Alameda's Lincoln Middle School wins state recognition

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The state has designated Lincoln Middle School as a California Distinguished School, making the school one of just 97 middle and high schools to earn the honor this year.

"We are proud of the entire Lincoln community for all the outstanding work this great honor represents for Lincoln and for all of Alameda," Superintendent Kirsten Vtal said.

The schools were honored for high performance and sustained growth; the state's superintendent of public instruction, Tom Torlakson, said in a statement.

"Becoming a Distinguished School is a direct reflection of the dedication, hard work and vision of each school's education community. They have succeeded despite a bleak economic environment and have endeavored to maintain their momentum and focus," Torlakson said.

Applicants for the honor are considered based on state test scores and on their ability to close achievement gaps between high-performing and low-performing students. The schools also must describe two "signature practices" that they have implemented to boost student achievement, which are verified during on-site visits from educators.

Schools that win the title agree to share their signature practices with other schools across California and to serve as mentors to other educators.

Lincoln's two signature programs are an English language learner support program that targets students learning English as a second language and a program that focuses on groups of students who have struggled with state tests. Both programs offer intense instruction, relationship-building activities between students and teachers, targeted instruction and individual academic plans, said Lincoln's principal, Nicole Williams Browning.

The school has seen English learners' proficiency on state English Language Arts tests rise from 45.5 percent proficient in 2006 to 78.8 percent in 2010, and proficiency rates for the school's African American and Latino students also rose during that time frame.

The distinguished schools program has honored 5,300 schools since its inception in 1986. Lincoln also earned the honor in 1992.

Honorees will be feted on May 20 with an awards ceremony and dinner at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim. The event is funded by corporate donors and by statewide education organizations.

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