There will be a panel presentation at the SCRA Program at the 2004 Eastern Psychological Association Annual Meeting in Washington, D,C. on April 16"' titled, community psychologists in schools: Examining positive youth development, emotional intelligence, program evaluation and mental health. " Panelists are: Milton A. Fuentes; Jane Shepard; Maurice Elias; and Cindy Crusto. The panel presentations will be followed by informal round-table discussion to explore the role of SIIG and its future direction.

Making Use of the Positive Youth Development Approach
in Schools

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Over the past seven years, I've had the opportunity to consult to several middle and high schools located in the New Haven area. Whether it was to plan and implement programs in peer mediation or social competency, train teachers in team-building, or to attend committees to improve school climate, I have found that both youth and adults respond enthusiastically when projects were put in the context of Positive Youth Development.

One of the core constructs of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach is the notion that "problem-free is not fully prepared" (Pittman, 1991). It emphasizes that focusing solely on decreasing and/or preventing risky behaviors misses the whole person and his/her potential. Instead, the PYD approach insists that all adolescents need supports and opportunities to develop the aspects of identity and areas of ability necessary to become healthy and successful adults (National Training Institute for Community Youth Work, 2002). The key principles of Positive Youth Development are often described as the 5 C's: *Competence* (academic, social, and vocational); *Confidence* (positive self-concept); *Connections* (to community, family, peers); *Character* (positive values, integrity, and moral values); and *Contributions* (active meaningful roles in decision-making, facilitating change) (Public/Private Ventures, 2000). There is a strong emphasis on the interaction of the youth and the environment with attention to cultural factors (Deyhle, 1995; Boykin & Toms, 1985), Finally, adults are encouraged to see young people as resources in their social environments whether in the family school, or greater community and creating adult/youth partnerships is emphasized as a best practice to achieve success.

From the PYD perspective, it is the engagement of students in their own learning and in the school system processes which holds the promise of health promotion and problem prevention. Three of my experiences highlight these ideas: implementing block scheduling, a peer mediation program, and a safe school committee.

Block scheduling at high schools means that students have fewer classes each day with each class being longer, and in the case of one suburban high school, ninety minutes, At first many teachers were resistant and wondered how they would hold students' attention for so long. What this has led to in the six years since its inception, however, are classes that involve more interactive learning and opportunities for, students to work in groups and to be responsible for teaching one another about the subject matter. As we know, people generally remember information they have to teach much better than information they passively receive, This for-mat also encourages the development of teamwork and group decision-making skills. Teachers are encouraged to see these additional competencies as related to improved academic performance as well as serving other positive youth development functions. As a result, teachers and students become allies in the classroom.

Peer mediation programs teach students valuable conflict resolution skills while engaging them in sharing the responsibility for improving, overall school climate by helping other students resolve tensions that could otherwise escalate into more severe interpersonal problems. When they make a referral to the program, adults in the school send the message that the students have special skills and perspectives because of their peer status and students feel their work is meaningful.

In the high school I consult to, the success of the peer mediation program led to the inclusion of students when a safe school committee was formed. The school leaders chose to acknowledge the important role students could play in maintaining a positive school environment. The committee, which also includes teachers, parents, the security resource officer, administrators, guidance counselors, and community stakeholders, meets quarterly to discuss school safety from a wide range of perspectives. Students have taken the daily responsibility for meeting visitors at the front door and giving them an identification badge as a means of ensuring strangers are not entering the school. These students take turns during their free periods and provide coverage all day. They have a radio that puts them in constant touch with the administrators and school security personnel. So, their opinions are heard in the committee meetings and they are active in the daily security of their school.

On a much larger scale, the organization What Kids Can Do in partnership with the Forum for Youth Investment published a working paper about 40 youth-adult partnerships in the San Francisco Bay Area that are working toward educational chance.

"Taking Democracy in Hand" summarizes some of their ideas and projects ranging from advocating, for multi-ethnic curriculum to capacity building for effective youth leadership in schools (Cervone, 2002), Both organizations also have well-developed websites that provide a wealth of information related to the Positive
Youth Development field (www.forumforyouthinvestment.org, and www.wkcd.org).

Encouraging adults in schools to listen to students and provide them with opportunities to share responsibility is not always easy but I have found that once the process starts, the rewards that participants experience provide inspiration to continue the change process and that the PYD model gives them a useful framework to build with.

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