

Tiny Valley High Raises Expectations

New Academy Pushes Higher Education

By Patricia Gabbett

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FROM ALBUQUERQUE'S smallest high school come great expectations.

Beginning Monday, Valley High School will start spending a \$750,000 grant from the General Electric Foundation for a high-powered academic program to double the number of graduates who go to college. About 20 percent of its graduates now enroll in a four-year college, compared to about 60 percent nationally.

Valley High teachers, counselors and principals this spring and summer created and fine-tuned the Valley Academy, a school within a school. They're equipping it with state-of-the-art computers, a sophisticated language lab and a beefed-up curriculum to reach their goal in the next five years.

"We've always wanted to do a good

job for kids, and now we're raising expectations for ourselves," said Assistant Principal Peggy Piper. "We've kept the good things we've been doing

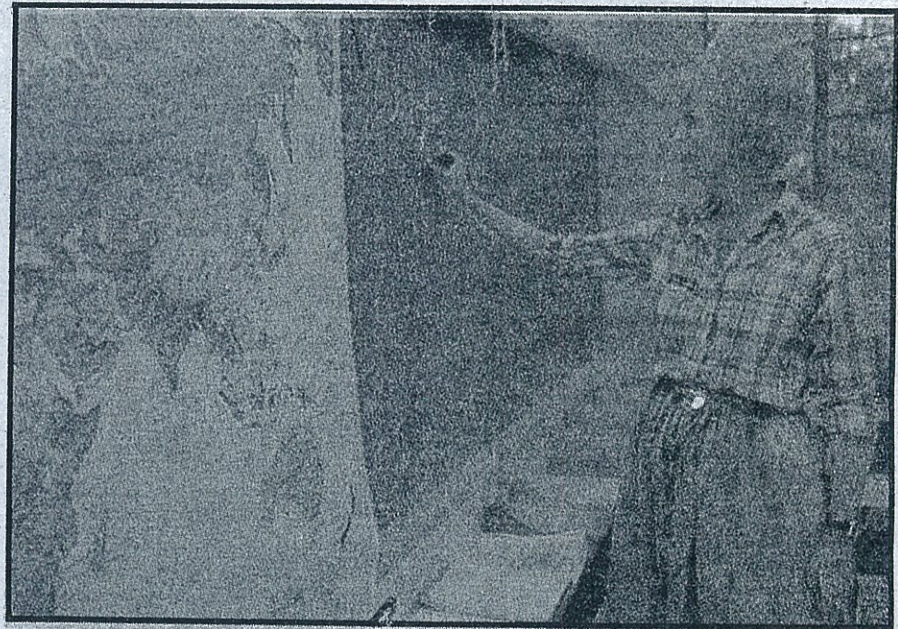


and added to those, and we're going to throw away some of the old things."

The GE grant, one of the largest single corporate gifts of money ever made to a public school, follows an emerging national trend of business backing for public schools.

Prompted by concerns over labor-force quality, about 84,000 partnerships between businesses and schools have been forged in the past five years, according to a recent White House survey.

"We, like many companies concerned about the future work force, want to help educate today's young-



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History teacher Simmie Plummer gets ready for another school year. She is coordinating Valley Academy seminars on critical thinking.

sters so they're prepared for the types of jobs that will be available," said Phyllis McGrath, manager of the GE Foundation's college-bound program.

The foundation plans to spend \$20 million over the next 10 years on projects like Valley Academy. Valley was the first school in the nation to get a check from the group. Two more schools have gotten even larger grants

since, and a fourth school will be named this week.

Everyone involved in Albuquerque's project — including the students who will be the pacesetters — says the

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■ The students of Valley High A8