

Youth Together

What comes to mind when you think of the first day of school? From 1994 to 1998, for many Castlemont High School students this day was one filled with both excitement and anxiety. The resolution? Youth Together. YT was formed in 1996 by a group of concerned youth, parents, community members and school officials to address many of the issues that were hindering the success of students in East Bay Area schools.

YT operates student organizing clubs called Youth Together Student Teams at four Oakland high-school campuses. These multiracial teams further the organization's mission of empowering youth to create change. They spearhead school-based efforts to prevent and reduce conflict and violence. Team members develop leadership skills, create an environment of multiracial solidarity, and work to improve school conditions. YT student leaders work in partnership with the Oakland Unified School District and collaborate with local school-site principals. The student leaders envision their schools as a central and vital resource for their communities.

“Team members develop leadership skills, create an environment of multiracial solidarity, and work to improve school conditions.”

Prishni Murillo, executive director of YT, says, “YT provides students an opportunity for meaningful engagement. It’s a vehicle to empower students.” YT addresses issues students may be discussing with their friends in an organized way that “bridges the conversation with school leaders,” she explains.

The results of the students’ efforts have been extremely positive. To address specific issues around race relations, YT student leaders sponsored early morning workshops, lunchtime rallies, dances and the painting of a multicultural mural. Results included an increased level of academic engagement, decreased truancy and fewer interracial conflicts among YT student leaders and their friends.

YT allows students to take on leadership roles and drive programs for peace, unity and justice. It provides a platform to execute a plan to address student concerns. Students learn they have the ability to change themselves, their friends and their schools.

Funding from Clorox supported the Youth Together Student Teams.



