



Success Story: Planned Parenthood of the Greater Northwest

Increasing Self-Confidence and School Safety through Community Service

With nearly 20 years of experience offering youth development programming, [Planned Parenthood of the Greater Northwest](#) (PPGNW) has a longstanding commitment to serving adolescents. In 2010, supported with funding from the [Office of Adolescent Health](#), PPGNW and five other Planned Parenthoods began to implement the evidence-based Wyman Center's Teen Outreach Program (TOP™) to address the high rates of teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection (STI), and poverty across communities in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. A key component of TOP™ is that youth take the lead in identifying, developing, and participating in community service learning (CSL) projects in addition to the TOP™ curriculum. PPGNW's Director of Education shared, "One of the things that makes TOP™ unique is that it is so youth voice-driven. Youth name the issues that they see in their community and identify what they can do to help solve them."

Students in a TOP™ Club in Portland, Oregon observed and experienced that bullying and name calling made it difficult for students to be themselves, feel comfortable at school, and learn in a safe environment. PPGNW's Director of Education shared, "The students worked to counter the saying 'sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me.'" For their CSL project, students engaged the school community by showing self-pride and pride for overlooked identities. By printing stickers for all students that said "Proud to be...", the TOP™ club provided their peers with an opportunity to fill in stickers with words and pictures. For the day,

students walked through school with stickers that read "Proud to be Latino", "Proud to be an artist", and "Proud to be me" along with dozens of others. In conjunction with the stickers, the students implemented what they called "a box of insults." This activity involved writing down names they had been called or had called someone else and dropping them into the box as a way to symbolically let go of the label. Additionally, the students put together a Facebook group with over 130 members that included educational videos and various statistics about bullying. This CSL project started in one TOP™ club and engaged not only students in their own school, but also students at other schools so that they too could feel comfortable in their own skin and feel safe in their learning environment. The campaign garnered a great deal of attention spreading to other schools in the area, and even to a school in the Dominican Republic.



Students at Wilson High School conduct a Community Service Learning activity to prevent bullying. Credit: Planned Parenthood of the Greater Northwest



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TOP™ is a nine-month group-based youth development program that includes 25 curriculum sessions. The youth in the program work to develop healthy behaviors, life skills, and a sense of purpose. In particular, the goals of the program are to reduce teen pregnancy rates, delay the onset of sexual activity, increase contraceptive use among sexually active youth, decrease academic failure, and increase positive attitudes toward service and community engagement. Critical to the program is the development of supportive relationships with adult facilitators and peers. PPGNW's Director of Education shared, "We have amazing facilitators. They really care about the communities and working with youth. They are committed to the youth voice component."

As an evidence-based intervention, TOP™ has been shown to decrease pregnancy, suspension, and school dropout.¹ Through PPGNW and their partners' implementation of TOP™, almost 2,000 youth per year have received TOP and given back to their communities through their CSL projects. In addition to program delivery, PPGNW is conducting a randomized controlled study with Philliber Research Associates, and they are hopeful that they will see positive outcomes as they continue into the fifth year of implementation.

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¹ Allen, J. P., Philliber, S., Herrling, S., & Kuperminc, G. P. (1997). Preventing teen pregnancy and academic failure: Experimental evaluation of a developmentally based approach. *Child Development*, 68(4), 729-742.