

New Efforts in Education Highlight Push for East Side Students



ALearn's new Catalyst to College program intends to bolster education services at two high school's in the East Side Union High School District, by continually providing guidance in the path to college. Photo Credit: ALearn

Estephany Haro
El Observador

Yerba Buena high school students and members of the East Side high school district came together last Thursday to welcome ALearn and its new program, Catalyst to College. This new program was funded through a \$500,000 grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and will be offered to students from Yerba Buena and Independence High Schools.

The attendees welcomed the founder and CEO of ALearn, Kathryn Hanson who then introduced a group of nine students that were part of the summer program and gave their testimonies and thanked the rest of the attendees for being part of the launch.

"I think these are the hidden figures of the new generation, the brave and bold...I want to come back in six years from now and see you all graduating from college and have you tell them how what you're going to do in your careers," Hanson said.

According to ALearn, the students enrolled in this 4-year program at Yerba Buena and Independence high school since it began on August, 41 percent are Latino followed by 34 percent Vietnamese.

"I want to graduate from UC Davis because I want to be a doctor or a nurse, the reason why I came to the program is because I know they are going to help me," said one of the students who started the program during the summer.

Linda Prieto, Vice President of Programs in ALearn is the daughter of immigrants and the first one in her family to graduate from college. She understands that most of the students served will be first generation in their families

to go on to college and graduate from college. "Many of us that come from low income communities like myself included who didn't have parents who had the opportunity to attend college don't know where to go, don't know who to ask," Prieto said.

East Side Union District Superintendent Chris Funk also added that even when kids are successful during their high school years, it might not be the same at the moment of attending higher education.

"Usually our counselors as much as they help us they're also overworked and they can't be there for every child individually and so this program is very important for the students and parents to know that they can come, they can sign up for free," Prieto said.

A Catalyst to College Program Coordinator will be physically at Yerba Buena and Independence High School two days a week, "her job is to help this students successfully navigate high school to a four year college or university also graduate from that college or university," Prieto said.

Susi Rodriguez is one of the Catalyst College Program coordinators that will be guiding students throughout their high school years where students will be taken to different campuses.

"We actually started off with a one week summer academy at Santa Clara university where we went over college applications, the financial aid process because I think many times many families think they can't afford college," Rodriguez said.

This program is free and parents who have kids at Yerba Buena High school and Independence High school are encouraged to sign up.