



EAST WHITTIER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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Granada Middle Awarded California Gold Ribbon for Promoting Engagement, Civic Education

EAST WHITTIER – Granada Middle School has been named a California Gold Ribbon School for strengthening student and parent engagement, instilling high academic standards and fostering a supportive culture that has significantly reduced student disciplinary issues.

Granada's Matador LEAD (Leadership through Engagement, Action and Determination) initiative, implemented in 2013, was singled out for its civic education awareness and parent, family and community engagement.

The Gold Ribbon is California's highest academic honor, created to replace the Distinguished School Program to honor schools for model programs during rollout of the new California Standards. The program honored elementary schools last year. This year, it honors middle and high schools.

"This is a great day to be a Granada Matador," Granada Middle School Principal Justin Mayernik said. "Through our Matador LEAD initiative, we have transformed the culture on campus, where every student has the opportunity to choose the elective courses and extracurricular clubs they want to participate in. The result is a school where students, staff, administrators and parents can communicate freely and learn from each other."

Since the implementation of Granada's engagement initiatives, the school has significantly reduced suspension rates, dropping 66 percent since 2013 and slashing student disciplinary actions.

Student and parent surveys paint a positive picture of school culture at Granada. One hundred percent of parents surveyed agree that Granada is a safe place for children, and over 90 percent feel they are encouraged to participate in school activities, are informed of school events in a timely manner and feel comfortable communicating with staff.

The school's Matador LEAD program created a campus-wide support group to raise funds for and maintain a variety of student clubs, including Model United Nations, Garden Club, Jazz Band, Christian Club, Video Production, Campus Pride, lunchtime murals, and the Think Pink cancer awareness club.



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“Our ASB has provided funding for club advisers and the clubs themselves are self-sustaining via fundraising efforts,” Mayernik said. “An unforeseen benefit of this fundraising is that students are learning the basic economics of running a nonprofit organization.”

Granada also was praised for its “Five to Thrive” initiative, created to keep communication lines open between students and staff. Homeroom teachers select five students to engage with on a regular basis, having conversations about non-academic topics, in an effort to get to know the students better.

“East Whittier City School District has always placed the highest priority on creating an academic environment that promotes a positive self-concept for all students,” EWCSO Superintendent Mary Branca said. “Congratulations to our Granada educators and staff for being recognized for their tireless efforts to improve student engagement and provide a safe school climate that is conducive to producing successful, lifelong learners.”

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