School's back-to-basics

approach to reading,
writing, math credited

By ERIC SAGAEA
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Parental involvement is
mandatory at Gallego Basic
Elementary School
Parents who want to enroll
their children in Gallego Basic,
the only magnet school in the
Sunnyside Unified School
District, must meet with the
principal before doing so and
must sign a contract agreeing to
help their kids with homework.
"There is a lot of parent
involvement and the school has
high expectations for the stu-
dents," said Genevieve
Landavaso, mother to Jason, 10,
a fourth-grader there. "What
really attracted me to the school
was the discipline. How they
really emphasize the home-
work."

Gallego Basic was recently
highlighted in a study conducted
by the Morrison Institute for
Public Policy and the Center for
the Future of Arizona that
looked at high-poverty schools
with large numbers of Hispanic
students and those designated as
English-language learners.
The school consistently out-
performed others on the third-
grade reading portion of the

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Five schools recognized
for their innovative teaching
approaches, Page 9A

Stanford 9 test during the eight
years the study covered.
Gallego uses a back-to-basics
approach to education, which
focuses strongly on reading,
writing and math.
Reading is taught through the
Spalding Method, which uses
writing skills to improve stu-
dents' comprehension of text.
In Anthony Faulkner's third-
grade class there are 31 tests
hanging on the bulletin board.
Not a single one has a score
below 80 percent and most are a
perfect 100.
"That's pretty normal with
this class, especially with read-
ing," he said.
The study, "Why Some
Schools With Latino Children
Beat the Odds ... and Others
Don't," cited Gallego Basic's con-
sistent curriculum and flexibili-
ty, as well as parental involve-
ment

Arizona Superintendent of
Public Instruction Tom Home
said the South Side school is the
best in the state for teaching ELL
students.
Of those students declared

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IVlarc© Mwen®, 8, is in Anthony Faulkner's third-grade class at Gallego Basic Elementary School. Most of Faulkner's students excel at reading.

proficient in English in 2003, 84
percent passed all three sections
of the AIMS test two years later.
that's the best record among
new English speakers.
"This is a traditional school, so
they're doing traditional things,"
Home said. 'Tf every school did
what this school was (doing),
we'd have all the kids becoming
English proficient more quickly."
Principal Debra Bergman said
Gallego Basic's approach takes a
certain amount of buy-in from
everybody involved - from the
students and their parents to

herself and the teachers.
"I think the families like the
commitment that we have," she
said. "The curriculum is very
consistent throughout. Once (the
students) become strong readers
by the third grade, then they
start to use their reading skills to
learn."
The school is serving more of
a lower-income population
today than it was a few years ago
and more ELL students are
attending.
About half the students there
speak English as a second lan-

2006 TOC§0H CITIZEN STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT AWAfffi lOSiSNEE

Rincon Ugh School

This is another in a series profiling nominees for the 2006 Tucson Citizen Student Achievement Award, presented to a high school senior who excels in scholarship, leadership an school and extracurricular activities.
Public, private and charter schools in and around Tucson were invited to nominate one person each. The winner will be announced this month.
Name: Duncan Lewis Davenport, son of
Joubert and Paula Davenport.
School: Rincon High School
Academic achievement: He has a 4.09 grade-
point average and is ranked second in a class o
218 students.
Achievements: University of Arizona
President's Award for Excellence; choral
solo/ensemble festival, fourth time medalist;
Da¥enp©rt South Central Regional Choir; highest scorer on the school team award in state Academic
Decathlon, bronze medal in interview category and silver medalist in speech competition in regional Academic Decathlon; National Honor Society.
School activities: Advanced choir, National Honor Society, University High School Film Club and Student Productions Club; Academic Decathlon team.
Community activities: Cactus Cowboy Corral; Tucson, Arizona, Boys Chorus; University of Arizona Outreach Choir; Optimist Club volunteer for box car derby and Oktoberfest. Leadership: Cactus Cowboy Corral roping troupe top hand Rincon Choraliers secretary, Arizona Boys State, leader o men's section of top Rincon Choral class, National Hono Society mathematics tutor.

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guage. That means that although Bergman said.
the curriculum is standardized "We have to be a little flexib throughout the school, there especially when our populati must be room for adaptation, is shifting.''