



Oakland middle schools get \$15 million Funds will allow major expansion of services to students

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OAKLAND — Seven middle schools in Oakland's neediest areas will receive \$15 million for an initiative to give students the extra help they need to graduate from high school and lead healthy lives, the Atlantic Philanthropies, an international foundation, announced Monday.

The grant will allow the middle schools to expand on-campus medical, dental and counseling services, add after-hours and summer programming and offer more support to families, from second-language acquisition to tax-return assistance, those involved in the project say.

"What we're looking at is services for people unlike schools have ever done," said Phil Cotty, principal of United For Success, a small school on the Calvin Simmons campus in East Oakland. Public health advocates say the stresses, medical needs and high-risk behaviors of middle school children too often go untreated, and that adolescents are more likely to take advantage of services offered at their school than at a clinic elsewhere in the community.

A California Healthy Kids Survey administered in 2006 found 9 percent of Oakland's seventh-graders reported they had carried a gun. Ten percent reported they had been "very drunk," and 4 percent indicated they had been intoxicated on school property. Only 19 percent said they felt "very safe" at school.

"You talk about high school dropouts, but they really begin to drop out in middle school," said City Councilwoman Jean Quan, a former school board member who is now on the Safe Passages/Youth Ventures Joint Powers Authority, an intergovernmental body that advocates for youth and families exposed to violence. "To me, this is really so much of our dream to make education different in the Oakland public schools."

Oakland was one of 35 cities in 22 states that applied for the Atlantic Foundation funding, said Marcia Smith, Atlantic's vice president. Other grant recipients include Chicago, as well as five communities in New Mexico. Smith said the strong relationships between various agencies and community-based organizations pushed the Oakland to the top of the list.

In March, Kaiser Permanente donated \$3 million for the expansion of school-based health centers in Oakland. The Oakland school board has also said it would set aside \$10 million of locally funded bond revenues to build and modernize health clinics. The clinics are expected to open within the next two years.

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The Schools: United for Success and Peralta Creek (Calvin Simmons); Coliseum College Preparatory Academy and Roots International (Havenscourt), West Oakland Middle School (Cole); Madison Middle School and Roosevelt Middle School