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Elementary school promotes college early

UNIVERSITY-BOUND: Winchester is one of five 'No Excuses University' schools in the nation.

By VALERIE CLARK/The Valley Chronicle

Students at Winchester Elementary School have no excuses to avoid college.

At least that's what school officials and teachers hope after introducing "No Excuses University," a program to get elementary school students interested in someday attending college.

Students and families gathered at Winchester Community Center on Feb. 1 to learn about the program. Scott Turner, formerly of the San Diego Chargers, spoke to the crowd about overcoming obstacles to achieve dreams.



REPRESENTING: Teachers of Winchester Elementary School hold up the banners of the schools that their classrooms are representing at last week's 'No Excuses University' rally at the Winchester Community Center. VALERIE CLARK / The Valley Chronicle

Winchester is among five schools in the nation to be chosen to be a NEU school. In keeping with the spirit of the program, each school involved adopts the pledge: "We are committed to creating a school that knows no limits to the academic success of each student."

In addition, each classroom adopts an actual university to represent it. Last week's rally had each teacher introduce their school by waving a flag with the school's name on the banner. Some of the schools represented were Baylor, USC, UCLA, University of Redlands, and Columbia University.

Each classroom has a board that is dedicated to their university. Students wear the colors of their university on Fridays and gather at the flag pole in the morning to talk about the successes they have achieved during the week. Teachers also fly their school's flag outside their classrooms, and on Mondays, students wear NEU T-shirts to school.

"We want to have college be a part of the daily language and an expectation of what occurs after high school," said Winchester's principal Marc Horton.

He added: "We have to (promote college now) because if no one speaks it, it's not going to happen and we are in an area where college needs promotion."

Before Horton began his career in education, he worked as a social worker. "I was working with people who were told to change. They were told, 'Either you change, or this will happen to you.' I went back to school so I could work with people before they were told to change."

Both students and parents, said Horton, have expressed their excitement about NEU. Parents are asked to talk to their students every day about their day and also to encourage them.

Horton said he believes parents want the best for their children. Between them and teachers, he said, students will receive positive reinforcement and believe that they are capable of whatever they want from life.

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