



# TigerTalk

A Publication of the Terman Middle School PTA

March 8, 2007

Terman Middle School  
655 Arastradero Road  
Palo Alto, CA 94306  
(650)856-9810  
<http://www.terman.pausd.org>

## CALENDAR

### March

Fri. 9th 8:30 a.m.  
PTA Executive Board Meeting

Fri. 9th 7:00 p.m.  
School Dance

Mon. 12th 3:30 p.m.  
School Site Council Meeting

Tues. 13th  
Parent Visitation Day

Wed. 14th  
Book-a-Thon ends

Wed. 14th 7-9 p.m.  
PTA Meeting & Parent Ed. Night  
"Bullying and Social Norms at Terman"

Thurs. 15th-Sat. 17th  
School Play *The Tempest*

Thurs. 22nd  
Cotillion classes begin

Fri. 23rd  
Deadline for Site Council Survey

Thurs. 29th 8:30 a.m.  
PTA Executive Board Meeting

Fri. 30th  
**Minimum Day** (dismissal at 12:20 p.m.)  
End of 3rd Quarter

Sat. 31st  
Direct Appeal Campaign ends

### April

Mon. 2nd—Fri. 6th  
**No School**—Spring Break

Mon. 9th 3:30 p.m.  
School Site Council Meeting

Wed. 11th 7:00-9:00 p.m.  
PTA Election Meeting & Parent Ed.  
Night  
"Financial Literacy for Families with  
Children"

Wed. 18th 2:00 p.m.  
Volunteer Appreciation Event

Fri. 20th  
Parent Visitation Day

## Letter from the Principal

Dear Terman Community,

One of the gifts the school communities received from the state legislature this year, in the form of Assembly Bill 1802, was additional funding for school counselors. For Terman that meant we were able to hire a third counselor and provide a counselor for each grade level. Since December, Michele Chin has been working entirely with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and Melanie Blaskower entirely with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Our new counselor, Terri Nelson, joined us at the end of November and has been working with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Terri worked at Terman last year completing her student intern work for her counseling credential. Her presence on our team has been virtually seamless.

Having a counselor at each grade level is a terrific support system for all students here at Terman. Many parents and students, especially at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, do not realize the value of the counselor program. The counselor is a student advocate as well as a coach for students to learn how to become their own advocates. Counselors do not deal with discipline, but may work with the administration to help students find appropriate behaviors.

Going to see your counselor does not mean you have a problem. Rather it provides a positive adult who can assist and support the student through the middle school years. Next year, Ms. Chin will be staying with this year's 7<sup>th</sup> grade class and will move with them to become the 8<sup>th</sup> grade counselor, Ms. Blaskower will pick up this year's 6<sup>th</sup> graders as they become 7<sup>th</sup> graders and follow them through to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Eventually,

each counselor will start with a class in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and continue with them until the class is promoted to high school.

As parents, if you are having a question about program or scheduling or support for your student you should contact the counselor. They will help you or refer you to a reliable source for help. If you feel that your student is not comfortable in their grade level then you should be contacting the counselor for advice. Middle School is more than a transition from elementary to high school. It is the beginning of adolescence, wanting to establish an identity and beginning to rely on sources outside of the home. Don't hesitate to contact your student's counselor.

Parents, we also ask that you consider both sides whenever your student shares what appears to be a problem or injustice at school. It is understandable that a student will present his/her version of a situation without considering the other side. Often a situation takes on a different perspective when you hear what else was happening at the time.

Please save time to come and to see our annual play "*The Tempest*" performed March 15 through March 17 here at Terman. The students and Mrs. Rose put in many hours and long afternoons after

*Continued on page 2*

## Tiger Talk

*TigerTalk* is published monthly during the school year by the nonprofit Parent Teacher Association of Terman Middle School.

Principal	Carmen Giedt
PTA President	Joan Jacobus
Executive Vice President	Sharon Dally
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To Submit Articles for Publication:

Email stories relating to the PTA and its activities to Susan Voll at [foleyvoll@yahoo.com](mailto:foleyvoll@yahoo.com).

Email stories relating to academic or after-school activities to the Principal at [cgiedt@pausd.org](mailto:cgiedt@pausd.org).

Attachment should be sent as MSWord or text-only documents. Flyers, coupons, charts and other artistic or hard-to-format items should be placed in the *TigerTalk* folder in the PTA box, located in the school office. They should be on white paper. Only flyers announcing PTA and/or PAUSD sponsored activities may be included. Write your name and phone number on the back in case we have any questions. All submissions are subject to editing for space and content.

Information in this newsletter is provided as a community service. The mention of any business, service or organization in this newsletter does not imply endorsement by the Terman PTA or the PAUSD.

### Next issue

Submission Deadline: 5 p.m. Wed. March 21

Publication Date: Tuesday, April 10

### eNews

To subscribe or unsubscribe, send an email to:

[majordomo@laki.pausd.palo-alto.ca.us](mailto:majordomo@laki.pausd.palo-alto.ca.us) with the following:

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### Parent Network

To join the online yahoo group, send an email to either parent network co-chair: Anni Weston at [anni@mcvicker.org](mailto:anni@mcvicker.org) or Aarti Johri at [Aarti\\_johri@hotmail.com](mailto:Aarti_johri@hotmail.com).

## Letter from the Principal *continued from page 1*

school and weekends to bring this play to our stage. We are grateful to our staff and many volunteers who made this production so successful. Thanks to the PTA the stage will be well lit with new spot lights this year.

We hope that you will be able to make it to our Orchestra/Choir concert on March 28<sup>th</sup>. We are very proud of our musicians, and very thankful to have the wonderful music teachers that we do. The last concerts of the year will be on June 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> for the band and orchestra and choir.

The School Site Council will be having elections again in May for the next school year. We are currently soliciting nominations and will send out ballots with *TigerTalk* at the end of May. School Site Council is responsible for overseeing the School Improvement Plan and for reviewing academic progress of the school and progress on district goals. You may contact Linda Lingg, Chair, at [magnons@pacbell.net](mailto:magnons@pacbell.net) or the principal at [cgiedt@pausd.org](mailto:cgiedt@pausd.org).

## Communication

This year our website has been nothing short of phenomenal thanks to our Webmistress Carol Bly. It is updated weekly and sometimes daily. Please check it whenever you need up to date information about school happenings.

We also have weekly *eNews*, *TigerTalk*, parent conferences, classroom newsletters, notices home, etc. Undoubtedly, however, we are missing people, and there are surely people who feel they are not getting the kind, or frequency, of communication that they desire. Please let us know if you need communication from the school that you feel you are not getting. We know there is always room for improvement. Every staff member has email and by now a voicemail for phone calls. Check our website on a regular basis for updates.

Sincerely,

Carmen M. Giedt

# PTA President's Letter

Dear Terman Families,

We hope you all came back refreshed from the "ski week" break. It's hard to believe, but we're nearly three-quarters of the way through the school year and already plans are well underway for next year.

Our PTA nominating committee has been hard at work recruiting candidates for next year's PTA officers and committee chairs. Many of our stalwart volunteers over the past few years are leaving to move on to Gunn, so if the nominating committee contacts you, please say YES! Even better, don't wait to be called. Contact any of the committee members (Tina Tang, Lynn Kidder, Sujata Joshi, Leslie Fiedler, Jan Rossi, Tanya Henderson, and Carol Kibler) and ask which volunteer jobs best fit your time and talents. Check out the PTA roster on the Terman website to get an idea of the variety of jobs available. Remember that PTA events and programs greatly enrich your child's experience here at Terman, but none of it—social events, communications vehicles, fundraising for school support, and much more—happens without volunteers.

Speaking of volunteers, there are a few we want to thank in particular. Susan Voll and Yasuko Weyhrauch edit and produce the *TigerTalk* newsletter every month to keep you in touch with what's happening at school. Lisa Schmidt edits the weekly *eNews* and does a great job balancing completeness with brevity. Nitay Gill and her team of volunteers host monthly staff appreciation events that are a big hit with our hard-working Terman teachers and staff. And finally, Jan Rossi, with the help of numerous parent and community volunteers, coordinated a very successful science fair that stimulated a lot of great hands-on science on the part of our Terman students. And while we can't name you all, the unsung heroes who drive on field trips, shelve books in the library, and quietly help in many other ways are also much appreciated.

One very visible area where the PTA makes a difference is our educational grants program, coordinated by Daisy Zook. The second round of grants for this academic year was awarded recently and included funds for:

1. A followspot to enhance the stage lighting in the Café for drama productions and music concerts. It will be installed in time for the upcoming performances of *The Tempest*.
2. Seven high-quality non-stick skillet, one for each of the stations in the Home Economics classroom, which will help ensure that all students are equally successful

in their cooking projects.

3. Thirty copies each of five novels to be used in literature circles in 7<sup>th</sup> grade English classes. These titles, related to the theme of multiculturalism, supplement the core literature materials.

You won't want to miss the PTA-sponsored parent education events coming up at Terman. On March 14, Philippe Rey, Psy.D., will be discussing social norms and social cruelty (bullying). Dr. Rey, the executive director of Adolescent Counseling Services, is a gifted speaker with valuable insights on these topics of great importance to all middle school families. Assistant Principal Mike O'Neill will join Dr. Rey to answer any of your questions. See the flyer in this issue of *TigerTalk* for more details. And be sure to mark your calendars for April 11, when we will have a presentation entitled "Financial Literacy for Families with Children" by Terman parent and Financial Planner and Advisor Bruce Jaffe. We will also elect our PTA officers for next year at that meeting.

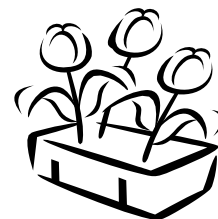
Finally, the Palo Alto Unified School District will be making decisions in the next few months that will profoundly affect all students in our district for years to come. A new superintendent is being selected, school attendance area boundaries are being adjusted to accommodate enrollment growth, and a long-range facilities master plan is being developed. Community input is welcomed on all of these decisions. We urge you to stay informed and get involved.

As always, we welcome your questions, comments and participation.

Sincerely,

Joan Jacobus  
PTA President  
jjacobus@sbcglobal.net

Sharon Dally  
PTA Executive Vice President  
sharon.dally@gmail.com



# From the Assistant Principal

## Site Council Survey

### Attention Parents and Students:

The Terman Site Council is interested in what you think. We are conducting our annual survey and need your participation. All data collected will be anonymous and will not be associated with individual names.

To increase participation, we are offering the following incentives:

1. **Parent Survey** - Parents should print the "Thank you" page at the end of survey, write their student's name on the page, and sign it. Students will then return it to their first period teacher. The first period class with the highest participation rate will win a pizza party at lunch. Parents should print and sign a "Thank you" page for each child.

2. **Student Survey** – Students should print and write their name on their "Thank you" page and return it to the bin in the office to receive a prize.

To access the survey, please visit the Terman web site at [www.terman.pausd.org](http://www.terman.pausd.org) and click on the appropriate link to take the survey. Print copies are available in the office. We will announce times when the computer lab is open at lunch for students to take it there. Hurry! The survey closes **March 23**.

## Traffic Near Campus

Traffic in the parking lot continues to be a challenge. To ensure the safety of our students, we would like to remind drivers of the following guidelines:

- When entering the parking lot for drop off, vehicles should pull as far forward to the curb as possible. Students should exit the car at the curb quickly to avoid congestion.
- When picking up students, drivers should utilize the loading zone that is painted on the pavement in the east section of the parking lot beyond the curb. Only when this is full should drivers wait at the curb near the flagpole.
- Drivers may only use the front parking lot; the rear cul-de-sac and parking area near the field is off limits during the school day as well as thirty minutes before



and after school.

- Reminder from the Palo Alto Police Department: Seatbelts must be worn, even in the parking lot. Also, drivers need to obey the "No right turn on red when children are present" signs at the Terman Dr. / Arastradero Rd. / Donald Dr. intersection.

## Personal Electronics

While enjoying a basketball game in my usual courtside seat last week, I noticed one of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders awash in electronics. The young man who caught my eye was simultaneously talking on a cell phone, listening to an iPod on the other ear, and playing a mini game console.

While I find this rather amazing, students should exercise caution with what they bring to school.

- Students are strongly discouraged from bringing personal electronics on campus.
- Students bring their valuables to school at their own risk. We cannot be responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged property.
- Valuables should not be left unattended or laying around in backpacks; 100% of items reported missing or stolen were unattended.
- Students should not use personal electronics in class, unless doing so for learning purposes with the permission of their teacher. Cell phones should always be off.

## After School Sports

The buzz around campus recently focused on the success of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade basketball teams. Watching the school community come together to support our student-athletes has been fantastic.

The after school sports program is jointly administered by the City of Palo Alto and School District. Together we are pleased to offer sports opportunities in three seasons: Fall (girls' volleyball, flag football, and cross country), winter (basketball), and spring (wrestling and track and field events). Terman students compete against schools both inside and outside of Palo Alto in the Art David Athletic League.

*Continued on page 5*

# TERMAN UPDATE



## From the Library

It is always a treat to read a very good book! Listed below you will find the winners of some of this year's children's book awards.

All books are either available or soon to be available from our school library and also the Palo Alto Public libraries. Students and their families are encouraged to read these excellent new books!

The 2007 Newbery Award (for an American author of an outstanding children's fiction book.)

### The Higher Power of Lucky by Susan Patron

Fearing that her legal guardian plans to abandon her to return to France, ten-year-old aspiring scientist Lucky Trimble determines to run away while also continuing to seek the Higher Power that will bring stability to her life.

2007 Newbery Honor Books

### Penny from Heaven by Jennifer L. Holm

As she turns twelve during the summer of 1953, Penny gains new insights into herself and her family while also learning a secret about her father's death.

### Hattie Big Sky by Kirby Larson

Sixteen-year-old Hattie Brooks inherits her uncle's homesteading claim in Montana in 1917 and encounters some unexpected problems related to the war in Europe.

### Rules by Cynthia Lord

Frustrated at life with an autistic brother, twelve-year-old Catherine longs for a normal existence but her world is further complicated by a friendship with a young paraplegic.

2007 Batchelder Award (for the publisher of an outstanding children's book originally published in a foreign language.)

### The Pull of the Ocean by Jean-Claude Mourlevat

Loosely based on Charles Perrault's "Tom Thumb," seven brothers in modern-day France flee their poor parents' farm, led by the youngest who, although mute and unusually small, is exceptionally wise.

2007 Siebert Award (for the author of the most distinguished non fiction book written in English.)

### Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11

by Catherine Thimmesh

Chronicles the Apollo 11 mission, the spaceflight that landed the first man on Earth's moon on July 20, 1969, emphasizing the contributions and reactions of the thousands of people who made the mission successful.

Dede Barnhart  
Library Media Teacher

## From the Assistant Principal *continued from page 4*

Players are taught by coaches hired and supervised by the City. All coaches undergo background checks. We are fortunate to work with many coaches who have been with the program for several seasons and know our students well. All students are welcome to participate. Every student who registers will be placed on a team; there are no cuts. Athletes are also guaranteed playing time once on a

team. Whether a student is an experienced athlete or novice, there is an opportunity to play and have fun.

Mike O'Neill  
Assistant Principal

## French Classes

Mme. Raman collaborated with Anne Jensen of Gunn High School, to bring the French club students to visit with Terman's French 1B classes. The students watched a cancan dance show, a skit in French and took part in a cultural trivia game. "Laissez le bon temps rouler!" In all the French classes, we celebrated Mardi Gras (which fell on February 20th this year). This festival, known as Carnaval in France and other countries, is celebrated with great fervor in New Orleans. Students learned about the origins of Mardi Gras and also Carnaval. They made colorful masks, listened to zydeco music, wore traditional Mardi Gras beads and ate crepes (with nutella and other yummy fillings) made by their classmates.

Vyjayanthi Raman  
French Teacher

## Music Notes

Congratulations to all music students for outstanding performances. The Orchestra and Choir performed Dec. 6 and the Bands on January 31 and February 1. Concert Band, Choir and 7/8 Orchestra also toured to the elementary schools on February 15.

There are many exciting activities planned for the spring semester.

March 28 Terman Orchestra/Choir Concert 7:00@Terman  
 April 27-28 CMEA Band Festival at Gunn  
 May 5 May Fete Parade  
 May 9 Honor Concert 7:00@Gunn

June 6 Terman Orchestra/Choir Concert 7:00@Terman  
 June 7 Terman Bands 6:30@Terman

Thank you again for your continued support of our program.

Mark Dungan, Band Director  
 Lisa Lawrence, Band Director  
 Beerli Moalem, Orchestra Director  
 Naomi Temes, Choir Director  
 Nancy Coffey, Music Coordinator

## TERMAN SCIENCE FAIR

Terman's young scientists showed off the results of their recent investigations at the annual Terman Science Fair on Wednesday, January 24. Science classes visited the displays during the day and families enjoyed them in the evening. Students had to present their work to judges who asked them many questions about their experiments and gave them feedback on their work.

In all there were 60 projects that involved 100 students-- that's 1/6th of the school!! The caliber of science presented at Terman's science fair truly impressed the judges. Most of our young scientists will be taking their science fair projects to the next level --the annual Santa Clara County Fair (aka Synopsis Silicon Valley Science and Technology Championship), March 13-14. In the past Terman has been one of the top participating schools at the county fair and we expect this year's young scientists will continue that tradition.

The photos from this year's fair capture much of the students' creativity, hard work and variety.

Robin Young Ames  
Science Teacher and IS

## **Brain Day in the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Classes**

Researchers from the Stanford Neuroscience Department shared samples and stories with the 7<sup>th</sup> graders on January 31 and February 1.

Tammy Juarez  
Science Teacher

## **School Directory Updates**

The following is a correction to the school directory:

## **The Cotillion is coming to Terman! Sign up today!**

Requested by parents and organized by the PTA, Cotillion classes are starting at Terman on Thurs, Mar 22 7:30-8:30 pm for 7 sessions. Students learn ballroom and contemporary dance and dance etiquette under the direction of Barry Woodruff. For years, this has been a popular program with students at Jordan.

Sign up forms in the Terman office or in this issue of *TigerTalk*.  
\$100 checks payable to Woodruff Dance Studio, return to school office.  
Scholarships available. Contact Janet Ramusack Levine, [jpgalmtree@comcast.net](mailto:jpgalmtree@comcast.net)

## **School Dance**

March 9, Friday

7 to 9:30 p.m. – Café

For all grades

Sponsored and chaperoned by the 7th grade teachers, with help from parents.  
March Madness is the theme.

Tickets sold at the Student Store.  
\$4 with student body card, \$5 without.  
NO tickets will be sold at the door.

All library fines, missing books and sports uniforms must be cleared  
to purchase ticket.

Snacks and drinks available for \$1.00 at the dance.

## Notice of Community Meetings to Solicit Public Comment



### Long-Range Facilities Master Plan

The Palo Alto Unified School District is interested in presenting proposed modernization and growth needs for district facilities for community input. This information will be presented to the Board of Trustees on Tuesday, April 24, 2007.

The District welcomes your comments on the project.

#### ◆ Elementary Schools

Thursday, March 8, 2007, 6:30 p.m.  
PAUSD Offices, 25 Churchill Ave. (Staff Development Center)

#### ◆ Middle Schools

Wednesday, March 14, 2007, 6:30 p.m.  
PAUSD Offices, 25 Churchill Ave. (Staff Development Center)

#### ◆ High Schools

Thursday, March 22, 2007, 6:30 p.m.  
PAUSD Offices, 25 Churchill Ave. (Staff Development Center)

Written and oral comments will be accepted at these meetings, and you may also send your written comments to Tom Hodges at 25 Churchill Avenue, Building D, or e-mail [thodges@ocmi.com](mailto:thodges@ocmi.com). The District will accept comments on this information until March 31, 2007.

## Do You Want to Serve on the 2007-2009 Paly Site Council?

**DEADLINE: APRIL 20, 2007**

PARENTS. Please consider submitting your name as a candidate for a two-year position on the Paly School Site Council. We are presently seeking candidates for 2 parent representative seats on the Paly Site Council for 2007-2009. To be eligible, a parent must have a student at Paly during his/her entire term and able to attend afternoon meetings. In addition, no employee of the PAUSD is eligible to serve as a parent rep.

Each candidate will be asked to write a short statement which will appear on a ballot in the August Information packet. Each candidate should also plan to attend the meetings on May 7, May 21 and June 4. The deadline for submitting your name and the short statement is April 20. Please feel free to attend the March 5, March 19 or April 16 meetings to learn more about the Council. If you are interested or wish to nominate someone, please call Site Council Coordinator Edie Miller at 329-3710 ext 7301.

The Site Council is composed of parents, staff and students elected to represent their constituencies in site-based decision making. The Council meets after school on most first and third Mondays of each month of the school year. The Council is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the school plan and understanding the school budget. This includes selecting and monitoring school projects which may receive approximately \$50,000. The Council is regularly updated on school and district issues, budget matters and other important issues. Details are available in the Paly Site Council minutes and agendas published on the LINK, in the REPORTER and posted in the main hall.

## Would You Like to Serve on the Gunn Site Council for 2007-9?

Site Council needs two (2) parent representatives to serve a two-year term, starting next September. Are you interested? Here are the FAQs:

**WHO CAN SERVE?** Any Gunn parent. Gunn's site council consists of 15 members: 4 faculty, 3 staff, 4 parents and 4 students. Each representative serves a 2-year term, maximum four years in a row. Two of the four parents are up for reelection or replacement each year.

**WHAT DOES GUNN'S SITE COUNCIL DO?** Allocate

about \$45,000 in funds from state and district grants on departmental projects. Also work on the School Site Plan, create the School Report Card, and work on WASC.

**WHEN DO WE MEET?** Monday afternoons at 3:30pm for one to 1.5 hours once or twice a month.

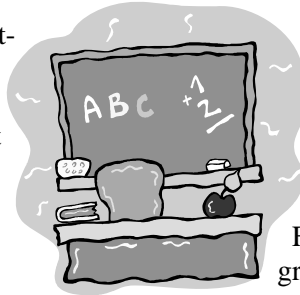
**HOW TO APPLY?** Pick up a form in the Gunn Office at 780 Arastradero Road .

**QUESTIONS?** Call the Site Council desk at the Main Office or email [rhart@pausd.org](mailto:rhart@pausd.org).

# PAUSD UPDATE

## PAUSD Increasing Student Enrollments

At the January 16<sup>th</sup> PAUSD school board meeting, Superintendent Mary Frances Callan presented six recommendations to the school board for accommodating the growing student enrollment. They are as follows:



1. Monitor forecast enrollments against actual enrollments annually in January.
2. Expand elementary sites using Level One and Level Two guidelines and adjust attendance areas for the 12 schools taking into account expanded capacities.
3. Revisit school size maxima set for JLS and Jordan middle schools. Terman would stay as is, but JLS and Jordan would increase in enrollment.
4. Approve a High School Task Force to study expansion options for high school..
5. Reconvene the Attendance Area Advisory Group (AAAG) to provide input on a revised 12-school scenario.
6. Plan to consider in 2009 the opening of Garland if enrollment exceeds capacity beyond 2012.

At the February 6<sup>th</sup> school board meeting, after much discussion late into the night, the school board took the following action:

1. Agreed to formally review the enrollment forecast on an annual basis.
2. Approved Level One site expansions for the following school sites:
  - Barron Park – to become 3 strands\* (needs 2 classrooms)
  - Briones – to become 3 strands (needs 2 classrooms)
  - Fairmeadow – to become 3.5 strands (needs 3 classrooms)
  - Ohlone – to become 4 strands (needs 3 classrooms)

Note - Level One and Two expansion at Nixon and Level Two expansion at Fairmeadow (to become 4 strands) would be held off until additional information is presented at the April 24 school board meeting.

\*A strand is the number of classes per grade. For example, a 3 strand school has 3 classes per grade K-5 for a total of 18 regular classrooms.

3. Postponed decision on middle school size until April 24th school board when additional information will be presented on how the schools would handle the estimated 50 additional students at both JLS and Jordan (100 total additional middle school students).
4. Approved convening a High School Task Force to examine options for high school expansion.
5. Agreed, on a tight 3-2 vote, to stay with 12 elementary schools for now.
  - Stated we have not reached a trigger point for opening a 13<sup>th</sup> school.
  - Asked the AAAG to define new boundary areas for 12 schools bearing in mind peer streaming and keeping LAH students together.
  - Also asked AAAG to recommend a trigger point for a 13<sup>th</sup> elementary school and the most appropriate location for the 13<sup>th</sup> school (Greendell, Garland or Fremont Hills).
6. No action on this recommendation.

For more information go to the district website at: [www.pausd.org](http://www.pausd.org) or check out the local paper websites for coverage of the meeting.

## Setting Limits With your Children by Amy A. Moskovitz, MA

One of the hardest things for a parent to do is say no to his child. “Well,” parents often rationalize, “it’s only the first time he has stayed out past curfew. He is under a lot of stress and really wants to see his friends, so I suppose I will let him go out tonight.” And out the door he goes.

If these thoughts sound familiar, you are not alone. Teens love to push the limits and their parents are boundary number one. How long can I stay out? Do I really have to study for this exam? Pre-teens and young adults alike are constantly exploring the world around them, pushing to determine their abilities, their strengths, and their weaknesses. The resulting behaviors can be exhilarating, devastating, and some times even dangerous. Parents need to help their teens learn where to draw the line.

Although they often feel invincible, teens are, of course, quite vulnerable. In some ways, parenting a teenager is like re-living an earlier challenge, the “terrible twos.” A two year old wants to discover everything around him or her. Two year olds will eagerly toddle away from mom. Studies have shown, however, that that same toddler will undoubtedly turn back and look for reassurance in their parent’s eyes; “Can I touch this?” little Janey inquires, “Is it safe for me to walk over here?” We watch with delight as a little one explores and grows more independent. But, sometimes we have to say no. When something is off limits Janey cries and screams in frustration. How unfair!! However, parents rest assured that they have done the right thing by preventing Janey from sticking her finger in the socket. Parents also know that in a few minutes something else will catch Janey’s eyes and all will be right in the world again.

Teens are not so different. They too want to discover the world and practically demand independence. While a toddler will look for a parent’s permission, teens act like they want anything but! Contrary as it may seem, teens do still need their parents’ help. Clearly help is not as simple as moving a hand away from a socket. As your child grows, helping them thrive and succeed in the world takes on a different look.

It may sound cliché or like an over played TV ad, but when you are concerned about your teen’s behavior, talk to them. Ask why they want to do such and such; make it known that you hear what they are saying. In return, explain to them your concerns. If you can, try to reach a middle ground. For example, “I will let you go to this concert, but I want a parent to be present, and I would like for us to talk to that parent together about the plans for the eve-

ning.” Empower your teen as much as you can. The more open you are with your children, and the more respectful you are of their desires, the more likely it is you will reach a mutual agreement.

Of course, there are still times when you have to say no. In the above-mentioned example, if a parent cannot attend, and you still have concerns, then you need to say, “No.” Make it clear to your teen that you want them to have fun with their friends, and you understand this concert is important, but also make it clear that you are the authority and you have the final say.

Setting limits is about helping your child survive and succeed in the world. When your teens do push past your limits, consequences must follow. If your teen comes home late, perhaps she shouldn’t go out the next night. This will serve as a reminder that when you set a limit, it needs to be respected.

It is okay to say no to your kids. They will not hate you forever. They may lock themselves in their rooms or scream and yell, but that is okay, too. They are upset and they have a right to express that. Just keep in mind: you are the parent, the one with more experience, the one who is there to help your teen navigate this crazy world. If you don’t show them where the deep end starts they might just flail.

If you find your family is struggling with setting limits, there are many services available at your teen’s school as well as in the community. Adolescent Counseling Services has therapists on your teen’s campus that can work with you as a family, and with your teen individually to help relieve building tension and work towards more peaceful family relationships in your home. Beginning this spring, ACS is also offering Community Education Workshops at the Mitchell Park Community Center.

***Adolescent Counseling Services is a community non-profit, which provides vital counseling services on six secondary school campuses at no charge to students and their families. To learn more about ACS, please visit our website at [www.acs-teens.org](http://www.acs-teens.org) or call Mary Hammes, MFT at Terman at (650) 354-1412. ACS relies on the generosity of community members to continue offering individual, family and group counseling to over 1,500 individuals annually, helping teens find their way! ACS provides critical interventions and mental health services, building a better future for tomorrow.***