

**MONTEBELLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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**TWO MUSD SCHOOLS RECOGNIZED FOR CLOSING THE  
ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

**'HONOR ROLL' HIGHLIGHTS HIGH-PERFORMING SCHOOLS IN CALIFORNIA**

**MONTEBELLO** – Two Montebello Unified schools are being honored for their impressive work in helping their students reach higher levels of achievement.

California Business for Education Excellence (CBEE) has named La Merced Intermediate and Montebello Gardens Elementary to the 2013 Honor Roll, which recognizes elementary, middle and high schools for demonstrating consistently high levels of student academic achievement, improvement in achievement over time, and a reduction in achievement gaps. Specifically, the two schools have been designated as Star Schools, schools that are classified as high-poverty, yet continue to close the achievement gap.

“No matter what challenges our students may face, it’s our job to ensure that they are receiving the best educational programs, services and support possible,” said MUSD Board of Education President David Vela. “These schools are proof that demographics should not determine the level of student success. Instead, our District is ensuring access to high-quality instruction that will serve these children well as they continue to grow and progress in their education.”

The CBEE Honor Roll is a growing resource for schools to learn about best practices that increase student achievement. Schools are evaluated on several success factors that include having high expectations for all students, ongoing collaboration among teachers, targeted use of data to improve achievement, continual intervention for struggling students and mastery of content knowledge and best practices.

“The entire staff, administration and student body at these schools deserve so much credit for what they have done in terms of academic achievement,” said MUSD Superintendent Cleve Pell. “Our top priority is to best prepare our students for success beyond our classrooms and I am confident that is happening here.”

Both schools over the past few years have showed continual growth and have outperformed schools with similar demographics in the areas of English-language arts and math.

“Our teachers work collaboratively on a daily basis and meet in teams in order to plan their rigorous and interesting lessons for children,” said Montebello Gardens Elementary School Principal Norma Perez. “At the same time, they’re teaching students from a young age to be critical thinkers by requiring them to explain and justify their answers. I’m very proud of my entire school community because this really is a team effort.”

This is the seventh time the school has received this recognition. Montebello Gardens was also named to the CBEE Honor Roll in 2006 and 2008-2012.

From an Academic Performance Index (API) score of 785 in 2007, the school has improved by 100 points over the last six years, to a score of 885 last year.

La Merced Intermediate has also seen positive progress over the last few years. API scores at the school show a growth of seen continual improvement, from 655 in 2007, to 799 in 2013.

“We hold high expectations for our students and evaluate data to provide additional support to struggling students as well as our children who are English-learners,” said La Merced Intermediate School Principal Michael Ladjovic. “Our staff and teachers work collaboratively to ensure that our students have the rigorous instruction, assistance and encouragement they need to reach their potential.”

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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).