



El Monte Union High School District

Community Committed to College and Career

PRESS RELEASE

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El Monte Union Engineering Pathway Recognized with Golden Bell Award

*Mountain View High School Zoo Crew cited for excellence in
career technical education*

EL MONTE – El Monte Union High School District has been recognized by the California School Boards Association (CSBA) with a Golden Bell Award for its groundbreaking career technical education (CTE) pathway, Zoo Crew: Engineers Gone Wild! The three-year science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) pathway launched in 2018 at Mountain View High School.

The Zoo Crew engineering pathway aims to inspire more female and underrepresented students to enroll in STEM courses. Zoo Crew challenges Mountain View students to master rigorous CTE coursework by designing and engineering products, habitats, and structures that benefit wildlife, with a curriculum that is fun and relevant.

El Monte Union and Mountain View High officially received the Golden Bell Award during a CSBA awards reception and ceremony on Dec. 2.

Mountain View engineering teacher Lee Porter developed the Zoo Crew curriculum, with the goal of introducing engineering and architectural concepts through a lens of relevancy that would resonate with students. By presenting students with real-world problems, Zoo Crew sparks creativity and innovative spirit, with results that align with the student desire for environmental and social justice.

“Zoo Crew CTE goes beyond rigorous academics,” Porter said. “Kids often think they can’t make a difference. Young people find the drive to do hard things like Zoo Crew engineering because they feel part of something. They recognize the work is in service of something larger than themselves.”

From its first day, when Zoo Crew students were greeted in class with a rare African wildcat, the serval, Mountain View students have used Zoo Crew to channel their creativity, critical thinking and decision-making skills, better understand the symbiosis between man and nature, protect their environment and prepare themselves for the rigor of higher education.

Zoo Crew assignments are given humorous names such as “Build a Villa for a Chinchilla” and “Panda-monium: Simple Machines in a Panda Playground” to pique student interest and overcome the anxiety of

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the engineering course, encouraging students to approach tools and concepts like 3-D Inventor software and mechanical advantage measures with confidence and innovative spirit.

Supported by industry partners, Zoo Crew students have engaged in project-based learning that resulted in real-world projects, like fabricated fish popsicle molds for seals, wildlife crossing structures and enrichment devices that students have donated to local animal rescues and wildlife sanctuaries.

Zoo Crew has had a positive impact on Mountain View High CTE enrollment. Female enrollment in CTE pathways has risen from 16% in 2016 to 46% in 2021. The number of classes resulting in “D” or “F” grades has plummeted from 43% in 2016 to 10% in 2020.

The California Department of Education (CDE) has archived Zoo Crew CTE materials – including course outlines, lesson plans and more – on its CTE website. The National Wildlife Federation supports Zoo Crew with grant money and has expressed interest in replicating the Mountain View pathway nationwide.

“This is an extraordinary award that reflects the commitment of the District’s CTE department to produce imaginative and rigorous curriculum that deeply engages students and has successfully incorporated historically underrepresented teenagers, guided by the professionalism and dedication of Lee Porter,” Superintendent Dr. Edward R. Zuniga said. “We would like to thank the CSBA for this honor, as well as the CDE and National Wildlife Federation for their tremendous and ongoing support.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

EMUHSD Zoo Crew 1: El Monte Union receives a visit from a serval cat at the launch of the Zoo Crew: Engineers Gone Wild! CTE pathway in 2018.

EMUHSD Zoo Crew 2: District officials, Mountain View Principal Jose Morales and Zoo Crew Engineering Teacher Lee Porter were present at the CSBA Awards ceremony to accept their Golden Bell Award, held on Dec. 2.

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The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.