Early Start to College Program Gets Great Response

Early Start to College (ESC) has had a successful start. We originally planned on serving 200 students, but we now have over 300 students and parents that have signed up for our program. One of the first activities of the year was a Role Model Presentation at Gilliland Middle School in Tempe on September 17, 2003. The presentation included all 14 students and featured guest speaker, Arizona State University student and former Gilliland student, Bernadette Chavez. Bernadette shared a part of her transition from middle school to high school, how she chose to attend ASU, and why she chose journalism as her major. The students related to her stories because they are facing similar community issues. The students who attended had specific questions for Marisol concerning her life, choosing classes, and why she chose journalism as her major. Marisol provided many of the students with first-hand knowledge of what a college life was like.

On October 14, 2003, Stardust House was the site for our third Role Model Presentation. Over pizza and sodas, guest speaker Marian Molina, an ASU journalism student, spoke to the 28 third and fourth graders about her decision to go to college. Marian talked about her struggle to make it to college and how she dealt with her cultural identity. Many students related to her story because they are facing similar issues. The students who attended had specific questions for Marian concerning her life, choosing classes, and why she chose journalism as her major. Marian provided many of the students with first-hand knowledge of what a college life was like.

The second Role Model Presentation was held on October 3, 2003, at Phoenix Preparatory Academy and featured speakers Alex Cruz and Daniel Ferrer, both ASU engineering students and members of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE). Alex and Daniel, speaking to the 23 students who attended the presentation, addressed many topics, including engineering, college life, scholarship information, and extracurricular activities. Many of the eighth-grade students who had never thought of exploring engineering had a field trip to Stanford to give an overview of what jobs could be available to them if they pursued an engineering degree.

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Dr. Rene Diaz, superintendent of Phoenix Elementary School District, was the featured presenter at P. H. Gonzales Elementary School on October 24, 2003. All 83 eighth graders, teachers, and the principal, Jim Paxonos, benefitted from Dr. Diaz’s knowledge and experience. Dr. Diaz, who was born and raised in Tolleson, shared stories about what Tolleson was like when he was growing up. He spoke about the hard labor that his parents had to endure partly due to their lack of education and how that motivated him to pursue an education. He emphasized the importance of finishing school, having a positive attitude on a daily basis, and identifying role models in one’s own life.

School Board Leadership Seminars Keep Improving

The leadership seminars continue to bring K-12 school board members and educational leaders together. The last seminar was presented to Texas school board members in San Antonio, Texas, at the Plaza San Antonio Marriott, from Thursday, October 9 through Saturday, October 11, 2003. Eleven school board members (see photo) were in attendance, and were presented a strong program.

No Child Left Behind was presented by Dr. Joe J. Bernal, state school board member, Geogoria Gonzalez and Anita Villarreal from the Texas Education Agency; Mr. Craig Foster of the Equity Center talked about the Texas equalization of school funding and the Edgewood ISD vs. Kirby ruling that recaptures taxes that are equally redistributed to all school districts across the state. In addition, Dr. Omar Lopez, representing The College Board, talked about identifying educational practices; Dr. Patricia Guerra, Research Fellow and Co-Director of the Leadership for Equity and Access Project at the University of Texas at Austin made a presentation on teacher quality and teacher cultural diversity training that benefits all students; Dr. Jimmy Vasquez, Executive Director Region 19 Education Service Center and Oscar Garcia, Ben Bolt-Palito Blanco I.S.D. talked about superintendent/school board relations; and San Antonio Councilman Julian Castro shared his views and experiences on relationship building between the school board members and local and state officials.

Friday evening’s special guest speaker was Dr. Gilberto Hinojosa, Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies at the University of the Incarnate Word who provided the historical information, through story telling, about the famous battle at the Alamo and the Mexican American involvement. Friday evening’s dinner started with the melodic Mexican music by El Mariachi Los Pacientes de Pedro Moreno.

Participating school board members gleaned much information at the seminar as indicated by the following comments:

“I believe I received more information this weekend than I believe I ever had with any of the TASS conferences. I wish I would have known the information that I received this weekend many years ago. But, like they say, it’s never too late to forge on! Thanks again.”
Rose Olayo Herrera, Fr. Worth I.S.D.

“The sharing of information is great with a smaller group. The presenters were very informative and prepared. I really got a lot of valuable information; the handouts are very helpful. I would like to be able to attend next year if given the opportunity. Excellent, great!”
Carmen Elguazabal, Presidio I.S.D.

“Thank you for the wonderful opportunity to be a part of the HBLI training again. It was the best! I have shared everything with our board members and others in the school district I work at. Our board president and superintendent wanted to know if they could go and be part of the training. When I spoke to our superintendent about some of the things I learned, she was aware of much of it. It was a confirmation to me that we chose the right person for the job. In January she will be here a year.”
Cicely Gonzales, Pawnee I.S.D.