

High School to Unveil New Tech Classroom

[Valley Edition]

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Author: IRENE GARCIA

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Students and administrators at San Fernando High School will celebrate the completion of a new, state-of-the-art technology center ceremony and public tours of the facility.

The new Community Inspiration Studio is a high-tech digital classroom equipped with 60 computers, digital cameras, a wireless teleconferencing equipment and other technology.

The studio is a welcome addition to this working-class Latino community in the northeast San Fernando Valley, said Marco Torres who helped create the center and runs it.

"We're in a part of the Valley with the least access to technology," Torres said. "To most of the people who live in this area, computer is very important."

The 3,000-square-foot center also has a video conference room, a 102-inch presentation monitor, three private rooms and a public bilingual public service programs will be produced. There is also an elevated loft with two computers and a printer, as well as high-speed internet.

"This was a vision for so long, it's like a dream come true," said Luis Ochoa, a 17-year-old senior who will attend UC Berkeley in the fall.

"This is one of the only things that motivates me to come to school."

Luis was one of many students who helped Torres design the studio. Torres, a technology whiz, proposed the center a few years ago and secured federal and state funding to create it. In all, it took about two years and more than \$1 million to transform a former industrial building's appearance to an old warehouse, into the new facility.

Most of the funding for the overhaul came from the California Digital High School grant, a \$500-million project designed to boost training in classrooms.

The four-year program, launched in 1997, has already given schools throughout the state \$100 million.

"Now we have anywhere, any time learning," Torres said. "Our kids can hook up with kids in New Zealand and Mexico. This is where teachers and students can work in."

Earlier this week, students were allowed to use the center. Jazmin Rodriguez transferred files from a class project to her teacher's computer.

"The speed is unbelievable," said the 17-year-old senior. "It used to take a day to do something that now takes five minutes."

Jazmin plans to spend lots of time in the new center, which will be open to students and faculty from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and family members associated with the school also will be able to use the facility and take computer classes, Torres said.

Today's ceremony and public tours will begin at 10 a.m.

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