

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2011

EL RANCHO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT SAFE SCHOOLS/HEALTHY STUDENTS GRANT INITIATIVE

In January, six members from El Rancho Unified School District's Core Management Team braved the snow and cold of Washington, D.C. to meet with other Safe Schools/Healthy Students grantees at the Leading for Change Conference. Our attendees were: Dora Soto-Delgado, SS/HS Project Coordinator; Lydia Cano, Assistant District Superintendent; Lorraine Jimenez, District Evidence-based Intervention Coordinator; Debbie Nelson, Los Angeles Dept. of Probation; Susan Donner, Dept. of Mental Health Liaison; and Lt. Steve Sanchez, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Dept.

The purpose for gathering recipients of the SS/HS Grant Initiative was to encourage and develop strong teams of agency partners to effectively implement programs and initiatives in a spirit of shared vision and leadership within their respective communities. Leading for Change is a three-part process that focuses on leadership practices, system integration, and implementing change:

- Part One uses content delivered via webinar (an interactive seminar conducted over the World Wide Web) and prep work done by each team at its own site
- Part Two is an in-person event that builds a shared vision.
- Part Three implements change initiatives facilitated by each site working with its assigned Technical Assistance Specialist.

SS/HS Project Coordinator, Dora Soto-Delgado says the process helps each site's team "build shared leadership and strengthen that leadership for systemic change...and to integrate the grant's programs with partner activities." She also stressed that the Leading for Change conference recognizes and addresses the challenges that come with change initiatives.

At the conclusion of the conference, Assistant Superintendent Cano noted that the Core Management Team (CMT) would now be able to identify opportunities at the policy

level to integrate partner services and programs. Team members learned that by "mapping local and state funding streams, positive youth and family outcomes can be fully supported."

She added that conference attendees took home ideas on how to review strategic partner plans in order to "discern service coordination, policy alignment, and funding coordination."

Probation Officer Nelson says what she liked about the conference was "the direct communication and engagement we had with grantees from other parts of the country; what programs are being implemented at their sites, and how they handle the sometimes challenging aspect of working with other professions, and hearing and feeling the genuine passion they have for administering grant programs was very inspirational." Other valuable insights occurred in the breakout session for Juvenile Justice Representatives. Nelson was particularly gratified that a judge from Texas said he had never considered probation as a prevention component, so "being able to share information and learn from other grantees was definitely beneficial."

Lorraine Jimenez enthused that the conference "was great!" She stated that it brought home "the importance of partner collaboration efforts ... and working with federal staff members to assist in the team's goals was invaluable." Jimenez, who coordinates the Character Counts!, Too Good programs, and Olweus Bullying Prevention programs, was pleased that the ERUSD team could "give testimony to the good work that's being done at our school sites: approaches we have taken and what worked for us."

The national Leading for Change conference was yet another tool for our dedicated teachers, administrators, and community partners to ensure that our children's learning environment will be safe, stable, and of the highest quality.



Back Row (L-R) Debbie Nelson, LA County Department of Probation, Susan Donner, LA County Department of Mental Health, Lt. Steve Sanchez, LA County Sheriff's Department
Front Row (L-R) Dora Delgado, ERUSD, Project Coordinator, Lorraine Jimenez, ERUSD, Evidence-Based Program Facilitator, Lydia Cano, ERUSD, Assistant Superintendent

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

2/11/11 - Emergency Operations Center Meeting

2/17/11 - Core Management Team Meeting

2/28/11 - School Site Coordinator Meeting

SPOTLIGHT ON... Valentina Shibata

School Site Coordinator at Ruben Salazar High School

Described as "a blessing" for RSHS, and "well liked and respected" by her peers, Valentina Shibata earns the ERUSD Personality Spotlight this month, and it is well-deserved recognition for this busy teacher.



Ms. Shibata has been with the District for four years, teaching Earth Science and Biology at RSHS. In addition, she has been designated the School Site Coordinator for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant initiative. She will be one of 13 people responsible for being the lead for all classroom teachers at their respective schools who teach the curriculum for Too Good for Violence, Too Good for Drugs, Character Counts!, and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. It's a big undertaking for these educators and Valentina Shibata is up to the task.

She has already shown imagination and style in the creative way she introduced the Character Counts! program at Ruben Salazar. She put together an MTV-style interview video showing what students and teachers thought the Six Pillars of Character meant to them. The film, shown at the school's first assembly, was edgy and demonstrated a flair for teaching vital to these components of the program. Adding to Ms. Shibata's busy schedule, she has been appointed the teacher in charge of the smoking cessation grant recently awarded to RSHS. And as a trainer to the health teachers of the Too Good for Drugs/Violence program, it's no wonder they cite her as a blessing in her role as a site coordinator.

Valentina Shibata is a native Californian who grew up in Montebello and attended El Rancho High School. She graduated from UCLA with a B.S. in Physiological Sciences. In 2000, she completed Post Baccalaureate Studies in Biology from CSU Fullerton and a Single Subject Teaching Credential from CSULA in 2009. She brings a solid background of Biological Sciences to her work at RSHS with a strong emphasis in human physiology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics. Some credentials indeed!

One of the more interesting aspects of Ms. Shibata's career is a ten-year stint as a professional folklorico dancer with the Danza Floricanto Folk Dance Company of Los Angeles. During those years, she managed an after-school dance program for 4th and 5th graders. Also during that time, she worked for the California Family Health Council as a research assistant, interviewing study participants on the use of contraceptive devices and instructing them about the use of those devices. Another part of her varied experiences in education included aiding visually-impaired students to participate in mainstreaming in the Whittier Union High School District.

Valentina never seems to stop working with young people. She was the Young Women's President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This included teaching weekly lessons to girls 12 to 18 and providing a mid-week activity that reinforced the values taught in class. What does this motivated and ambitious woman do for herself? She enjoys stamping, scrapbooking, jewelry making, and other craft projects. She likes to curl up with a lot of books, and says that she makes "awesome cookies" for her husband and three children!

Valentina Shibata is the kind of dedicated educator who cares deeply for her students and is working hard to further the District's goals of making its schools safe and its students healthy.

ERUSD is proud to have Ms. Shibata as an advocate for its children.

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