



from the office of Superintendent Robert Collins



Counselors Mandy Najimi and Heather Hays-Eady are joined by French teacher Jan Hedeline



Spanish teacher Chanda Giles enjoys lunch with a student.

“MIX IT UP” DAY BRINGS WEST HILLS STUDENTS TOGETHER “JUST FOR LUNCH”

It is truly about leadership, a passion for all students and a willingness to “make something happen.” Once a month Counselor Heather Hays-Eady and her committee walk campus at lunch time looking for students, and not just any students. They are looking for a certain mix of students to invite to a “Mix It Up” lunch the next day. The luncheon brings together about 50 diverse students who never would have met or talked with each other in the normal comings and goings of the school day. The invitation said it best, **“MIX IT UP – an organization committed to breaking down social barriers and building community.”**

Five teachers were also invited to interact with the students. With a teacher leader or two at each table of about 6 to 8 students, students talked about themselves, likes and dislikes and their take on such questions as:

“Would you rather be considered a great friend or an excellent athlete?”

“Would you rather go without television for the rest of your life or go without junk food for the rest of your life?”

“Make \$100,000 a year digging holes with a shovel or make \$30,000 a year playing your favorite sport?”

The questions engaged students and teachers in conversations that spoke to who they are as individuals. **It was the first step in understanding one and other.** There was no question that the students truly enjoyed listening to each other.

The second part of lunch brought teachers and students together to identify “who they were based on such questions as: “Who has never traveled outside California?” “Who intends on attending a four-year college?” and “How many have a grandparent living in the home?” What the questions elicited was the similarities that students may have, that they never before considered.

Outstanding leadership on the part of Heather Hays-Eady and her committee make this monthly event happen. They are catalysts of change in helping students understand and appreciate one and other. It is ongoing events such as “Mix It Up” Day that directly address the school culture by initiating conversations that may never take place otherwise.

GUHSD COUNSELORS & SPARC: A NEW STANDARD OF ACCOUNTABILITY



From left to right: Michelle Ditomaso, Valhalla; Tanya Bulette, West Hills; Tracy Wilson, Project Shield Coordinator; Gracia Gregg, Monte Vista; Maria Garcia, Mount Miguel; Deborah Samson, El Cajon Valley; Carolee Villegas, El Capitan; Kim Doroh, Granite Hills (not pictured: Noel McMahon, Grossmont and Lori Ruff, Santana

Last week counselors representing each school in GUHSD shared with me their **Support Personnel Accountability Report Card (SPARC.)** **It is a continuous improvement document** that provides a school’s counseling program and student support team with an opportunity to demonstrate effective communication and a commitment to getting results. Modeled after the School Accountability Report Card (SARC), the SPARC has been developed by an advisory group of Los Angeles County counselors, administrators, counselor educators and California Department of Education consultants.

In the past, El Cajon Valley, Monte Vista, and Valhalla have submitted SPARC’s and were recognized by their sites and by the School Board. This year, **all nine comprehensive schools submitted a SPARC.** By submitting these documents, our sites are up for statewide recognition, culminating with an awards ceremony on May 8, 2009, at the University of San Diego. More than that, however, our Student Support Personnel Teams are committed and excited about presenting the results of their efforts on their school campuses. Many teams will use this document to promote their programs, inform school staff about data-driven interventions, and to welcome incoming students to their school. It is also used to demonstrate areas of strength within the WASC and California Distinguished School processes.

All schools will make this document available on their websites and are committed to continue looking at the data that drives our student results. Many hours have been put into these documents and staff members who participated are proud to share the final products. **Even within these tough times, there are great things happening for students on our campuses.**

Tracy Wilson, Project Shield Coordinator, Tanya Bulette, counselor at West Hills, and Dr. Rowell, USD Director of CS3, all facilitated the success of this process for our District and should be recognized for their dedication and passion for our East County youth.