

# Montebello Unified School District



## Press Release

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## Montebello Unified Inaugural Global Learning Conference Highlights Ethnic Diversity, Multiculturalism

**MONTEBELLO** – Montebello Unified School District opened its inaugural Global Learning Conference with a pledge to students, parents, teachers and community members to develop a rigorous curriculum that encourages students to become globally competitive in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural world.

“By embracing the diversity that exists within our culturally rich community, and mindfully and effectively incorporating it in our programs of study, we are creating global citizens who will be competitive in higher education and career,” said Montebello Unified Board President Edgar Cisneros, who addressed participants. “This conference is just one of many ways we continue to respond to and collaborate with our community while increasing the depth and breadth of history, knowledge and programs available within our District.”

The day-long workshop featured presentations by ethnic studies scholars, speeches by District leaders and administration team members, and panel discussions showcasing the District’s efforts to promote the short- and long-term benefits of diversity in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools.

Panel discussions included the advantages of bi- and multiculturalism, how to embark on the pathway toward the state Seal of Biliteracy, ethnic studies and increasing student achievement in MUSD.

“This conference demonstrated the interconnectedness between Dual Language Immersion, the Seal of Biliteracy and our forthcoming Ethnic Studies framework,” Montebello Unified Board Clerk Lani Cupchoy said. “This event truly served as an important step toward developing a continuous K-12 pipeline that will build upon multilingual competency and cultural capital for our students.”

Board Clerk Cupchoy moderated a panel exploring the issues relevant to the development of an ethnic studies curriculum, with panelists Melina Abdullah, Professor of Pan-African Studies at California State University, Los Angeles; Fredy Ramirez, Bell Gardens High School alumnus and student at Long Beach City College; Leslie Hiatt, Bell Gardens Elementary fifth-grade teacher; and Enrique Ochoa, Professor of History at California State University, Los Angeles. All weighed in on the importance of studying race, class, gender and sexuality.

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The conference's two keynote speakers offered eloquent examinations on how ethnic studies matters to the Montebello community.

Dr. Gilda Ochoa, professor of Sociology and Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies at Pomona College, discussed the uncertainties of the achievement gap, the factors that influence race and ethnic relationships, and the value of creating community partnerships.

Dr. Curtis Acosta, former teacher and founder of Acosta Latino Learning Partnership, talked about the struggle to reverse a statewide ban on ethnic studies programs in Arizona and how misrepresentation over race and ethnicity pervade media coverage.

"By incorporating and understanding diversity, culture and multiliteracy at all levels within our District, we are providing our students with skills that strengthen our sense of community beyond our classrooms," MUSD Superintendent of Education Susanna Contreras Smith said. "I look forward sustaining and building Montebello Unified programs that align with this mission."

In February, the MUSD Board of Education approved a pioneering and comprehensive Ethnic Studies program. The Global Learning Conference was designed as a way to apprise the community how exactly the District will implement the graduation requirement and to develop a forward-looking approach to embrace a District where 33 different languages are spoken.

**Photo Captions:**

**GLC1:** Montebello Unified School District's inaugural Global Learning Conference, held May 2, featured a day-long workshop for students, staff, teachers, parents and community members included presentations by ethnic studies scholars, speeches by District leaders and administration team members, and panel discussions showcasing the District's efforts to promote the short- and long-term benefits of diversity in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools.

**GLC2:** Montebello Unified School District's inaugural Global Learning Conference, held May 2, featured a day-long workshop for students, staff, teachers, parents and community members included presentations by ethnic studies scholars, speeches by District leaders and administration team members, and panel discussions showcasing the District's efforts to promote the short- and long-term benefits of diversity in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools.

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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).