



Bellflower Unified School District

Media Release

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State Supreme Court Chief Justice Presents Bellflower High with Award of Excellence

BELLFLOWER – State Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye praised Bellflower High School students for “thinking deeply about issues that affect all of us” on Tuesday as she presented the school with California’s highest honor for civic-learning programs, the Award of Excellence.

A panel of lawyers, judges and civic-learning experts chose Bellflower and two other schools for the award from more than 100 applicants based on the depth and breadth of their civic-learning courses and programs.

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

Those projects lined the walls of Bellflower High’s gymnasium on Tuesday for the presentation ceremony, with the student creators from grades seven through 12 on hand to discuss their exploration of local issues.

Cantil-Sakauye, who launched the California Civic Learning Initiative four years ago with State Superintendent Tom Torlakson, talked to students about their projects before presenting the award.

She said critical thinking is key to maintaining democratic institutions.

“We need to teach young people to think critically and think deeply about others, like so many of these fantastic projects and the wonderful children I talked with today, who are thinking deeply about issues that affect all of us and affect their future generations.”

MORE

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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The event was attended by Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia, D-Bell Gardens, U.S. Rep. Linda Sanchez, Bellflower Mayor Dan Koops and representatives of the Los Angeles County Superior Court and Los Angeles County Office of Education.

Garcia and Sanchez presented the school with recognitions for its achievements.

“Civic engagement is something we all feel is important, but isn’t always communicated to the next generation of young adults who will be our nation’s leaders in the future. So it gives me an extraordinary amount of pride to be invited to celebrate with you,” Sanchez said.

The event included comments by Bellflower High School senior Stephanie Larios, who told how she sparked interest in the democratic process among members of her own family.

“Voting impacts everyone and everything. It impacts our education, economy and independence,” Larios said. “Many of us are unaware of the impact we can have on our own lives. ... With my civics education here at Bellflower, I have learned how to become part of the solution.”

Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs praised Bellflower’s civics education team, led by teacher Susan Nicoletti, the high school’s administration led by Principal Michael Lundgren, and the District’s Board of Education.

The award is Bellflower Unified’s second consecutive win. Mayfair Middle School won in 2015, the first middle school so recognized.

“Here, in tiny little Bellflower, BUSD is strong and truly has hit the Standard of Excellence, Nothing Less,” Jacobs said.

CAPTIONS:

CIVIC_1: California State Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye discusses civic-engagement projects with students from Bellflower High School on Tuesday, April 5. Cantil-Sakauye presented the school with an Award of Excellence for its program, the state’s highest honor for civic-learning programs.

CIVIC_2: Members of Bellflower High School’s civics teaching team stand with California State Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye on April 5 after she presented the school with the state’s top award for civic-learning programs.

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