

West Prep eyes scholastic renaissance

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

Efforts to educate the community about educational reform at the newly established Preparatory Institute School for Academic Excellence at West Hall, formerly known as West Middle School, was met with a low turnout. On Monday, the school hosted two informational meetings regarding the school's new change, format and focus at 11:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. but only drew attendance of 6 and 20 respec-

tively. None of the participants were identified as a parent of an attending student or as a student of the campus, which is now called West Prep.

The reform efforts at West Prep are underway to prevent a possible takeover of the school by the Nevada Department of Education for the school's failure to meet acceptable criteria measured as the AYP or adequate yearly progress testing requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act. The school is in

"I think we all recognize that student achievement is a shared responsibility among parents, staff members and students."

— Michael Barton
Principle of West Prep



year four of not making AYP in the areas of English language arts and mathematics.

The meeting focused on the changes that would be made at West Prep, some pat-

terned after the efforts at the Foshay Learning Center in Los Angeles and Talent Development in Philadelphia. These schools adopted a philosophy where the practices focused on cooperative learning, world-class standards, use of modern technology, improvement in math and English, better school attendance, promoting good study habits, lower class size and raising teachers' and students' expectations led to overall academic achievement.

The enrollment at West Prep this year is 847 students in comparison to 1,041 last year as a result of a school district provision allowing parents the option to transfer their students out of a school if it fails to make academic improvement for three consecutive years.

In reviewing the district's latest school accountability report card for 2004-2005 summarizing the results of the last standards-based test performance, the percentage (See West, Page 3)

Arts Center hosting cultural workshops

By Tasha Pope and Parker Philpot
Sentinel-Voice

The West Las Vegas Arts Center at 947 West Lake Mead Blvd. is holding a spring break dance workshop called Great Performances on April 13 and 14 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. This workshop is designed to expose youth to African-American theater and dance. "We want to give our young people an understanding of the body of work that African-American's created," said Jewel Jeppe, a cultural activities specialist at the center.

This is the first year for the youth activity workshop, and it is a creation of center staff members who felt there was a need to give the youth "something positive and educational to do during [spring break], Jeppe explained.

The Great Performances workshop series is open to youth 10 to 18 years of age, regardless of their experience with the arts. Participants will attend five separate classes during the two day workshop, each lasting a little over an hour. Classes will focus on theatrical and dance works that African-American entertainers have performed on Broadway.

"[I want participants to] become more active in their own art form," Jeppe said. Experienced performers and coaches will lead the classes, and each performing arts instructor has many years of experience and accomplishments.

Walter Mason was the acting coach of Sammy Davis Jr., and Lindell Blake is an "accomplished performer," Jeppe explained as she listed the notable team of instructors for the workshops and their impressive bios.

Shakespearean trained actor Mason also performed Othello at the White House. Mason is founder and director of the Ira Aldridge Theater Company and has produced stage plays.

Classically trained dance instructor Steven Reynolds hails from Broadway, performed with the legendary dance company of Alvin Ailey, and performed locally in the stage show "O" at the Bellagio Hotel.

Another dance and acting instructor, Shelby Brown, was the founder of the Westside Academy of the Performing Arts and starred in film. She was featured in Michael Jackson's "Moon Walker" and "Smooth Criminal" videos.

Chazz "Swing" Young had a long professional jazz, tap and swing dancer career and served as director for the Austin Dancers, a renown Las Vegas-based troupe.

Lindell Blake is a spoken word, tap dancer and improv performer. He was the lead member of Break Machine, the first world touring break dance group. Blake, too, appeared in hit videos of pop star Jackson — "Bad" and "Smooth Criminal."

Dr. Rochelle Hooks' experience includes being an educator with the Clark County School District, a creative writer and performer in stage productions, including Mason's recent production of "Raisin in the Sun."

For classes, students are asked to bring sack lunches and wear dance attire to enable comfortable and efficient participation. Participants are also asked to bring jazz or tap shoes but Jeppe said, "We [won't] turn anyone away."

There is a one-time fee of \$25, but the only requirement is that the participant "must be willing [to learn]," Jeppe said.

Registration for the workshop will be held at the center daily, now through April 12.

For more information call 229-4800.

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