



# Bellflower Unified School District

## Media Release

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## **Bellflower High School Wins Top State Civic Learning Award; Win is BUSD's 2nd in a Row**

**LAKEWOOD** – Bellflower High School is being recognized as one of the three top schools in California by California's Civic Learning Initiative, a program run by State Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson.

The high school was named March 1 as a recipient of an Award of Excellence; two additional winners hail from Sacramento and San Diego counties. Six schools received Awards of Distinction and 78 schools posted Awards of Merit in the highly competitive program."

Bellflower Unified's victory is its second consecutive win. In 2014-15, Mayfair Middle School became the first middle school recognized by the 4-year-old initiative.

"This award is a great validation of the civic-learning efforts that exemplify our social studies programs across Bellflower Unified," Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs said. "Our team of educators does an amazing job of connecting the abstract concept of civics to hands-on participation in our community."

A panel of experts chose the winning schools based on depth and breadth of civic-learning courses and programs.

Bellflower High School's civics-learning program, launched three years ago, engages students in real-world issues. Students are required to frame an inquiry into a community issue, investigate the issue, engage in civil dialogue and capture different points of view before drawing a conclusion they share with teachers and classmates.

All students – from grade seven through 12 – present their findings during the Bellflower Civics Fair in June. Juniors and seniors go a step further, taking an active role in their issues.

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## Standard of Excellence - Nothing Less

Bellflower Unified School District provides a pathway for all students to attain the expertise and develop skills of academic excellence that will empower them to become lifelong active learners, demonstrate respect for themselves and others in a dynamic, diverse and global society, become responsible, informed, productive, independent and contributing citizens, and perform successfully in their chosen field and in society.



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In recent years, students have provided homeless residents with toiletry care bags and urged the city to install better lighting on crosswalks to shield pedestrians at night. This year, students are highly focused on elections, especially a push for Bellflower to adopt a district system for electing City Council members. Another group of students obtained city permission to create a mural at a local park. Many students also volunteer at the Bellflower Volunteer Center.

"It's exciting to see these model schools innovating in engaging, real-world civic learning, and I congratulate the awarded schools at all levels," Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye said in a release.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson said the winners are preparing students for their roles as citizens.

"Starting with students in elementary and middle school, teachers are engaging their students in mock trials, mock congress and other rigorous and relevant opportunities that develop civic skills. Their efforts make our students and our democracy stronger," Torlakson said in a release.

Mayfair's program incorporates a variety of project-based and collaborative learning efforts to give students a theoretical and practical understanding of civics, from role-playing activities that bring historical elections to life to a public service component that students are required to lead.

"At Bellflower Unified, all of our educational programs are designed to prepare our students for the challenges that follow K-12 education – in the realms of career and higher education," Board of Education President Dr. Paul Helzer said. "This civic-learning program is part of that preparation, giving our students a grounding for how their education translates into how we handle real-world challenges."

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