



VVC hosts full house for Bridge Program

New program to help transition high school seniors

By CHERYL THOMPSON Special to the Daily Press

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Principals, superintendents, counselors, board members and other administrators came together in the Student Activity Center at Victor Valley College to attend the Kick-Off Conference for the Bridge Program on Aug. 29. Also in attendance was special guest Dr. Herb Fischer, San Bernardino County superintendent of schools.

More than 140 administrators listened during the opening session as Chris Piercy, Bridge Program Coordinator of VVC, explained the concept and tools of using the Bridge program in high schools across the High Desert to transition high school seniors to college in a more user friendly way.

The Bridge Program operates on the premise that community college is a natural home base for the many students, and it is being underutilized.

Piercy shared statistics that showed the state being ranked 48th in the Nation for students going from high school to any post-secondary institution. San Bernardino County has recently seen its number of students continuing their education beyond high school drop to below 35 percent with the state average at 43 percent.

These numbers are especially troublesome to areas such as the High Desert, which is growing, and needs an educated work force if it is going to attract more businesses and higher paying jobs.

"Don't fix the blame, fix the problem," Piercy said. His solution is having a program that empowers high school students to register for college while in their seniors' English class. This program came out of a personal encounter with a former student who was discouraged from signing up for college because it was so confusing and logistically difficult.

Piercy has been an educator for 30 years, teaching history and political science at Serrano High School in Phelan. He is also an adjunct professor of VVC teaching political science.

Bridge is designed to be utilized by English high school teachers having students take career surveys and sign up for their own personalized Web page that are designed with abundant resources such as EUREKA, the California Career Information System. High school seniors will be able to register for VVC during the month of April in which the California standardized testing takes place.

Piercy's goal is to adapt the Bridge Program to eventually be incorporated into grade six and up. As Snowline School Board President Mike Patterson said, "Get students engaged as early as possible for our future."

Bridge Program Conference participants also engaged in breakout sessions designed

for further information and discussion on how to make the Bridge Program work at their school, including the technology. As a few of the High Desert schools act as testing sites for Bridge, there is interest from educators outside the area who may expand the program. For more information on the Bridge Program, e-mail Chris Piercy at piercyc@vvc.edu or call 559-6991.



Photo courtesy of Cheryl Thompson

From left, Dr. Arthur Golden, superintendent of Snowline, Dr. Herb Fischer, San Bernardino County superintendent of schools, Chris Piercy, Bridge Program coordinator of VVC and Rick Piercy, president and CEO of Lewis Center.

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