



PRESS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified's Sequoia Middle School Named to Schools to Watch List

FONTANA, CA – Fontana Unified's Sequoia Middle School is one of 22 schools in the state to earn a spot on the 2018 California Schools to Watch List, recognized for boosting student achievement, creating a positive campus culture and reducing suspensions.

The Schools to Watch list, created by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, identifies schools across the U.S. that share three features: academic excellence, developmentally responsive to early adolescence and social equity.

"I'm very proud of the work our school has done," Principal Antonio Viramontes said. "Together, we are raising student expectation and achievement while our positive discipline system and student clubs improve the school's culture and lower our suspension rate."

Sequoia leaders cited programs and practices that drive student success, including college and career readiness through Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and intervention programs to help students with math and English language arts.

Using student performance data, Sequoia Middle has also worked to refine instruction and boost math scores by revising the master schedule to lower class sizes in math and offering after-school tutoring opportunities. The school aims to boost English language arts performance by adding resources to develop critical reading, argumentative writing and intervention support services.

Sequoia's Renaissance club, along with counseling, the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) discipline system, and mentoring programs, helped the school reduce its suspension rate from 32 percent in the 2008-09 school year to 4.1 percent during 2015-16.

The school also was recognized by the California PBIS Coalition as a silver medal school in 2017 for its work in team-building activities, reviewing classroom expectations and creating positive support structures.

Teachers and administrators also are learning the most up-to-date methods to prepare students for standardized testing, increasing engagement and mastery of California Standards, and reinforcing positive behavior techniques.

“Sequoia Middle School has come a long way,” said Gorge Santiago, FUSD Executive Director of Secondary Schools. “Over the last few years, they’ve really focused on improving academics, culture and making sure that all students are successful.”

Sequoia Middle School will accept the award in Sacramento on March 3 and will be honored in Washington D.C. at the National Schools to Watch Conference, held June 27-30.

“We are very proud of Sequoia Middle School for earning this milestone achievement and working hard to boost student achievement,” FUSD Superintendent Randal S. Bassett said. “This recognition highlights the commitment by our Fontana Unified teachers and staff to provide the best learning environment to our students.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

012918_FUSD_SEQUOIA: Sequoia Middle School’s Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, which promotes academic success through peer mentoring and tutorials, is one of several flagship programs that earned Sequoia a spot on the 2018 California Schools to Watch list.

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