



# HACIENDA LA PUENTE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Hacienda La Puente Unified Wins Golden Bell Award for Fostering Democracy, Excellence in Citizenship

**CITY OF INDUSTRY** – Hacienda La Puente Unified’s Project Life Experience About Democracy (LEAD), designed to foster informed citizens by identifying community issues, developing solutions and participating in real-world civic action, has won the California School Boards Association (CSBA) Golden Bell Award for its excellence in amplifying the student voice and promoting change.

The program, founded in 2014, was developed as an extracurricular experience for students to get involved in local politics and collaborate with various neighborhood affiliations throughout the year, including the City of La Puente and its Parks and Recreation Department. Project LEAD is also a multi-year recipient of the California Department of Education’s Civic Learning Award.

The award-winning program continues to grow and is now available at eight HLPUSD schools, including Nelson, Del Valle, Sunset and Workman elementary schools, Newton, Sierra Vista and Sparks middle schools and La Puente High School.

"On behalf of the Board of Education, I want to congratulate our students, staff and community on this prestigious honor," Board President Christine H. Salazar said. "Our Board and District goals aim to prioritize strong partnerships and shared responsibility of delivering integrated educational programs that are responsive to the needs of a multicultural community. Project LEAD is doing a phenomenal job of fulfilling that mission and it's been a joy seeing our students' outstanding community involvement, citizenship and character development throughout the years."

Project LEAD students have contributed to countless action plans throughout the years, including providing feedback to City Council members and La Puente Park to enhance their community youth music program. After collecting insight from local artists, students shared their findings during a series of city council meetings, highlighting the many ways music increases citizenship, boosts morale and develops a sense of pride through music.

In addition, students organized the City of Hope Engagement Project by collecting and donating clothing items to breast cancer patients, worked with the City of La Puente on the Backpack Drive to ensure students have access to backpacks and school supplies and a number of beautification projects across the La Puente community.

"Project LEAD provides students with the opportunity to engage in civic learning directly with the City of La Puente staff and elected officials," Nelson Elementary School Principal Dr. Marci Chavez said. "Through peer mentoring, mock city council meetings and engaging service projects, our students experience what it takes to be civic learners and leaders. This opportunity to learn and grow positively impacts the trajectory of our students' lives."

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During the 2022-23 school year, Project LEAD students and staff were also invited to serve as expert panel speakers at the 2023 International New Pedagogies for Deep Learning Lab: Students as Changemakers, where participants shared their experiences and recommended various learning designs and potential partnerships.

All eight school sites have several community service events, meetings and rigorous classroom lesson plans scheduled for the 2023-24 school.

“Our District is proud to offer civic engagement opportunities that focus on relevant community issues and provide students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to cultivate positive change,” Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez said. “This honor represents our District’s commitment to activating student voices, expanding civics within the classroom and preparing them with the skills and confidence to be well-informed citizens and help build a better tomorrow.”

## PHOTO CAPTIONS:

**HLPUSD\_GOLDENBELL1:** La Puente High School Project LEAD students, mural artist Franky Fingers (center-left), Principal Dr. Lisa Lopez (center) and Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez (center-right) celebrate the unveiling of the “Bridge Town” mural located in Old Town La Puente on Oct. 3

**HLPUSD\_GOLDENBELL2:** Project LEAD students from Nelson and Del Valle elementary schools provide school updates and collaborate with city council members during a mock City of La Puente council meeting.

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