

Taking School Home

*Verdugo Hills High School
Tujunga, California*

Verdugo Hills High School has the largest geographic transportation sending area of any high school in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) helped produce a video series to bring parents who lived near or far right into the classroom with their students. Known as Taking School Home, the project provided a way for parents who were unable to come to school to be informed about their children's academic lives. The project was created and led by Verdugo Hills' Parent Center Director, a former documentary filmmaker.

Taking School Home includes six videos, four of which are departmental videos in the areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies. Another video explores the school's electives program. A final tape, called "Navigating Verdugo," is devoted to illustrating the way the school works. In all, the video series informs parents of course offerings and graduation requirements, and introduces them to teachers and classroom settings.

The ATP produced 200 English and 100 Spanish copies of the video series. The total cost to implement the project, over two years, was \$63,000. Major sources of funding were the school's Title I allocations and Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Grant.

Many members of the school community contributed to the videos' production. Teachers and staff helped plan the videos, agreed to have their classes taped, recorded voice-over tracks, and served as translators. Administrators and department chairs viewed

and approved rough cuts of the videos. Teachers received nine English and three Spanish copies to lend to their students. Students and their parents provided feedback through surveys accompanying each tape.

The school's brochure and newsletters alerted parents to the video series. Parents had opportunities to view portions of the videos at Orientation, Title I, and PTSA meetings. At Back to School Nights, teachers showed subject area videos in their classrooms, and the Parent Center Director manned a booth at the main entrance where videos were available for check-out.

Students and their parents have checked out over 1,000 copies of the videos. Parents, especially those who are unable to come to Verdugo Hills, have gained a better understanding of their students' school experience. One parent commented, "I have now seen three videos, and I feel I know so much more about the school and the class experience. I will recommend the videos to other parents." Students who watched the videos learned about their future classes and teachers, as well as the possibilities open to them after graduation.

Verdugo Hills will continue to send home the videos and screen them at school events. The school plans to increase publicity in order to expose even more families to Taking School Home.

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