

County Board of Education visits Norton Space and Aeronautics Academy

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(Photo by Nelson Brown) County School Board President Mark Sumpter looks over work by a student at the Norton Space and Aeronautics Academy during a school board tour Sept. 6.

On Sept. 6, key members of the San Bernardino County Board of Education visited Norton Space and Aeronautics Academy (NSAA), a Lewis Center for Educational Research Program, to check on the progress of the charter school since it opened its doors in August of 2008 to grades kindergarten through third grade. Each year the school will add one grade level with the goal of becoming a K-12 school by 2018.

The team of 12 members, including County Superintendent Gary S. Thomas, and Board President Mark Sumpter initially met in the gymnasium of the school for a brief overview by Principal Jan Gustafson-Corea. Afterwards, board members were split into teams of two, and

visited classes that were in session. One team, headed by Rick Piercy, CEO Lewis Center for Educational Research, and the other by Principal Corea.

The members had a chance to see the students neatly dressed in their uniforms, and observed how they were taught in both English and Spanish. The students themselves were well behaved, and most of them kept their focus, and attention on their lesson and not the small crowd of adults that came into the class.

NSAA is also a program of Dual Immersion. Dual Immersion is where a percentage of two languages is used for instruction in the classroom. Depending on the subject being taught, and the grade of the student, a higher percentage of one language is used over the other. NSAA is using English, and Spanish. They intend to incorporate Mandarin at a later time. “This program is very interesting. It’s important that the children stay in the program to get the foundation of both languages,” said Dr. Beth Higbee, SBCSS, Assistant Superintendent

“After three or four years of the Dual language program, student’s scores match or exceed those of single language children,” said Principal Jan Gustafson-Corea.

“Our goal is for all students to be able to speak, read, and write in English and Spanish in all academic areas after continued attendance in the program for five years,” added Rick Piercy.

Although the school opened just two years ago, Rick Piercy is hoping the school will have the same or better success as the Academy for Academic Excellence (AAE), a K-12 charter school in the Apple Valley. “AAE had a 100 percent graduation rate with 91 of the 96 graduates being accepted to two- and four-year colleges.

“One-third of the high school kids go into a ROTC program,” Rick Piercy continued.

Principal Jan Gustafson-Corea was very enthusiastic as she spoke of the growth of the program. “As we grow, we’re looking to add more art and music to the curriculum,” she said. “We also plan to have at least 15 books in the library for every student,” she continued.

“What we are seeing here is a great opportunity for children to thrive,” said Mark Sumpter.

Partnering with the University of California, Riverside and California State University, San Bernardino, will benefit students as the NSAA puts research-guided programs into best practices.

For more information, visit www.lewiscenter.org or call (909) 386-2300.