Kindergartners peek at college

Amanda Flores, 5, and her mother, Alma Flores, lead a group touring the San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus Monday. (CHELCEY ADAMI PHOTO / June 25, 2012)

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CALEXICO — Kindergartners' eyes grew wide as they entered a science lab classroom during a campus tour at San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus Monday.

Several pointed at science lab tools on desks and asked questions about their use.

The tour was part of the fourth "College Begins in Kindergarten" Academy, which will give more than 850 incoming kindergartners from seven Valley school districts a taste of what college actually looks like this week.

It's offered through a collaboration between the Imperial County Office of Education, SDSU-IV and the California Student Opportunity and Access Program.

"We want their first experience on a college campus to be positive," said Martha Singh, Cal-SOAP Imperial County assistant director. "More than anything we believe college begins in kindergarten, and that's why we start planting the seed really early."

It was the first time Monday for most of the kindergartners such as Dean Eid, 4, to be on a college campus.

"We want to tell him, 'This is what your future will be like,' to try your best and come here," his mother, Batsa Eid, said. "They already know there's going to be school and then college at the end of it in order to have a better job."

Parent Alma Flores agreed. Her 5-year-old daughter Amanda wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up, and Flores feels that exposure through programs like the academy gives a tangible idea of what she
Kindergartners need to do to study veterinary medicine.

Kindergartners and their parents visited with the Imperial Irrigation District’s mascot, Dippy Duck, toured the SDSU-IV campus, listened to storytellers and participated in activities throughout the campus Monday.

Singh said the academy also focuses on promoting education at any age by encouraging parents to return to school or attend in the first place.

Parent Joel Lopez said he regrets not going to school and said by his 4-year-old son visiting the campus, it “motivates and helps him a lot.”

“It’s to see that his education is very important for his future, he can become somebody,” mother Silvia Reyna said as Joel Lopez II excitedly walked through campus classrooms Monday.

“We want students to start saying, not ‘if’ I go to college but ‘when’ I go to college,” Singh said.

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