



CA15th SAC

Student Advisory Committee

Congressman Mike Honda

May 18, 2002

Welcome!



CA15th SAC

Problem Statement



How does promotion of diversity and tolerance, or lack thereof, affect relationships and education in 15th Congressional District high school communities?



Survey Overview

The SAC surveyed high school students from 20 district high schools to examine how well local schools promote tolerance and diversity and to identify the most effective existing programs.

We contacted the following schools and collected over 430 surveys:

- Bellarmine
- Branham
- Cupertino
- Del Mar
- Gunderson
- Harker
- Leigh
- Leland
- Los Gatos
- Lynbrook
- Monta Vista
- New Valley
- Oak Grove
- Presentation
- Prospect
- Santa Clara
- Santa Teresa
- Saratoga
- Westmont
- Wilcox
- Willow Glen



Survey Questions

- 1) Does your school provide programs that promote diversity (e.g. curriculum, clubs, and activities)? If yes, please list a few of them and/or describe them.
- 2) How effective are the above-named programs in your school if they exist? Do students participate fully?
- 3) Do you feel that your school adequately addresses diversity (in terms of classes, clubs, and activities)? If not, how could your school improve?
- 4) Are you interested in learning about "differences," for lack of a better word, i.e. different cultures, belief systems, sexual orientations, and generations?
- 5) If your school were to offer classes or programs that focused on different cultures or belief systems, i.e. Asian literature, Eastern thought, world history from non-Western perspectives, or issues of diversity, i.e. hate crime or genocide studies, would you be interested in taking them? (Regardless of whether or not they could fit in your schedule)



Survey Questions, contd

- 6) Who do you feel most promotes diversity and tolerance in your school?
- 7) Which group do you feel has been the most influential in forming your perception of diversity?
- 8) Do you feel that there are tensions between you and your parents regarding diversity issues?
- 9) With whom do you feel you have the closest personal relationship?
- 10) Who do you feel is most responsible for setting the tone for diversity and tolerance in your school?
- 11) Have you ever participated in programs that are interactive and participant-driven to increase awareness about diversity and prejudice (e.g., Camp Anytown, New Bridges, church groups, etc.)? If yes, please specify which one(s).



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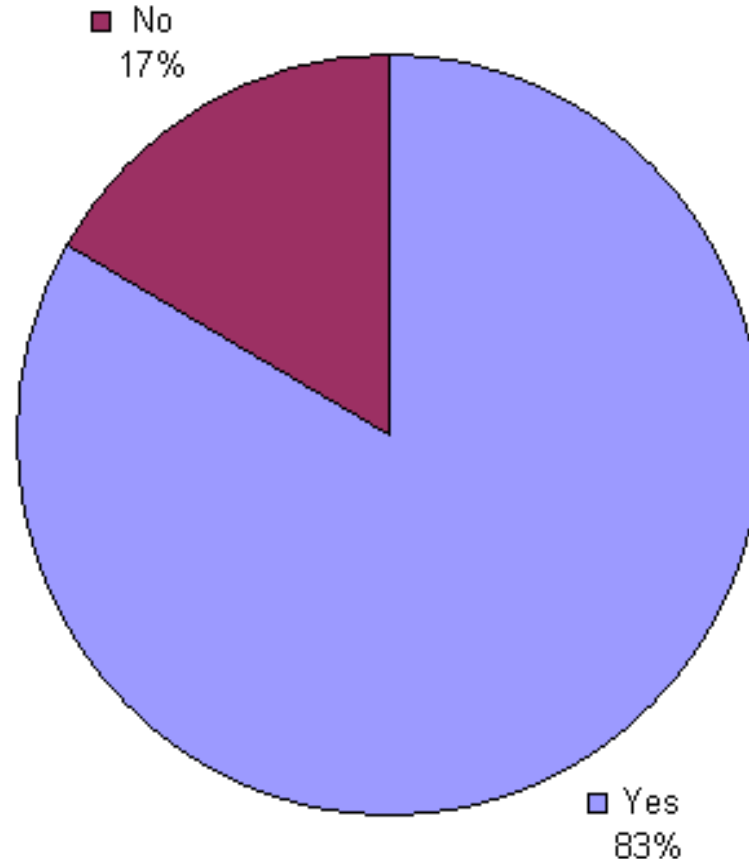
Survey Questions, contd

- 12) If you had the opportunity, would you participate in an out-of-school activity (similar to the ones described above) that promotes interaction and understanding between different and diverse groups, i.e. different ethnicities, belief systems, etc.?
- 13) Do you find that most of the students at your school are ethnically segregated?
- 14) Do you prefer to be around others of the same ethnic background?
- 15) Have you ever been a victim of racial intolerance?



Survey Results: *a snapshot*

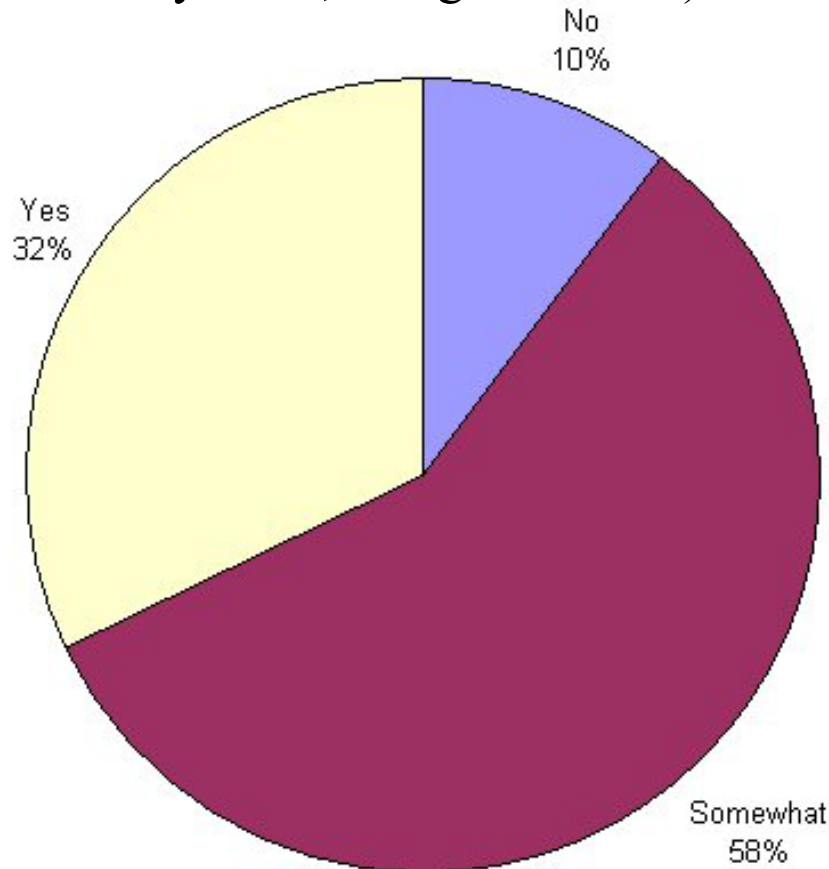
Question 1: Does your school provide programs that promote diversity (e.g. curriculum, clubs, and activities)?





Survey Results: *a snapshot*

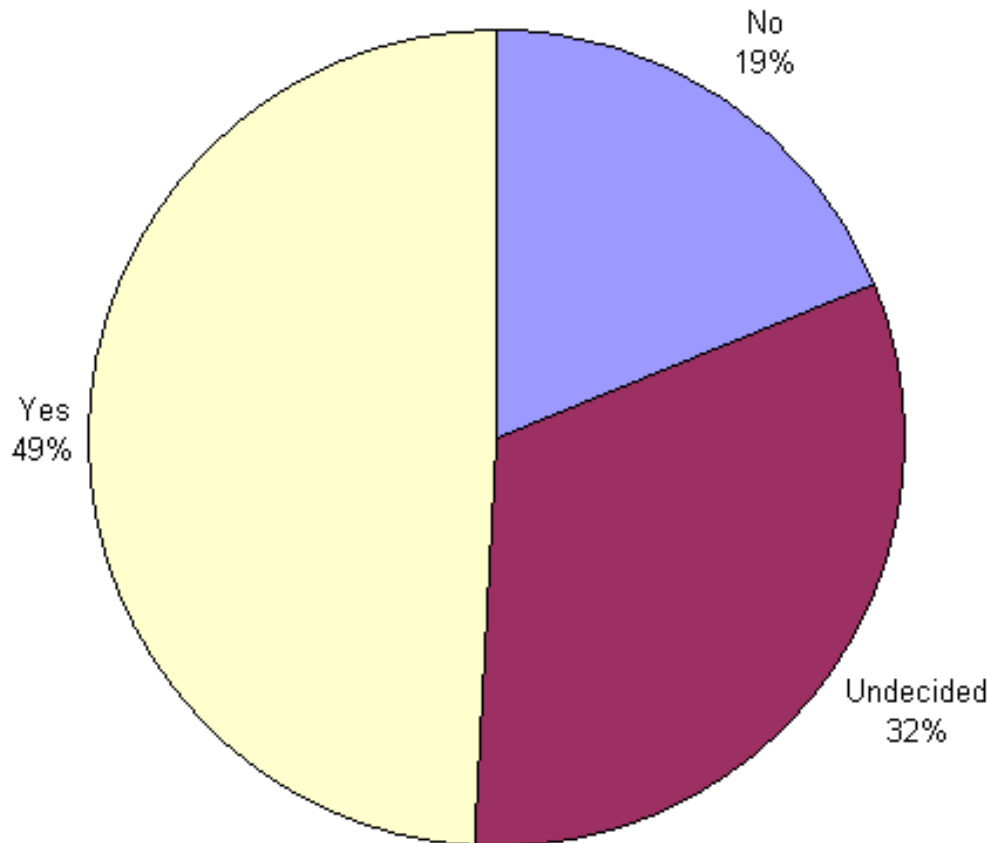
Question 4: Are you interested in learning about "differences?" (i.e. different cultures, belief systems, and generations)?





Survey Results: *a snapshot*

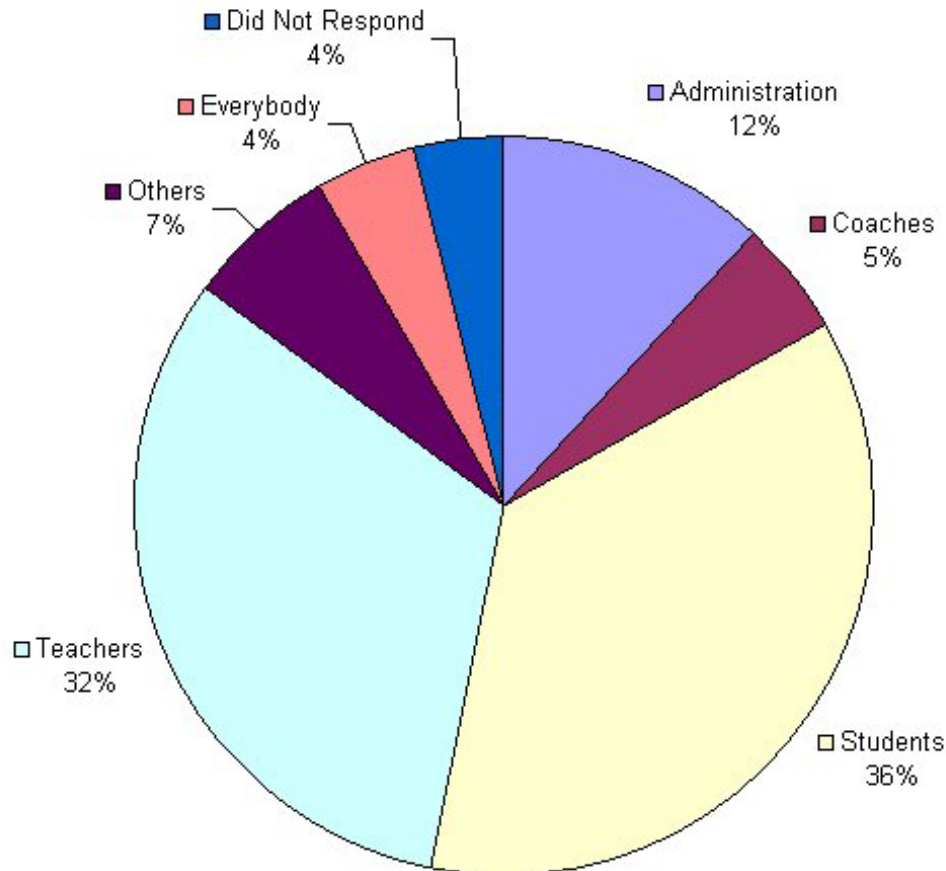
Question 5: If your school were to offer classes or programs that focused on different cultures or belief systems, would you be interested in taking them?





Survey Results: *a snapshot*

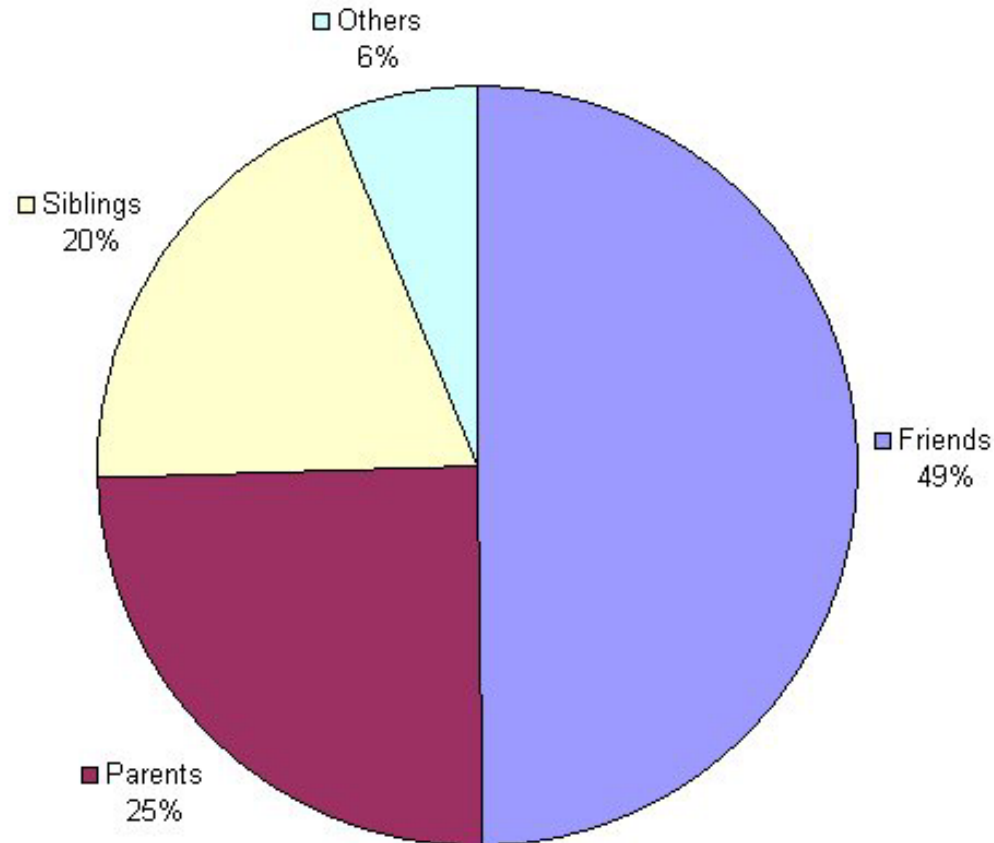
Question 6: Who you feel most promotes diversity and tolerance in your school?





Survey Results: *a snapshot*

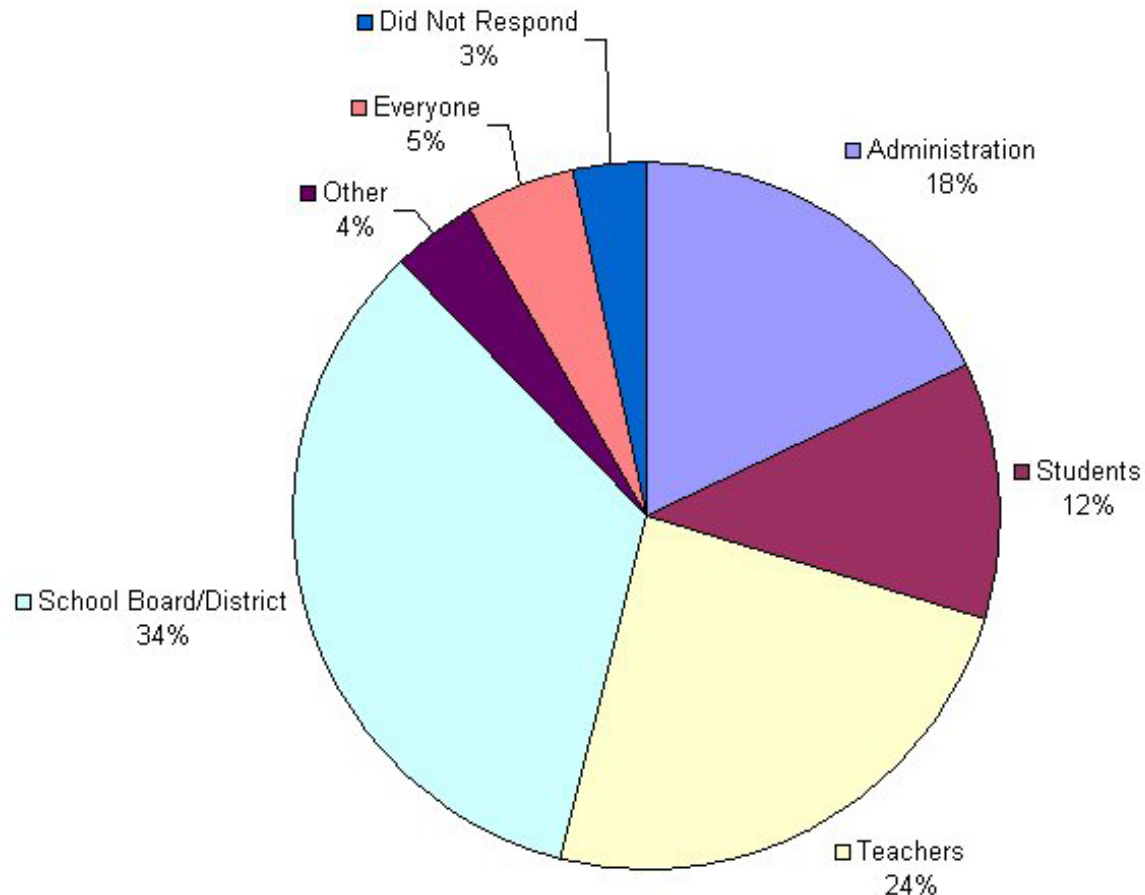
Question 9: With whom do you feel you have the closest personal relationship?





Survey Results: *a snapshot*

Question 10: Who you feel is most responsible for setting the tone for diversity and tolerance in your school?

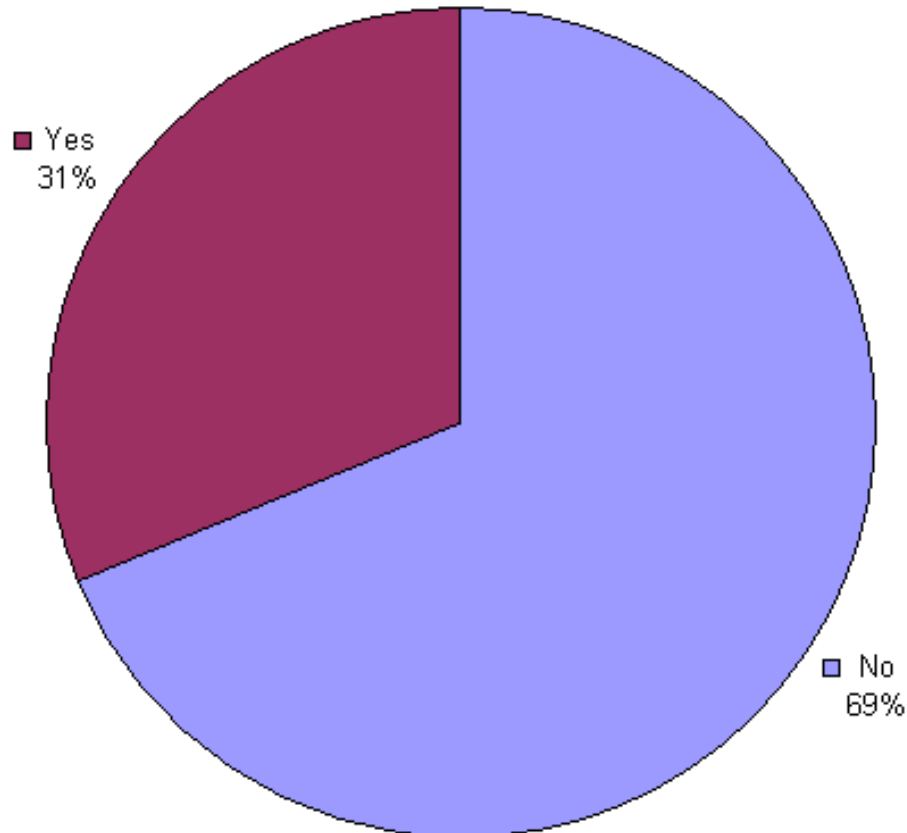




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Survey Results: *a snapshot*

Question 15: Have you ever been a victim of racial intolerance?





Survey Results: *student comments*

We received widely varying responses to our questions and throughout the survey invited students to comment further on their answers.

Availability of Programs & Clubs to Promote Diversity:

- *Which schools have the biggest offerings?* – Oak Grove & Wilcox
- *Which offerings are perceived as most effective?* – Wilcox
- *Which offerings are perceived as least effective?* – Santa Clara



Survey Results: *student comments*

Responsibility for Promoting Tolerance:

- *Respondents from all high schools indicated that the student body shares in the responsibility for promoting tolerance.*
- *Other responsible parties mentioned include administration, teachers (some named specific outstanding teachers), parents, friends, and specific departments (e.g., English Dept).*



Survey Results: *student comments*

Critical Influences on Attitudes Toward Diversity:

- *A majority identified church groups as key influencers.*
- *Several students also mentioned growing up in a diverse community as having influenced their views.*
- *Most students indicated that race was not a factor in choosing friendships. Shared interests and an individual's character were both viewed as more important.*



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Superintendent Interviews

At the beginning of April, superintendents of the school districts within the 15th Congressional District were invited to discuss their perspective on the state of diversity and tolerance in their high schools with members of the SAC.

In part due to the busy schedules of the superintendents, response to these interview requests was limited to just one superintendent and school district—Paul Perotti of the Santa Clara Unified School District.



Superintendent Interviews

Paul Perotti—SCUSD:

- *The superintendent and district office play a role in setting district policy based on state and district standards. Additionally, the school itself interprets these policies to meet their own needs.*
- *More co-operative planning is needed among the sources of policies and regulations—city council, school district, state govt.*
- *The 1970's witnessed discrimination against African Americans and the 1980's the targeting of Hispanics. Today, the group most frequently encountering intolerance may be homosexuals.*
- *Time and a lack of government funding are the biggest obstacles to further promotion of diversity and tolerance.*



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Survey Wrap-up

- Any sincere effort must address the root causes of intolerance.
- Students find their parents and friends to be most influential, yet parents receive the least attention in terms of addressing diversity education.
- There should be a link between school programs and the family unit.



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Responsibilities

In addition to surveying the current status of diversity and tolerance in 15th Congressional District schools, some members of the SAC also considered the roles that students, parents, teachers, and administrators are expected to fulfill in developing and maintaining a school atmosphere that welcomes and respects diversity.

The responsibilities of the following groups were considered:

- Families
- Student Govt, District School Board, and School Administration
- Teachers and School Staff
- Policymakers



Responsibilities: *families*

- Families are responsible for instilling a sense of diversity in children because religious, cultural, and ethnic traditions are passed down primarily through family members.
- An April 2001 Gallup Poll specifically pointed to parents as the figures considered the most influential in engendering a sense of tolerance among their children.
- The family environment is essential to the promotion of diversity and tolerance because family members serve as behavioral models and as support for young children.



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Responsibilities: “governing” bodies

- Participants:
 - District School Boards
 - School Administration
 - Associated Student Body
- Common Goals:
 - *Create a learning environment where the opportunity is not hindered by bias toward race, color, gender, culture, religion, sexual orientation, or other categorical umbrellas.*
 - *Provide a safe campus free from discrimination*



Responsibilities: “governing” bodies

District School Boards

- Provide direction for schools within the district
- Example: The Saratoga-Los Gatos Joint School District adopted “*to vigorously promote an atmosphere of mutual respect and dignity for all students, staff, parents, and community members*” as one of their district goals.

School Administration

- Strive to lead teachers and staff to create a school environment where students feel safe to express themselves without having to put on a costume to conform to others around them.



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Responsibilities: “*governing*” *bodies*

The Associated Student Body (student government)

- Create programs that actively promotes acceptance of others
- Provide opportunities for students of different backgrounds to interact with one another
- Example: An assembly or rally about diversity in general, followed by small group discussion among the students.



Responsibilities: *teachers & staff*

- Teachers and school staff have the closest authoritative role with students.
- They have constant contact with the students and are able to build a relationship with the students.
- Teachers and staff should take advantage of this unique position to consciously monitor the class and school environment.
- They should seek to facilitate discussion in class regarding negative events that may occur in class or in school; teachers should not hesitate to take a moral stance on the derogatory terms used such as “chink” toward an Asian or “cracker” toward a Caucasian.



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Responsibilities: *policymakers*

- Policymakers face a difficult challenge in responding to societal problems like those surrounding diversity and tolerance.
- Recent Congressional initiatives:
 - Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990 – required cooperative collection and analysis of data on hate crimes by Justice Dept and FBI.
 - 1994 Violent Crime Control & Law Enforcement Act – refined legal definition of a “hate crime”.
- Federal reach is limited:
 - Equal Rights Amendment of the 70’s failed to be ratified.
 - Affirmative action policies remain extremely controversial.



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Responsibilities: *policymakers*

- Legislation proposing to solve diversity and tolerance issues also encounter difficulties when they neglect cultural influences that may lie at the core of the problem.
- Perpetrators of intolerance may believe that their acts or words are for the good of their society and that others will think the same way they do.
- Legislators and community leaders should continue to formulate new solutions. However, they must remember that solutions such as education and counseling aimed at directly altering negative mentalities must be included.



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Where do we go from here?

Our task was to devise an *action plan* for the 15th Congressional District. We incorporated the data gathered as part of the school and superintendent surveys as well as the research on group responsibilities and added to it some of our own findings.

We conducted phone interviews with each of the schools from the congressional district, following a brief, consistent script:



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Phone Interviews

Hi my name is _____, and I am a member of the Student Advisory Committee of Congressman Mike Honda. May I please speak to the diversity director, activities director, or anyone who would be familiar with diversification at your high school? We are addressing the status of diversity and tolerance in the 15th congressional district and are interested in learning about what your school is doing or has done in this matter. Examples are: clubs, classes, fairs, bulletin boards, posters, Saturday activities, or diversity nights. If you have not implemented any of these activities, is it because you do not see a need for them in your school or simply funding matters? Have you had surveys about diversity in the past? If so, what were the results, if not, would you be opposed to having one? Could you please tell me the demographics of your school? Thank you very much for your help.

Maggie



Findings

Overall, our findings correlated with the results of our student surveys. Our “high scoring” schools did a good job of promoting diversity and tolerance. “Low scoring” schools have room for improvement.

A sampling:

- One of the high scoring private schools promoted diversity and tolerance education by offering curriculum that was not European or American based. We liked that this school had an Asian literature class as a credited substitute for an English requirement.
- Another high scoring public school had high student involvement in diversity clubs. These clubs put on activities such as hosting speakers or sponsoring a cultural diversity week.



Findings

- On the opposite end of the spectrum, in one school offering no programs to promote diversity and tolerance education, we found that there was a significantly greater number of students who reported they had been a victim of racial intolerance.
- Another low scoring school reported that since their school was 95% single ethnocentric, they did not need any diversity or tolerance education. We felt this to be faulty logic and that students benefit from learning what is going on outside of their neighbor and outside of their culture.



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Recommendations

- If you haven't already done so, commit yourself and your school now to promoting tolerance and respect in every aspect of school life. Involve large, diverse groups of students in every step of the process.
- Adopt an equity, respect or anti-bias policy. Include consequences for hate crimes and other bias incidents, and publish the policy in the school handbook.
- Research all applicable hate-crime and civil rights laws. School system attorneys can advise you about the school's obligations to protect students under federal, state and local laws.



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A few names that can help

GSA

Gay-Straight Alliance Network

AACI

Asian Americans for Community Involvement

NCCJ/Camp Anytown

National Conference for Community and Justice

Project Bridges

Promotes interracial understanding through leadership development, cultural and family activities, and other after school programs.

...and many, many others...



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A Call to Action

- Cooperation between *families, schools,* and the neighboring *community* can help to encourage diversity and tolerance in our high schools.
- These three groups are interdependent; they rely on each other. Like a three-legged stool, each point keeps the weight of diversity and tolerance balanced.
- We have recommended actions for each group. When each group does their part, we achieve the most promising results.



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A Call to Action: *families*

- Teach children to be tolerant of other cultures and beliefs.
- Be involved with school and diversity programs.
- Encourage family discussions that allow children to express their feelings.
- Prepare foods of other cultures and teach children about the beliefs of a given culture.
- Give children opportunities to foster their own beliefs.



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A Call to Action: *schools*

- Establish a diversity club, which serves as an Umbrella Club, for all diversity and tolerance groups within a school.
- Make a school-wide pledge, to abolish intolerance.
- Involve all school personnel in creating a school climate in which prejudice and hate motivated behavior are not acceptable, but also permits the expression of diverse viewpoints.
- Initiate classroom discussions to allow students to express their feelings or beliefs in a wholesome manner.



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A Call to Action: *schools*

- Provide classes that promote cultural education.
- Provide clubs that promote tolerance and diversity.
- Survey teachers about their ethnic backgrounds and ask them to share experiences involving prejudice with the students.
- Entire faculty should be aware of the various manifestations of hate and be competent and prepared to address intolerance issues.



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A Call to Action: *community*

- Sponsorship of school cultural days. Ask neighboring businesses to support the schools efforts to promote tolerance, by sponsoring cultural days.
- Provide civic cultural diversity events such as parades or civic sponsored cultural education days. Promote the education of different cultures within the town or city.
- As a community, support school campaigns for the promotion of tolerance. Encourage by sponsoring the school when needed such as donating during fundraisers.



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Thanks for coming!