



# HACIENDA LA PUENTE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## Four Hacienda La Puente Unified Middle Schools Recognized as 2024 Schools to Watch

**CITY OF INDUSTRY** – Cedarlane Academy, Fairgrove Academy, Mesa Robles School, and Valinda School of Academics have been named 2024 Schools to Watch by the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California League of Educators, recognizing their continued success in keeping students engaged through a critical stage in their K-12 educational journey, demonstrating social equity and helping them achieve academic excellence.

The four campuses are among 16 schools to be newly designated as Schools to Watch and will be honored alongside 36 re-designated model schools at the annual California League of Schools Conference held March 8-9 in Monterey.

“It’s incredible that our District has obtained a fourth of the sites honored with the prestigious Schools to Watch title for 2024,” Board President Christine H. Salazar said. “The biggest shift in K-12 education is the transition from elementary to middle school, and recognitions like this showcase the great work happening across our District. We embrace our cultural differences, foster ingenuity, inspire our students to reach new heights, explore their interests, and discover new passions.”

The District uses the ‘Six C’s of Deep Learning,’ an initiative introduced by the District’s partnership with [New Pedagogies for Deep Learning](#). The six global competencies include character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking, designed to prepare students with the essential character traits of grit, tenacity, perseverance, resilience, and the ability to make learning an integral part of living.

The four award-winning sites continually emphasize to students the importance of citizenship and critical thinking by thinking like global citizens, considering global issues based on a deep understanding of diverse values, critically evaluating information and arguments, seeing patterns and connections, building meaningful knowledge, and applying it in the real world.

“At Mesa Robles, we focus on the ‘Six C’s of Learning’ and with that, our classes have become more engaging and collaborative and our relationships with our students have become more meaningful,” Mesa Robles Principal Octavio Perez said. “Our scholars have a genuine interest in solving real-world problems and have become better citizens not just in our school but our community.”

**MORE**

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Fairgrove Academy, an award-winning school specializing in Visual and Performing Arts, helps bring music and joy to the City of La Puente. According to principal Sherri Franson, the school is known for being a vibrant hub of artistic talent and creativity, and dedicated staff members foster the growth of the diverse student body, continually nurture their abilities and empower their learning.

A few blocks down, students immerse themselves in various clubs and programs at Valinda School of Academics. From Spanish dual-language immersion, journalism, and art to an array of award-winning computer, science, technology, engineering, and math (C-STEM) teams and exploratory opportunities, Valinda continues to provide a safe, supportive environment that is committed to developing life-long learners.

Cedarlane Academy has also collected many C-STEM honors and recognitions, including its Cyber Patriot team, which inspires K-12 students to pursue careers in cybersecurity or other STEM disciplines. Additionally, the school offers Mandarin and Korean dual-language immersion programs and introductory medical-core classes that feed into the long-standing Biomedical Science Pathway at Glen A. Wilson High School for students interested in exploring concepts of biology and medicine.

The schools each completed an extensive application reviewed by middle school experts and hosted a validation visit to earn the designation; they are re-evaluated every three years to retain the title. Newton and Orange Grove middle schools were the first in the District to receive the honor in February 2022. Their respective principals, Ann Hanson and Elizabeth Kane, are set to attend the 2024 conference alongside Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez, Salazar Assistant Superintendent of Education Services Dr. Rosa Isiah, Director of K-8 Dr. Angela Lin, and the administrators from the newly designated schools.

“Congratulations to our middle school administrators, educators, staff, students, and families on this well-deserved recognition,” Jiménez said. “Being honored as a high-performing middle school takes a team of dedicated individuals and engaged students to ensure the culture and climate of the school is enhanced and fully supported by an enthusiastic and proactive community. Thank you all for your tremendous hard work and we look forward to honoring you in Monterey.”

## PHOTO CAPTIONS:

**HLPUSD\_SCHOOLSTOWATCH1:** Cedarlane Academy’s K-Pop club performs at a school wide Lunar New Year celebration on Feb. 7.

**HLPUSD\_SCHOOLSTOWATCH2:** Valinda School of Academics’ robotics team the “Super Smash BroBots” celebrate placing at the 2024 First Lego League Southern California Championship and earning a sport at the Western Edge International competition in May 2024.

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**HLPUSD\_SCHOOLSTOWATCH3:** Fairgrove Academy Principal Sherri Franson, educators and marching band students participate in the City of La Puente Winter Parade on Dec. 1, 2023.

**HLPUSD\_SCHOOLSTOWATCH4:** Mesa Robles School Principal Octavio Perez and Associated Student Body students celebrate being named a 2024 National Blue Ribbon School and Schools to Watch.

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