College Begins in Kindergarten Summer Academies helps pre-schoolers get excited about school

By ROMAN FLORES, Staff Writer

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CALEXICO — As 4-year-old Sonia Delgado lined up with other pre-kindergarten Finley Elementary students, she shyly clutched her mother’s hand in anticipation of Wednesday’s tour.

Sonia and her mother, also named Sonia Delgado, were participating in the College Begins in Kindergarten Summer Academies program through Imperial County Office of Education and the P-16 Council.

The program, which this year continues for about a month at the San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus, familiarizes pre-school children with higher education during the summer in order to prepare them for school and encourage them to succeed, according to a press release.

“The major focus of the summer academies is to get kids ready to know the alphabet and the kindergarten standards that are necessary to transition into kindergarten and be successful,” Javier Ramos, College Going Initiative Coordinator for Imperial County Office of Education, said.

“Through the Early Reading First program we’ve been able to provide professional development for the teachers at the sites, provide parents with learning materials and provide some funding to supplement the activities that are going on this summer for parents and students,” he said.

The program, which is now in its third year, is housed by SDSU-IV every year, academic adviser and freshman recruiter Norma Aguilar said.

“This program is great for students and their parents for two reasons,” Aguilar said. “Number one: It enables the students to become interested and excited in reading in a lot of ways. Number two: It exposes them to the university at an early age so that going to college is not just a dream, its actually attainable,” she said.

Ramos said that, despite statewide budget cuts to education and the dwindling summer school programs around the Valley, the College Begins in Kindergarten program is growing in number of participants every year.

“A number of school districts are a part of it this year,” Ramos said of the 202 students from six Valley school districts. “We hope to continue that in the future as funding opportunities come up.”

Though the 55 future Finley Elementary students were the biggest school group in this year’s CBK program, “It actually ran pretty smoothly today,” Michael McClure, academic coordinator for the California Student Opportunities and Access Program, or CalSOAP, said.
“Some of these kids are sharper than some of the high school kids really,” he added. “Seeing them motivated (about school) keeps you motivated. It’s nice to see kids want to go to college,” he said.

And the parents in attendance with their children enjoyed the day’s activities, Sonia Delgado said.

“I like it because they learn more and open their minds,” she said of her daughter. “It’s very good having summer programs,” she said.

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