

Education Spotlight



Flagstaff High School students polish their interview skills

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About 100 Flagstaff High School seniors are getting an intensive course on how to present themselves professionally and with confidence during job or other interviews thanks to the school's annual Senior Exit Interviews held during four sessions in April in school's library. The final session will be on April 30.

Community members, educators and others volunteered to sit on a panel to help the students review their resumes and discuss their appearance, their presentations and offer the youth tips on how to succeed in future interviews.

“It’s important for them to reflect on their time in high school and also important to get some gentle feedback on their interview skills,” said Karin Eberhard, spokesperson for the Flagstaff Unified School District. “It’s also important for the community to see how spectacular our kids are; otherwise we would just do it with our teachers. The students get feedback from people outside of school.”

The exit interview program was started more than eight years ago at the school. Walter Halaberda, who teaches English 11 and College and Career Ready English 12 at the school, has been leading the sessions for the past three years.

During one session, student Alejandro “Alex” Ornelas, photo above, left, went through the interview process, sitting across the table from mock job panel members who included Mary Kay Walton, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at FUSD and Marilyn Ruggles, an education consultant and co-founder of the Riordan Action Network.

Ornelas was among a group of students profiled in the Jan. 25, 2015 Arizona Daily Sun story: Flag High culinary students get sweet taste of victory

Community participants in the interviews have included representatives from the Arizona Daily Sun, the Coconino Coalition for Children & Youth, First Things First, Nestle Purina, Northern Arizona Healthcare, the Second Chance Center for Animals and city and other officials. This year, other community representatives included Kenneth Lamm, a member of the boards of the Flagstaff Community Foundation and the Grand Canyon Association.

“I’ve been doing this for a number of years,” he said. “All of them are terrific in their own way. They impress me every time. Sometimes, there are simple things we can talk to them about, such as the format of their resume. One thing that we consistently saw was that they said they didn’t want to brag. We said you are correct. We don’t want you to brag, but we want you to make clear all of the positives in the resume. If you speak five languages, put it in there. One student was an accomplished runner, number two in the state, but didn’t make a big deal about it. That is not bragging. The resume should put down everything in a positive way. We’re told to be positive, but we have to help them because some are really looking for help.”

Eberhard said she really appreciates the support of the community members and how it helps students succeed.

“We really like this program,” Eberhard said. “It’s good for the students and good for the community.”

For more information on the Flagstaff High School Senior Exit Interviews, contact Halaberda at whalaberda@fUSD1.org