



school bulletin

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County Honors Local Teachers of the Year

Three outstanding Long Beach Unified School District teachers were recently selected as Teachers of the Year.

Two of the three also earned the Los Angeles County Teacher of the Year honor and advanced for consideration as California Teacher of the Year.

Kenneth Fisher teaches math and engineering at Cabrillo High School, Erin Brady teaches third grade GATE/Excel at Holmes Elementary School, and Tim Schugt teaches second grade at Tincher Preparatory School.

Fisher and Brady earned the L.A. County honor. All three were honored at a recent luncheon hosted by the Los Angeles County Office of Education for top teachers throughout the county.

Kenneth Fisher draws on his own experiences as a troublemaking student to find ways to reach students of all abilities.



Fisher

"When I got to high school, my bad reputation was there long before me. But during my tenth grade year, my P.E. teacher and track coach asked me something no one had asked me before: Who are you, and what do you want? They were questions that took me a few years to answer realistically, and when I did, wow, life became simpler.

"They are questions I now use so often, that kids know when I am going to ask them! But when kids think about who they are and what they want, when situations arise, their decision is simple."

He believes that the answers to those questions can help students achieve greater success well beyond the math classroom.

Fisher also is a firm believer in the power of using data to help students understand what they need to focus on.

"Most students who are not achieving in school typically do not understand what they are supposed to be doing. By giving them data, by showing them strategies on a daily basis, students are more inclined to work and find success, because their path is laid out in front of them."

Fisher sponsors hour-long afterschool sessions three times a week for reteaching difficult concepts. He is also the host of "Fisher's Cafe," a three-hour Wednesday night event that draws up to 200 students who are seeking extra help in a class.

"I try to help all I can, but mostly the students group together and help each other as I serve crackers, cookies, juice and water. My little 'Cafe' has now turned into a school-wide study hall for all to attend."

Erin Brady entered the teaching profession after training as a fine artist and preservationist

in New York, restoring woodwork in turn-of-the-century churches.

"The last jobsite I worked at supported a soup kitchen that fed 900 to 1,200 homeless people daily. As I worked, patrons of the kitchen often talked to me. Their comments frequently focused on the fact that I was doing a job they could be doing. Despite the specialized training I had as an artist and preservationist, I climbed off the scaffolding one day, realizing I agreed with them, and soon applied to a teacher education program. I knew then, and still believe now, that making a difference in the early life of even one child might help keep them off such a line. I knew that I wanted to try."



Brady

Differentiation is at the core of her teaching, to better meet the needs of students who may be at the high or low ability ends of the spectrum.

Brady's approach to teaching was strengthened and confirmed after her son was diagnosed with autism.

"What has become intrinsic for me as part of teaching is what I have learned from parenting a special needs child; all students need rigor, compassion, differentiation for their style of learning, and patience.

"Also intrinsic to my beliefs about teaching, and contrary to the direction education has taken nationally in recent years, is my core

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Cabrillo High Earns National Certification

Cabrillo High School recently earned national certification from the nonprofit Project Lead The Way, a leading provider of science, technology, engineering and math curriculum.

The rigorous curriculum allows students to apply what they are learning in math and science classes to real-life engineering and technology projects. PLTW also prides itself on high-quality professional development for teachers, and active involvement of business, community and university partners.

"Cabrillo High School should be congratulated for demonstrating its commitment to PLTW's quality standards," said PLTW President and CEO Vince Bertram. "The real winners here, however, are Cabrillo's students, who benefit from innovative, project-based curriculum that encourages creativity, problem solving and critical thinking."

The national recognition program distinguishes schools for successfully demonstrating a commitment to PLTW's national standards. Certification as a PLTW school also means that Cabrillo students can apply for college credit or receive college-level recognition at 40 different PLTW affiliate colleges and universities when they successfully complete selected courses in high school.

"We've seen how the PLTW program draws more students to engineering and technology courses and gets them thinking about college and their careers," Cabrillo Principal Elio Mendoza said. "We are extremely proud to be PLTW certified and ecstatic that our students are eligible for college-level recognition, which may include college credit for select PLTW

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CELEBRATION – The Nelson Academy Choir performs at the school's recent grand opening ceremony. Joining the students for the official ribbon-cutting ceremony were school district and Signal Hill city officials. The new middle school opened Sept. 5 and is the first campus built with Measure K school bond funds, which are protected from state budget cuts and must be used solely for construction and renovation.



• Teachers of Year Share Successful Practices

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belief that exposure to creative experiences and the arts is necessary for diverse human beings. I believe that the reason my students thrive and demonstrate high achievement arises from my determination to infuse my classroom with art experiences that align naturally to content areas.”

She believes these offerings are fundamental rather than supplemental.

“Rigor does not always equate to pencil and paper tasks; it can have a foundation in a state of mind, stemming from creativity. I believe that I am a strong teacher of academic core skills, but the hook I use to engage my students is founded in creative challenge or experience in the classroom. I have fun with my students as we learn.”

Tim Schugt, like Brady, became a teacher as a second career. He had earlier worked in human resource management.

“As I entered my late 20s, I developed the feeling that I wanted to do something more meaningful in my life. While I was working in health care at the time, it did not have a direct impact on people’s lives. Though I had never previously considered teaching, I returned to my alma mater to earn a teaching credential.”

In his classroom, his students are expected to work hard and do their best, reflecting Schugt’s philosophy that any job worth doing



Schugt

is worth doing well.

“I have found my younger students are much more receptive to this, but it was also the case when I taught older students. I am often asked, ‘Is this good?’ My response is always the same, ‘If it is the best you can do, then the answer is yes.’ This is often all it takes to motivate a student to correct, refine and revise their work.”

He enjoys the challenge of motivating students who seem apathetic about their studies.

“Every child has the choice to be successful and we need to persevere in our attempts to make that happen.”

His most challenging moment as a teacher came when facing a roomful of disheartened parents at Back to School Night, after taking over a class for a popular teacher who took early maternity leave.

“She was an amazing teacher and their disappointment was obvious. I acknowledged it and shared that if I were sitting in their places I would feel the same way. They were surprised by my candor, and I promised to do all I could to make it a successful year. I lived up to my promise and succeeded in winning them over.”

Watching so many of his students continue to achieve and excel long after they leave his classroom gives him invaluable perspective.

“I have had students return as student teachers, to ask for career advice, request a letter of recommendation, or to let me know they’re leaving for military service. To know that I am remembered many years after I’ve taught a child is a great reward, and to have them seek me out is an honor. To be remembered by so many of my own former students is perhaps my greatest accomplishment.”



PLANT DAY – Signal Hill Elementary School fourth grader Chenna Parady participates in a recent “plant day” for the school’s American Heart Association Teaching Garden. The Heart Association helps to plant the gardens in elementary schools throughout the country. Signal Hill students built seven raised planters, filled them with soil and planted seedlings. The children will harvest produce and learn the value of good eating habits.

Wilson Teacher Wins State Science Honor

Wilson Classical High School science teacher Josiah Jones earned an award from the California Science Teachers Association for his recently completed student teaching at the school.

Jones won the 2012 Future Science Teacher Award from the association, which represents science educators statewide from kindergarten through the university level.

“In my 25 years of teaching, Josiah is one of the most outstanding if not the most outstanding student teachers I’ve had the pleasure to work with. His energy and enthusiasm are quite impressive,” said Wilson master teacher Steve Willie. “He constantly threw himself wholeheartedly into his assignment and tirelessly went above and beyond the call of duty to attend extracurricular activities



Jones

to the delight of his students. His rapport with students and vast knowledge of the subject matter ensure me that he will be a tremendous asset to the teaching profession.”

In fact, Jones is already an asset at Wilson, where he is hired in August to teach Advanced Placement environmental science and Earth science.

Jones earned two bachelor’s degrees – one in environmental studies, and another in physical geography – from UC Santa Barbara. During his student teaching at Wilson, he taught environmental science and oceanography.

The recent award comes with a \$1,000 prize provided by Sea World San Diego.

Learn more at classroomscience.org.

ShakeOut Drill

The fourth annual Great ShakeOut earthquake drill is scheduled for 10:18 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 18. For more information, go to shakeout.org and view the Recommended Earthquake Safety Actions (in the Resources section).

SCHOOL BULLETIN

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Names in the News

More than a year ago, Millikan High School student and Boy Scout **Andrew Lane** approached the Buffum Total Learning Center about his upcoming Eagle Scout project. He asked the staff what they needed, and they all agreed that puppet theaters for preschoolers would be a great way to teach language. To purchase similar puppet theaters from a school supply store would have been very expensive. A year later, every classroom has a puppet theater. Andrew surprised the Buffum teaching staff last month by personally delivering the puppet theaters. He had constructed and painted each one, even sewing the curtains himself. He received donations from various organizations and individuals for the project.

• Cabrillo Certification

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courses, scholarships and admissions preference.”

As part of the recognition process, Mendoza and a team of teachers, staff, students and members of the community submitted a self-assessment of the school’s implementation of PLTW’s Pathway To Engineering program. A site visit by a PLTW-trained team followed.

More than 4,200 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia now offer PLTW courses to their students.

Learn more at pltw.org.