



PRESS RELEASE

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Lynwood Unified's Annual Teen Summit Empowers Black Teens with Leadership, Pride

LYNWOOD, CA – More than 150 Lynwood Unified School District high school students gathered for a day of empowerment, connection and self-discovery at the District's [annual Teen Summit](#) on Feb. 20, engaging in impactful discussions on leadership, resilience and personal growth.

A staple District event rooted in inclusivity and equity, the Teen Summit provided African American students from its three high schools with a dedicated space to explore their identity, gain inspiration from role models, and build a sense of culture and community with their peers.

"I think that the event is very empowering," said Codi Thompson, a Firebaugh High School senior, who has received several college acceptance letters, scholarships and full-ride offers.

"It taught me to unite with my peers outside of school and gave me the opportunity to meet new people I wouldn't have met at school," added Thompson, who plans to attend Southern University, a historically Black university in Baton Rouge, La.

The day-long event included a panel discussion with Lynwood Unified leadership students and recent college graduates. Students were encouraged to explore their history beyond what is taught in public schools, stay disciplined in pursuing their goals and recognize when it is necessary to change their path to follow their true passions.

Keynote speaker Darin Earley, Ed.D., discussed finding one's purpose and core beliefs to guide students through decision-making. The Way to Escape portion of the program addressed peer pressure, staying focused and the consequences of drug use. The event also featured "Girls Talk" and "Boys Talk" sessions, offering a safe space for students to discuss pertinent issues.

Orion Williams, a Lynwood High School junior, aspires to study psychology. He shared how personal struggles, including the passing of his grandmother, taught him resilience and empathy. He now hopes to use his experiences to support others.

"With everything I've gone through, if I can continue to achieve and go through that, I can inspire the next Black young kid to do the same and let them know that no matter where they come from or the problems they go through in their life, they can go further," Williams said.

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Despite the national rhetoric surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, the Summit continued as planned, reaffirming Lynwood Unified's commitment to programs that support its community, said Director of Equity, Access and Instructional Services Patricia Brent-Sanco, Ed.D.

"No matter the challenges or discussions taking place in our nation, I want our families and students to know they are worth it," Brent-Sanco said. "I'm always going to stand up for them and I want them to always stand up for themselves."

The annual [Teen Summit](#) – which Superintendent Gudiel R. Crosthwaite, Ph.D. helped launch over a decade ago – continues to be a key community-building day as the District remains committed to equity, access and justice and supporting students as they navigate challenges.

"Lynwood Unified remains steadfast in celebrating and supporting our students, even as conversations around culturally relevant programs continue to evolve," Crosthwaite said. "The Teen Summit is a reflection of our commitment to ensuring every student feels seen, valued and empowered to embrace their identity, pursue their dreams and shape their future with confidence."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

LUSD_SUMMIT1: More than 150 African American high school students from Lynwood Unified attended the District's Annual Teen Summit on Feb. 20, engaging in impactful discussions on leadership, resilience and personal growth.

LUSD_SUMMIT2: Lynwood Unified high school students engaged in meaningful conversations during the District's Annual Teen Summit, building connections, sharing experiences and supporting one another in a space dedicated to empowerment and building community.

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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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