



# PRESS RELEASE

**Poway Unified School District**

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## **Poway Unified School District Receives Prestigious ‘Golden Bell Award’ from California School Boards Association (CSBA)**

- ***Distinguished honor celebrates outstanding education programs and governance practices***

(Sacramento, CA) – For the first time since 2013, the Poway Unified School District (PUSD) was selected as a recipient of a “Golden Bell Award” from the California School Boards Association (CSBA).

This educational honor, in the category of School Culture and Safety, highlights PUSD’s district-wide ‘No Place for Hate’ efforts, anti-bias training for staff, See Something Say Something Tip line, safety committee work, SAVE Promise clubs, and PUSD’s anti-racism resolution and equity improvement planning.

In 2016, after a series of hate-related incidents, PUSD adopted a system-wide, student-led approach to improving school safety and culture through the “No Place for Hate” program with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Students took ownership of shifting campus climates toward that of inclusivity, increased threat reporting, diversity, and conversations about bias and stereotypes through assemblies and activities. Through this partnership with the ADL, students are empowered to move from being a bystander to an “upstander,” acting as agents of change within their peer groups and the greater student body. The No Place for Hate program has since expanded from the original five PUSD high schools to include nearly all of PUSD’s 39 campuses. The District’s No Place for Hate activities have been [highlighted](#) at the national level as exemplary programs. From 2015 to 2019, a California Healthy Kids Survey revealed that school connectedness among students had increased by seven percent, and bullying or harassment reports due to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability had decreased by seven percent.

“This is what makes Poway Unified students so special; they are the agents of change in our District. Positive campus culture is so important for our students to feel safe, welcome, and comfortable to be able to be themselves. Only then, can they learn and flourish to the best of their abilities and potential. This directly ties into our Board Vision of creating culture and



*CSBA Golden Bell Logo*

conditions to empower world-class learners,” PUSD Board President Michelle O’Connor-Ratcliff said.

The work to improve school culture further progressed in the Spring of 2020. The Board of Education strengthened initiatives by passing an “Anti-Racism [Resolution](#)” and directing staff to create a Racial Equity and Inclusion [plan](#). Through this plan, the District commits to anti-bias training for all staff, the hiring of more diverse staff, and implementing more diverse curriculum for all students K-12.

Finally, the District improved campus safety initiatives by implementing a 24-hour anonymous tip line monitored by law enforcement to report any school-related threats or violence. This tip line, 1-844-PUSD-TIP, was printed on the back of all student ID cards, and presented to secondary students with a [PSA](#) titled, “If you see something, say something.” In its first year, the tip line received 128 calls, and enabled District staff and law enforcement to prevent at least one suicide, among other incidents. Student-led violence prevention and education was further enhanced on secondary campuses through the formation of SAVE (Students Against Violence Everywhere) Promise clubs. These clubs serve as an extra layer of safety for alienated students before behavior escalates to violence.

All of the systems improvements listed above, including a \$3 million expansion of campus security technology and staffing, have had a positive and lasting impact on school culture and safety in PUSD, furthering PUSD’s vision of creating culture and conditions to empower world-class learners.

### **About CSBA’s Golden Bell Award Program**

The Golden Bell Awards are presented by the California School Boards Association to promote excellence in public education and school board governance practices. The awards reflect the depth and breadth of education programs and governance decisions supporting these programs that are necessary to address students’ changing needs. CSBA is a non-profit education association that represents the elected officials who govern public school district and county offices of education, supporting nearly 1,000 education agencies and more than 6 million students statewide. To learn more about the Golden Bell Awards and all 40 winners, visit: <http://awards.csba.org/golden-bell/>

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