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SCHOOLS

Bullis Boosters Camp adds leadership element (/news/sections/schools/210-school-features/53509-)

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Traci Newell/Town Crier

Bullis Boosters Camp counselors-in-training, from left, Nicole Andrews, Elena Alturi and Amrita Sangani serve snacks to students at the summer bridge camp.

In addition to its tuition-free summer bridge camp for local underserved students, the Bullis Boosters Camp expanded to include a counselor-in-training leadership program this year.

In an attempt to add sustainability to the annual program for second- through fourth-graders, camp officials added the leadership element for junior high and high school students.

"This is a paid program that is helping make our main camp sustainable," said Grace Yang, co-founder of the Bullis Boosters Camp. "It's been reliant on private donations for so long – we thought this would be good for the long term."

Bullis Charter School athletic director Joseph Stark, who has a background in creating new athletic programs at schools, developed the curriculum for the program, including a student workbook.

"One of the needs I saw was that part of the leadership they were missing was influence over their peers – they don't have that trust and bond," Stark said of the student leaders. "So I made this week (about learning) how to influence others positively."

The curriculum focused on training in youth development, communication, leadership, activity planning, safety and relationship building. Counselors put their skills into practice daily, getting involved directly with the program's teachers and campers, including lesson planning and spending the week learning alongside experienced educators while providing a meaningful community service.

"At this camp, one thing I am learning the most is how to be a leader," said Tamur Asar, sophomore at Los Altos High School. "The (workbook) teaches you tons of great tricks so that you can put yourself in the right mentality and situation to be a leader for these kids."

Each day the counselors-in-training helped the teachers supervise activities in class, and Stark said their role was important in classroom management.

"Every day we are doing an activity on influence so that we can influence the campers to do activities and have fun at the camp," said Nicole Andrews, counselor-in-training and a seventh-grader at The Girls Middle School.

Asar said he learned to lead by example.

The new counselors-in-training element complemented the Bullis Boosters Camp's primary mission – running a weeklong, hands-on language arts and science engineering day camp for incoming second-, third- and fourth-graders from Mountain View and Los Altos.

The camp, targeted to English Language Learners and those who qualify for free and reduced-price lunches, served 48 students this year.

Campers took a field trip this year, with half of the students touring Google offices and the other half visiting the Los Altos History Museum.

The program continues to be a community effort, with donations from ExploraBox, Linden Tree Books, LuLu's, Jersey Mike's, Whole Foods Market, Spot Pizza and Taste Nutrition.

For more information, visit bullisboosterscamp.org.

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1 COMMENT

Tremendous! | 6 Months Ago

This sounds like a wonderful program - the exact kind of thing that Los Altos should represent. So great to see some such a camp come together to offer an enriching experience for these kids. Kudos to the local merchants for their donations. Genius idea for the camp organizers to offer opportunities for counselors in training to broaden their perspectives and give them leadership skills. Well done BCS!

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