

**AUSD Names 2020 Teacher of the Year**  
*Maya Lin School teacher Brian Dodson chosen for*

**June 17, 2020, Alameda, California** — Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) announced today that Brian Dodson, a second and third grade teacher at Maya Lin School, has been selected as the 2020 Teacher of the Year.

Mr. Dodson, who has been a teacher with AUSD for eight years, received his Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Communication Studies from UC Davis and his teaching credential from California State University, East Bay. He completed his student teaching at Maya Lin School and was hired immediately after.

"This is as much a team award as it is an individual one," he says, "because I would not be the teacher I am today without working alongside the incredibly talented and dedicated staff at Maya Lin. I'd like to thank my fellow teachers at Maya Lin for being an ongoing inspiration to me. I would also be remiss if I didn't mention that the culture of collaboration, ingenuity, and joy did not appear at Maya Lin on accident, and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my principal, Judy Goodwin. She truly sees her teachers as artists and allows us time and space to develop as educators."



**Supporting the needs of all students**

Colleagues who submitted recommendation letters for Mr. Dodson cited his professionalism, collaborative spirit, positive attitude, commitment to social-emotional learning, natural leadership, and ability to develop close relationships with Maya Lin's families as reasons why he should be selected as the district's Teacher of the Year.

"Brian is masterful in implementing interventions to support the needs of all students," Principal Goodwin wrote in her recommendation letter. "He quickly identifies what motivates each child and incorporates opportunities for the student to be successful and engaged in instruction. Building strong, caring relationships based on student interests is the magic ingredient to the academic and social emotional educational gains Brian is able to achieve with his students."

Noted Terry Eichel, a K-1 teacher at the school who served as Mr. Dodson's master teacher when he first joined the staff, "Brian has incredible instincts about how to teach material and how to support children, and also the self-confidence and dedication to keep trying when something doesn't work. He is especially talented in helping children feel noticed, accepted, and able to grow from their mistakes. He is involved not only with his own students but with countless other children who need a mentor."

**“No day is ever like the one before”**

Mr. Dodson says his primary passion in teaching is being able to “creatively problem solve and collaborate with my colleagues to make sure I’m meeting the needs of my students. I love the profession because no day is ever like the one before. Every day when I come to school there is a new challenge or a new puzzle to try to solve. The feeling of trying over and over again to find a successful intervention with a student, getting a tip from a colleague that illuminates the mystery, and then finally seeing the look of satisfaction a student has when they have a breakthrough energizes me in a way very little else can.”

In addition to teaching second and third grade (at Maya Lin students stay with the same teacher for two years), Mr. Dodson has taken numerous leadership positions at his school, including: being a member of the Leadership/Alignment and Social Justice Equity committees; serving as the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support lead for the school; and volunteering as the staff representative to the Maya Lin PTA.

“Last summer Brian brought the school and community together by approaching numerous local businesses in the community and found a way to get them involved with Maya Lin's school-wide positive behavior acknowledgement system,” Bonnie Roberts, an AUSD intervention lead, wrote in her recommendation letter. “He formed a partnership with many of the businesses, and they agreed to donate coupons for discounted or free items to give to students as rewards when they are recognized for following the school rules.”

**“You will teach as no one has taught before”**

Mr. Dodson was chosen as Teacher of the Year, of course, in the midst of a global pandemic that caused AUSD – along with schools around the world – to suspend in-class instruction.

The transition to distance learning, he says, made him appreciate the potential for educational technology. “The benefit of face-to-face interaction with students is immeasurable, and I think we all saw how we suffered as a community when we lacked that authentic human connection,” he says. “However, I also learned that we as a profession have a lot of learning to do when it comes to using educational technology in concert with traditional classroom teaching. I believe that much of this technology is as natural as breathing to many of our students, and if we are not leveraging that in our collective practice, we cannot reach all of our students in a way that works best for them.”

Nominees for AUSD Teacher of the Year come from parents, students, staff, and the community. After being invited to submit materials (including a resume and letters of support), a selection committee selects three semi-finalists and observes them in the classroom and then interviews them before making a final decision. The other semi-finalists this year were Amy Frary, a core teacher at Lincoln Middle

School; Kristin Furuichi Fong, a Title 1 intervention teacher at Ruby Bridges Elementary School, and Ana Soria-Kevy, a kindergarten teacher at Edison Elementary School.

“Looking at this group of caring AUSD teachers – all of whom combine rigor, passion, and creativity in their practice with students - gives me so much hope for the future of our students and the teaching profession,” says Superintendent Scuderi. “Research shows that the strongest determinant of a child’s success in school is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. We – and our students - are fortunate to have teacher leaders of this caliber in our district, and I look forward to working with them and learning from them over the coming year.”

Next fall, Mr. Dodson will compete to become Alameda County Teacher of the Year.

When asked what advice he would give to a novice teacher, Dodson said he would counsel teachers to “stretch and explore. Listen to as many teachers as you possibly can and absorb what they are saying like a sponge. But know, that you are an artist, and you will teach like no other has ever taught before you. You will find your own beat, your own brush stroke, and it will change day after day, year after year, as you attempt to find the rhythm with the new group of students that greet you. Stick with it - it won’t get easier, but you’ll get better. And as you get better, you will begin to find joy in the challenges this profession will never stop offering you.”

“I’d like to congratulate Mr. Dodson for winning this honor and thank him for his service to the Maya Lin community of students, families, and staff,” says Board President Mia Bonta. “He is such an exemplar of the creativity, innovate spirit and resilience of our AUSD educators and we are so proud to have Mr. Dodson leading the way in the coming years.”