



Carlsbad Unified School District

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For Immediate Release

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CUSD SUMMER SESSION STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS GAIN MULTIPLE SKILLS WHILE MAINTAINING THEIR LEARNING MOMENTUM

Carlsbad, CA ... Four dozen incoming grades 6-12 students with moderate to severe disabilities are working hard to retain and improve their academic, behavioral and social skills this summer at Carlsbad High School through an Extended School Year (ESY) program. The program continues, Tuesdays through Fridays, through July 29, 2011. A smaller contingent of students is working in classrooms at Magnolia and Hope Elementary as well.

North Coastal Consortium Special Education Program Specialist Brent Nielsen states, “ESY offers a continuous educational experience that is important to students with special needs. We can prevent regression of learned skills, which could otherwise deteriorate and need to be recouped. The structure we provide is key to our students’ well-being and achievement.”

Within that structure exists a great deal of flexibility, which makes for an enjoyable summer experience. Nielsen reports, “The kids take field trips to the grocery store, local eateries, California Surf Museum, Oceanside Pier and other locales. The trips are relevant and meaningful as well as fun and engaging. They offer students an opportunity to improve their functional daily living skills, such as making purchases and counting out change. Our higher-functioning kids open their eyes and minds to considering future job possibilities. It’s very motivating for all.”

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Experiences Expand Students' Learning and Their Universe

John Murphy's classroom of teens ages 15-17 are working diligently in an informal yet rigorous environment. Murphy quips, "We may be dressed casually, but it's not the Carlsbad Country Club."

For one current lesson segment, Murphy's kids walked to the Library and checked out books on Aztec, Incan and Mayan history. After learning how to conduct research and delving into the subject matter, they will create Power Point presentations highlighting what they've discovered. In-between their studies, they participate in fun learning activities such as card games and are planning a field trip to a burger joint to celebrate one of the student's birthdays.

"It's all part of experiencing and learning to navigate the world to which they will be transitioning as adults," says Nielsen, who believes that both the summer and the entire year-round program to address students with special needs is successful on many levels. He explains, "Our culture of inclusion here at Carlsbad High and throughout the District makes success achievable for all of our kids."

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Photos:

Trever Quejada-Dean and Brandon Del Rio take a break from learning math ("Fractions? They're a piece of cake!" says Brandon) for a friendly game of war.

Naeem Zaboori and Lexi Martinez conduct research on ancient civilizations while recalling their fun time at last year's Best Buddies prom.