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EDUCATION: MAUREEN MAGEE

Pilot math and science program tested at Lemon Grove school

A Lemon Grove middle school has become a living lab for local college students seeking innovative ways to engage students in math and science.

Future teachers at San Diego State University are designing math and science activities that they pilot with students at the Lemon Grove Academy of Sciences and Humanities twice a week through LabZone, a program at the SDSU Center for Research in Mathematics and Science Education.

Now in its third year, the project is designed to give budding educators a place to learn theories in math and science education while engaging underserved youth.

"LabZone enriches the experience for underserved middle-schoolers in San Diego while simultaneously providing SDSU students with the opportunity to design and

implement their own ideas of engaging math and science activities without limitations of a day-to-day curriculum, energizing them for the possibilities of a future in education," said Alexander "Sasha" Chizhik, a professor of educational psychology and faculty member at the center.

SDSU students design and test their activities in a lab before introducing them to students. "It's important that we expose youths to the wonder and ubiquity of math and science in their lives," Chizhik said.

Organizers expect to help answer a national call to guide more students into science, technology, engineering and math.

"In addition to the authentic learning opportunities, our students have developed relationships with the SDSU students who often serve as mentors, guides and champions for academic success during middle school and beyond," said Rick Oser, principal at the academy.