



Press Release

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Two Montebello Unified Students Overcome Hardships, Win \$500 Bilingual Education Scholarships

The Duo Plan to Use Developed Language Skills to Pursue Careers as Educators

MONTEBELLO – Two Montebello Unified School District students who have proved their resilience by overcoming many challenges in their lives have been awarded \$500 scholarships for excellence in bilingual education, thanks in large part to the guidance from MUSD staff and strong District programs that promote rigorous academics and a global worldview.

Schurr High School senior Miguel Rios earned the Shelly Spiegel-Coleman scholarship and Vail High School senior Miguel Perez Inclán earned the Daniel Carlos Herrera Memorial scholarship from the Los Angeles County Bilingual Directors' Association, which rewards bilingual seniors who plan to promote bilingual education through careers in teaching and counseling.

"We are so proud of these young men and the perseverance they have shown to earn these scholarships and make an impact on their communities," Montebello Unified Board President Edgar Cisneros said. "Bilingualism and biliteracy are necessary skill sets in today's increasingly competitive higher education and career landscape and these students are taking full advantage of the many learning opportunities available within MUSD."

The District's efforts to promote biliteracy and multi-literacy continue to grow to prepare students for their futures, while also responding to the community's diversity – 33 different languages are spoken within its communities. In line with this commitment, the District recently adopted an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement.

Both Rios and Perez Inclán plan to use the language skills they've developed to pursue careers as educators and to give back to their own communities.

"I am humbled that someone would make the effort to invest in me," Rios said. "I want to return the investment."

However, there were many obstacles the two Pasadena City College-bound students had to overcome to reach this success.

Rios has been in foster care since he was 8 years old. Upon entering Schurr, Rios' home life deteriorated and he eventually became homeless for a three-week period, sometimes staying at a friend's house, sometimes on a Metro bus.

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After learning this, Schurr English Learner Program Facilitator Carmen Patlan immediately arranged for Social Services to provide Rios with a more stable living environment and steered him toward Students Run L.A., an organization that trains at-risk students to run the L.A. Marathon. Training with teachers prompted Rios to aspire to be an educator himself.

“Miguel is such an inspiring student,” Patlan said. “His determination guides everything he does, whether deep in his studies or training for a marathon.”

Perez Inclán was born in southern California but spent his early childhood in Mexico before moving to Bell Gardens when he was 7 years old. Perez Inclán’s father was soon diagnosed with a terminal illness, causing a rift between the two that led Perez Inclán to shirk his education.

He eventually transferred to Vail High School, where he found himself among caring administrators like counselor Nelly Blustajn and Principal Horatio Perez. Perez, whose exhortations to “pay it forward” greatly resonated with the deeply analytical Perez Inclán, became an inspirational role model and helped him discover his love for education and goal to become a history professor.

“I strive to build a foundation of education for students in low-income communities,” Perez Inclán said.

Superintendent of Schools Cleve Pell commended the MUSD staff members who supported Rios and Perez Inclán for recognizing the needs of their students and supporting them.

“We are so appreciative of the continued excellence provided by our District community,” Pell said. ““Thanks to our outstanding teachers and counselors, our students are able to reach their potential and are ready to give back to their communities in the field of education.”

In addition to courses in Spanish, French, Mandarin and Japanese, the District offers the Seal of Biliteracy program, rewarding graduating seniors who have demonstrated dual- or multi-lingual proficiency. For elementary school students, the District’s Dual-Language Immersion program pairs English-learners with native English speakers to help students gain dual-language skills, while providing rigorous, standards based curriculum.

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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.