



Press Release

For Immediate Release:
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MUSD Educator Receives Sole \$25,000 Scholarship from Toyota Financial Services

MONTEBELLO – As a Potrero Heights Elementary School site leader, Karen Ho is involved in all aspects of school leadership. She is an English Learner Program Facilitator, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Facilitator, oversees Potrero Heights' Categorical Budget, functions as the school webmaster, and even acts as a curbside valet in the mornings. After work, Ho travels to Azusa Pacific University to complete her Doctor of Education degree, while raising a family. Recognizing her tenacious commitment to academics, Toyota Financial Services will grant Ho the \$25,000 George Borst Community Leadership Award scholarship for 2015.

“Karen illustrates the high caliber of Montebello Unified teachers and exemplifies our District’s dedication to intellectual development and personal growth on all fronts,” Montebello Unified Board President Edgar Cisneros said. “We are so proud of Karen and congratulate her for this scholarship and for her doctorate candidacy.”

Ho was nominated for the scholarship by Anna Araujo, Chief Professional Officer of the Boys and Girls Club of East Los Angeles and Potrero Heights’ principal Lili Atoyan, who upon arriving at the elementary school gained an immediate appreciation for Ho’s dedication to her students. Atoyan also contributed a letter of recommendation.

“It’s fascinating to see Karen do her job. She is confident, calm and organized,” Atoyan said. “She’s a gift – dedicated, knowledgeable, intelligent and truly wonderful.”

Ho’s dissertation subject – which examines the relationship between parent literacy practices and academic achievement in elementary through middle school education – is well-suited for Montebello Unified and its commitment to global learning and dual language immersion programs.

“I work with a lot of students who are English learners. Many of them come from households where their parent’s language skills are limited,” Ho said. “I wanted to dig deeper into how that might impact their child’s education.”

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She worked briefly at Bella Vista Elementary before moving to Potrero Heights Elementary in 2002. Over the years, Ho has taught kindergarten and first, fourth and fifth grades at the elementary school. She was promoted to Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) in 2012.

It was during her years as a grade school teacher that Ho began to wonder about the relationship between parent literacy and student academic achievement. After obtaining her Master's degree in education at Azusa Pacific University in 2006, Ho decided to take the leap into a doctorate program to further examine literacy and achievement.

The scholarship comes from Toyota Financial Services, which created a foundation to provide scholarship opportunities for women and to honor former Toyota Financial Services CEO George Borst. In his 16 years at Toyota, Borst was known for his diversity, inclusiveness and for his commitment to advancing women leaders.

"Karen Ho truly represents the type of woman, educator and leader who should be honored by such an impressive scholarship," Superintendent of Schools Cleve Pell said. "We extend a heartfelt thank you and congratulations to her for this excellent achievement."

Ho did the majority of her course work from 2006 to 2009 before taking a hiatus and coming back in 2014 to complete her dissertation. Pending approval from her professors, Ho will graduate in May 2016. Ho and her family will be honored by Toyota Financial Services at a Community Day event on May 12, 2015 at the Toyota Campus in Torrance.

Photo Caption:

Karen Ho, in her 16th year at Montebello Unified, has been recognized for her tenacious commitment to academics by Toyota Financial Services who will grant Ho the \$25,000 George Borst Community Leadership Award scholarship for 2015 on May 12.

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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.