

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Valerie Martinez

Juliette Funes

(909) 445-1001

Three Pomona Unified Programs Announced as Finalists for 2014 Golden Bell Awards

POMONA, Calif. – Three of Pomona Unified’s innovative programs aimed at promoting and increasing student achievement have been named finalists for the 2014 Golden Bell Awards, the most prestigious honor for a California school district awarded by the California School Board Association (CSBA).

Of the almost 250 entries that were submitted for the award, now in its 35th year, three of PUSD’s programs were nominated, including: **Palomares Academy of Health Sciences**, a National Academy Foundation school, where 100 percent of the first senior class has successfully graduated and has been accepted to four-year universities; the Child Development’s **Tots, Teachers and Technology** program, which is revolutionizing learning through technology and interactive media for 3- and 4-year-old students; and **The Youth and Family Master Plan**, a partnership between PUSD and several community organizations that offers a comprehensive, school-based program to address community needs, from prenatal health to graduation and career-readiness support.

“These Golden Bell nominations only validate the groundbreaking work we have been doing in Pomona Unified to provide our students with a rigorous academic program that is challenging them and preparing them for success in their futures,” said Board of Education President Frank Guzman. “Congratulations to our PUSD family for helping our students achieve.”

The **Palomares Academy of Health Sciences** was initiated in 2008 when the former Palomares Middle School was transformed into a seventh- through 12th-grade academy providing students a dedicated pathway into health science careers. The school offers project-based learning and a rigorous STEM curriculum. Students attend workshops at Western University of Health Sciences, work at Pomona Valley Hospital and showcase their skills at health fairs.

“Palomares Academy has taken students who are underrepresented and underserved, and by tailoring education to real-world career pathways, has opened up avenues of opportunity in the health sciences,” said former Principal Reedy Wade.

“Pomona’s next generation of doctors and health professionals will come from the Palomares Academy,” added current Principal Camille Ramos-Beal.

Started in 2009, the **Tots, Teachers and Technology** program engages preschool-aged children in exploring technology and interactive media in playful and creative ways using SMARTboards, iPads and tablets. Children learn in a hands-on, play-based environment that includes stories, songs and digital content. The program also provides professional development for teachers and a platform for parent engagement.

“Technology in early childhood education is a revolution in teaching and learning, and we here in Pomona have been holding a revolution for the past five years,” said program lead Marilyn Hokanson, chosen Educator of the year 2013-14 by the California Head Start Association. “We are so happy the rest of the nation is now catching up to us.”

Created in 2005 to combat decades of gangland violence, **The Youth and Family Master Plan** is a collaborative model that brings together PUSD, parents, the city of Pomona, community businesses, medical and mental health organizations, universities and nonprofits to change the culture of a community. Serving as a community-wide intervention tool, the program ensures that students receive every opportunity for academic and social success, with PUSD leading the charge. The partnerships have helped expand support services, early learning programs, town hall meetings, tutoring and intervention, career pathways, after-school safety and more.

“I know that a program like the Youth and Family Master Plan can transform lives by giving students values and goals,” said Superintendent Richard Martinez. “When community resources connect, students’ lives are changed. This program has given the community a spirit of value, pride and hope.”

In the coming weeks, CSBA representatives will visit each site to verify the excellent work being done. Winners will be selected at a later date.

“We are transforming learning with our exemplary programs at Pomona Unified, and I want to congratulate our teachers and staff for leading the way and helping to enrich the lives of our students,” Martinez said.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

GOLDENBELL1: Wearing white coats during each of their lab experiments, students at the Palomares Academy of Health Sciences learn about a variety of health science subjects, including studying the human body.

GOLDENBELL2: Preschool children in the Tots, Teachers and Technology program at Madison Elementary use interactive media, along with stories and songs, as a tool for early learning development. This program is also part of the Youth and Family Master Plan, which instituted support services, like all-day kindergarten and child development centers, to meet the needs of all children in the community.

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