



HACIENDA LA PUENTE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 13, 2023

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Hacienda La Puente Unified High School Earns 2024 California Democracy School for Strong Civic Leadership

CITY OF INDUSTRY – La Puente High School is one of only four schools recognized as a 2024 California Democracy School by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), receiving the honor for its high-quality civic learning, commitment to strengthening democracy, and pursuit of happiness for future generations across the District community.

The award-winning schools were honored during LACOE's 2024 California Civic Learning Student Showcase and Award Ceremony at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library Museum on May 11, where students, families, principal Dr. Lisa Lopez and District representatives gathered to learn more about the students' initiatives throughout the 2023-24 school year and celebrate their successes.

During the event, La Puente students were highlighted for their civic engagement projects, including investigated and proposed city solutions, robust volunteer and community service endeavors, and school safety enhancements.

"Thank you to LACOE for putting on this spectacular event that recognizes our students' exemplary work and commitment to better our schools, community and country," Lopez said. "I have confidence in our future knowing our students are finding joy and passion in becoming civically engaged citizens and finding solutions to real-world problems."

As part of the selection process, LACOE official Michelle M. Herczog, Ed.D., Coordinator III, History Social Science, completed a site visit on April 11, where she evaluated the school's civic outcomes, school environment and sustainability, and more. To help complete the assessment, Herczog met with student leaders and educators from various civic-action clubs and programs to learn more about their extensive civic education curriculum, ethnic studies coursework, and engagement with local government and the community at large.

City of La Puente Mayor and La Puente High School alumnus Gabriel Quinones was also present during the site visit, where he advocated for the school's continuous partnership and commitment to civic excellence.

"It has been such a privilege to work with our local schools," Quinones said. "I enjoy connecting our students from La Puente to city projects and events. I am proud of the partnership between the City of La Puente and our Hacienda La Puente Unified School District."

La Puente has a long history of civic learning opportunities that include the Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program that motivates young people to be better citizens. The character development and citizenship program is also the only one available to students in the District. In addition, La Puente is one of nine

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schools in the District that has implemented the California School Board Association Golden Bell award-winning program, Project Life Experience About Democracy (LEAD), a civic action program designed to amplify the student voice and promote change.

At the heart of the school's dedication to social justice is the Dream Resource Center, a safe space funded by the District and the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations' community-centered program, LA vs. Hate. The nonprofit organization 211-LA and the Helpline Youth Counseling program also support the facility, which provides social, emotional, and academic services, snacks, workshops and supplies for students experiencing bullying and exclusion. The center collaborates closely with other campus advocacy groups, staff, and local officials to host events throughout the school year designed to boost inclusivity and self-expression and combat discrimination across the District.

The California Democracy School Project, originally funded by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, is designed to institutionalize civic learning in elementary, middle, or high schools to prepare students for college, career, and citizenship in a digital and evolving economy. The Project is directed by the LACOE with support from the Los Angeles County Education Foundation.

"On behalf of the entire Board of Education, I want to congratulate the La Puente High School community for working together to continuously achieve their school's mission of not only reinforcing but elevating their commitment to civic excellence," Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez said. "At Hacienda La Puente Unified, we pride ourselves on being partners in community and encourage all students to identify their values, lead with empathy and have the confidence to create the change they wish to see in the world."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

HLPUSD_LPHS1: La Puente High School was named a 2024 California Democracy School during the Los Angeles County Office of Education's California Civic Learning Student Showcase and Award Ceremony on May 11.

HLPUSD_LPHS2: La Puente High School Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) were recognized for their outstanding leadership and dedication to civics while performing the Presentation of Colors during a Board of Education meeting on May 9.

HLPUSD_LPHS3: La Puente High School students and Principal Dr. Lisa Lopez celebrate the unveiling of the Dream Resource Center during a ribbon-cutting ceremony in April 2023.

HLPUSD_LPHS4: Hacienda La Puente Unified administrators, City of La Puente first responders, military personnel, and community members gather in honor of those who lost their lives during an annual La Puente High School 9/11 Remembrance event on Sept. 12.

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