# CARSON SCHOOL ACHIEVES GENDER PARITY IN COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ROBOTICS, EARNING PRESTIGIOUS DIVERSITY AWARD

*Magnolia Science Academy-3 Carson received the College Board's AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award for equal female representation, an accolade earned by only 3 percent of schools nationwide.*

**CARSON, CA** – Magnolia Science Academy Carson (MSA-3) – part of the Magnolia Public Schools network of 10 high-performing public charter schools throughout Southern California – was recognized by the College Board with their prestigious AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award for attaining equal female representation in its AP Computer Science class, among only three percent of schools nationwide to earn this distinction.

"At Magnolia, we know access *to* and passion *for* science, math and engineering classes will translate to more lucrative careers and break the cycle of economic inequality," said Alfredo Rubalcava, chief executive officer of Magnolia Public Schools, which serves many students who are among the first in their family to attend college. "Only one in seven engineers are female. Women of color make up only 10 percent of STEM professionals. At Magnolia, we're changing that. Our girls want to work at NASA and Boeing, and they know they can do it. Better yet, it's cool to want to do that among their peers. We're providing our students tools for their ticket out of the cycle of poverty so many of them face."

This honor specifically recognizes MSA-3's gender equality in their AP Computer Science Principles class where *more* than half of their students are female, achieving parity for the second year in a row. This is nothing new for MSA-3, where encouraging females to take part in math and science is intentional, embedded in their culture and started early in their education. Not only does the AP Computer Science Principles achieve gender parity, but so does their robotics class – an elective offered to seventh and eighth graders where *more than half* of the students are female – and their traveling robotics team, which competes in elite competitions.

"Magnolia is empowering young women to see themselves as creators, innovators, and problem-solvers," said Stefanie Sanford, College Board global policy chief. "We hope to see even more high schools inspire female students to harness the potential of an AP computer science education."

According to the MSA-3 computer science teacher, the girls in these classes often outperform their male counterparts academically. This recognition is indicative of the larger culture at MSA-3 where

students – including females in record numbers – find achieving academically in STEAM subjects in vogue with their classmates and the robotics team takes the place of what the football team once meant in high school lore.

MSA-3, and other Magnolia schools, are able to foster this inclusive, STEAM-positive environment by offering robotics, labs and science, engineering and math classes to *all* students from a very early grade level. At other schools, these courses are often offered on a limited availability and to only juniors and seniors. Magnolia believes if you're introducing these programs in high school, you're way too late to capture the students' attention and make success in these areas an accepted part of school culture.

"I like learning how to program and code because I can figure out how to tell a robot what to do and move – it's like pieces of a puzzle and its awesome figuring out how all the pieces tie together," said eleventh-grader Elani Dotson, who participates in the coding class and AP Computer Science class, in addition to the dance team and student government. "Girls are interested in science, but before Magnolia, I was scared I wouldn't understand it. I was encouraged to go for it and now as part of the Python Program, I share my experiences in STEAM in an all-girls group. It's safe to try here, and actually cool to be good at STEAM."

Alexandra Acosta and Briseya Garcia, eighth-graders and aspiring NASA engineers, also feel supported and encouraged to venture into the STEAM field. They're exploring their passion for science as accomplished members of the robotics team, where they lead both the meetings and competitions.

Gender and racial equality is a priority for Magnolia Public Schools, considering nationwide only [27 percent of all students taking the AP Computer Science exam are female and only 18 percent of computer](#) science degrees to go women. STEM jobs in the U.S. pay 30 percent more than non-STEM jobs, have grown by 24 percent in the past decade, and yet only *four* percent of STEM professionals are Latino and *three* percent are African American.

MSA-3, which serves 462 students from grades six through 12, 90% of whom are qualified for free and reduced lunch program, provides a STEAM-focused curriculum to *all* students. This academic program is designed to challenge students, foster an environment where students want to learn, whether that is through our science labs or robotics projects and competitions, and offer students an advantage in their college and career plans.

**About Magnolia Public Schools**
Magnolia Public Schools is a high-performing network of 10 public charter schools in Los Angeles, San Diego and Orange counties that provides a college preparatory educational program emphasizing science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM). Magnolia's mission is to prepare students to succeed in college through a rigorous academic program while reinforcing core values through character development classes that cultivate respect for self and others. Magnolia's vision is to create scientific thinkers who contribute to the global community as socially responsible and educated members of society. www.magnoliapublicschools.org

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