



GROSSMONT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT'S NEWSLETTER

From the office of Superintendent Robert Collins

Lourdes – A Student Missed

I'm often asked, "Where did you get this passion for seniors and post-secondary plans?" It began in 1987 when I was principal at Grant High School in the San Fernando Valley.

The month was May and I was going through the senior list and the colleges that seniors had been accepted to. One name jumped out at me, Lourdes Gonzales. She had a 3.4 GPA, but next to her name there was no college designation. I figured that she probably hadn't taken a college preparatory sequence. I decided to go down to the counseling office and check it out.

To my surprise, Lourdes had completed the A-G requirements to the University of California. I called in the college counselor and the grade level counselor to inquire about Lourdes. The response was, "Well, we really don't know her that well."

So I called in Lourdes. I asked her why she wasn't going to college. She just shrugged her shoulders. She told me she was just going to stay at home and help with the family. Maybe get a part-time job. And then she said, "What's wrong? I did everything everyone asked me to."

I asked her if anyone at school had ever talked with her about going to college. She just shrugged her shoulders. Lourdes was capable, bright, and hard working, but no one had taken the time to talk with her about her future.

I made a commitment that day that there would never be another Lourdes in my life. I resolved that I would do whatever I could to ensure that we counseled, inspired and helped every senior develop a post-secondary plan. Whether the student was going to a 4-year college, community college, the military or some type of further training, we had a responsibility to help that senior realize his or her goals.

What Makes A Great School District? One Answer is Found at Valhalla High School

As Principal Larry Martinsen and I walked around Valhalla High School, we entered a center filled with computers, reference guides, posters and information, all dedicated to career exploration and college guidance. It was the **Career and College Center**, coordinated by Marilyn Rodriguez.

The Center immediately grabbed my attention, and more importantly, it grabbed the attention of hundreds of Valhalla students and parents. Every day in one location students can explore different careers, tour college campuses, apply to college or access financial aid information.

There is no question that every parent has a dream for their child and every student has wondered who they will become after high school. Our schools make it clear that their mission is to graduate students who are college prepared and career ready. It isn't just about a high school diploma; it is about each student's future.



In visiting schools this month I have seen a variety of college and career centers. What I am proposing is to take a lead from Valhalla High School in order to take college and career preparation to the next level.

What are the possible recommendations?

1. Establish **fully equipped college and career centers at every high school campus**. That means a dedicated center with up-to-date computers, fax machines, internet capability, reference guides and appropriate information.
2. Ensure that every high school has a **program beginning in 9th grade to inform parents of college and career choices and opportunities**. These programs have to be ongoing through the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade.
3. Train **all counselors** in all aspects of college preparation, applications and financial aid.
4. Ensure that **every student graduates with a post-secondary plan**.
5. Develop extensive **relationships with all local colleges as well as the University of California and California State University systems**.
6. Establish a **system where we are held accountable for the plans and futures of our students**.

It is not enough to be held accountable for high school graduation. **Our parents and students expect more. What makes a great school District? It is great schools.** It is a continual commitment to the future of each student. That is what I saw at Valhalla High School.