

Think K-14 - Bridge Conference VVC Hosts a Full House for the Bridge Program



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On August 29, 2007, one of the largest gatherings of principals, superintendents, counselors, board members and other administrators, with special guest Dr. Herb Fischer, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, came together in the Student Activity Center at Victor Valley College (VVC) to attend the Kick-Off Conference for the Bridge Program. An enthusiastic tone was set when participants began showing up at 7:45 am for the sign-in that began at 8:30 am. Two members from the College Board flew in from Texas and San Jose, California, in order to learn first hand about this program.

Over 140 administrators listened during the opening session as Chris Piercy, founder and director of Bridge, 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. Mr. Piercy shared statistics that showed California being ranked 48th in the Nation for students going from high school to college. Only 3.7% of graduating students in the High Desert attend community college full-time, with 4.1% of students going part-time. The High Desert is growing and needs an educated work force.

“Don’t fix the blame, fix the problem,” said Mr. Piercy. His solution is having a program that empowers students to register for college while in their seniors’ English class. This program came out of a personal encounter with a former student that was discouraged from signing up for college because it was so confusing and logistically difficult. Mr. 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 Victor Valley College 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. Seniors will be able to register for VVC during the week of California standardized testing, usually in April, which seniors do not take.

Mr. Piercy hopes to adapt the Bridge Program to eventually be incorporated into grade 6 and up. As Snowline Board President Mike Patterson said, “Get students engaged as early as possible for our future.”

Participants also engaged in break-out 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 which may expand the program.

In order to allow Bridge to become a reality, it was formed with help from the United States Department of Education through a Title V Hispanic Serving Institutional Grant, Victor Valley College, and Lewis Center for Educational Research, Snowline Unified School District, Hobsons, Inc., and EUREKA: the California Career Information System. For more information on the Bridge Program, contact Chris Piercy at piercyc@vvc.edu or 760-559-6991.