

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Petaluma City Schools, Petaluma Health Care District and Community Partners Bring Innovative Drug Prevention and Academic Support Programs to Students

Petaluma, Calif., October 1, 2018 – An exciting roster of new and first-of-their-kind programs are rolling out in the [Petaluma City Schools](#) (PCS) District to tackle some of most pressing challenges schools and students are facing. In close partnership with the [Petaluma Health Care District](#) and many community partners involved in funding, oversight or execution, the new programs include: an Alcohol, Tobacco or Other drugs (ATOD) Peer-to-Peer Prevention program run by [Community Matters](#); [Still I Rise](#), a pilot program offered through 10,000 Degrees that targets vulnerable middle schoolers to help them meet academic requirements and graduate high school college-ready; and, [Operation Prevention](#), an opioid education and prevention curriculum, which will launch later this school year.

“The partnerships and innovative ideas that result in real, positive impacts in this community are astounding,” said Dave Rose, PCS assistant superintendent. “We have put significant effort into identifying the needs our students, staff and parents face on a systemic level, and then working with enthusiastic partners to address these challenges head on. Drug, tobacco and alcohol use is escalating with new products and marketing that target teens, so we sought to increase resources in our schools to help combat these new challenges. Additionally, we’re pioneering the academic support program at the junior high level because we’re finding that intervention to get underperforming students graduation ready needs to happen before they reach high school. Through dedication, communication and collaboration, we are fortunate to be on the cutting-edge and proactive in investing in Petaluma’s youth.”

About the programs:

Run by nonprofit **Community Matters**, creators of the Safe School Ambassadors Program, the ATOD Peer-to-Peer Prevention Program is training students in the skills and techniques they’ll need to talk to their peers about smart decision making when it comes to substance use. Up to 40 students chosen for the program were nominated by teachers and staff to have significant impact on their diverse circles of influence. The program, launching at Casa Grande High School and Petaluma High School, follows a harm reduction model to improve the social and emotional climate in schools in an effort to reduce substance use and support positive student mental health. The program is made possible by a Petaluma Health Care District grant in partnership with the Petaluma Educational Foundation.

Still I Rise is an early intervention program that will provide necessary curriculum, mentorship and support to students who have fallen behind and risk failing the requirements to graduate high school. Supported by the Petaluma Health Care District’s [Community Health Initiative of the Petaluma Area](#) (CHIPA) Cradle to Career group, the program was originally created for high school students *but it is being adapted for junior high students for the first time at Kenilworth Junior High School.*

Operation Prevention brings drug education to students through classroom curriculum and parent toolkits. Developed by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in partnership with the Discovery Education Network, this program aims to provide age-appropriate education on the dangers of opioid misuse and kick-start conversations and learning at home and in the classroom. PCS is in the planning phase to implement this curriculum as the school year begins. In addition, the new Petaluma Police Department [Student Resource Officers](#) will join a team of trained high school teachers and administrators to support the program. This effort is the result of coordination among the Petaluma Police Department, Petaluma Health Care District, Petaluma Parents Against Drugs, the DEA and PCS. *PCS will be the first Northern California school district to launch the program.*

“We are thrilled to see these programs come to fruition at PCS,” said Ramona Faith, CEO of the Petaluma Health Care District. “We have long been immersed in supporting Southern Sonoma County education and it remains a priority because we know that an educated community is a healthier and economically strong community. Our youth face difficulties that can get them off track from educational success, and we have to be adaptive and creative to support students and their families, as well as educators. These new programs are research-based and proven effective, and bringing them to PCS is a true testament to how this community convenes and brings together the resources to improve our community’s health.”

About Petaluma City Schools

The Petaluma City Elementary and Joint Union High School Districts are committed to providing opportunities for all students to be challenged and motivated in school so that, upon graduation, they will be successful in their future educational endeavors, careers, and community. For more information, please visit www.petalumacityschools.org.

About Petaluma Health Care District

The Petaluma Health Care District (PHCD) is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the Southern Sonoma County community through leadership, advocacy, support, partnerships and education. Its vision is to foster a healthier community, a thriving hospital and local access to comprehensive health and wellness services. PHCD has served the health and wellness needs of the community for more than 70 years and is a public agency managed by the community for the community. For more information, please visit www.phcd.org.

#