



HACIENDA LA PUENTE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Hacienda La Puente Unified Middle Schools Named 2025 Schools to Watch, Showcasing Excellence

CITY OF INDUSTRY, CA – The California League of Middle Schools (CLMS) recognized four Hacienda La Puente Unified School District schools for their exceptional contributions to academic excellence, social and emotional support, and hands-on programs that prepare students for future success.

Grandview College Preparatory Academy and Sparks Middle School are among 46 California schools to be newly designated as Schools to Watch, with Newton and Orange Grove middle schools being among 44 others to be redesignated. All schools were honored during the National Schools to Watch conference from March 6 to 7.

"At Newton Middle School, our Schools to Watch recognition is a testament to the unwavering dedication of our educators, the strength of our community partnerships, and our commitment to shaping well-rounded, future-ready students," Newton Principal Ann Hanson said. "Together, we create a learning environment where academic excellence and extra-curricular opportunities provide the space for every student to truly thrive."

The recognized HLPUSD schools have implemented targeted initiatives and a comprehensive curriculum to promote holistic student development, focusing on academic and personal growth. Central to this effort is the District's "[Six C's of Deep Learning](#)," which include character, citizenship, collaboration, community, creativity, and critical thinking – competencies that help cultivate resilience, perseverance, and lifelong learning.

"Sparks holds a tradition of a legacy of excellence, and we continually collaborate with our teachers, staff, and families to ensure our students are on a pathway to academic and personal success," Sparks Principal Dr. David Nieto said. "Each of our students are provided with the support and resources they need to fuel their passion and find a career that amplifies their best skills and interests."

These schools' science-, technology-, engineering-, art-, and math- (STEAM) driven curriculum prepares students for modern career pathways, providing advanced skill development early on. Numerous STEAM programs are offered at each school, including an engineering pathway at Grandview, the Youth Cinema Project at Sparks, robotics at Newton, and aviation at Orange Grove, which equip students with emerging career skills to succeed in high school and beyond.

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“We are honored to be recognized as one of the top schools in the state serving middle school students,” Grandview College Preparatory Academy Principal Theresa Lei said. “At Grandview, our guiding principle is that excellence is not just taught, but that it’s a relationship that is built, a community that is inspired, with forward-thinking into the future.”

Students at each school have access to language courses, which helps them form a foundation to thrive in a multilingual society while being immersed in cultural studies. Grandview and Newton offer a Spanish dual immersion program, Sparks provides a Spanish and Korean language elective with plans to offer dual immersion next school year, and Orange Grove offers a Spanish elective. Sparks and Orange Grove are also home to the District’s student mariachi ensembles, in partnership with the Grammy-Award winning Mariachi Divas band.

“The Schools to Watch redesignation affirms the dedication of the Ocelot staff to the students at Orange Grove Middle School,” Orange Grove Principal Elizabeth Kane said. “Through collaboration, student voice and choice, experiential learning, and continual staff development our school community is growing their greater good at The Grove.”

Additionally, students can dive into leadership development and civic engagement through real-world experiences in the classroom and their cities. The Golden Bell-winning Project Life Experiences About Democracy (L.E.A.D) program at Sparks and Orange Grove gives students the opportunity to visit local city departments, participate in mock city councils, and speak in front of the community at City Council meetings. Newton was awarded the Civic Learning Award of Distinction for student advocacy to enact policy change and partner with judges in the classroom.

With a strong emphasis on kindness and anti-bullying campaigns, these schools foster a supportive, student-driven environment where collaboration and empathy thrive.

“The Schools to Watch distinction reflects the transformative learning experiences provided to every student in our District,” said HLPUSD Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez. “This recognition underscores Hacienda La Puente Unified’s commitment to creating a rigorous, inclusive, and nurturing learning environment where students excel academically and also develop the skills and resilience needed for future success.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

HLPUSD_SCHOOLSTOWATCH1: Grandview College Preparatory Academy attended the National Schools to Watch conference from March 6 to 7 to accept their Schools to Watch recognition.

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HLPUSD_SCHOOLSTOWATCH2: Performing for the first time together, Sparks and Orange Grove middle school mariachi ensembles perform at the annual HLPUSD State of the District event. Sparks was recognized as a School to watch, with Orange Grove being redesignated with the same honor, citing its visual and performing arts and multicultural environment as areas valuable to students.

HLPUSD_SCHOOLSTOWATCH3: Newton Middle School students create a hydraulics system to understand how liquids are used in mechanical properties. Newton was redesignated as a School to Watch, with its STEAM curriculum and hands-on activities cited as a notable area.

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