

San Bernardino County's Golden Bell Award recipients honored

San Bernardino Sun, Tuesday, 1/31/12

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RANCHO CUCAMONGA - School districts in San Bernardino County that recently received prestigious Golden Bell Awards were recognized Monday evening at the annual meeting of the San Bernardino County School Boards Association.

The awards, given annually by the California School Boards Association, honor districts throughout the state that develop innovative education programs. In December three awards were granted to San Bernardino County school districts.

The awards do not carry a financial reward.

"It's pride, and getting the recognition," said Karla Wells, assistant superintendent of learning and teaching at the Ontario-Montclair School District.

The Ontario-Montclair district received two awards: one for a program that helps guide students to college, and another for a program that encourages science education through demonstrations outside the classroom of science's real-world applications.....

"This is the kind of stuff I think we all need to be paying attention to," said Gary Thomas, San Bernardino County superintendent of schools, during the program at Etiwanda Gardens in Rancho Cucamonga. Thomas highlighted the county's education achievements in the past year - including an 11-point rise in its Academic Performance Index score - but also bemoaned the state's funding cuts to public education, calling such cuts a "disinvestment."

The focus of Monday night's event, however, was on the Golden Bell Award recipients, each of which gave a presentation on their award-winning programs.....

Ontario-Montclair's Online to College program, in place for more than a decade, provides students with a track to college starting in the fourth grade. Students in the program learn about the benefits of college, and they receive some assistance filling out college applications.

Students who complete the program are eligible to attend Chaffey College tuition-free for two years. They also receive financial assistance to purchase college textbooks.

Of the program's participants, 54 percent enroll in college after they complete high school. Of students who do not complete the program, 38 percent attend college.



From left, Bonnie Mooney, Coordinator of Family/Collaborative Services, Leslie Sorensen, Resource Development Administrator, both of the Ontario-Montclair school District, Charlayne Sprague, Principal for the Etiwanda School District, and Karla Wells, Assistant Superintendent, Learning and Teaching, for the Ontario-Montclair School District, ring their Golden Bell awards.

The district's other Golden Bell Award program, Partnerships for Outstanding Science Education, consists of a two-week summer academy where students receive hands-on science instruction rather than learn solely from textbooks. "The whole idea is to get kids involved in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects," Wells said.

The Etiwanda School District's PACK (Personally Achieving Character & Knowledge) class consists of a period during the school day where students receive targeted instruction in math or English.

The students are divided by their performance levels into four classes. For the other six periods during the school day students are integrated, not divided into honors classes, said Charlayne Sprague, principal of Day Creek.

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