

Civic Learning Awards Honor 75 California Schools

The annual awards are co-sponsored by the Chief Justice and State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

March 05, 2020

Seventy-five schools will receive the 2020 Civic Learning Award, co-sponsored by Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond. In its eighth year, the awards program recognizes K-12 public schools, celebrating their strong civics curriculum in school and service-learning projects in their communities.

Chief Justice Cantil-Sakauye will visit three schools to present the Award of Excellence, the top award given to one elementary, middle, and high school in the state. This year, the top awards go to:

La Costa Heights Elementary School, San Diego County

At La Costa Heights, fifth graders picked a state bill to research and advocate for with their state legislators. Students chose to focus on pay equity with Assembly Bill 271 and presented their findings and recommendations to lawmakers. Students also helped design and install 40 environmentally friendly drop boxes in the community for voters to cast absentee ballots. The school has received the Award of Distinction and the Award of Merit in previous years. This is the first year it received the Award of Excellence.

South Junior High School, Orange County

Students at South Junior prepare and deliver two-minute “soapbox” speeches that include a call to action on issues of importance, such as the death penalty, gun laws, and college tuition. They later deliver their speeches before a panel of local judges. The school also created its own “Soapbox Night,” giving students the opportunity to present issues they are passionate about in a public platform.

Savanna High School, Orange County

All students participate in the Raising Student Voice and Participation program at

choose a vacant lot and create a video to pitch a valuable project for the community. Government class students can train as poll workers and many work 15-hour shifts on election day.

In addition to the three Awards of Excellence schools, six schools received the Award of Distinction, which will be presented personally by members of the judiciary. This year's Award of Distinction schools are:

Park Dale Lane Elementary, San Diego County
San Marino Elementary, Orange County
Natomas Pacific Pathways Middle/High School Charter, Sacramento County
Walker Junior High, Orange County
Pacific High School, San Bernardino County
Loara High School, Orange County

In addition to the top nine schools, 66 schools received the Award of Merit.

The Civic Learning Awards are part of a broad effort to promote civics to all California students. Started in 2011, the [Civic Learning Initiative](#) now includes the statewide [Judges in the Classroom](#) program, which pairs local volunteer judges to teach students about the judicial branch. The initiative also includes 15 independent [Civic Learning Partnerships](#), which bring together local court, school, and business leaders to increase civic education and engagement.

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