



## LYNWOOD STUDENTS TAKE PART IN SUMMER READING PROGRAM

By: Staff Writer

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LYNWOOD - Summer days are anything but sluggish for Lynwood students who are spending their time in a summer literacy program that is meant to both inspire and empower children with activities such as reading, art, dance, music, field trips and community service.

In an effort to boost students love of learning and preserve their academic progress during the summer months while they are not in school, Helen Keller Elementary School is serving as a host site for the Read Lead Childrens Defense Fund Freedom Schools program, a six-week literacy enrichment camp aimed at students between kindergarten and the eighth grade in Lynwood.

The program which kicked off on June 23 and runs through Aug. 1 places a heavy focus on reading instruction while also empowering students to be leaders in their families and communities.

The program will hold an end-of-summer celebration July 31 at 5 p.m.

We want our kids to keep learning, engage in fun educational activities and visit museums and libraries on a continual basis, but for many students, summer break can hinder those opportunities, Lynwood school board President Briseida Gonzalez said. This program counters this and has provided 75 local students with the critical building block to continue their successes in school and retain what theyve learned throughout the year. It's a great partnership that has now been running three years strong.

Studies show that students who qualify for free or reduced lunches generally lose approximately two months of reading and academic achievement during their summer breaks, leading to learning loss and contributing to the widening achievement gap between lower- and higher-income children and youth.

The Childrens Defense Fund Freedom Schools program rooted in the work of the civil rights movement when college-age youths provided alternative instruction to Mississippi underfunded and segregated school system provides students with the opportunity to engage in stimulating activities.

They begin each morning with Harambee, a Swahili term that means all pull together, during which time the scholars and their teachers chant motivational songs, read aloud, listen to guest readers and close with a moment of silence.

I like Harambee and how Im improving in reading, and I really enjoy the teachers, who are energetic every day, said Helen Keller student and two-year participant of the program Anastacia Nwosu. We usually read books about the civil rights movement, which helps me learn about my culture.

During the program, each student reads between eight and 10 culturally relevant books that relate to the

program theme of I can make a difference.

It helps me learn that you can do anything no matter what color or culture you are, said Downey student Samantha Belloso, who previously participated in the program held at Lynwood United Methodist Church.

Students engage in up to 30 lessons driven by the new Common Core State Standards. They each have college mentors and participate in a field trip every Friday, visiting places such as libraries, neighborhood cultural centers and science and technology museums. Also included are parent and family empowerment and workshop training.

Lynwood Unified always strives to provide students with high-quality academic instruction, and that goal is especially important over the course of summer vacation when learning loss is likely to increase and achievement gained over the year drops off, said Superintendent Paul Gothold. This program provides an avenue of success for our kids, who can develop their reading skills and learn about social justice at the same time.

The program, being administered by Read Lead, is also taking place at Cal State Dominguez Hills and Holman United Methodist Church in South Los Angeles.