Mount Logan Middle School students explore college application process

By Kelly Cannon  Dec 16, 2014
Mt. Logan Middle School student Fernando Reyes practices filling out an application to Weber State University after learning about the different colleges and universities in Utah on Tuesday. (Eli Lucero/Herald Journal)

Though high school graduation is still nearly four years away for them, eighth-graders at Mount Logan Middle School got a sense of the college application process Tuesday.

College Application Day, sponsored and led by GEAR Up, provided each eighth-grade student with the chance to learn more about the colleges in Utah and then fill out a practice college application.

“We wanted to do a mock application for eighth-graders, so when they get to the point of filling out applications, they’re not strangers to the process,” said Nicole Vouvalis, diversity specialist at Utah State University.

The GEAR Up volunteers had real applications available for the students to look at and simplified versions of the application for them to fill out.

GEAR Up is a federally funded program that is designed to help students become better prepared for college. This includes mentoring and tutoring, college tours, SAT/ACT prep and
many more programs and activities. GEAR Up is run through USU and helps students in middle school and high school.

Before the students began filling out the applications Tuesday, they participated in an activity where they completed a worksheet that had hints and clues about each Utah college. For instance, the first clue said, “This university has lots of campuses, is the largest residential campus in the state of Utah and its mascot is Big Blue,” with the answer being USU.

After figuring out which college each clue referred to, the students then used a StepUp College Guide to learn about enrollment numbers, tuition costs and available degrees.

Vouvalis said the whole purpose of the visit to Mount Logan is to get kids thinking about college.

“At this point, they don’t know all the schools, so this activity gets them to start thinking about these things, like tuition and school size,” Vouvalis said. “It’s to get kids thinking about college and prepare them for the actual application process.”

Thirteen-year-old Tylee Thomson said she has only just started thinking about college.

“I have some colleges in mind, like USU or Westminster or maybe Snow College to start out,” Thomson said. “(College is) stepping into a new part of your life and learning about new things.”

She said she would like to either be a neurosurgeon or a veterinarian, since she loves animals.

“Something that takes a lot of skill,” she said.

However, Thomson isn't without worries about her collegiate future.

“I’m worried about not being good enough or not being smart enough once I get in to finish and graduate,” she said.

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