

**EL RANCHO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**SAFE SCHOOLS/HEALTHY STUDENTS GRANT INITIATIVE**  
**November 2011 Newsletter**

**UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

- 11/9 - Trauma, Grief & Loss in Children/Adolescents Training
- 11/14-18 - National Bullying Awareness Week
- 11/15 - Olweus Bullying Committee Training-Magee
- 11/16 - Olweus Bullying Committee Training-Magee
- 11/16 - Trauma, Grief & Loss in Children/Adolescents Training
- 11/17 - CMT Meeting & EWG Meeting
- 11/18 - Too Good for Drugs/Violence Program Ends
- 11/28 - School Site Coordinator's Meeting

**EL RANCHO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT WOWS U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION DUNCAN!**



Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education

The Safe Schools/Healthy Student Grant Initiative gave ERUSD the opportunity to turn many things around in terms of student and school safety within the city of Pico Rivera, and when U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan came to a Town Hall Meeting in October, he got a look at what local districts, students, teachers, and parents can accomplish in a very short time. And that look was impressive, indeed!

Secretary Duncan and several federal education officials, including Representatives Grace Napolitano and Linda Sanchez, appeared before a packed house at El Rancho High School on October 11 to emphasize the critical issue of encouraging children to not only stay in school, but continue on to higher education to gain coveted degrees from the nation's colleges and universities post-graduation. ERUSD, in its third year of utilizing the four-year federally-funded SS/HS initiative, has made significant strides in keeping its youth physically and emotionally safe within the classroom and community in order to create an environment of learning. Our kids succeed not only in academic endeavors, but are less threatened by violence and are racking up impressive numbers against substance abuse.

El Rancho Unified School District is one of 365 select communities currently taking part in this proven-to-work effort. And the benefits district students have gained in the past three years are making federal officials sit up and take notice that it is certainly working in Pico Rivera schools. A few of our accomplishments under the grant include:



Founder of Josephson Institute, Michael Josephson, Character Counts! with Dora Soto Delgado, SS/HS Project Coordinator (L), and Maria Huerta, SS/HS Mental Health Coordinator (R)

- Decreased truancy rates by 40%
- Decreased fighting on school property by 15%
- Decreased the fear of physical violence on campus by 17%
- Decreased number of students carrying weapons to school by 19%
- **Increased** the number of students receiving school-based mental health services by an amazing 30%!

And we've only just begun! Systemic change within the district is moving forward to prepare our students to become life-long learners who will excel academically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and culturally. These are results and goals that SS/HS Project Coordinator, Dora Delgado, shared with Secretary Duncan at the prestigious meeting last month. During the Q&A portion of the town meeting, Ms. Delgado asked the Secretary if the statistically shown success of the current grant would indicate further funding for school districts to continue the work of keeping students and communities safe in spite of violence and substance abuse problems that abound in our culture. Arne Duncan assured ERUSD administrators, teachers, and students that the government is striving to make sure the work will continue because "no school can be a great school until it is a safe school."



However, the school district is quick to note that grants are not the only source of assistance. It's about the old adage that it "takes a village" to care for our children, and its due to the efforts of partnering with the City of Pico Rivera, ERUSD Police Department, and the Los Angeles County Departments of Mental Health, Probation, Education, and Sheriff's Department that is bringing forth positive change in the way we teach and make safe havens for our children. By collaborating we are able to focus on five key areas: 1) Safe environments; 2) Alcohol, tobacco, and drug prevention; 3) School and community mental health services; 4) Early childhood social and emotional learning programs and 5) A climate of support systems for all students. Safe Schools do make for Healthy Students and El Rancho Unified School District can point with pride that it is diligent and serious in its goals of putting a college degree in every household by creating a Legacy of Success through the initiative by:

**IMPROVING Schools**  
**BUILDING Communities**  
**CHANGING Lives**