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APTOŚ

A TASTE OF COLLEGE LIFE

Westlake Elementary students are some of 2,800 fourth-graders touring Cabrillo College on Friday.

Santa Cruz Elementary program welcomes thousands of fourth-graders to Cabrillo campus.

By Cabin Men

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APTOŚ  Every child should go to college. That was the message parents, teachers and Cabrillo College officials reiterated Friday to more than 2,800 fourth grade students.

It was the third annual S4C Sampler Fourth Grade Event, an event focused on helping the students begin to contemplate their futures.

“Today is an opportunity to show all of the Santa Cruz County fourth-graders what it’s like to be on a college campus, said Leslie De Rose, program co-ordinator for S4C, which stands for Santa Cruz County College Commitment. “Get them comfortable with the idea and have it be a natural idea that they go to college.”

The day’s activities comprised a brief presentation by Cabrillo College President Laurel Leeke, a tour of the campus and a 40-minute college class.

During the tour, students were split into smaller groups and led around Cabrillo’s campus, touring the library, the hallways and some classrooms.

The program’s origins were sparked after a study revealed that students who are taken to a college campus and the idea of higher education before sixth grade were much more likely to go to and graduate from college. From there, S4C, in conjunction with the county’s school districts and the colleges, created a series of programs with that message in mind.

In addition to the fourth-grade visit, seventh-grade students are taken on tours of UC Santa Monterey Bay and UC Santa Cruz and high school juniors attend workshops about applying to college.

There is no measurement of the results yet but De Rose said, steadfastly, parents have praised the program.

“I’ve literally spoken with parents who get a little tear in their eye and say, ‘I can’t believe my kid is talking about college. They never thought they could go,’” she said.

As far as the tour went, each group was assigned to classrooms and taught college-level subject matters, such as statistics, astronomy, engineering and others.

The programs were modified to maintain the children’s attention and inspire their imagination.

Clairol Melbourne, a teacher at Delaveaga Elementary School in Santa Cruz, brought 19 children in the event.

The students were on their way to a class and talked excitedly about the day.

“I think it’s great that they get to come check it out,” Melbourne said about Cabrillo College.

She added that while some of the parents may have started talk to their kids about college, some may have not. The day’s events can circumvent that by planting the idea in their hearts, she said.

“It’s a good opportunity for them to see that school is something they have a choice about,” she said.

Cole Rayborn, 9, was among Melbourne’s students and enjoyed the entire day.

“I like it because you get to learn if you want to choose this for a junior college,” he said.

His friend, Lowell Green, had other plans. “It’s a good college but I might go someplace better and far away.”

PHOTOS BY DAVE SYKES/SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL