

Pair of San Bernardino County middle schools get state honor

Beau Yarbrough, Staff Writer San Bernardino County Sun

Posted: sbsun.com

Two San Bernardino County middle schools have been named "Schools to Watch."

The state designation is part of a national effort to improve middle school education, overseen by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. It is awarded by the California Department of Education and the California League of Middle Schools.



Dr. Irvin Howard, President of The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform, rolls out a banner with the help of student representatives at Summit Intermediate School in Rancho Cucamonga. (Thomas R. Cordova/Staff Photographers)

Summit Intermediate in Rancho Cucamonga and Vanguard Prep in Apple Valley are among 12 middle schools to receive the designation this year, and are the first two in San Bernardino County.

"A few years ago, we came together to revise our vision, and the students and parents and teachers and members of our school community looked at where we are and where we wanted to go," Summit Intermediate Principal Lori Arita said Tuesday.

The school community looked at the goals of the Schools to Watch program and began working to earn the designation. "We start with a principal's checklist," Arita said. The school had to demonstrate excellence in four areas - academics, responsiveness to the needs of adolescents, creating opportunities for all students to excel and creating organizational structures to help middle school education. To earn the designation, school officials also had to write how they planned to improve on each of these areas.

"We identified areas that we wanted to focus on as a school. Perhaps some of them were things that we used to do, but due to budget cuts we didn't (keep doing them)," Arita said.

"We used to have the AVID (college readiness) program, and we'd like to return to that, and we'd like to bring back Bring Your Parent to School Day."

In January, school officials learned they'd received the designation, and held a celebration Tuesday morning.

"We wanted it very kid-centered, so we did it like a pep rally," Arita said.

Summit Intermediate received a banner and will also be painting the Schools to Watch logo on the side of the school.

Only about four dozen middle schools in California have earned the Schools to Watch designation, which lasts for three years. Schools may reapply after it expires.

Reach Beau at [via email](#), call him at 909-483-9376, or find him on Twitter [@InlandED](#).

