



## Ben F. Kolb Middle School Earns Historic State & National Recognition; Schools to Watch Program

**February 14, 2023 - Rialto, CA** - Kolb Middle School has been selected as one of the 78 California middle schools, hand-picked by the California Schools to Watch program for 2023. This prestigious recognition highlights the school's exceptional support for the whole child through academic excellence, social equity, developmental responsiveness, and innovation. The 2023 California Schools to Watch program recognizes 36 new schools, while an additional 42 existing Schools to Watch have been successfully redesignated. This brings the total number of California Schools to Watch to 186, reflecting a significant 24% increase in the program's network size over the past year.

“Congratulations to these schools for building systems that support all students from all backgrounds and who bring a wealth of individual and family assets,” said **Tony Thurmond**, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction. “These middle grade students attend programs that help them believe in themselves, discover their interests, and work toward their academic, life, and career goals.

The Schools to Watch program's uniqueness is reflected in its requirement that all teachers and administrators at candidate schools complete an extensive rubric that evaluates the school's systems as part of the application or reapplication process.

“Under the leadership of **Mr. Armando Urteaga**, Kolb has managed to excel academically, all while providing SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) support and a positive school culture that has allowed our children, my child, to thrive, and for that I am grateful,” said **Jacob Moreno**, Kolb Middle School parent.

The 2023 California Schools to Watch program will be celebrated twice this year; the first in Monterey, California, with district leaders being recognized on March 9, and the second one on March 10, 2023, with the recognition of school teams.

“I am incredibly proud that Kolb Middle School has earned this prestigious State and National recognition,” said **Armando Urteaga**, Lead Personnel Agent and former Kolb Middle School Principal who led this process. “The students and the staff have proven that when you lead with academics and a positive school culture, there are unlimited possibilities.”

Partners of the state-level program, the California Department of Education, the California Middle Grades Alliance, and the California League of Educators, will be part of these events. School officials will also travel to Washington, D.C., from June 22-24, to receive recognition from the National Forum Schools to Watch, the nonprofit organization overseeing the national program.

“This recognition highlights the dedication and hard work of the Kolb Cougars family,” stated **Dr. Cuauhtémoc Avila**, RUSD Superintendent. “The school is committed to fostering a culture of innovation and high expectation among students, staff members and families. Kolb is a testament that honorable and compassionate service to others enables everyone to experience physical wellness, academic excellence, and sound moral character.”

For more information about the program, please visit the California League of Educators California Schools to Watch web pages at: <https://www.leagueofeducators.org/stw>