

Incoming principal a strong leader

She hopes to put her school on an accelerated track

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By LEEZEL TANGLAO / The Press-Enterprise

Townfolk

Barbara Sanchez

Age: 36

Residence: Vista

Family: Married, one child

Occupation: New principal of Romoland Elementary, former assistant principal of Harvest Valley Elementary in Romoland.

ROMOLAND - Ever since she learned to read, Barbara Sanchez knew a career in education was in her future. "I remember telling my first-grade teacher that if she had a headache she should lay down and I could take over," said Sanchez, who has been in the field 11 years. "I've always been someone involved -- the leader of the group."

Now Sanchez, 36, is preparing to lead teachers and staff into the new school year, beginning Aug. 22, as principal at Romoland Elementary School.

"I'm so excited to be given this opportunity to work with such a great staff and get the community involved," she said.

Sanchez is no stranger to the Romoland school district, which includes three K-8 schools in the rural unincorporated area between Hemet and Perris.

Every day for two years, Sanchez has made the drive from Vista to Romoland, serving as assistant principal of Harvest Valley Elementary School.



William Wilson Lewis III / The Press-Enterprise

Barbara Sanchez applied for and became principal of Romoland Elementary School when Manuel Valdes left to become principal of Boulder Ridge school, which is set to open next month.

Sanchez applied for her new position after former Romoland principal Manuel Valdes left to become principal of Boulder Ridge school, the district's newest school which is set to open next month.

"She has demonstrated to us the skills and qualities that make a good principal," Romoland School Superintendent Roland Skumawitz said. "She really makes you feel comfortable and shows strong leadership abilities."

A graduate of San Diego State University and Cal State San Marcos, Sanchez has taught kindergarten through fifth-grade in two school districts in San Diego County before coming to the Romoland district.



Her language skills are an added plus in her new position -- she is fluent in Spanish at a school where more than half of the students are English learners.

"I plan to get more parents involved and along with the community," said Sanchez. "When a principal is not in tune with the community and the staff, you set yourself up for failure."

Cathy Prince, a third-grade teacher at Harvest Valley, said she'll miss Sanchez's enthusiasm. "She has such an amazing amount of energy," Prince said. "And she really listens to people. It makes you feel valued."

Sanchez hopes to carry out her vision to help Romoland elementary reach its potential by putting the school on the path of an accelerated school.

She is bringing on board the accelerated schools project -- a program intended to create powerful learning opportunities for all students based on three components: unity of purpose, responsibility and building strengths.

Also in the works is incorporating technology in the curriculum by using laptops and other software.

"We want to bring our students up to speed," Sanchez said. "When you see the light bulb goes on, that's the greatest moment."