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PRESS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Wins 2016 Golden Bell Award for Freshman Success Intervention Program

Program empowers upperclassmen to mentor, guide freshmen

FONTANA – Fontana Unified’s Summit High School has been awarded a 2016 Golden Bell Award for a program that successfully supports freshmen as they shift from middle school to high school – a transition made easier with the mentorship and guidance of junior and senior students, called Link Crew leaders.

Of the almost 300 entries that were submitted for the award, now in its 37th year, Summit’s Freshman Success Intervention Program (FSIP) was selected to win the most prestigious honor awarded to California school districts by the California School Boards Association (CSBA).

The school and District will receive the award at a recognition ceremony on Dec. 3 at CSBA’s annual Educational Conference in San Francisco.

“I cannot express how proud I am of Summit High School and its Link Crew program, especially our juniors and seniors who play a critical role in the development of our incoming freshmen, who are gaining the skills to succeed in high school,” Fontana Unified School District Board of Education President Lorena Corona said. “This Golden Bell Award validates the hard work of everyone involved in making this program a success, and I want to congratulate the Summit High community for its commitment to working together for the benefit of our students.”

Summit High School’s 2016 graduates were the first freshmen to participate in the Link Crew program, which began in 2012. Over the years, students and staff saw the program evolve from one of social and emotional support to one that uses data and statistics to improve student academic performance by reducing failing grades.

“Link Crew has transformed our school, with our upperclassmen leading the charge,” Summit High School Interim Principal Mike Micallef said. “They have experienced much during their years at Summit and have enough insight into the challenges and opportunities high school offers to effectively mentor our newest students. It is because of them, our teachers, staff and parents, that our school has seen such marked success.”

FSIP consists of 175 junior and senior Link Crew members who are extensively trained to serve as tutors, positive role models, motivators, coaches, leaders and teachers to freshmen, facilitating their academic success during their first year of high school and beyond.

While the program initially focused on social and emotional support, FSIP shifted its concentration to one of strategic intervention and support focused on academics after school data showed that a substantial number freshmen were failing first-year classes.

In the 2015-16 school year, administrators launched a number of strategies to remedy the situation, including creating a Freshmen Tutoring Lounge with the help of 130 Link Crew leaders and 45 Peer Link Tutors. The lounge serves about 40 students a day.

Other programs conducted throughout the year included freshmen parent nights and outreach opportunities, study skills and technology workshops, and parent support phone call events. Additionally, teachers, staff and administrators have supported the initiative, with freshmen teachers working in Professional Learning Community (PLC) groups to coordinate their students' needs with how Link Crew could support them.

Link Crew leaders review missing assignments and low test scores to manage ongoing student assessments while providing guidance on academic performance goals. During the 2015-16 school year, 200 students applied for 130 positions Link Crew leader positions.

A review of data showed that Summit was able to close the achievement gap by 35 percent over the previous year, demonstrated by the reduction in the number of freshmen classes failed and an increase in students passing core classes.

"The Link Crew program is built on the belief that students can help other students succeed. With the support of our incredible teachers and staff at Summit, this program has made a substantial difference in the lives of both our freshmen and mentors," Interim Superintendent Fontana Unified Superintendent Randal Bassett said. "I want to congratulate everyone in the Fontana Unified family for nurturing such a transformative program and earning well-deserved prestige for it."

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSDGOLDENBELL: Summit High School's Link Crew students tutor freshmen as part of the school's Freshman Success Intervention Program (FSIP), which was awarded a 2016 Golden Bell Award for using innovative strategies to improve student achievement.

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