Summer Migrant Academy bolsters creativity, helps students pass exit exam

By ROMAN FLORES
Staff Writer

3:21 a.m. PDT, July 2, 2011

CALExico — Viewing a video of elephants painting and making PlayDoh creations were just part of the innovative instruction taught to students at the Summer Migrant Academy here Friday.

In its third year, the program uses a nontraditional, interactive approach to help migrant students overcome their fears, frustrations and anxieties about mathematics, language arts and the high school exit exam, according to a press release.

Simon Silva

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The emphasis of the program is to create a learning environment that is nontraditional and touches the lives of the students, not only in their knowledge but also in their personal growth beyond the classroom,” Ponce said.

“(Friday) we were trying to focus more on creativity,” former local migrant student and professional artist/author/presenter, Simon Silva, said.

“My job here as part of the summer program is to chip away at the fear, the self-doubt that they have and open up the floodgates to their creativity,” Silva, who has been teaching classes throughout the program, said Friday at the university.

“Using cardboard boxes and PlayDoh chips away at their fears and brings their guard down because a lot of these kids don’t have a high self-confidence,” he said.

“I’m trying to give them as many survival skills as possible. Anything that will help these kids stand out (to colleges and employers),” Silva said.

And the students seemed to be learning in a life-changing way.

“We’re learning a lot about other people’s lives and how it affects our lives,” 15-year-old Brawley resident Roxanne Padilla said. “It shows that everyone is different and it shouldn’t matter the way you are or the way you look,” she said.

“(It made me realize that) art is actually important,” 17-year-old Armando Mendez, of Holtville, said. “I didn’t really like to draw and paint and since I started this class I like to draw and paint more,” he said.

“He knows how to explain things well,” Armando said of Silva. “He’s a pretty good teacher.”

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IMPERIAL COUNTY SUMMER MIGRANT ACADEMY BY THE NUMBERS

3 — years the program has existed in Imperial County

4 — weeks in the summer program

43 — students in the program in 2011

89 — percent of migrant academy students who passed the math portion of the California High School Exit Exam on their first try in 2010

84 — percent of migrant academy students who passed the English-Language Arts portion of the California High School Exit Exam on their first try in 2010

Source: Sandra Kofford, Imperial County Office of Education migrant education program director for Region VI

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Valleyite at 10:00 AM July 04, 2011
Not that Catholic Schools were perfect, but the things they demanded were respect and obedience. It made for a much better learning environment. Distractions were not tolerated and kids actually received an education.

Nowadays, students are given the “choice” of whether or not they want an education, just as long as they show up so the school gets paid for their attendance. Education should not be optional for young people, that’s why it’s up to their parents to guide them in the right direction.

Discipline is almost unheard of because if Johnny whines to his parents, it’s turned around to blame the teacher and lawsuits are a constant threat. Many homes lack discipline and a learning environment, so how can it be possible only part of the equation, the classroom, be successful? It’s doomed to continued failure.

I laugh about the threat of the "ruler whacking my knuckles" now, but it didn't harm me; I made it...
through with a successful life and great education.

socrates at 7:33 AM July 04, 2011

Roman, good points. Some folks lack the facts and critical awareness, nay, insight, to distinguish between wasted taxes (wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, subsidies to Michelle Bachmann, etc.) and taxes INVESTED for the common good of all our citizens.

http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/01/conservative-cash-crop/?emc=eta1

RomanFlores at 7:16 PM July 03, 2011

Gamecock: Out of all the teachers and all the classrooms I've been in, both as an education reporter and a long-time student/college graduate, I've rarely seen teachers that reach their students as well as Simon Silva does in these classes. Think about how hard it must be to teach students anything these days with all the distractions in the world around them. Now think about how hard it must be to teach something as abstract as critical thinking skills...do you think you'd be able to? I know I wouldn't; at least not nearly as well as Mr. Silva. Teaching is sometimes a thankless job. When the public finds teachers that really reach students and programs that bring about results as this one they should applaud it, not make fun of it.