

PRESS RELEASE

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Lynwood Unified's Job Opportunity for Youth Program Recognized with Golden Bell Award LJOY Supports At-Promise Scholars in Pursuit of Diploma

LYNWOOD, CA – Lynwood Unified School District's Job Opportunity for Youth program (LJOY) has been selected as a recipient of the prestigious Golden Bell Award, a recognition bestowed upon school districts that have demonstrated outstanding programs dedicated to supporting student needs and promoting excellence for all.

The LJOY program – which provides [at-promise](#) students with the opportunity to complete their high school education while gaining valuable work experience within the District – will be recognized by the California School Boards Association at a reception and ceremony on Nov. 30 in San Francisco.

"We are honored to receive this recognition and show our community that we are invested in our students' futures and their ongoing success," said Director of Student Services and LJOY Program Administrator Maribel Martinez, Ed.D. "Some of our most vulnerable students struggle with food and housing insecurities, but we are committed to being the lifeline that empowers them to know they can still graduate and we're going to help them get there."

A panel of experts recently conducted a comprehensive on-site assessment to understand campus culture and witness firsthand how the LJOY program, now in its third year, addresses the unique needs of the students it serves, particularly foster and unhoused youth.

"We brought on the LJOY program to take those worries and stresses away from students so they can focus more on education and still be able to support their family," LJOY Supervisor Deetra Davis said.

LJOY participants are juniors and seniors and can work up to 20 hours a week for the full school year. They receive specialized mentorship to help them manage their time effectively while simultaneously gaining on-the-job training and completing their high school coursework. Students engage with District staff and receive insight into professional culture by providing classroom, office, custodial and instructional support.

"I work with kids, helping them with their homework and organize events – it's awesome to be with them," LJOY student Jessica Soto said. "This program has inspired me to pursue a career in teaching and I want to thank Lynwood Unified for showing us that we can be successful regardless of our circumstances."

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The program has grown from serving 28 students the first year to now serving 60 in the 2023-24 school year. The District also supports students in securing employment through partners such as Think Together once they graduate.

“This recognition reaffirms our unwavering commitment to seeing our students succeed. The LJOY program ensures that every student is capable of not only graduating but thriving in their personal and professional lives regardless of whatever obstacle is in their way,” Superintendent Gudiel R. Crosthwaite, Ph.D. said. “We are immensely proud to have received this award and will remain steadfast in our mission to empower students to succeed.”

This is the sixth Golden Bell Award won by the District since 2014, demonstrating the District’s commitment to promoting student success and fostering safe, inclusive and positive learning environments at all LUSD campuses.

Learn more about the LJOY program here: <https://bit.ly/LJOY>.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

LUSD_LJOY_1: Lynwood Unified School District has been awarded the prestigious Golden Bell Award for its Job Opportunity for Youth program (LJOY), which provides at-risk students with the opportunity to complete their high school education while gaining valuable work experience within the District.






LUSD_LJOY_2: The LJOY program, now in its third year, provides students with mentorship and work opportunities as they pursue their high school diploma. Students engage with District staff and receive insight into professional culture, including classroom, office, custodial and instructional support.

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The mission of Lynwood Unified School District, the model urban school district, is to ensure each student fearlessly achieves their highest academic and personal aspirations while contributing to a diverse, global society through an evolving system distinguished by:

★ *People of great character who inspire and lead by example* ★ *The instilling of courage to be creative* ★ *The transformative uses of technology*
★ *Safe and clean environments* ★ *The inclusion of all voices in our community through equity, access and justice*

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