

# Teen Dating Violence Prevention Policy Project: Key Evaluation Findings



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harder+company  
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## Background

Peace Over Violence (POV) was funded by The California Endowment to implement the Teen Dating Violence (TDV) Prevention Policy Project at Miguel Contreras Learning Complex – School of Global Studies during the 2008-2009 school year. POV facilitators worked with a small group of student leaders and two advisory classes to teach students about teen dating violence and to empower them to develop a campaign to raise awareness and educate the student body about teen dating violence. POV facilitators also supported students in several campus-wide teen dating violence awareness events and provided student leadership training.

Harder and Company Community Research (Harder and Company) conducted an evaluation of the TDV Prevention Policy Project. The goal of the evaluation was to assess the implementation and the impact of the project. Harder and Company developed all data collection instruments in collaboration with POV staff members. Data were collected by POV staff members and analyzed by the evaluation team. This report highlights key findings from one focus group with 11 student leaders, two student leader interviews, and two school staff interviews (one teacher and one resource specialist).

## Key Findings

### TDV Prevention Activities

During the 2008-2009 school year, POV staff members worked with student leaders to organize Denim Day, a school-wide campaign to raise awareness and educate the public about rape and sexual assault. Students leaders made presentations on teen dating violence in several classrooms, designed shirts, and distributed flyers. They also developed monologues and a skit involving teen dating violence for a school assembly and participated in a poster competition on dating violence. In September 2008, POV provided a youth leadership summit for students that focused on developing advocacy and public speaking skills. Further, POV facilitators taught *In Touch With Teens*, a relationship violence prevention curriculum to two advisory classes once a week during the school year, and supported students to create the Students Together Organizing Peace (STOP) Club on campus. During summer 2009, student leaders from MCLC completed a four-week course in violence prevention specialist training to become volunteer presenters. In September 2009, STOP Club officers participated in a leadership luncheon with POV facilitators and MCLC faculty advisors.

### Impact of TDV Prevention Activities

Both students and school staff indicated that the prevention activities at their school have had a positive impact. Students reported



that through Denim Day they were able to provide information regarding teen dating and sexual violence to students at their school.

One student stated, "...because of Denim Day, there were [a] lot of students who were involved and they were really into the info that they have learned." They encouraged students to report dating violence if they or someone they know are experiencing it and provided the POV hotline. One student leader indicated that they saw some changes in students' behaviors and reported, "Actually, I saw some changes in school – not big ones, but I saw like sometimes the girls not hitting the guys anymore. I saw more changes in how the girls reacted." Similarly school staff reported that through Denim Day the student body now know and recognize POV. It increased knowledge about teen dating violence among the student body and encourages students to think about it more critically. Students also learned how to support friends who are experiencing teen dating violence.

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– Student

The TDV prevention activities also impacted the student leaders as they became more aware of teen dating violence and became motivated to help others. The following are comments from student leaders:

- “At first I didn’t take it seriously, but now I do. It has helped me, help other people.”
- “STOP has made me realize that violence is very bad, it also motivated me to participate in my school.”
- “[TDV activities] changed what I think is acceptable. I use to think that the victim would get blamed because it was her fault – now I see it really is not her fault.”

One student leader indicated that involvement in the TDV prevention activities changed the way he/she interacts with his/her peers and said, “It has changed how we treat each other – it can affect someone if you say something bad to them. It has kind of changed what I look for in a relationship – because you have to get to know that person really well. That way you know how they really act when they’re mad or something is really bothering them.” School staff also expressed that student leaders’ participation in the TDV prevention activities gave them an opportunity to take a leadership position.

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– Student

Additionally, as a result of TDV prevention activities on campus, such as Denim Day and other large scale outreach campaigns, school staff members are more knowledgeable about domestic violence and teen dating violence issues and they want to learn more about it. One school staff member stated, “There has been a slight change. The knowledge is there. If we keep it up, I believe there will be a larger change.” Student leaders also noted that the prevention activities have positively impacted teachers and school staff. One student leader reported, “I think it made them [teachers] feel like they could help other students, by bringing these things to the school. If students need help they can

talk to a teacher. I think they got more information (they knew some), but I think they learned as well.”

### Challenges Encountered

Some of the challenges encountered by the student leaders were that some students did not take the topic of teen dating violence seriously and other students did not feel comfortable with the topic because they were dating violence survivors. One student stated, “Some didn’t take it seriously until I told them to keep their comment to themselves, then they realized that we are serious about this important movement. Also, some were shy and intimidated about the topic.” Another student reported that the challenge was “having them [students] pay attention to what we were saying and take it serious[ly], not as a joke.”

Another challenge of the TDV prevention activities on campus was the teacher buy-in. Teachers often advise other student groups and they may consider POV’s TDV prevention work with the students as a competition to their student groups. One school staff member reported, “Teachers believe other issues are more important (immigration, gang violence, etc.). So teachers are more concerned with these issues amongst the students and are doing their own thing.” Additionally, the school administrative staff is spread thin and they have less time to help promote or support the activities and agenda of an outside agency like POV.

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### Satisfaction with TDV Prevention Activities

Overall, all school staff member indicated that they are satisfied with TDV prevention activities at their school site. One teacher felt that it exceeded his/her expectations and said, “I’m actually pretty surprised it turned out so well. I didn’t think it would have as much impact as it did.” Students interviewed also indicated that they were satisfied with their involvement in the TDV prevention activities. One student leader stated, “I learned a lot and I view things differently now. I’ll be involved with POV in the next years to bring the message to other youth.”

### Suggested Improvements

Some improvements suggested by student leaders include greater support from community and organization leaders and having survivors of teen dating violence speak about their experiences. Some student leaders also would like to see more students become involved with the project in the future. School staff members suggested that the program be more organized, improve classroom management, and focus more on building relationships with students. Another suggestion is to alternate the group structure on a weekly basis so that groups vary from large combined co-ed group or smaller co-ed groups to gender-specific groups. Lastly, a school staff member

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– Teacher

suggested that POV's activities expand to other schools at Miguel Contreras so impact of the program can be deeper and campus-wide.