



Press Release

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Lynwood Unified Inspires African American Students at MLK Leadership Conference

Lynwood – Lynwood High School senior Alexis Harris aspires to become a physical therapist and one day open her own clinic, but she knows that without a plan of action it's nothing more than a dream.

Her dream became more of a reality when she was mentored by successful professionals and mapped a path to success during the inaugural Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Conference on Jan. 19 at Firebaugh High School.

"I learned how important it is to network and surround yourself with people who can help you achieve your goals," Harris said. "I now know which colleges will be best for my career and the next steps I should take in order to become a physical therapist."

Alexis was one of the nearly 200 Lynwood Unified African American students who sought to refine their personal paths at the conference where Young Black Achievers Student Union members from Firebaugh, Lynwood and Vista high schools joined professionals who served as panelists to help students explore ways to reach success and make a positive impact.

The theme of the conference was "Against All Odds," a mantra woven into the speeches of 13 guest panelists who shared personal stories of overcoming obstacles to reach success. Panelists included representatives from Elevate Your G.A.M.E., a mentorship program for students, as well as Lynwood Unified Instructional Services Coordinator William Gideon.

Lynwood Unified High School Equity Coordinator Larry Reed shared his challenges of encountering early parenthood as an 18-year-old. His son, Phil, 21, served as a panelist and discussed choosing academics over athletics as a senior at California State University, San Bernardino.

"You have to be confident in listening to your own voice no matter what is going on around you," Phil Reed told the audience. "The moment I stopped playing college basketball, everything in my life has been so much better."

After the panelists addressed students, the conference attendees enjoyed an interpretive dance performance from Lynwood High student Semaj Williams. Following lunch, male and female students separated for breakout groups in which they devised individual goals and pathways to success.

"We wanted to make sure students left the conference not only feeling empowered, but also supported by the District as they aspire to their goals," Lynwood Unified Director of Equity Dr. Patricia Brent-Sanco said. "We're here to help young people find their path and we're willing to walk it alongside them."

MORE

The **Lynwood Unified School District** is dedicated to offering students a world-class education to prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century. Under its Achieving Greatness Initiative, the district is realigning all aspects of its organization to strengthen and expand instructional programs, enrichment and extracurricular activities, and support system for students and staff. For more information, visit www.lynwood.k12.ca.us.

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The conference connected former Lynwood Unified students with current ones, including such District alums as: Lynwood Unified Board Member Gary Hardie, Rosa Parks Elementary Principal Dawn Green and Washington Elementary Principal Shamell Wilson.

In closing remarks, Hardie reminded everyone that the successes of those like MLK speak to the possibilities of the future.

“The conference was an opportunity for our students to hear directly from our staff and to be empowered,” LUSD Superintendent Gudiel R. Crosthwaite said. “We are here to support them, and to inspire them to be their best.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

012518_LUSD_MLKCONFERENCE1: A group of Lynwood Unified students pose during the Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Conference on Jan. 19. Nearly 200 students received mentorship from professionals during the event.

012518_LUSD_MLKCONFERENCE2: Lynwood High School student Semaj Williams performs an interpretive dance during the Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Conference on Jan. 19.

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The mission of **Lynwood Unified School District**, the cultivator of innovative thinkers, is to ensure each student fearlessly achieves his or her highest academic and personal aspirations while contributing to the greater society through a unique system distinguished by:

★ People of great character who inspire and lead by example ★ The instilling of courage to be creative ★ The