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Blach Intermediate School Named a 2013 California Distinguished School

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson has announced that Blach Intermediate School, in the Los Altos School District, is one of 218 public middle and high schools named California Distinguished Schools for their strong commitment and innovative approaches to improving student academic achievement. Only twenty-one middle and high schools in Santa Clara County were honored with this prestigious award this year. Elementary schools and middle schools are awarded in alternating years.

"Being recognized as a Distinguished School for the teaching and learning that happens at Blach each and every day is great validation for the work we all do," said Sandra McGonagle, principal of Blach Intermediate School. "It is incredibly rewarding to be a part of a school, district, and community where student learning and student success are a priority. At Blach, we are incredibly proud of the work we do and are thrilled to be recognized as a California Distinguished School."

The 2013 California Distinguished Schools Program directly focuses on the right of California's students to an equitable and rigorous education, and recognizes those schools that have made progress in narrowing the academic achievement gap. The application process consists of a written application, which includes a comprehensive description of two of the school's signature practices, and a county-led site validation review process, which validates the implementation of work being done.

"We are proud to see recognition of the success of Blach Intermediate School. The unique learning environment created by our faculty, parents, and students is a gem within the wider community," said Doug Smith, president of the Board of Trustees of the Los Altos School District. "Thriving neighborhood schools are at the core of what makes this such a wonderful place to live, and we are thrilled that outside experts have once again recognized an LASD school for the special contribution it makes to the quality of life in Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and Mountain View."

"Blach School is an outstanding example of the excellent education provided our community thanks to the tireless efforts of the teachers, students, staff members, parents and the administration," said Jeffrey Baier, superintendent of the Los Altos School District. "Blach is focused on the academic, social and emotional needs of each and every student and work diligently to ensure their success. This is the hallmark of each of our LASD schools. The

school culture is one of total commitment to its students leading to student success. Success at Blach, in high school and beyond.”

Principal Sandra McGonagle and representatives from the school will be honored in May during regional award ceremonies where Torlakson will present each school with a 2013 Distinguished School plaque and flag. In a press release announcing the California Distinguished Schools, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson stated, “These schools have gone the extra mile to provide high-quality instruction that puts their students on the right path toward career and college. Given the enormous challenges schools have faced in recent years, it is inspiring to see this kind of success in so many schools. Our future depends on meeting the needs of every student no matter where they come from or where they live.”

Los Altos School District operates seven elementary and two junior high schools and is a top-rated school district in the State of California. LASD serves 4500 K-8 students from portions of Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Mountain View and Palo Alto. All nine schools in the district have been California Distinguished Schools and/or National Blue Ribbon Schools. LASD is nationally recognized for its many educational innovations and awards including the first district to create blended learning mathematics environments utilizing Khan Academy.

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