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PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS TAKE ACTION TO CREATE A MORE INCLUSIVE CLIMATE



Students at East Lake High School engage in the concentric circle activity during a Youth Conference.

October 2007—Community Tampa Bay, a non profit organization promoting respect for diversity, has partnered with Pinellas County Schools to conduct 40 prejudice reduction workshops, also known as Youth Conferences, this school year. Already, there is a waiting list for the workshops.

“We are thrilled that schools have reacted so quickly to schedule Youth Conferences at their sites. It underscores the profound impact of the workshops on the students and the school climate,” says Gerri Bradley, Teacher-On-Assignment at Community Tampa Bay.

Youth Conferences are tailored to the context of the individual school and address issues such as bullying, name-calling, cliques, race relations, stereotyping, gossip, and violence. The experiential methods and interactive teaching techniques used by Community Tampa Bay increase self-esteem and reinforce positive character qualities.

Results from last school year are impressive indeed with 95% of high school students, 80% of middle school students, and 100% of elementary school students stating they benefited immensely from the workshops.

Students leave each Youth Conference with the skills and the confidence to advocate for a safer, more inclusive school community. The results are tangible: 93% of high school students and 88% of middle school students last year declared that the Youth Conferences dramatically increased respect among students.

For more information about the Youth Conferences and other programs of Community Tampa Bay, please visit www.communitytampabay.org. If you are interested in scheduling a Youth Conference at your school, please contact Keisha Bell, Program Specialist at Community Tampa Bay, at (727)568-9333 or kbell@communitytampabay.org.