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CONTACT: CLARA POTES-FELLOW/JIM SMART  
MTA PRESS RELATIONS  
(213)244-6566/244-6347  
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## **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM ANTIGRAFFITI EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

Approximately 240 third and fourth graders participated in a graduation ceremony highlighting the completion of a 13-week antigraffiti education class conducted by the MTA Transit Police.

The Ford Elementary School students received a "NO TAG" T-shirt and a certificate of completion at the ceremony held **Thursday May 12 at 12:30 p.m. in the school auditorium located at 1112 E. Ford Boulevard in East Los Angeles.**

The curriculum named "NO TAG" teaches students ages 6 to 12 about the negative effects of tagging and offers alternatives to gang writing. During the program students learn how to handle peer pressure and are encouraged to look up to positive role models such as teachers, police officers and parents.

"Educating our younger generations about the negative impacts of graffiti in the community is the best method to curb this growing trend," said Councilman Richard Alatorre, MTA Chairman. "These extracurricular activities contribute to enrich the lives of young students and provide alternatives to crime and drugs."

The program initiated by the MTA Transit Police is part of an overall effort by the MTA to keep buses, transit facilities and MTA surroundings graffiti free.

A curriculum consisting of 13 one-hour lessons is taught at each school site by a team of police officers, school teachers, bus operators and maintenance workers.

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"This type of community involvement shows the intense interest and personal commitment of MTA police officers and employees who are determined to rid our buses and facilities of graffiti," said Franklin White, MTA chief executive officer.

"Children are sometimes frightened by police officers. Our NO-TAG program allows them to interact with our officers in a positive manner," said MTA Transit Police Chief Sharon Papa.

A highlight of the program is a miniature replica of an MTA bus that resembles a cartoon character able to talk, play music and dance. Completely amused by the character, children learn how to appreciate and respect public and private property.

"The curriculum is designed for elementary school students, to provide a fun, entertaining and meaningful learning experience," said MTA Transit Police Officer Belinda Byrd who developed the curriculum.

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