

# WHAT IS NO EXCUSES UNIVERSITY?

Damen Lopez is the founder of No Excuses University (NEU). He began NEU when he was a principal at Los Penasquito (Los Pen), an elementary school in Poway Unified School District in San Diego. He started NEU after researching the kinds of programs available for teaching elementary school students about going to college. Because there wasn't anything for elementary school, he founded No Excuses University.

His mother used to tell him every night before bed, "After high school, comes college."

No Excuses University is based on the idea of college readiness—"Every student deserves the opportunity to be educated in a way that prepares them for college, if they so choose to attend." The Six Exceptional Systems help schools focus on the most important part of a school—learning and better results for students' education. No Excuses! No Limits!

## NEU: Six Exceptional Systems

### A Culture of Universal Achievement

is when everyone at a school believes that all students can learn, no matter what! **At Thompson**, staff members all share one goal: *Every student will be performing at or above grade level in all subject areas.*

We believe that students' challenges in life do not define who they will become. These challenges are simply stepping stones to success. It is our job to create positive relationships with students and their families. Challenges will not interfere with our high expectations; expectations will be fair for all students.

We believe that consistent collaboration among staff members, and with students/families, is critical to student and

school success. Collaboration should happen on a daily basis through formal structures, as well as informally with students at the heart of our work.

High expectations will be set for students, staff, and parents, with permission to fail while taking academic risks, support for persevering and showing grit, and opportunities to learn while never giving up—no matter what—No Excuses!

**Collaboration:** Teachers and other staff members work together in an effort to prepare students for college. **Standards Alignment:** Teachers plan their lessons using the correct grade level standards for the area(s) they teach.

**Assessment Plan:** Teachers plan common assessments that align to the standards. Successful common assessments will show teachers if students have mastered the standards.

**Data Analysis:** Data should be the language of any NEU school. Teachers analyze data to plan for interventions and daily lessons.

**Interventions:** Data is used to plan interventions. Interventions provide teachers with data regarding the effectiveness of an intervention.

### Teachers Pledge to:

- ❖ Teach state standards
- ❖ Communicate regularly with parents
- ❖ Strive to meet the individual needs of each student

### Students Pledge to:

- ❖ Arrive at school every day, on time unless they are ill
- ❖ Follow the school rules
- ❖ Complete and turn in assignments
- ❖ Share letters, corrected work, and other school information with parents

### Parents Pledge to:

- ❖ Ensure that their child(ren) attend school every day, on time, unless they are ill
- ❖ Practice and use the PBIS Skills and the three expectations: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe
- ❖ Look at communication from school—corrected work, fliers, letters, etc.

What is the **Parent Take-5 Pledge**? We ask that parents take 5 minutes each day to talk to their child(ren) about their day. Here are five ideas you may want to use: 1) What was your student goal today? 2) What did you do today to achieve your goal/s? 3) How did you make your character count today? 4) What can you do tomorrow to act as an outstanding NEU student? 5) Encourage your student in a specific and genuine way.

## NEU: Symbols

**At Thompson**, one of the most obvious signs of our affiliation with NEU is our No Excuses University logo! This logo is used to create student and staff t-shirts. NEU shirts will continue to be worn by staff members and students on Fridays. Every classroom has adopted a 4-year university and that university's symbols are visible in and outside of the classroom. Mondays are college spirit days, when we encourage students to proudly wear their college t-shirt or colors.

During the year, students will continue to learn about their classroom adopted college through virtual field trips, and possibly a visit from or to that college. NEU planners are used in grades 2-6, and college vocabulary will be learned at every grade level. College-themed bulletin boards and flags are in hallways and other common areas.

All of this is done to get students to think about college and begin the conversation about which college they would like to attend. At Mirage, we truly believe that every child should begin preparing for college, starting in preschool—**NO EXCUSES! NO LIMITS!**



