



Victor Maccharoli / Daily News

Mentor Sisley Brewer, far left, helps from right to left, Christian Beecher, 7, Shayrah White, 7, Jada Riley, 7, and Makahla Disburke, 6, work with beads at the Center for a New Generation run by the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula in East Palo Alto on Thursday.

## Prepping for higher education

Creativity a key part of curriculum at Center for a New Generation

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Hundreds of Ravenswood City School District youths will be doing everything from rapping to building model cars to touching and studying bugs while participating in a summer program designed to help them prepare for high school with a dash of fun.

At three sites, the Center for a New Generation has a total of about 1,000 students in grades K-8 polishing their math, English and science skills while dabbling in electives such as drama and song writing.

The enrichment program was launched years ago by former Stanford University Provost and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and adopted by the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula, which added a stronger academic focus.

Last week, the club announced the opening of two new sites — one at East Palo Alto Academy High School and the other at Taft Elementary School in Redwood City — that will help host the five-week summer



Jennifer Alvarado, right, works on making her own pinata while in the background Jessica Zuriga helps Sione Takau, 7, with his.

program. The expansion will bring enrollment to almost 1,200 youths.

In an area where only about two-thirds of teens graduate from high school, the Center for a New Generation model is designed as a stepping stone to the 9th grade and a primer on the benefits of college, said mentor Sean Mendy, 25, during a class recess at Edison-McNair charter school.

"That's really the focus of the program," Mendy said. "To get kids ready for high school."

And that message was evident.

"If the NFL career doesn't work out, I want to be a lawyer," said Kamel Greene, 13. "I'd like to be a lawyer because I like to argue."

Greene and his classmate Daron Meacham, 12, were standing outside of a rap class. They were learning how to infuse their lyrics with metaphors and similes. It may not be standard curriculum, said Alara Mac Gillivray, the club's education director, but it is a potent literacy tool.

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Demetris Hill, center, 17, helps a group in science class on Thursday at the Center for a New Generation run by the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula in East Palo Alto. Hill, who recently graduated from the program, is a senior at Sacred Heart Prep.

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In the auditorium, a group of young teens were taking turns on stage in an improvisation elective. With big stars hanging from her ears, Micha Auzenne, 13, said she likes the program because it keeps her busy during the summer. And it's also helping her pursue an early career as a child actress, she said. If she can't be a gladiator when she grows up, she said she wants to be a lawyer.

The program has become an institution for local students, many of whom move onto high school and return each summer to volunteer and even work in the program.

Demetris Hill, 17, entered the program in the third grade and said it had a huge impact on his education. He's attending Sacred Heart Prepara-

tory in Atherton on a full scholarship and is teaching Greene and Meacham's rap class.

"I wouldn't be in a private high school if it weren't for this," he said.

Club Development Director Chris Canter said the program also serves about 800 kids during the regular academic year as an after-school program, but focuses more on homework and tutoring then.

The recent expansion was funded with private donations and a \$120,000 federal 21st Century Grant for the Taft program, Canter said. The new location at East Palo Alto Academy — a high school — almost didn't happen after the club lost a bid for a \$180,000 grant from the same source, he said. The club appealed that decision and should get the final word July 18. In the meantime, he said, his board of directors gave him the green light to open the new site, even without immediate funding.