Parents visit migrant summer academy

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Language arts teacher Lizett Samaniego reads from "The House on Mango Street" as she teaches literary analysis to migrant students during the Migrant Education Summer Academy & Lyceum open house at San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus in Calexico on Wednesday. Parents, guests and educators observe student activities (background) during the open house. (JOSELITO VILLERO PHOTO / June 27, 2012)

By CHELCEY ADAMI
Staff Writer
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CALEXICO — Josefina Coronado said her daughter used to have problems with subjects such as math, but innovative techniques through a local migrant education partnership have helped her address those learning issues.

Now the seventh-grader from Calipatria is more motivated to learn and excitedly gets up in order to catch her early 6:30 a.m. bus to the Migrant Summer Academy put on by the Imperial County Office of Education and San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus’ Division of Education.

Parents of students in the Migrant Summer Academy saw firsthand how the program incorporates unique learning techniques during an open house at SDSU-IV on Wednesday.

It’s the fourth summer that ICOE and SDSU-IV have partnered up with the Migrant Program to offer the summer academy.

Fifty junior high school migrant students, 60 high school migrant students, and 40 juniors/seniors migrant students will learn math concepts and forms of linguistic expression at the academy, which lasts until July 13.

It incorporates nontraditional learning methods in order to help students visualize the concepts being taught as well as to mitigate feelings of intimidation by the learning process.

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Simon Silva, an artist and author, will work with the ninth-graders each Friday, using visual art to facilitate learning.

“We try to not only influence the learning of math and linguistics but also influence how they feel about math and linguistics,” said Gregorio Ponce, SDSU mathematics education associate professor. “It’s not just knowing the subjects but fitting the subjects into their lives.”

Some students aren’t ready to participate when they arrive, so instructors try to get to know them and create relationships in order to help them open up to the learning process, said Fernando Rodriguez-Vallas, SDSU-IV biliteracy education associate professor.

The classes tend to move away from lector-based learning and instead focus on engaging the students in a dialogue.

The academy is also specifically held on the university campus in order to help motivate the migrant students to seek higher education, ICOE Migrant Education Program Region VI Director Sandra Kofford said.

“The goal is to plant the seed that college is possible by having the program at this college,” she said.

Engaging the parents in the educational process can be just as important as the learning process itself, Rodriguez-Vallas added.

“We need to educate the parents as well so they can support the children,” he said. “They need to know that without them, it’s not going to happen.”

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