



### Montebello Five

1. Asset #3-Other adult relationships
2. Asset #5-Caring school climate
3. Asset #10-School Safety
4. Asset #22-School Engagement & Participation
5. Asset #24-Bonding to School

### Upcoming Activities

- 6/3 - School Site Coordinators Meeting
- 6/13 - ATOD HS Meeting
- 6/16 - ATOD ES & MS Meeting
- 6/24 - Mental Health Providers Meeting
- 6/26 - Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Training
- 6/28 - Suicide Prevention Training
- 8/24-8/25 - Too Good for Drugs & Too Good for Violence Training

## Montebello Unified School District Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grant Initiative

Take a Second, Make a Difference

June 2011 Newsletter

### IT'S REAL, IT'S TRAGIC: THEY'RE OUR KIDS, AND IT'S HAPPENING EVERY 100 MINUTES...

**Suicide:** It is an unthinkable act, yet it is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 14-24 today. Even more disturbing, it's the fourth leading cause of death for children 10 to 14. Most of us are unable to comprehend statistics like this. We find it difficult to talk about. We find it hard to believe that suicide is a serious threat among our school-aged children – aren't their lives just beginning?

It's often called the 'silent epidemic' but mental health professionals tell us that 80% of those contemplating suicide have talked about it beforehand and often give clear indications.

Montebello Unified School District administrators, teachers, and counselors are all too aware of these sad statistics. According to Michael Cobarrubias, director of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant initiative, it's a subject they take very seriously. MUSD strongly believes in taking a pro-active stance by educating staff, parents, and children about the warning signs of suicide and taking steps to prevent it from happening to any child within the district's 32,000 student population. While the district's teen suicide rate is very low, "one is too many," says Cobarrubias. District teachers will be given special training on June 28 to learn how they can be aware of the dangers facing some emotionally at-risk students. These teachers will share insight with all school personnel - from office staff to custodial and cafeteria workers - so that our children can be surrounded with a strong support system while they are in our care. Positive and timely interaction with parents becomes another preventative measure in this highly sensitive matter.

Many of us are inexperienced in "reading" the warning signs. What are they, and how can we tell the difference between normal adolescent angst and serious suicide ideation behavior? How can we address the depression that most teens contemplating suicide have, but are unable to deal with? How do they reach such a state of suffering that death is chosen to alleviate the pain?

Though there can be many causes that may prompt a teen to take his or her own life, these are the more typical factors leading to deep depression:

- Violence or abuse in the home
- Break up of the family unit
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Rejection by friends or peers, often in the form of bullying
- Substance abuse
- Inability to find success in school
- Experiencing loss of a loved one
- Unhealthy relationships or break-ups

According to mental health counselors and psychologists, these are some Red Alert signs to watch for:

- Complaints of emptiness, sadness, and fatigue, or

- physical illness symptoms
- Statements and jokes about death and suicide
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance
- Expressions of worry that no one cares or nothing matters
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Reckless or risk-taking behavior
- Marked personality change
- Begins to give away sentimental possessions

The above lists are by no means complete; there are myriad risk factors, including undiagnosed mental illness. This is why MUSD is working to implement a district-wide protocol with an effective response to suicide ideation that includes well-articulated steps and assessments for counselors, psychologists, and other support staff to use in their documented response. When unusual student behavior or attitudes are noted, the student and parents will be brought together with qualified professionals to assist teachers with the situation.

If a staff member identifies a student as potentially suicidal, a building administrator or a site crisis team member will be contacted immediately, and the student will be kept under constant adult supervision. A trained professional will meet with the student and complete a screening process to determine the level or degree of risk. The screening includes determining the student's specific plan, availability of method, and lethality of the method. Upon completion of the screening, parents will be notified and requested to come to the school. No child, regardless of the level of risk, will be sent home alone. Parents will sign a notification form and given a list community resources for mental health services or school-based mental health counseling services. If a parent or guardian refuses to sign the notification form, the school may proceed with seeking treatment or care for the child and write a report to the Department of Children and Family Services. If a risk is determined to be mild or low, counselors will work up a "No Harm" plan with the student: one approach may be to have the student agree either in writing or verbally to not harm his or her self.

The district employs a strict policy of confidentiality regarding a student who appears at risk of suicide. These matters are known of only by those directly involved with a treatment program.

This district will do all in its power to ensure that each and every perceived threat to health and safety is taken seriously every time, and that any student's emotional distress/instability will be treated with dignity, compassion, and professional care.

#### For additional information

Contact Michael Cobarrubias, Grant Director  
[Cobarrubias\\_mike@montebello.k12.ca.us](mailto:Cobarrubias_mike@montebello.k12.ca.us)  
[www.spsg-software.com/montebello](http://www.spsg-software.com/montebello)

### Kudos to...

#### SGT. Linh Dinh MUSD Police Dept.



The Montebello Unified School District is pleased to announce a new Core Team Management member for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant initiative, Sergeant Linh Dinh of MUSD's Police Department. Sgt. Dinh has served on the force for over six years in numerous capacities: first serving as a district-wide patrol officer, moving up to the rank of Corporal for field training, as well as serving as School Resource Officer for Montebello High School. After a 2009 promotion to Sergeant, Dinh took on the responsibility for the overall supervision of field operations, including several administrative assignments in personnel training, background checks, procurement, fleet management, and district emergency operations. Most recently, Sgt. Dinh has become the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Manager and Operations Chief following the departure of Capt. John Ortega earlier this year. He leads a department of 106 sworn and non-sworn officers who oversee the safety and security of all district schools, their students, staff, and faculty. Sgt. Dinh comes highly qualified with extensive experience in the area of disaster response and emergency preparedness.

Sgt. Dinh's career path has taken some twists and turns to reach his current calling. He graduated from UCLA in 1997 with a degree major in Geography with an emphasis on Biogeography. Teaching certificate in hand, he taught for one year in the district's Montebello High School. But as chance would have it, he started working for the City of Glendale as a Reserve Park Ranger for a number of years. Linh attended the LA County Sheriff's Department Reserve Academy and then moved on to the Rio Hondo Police Academy to achieve his certification as a full time officer. Emergency preparedness was a particular interest for Sgt. Dinh, but to achieve his current skill set he put in long hours training with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and California's Fire Marshal department as well as with local and regional fire/rescue agencies.

On the personal side of Linh Dinh, we find a husband and father, an enthusiastic Bruin's fan, a golfer who says he's trying to "figure out how to play a decent round," a guy who enjoys relaxing with action films and comedies, and a "wannabe handyman around the house who has no trouble starting projects - it's the completion of them that sometimes gets him in trouble!"

But Sgt. Dinh has had no problem completing a Search & Rescue Unit, which will give the district's first responders the ability to mobilize quickly and efficiently set up a tactical command post, medical treatment/triage areas, and initiate search and rescue. Next up on his list is the construction of a mobile EOC to be utilized during extended emergency operations. Add to his already loaded plate, Sgt. Dinh will be working to upgrade the district's radio communications network in order to meet FCC narrowbanding mandates. MUSD is indeed fortunate to have an officer with Sgt. Linh Dinh's capabilities. Welcome aboard!