

# Llano Grande Center for Research and Development

October 2007

[www.Llanogrande.org](http://www.Llanogrande.org)

## LG CLASS BEGINS WITH STORIES

Amidst the scattering of students sitting around the cramped, although cozy, circle, there are no textbooks or handouts or homework. There is no teacher standing in front of the classroom lecturing, or furious note taking.

But in the eyes of the kids and adults in this circle, there is learning happening. It can be seen in their tears, in their excitement, in their far-away nostalgia as personal story after personal story is shared with one another about who they are and where they come from.

And through this process, a collective consciousness is being raised about who we are as individuals, as a family, and as a community.

The Llano Grande Center began its second-year of offering social studies research methods classes this August, working with close to 30 high school students to learn about identity, place and community change.

Engaging in a process of “co-learning,” the classes have no teachers, but rather is a space where Llano Grande staff and students work together to explore a common direction of learning.

With different themes spread across each of the school year’s six weeks, the class will explore personal and community identity; oppression and social justice; the power of story and digital storytelling; our local place and environment; and community engagement.

Through these learning journeys, students will become involved in a variety of skill-building activities including digital storytelling, oral history collection, community research, and asset-mapping. At the end of the year, the

## LG AFTER-SCHOOL HAS NEW LOOK

As amazing work happens during the school day with kids in the Llano Grande class, students also have the chance to become involved in community change work after school, with different ways to participate every day.

Each day of the Center’s new after-school programming will feature a different theme as a way to open our doors to a larger set of interests students have.

The restructuring includes several of the Center’s past after-school programs, but organizes them to allow students to participate when and how they feel is possible.

Monday afternoons have been designated as “Movie Nights,” where staff will present a feature film or documentary with relevant and significant ideas on issues such as community, identity, or social justice. The group will then engage on meaningful discussions on the theme of the film.

Tuesdays are focused on college access, as staff will host meetings and workshops for students and parents on the various aspects of becoming prepared for life after high school. From filling out applications, to seeking financial aid, and even helping kids plan college visitations, our goal is to offer as much tangible college support as possible on this night.

Wednesdays will be the days students can come in and learn new skills in media creation. Designated as “Make Your Own Movie Day,” students will learn about basic movie creation by becoming involved in the filming and editing process. The goal of this program is to help kids understand the power of their own voice, as well as the



Llano Grande students work on a mural depicting their image of community including what they see as local assets and deficits.

# LG AND EEHS WORK TO REVITALIZE COLLEGE CULTURE

Once recognized informally as the "Ivy League Prep School" of the Rio Grande Valley, Edcouch-Elsa High School and the Llano Grande Center are working again to revise and revitalize the way students, parents and teachers think about college.

Recognizing the potential of our students and this school, which has sent more than 50 students to elite universities across the country, Llano Grande staff

have been meeting with principals, department heads and counselors to create broader access to higher education for students, as well as create programs that encourage not only a greater number of students applying and getting into college, but succeeding and graduating from them.

Preliminary ideas for this initiative include holding workshops with Edcouch-Elsa college counselors and

key teachers to think about how we can develop relationships with colleges and universities across the country to provide more higher education options for students.

Another goal is to increase the number of students who apply to national military schools, as well as increase the number of students who earn National Merit Scholar distinction through the PSAT.

## AFTER-SCHOOL, CONT'D

possibilities that exist in our new technological society to use these skills.

The final night of our afterschool program is an open night, where students and staff decide on a topic or event and explore it through discussion or action. Some ideas include using this night to learn about cultural practices, such as how to make tamales; as discussion nights, where local issues will be brought to the table for conversation; or as book nights, where conversations around texts will be held.

Americorps volunteers Isaiah Mata and Mark Rodriguez, both Edcouch-Elsa High School seniors, will be working with Llano Grande staff members to coordinate these programs.

## LG HOSTING KZOO COLLEGE

In an effort to create as much access to college as possible, the Llano Grande Center will be hosting Rod Malcolm, Associate Director of Admission for Kalamazoo College, at a seminar for students and parents this month.

Mr. Malcolm, in charge of student recruiting for "KZoo," will speak to families not only about the benefits of attending the Michigan-based school, but as well will share important details about applying to any college.

Through the Center's relationship with Mr. Malcolm and Kalamazoo College, close to a dozen recent Edcouch-Elsa graduates are now attending school at the small private university.

Mr. Malcolm will be at Edcouch-Elsa High School on October 18th at 1 p.m. to meet with students, and will meet with parents at 6 p.m. in McAllen.

For more information, please feel free to contact the Llano Grande Center.



Malcolm

class will use the final six weeks to work collectively on a community change project.

Last year's group partnered with the city of Elsa and Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York during their last six weeks of school to create design concepts for the renovation of Mario Leal Park. Students are continuing to work on the development of the park this school year by raising funds and collecting community input.

## LG PLANNING 10TH ANNIV.

In August 1997, through funding from the Annenberg Rural Challenge, the doors of the Llano Grande Center opened at Edcouch-Elsa High School, paving the way for countless students, teachers and local leaders who have become an integral part of this school and community.

Over time, the Center has gone on to send kids to college, collect local history and empower youth and community members alike to create local change.

Ten years later, we continue to see the Center flourish with new staff, students and leaders, and have begun planning celebrations to commemorate our work over the past decade.

Some of the highlight events for this anniversary year will include a celebration of our alumni and families, a formal gala honoring those who have contributed directly to the Center, as well as a book detailing the different aspects of work and change that have happened here.

For more information on events and how to help, please contact that Center.

**PARENTS: WANT TO PARTICIPATE?  
FEEL FREE TO COME BY OUR OFFICE AT ROOM A1 AT  
EEHS, EMAIL US AT [INFO@LLANOGRANDE.ORG](mailto:INFO@LLANOGRANDE.ORG), OR  
CALL US.**