



Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Lynwood Unified's Success Serves as State Model

Other districts study how Lynwood is boosting student achievement

Lynwood, Calif. – Rising test scores, higher graduation rates and fewer dropouts are among the dramatic gains in student achievement in Lynwood Unified School District that Superintendent Paul Gothold presented during a recent training program organized by the California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators (CAAASA).

The Equity Leadership Institutes, CAAASA's new professional development series, is showcasing the best policies and practices for improving academic achievement of African-American and other underserved students in California schools. The four-part series kicked off Dec. 15 in San Francisco and continues through the spring.

"The invitation to participate in this prestigious forum is further recognition of how Lynwood students, parents, staff and community members are making our Achieving Greatness initiative a reality," Gothold said. "I was honored to represent Lynwood schools and share our experience so students beyond our boundaries can benefit from our successes."

Lynwood Unified has earned statewide acclaim for its strategies that have led to record gains in student achievement in recent years. Between 2011 and 2013, they include:

- A 34-point increase in Academic Performance Index (API) scores from 689 to 723, the biggest jump of any unified school district in California with more than 6,000 students;
- Significant API growth for all student subgroups, including a 40-point increase for African-American students; a 33-point increase for Hispanic/Latino students; a 25-point increase for students with disabilities; and a 31-point increase for students classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged;
- An increase in graduation rates averaging more than 16 percent at the district's two comprehensive high schools;
- Rising first-time pass rates among 10th-graders taking the California High School Exit Examination, with a 7 percent increase on the English language arts section and a 10 percent increase on the math section;
- Growing numbers of students completing coursework required for application to University of California and California State University schools;
- Declining dropout rates, from 32.2 percent in 2010, to 18 percent in 2013.

Under its strategic plan adopted in 2011, the district implemented systemic changes for improving student outcomes. Specific measures included ensuring all students set personal college and career goals; offering equal access to instructional programs; providing professional development for all teachers; improving communications at all levels within the district and among schools, families and the community; and maximizing data to pinpoint students' needs and break down barriers blocking their progress.

"We firmly believe that all students, regardless of their backgrounds or where they come from, deserve equal access to a world-class educational experience and learning opportunities," said Board of Education President Maria G. Lopez. "We couldn't be more proud of the progress we're seeing, which would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of our collaborative team of teachers, staff and administrators. We will continue supporting our students in every way possible so that they can reach their potential."

Lynwood Unified's Data Reflection Model earned the district a 2014 Golden Bell Award from the California School Board Association (CSBA). On Dec. 16, Lynwood Unified accepted the honor, which recognizes outstanding programs and practices that address students' changing needs, at CSBA's Annual Conference and Trade Show in San Francisco.

Aligning the district's budget with its stated priorities was essential, Gothold said. "We are especially proud to have improved student performance during an economic downturn when we and many other school districts were hard hit by declining per pupil revenues."

In recent years, Lynwood Unified has aggressively pursued all available funding for instructional programs and capital improvements. Its successes include voter approval of a \$93 million school facilities bond in 2012; obtaining \$2.3 million for energy efficiency projects from the California Energy Commission and qualifying for \$1.4 million more for future improvements; and securing \$14 million in additional state funding for the 2014-15 school year and adopting a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) to enhance instructional services for English-learners, students from low-income families and students in foster care.

The LCAP process is among topics educators will address during CAAASA's Equity Leadership Institutes. Superintendents and school board members representing approximately 75 school districts statewide attended the first seminar in San Francisco. The series continues throughout the school year with meetings in Monterey, San Diego and Sacramento. CAAASA created the program with major funding from The California Endowment.

The Lynwood Unified School District is dedicated to offering students a world-class education to prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century. Under its Achieving Greatness Initiative, the district is realigning all aspects of its organization to strengthen and expand instructional programs, enrichment and extracurricular activities, and support systems for students and staff. For more information, visit www.lynwood.k12.ca.us.

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