



**RIVERSIDE COUNTY
OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

EDWIN GOMEZ, Ed.D. | County Superintendent of Schools

R I V E R S I D E C O U N T Y

2024
**CELEBRATING
EDUCATORS
LUNCHEON**

Riverside Convention Center

3637 Fifth Street | Riverside

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Sponsored by:



OUR PLEDGE

Every student in Riverside County
will graduate from high school academically
and socially prepared for college, the workforce,
and civic responsibility.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Edwin Gomez, Ed.D.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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PROGRAM

This special recognition luncheon is an opportunity for our county's K-12 education community and partners to come together and recognize outstanding educators. District nominees from each category will be recognized along with the 2024 Riverside County Educators of the Year.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Heritage High School Jazz Ensemble

Heritage High School

PERRIS UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

WELCOME

Jodi McClay, Ed.D.

Riverside County Deputy Superintendent of Schools

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

Ramona High School Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers'

Training Corps

Ramona High School

RIVERSIDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Beaumont High School Trio

Beaumont High School

BEAUMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

REMARKS

Edwin Gomez, Ed.D.

Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

AWARDS CEREMONY

SCHOOL COUNSELOR OF THE YEAR



Gabriella S. Zlaket

School Counselor, Arlington High School
RIVERSIDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Gabriella S. Zlaket boasts 20 years of counseling experience at Arlington High School. Her leadership spans various educational organizations, driving initiatives like the Riverside USD School Counseling Plan, ensuring comprehensive student support. Beyond administrative roles, she revitalizes student organizations, secures STEM partnerships, and champions inclusivity, leaving a lasting impact on her community.

Colleagues praise her multifaceted involvement and unwavering dedication to student success, affirming her as a beacon of excellence in educational leadership.

Gabriella's Message: *As living proof of the transformative power of education and kinship, I am grateful to have been selected to represent Riverside USD as the 2024 Riverside County School Counselor of the Year. The life-changing support my own school counselor, Mrs. Kay Daugherty, gifted me during my years at Arlington High School inspired me to pursue a life of service in support of students. Mrs. Daugherty, and her team of school counselors, led the way in providing robust access to the information, resources and supports I needed to pursue my dream of being the first in my family to attend a university. I am indebted to the many caring educators across the years who proactively encouraged me with words of kindness and by providing opportunities to follow my dreams and fulfill the potential they saw in me. This honor could not have been possible without the teamwork, servant leadership and unyielding commitment to student success of the Arlington High School Guidance and School Counseling Team. This exemplary team employs a comprehensive school counseling program in the academic, college/career and socio-emotional domains and provides guaranteed guidance for each student. The team guides each student towards fulfilling the standard school success metrics, but is driven by the incredible potential each student possesses that will lead to a wonderful quality of life. Additionally, I am appreciative of the consistent and proactive school counseling supports provided by the RCOE College and Career Readiness, the student-centered focus of Riverside USD district and site leadership, and for the collaboration with colleagues and community partnerships that have ensured that student needs are advocated for and met. I am blessed to walk alongside this path of life with my husband, children and family and thank them for selflessly sharing me with my kids at school. The foundation for this award was fomented by the love, encouragement and sacrifices my parents made in support of my educational aspirations and by God's providence, for which I am thankful.*

Congratulations to the 2024 School Counselor of the Year Nominees

- Kellie Boatman, Beaumont Middle College High School, Beaumont USD
- Araceli de la Torre, Coachella Valley High School, Coachella Valley USD
- Stephanie Flowers, Moreno Elementary School, Moreno Valley USD
- Alexis Goddard, Centennial High School, Corona-Norco USD
- Stephany Hernandez, Student Assistance Program, Desert Sands USD
- Laura Leon, Winchester Elementary School, Hemet USD
- James Marnell, Patriot High School, Jurupa USD
- Heather Mirimanian, Margarita Middle School, Temecula Valley USD
- Daniela Munoz, Boulder Ridge Elementary School, Romoland SD
- Lisa Nadalet, Canyon Lake Middle School, Lake Elsinore USD
- Mauricio Perez, San Jacinto High School, San Jacinto USD
- Susan Perez, Phillip M. Stokoe Elementary School, Alvord USD
- Blanca Rodriguez, Good Hope Elementary School, Perris Elementary SD
- Evelyn Rodriguez, Kathryn Newport Middle School, Menifee Union SD
- Carly Searl, Rancho Verde High School, Val Verde USD
- Esperanza Solis, Paloma Valley High School, Perris Union HSD
- Joana Soto, Banning High School, Banning USD
- Verenice Torres, Cathedral City Elementary School, Palm Springs USD
- Cari Young, Warm Springs Middle School, Murrieta Valley USD
- Gabriella S. Zlaket, Arlington High School, Riverside USD

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



Michelle Forcina

Secretary III, Canyon Springs High School
MORENO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Michelle Forcina brings 12 years of educational experience, with 8 years dedicated to Canyon Springs High School within the Moreno Valley Unified School District. In her role as Secretary III, Michelle's dedication shines through in her commitment to ensuring smooth operations and student success. She cultivates strong relationships with substitute teachers, maintains office efficiency, and fosters a welcoming environment

where all stakeholders feel valued. Michelle's impact extends beyond administrative duties; she actively builds connections with students, embodying the values of compassion and dedication.

Michelle's Message: *Every human life is a culmination of interactions and experiences. I have been blessed to have interacted with great people who have inspired me and pushed me to be better. I would like to thank my parents for teaching me to take pride in a job well done, for supporting me in every endeavor, and for teaching me to be thankful no matter the circumstances. Thank you to my children. Somehow you see me as a better person than I actually am. Thank you to the many coworkers who took time to teach me your wisdom. Thank you to my husband who never makes me feel guilty for spending so much energy on my kids at school. Thank you to my boss for seeing my potential and encouraging me to keep moving forward. Thank you Moreno Valley USD for trusting me and allowing me to keep advancing. Thank you Riverside County Office of Education for the impact you have on this valley. The families and students in this area are better because of what you do. Lastly thank you to our wonderful students. You are the future. You are the reason that we work so hard every day and you make it so rewarding. We see you and we care about you!*

Congratulations to the 2024 Classified Employee of the Year Nominees

- Sara Alatorre, Categorical Programs Clerk, Sky View Elementary School, Perris Elementary SD
- Monica Alcantara-Cardona, Secretary, Mountain View High School, San Jacinto USD
- Peter Arballo, Facilities Manager, Santa Rosa Academy
- Connie Bemiller, Account Clerk III, Fiscal Services, Temecula Valley USD
- Lawrence Curry, Warehouse Person, Banning USD
- Fred Ference Jr., Lead Custodian II, Val Verde High School, Val Verde USD
- Michelle Forcina, Secretary III, Canyon Springs High School, Moreno Valley USD
- Traci George, School Secretary, Felix J. Appleby Elementary School, Palo Verde USD
- Anton Gillmore, Campus Security Officer, Mountain Shadows Middle School, Nuview Union SD
- Manuel Guzman, Custodian II, Palm Innovation Academy, Beaumont USD
- Pamela Guzman, Attendance Clerk/Registrar, Hans Christensen Middle School, Menifee Union SD
- Lisa Imfeld, Paraeducator I, Stallings Elementary School, Corona-Norco USD
- Jessica Larsen, Instructional Aide, Cottonwood School, Hemet USD
- Cristina Macias, Lead Nutrition Services Assistant, Liberty High School, Perris Union HSD
- Francisco Ordaz, Bus Driver/Maintenance, Eagle Mountain School, Desert Center USD
- Jose Peña, Custodian/Maintenance, Valley View Elementary School, Coachella Valley USD
- Melissa Reynoso, Executive Director's Secretary, Riverside County Office of Education
- Angelica Rodas, School Site Secretary, Rio Vista Elementary School, Palm Springs USD
- Kathleen Rodriguez, Intensive Behavior Interventionist Assistant, Central Middle School, Riverside USD
- Dominic Rutigliano, General Maintenance Journeyman, Jurupa USD
- Ariana Sanchez, Instructional Aide II, Romoland Elementary School, Romoland SD
- Shanah Tompkins, Clerk III-School Attendance Review Board, Lake Elsinore USD
- Donna van Nieuwenhuyzen, Registered Behavior Technician, Foothill Elementary School, Alvord USD
- Cynthia Vinson, Nutrition Worker, Murrieta Valley High School, Murrieta Valley USD

CLASSIFIED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR



Michael Sattley
Director of Facilities Services
HEMET UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Michael Sattley's leadership is characterized by a commitment to creating optimal learning environments through physical renovations and community engagement initiatives. Michael's holistic approach integrates student involvement and STEM learning into construction projects, fostering collaboration and innovation. Colleagues commend his visionary leadership, attention to detail, and dedication to enhancing educational experiences and community pride. Michael Sattley brings 19 years of education experience and a strong focus on improving school facilities within the Hemet Unified School District.

Michael's Message:

I am humbled and honored to be the recipient of this award and recognition. A successful facilities program cannot happen without the support of amazing and dedicated people; from our Board of Trustees, Executive Cabinet, Facilities department, District Staff, thank you! I'd like to recognize our Superintendent, Dr. Christi Barrett, thank you for leading Hemet USD to be laser-focused on staying true to the District's mission and vision. To our Deputy Superintendent, Darrin Watters, thank you for always believing in me, for your encouragement and entertaining my sometimes creative and color(ful) ideas. I put my heart into our projects and thrive in creating new and/or improved learning spaces for our current and future students which will support them in their educational journey and future successes. Thank you to my wife, Monica and my awesome daughters for your love and support, without which, I would not be able to participate in this important work.

Congratulations to the 2024 Classified Administrator of the Year Nominees

- Jordan Aquino, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, Desert Sands USD
- Mercedes Aviles-Santos, Accounting Supervisor III, Moreno Valley USD
- Nicholas Chitwood, Ed.D., Administrator, Riverside County Office of Education
- Neal Conijn, Supervisor, Maintenance and Grounds, San Jacinto USD
- Pablo Flores, Network Engineer I, Val Verde USD
- Beatriz Gonzalez, Director of Expanded Learning Program, Coachella Valley USD
- Allen Hershman, Technology Support Coordinator, Beaumont USD
- Melody Hopewell, Intensive Behavior Interventions Supervisor, Riverside USD
- Angela Huante, Supervisor of Transportation, Palo Verde USD
- Debra Jilek, Director of Risk Management, Temecula Valley USD
- Richard Kurylowicz, Accounting Coordinator, Perris Elementary SD
- Joshua Mativa, Assistant Director of Maintenance and Operations, Lake Elsinore USD
- Audrey Mitchell, Director of Nutrition Services, Perris Union HSD
- Shannon Nelson, Human Resources Coordinator, Jurupa USD
- LaShonda Owens, Director II, Human Resources, Alvord USD
- Scott Palmer, Director of Student Data Systems, Murrieta Valley USD
- Sarah Phelps, Director of Nutrition Services, Palm Springs USD
- Stephen Radelicki, Technology Support Supervisor, Menifee Union SD
- Eddie Ramos, Director, Fiscal Services, Banning USD
- Brittany Ritzi Foust, Communications Director, Corona-Norco USD
- Vanessa Rodriguez, Director of Classified Personnel, Romoland SD
- Michael Sattley, Director of Facilities Services, Hemet USD

SITE SUPPORT EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



Sharon Nakama, Ed.D.

Coordinator of Special Education

MORENO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Sharon Nakama brings 35 years of educational expertise, with a focus on special education coordination within the Moreno Valley Unified School District. Her leadership spans various organizations and initiatives, seamlessly integrating educators and parents to foster student growth. Dr. Nakama's advocacy extends beyond the classroom, ensuring comprehensive support for students with disabilities through partnerships with key organizations. Her commitment to inclusivity and empowerment has catalyzed positive change, cultivating a culture of support and engagement districtwide. Colleagues commend her visionary leadership and dedication, reaffirming her role as a beacon of hope and inspiration for students with disabilities.

Sharon's Message: *It is an absolute honor to receive the 2024 Site Support Employee of the Year award this last year of my career in education. It's been a team effort over the years with students, parents, instructional assistants, teachers, related service providers and the support of our administrators to make things happen! Everything we do happens because we work together to make things happen. Together we have raised the expectations for our students with significant disABILITIES in bringing forth inclusive events for our students, building curriculum and connecting them to resources to assist them beyond our educational system. I am blessed and very proud to say I have worked with extremely conscientious and dedicated individuals in Moreno Valley USD and Riverside County Office of Education, who truly care about our students with special needs. There is no way I would have received this award without their support over the years. Thank you team.*

Congratulations to the 2024 Site Support Employee of the Year Nominees

- Kristie Bott, Educational Therapist, North Mountain Middle School, San Jacinto USD
- Yadhya Carlos, School Psychologist, Wells Middle School, Alvord USD
- Tamara Dewey, Coordinator of Educational Services, Murrieta Valley USD
- Susan Fleming, Head Mental Health Counselor, Palo Verde USD
- Ruben Garza, Maintenance & Operations Locksmith, Desert Sands USD
- Lan Gomez, Psychologist, Corona-Norco USD
- Yvonne Henderson, College & Career Specialist, Rancho Mirage High School, Palm Springs USD
- Kevin Lam, Psychologist, Perris Union HSD
- Carlos Mares, Wellness Therapist, Nuview Bridge Early College High School, Nuview Union SD
- Margarita Martinez, Administrative Specialist, Valle del Sol Elementary School, Coachella Valley USD
- Kory McPherson, Speech & Language Pathologist, Hans Christensen Middle School/Menifee Virtual School, Menifee Union SD
- Anne-Marie Meyer, Speech & Language Pathologist, Starlight Elementary School, Beaumont USD
- Claudia Montes, Instructional Coach/Middle School Teacher, Tomas Rivera Middle School, Val Verde USD
- Sharon Nakama, Ed.D., Coordinator of Special Education, Moreno Valley USD
- Delia Nguyen, Teacher on Special Assignment - Community Schools, Rubidoux High School, Jurupa USD
- Marie Pilgrim, Speech & Language Pathologist, Banning USD
- Dagmar Rea, District Librarian, Hemet USD
- Feliciano Rodriguez, Program Assistant, At-Risk Students, Desert Edge School, Riverside County Office of Education
- Maria Celeste Solomon, Speech/Language Pathologist, Lake Elsinore USD
- Pam Sorensen, Database/Software Specialist, Temecula Valley USD
- Shelton Yuen, Psychologist, Riverside USD

CERTIFICATED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR



Ryan Mulvanny

Director II, Professional Development and Learning
LAKE ELSINORE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Ryan Mulvanny, honored as Riverside County Certificated Administrator of the Year, brings 16 years of education experience, with a focus on inclusive leadership and continuous improvement. As Director II of Professional Development and Learning in the Lake Elsinore Unified School District, Ryan prioritizes equity and diversity in education, fostering culturally responsive teaching practices and integrating technology for diverse student needs. His emphasis on high expectations and ongoing professional development has led to improved teaching practices and student outcomes. Colleagues praise Ryan's transformative leadership, recognizing his commitment to every student's success and his instrumental role in enhancing educational experiences districtwide.

Ryan's Message:

I am deeply honored to receive the 2024 Riverside County's Certificated Administrator of the Year Award. This recognition is not just a reflection of my efforts, but a testament to the incredible support and dedication of my team, our visionary Superintendent, Dr. Ryan Lewis, and our thoroughly committed school board. Each day, I am privileged to work alongside outstanding educators in the Lake Elsinore USD, whose passion and dedication inspire me. Together, both our classified and certificated team members strive to create an environment where all students can thrive and excel. I am grateful for this honor and motivated to continue our important work, knowing that together, we can achieve remarkable things. Thank you to everyone who plays a part in our journey toward excellence in education.

Congratulations to the 2024 Certificated Administrator of the Year Nominees

- Leigh Baird, Coordinator of Assessment & Accountability, Desert Sands USD
- Nicholas Blake, Director of Funding & Program Accountability, Jurupa USD
- Kristin Brooks, Ed.D., Executive Director, Riverside County Office of Education
- Tonia Causey-Bush, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent of Academic Services, Banning USD
- Megan Cotton, Assistant Principal, Beaumont High School, Beaumont USD
- Peyton Davis, Assistant Principal, Menifee Valley Middle School, Menifee Union SD
- Steven Dunlap, Director, Innovation & Technology, Riverside USD
- Mary Godoy, Assistant Principal, Boulder Ridge Elementary School, Romoland SD
- Elizabeth Gomez, Principal, Julius Corsini Elementary School, Palm Springs USD
- Erika Heiliger-Garcia, Coordinator of Special Education, Perris Union HSD
- Lynnsey Huntsman, Assistant Administrator of Instructional Improvement & Academic Coaching, Badger Springs Middle School, Moreno Valley USD
- Josie Jackson, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, Perris Elementary SD
- Mark LeNoir, Assistant Superintendent, Education Services, Val Verde USD
- Jessica Macdonald, Assistant Principal, Temecula Valley High School, Temecula Valley USD
- Steven Mack, Assistant Principal, Alessandro High School, Hemet USD
- Martha Martinez, Director III, English Learner Support Services, Alvord USD
- Ryan Mulvanny, Director II, Professional Development & Learning, Lake Elsinore USD
- Robert Nichols, Director of Special Education, Coachella Valley USD
- Danielle Powell, Assistant Principal, San Jacinto High School, San Jacinto USD
- Benjamin Roberts, Ed.D., Administrative Director, Corona-Norco USD
- Jennifer Schriver, Executive Director of Secondary Education, Murrieta Valley USD

CONFIDENTIAL EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



Cindy Vasquez

Executive Assistant

JURUPA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Cindy Vasquez has been serving as Executive Assistant in the Jurupa Unified School District for the past 8 years. She has 23 years of experience in education. In her multifaceted role supporting Assistant Superintendents, Cindy plays a pivotal role in facilitating communication and professional development while serving as a bridge between the district, schools, and the community. Her impact extends beyond administrative duties; Cindy's bilingual proficiency and empathetic approach enable her to support Spanish-speaking students and parents, ensuring effective communication and fostering strong school-home relationships. She excels in crisis management, providing reassurance and confidentiality during emergencies. Cindy's meticulous planning and coordination contribute to initiatives like the Visual and Performing Arts program, enriching educational experiences for students.

Cindy's Message:

I am honored and humbled to have been chosen as County Confidential Employee of the Year. My journey with Jurupa USD spans nearly 24 years. It has been a true privilege working alongside such an extraordinary team and I am proud to represent my district. This recognition serves as a testament to both the dedication and hard work I've poured into my role and that I have made a difference in my community. It reinforces my commitment to excellence in every task and interaction. Being part of an environment that directly impacts students' learning and fosters connections between parents and schools through my bilingual skills is incredibly fulfilling. This award has not only made me feel cherished and respected professionally, but has also touched me personally. I am immensely thankful to my colleagues, staff, and mentors whose unwavering support and guidance have been instrumental in my journey. Lastly, I'm deeply thankful to my immediate family for their support every day.

Congratulations to the 2024 Confidential Employee of the Year Nominees

- Lena Anocibar, Executive Assistant, Temecula Valley USD
- Gloria Bramasco, Executive Assistant, Banning USD
- Olivia Castellanos, Senior Human Resources Specialist, Palm Springs USD
- Anna Fetzner, Executive Assistant, Perris Union HSD
- Michelle Haskin, Human Resources Secretary, Corona-Norco USD
- Marlene Hernandez, Credential Analyst, San Jacinto USD
- Sylvia Hernandez, Budget Analyst, Palo Verde USD
- Tammi Horn, Human Resources Clerk, Beaumont USD
- Maria Leyva, Human Resources Technician, Hemet USD
- Vicky Masatto, Personnel Specialist, Lake Elsinore USD
- Sarah Mc Amis, Assistant Superintendent Secretary, Business Services, Menifee Union SD
- Lupita Medina, Administrative Assistant, Human Resources, Coachella Valley USD
- Andrea Miltenberger, Coordinator, Human Resources, Murrieta Valley USD
- Corina Moreno, Confidential Secretary-Educational Services, Perris Elementary SD
- Sandy Perry, Executive Assistant II, Riverside USD
- Monica Sahagun, Sr. Human Resources Technician, Alvord USD
- Yanira Salehi, Credentialing Analyst, Desert Sands USD
- Cindy Vasquez, Executive Assistant, Jurupa USD

PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR



Emily Price, Ed.D.

Principal, Megan Cope Elementary School
SAN JACINTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Emily Price brings 25 years of education experience and innovative leadership as Principal of Megan Cope Elementary School. Inspired by “The Wizard of Oz,” she fosters a culture of academic excellence and student well-being, transforming the school library into a dynamic hub for learning and community engagement. Dr. Price’s emphasis on standards-based curriculum and personalized learning plans has led to significant academic progress, evidenced by improved Math and ELA results. Through daily Professional Learning Communities, she cultivates collaboration and collective teacher efficacy, ensuring every student receives personalized support to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Dr. Price’s inclusive leadership style and dedication to continuous improvement have earned her praise from colleagues and district officials.

Emily’s Message: *I am deeply honored to be recognized as the 2024 Riverside County Principal of the Year and represent not only my incredible team at Megan Cope Elementary school, but also the collective effort throughout San Jacinto USD to ensure every student achieves high levels of learning. However, this accolade is not mine alone. It belongs to each and every one of the phenomenal faculty, our dedicated support staff, our inspiring students, their supportive families, and our wider community. My heartfelt thank you to all! Together, we have soared to new heights, embodying the spirit of our school motto: “There’s No Place Like Cope.” Just like Dorothy in the timeless tale of “The Wizard of Oz,” we believe in the power of knowledge, passion, and courage to guide our students on their journey toward success. I am immensely grateful and proud of our dedicated teachers and staff who have worked tirelessly to create a nurturing and empowering learning environment for our students. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the highly supportive RCOE team, SJUSD board members, Superintendent Dr. Pyle and Cabinet, fellow administrators, and the entire Megan Cope team. I am forever grateful to my mentors throughout my educational career who have guided me on the path to servant leadership and especially to my whole family, my husband and our children who encourage, support and inspire me to make a positive impact in the lives of the students and families I serve.*

Congratulations to the 2024 Principal of the Year Nominees

- Stephanie Acosta, Herk Bouris Elementary School, Menifee Union SD
- Todd Biggert, John Glenn Middle School, Desert Sands USD
- Tania Cabeza, Ed.D., La Sierra High School , Alvord USD
- Yesenia Casillas, Starlight Elementary School, Beaumont USD
- Catalina Chrest, Sky View Elementary School, Perris Elementary SD
- Jeffrey Franks, Ed.D., Hemet High School, Hemet USD
- Petria Gonzales, Ed.D., John F. Kennedy Middle College High School, Corona-Norco USD
- Melissa Lee, D.C., New Horizon High School, Banning USD
- Tammy Patterson, Granite Hill Elementary School, Jurupa USD
- Philip Peeples, Moreno Valley High School, Moreno Valley USD
- Terry Picchiottino, Warm Springs Middle School, Murrieta Valley USD
- Emily Price, Ed.D., Megan Cope Elementary School, San Jacinto USD
- Ricardo Rincon, Manuel L. Real Elementary School, Val Verde USD
- Gilbert Rodriguez, Canyon Lake Middle School, Lake Elsinore USD
- Socorro Sanchez, Coachella Valley High School, Coachella Valley USD
- Juan Santos, Perris High School, Perris Union HSD
- Rob Sousa, James L. Day Middle School, Temecula Valley USD
- Aaron Tarzian, Rio Vista Elementary School, Palm Springs USD
- Steven Ybarra, Arlington High School, Riverside USD

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR



Marie Stevenson
Rancho Mirage High School
PALM SPRINGS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Marie Stevenson, named Riverside County Teacher of the Year, brings 16 years of educational experience, with the last decade dedicated to teaching mathematics at Rancho Mirage High School in Palm Springs Unified School District. As a dynamic educator, Marie wears multiple hats, serving as the Math Department Chair, coach, club advisor, and active participant in various school committees. Her commitment to student success extends beyond the classroom, evident in her advocacy for mastery grading and fostering cross-curricular collaboration. Students praise Marie for her approachable nature and dedication to ensuring every student's understanding. Colleagues highlight her ability to guide and inspire fellow educators, emphasizing her role as a catalyst for professional growth.

Marie's Message:

Thank you for the honor to be chosen as a 2024 Riverside County Teacher of the Year. I would not be in position to receive this award without supportive colleagues and family. My philosophy towards teaching math has evolved each year because math class is often a barrier for students. Although teaching math can be amazing as students learn to reason abstractly, it can also be challenging as each student is unique in their needs. This is why I continue to develop my classroom into a space where all students, regardless of their background, feel safe to ask any level of questions. I believe teachers have the power to truly impact students mathematically through their actions and words. If we can help students develop a growth mindset around math and see themselves as a "doer" of math, then more opportunities will await them. The more we can embolden students to persevere through challenges academically, the more likely they will learn to adapt to the challenges life will throw at them. Thank you to everyone involved in our profession, as we truly mold the future generation.



Lindsay Hill
Sundance Elementary School
BEAUMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Lindsay Hill, esteemed as Riverside County Teacher of the Year, brings 15 years of teaching expertise, currently inspiring students as a 4th grade teacher at Sundance Elementary School in Beaumont Unified School District. Within her 3 years in this role, Lindsay's impact resonates deeply; she serves as the Literacy Coordinator and spearheads initiatives like the site Reading Lab, which has grown significantly under her guidance. Lindsay's commitment to literacy extends beyond the classroom; she is a self-published author of children's books and actively engages the community through English tutoring and author events. Colleagues and students alike praise her inspiring teaching style, creativity, and dedication to making learning enjoyable and achievable for all.

Lindsay's Message:

I am deeply honored and grateful to receive the 2024 Riverside County Teacher of the Year award. This achievement would not have been possible without the unwavering support, encouragement, and guidance from my parents and family. Thank you for being my rock and for supporting me to pursue my passion for teaching. To my friends and colleagues, thank you for your continuous encouragement and for celebrating both my triumphs and challenges alongside me. To the Beaumont Unified School District and the Riverside County Department of Education, thank you for providing me with the platform and resources to excel in my profession and make a difference in the lives of our students. To my students, thank you for inspiring me and making my work meaningful. Lastly, to my husband and daughters, your endless love and support sustain me in my journey as an educator. This award is as much yours as it is mine.

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR



James Waedekin

New Horizon High School

BANNING UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

James Waedekin, honored as Riverside County Teacher of the Year, brings 17 years of dedication to education and currently teaching English at New Horizon High School in Banning Unified School District. Transitioning from a struggling actor/writer in Hollywood, James found his calling in education, where he integrates his love for writing and theater into his teaching. He is recognized for his multifaceted contributions, including serving as PBIS Coordinator, running the Drama Club, advising the Yearbook, and developing Career Readiness Portfolios. James's impact extends beyond the classroom; he is celebrated as an award-winning playwright and published children's book author. Colleagues commend his integrity, devotion to students, and commitment to creating a positive and inclusive learning environment.

James' Message:

Friendships, relationships, parental expectations, schoolwork, standardized testing, graduating, getting a job, getting into college Yikes! The high school world is a dramatic one. A lot of ground to cover in a very short time. Sometimes other issues plague our students, too. Teenage trauma, bullying, gang violence, depression, suicide. Hurting others. Hurting ourselves. Even ... surviving the aftermath of a pandemic. If you were to ask me why I teach? My classroom is the stage for our "rehearsals for life." I believe that I have not done my job if by graduation my students do not have a sense of who they are, where they've come from, what they want in their future, and what values they are taking with them. Courageously. Their life stories are their strength. And their stories continue to inspire me, and to compel me to be a better teacher. Thank you Superintendent Dr. Gomez and the Riverside County Office of Education for selecting me to represent Riverside County teachers. I am truly honored to be a part of the long tradition of extraordinary educators who've received this recognition before me, and those alongside me today. I want to thank the Banning USD, Superintendent Terrence Davis, our school board, and my principal, Dr. Melissa Lee, for their continued leadership, dedication, and support, always proving ... "IT BEGINS WITH ME." I am grateful to be a part of this community. I am grateful to be a part of this family.



Lorena Morales

La Sierra High School

ALVORD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Lorena Morales, Riverside County Teacher of the Year, brings 17 years of educational experience to La Sierra High School in Alvord Unified School District, where she teaches math and leads the AVID program. Her journey began as an intern at La Sierra, her alma mater, where she discovered her passion for teaching. As an instructional leader for the school's National AVID Demonstration Program, Lorena has mentored countless students, achieving a remarkable 100% university acceptance rate during the pandemic. Beyond the classroom, she fosters community partnerships, organizes workshops on college preparation, and serves as an advocate for English Learners. Recognized for her dedication, Lorena serves as Mathematics Department Chair, ELAC Facilitator, and CTI Induction Coach. Her commitment to empowering students resonates through her words and actions, inspiring students to believe in their potential and advocate for themselves.

Lorena's Message:

First, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Riverside County Office of Education and Alvord USD leaders for allowing me the opportunity to share my journey, struggles, and most importantly, my passion for teaching and learning. It's an immense honor to receive this recognition alongside my colleagues, students, family, and community. Over the past 17 years, I've experienced significant personal and professional growth while learning invaluable lessons that have shaped me into the educator I am today. Teaching holds a special place in my heart because I've witnessed firsthand the profound impact a teacher can have on students' lives, especially those facing economic, social, and academic challenges like I did as a first-generation Latina college graduate. Serving the same community where I grew up has been an amazing opportunity, and I am proud to be teaching at my alma mater, La Sierra High School, since 2007. I'd like to recognize my former senior AVID teacher, Ms. Nielsen, who served as a beacon of inspiration in my life. Thank you for your being a ray of light and motivating me to become an educator. I am certain you are smiling down at me from heaven. I'd also like to thank my parents, sister, husband, in-laws and my boys Jason and Gianni for their love, and encouragement. Being named 2024 Riverside County Teacher of the Year has been a humbling experience and a highlight of my life. I feel privileged to be a part of a learning community that embraces ingenuity, diversity, creativity, and fosters opportunities for growth. May we continue to ignite a love for learning and inspire the next generation of leaders. Si se puede, yes we can!

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to the 2024 Teacher of the Year Nominees

- Lena Aguirre, Rancho Verde High School, Val Verde USD
- Kathryn Akkerman, Bobby Duke Middle School, Coachella Valley USD
- Sara Alcalá, Chester W. Morrison Elementary School, Menifee Union SD
- Aimee Bachor, Dorothy McElhinney Middle School, Murrieta Valley USD
- Mary Beutz, Vail Ranch Middle School, Temecula Valley USD
- Andrea Bradley, Elsinore High School, Lake Elsinore USD
- Kevin Cauchon, Perris High School, Perris Union HSD
- Mary Dolan-Jimenez, French Valley Elementary School, Temecula Valley USD
- Andrew Edwards, Orange Grove High School, Corona-Norco USD
- Divina Elbo, Canyon Springs High School, Moreno Valley USD
- Sherrill Ferguson, Sunnyslope Elementary School, Jurupa USD
- Rosalie Fierro, Nuvview Elementary School, Nuvview Union SD
- Nicholas Goltry, San Geronimo Middle School, Beaumont USD
- Andrea Graydon, Frank Augustus Miller Middle School, Riverside USD
- Regina Hartford, Landmark Middle School, Moreno Valley USD
- Gabrielle Henderson, Mountain Heights Academy & Mountain View High School, San Jacinto USD
- Jose Hernandez, Palo Verde High School, Palo Verde USD
- Michelle Hickey, Innovative Horizons Charter School, Perris Elementary SD
- Felice Hill, Little Lake Elementary School, Hemet USD
- Lindsay Hill, Sundance Elementary School, Beaumont USD
- Sara Hogan, Shivela Middle School, Murrieta Valley USD
- Andrea Horne, Lakeland Village School, Lake Elsinore USD
- Natasha Kohls, Alvord High School, Alvord USD
- Allen Kruse, Hemet High School, Hemet USD
- Gabrielle Ladner-Mejia, Liberty High School, Perris Union HSD
- Markie Legasse, Jurupa Valley High School, Jurupa USD
- Nicole Lindemuth, Sunnymeadows Elementary School, Moreno Valley USD
- Kelly Mansfield, Val Verde Elementary School, Val Verde USD
- Andrea Martinez, Vista del Monte Elementary School, Palm Springs USD
- AnnMarie McCoy, Mira Loma Middle School, Jurupa USD
- Renee Miletic, West Shores High School, Coachella Valley USD
- Lorena Morales, La Sierra High School, Alvord USD
- Cheniece Parks, Táawila Elementary School, Menifee Union SD
- Shauna Petersen, Eagle Mountain School, Desert Center USD
- Sara Pink, Ethan A. Chase Middle School, Romoland SD
- Amanda Prospero, Woodrow Wilson Elementary School, Corona-Norco USD
- Julie Pulido, Lee V. Pollard High School, Corona-Norco USD
- Alicia Ramos, Moreno Elementary School, Moreno Valley USD
- Matthew Richards, Indio Middle School, Desert Sands USD
- Lindsay Ricketts, Vista Murrieta High School, Murrieta Valley USD
- Heidi Rnigge, Shadow Hills High School, Desert Sands USD
- Sarah Roenicke, Riverside Virtual School, Riverside USD
- Tricia Rugh, Railway Elementary School, Perris Elementary SD
- Cynthia Salazar, Chaparral High School, Temecula Valley USD
- Gerardo Saldana, Academy of Innovation, Hemet USD
- Mirna Serrato, Saul Martinez Elementary School, Coachella Valley USD
- Jean Siebert, Terra Cotta Middle School, Lake Elsinore USD
- Leslie Snyder, Nellie N. Coffman Middle School, Palm Springs USD
- Marie Stevenson, Rancho Mirage High School, Palm Springs USD
- Keith Still, San Jacinto High School, San Jacinto USD
- Kerri Valenzuela, Arlington High School, Riverside USD
- James Waedekin, New Horizon High School, Banning USD
- Jennifer Withrow, Benjamin Franklin Elementary, Desert Sands USD
- Scott Yakubovsky, Auburndale Intermediate School, Corona-Norco USD

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