

Middle School tours URI



Submitted Photos

Students from the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School toured the URI campus recently in an effort by schools to provide early career planning.

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COVENTRY — The middle school students at the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School of Coventry might just have an upper hand on those students who are just now beginning their college planning process as high school juniors and seniors.

The middle school launched a program this year that provided their eighth grade students the opportunity to tour the University of Rhode Island campus, eat in their dining halls, utilize their library facilities and visit their dorms.

It is all part of a new cumulative effort that falls into the schools "early career planning initiative," according to Lori LeBrun, the eighth grade guidance counselor who organized the trips.

LeBrun said that each student at the middle school has what is called an ILP, an individual learning plan, and as part of that plan students are encouraged by their guidance counselor and other administrators and staff in the school to "begin thinking

about their goals for the future as well as college and career planning."

"We start to develop the student's ILPs in sixth grade and then we finish them in their seventh and eighth grade year so we thought that it would be a really nice addition to what we already do in terms of planning kinds of activities to be able to offer a tour of a real life university so that these students would have a better understanding of it," LeBrun said. "You have to figure that some of these students have never even seen a college, never mind been on a college campus so this experience was extremely beneficial for them."

LeBrun said that because of the number of eighth grade students at the school, there are 407 of them, she had to divide the class into groups and take four separate trips. During each trip the students had the opportunity to see the classrooms, visit a dorm room, tour the recreational facilities, see the pool and eat in the cafeteria.

"It really was a great opportunity for the students to get a real feel for what college life is

like," LeBrun said. "We really wanted to make sure that they had the whole experience and they really did everything from seeing where the students sleep to where they eat and learn."

So far, she said, they have received "outstanding feedback" from both the students and the student's parents.

"I learned a lot about college life from the trip," Marissa Pelletier, one of the eighth graders to go on the trip said. "It made me think a lot more about my future and getting to that level and what I need to do to get there. It also made me think a lot about college and what I want to do in the future."

Zachary Denman, another one of the eighth grade students to attend the trip said that he thought the experience was extremely eye opening.

"I had no idea how many different classes you could take," Denman said. "They have a lot of fun things to do to keep the students interested too."

He said that the experience also left him with a lasting impression.

"After I went on the trip I

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thought a lot about college... more than I ever did," Denman said. "I need to take my grades seriously and work hard, because I want to get into college."

LeBrun said that every single one of the parents that she spoke to about the trip said that they were thrilled about the opportunity being offered to their children. Initially, she said, there may have been some hesitation from some who ex-

pressed their concerns that "it was just too early" to offer such an opportunity, but LeBrun explained that the timing was actually quite perfect and allowed the student's response to the experience to speak for itself.

"Although most of these students don't actually know what they want to be when they grow up at this point, now is the perfect time to show them why middle school is so important and how that what they are learning here in middle school

will affect their high school and college future," LeBrun said. "I truly think that these college visits truly sealed the major points that we try to get across in creating their ILPs."

LeBrun said that the cost of the trips was covered through a fund supported by Alan Shawn Feinstein so actually cost the school nothing. She said that she hopes that the funding will continue to be in place so that future eighth graders at the school will also have such opportunities.