



NORWALK-LA MIRADA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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State Superintendent chooses Escalona, Dulles for academic achievement

NLMUSD Schools Receive ‘Distinguished’ Honor

LA MIRADA – State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson on Wednesday awarded the California Distinguished Schools designation to two Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District elementary schools for making impressive strides in improving academic achievement.

This is the first time Escalona and Dulles elementary schools, both located in the city of La Mirada, have received the award.

“I applaud these strong, thriving schools that are making such impressive strides in preparing their students for continued success,” Torlakson said. “This award is well-deserved by these school communities for their enduring dedication to high standards, hard work and unwavering support.”

The California Distinguished Schools Program recognizes public schools that have made progress in narrowing the academic achievement gap. This year, 424 public elementary schools within the state received the designation.

In addition to earning the title, Distinguished Schools’ administrators and teachers will also share their successful practices with others that want to implement similar programs.

“The faculty and staff at all of our District schools have remained committed and have implemented innovative programs to ensure we succeed in closing the achievement gap,” said NLMUSD Superintendent Dr. Ruth Pérez. “Escalona and Dulles have both shown great gains in closing the achievement gap with their Hispanic and socio-economically disadvantaged subgroups.”

Dulles Elementary School Principal Robin Padget credited teachers who volunteer to stay after school to tutor their students, parent involvement and a dedicated Parent Teacher Association (PTA) for the school's success.

"I was thrilled that our teachers were able to be recognized for the hard work they do to help foster student success," Padget said. "The application process for California Distinguished Schools brought our teachers together in a way no other process could."

The signature practices Dulles highlighted in its application were its Balanced Literacy program and Individualized Math Instruction. Balanced Literacy combines different strategies that lead to greater student comprehension, including interactive reading and group reading. With Individualized Math Instruction, teachers devote their free time each week working with students one-on-one on math strategies and concepts.

Last year, six students at Dulles, in grades 2, 3, 4 and 5, all received perfect math scores on their California Standardized Tests.

Escalona Elementary also made tremendous gains with its Balanced Literacy program: 75 percent of its students read at proficient or advanced levels, as compared to 46 percent in 2004, when the school launched its signature practice.

The school was also recognized for its powerful parental involvement. Escalona has adopted the National PTA's Standard for Parent Family Involvement that includes communication, parenting, volunteering, student learning, school decision making and collaborating with the community.

"We've always known we were a Distinguished School," said Escalona Principal Bonnie Lytle. "We've been doing great work all along, now we finally feel like we're getting that pat on the back. We're just ecstatic we're finally getting the official title."

Other elementary schools within the District to receive the designation in the past include Eastwood (2012); Morrison (2008, 2012); Lampton (2010); Chavez (2006); Glazier (1993); and Gardenhill (1993).

"With so many schools in contention to receive this title, I am very impressed that two of our own received this prestigious award," said NLMUSD Board of Education President Margarita Rios. "Being a 'Distinguished School' is more than a placard we place at the entrance, but a sign that our schools are helping to serve others in improving and closing the achievement gap."

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