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Logan High adds LatinX outreach programs

By Irma Mora staff writer Jan 4, 2019



Parents listen to tips on how to have effective communication with their families at the first Puertas Abiertas workshop Wednesday at the Logan High School Library.

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Two new programs have been added to Logan High School's attempts to reach out to the LatinX community and help Spanish-speaking parents better communicate with the school and become aware of services available to the community.

One of the programs, "Puertas Abiertas" or "Open Doors," is a series of monthly informative workshops in which community organizations inform attendees about services they offer and how these services can be obtained.

These workshops will take place throughout the school year at 6:30 p.m. every first Wednesday of the month at the LHS library. Parent-liaison at LHS Maria Hunsaker said the workshops will consist of a dinner, a presentation by the organization and a question-and-answer session.

"It's just one hour. It's really short. We are trying to keep it to one hour," Hunsaker said. "We're hoping as we get going, you know, we will get more and more people especially for our, we have like an immigration attorney coming later on in March."

The first "Puertas Abiertas" workshop took place Wednesday with The Family Place informing attendees about effective communication in the family. Parents learned tips on how to better communicate when frustrated as well as the importance of nonverbal communication.

"I liked the topic. It was very interesting," said Suheily Valaquez, a parent of LHS students. "The topic had an impact on me because it pretty much happens to me, and the resource that brought it was a very prepared person."

Future workshops include: information from the Health Department in February, Immigration Lawyer Isabel Cueva in March, and mental health services at Bear River in May.

Parents of LHS students Velazquez and Jenny Soto said the workshops would help in educating the community in important topics and said they would attend the future workshops as well as invite others to come.

"I think it would be great if all the parents from Logan High School could come and really learn because it's true that the school helps our children, but I think the foundation is with the parents," Soto said. "Sometimes it upsets me when not many people come, but I think little by little as we let them know, they will come."

The second program is an intensive two-week English speaking class that will help English learners to practice the language.

"One of the biggest things we find in working with a lot of the parents is that they understand English. They kind of speak it, but they're scared to use it," Hunsaker said. "They don't have a lot of opportunity to practice. Sometimes in the work they do but for the majority of the time just basic conversation is not their strongest point, and so, what we're doing is just two weeks of intense practicing."

Students will be evaluated and placed in beginning, intermediate or advanced classes. Hunsaker said the goal of the classes is to help the students become more comfortable using conversational English.

"It's kind of based off of the speed dating," Hunsaker said. "You're with somebody for a few minutes and then you move on, and so we want them to get that practice over and over with different people so that they start to get more comfortable with their skills and more comfortable with their ability to speak."

Beginning on Monday, classes will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday for two weeks at LHS.

Although many volunteers from Utah State University and other community groups have signed up, Hunsaker said more volunteers would be helpful.

“Basically, you just have to be able to speak English. We’re asking for high school and higher,” Hunsaker said. “They’ll actually work with several different people is our goal. So, they’ll just kind of keep kind of asking the same questions and just talking to them and getting them to converse and feel a little more confident in their ability to speak English.”

For more information on to become a volunteer log onto www.JustServe.org.

Irma Mora