Superior Court of California
County of Santa Clara

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Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara Celebrates High Schools Recognized with the 2024 Civic Learning Award

SAN JOSÉ, California (October 30, 2024): The Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara, proudly honors Yerba Buena High School, Santa Clara High School, and Mt. Madonna High School for their outstanding achievements in civic education, as part of the 2024 Civic Learning Award ceremony. Presented in collaboration with the California Department of Education and the Judicial Branch, these awards celebrate schools that excel in providing meaningful civic learning experiences to students.

"The Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara congratulates this year's honorees for their exceptional work in fostering civic engagement," said Hon. Julie Emede, Presiding Judge Elect. "These schools are shaping the next generation of informed, engaged citizens, and we are proud to recognize their accomplishments."

Yerba Buena High School was honored with the prestigious Civic Learning Award of Distinction for its innovative civic education programs that empower students to apply classroom knowledge to real-world issues. One of the standout initiatives is the Senior Civic Action Project, where students research public policy topics, write in-depth papers, and engage in civic action. This project culminates in presentations before a panel of judges, demonstrating their ability to influence change within their communities.

In addition to the Civic Action Project, Yerba Buena's Law Pathway program allows students to explore legal careers in collaboration with the Santa Clara County Superior Court. Through observing live court proceedings, participating in mock trials, and engaging in immersive legal experiences, students gain firsthand insights into law and government. The school further encourages civic involvement through its partnership with the Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters, promoting voter registration and election participation, and instilling a deeper understanding of democratic processes.

Santa Clara High School earned an Honorable Mention for its comprehensive civic education initiatives that span from 9th grade onward. With an emphasis on advocacy and community involvement, the school's Ethnic Studies program introduces students to civic action, culminating in a Civic Action Project where students identify local or national issues and

develop solutions through hands-on learning. The school's partnerships with local organizations, including the Peer Court and Mock Trial programs, provide students with unique legal experiences, deepening their understanding of the judicial system. Santa Clara High's commitment to community engagement and leadership development contributed to its well-deserved recognition.

Mt. Madonna High School, also receiving an Honorable Mention, emphasizes civic learning through mandatory community service hours for graduation. Students connect their volunteer work with classroom learning, linking real-world experiences to their curriculum. The school's partnership with the Superior Court offers students a unique perspective on law-related careers, providing workshops and court staff interactions. With a strong focus on voter education and the judicial process, Mt. Madonna prepares students for active citizenship in a diverse democracy.

"By collaborating with local courts and community organizations, these schools offer students unparalleled opportunities to develop critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills," said Hon. Julia Alloggiamento, Chair of the Court's Community Outreach Committee and Vice Chair of the State of California's Power of Democracy Steering Committee. "Their civic learning programs are exemplary models for how education can lay the foundation for lifelong civic participation."

The Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara recognized all three schools during a special presentation at the Court's Educator's Day event on Thursday, October 24. Their dedication to fostering civic engagement and providing students with meaningful opportunities to connect with local government reflects a strong commitment to excellence in civic education. By preparing students for active citizenship and leadership roles within their communities, these schools set a standard for empowering the next generation of informed and engaged citizens.

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About the Civic Learning Award:

The Civic Learning Award is a joint initiative of the California Department of Education and the Judicial Branch to promote civic education in California schools. It recognizes outstanding schools that engage students in learning about democracy, law, and the role of citizens in shaping society. For more information, visit the Judicial Council of California's website: https://www.powerofdemocracy.org/.

Figure 1- Clay Hale and Mary Pollett, administrators from Yerba Buena High School proudly accept the 2024 Civic Learning Award of Distinction, honoring the school's dedication to empowering students with real-world civic knowledge and engagement.

Figure 2- Yerba Buena High School's administrators, Clay Hale and Mary Pollett photographed with Hon. Julia Alloggiamento.

Figure 3- Sharon Freeman and Pilar Svendsen, administrators from Santa Clara High School photographed with Hon. Julia Alloggiamento.

Figure 4- Dianne Padilla, an administrator from Mt. Madonna High School photographed with Hon. Julia Alloggiamento.

Figure 5- School administrators from Yerba Buena High School, Santa Clara High School, and Mt. Madonna High School join Hon. L. Michael Clark, Hon. Julia Alloggiamento, Hon. Julie Emede and Hon. Johanna Thai Van Dat to celebrate civic engagement in the County of Santa Clara.