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Baldwin Park Unified Orchestra Director Named ASTA 2023 Outstanding Teacher of the Year

BALDWIN PARK – Baldwin Park Unified orchestra director Paul Grant has a special place in his heart for the teachers who brought the joy of music to his life. He credits them for helping mold an energetic and mischievous student into a world-class musician and inspiring him to pursue a career as a music instructor.

For more than 10 years at BPUSD, Grant has channeled his former mentors, ensuring student success through equitable access to instruments and tailoring classroom lessons to ensure key foundational skills are learned each week. For his passion and dedication, Grant was recently named the American String Teachers Association (ASTA), Los Angeles Chapter's 2023 Outstanding Teacher of the Year.

Grant was also recognized for advocating for the purchase of hundreds of string instruments for the District's orchestra program and overseeing the replacement of musical instruments and supplies for band and orchestra.

"I want to help students discover a love for orchestral music and to develop their voice through their instrument. It's often in music class that students find their passion, community and sense of purpose," Grant said. "Music means something different to everyone. For some, it's where they find significance, for others it's an escape, and for others, it's where they find camaraderie."

Grant currently teaches beginning and intermediate orchestra at Jones Middle School and Sierra Vista Middle School, as well as fifth-grade violin at Central and Vineland elementary schools. Grant said he believes the path to success in the classroom is getting to know students and understanding where they are coming from.

Grant credits his childhood music teachers for helping him develop into the award-winning teacher that he is today. Grant learned about positivity and patience from his elementary school music teacher, how to push himself and develop a passion for music from his orchestral director, and technique and repertoire at age 17 from his first private viola teacher.

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Knowing he wanted to be a music teacher, Grant decided to become an orchestral director when he realized there was not much representation for orchestra teachers in California, as most music teachers opt to specialize in choral or band.

“I wanted to change that. I wanted to make a change in music education,” Grant said. “My main goal is always to be a better music teacher than I was the year before. I reflect on what went well and what I could do better. I am a firm believer in being a lifelong learner, so every year I go to music conferences to better my craft.”

Grant said he is thankful for having the District support his goals, sponsoring his attendance at prestigious conferences such as the 2022 ASTA Conference and the International Band and Orchestra Conference’s upcoming 2023 Midwest Clinic, to be held in early December in Chicago.

Grant will be at the helm when Jones Middle School and Sierra Vista High School stage their first orchestra concert of the year on Thursday, Dec. 14 at 6:30 p.m. at the Baldwin Park Performing Arts Center, located at 4640 Maine Ave., Baldwin Park.

“Paul Grant has helped change the lives of so many Baldwin Park Unified students by introducing them to the joys of music, providing them with world-class instruction, and the confidence to stay with their instrument through patience and practice,” Superintendent Dr. Froilan N. Mendoza said. “We are overjoyed to see him receive this honor from ASTA.”

PHOTO

BPUSD_Paul Grant: Baldwin Park Unified’s Orchestra Director Paul Grant was named a 2023 Outstanding Orchestra Teacher of the Year by the American String Teacher Association, Los Angeles Chapter, for his dedication to ensuring student success through equitable access to instruments.

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