

# A Cornerstone of Loma

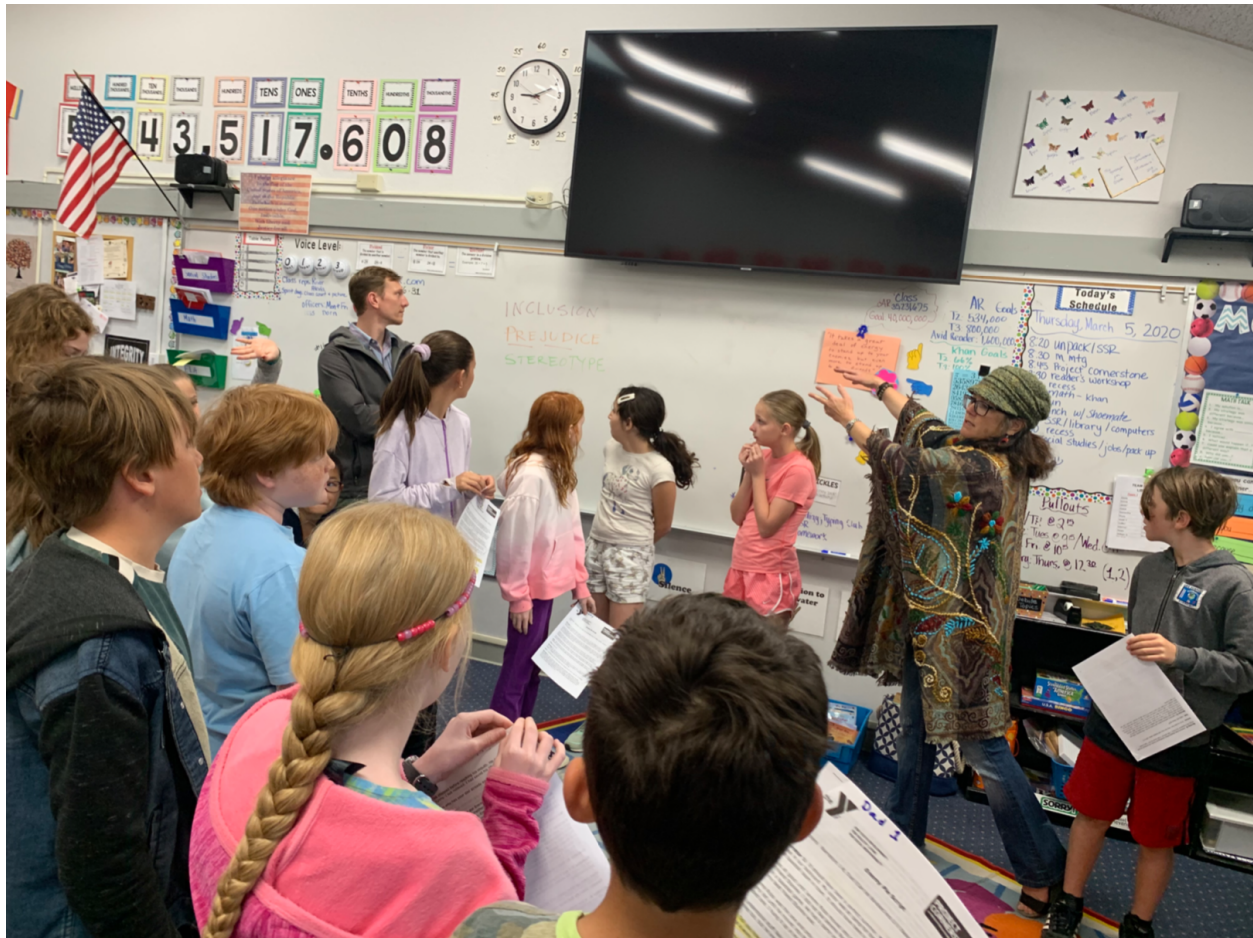
By: Jenifer Seal Cramer

Project Cornerstone is much more than reading a book to a classroom. The program offers a framework for *talking to kids*.

In a nutshell it's about learning how to be good to each other and how to be good to ourselves. In our wild world, I believe Cornerstone provides us a *pause* in our classroom schedule, to have a deep conversation about some important life lessons. It is a springboard for in depth discussion about such topics as: empathy, integrity, building friendships, and *how to handle it* when someone lets you down or hurts your feelings. I always tell the kids—these are truly life lessons, because each day as an adult I am continuing to learn and use the tools we talk about.

*“Being a part of Loma’s Cornerstone program has been a blessing. Every month I get to witness our kids navigate their personal strengths and weaknesses, as they relate to those of others, to shape opportunities for respect and camaraderie among the whole. It is awesome to see the tools they collectively draw upon; equal parts valley smart, ocean thoughtful, and of course mountain strong. Only at Loma could you ever expect to see these qualities so instinctive in our kids and it’s a wonderful reminder how lucky we are to call this home.”*

—**Dave DePiazza**, a Project Cornerstone Volunteer and Dad of Lyle, Hazel and Josie



I first learned about [Project Cornerstone](#) from a poster I saw about five years ago when our family moved to the area. It showed the YMCA program's impact from Elementary, to Middle, to High school by tracking essential “[developmental assets](#)” of surveyed students. When I looked closely at the poster graphic, I was absolutely struck that someone was measuring this so comprehensively.

**This research quantified how we can help support kids in a healthy way.**

YMCA started the Project Cornerstone program over 20 years ago to focus not on the bad paths kids were taking but instead with a focus on what is RIGHT about kids and to find ways to support them. Their research demonstrated that kids with a high number of these developmental assets are more likely to: stay off drugs, to have less anxiety, and to become healthy functioning adults. *Wow!* I wanted to be part of this effort.

I became a reader in Elementary school and then moved on to co-lead the program at our school along with Param Matharu this last year. We are also now working with a group to explore how Project Cornerstone could take shape at CTE.



This year in the Loma Forum you may have noticed a giant bright splash of color on the wall. As an all school project, **we created a Living Art Wall** that grew throughout the year to exhibit the lessons and fun crafts the kids made to “talk” about what they were learning and share with each other.

## Our theme this year was Inclusion

The kids enjoyed interacting with the Wall as they point out cool things they see and have contributed. My co-lead, Param, notes,

“This helps to reinforce the lessons that they were learning throughout the sessions and even introduces concepts that they may not have touched upon. This art wall is a visual representation of the assets that they are supported by as well as the fact that our community is full of people that care for them.”

I absolutely love going into the classrooms to read to the students. We all learn from each other. I am always amazed, particularly in the older grades of 4th and 5th graders,

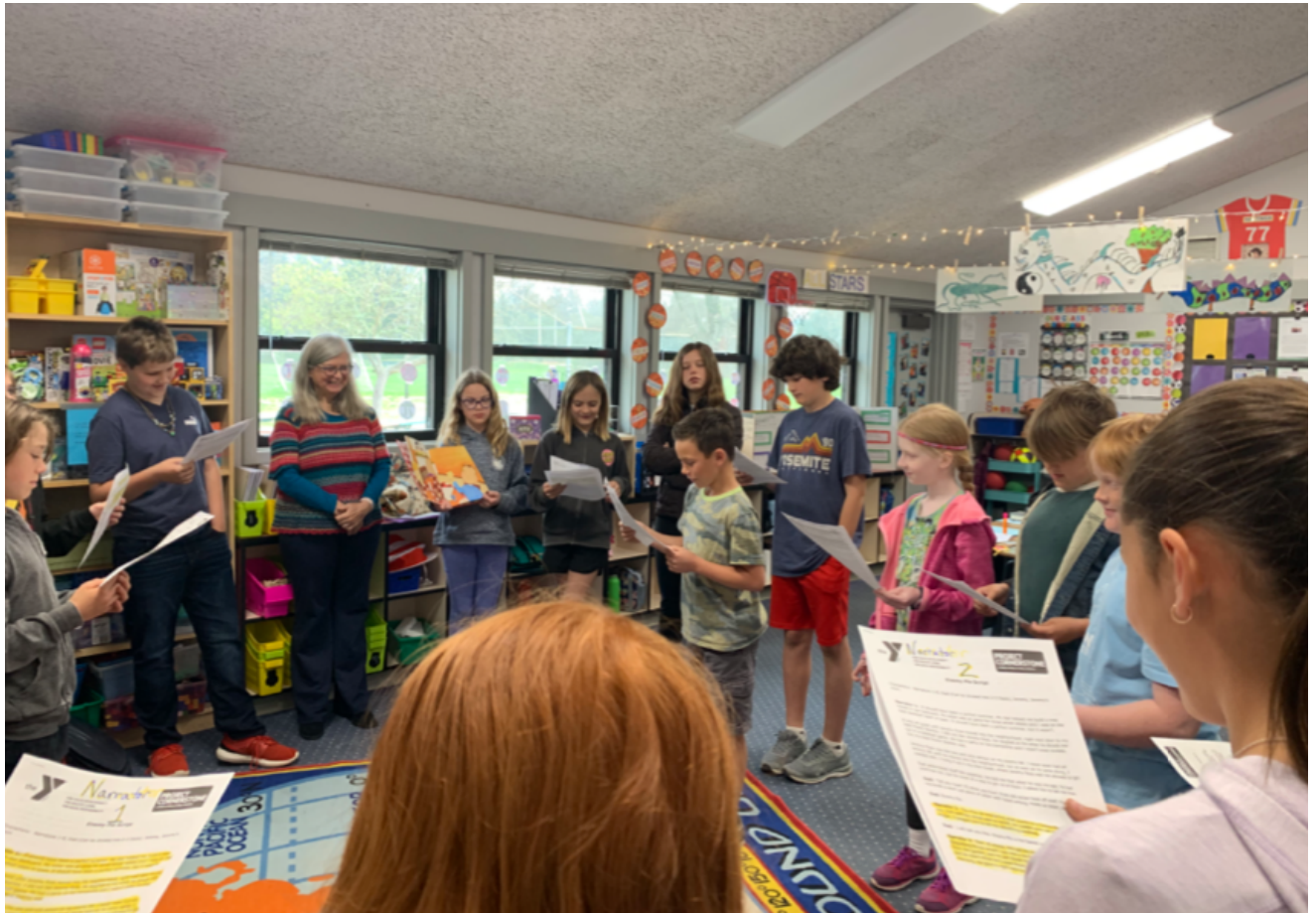
by how much these lessons have sunk in over the years from Kindergarten on up. My classroom reading partner the last two years, Marjorie Bowles, is a grandma and volunteer reader of 8 years. She and I both find it the highlight of our day working with the students, seeing their eyes sparkle as they are eager to engage in the discussion.

It is powerful that as a caring adult, we can help awaken new possibility in these students' lives and hopefully help make their lives a little better. Ed Dee, Loma's Project Cornerstone lead in years past comments that this impactful program can, "save kids lives and souls, bringing them access to further happiness and the confidence to do the right thing in the moment as second nature."

The school's commitment to this program is an important one for students, teachers, and families. The entire community benefits as the lessons learned radiate out. I encourage you to learn more and to support this program with your donation to the LPEF KEEP! campaign and if you'd like to delve deeper become a Cornerstone volunteer reader! [www.ymcasv.org/ymca-project-cornerstone](http://www.ymcasv.org/ymca-project-cornerstone)



# Intergenerational Cornerstone



*“When my oldest grandchild entered Loma, I volunteered to contribute to the classroom experience by participating in Project Cornerstone. As a retired teacher I recognized the importance of discussing the values promoted by Project Cornerstone in the classroom. By reading the selected books and following some of the ideas presented by the lesson plans provided, we are able to raise key issues and life lessons with the class. I enjoyed reflecting on our lessons and sharing with the students while discussing some great coping ideas with the students as they struggled with their self identity, their relationships with their peers, their families and the wider community. Over the eight years, I worked with two classes as I followed my grandsons' classes through Loma. I watched the students grow and mature through those years..”*

—Marjorie Bowles

# Learn More about Project Cornerstone

Learn more about the [Developmental Assets Framework](#)

