



## Press Release

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## **Montebello Unified Empowers Communities, Promotes Diversity through Education**

*District Hosts 2nd Annual Global Learning Conference*

**MONTEBELLO** – An expert in history and Latin-American studies galvanized participants at Montebello Unified School District’s second annual Global Learning Conference on Feb. 20 to look past barriers that may prevent people from learning from each other.

“We are all teachers and learners,” California State University, Los Angeles professor Enrique Ochoa told an auditorium filled with students and adults during the program’s keynote address. “All too often we are separated in artificial ways – by our job title, our role in schools, by grade level, by our age and our roles in the family – when really we all need to be talking and learning from each other, as equals.”

Ochoa’s talk headlined the District’s innovative conference, designed to encourage the exploration of identity and diversity in the classroom and throughout the community. About 175 students and more than 175 administrators, teachers, staff and parents attended the Montebello High School event.

Presentations by professors and MUSD teachers in six sessions addressed identity in the classroom, student diversity through poetry, the unconstitutional deportation of Mexican Americans in the 1930s, Armenians in America, gender identity and sexuality, and how to pay for college as an undocumented student.

“The goal of the Global Learning Conference is to continue finding ways to not only encourage respect and understanding of those around us, but to appreciate our own identity as well,” Montebello Unified Board President Benjamin Cárdenas said. “When we exemplify self-awareness and respect, everyone – especially our students – benefits. This conference illustrates our commitment to optimizing learning opportunities for the entire MUSD community.”

Ochoa, a professor of history and Latin-American Studies, sits on the District’s Ethnic Studies Committee, which is crafting an ethnic studies graduation requirement that will go into effect in 2016-17.

His address focused on how divisions within communities can influence education. At the core of education, he said, is self-discovery, community exploration, human connection and the ability to deep relationships through overcoming obstacles.

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The conference, themed “Empowering Communities through Knowledge,” featured presentations by four MUSD teachers, among others. Dr. Carlos Avila of Schurr High School spoke about exploring identity in the American classroom. Dr. Edith Chen of California State University, Northridge discussed learning about student diversity through poetry.

Bell Gardens Elementary School teacher Leslie Hiatt teamed with Dr. Christine Valenciana, professor of elementary and bilingual education at California State University, Fullerton, to discuss the unconstitutional deportation of Mexican-Americans in the 1930s. They also spoke about a law inspired by Hiatt’s class that requires a history of the deportation to be included in California textbooks.

Bell Gardens High School teachers Anne Cherchian and Elizabeth Kocharian talked about the Armenian community in America and Montebello. Sebastián Ochoa-Kaup of California State University, San Francisco led a workshop on understanding gender identities and sexuality.

Pedro Antonio Trujillo of Coalition for Humane Immigration Rights of Los Angeles, presented a workshop on how to pay for college as an undocumented student. Calvin Terrell of the National Teen Leadership Program inspired students to be warriors of change.

“I am so thrilled to continue strengthening this significant and pioneering movement within our District,” Superintendent Susanna Contreras Smith said. “By showcasing the unique fabric and history of Montebello Unified at this conference and throughout the school year, we are reminded to honor our past and our differences while promoting respect, education and community.”

**Photo Captions:**

MUSDGLC1: Nearly 175 students and more than 175 administrators, teachers, staff and parents attended Montebello Unified School District’s second annual Global Learning Conference, designed to encourage the exploration of identity and diversity in the classroom and throughout the community, on Feb. 21. Pictured here: speakers, presenters and MUSD officials.

MUSDGLC2: Nearly 175 students and more than 175 administrators, teachers, staff and parents attended Montebello Unified School District’s second annual Global Learning Conference, designed to encourage the exploration of identity and diversity in the classroom and throughout the community, on Feb. 21.

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**Montebello Unified School District** is a dynamic learning institution employing top-quality educators. It is the combined work of many that allows the District to continue educating more than 30,000 students every year using the 40 Developmental Assets at all of our school sites. It is through everyone’s efforts – students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators – that we are achieving the District’s number one goal of raising student achievement. Learn more online at [www.montebello.k12.ca.us](http://www.montebello.k12.ca.us).