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REACHING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION EARLY

Students are beginning to make their first steps toward reaching higher education goals at all four Laguna Beach Unified School District school sites thanks to a new District sponsored program coordinated by Ricardo Gallegos, the Laguna Beach Unified School District School/Community Liaison and Elizabeth Reynosa-Bland, the PTA Educational Liaison from El Morro Elementary School.

This district-wide program enables underrepresented students to participate in school field trips that will visit a community college and a four-year university with Mr. Gallegos and Mrs. Reynosa-Bland. They will also explore other post high school opportunities such as vocational and certificated schools. After the student school visits, parents will be invited to attend a workshop that helps families identify the short and long term rewards of a higher education and the variety of post high school educational opportunities. The workshop will help parents understand not just the general but specific information as it relates to student career goals and aspirations.

The student field trips were first conducted at El Morro last year when Mr. Gallegos and Kathleen Marlow, an El Morro Instructional Aide II Reading Specialist, took twenty ESL (English Second Language) 4th and 5th grade students in groups of five over a four day period to Orange Coast Community College to sample college life. Students received a class schedule and learned how to read the college map as they navigated their way through the campus. They were introduced to a variety of class topics and how the classes related to jobs upon graduation. Upon returning to El Morro, students wrote an essay about their experience. Their enthusiastic response helped pave the way for a larger district-wide program this year which will include both bi-lingual and monolingual students.

Mr. Gallegos explains his personal vision for the program, "My hope is that every student of our under represented community believes that they have the ability to achieve his/her goals and dreams." He expresses his appreciation to Dr. Joanne Culverhouse, Thurston Middle School Principal and last year's El Morro Principal and Dr. Steven Keller, Assistant Superintendent, both of whom strongly supported the program.