plan. The school was not permitted to fund any in-class work or any cessation related programming. Because of the limitations of how the funds can be used, in-class activities were not eligible for funding.

With the YMC on maternity leave, the TPP Policy Coordinator stepped in to support policy coordination, provide training and technical assistance in the RFP application process, and oversee finalizing the award proposals. Olympic received two awards of $500 each. The first award was used to send students to a Bay Area tobacco conference, Teens Tackle Tobacco. The second award supported students to create a student code of conduct focusing on smoke free bathrooms.

Teens Tackle Tobacco Conference

In February 2004, four Olympic students and two teachers attended the one-day Bay Area Teens Tackle Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs High School Youth Conference in Berkeley. The conference addressed a variety of strategies for prevention education, awareness, advocacy, and featured workshops on youth advocacy, peer education, tobacco advertising and manipulation, and media awareness. Olympic youth returned to school excited and full of ideas to incorporate into the next phase of the project. A video, “Frontline: The Merchants of Cool” was purchased (using award funds) and was used to facilitate understanding and discussion about how the tobacco industry markets to and targets teens to get them addicted to tobacco early. These activities culminated in the smoke-free bathrooms project.

Smoke-free Bathrooms

The Leadership Class had already been thinking about creating a code of conduct and decided to first tackle the problem of smoking in the restrooms. “Walking into the bathrooms was instant cancer,” exclaimed one student. Widespread smoking in the bathrooms resulted in the administration actually closing the bathrooms during class and forcing students to use restrooms in the main office. This was an unwelcome turn of events for both staff and students. Leadership Class youth – including those who were smokers – felt that students have a right to breathe clean air, not be “hit in the face with clouds of smoke” when using the restrooms. Two teachers spent two days each planning with students and administration to conceive and monitor the project. As a complementary activity (that was not reimbursed by the award), the school prepared a lesson
plan that resulted in students writing a school-wide student code of conduct to keep restrooms and public spaces free of smoke, as well as other practices demonstrating mutual respect.

The students began by talking to the principal who was unwilling to open the restrooms until there was reason to believe the restrooms would remain smoke-free. The students accepted her challenge. They visited each classroom to explain that there would be a trial period when the restrooms would be open, and explained it was a matter of respect between peers not to smoke in the bathrooms. They also promised to report anyone they saw smoking in the restrooms.

The experiment failed during the first week as smoking resumed after the first day. After talking with their teachers, the students decided on another strategy for the second week: to become student monitors. Again, the students visited classrooms to explain their role and monitored the restrooms each period for a two-week period. Since the monitoring began, there has been no smoking and no graffiti and very little garbage in the restrooms. When asked why, students responded that it was a matter of school pride. The monitors also proudly note that they have seen other students actually picking up garbage off the floor of their own accord. Monitoring continued for another week and, during the last week of school, students were assigned to do spot checks.

Next year, returning students will play a strong part of the orientation process so new students are clearly told about the expectations of their peers from the beginning. Students will continue to monitor bathrooms during the first two weeks of the 2004-05 school year, and conduct a full campaign of posters, announcements, and reminders about the goal of open bathrooms and what it will take to maintain that privilege. If it goes well, they will again assign monitors to do spot checks as necessary.

**Outcomes**

In a short period of time, a number of key steps had been taken to counter pro-tobacco influences on the Olympic campus:

- A comprehensive needs assessment of the tobacco environment on the Olympic campus was conducted. This assessment raised awareness among the campus community about smoking issues as well as opinions and beliefs among faculty, staff, and students about tobacco-related problems and solutions.
- A committed working group representing the campus community and including community members was organized, creating a chance for youth and adults to talk honestly about tobacco use on campus.
- Extensive outreach was conducted to recruit students to participate in the process.
- Students had considerable input to the process and felt they had been heard.
- A system to reward students who had perfect attendance allowing them to leave class five minutes early before brunch was successfully pilot tested in March and has become an on-going feature of the student rewards system. In addition, an honor roll system was established. The names of honor roll students are announced during homeroom periods, prominently displayed in a display cabinet along a wall, and a
A recognition event for the honor roll is held during Senior Night for the graduating class.

- Students caught smoking on campus are offered help to quit smoking – in the form of referrals, counseling, and the 1-800-NoBUTTS hotline – in place of punishment.8
- Every objective in the tobacco action plan was met. However, Olympic no longer has a cessation class on campus due to finding cuts.
- Students undertook a successful campaign to ensure smoke free bathrooms on campus.
- Collaborative efforts led to other potential resources to continue ongoing tobacco work. Having learned that the Mt. Diablo Unified School District was writing a TUPE grant to the state, TPP suggested that Principal Bartley request funds be earmarked for Olympic High School smoking cessation. TPP also encouraged Bartley to share with the grant writer the process undertaken at Olympic, including the tobacco action plan, to include as part of the grant. The proposal was subsequently funded, and part of it will be used for smoking cessation at Olympic.

**Challenges**

**Student participation**

Unlike traditional high schools that generally feature many programs and activities, Olympic has no after school programming which became a significant challenge to involving youth. Trying to schedule a time when teachers and students could meet together and having meetings after school – the only time the teachers could attend – failed to attract youth. Olympic students are used to leaving school promptly at the end of the school day unless they had to stay because of detention. Also, unlike other TPP programs that relied heavily on youth participation, TPP was unable to move youth meetings into the community since students came from many different neighborhoods.

**Two Unique Student Populations**

From the beginning, TPP tried to include both Olympic and Alliance, in the project. For a variety of reasons, while mobilizing the Olympic staff went well, neither Alliance staff nor youth were ever very interested in the project. TPP did not have the resources to properly deal with issues at Alliance. Further, Olympic and Alliance schedules and faculty are different and it was difficult to schedule meetings that both could attend. Eventually, the project focused solely on Olympic staff and students. (See sidebar on following page for more information.)

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8 Olympic has replaced detention with a Responsibility Program. Students caught smoking on campus, particularly those who are caught repeatedly breaking the rules, are now required to spend 15 minutes at lunchtime pick up litter, cigarette butts, etc. on campus. The idea was to hold students responsible in ways that they could concretely “give back” to the campus by helping to clean up litter or help out in the office.
Parent participation

In general, parents of high school students tend to be less involved in their child's school than parents of younger children – a challenge many high schools face. The lack of parental involvement at Olympic could have been caused by numerous factors, including parents needing to work more than one job to support their family, time conflicts, and lack of interest, among others.

Shrinking school budgets

Like many schools, Olympic High School is continually struggling to work with fewer and fewer resources. Beginning a new, demanding project on campus meant asking more from teachers at a time of budget cuts and tremendous uncertainty.

Continuing the smoking cessation class for students

Even before the action plan was completed, the Tobacco Action Group created a smoking cessation class for students in partnership with a community-based agency participating in TAG meetings. The class continued through the end of the school year but was not renewed in the Fall due to funding cuts. While evidence of the effectiveness of youth cessation programming is not conclusive, the class provided a safe and supportive space for students thinking about quitting.

Lessons Learned

Treating Teachers, Students, and Parents as Experts

The CDC Guidelines convey a full spectrum of tobacco prevention and intervention activities that can be done on a school campus and are a useful reference tool to guide development of policies and actions that have been well researched and proven effective. While presented as ideas that might work on campus, the Youth Mobilization Coordinator was careful not to allow
the weight of guidelines published by the federal government to overshadow or obscure ideas coming from teachers and students on the frontlines. “They know what’s happening on campus better than anyone else ever will,” said Barbour. “I told them that I knew they know about the problem – and probably a lot of the solutions – better than anyone.” Being broad-based, the CDC Guidelines supported campus-generated solutions and helped to validate the expert opinions of those who live with the problems and their ability to develop effective solutions.

**Taking a Comprehensive Approach**

TPP began the project at Olympic knowing it would be an uphill struggle. While teachers and students did not need to be convinced that student smoking was a problem, teachers were stretched and stressed, and students did not feel listened to or involved in solving problems. The Youth Mobilization Coordinator realized that to get the campus community to pay attention to the tobacco project, she would need to take a first things first approach by acknowledging and helping to address some of the other critical unmet needs teachers and students were dealing with, along with tobacco. Olympic teachers and administration were skeptical about an outside project draining their limited time and resources. “I think that a lot of us at Olympic really do want to help with this, but it’s a tremendously big job, and we can’t do it by ourselves,” said one key informant. “We don’t have the time.” Students, on the other hand, felt like prisoners in a locked facility and resented that there was no system in place to recognize and reward those that did follow the rules and were doing well. According to one key informant, it was a time when “staff and students have low morale.” It was thus important that some tangible gains could be shown as quickly as possible.

In an effort to gain trust and support from the students, Barbour helped to establish and implement a reward system for good behavior. She also helped to establish a cessation class on campus, and used her connections with the county alcohol and drug program to facilitate meeting on campus for students struggling with alcohol and other drug problems using 12-step concepts. These actions provided additional resources and ideas that otherwise might not have been implemented, created goodwill, built good relationships and trust, and demonstrated flexibility and willingness to partner in practical ways.
Creating Ways for Youth to Participate

As in other successful projects undertaken by TPP that involved youth, it was clear that Olympic students needed to be brought into the process in a comprehensive and respectful way so that appropriate and meaningful solutions could be crafted. From the beginning, Barbour sought student opinion and input through the “Speak Your Mind” survey and student focus group. When TAG meetings began, Barbour intentionally set them up for adults only and met separately with youth. Sensitive to the power imbalance between the adults and youth, Barbour believed that before the two groups were mixed, each needed its own time to talk openly and honestly about problems. During the same time period, she held a series of well-publicized youth-centered meetings in classrooms. “Isabelle is coming to your classroom!” flyers announced the schedule of class visits through February and March. The YMC conducted parallel planning sessions using similar tools and exercises and shuttled issues back and forth to each group. She successfully recruited youth to attend a limited number of TAG meetings when it was most important to have youth voices present, and eventually came up with a tobacco action plan that involved the input of both adults and youth.

Following the completion of the tobacco action plan, Leadership Class youth were given the opportunity to attend a Bay Area youth conference on tobacco and returned to school motivated to incorporate what they learned to the campus. With the help of their teachers, these youth took leadership roles in finding ways to convince their peers to keep campus restrooms smoke free. The students not only took on an authority role that was focused on the common good, but also experienced what staff go through when students disrespect them and came to realize that that behavior is clearly unacceptable. Youth who are returning to Olympic have committed to educate new students about the restroom policy and continue to ensure that restrooms are smoke free.

At the end of the school year, students participating in smoke-free bathrooms activities suggested having a smoking cessation class or group on campus that would be led by “young, cool people” and that “RESPECT” be the motto of the school year next year. Ironically, while the administration has taken steps to avoid automatically punishing students found smoking on campus, the Leadership Class students think that students caught smoking in the restrooms should be immediately suspended.

Having a Committed Administration and Motivated Teachers

Knowing that the campus administration supported the project was a major factor in choosing Olympic which, along with a group of teachers that consistently attended TAG meetings, was key to the success of the project. Throughout the process, Barbour met regularly with the principal and/or vice principal to keep them informed about progress being made or barriers encountered and typically found them to be willing to pave the way to implement action items decided in TAG meetings. Barbour was credited with keeping the group informed and focused. “She’s wonderful about keeping track of what we did,” said one key informant. “We have so many things that we’re always thinking about that when she comes back with the feedback of what we’ve already done and what we said we would do, it is so helpful.”
Conclusion

TPP partnered with Olympic Continuation High School on a tobacco prevention project that brought additional resources to the campus, successfully organized teachers and students, and paved the way for future collaborations with the county health department and the school district. “Teachers can be critical, not wanting to cooperate with outside programs,” commented Olympic Principal Rinda Bartley. “[TPP] conducted the project in a gentle, respectful way and built a positive presence and precedent…They rallied us, brought food, encouraged kids to come to meetings…Our budget is in shambles. We never could have sent kids to the tobacco conference in Berkeley, or had a task force on smoking in bathrooms, or purchased videos about tobacco industry marketing to youth…Addressing tobacco issues in a quality, sustained way was icing on the cake we never would have gotten to.”