



OUSD Employee Recognition Ceremony

May 17, 2023

**An evening dedicated to
celebrating outstanding staff**

HOSTED BY THE TALENT DIVISION

HONORING OUR OWN 2023

OUSD Employee Recognition Ceremony

SMALL PLATES RECEPTION: 4:30 pm



ENTERTAINMENT

Oakland Technical High School Cheerleading Squad

AWARDS CEREMONY: 5:00 pm

WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Tara Gard, Chief Talent Officer



OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Superintendent of Schools



PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

- | | |
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| + Classified School Employees of the Year | + Excellence In Student Leadership Award |
| + Classified Excellence Award | + Parent, Family, Community Leadership Award |
| + Teachers of the Year 2023-2024 | + Students' Choice Staff Leader Award |
| + Teaching Excellence | + i am OUSD Excellence Award |
| + Excellence in Substitute Service | + Superintendent's Excellence Awards |
| + Educational Leadership Award | |
| + District Leadership Award | |



Greetings and Congratulations to Our Award Winners!

Good evening and thank you for joining us as we celebrate the outstanding work done by our colleagues, year in and year out. Honoring Our Own is always one of my favorite events because we get to focus entirely on our most important resource, our people. Throughout

the past year, the staff members we are celebrating have shown exemplary dedication to ensuring that students across Oakland Unified School District receive an excellent education and that their fellow employees have all that they need. Each award recipient you will meet tonight represents all of our staff in a remarkable way. Their work is deeply rooted in our shared values and the belief that every child in Oakland deserves to be well-prepared for college, career and community success.

I want to say thank you to all of our employees for the dedication and passion they bring to work every day across the District. The academic and social/emotional support at our schools remains steadfast thanks to the educators, leaders and support staff who ensure not only a safe and nurturing environment, but provide students with the right blend of resources each one needs to excel. The seen and unseen stories of love and care are what continue to keep our community thriving. I know we are a stronger District with greater resolve to improve the educational outcomes of all students in Oakland. As a former OUSD Teacher and Principal and parent, I see what you do every day to support our young people, and I deeply appreciate it. My plan is to support you in every way I can, and to attract and retain more of the best people to help us on this critical mission.

Our honorees tonight enrich our school communities in exceptional ways with their expertise, attention to detail, and commitment to our District's core values, especially putting Students First. We all know that this work is not easy, but it is entirely worth it. And I thank each of our honorees for doing all that they do with love, grace, and joy. You show all of us how to overcome obstacles, how to succeed, and how to lead.

This is the 16th Annual Honoring Our Own, and each year I am humbled by the remarkable stories of our staff. I am excited to learn more about our honorees who were chosen by their peers, the people who see their value every day. That is perhaps the best thing about these awards: they come from the people who know the honorees' dedication and hard work as well as anyone. It is high praise to be honored by one's colleagues and students. I applaud all of you for being recognized.

Together, let's congratulate our honorees and thank them for everything they do in support of the young people of Oakland.

Respectfully,

Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell
Superintendent
Oakland Unified School District

2023 AWARDEES



CLASSIFIED SCHOOL EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

This award category recognizes exemplary classified school employees who symbolize the profession's contributions and commitment to quality education. OUSD's Classified School Employees of the Year are selected through careful consideration based on rigorous standards from the State of California. They take into consideration nominees' work performance, school community involvement, leadership and commitment, and are considered at the county and state levels for further recognition.



Sandra Burton

Attendance Specialist, Emerson Elementary

"Ms. Sandra is considered the heartbeat of the school. Her gentle leadership is what makes people gather around her; they just want to be near her because she naturally makes people feel better. Her caring welcome makes everyone feel familial. She has forged such trusted relationships among her colleagues that when called upon to support with translation, there is no hesitation. Ms. Sandra's way of including, inviting, and affirming creates collegiality among all the Emerson staff. She single-handedly fortifies community-building whether in the classroom or in the community."



Belinda Campbell

Senior Computer Operator, Technology Services

"Belinda is known for her desire to learn new things; whenever there's something new on the horizon that has never been done before, she jumps in with enthusiasm, figures it out, ensures it works well and has a process behind it. If there's a problem, she is going to find a way to fix it. Folks will never hear something didn't get done if it's in her power, and if not, she'll find the needed person or component to ensure staff is not left without the tools they need to function."



Jason Dixon

Custodian, Oakland Tech High

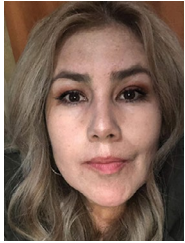
"In addition to his primary custodial duties, on any given school day, you can find Mr. Jason skillfully filling the roles of Culture Keeper, Counselor, Student Support Specialist, and Campus Security. Indispensable: he should be getting at least three salaries based on the responsibility he holds across the school community. Jason maintains supportive relationships with several students and regularly checks in on their academic performance and home lives. He is often found having deep conversations with troubled students, and teachers frequently seek his advice. He is an important social-emotional support on our campus."



Martha Flores

Noon Supervisor, Lockwood STEAM Academy

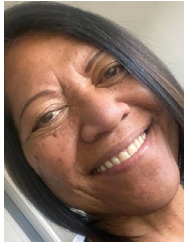
"Although Martha was hired as a Noon Supervisor, she has always really wanted to help in the classroom. When Restorative Justice circles with parents were provided, Martha helped train parents, as well as leading other preparation sessions. When math curriculum changed, she was able to tell parents what it looked like in the classroom. An expo was held so they could see what their children were learning, and Martha helped organize it. She went on walkthroughs and provided Spanish translation services. She is an integral member of the administrative and educational team!"



Cecilia Franco

Food Service Assistant III, REACH Academy

"Ms. Franco continually advocates for equitable academic and social-emotional outcomes for students who have been historically underserved by schools and society by modeling a strong commitment to achieving 'educational equity.' This is achieved by her strong commitment, exceptional leadership, and vision to tackle food insecurity (as well as "food deserts") head-on in deep East Oakland. She is laser focused on changing the narrative and breaking the cycle of poverty and poor performance that disproportionately impact students of color by ensuring all students receive high-quality, nutritious meals, improving learning and health outcomes."



Venus Mesui

Case Manager, LIFE Academy

"Whenever a LIFE alum walks into the building, the first question is always "where is Mama Venus?" She has literally held the community in her arms for over twenty years, and all the joy, trauma, and struggle that comes with it. She is the first face you see and the first person who greets you, and her warmth makes LIFE feel like home. She is elder, teacher, storyteller, the culture keeper of our community. Mama Venus shows up every day with a genuine smile, a warm hug, and a huge heart; she's an essential part of LIFE Academy's soul."



Mladie Thomas-Alexander

ParaEducator, Piedmont Avenue Elementary

"Mrs. Thomas is an amazing lead of our school's Paraeducators. Her students are daily met with engaging and effective lessons, and the learning extends beyond their time with her. She goes far beyond taking care of her own special education class, she also supports with the training of new staff and handles additional duties by assisting the school nurse in caring for students. She has been a guiding force leading to exceptional performance in our Paraeducators; she holds everyone to a high standard both by her own modeling and her leadership."



CLASSIFIED EXCELLENCE AWARD

This award category recognizes exemplary classified school employees who symbolize the profession's contributions and commitment to quality education. These employees are essential to maintaining strong service to schools while making a huge difference in the lives of the students of OUSD.



Maria Hernandez

Noon Supervisor, Lockwood STEAM Academy

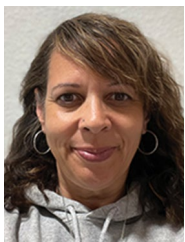
"Maria is one of the most selfless women I've ever met, and she always puts kids and families before herself. She has taken the initiative to be trained in Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS), plus she leads family engagement events. She has been and continues to be an immense asset on our team. Maria invaluablely provides translation support as needed to support communication between members of the community and school staff."



Peter Karoutas

Lead Electrician, Buildings & Grounds

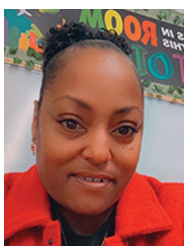
"Peter will never turn his back on a colleague; when a fellow employee needs assistance, rather than delegate, he will likely come out personally to assist in the field and get his hands dirty in any way he can. He is skilled in multitasking and delegating essential electrical repairs districtwide. On several occasions during the pandemic years, Peter was the only employee present to take on the daily electrical emergencies."



Michell McKnight

Office Manager, Dewey Academy

"There is not a student on Dewey's campus she has not helped—from bus tickets, to referrals, to housing. She does anything and everything to support students. Any time staff members need anything, they are directed to Michell; she is the go-to person and students feel safe to ask her for help due to her warmth and caring. She continually goes out of her way to ensure all have what they need to be successful. Staff members sing her praises!"



Jeanette Parish

Noon Supervisor, Allendale Elementary

"An amazing support to both students and staff, Ms. J takes care of ALL students from the heart. She knows pretty much every student by name. We often hear her checking in with students, especially those who need extra support. She supports staff and our school in general in so many ways, willing to take on any task that is given. And always with a smile!"



Banipal Saatloo

Lead Steamfitter, Buildings & Grounds

"Bani took the lead, providing upgraded filters to mitigate the pandemic's effects. Responsible for coordinating and responding to all HVAC emergencies districtwide, he has demonstrated exceptional problem-solving skills and ability to handle even the most difficult situations gracefully and professionally. Bani has always been willing to lend a helping hand to his co-workers and maintains a positive attitude that inspires us all."



Connie Terrell

Elementary School Secretary, Piedmont Avenue Elementary

"Mrs. Terrell is a leader in our school and the District. When other clerical members need questions answered, they can count on her to assist. Whenever I am out, I rely on her to speak on my behalf, trusting her judgement, knowledge, and leadership. Mrs. Terrell ensures everyone feels welcome, supported, and that their needs are met. She builds relationships with staff, parents family members and students, always showing concern and care."



TEACHERS OF THE YEAR 2023-2024

OUSD Teachers of the Year are selected through a rigorous process that includes classroom observations, feedback regarding their teaching practice, and self-reflection on their teaching philosophy and pedagogical practice. OUSD Teachers of the Year are considered at the county and state levels for further recognition, and we are proud to celebrate these Teachers for their accomplishments and contributions to Oakland's youth.



Sean Gleason

9th-12th Grade English Teacher, Rudsdale Continuation High

"Sean is a true team player, and leader. He fosters positive and productive discussions with colleagues, motivating and challenging us to be our best selves for our students. Not only does he plan and support Student of the Marking Period (STOMP) recognition assemblies, but he encourages participation and models ways to positively interact with our students in a fun, safe, non-classroom environment. Sean has exposed students to writing and recording their own perspectives, modeled after the KQED Perspectives series. Many students, during a short 6-week marking period in Sean's class, have found their voice to express their hardships and successes as teens growing up in Oakland."



Niesha Johnson

3rd Grade Inclusion Teacher, Chabot Elementary

"I have never seen a student Niesha couldn't reach. She prioritizes getting to know each child and uncovering their strengths. She builds on their strengths to scaffold every child to meet grade level expectations. Her data consistently shows significant growth across all subgroups. Knowing that the work she does with her students is long lasting, I get the annual pleasure of determining which students are most in need of 'a little Ms. Johnson magic.' Not only does Niesha explicitly teach her students the importance of academic risks she facilitates them becoming each other's biggest supporters. Her class is a model of community, joy, and inclusion."



TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Teaching Excellence Awards recognize the combination of a Teacher's skill and passion, dedication, and self-reflection of practice that make for a rich and engaging learning environment for Students.



Thirkell Debellotte

Physical Education Teacher, Skyline High

"Thirkell Debellotte lovingly called Coach D goes far and beyond his title. The OUSD value of Equity shows up because he understands how to adjust his lesson for different skilled students. I know for some of our LGBTQ+ students, PE can be a place of anxiousness and uneasiness. I've seen Coach D calm their fears by giving them access to a private dressing room, or how he connects to the hearts and spirits of our SpEd students. He asks students about their guardians and siblings he has taught in previous years. Students say he makes physical education fun. Students who had no interest in PE, Coach D changed that!"



Cory Henrickson

9th-12th Grade Science Teacher,
Rudsdale Continuation High

"Cory's commitment was really highlighted this year when she volunteered to change from an English teacher to a Science/Health teacher. We hadn't been able to find a science teacher who spoke Spanish and could work with recent immigrant students. She spent her summer creating all new curriculum in a subject she had no experience with, got a practicing Physician to coach her, and goes to every Science PD and training that is available. The students LOVE the class! She completely sacrificed her subject, her training, and her time for our school and our students. There was nothing in it for her and that is a perfect example of her deep generosity."



Jessie Papalia

Elementary Newcomer Teacher Leader, Bridges Academy

"Jessie's commitment to newcomer students and families is astonishing; her love, grace, and patience naturally connects her with students. She builds relationships socially and academically, to respond to student needs. Exceptionally involved in her school community, Jessie creates authentic spaces to honor and build on students' home cultures, languages, and assets. She is data-driven and adaptive, not only focusing on students' instructional supports and language growth and proficiency but also seeing them as whole children. She is deeply appreciated for her commitment and caring."



Sonia Thacher

Special Education TK-2nd Teacher,
Manzanita SEED Elementary

"As co-teacher, Sonia was always reliable and resourceful. Her teamwork, motivation, and dedication made my job much easier as she guided students with negative behavioral needs with dignity and respect by following SEL protocols while celebrating student success. She also worked with other teachers to make sure all students were successful by meeting after school to discuss strategic paths. She was always willing to work late; she was never too busy to discuss student needs. No child was left behind under her watchful eye. Our students improved more under her guidance than with any other teacher with whom I've worked."



Natalie Tran

TK-Kindergarten Teacher, Montclair Elementary

"Natalie frequently incorporates sign language into her instruction which is beneficial when instructing students with complex communication needs. She uses person-centered, innovative planning to support their social, emotional, and academic needs. Throughout instructional sessions, Natalie provides clear and consistent expectations and feedback. She is willing to do what needs to be done on campus. I have seen her deliver breakfast bags to classrooms on rainy days, help parent and community volunteers create a staff photo board, create fundraisers for community members in need, run phonics intervention groups for other teachers, and teach music and movement to all kindergarten students, not only her own."



EXCELLENCE IN SUBSTITUTE SERVICE

The ability and willingness of our Substitutes to walk into a new situation, ready to perform at their best can spell the difference between Student growth and progress and falling behind, as well as the effectiveness of schools and central office departments. Our substitute award is reserved for the exemplary individual who models dependability and flexibility, and who consistently performs at and above expectations.



Bree Lancaster

STIP Substitute Teacher, Thornhill Elementary

"Ms. Lancaster is a long-time active member of the Thornhill community. A former Parent and PTA president, she has a way of really helping children, especially during tough times. She supports all their emotions and is very present and approachable. Her positive energy is contagious and brings children joy. Known as a phenomenal team player who goes above and beyond for the Thornhill community, Bree is amazing with parents and kids; she just really cares. Her nominating student says, "Ms. Lancaster makes even the most sad person turn to joy.""



EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

School leadership is difficult work, and those who excel at this work seamlessly and simultaneously support the success and growth of Teachers, Students, Colleagues, Schools and the District overall. Awardees in this category are models of the values, skills, development, and practice of Oakland school leadership, and spans roles and departments across the District.



Caroline Jones

CDC Site Administrator, Early Childhood Education

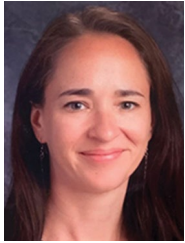
"Caroline is a dedicated principal in the field of early learning, firmly believing that all children, regardless of background or ability, have the right to a high-quality education that meets their individual needs. Her approach is grounded in a conviction that diversity enhances the learning experience for all students, fostering empathy, understanding, and respect among the children in her care. Caroline ensures her school is a welcoming and accepting place for all students. Her proactive collaboration with preschool teaching teams fosters a holistic learning environment for us all."



Maria McCormick

Principal, Hillcrest Elementary

"Maria is an equity-driven leader who views all her actions through a solid instructional lens. One of her best qualities—so needed during uncertain times—is her calm under pressure. She keeps students at the forefront of everything she does, and she is diligent about ensuring students and families receive all the support they need. She leads with grace, is highly collaborative, and always willing to encourage teachers, staff and fellow colleagues. Maria makes certain that the school culture ensures students are motivated to learn."



Tierre Mesa

Principal, Urban Promise Academy

"Tierre is very strong in operational leadership. Urban Promise Academy rarely has fires or crises that require help from those outside the school. She has also sustained an excellent family engagement team and COST team in service of student socio-emotional needs. Tierre partnered with a coaching organization to help take our instructional game to a new level. The middle school network modeled our network approach to learning walks largely on what we learned from UPA's partnership. Now, the network's schools all use this learning walk framework to improve instruction."



Pamela Moy

Director, Comprehensive Community High Schools, Oakland High

"Ms. Moy fosters positive relationships with all staff and Oakland High stakeholders. She deeply understands and responds to a wide range of student needs in service of student wellbeing. Under her leadership, Oakland High has become a high-demand school that provides students with the academic and extracurricular resources they need to thrive. She has developed leaders and established a robust model of distributed leadership. Oakland High is a well-oiled machine, and that is due to the direction and trust she has placed in her team."



Mukta Sambrani

Principal, Lincoln Elementary

"Ms. Sambrani wholeheartedly believes in the abilities of all students, holding high expectations for everyone including herself. Under her stewardship, Lincoln upholds its tradition of celebrating the rich home cultures of all students and families. She embodies the value of joy in learning, and on any given day you might find her dressed as a butterfly, playing games with students on the yard, or cheering on a student at the District Spelling Bee. OUSD is fortunate to have such a stalwart and engaging leader!"



Nikki Williams

Principal, Oakland Academy of Knowledge

"Nikki has done a masterful job merging Howard Elementary and Roses in Concrete to create OAK, fusing the best of both together, creating highly innovative Ethnic Studies, Arts, and whole child-focused programs. She oversaw campus beautification in partnership with the Warriors. Nikki is a passionate and informed advocate for Special Education, ensuring students with diverse needs are front and center and integrated into the life of the school. She is respected and appreciated by her peers for her systems thinking and consistent focus on improvement."



DISTRICT LEADERSHIP AWARD

District leaders are individuals who step up and step in to play a critical role in support of OUSD's mission and vision. They are high performers who have a strong record of quality service and professionalism. They have brought system and process improvements to their work that visibly improve how we support Students, Teachers, Families, Schools and fellow employees.



Sarah Glasband

Director, Talent Development, Recruitment & Retention

"Sarah models compassionate and powerful leadership amid massive inequities. A collaborative leader, she stands for diversity and justice, ensuring our hiring represents the students of Oakland. She leads our team with love, humanity, and humility, and supports us bringing our whole selves to work, providing space for us to grow! An example of wisdom, leadership, and foresight, she brings out the best in our team. Down for the Town, she is always a text away, no matter what is on her workload!"



Ryan Nguyen
Controller

"Ryan is passionate about the quality of his work as well as the work of his team. He possesses strong analytical and technical skills and can solve complex problems being presented and helps clarify solutions in ways others understand. He has worked hard to develop technical expertise and is disciplined to achieve results with so many competing deadlines. He supports and encourages staff through the vigorous budget and fiscal cycles and all the deadlines that accompany them. It does not matter who comes to him for help. He will step in and assist with compassion and precision."



Kechette Walls
Business Manager, Custodial Services

"Kechette has devoted 16 years to OUSD managing the business side of Custodial Services, working tirelessly to ensure that the department runs smoothly. She assists in managing air-purifier tracking throughout the District, which includes a staggering 2,800 units custodians have serviced. She has an innate ability to collaborate proficiently with various District departments. Kechette is the go-to for 200-plus custodians and substitutes in Custodial. Many say that they simply trust her!"



Marc White
Director, Buildings & Grounds

"Employed with OUSD for over 25 years, Marc manages all skilled-trade positions, which include carpenters, plumbers, electricians, steamfitters, glazers and more. Marc has a knack for problem solving issues at school sites and helping Principals create spaces not designed as classrooms into educational learning areas. During the height of the pandemic, Marc supported schools by building outdoor learning spaces at most schools and installing I-Q Air units in multiple classrooms."



EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARD

This award is reserved for OUSD students who are members of Student Leadership in their school and/or at the district level. Student Leadership awardees lead other students toward success, a sense of community, belonging, and strong school culture and take on leadership roles in their classrooms and school environments.



Linh Le
Student Board Director

"Linh exhibits both honesty and integrity in her community and schoolwork. Linh has the heart of a leader, but the wisdom to step back, listen to her peers, and uplift the voices of students throughout our district. Linh has grown within her leadership skills to develop the next generation of leaders."



Natalie Gallegos Chavez
Student Board Director

"Natalie has served on the school board for two years, continuously challenging District leadership and the board to provide spaces for students to directly voice their opinions and experiences. Natalie engages her peers across our district to ensure their voices are heard across decision-making spaces, working with students and sites straightforwardly."



Vida Mendoza
President, All City Council

"Vida is, at her core, a builder. She listens, gathers information, learns, and then acts. Given her extensive experience in leadership positions both at LIFE and on All City Council, Vida understands the importance of collaboration and clear communication; then she has a detailed orientation to the work that serves to ensure follow through."



PARENT, FAMILY, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD

This award is reserved for OUSD Community Members, Family Members and/or Parents who have been instrumental in creating the conditions for students to thrive in OUSD schools, and who have been instrumental in shaping District goals and culture and/or school culture and climate. They uphold OUSD values in service of students and families.



Shelley González

School Site Council Chair & Parent and Student Advisory Committee Representative

"Ms. Shelley González is a mother of six, two current OUSD students. A model of proud and outspoken parent leadership in schools and districtwide, her drive and conviction have inspired all the parent members of the Parent and Student Advisory Committee to take center stage as elected representatives for parents and caregivers in OUSD. Shelley is often heard declaring, "PSAC Neva Sleeps!" And this is true of PSAC in part because she neva sleeps! Shelley brings out the best in the membership; she rolls up her sleeves to ensure resources flow quickly to students and families."



Alan Pursell

Community Advisory Committee for Special Education & Student Advisory Committee Representative

"'Privilege: when you think something isn't a problem because it doesn't affect you directly' are words that initially drove Alan Pursell to leadership in the Community Advisory Committee for Special Education. When he realized the disproportionate suspension rates for Black students with disabilities in OUSD, he joined CAC despite already serving as School Site Council Chair and a member of the PSAC. A proud parent of an Edna Brewer student with autism, Alan works tirelessly to create the conditions for collective leadership. Currently, he is moving the OUSD community to face ableism head-on to truly protect and embrace disabled students."



STUDENTS' CHOICE STAFF LEADER AWARD

Students from the OUSD community select a staff ally who has been instrumental in creating the conditions for students to be meaningfully engaged in learning, shaping school culture and climate. These adults demonstrate partnership in decisions that affect students for positive change and value the unique and diverse experiences of students in their school community with love, care, compassion, and respect.



Liam Barney

English & Ethnic Studies Teacher, Oakland Tech High

"A 2013 Tech graduate himself, Mr. Barney knew he wanted to be a teacher upon entering college. He joined the Oakland Tech teaching community after graduating from college in 2018 and has been a valued member of the 9th grade English and Ethnic Studies team. He has a gentle disposition and is willing to support students inside and outside of the classroom as needed. His nominating student notes that he demonstrates Equity and Joy and says, 'He treats everyone with kindness and is a very friendly and open person.'"



Felipe Bobino Jr.

Case Manager, Skyline High School

"Coach B, as Felipe Bobino is lovingly called, provides comprehensive program support of needed services for students to resolve their conflicts, build self-esteem, set goals, and achieve academically. He supports students' problem solving in areas that would hold them back from succeeding. His love, commitment, and work each day is seen and appreciated by all. His nominating student said, "'He makes sure students go to class; he also checks in with students to see how they are doing and to see if they need any help.'"



Ana Laura Castro Valdivia

College and Career Readiness Specialist,
Oakland High School

"Expert at supporting student readiness for college or their desired career, Ana Laura is known for her high joy factor. She encourages students to think critically and develop the needed self-motivation to meet their goals. Her nominating student says, 'Ms. Ana Laura is very approachable. Her smile and laugh make her very fun to talk to. When we ask her questions about anything regarding college, she tells us her experiences and how important it is to network. Often, when you enter our school's future center, she is surrounded by students because of how approachable and accommodating she is. She also brings joy to everyone and constantly make her students laugh.'"



Chad Chiparo

7th Grade Dean, Claremont Middle School

"Chad provides exemplary social-emotional support for students. His positive attitude and willingness to help with whatever is needed exemplifies the Claremont motto of being Compassionate, Mindful, and Safe. He supports 7th grade programming and augments the culture that enables students to flourish. His nominating student said, 'Mr. Chiparo is the person that says hi to everyone, students, and adults. He makes sure everyone has a great day, and always makes people feel special! Mr. Chiparo is the best example of a role model!'"



Glendy Cordero

Program Manager, Community Schools,
Urban Promise Academy

Glendy joined the UPA community first as a parent and has been Family Resource Center Director and Community School Manager for 17 years. She builds strong relationships with students and shows deep care and dedication to their support. She welcomes students to the school, answers their questions, and connects them to resources. She knows our students, their siblings, their families, their cousins, their aunties, and more due to her long-term commitment to our school and the Fruitvale community. Glendy is truly the heart of our school!"



Tiffany Couch

Culture & Climate Ambassador, Madison Park Upper

"An essential component of the community and highly dependable, Officer Couch creates a safe, positive environment for staff, families, and students. She shows up daily with a great attitude, and everyone knows and trusts her. She supports a positive and inviting climate and culture on campus and is one of the trusted adults students know they can turn to in all situations. Her nominating student says, 'When I need to talk, she always listens and gives me the best advice, and when I need help, she's there.'"



David Doubley

Restorative Justice Facilitator, Claremont Middle School

"A former student, PE Teacher, Coach, Athletic Director, and current Restorative Justice Facilitator at Claremont Middle School, David followed in the footsteps of his parents, who were educators and coaches as well. Coach Doubley is the go-to person, not only for students but for adults as well. Nominating students said, 'Coach D lifts up all the kids every day,' and, 'he helped me feel better when times were tough, so I know I can always count on him.'"



Casey Fern

Drama/Stagecraft Teacher & Auditorium Manager,
Oakland Tech High

"Casey is the backbone of our Drama Program; his years of experience provide programmatic structure, AND he builds production sets with his students. He oversees the Tech Techies Afterschool program, and these students provide all the technical support for productions at school during the day and after school as needed. His nominating student says, 'I come to school on Mondays to go to his after-school program and he makes every day better. He even stays away from his family 'til 10 during Tech Week to help with student productions.'"



David Gibson

Restorative Justice Facilitator, Edna Brewer Middle

"There aren't enough words to describe what an incredible person Mr. Gibson is. Our community wouldn't be Panther Proud without his reflective, positive presence. His ability to implement restorative justice practices in our school are second to none. 'Mr. Gibson provides leadership on the significance of a positive and restorative school climate to the benefit of all students and families. His nominating student says, He is always willing to allow us to use his room, is always pushing us to express our creativity, and find ourselves along the way.' "



Katie Harvey

6th Grade English Teacher, Edna Brewer Middle School

"Ms. Harvey is a new teacher to Edna Brewer, but you would never know it by the way she has easily acclimated to the Brewer community. Her students have a deep sense of wellbeing in her class. Her nominating student says, 'Ms. Harvey makes everyone feel comfortable. She is open to helping students learn more about what they're interested in, even if it doesn't specifically have to do with the lesson plan. Always committed to teaching good lessons, she is someone I know I can be comfortable around. She is kind and fun, and I love her class!'"



Sean Iannello

7th Grade Math Teacher, Edna Brewer Middle School

"Mr. Iannello always makes learners feel accomplished about succeeding in math, but, especially important, about themselves as people. He helps his students access the skills they need to utilize math in their everyday lives. He has created a classroom culture that attracts students. His welcoming nature is evidenced by the fact that his classroom at lunch always has student presence. His nominating student says, 'He is always making the students feel good, and is not being condescending, ever. He is very helpful and makes us laugh.'"



Tate Jawdat

Social Science/History Teacher, Montera Middle School

"Tate Jawdat, who is known as Mx. J to their students, Social Science/History Teacher identifies as a nonbinary educator, provides ample opportunities for affirmation for their students. Mx. J's nominating students wrote, "They make sure that every student is doing okay mentally, and in their class, there is no homophobia, transphobia, or oppression of any kind from students and teachers. Their classroom is a safe space where everyone feels welcome. They run our QSA (Queer/Straight Alliance), leadership class, and teach Critical Race Theory in history. They are completely responsive to student needs. They are the best staff member by far at my school."



Nida Khalil

Program Manager, Community Schools,
Bret Harte Middle School

"Ms. Khalil has a passion for our school and the surrounding community. Her work typifies the best examples of collaborative partnerships that Ms. Khalil has initiated and fostered; our school has been able to provide regular services and resources to students, families, and the surrounding neighborhood community. She deftly supports youth leadership, parent engagement, and family support. Her skillful perceptiveness has made her indispensable. Her nominating student says: She is always putting the students before her and is always equal."



Virdell Larkins III

Instructional Support Specialist,
Oakland Academy of Knowledge

"Virdell Larkins, or Mr. V as he is known, unquestionably works well in his assigned classroom, but his greatest talent comes down to kindness and thoughtfulness. Mr. V can be counted on to provide positive reinforcement as well. His nominator says, 'Mr. V always has a smile on his face and encourages the students. He is very patient and understanding with the students and supports them and their families. He is creative and adapts to each child's respective needs. He never makes a distinction between the children and treats them all like his favorite. He is caring. That makes a big difference.'"



Ian Patton

Counselor, Melrose Leadership Academy

"Earlier this year, Mr. Ian received an anonymous communication from a student who expressed thinking about harming himself. Mr. Ian went into EVERY middle school classroom to remind students that adults are on campus to support them, they are all important, and adults take their safety seriously. Mr. Ian's deep commitment led him to offer an immediate school-wide intervention. As a result, students who were in distress that day came forward for support and a safety plan. This is the kind of leadership and care that not only saves lives but also reminds students they matter and adults around them see them. His nominating student says, 'He inspires people to be themselves, and helps to support students in need.'"



Jennifer Riback

6th Grade Math & Science, Montera Middle School

"As a 6th grade Math and Science teacher, Jennifer Riback is especially aware of the life changes happening to her students and how challenging it is to deliver the content in ways students will respond to. As a result, she seems to be ready for any situation; her teaching style is active and engaging. She is flexible and adaptable to the teaching moments that present themselves. Her nominating student says, 'Ms. Riback embodies Equity because she tries to give students what they need. She embodies Joy because she makes the classroom a fun learning environment.'"



Jeremy Sutton

English 3 Teacher, Oakland Tech High

"Mr. Sutton is always ready to put in the work for student accomplishment. He encourages us to reach for new heights and gives true honesty with respect to those who are failing. Mr. Sutton has many students come through his class and his goal is to have students achieve their needed results. He prepares us for college level writing and expectations and for the college application season. Mr. Sutton provides as many opportunities as he possibly can with all the connections he has."



Susan Deniz Thacher

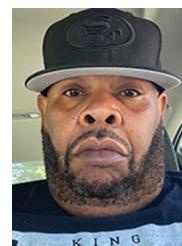
7th Grade Math Teacher, Claremont Middle School

"A special teacher and person at Claremont, Deniz Thacher is loved by everyone she meets. She takes extra time with students to ensure they learn the subject matter. In addition to her skills in the classroom, she shows up for Claremont students by attending outside sporting events. She has built great relationships with Claremont community, and she is invaluable! Her nominating student said, 'She takes time so that we can learn even though sometimes she doesn't get paid.'"



i am OUSD EXCELLENCE AWARD

The person receiving this award embodies and exemplifies the core values of the Oakland Unified School District. They reflect the values of Equity, Students' First, Excellence, Cultural Responsiveness, Integrity, and Joy in their commitment to the students, families, educators, and communities in Oakland Unified.



Carnial Booker

Special Education Teacher, Claremont Middle School

"Carnial Booker's story in OUSD is one that inspires us all to be better. Having come from a role as Lead Truck Driver, making Teamster wages, to an Instructional Support Specialist, and now in his third year as a Special Education Teacher, he shows how remarkable his unwavering dedication is to his profession, family, and his community. Through his tireless work in Special Education, he has reminded us of the importance of kindness, compassion, and selflessness; and he has shown us that anything is possible with the right attitude, mindset, and support."



Rosemary Whisenton

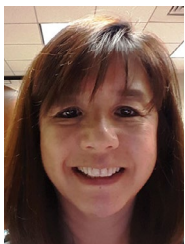
Culture & Climate Ambassador, Oakland Tech High School

"I met Rose as a freshman in high school. I became one of the many children that she has cared for. Rose is one of the most caring, thoughtful, and empathic people. She's the woman of a million jobs on campus and you never really have been at Tech if you don't know Rosemary. Oakland Tech really is Rosemary High! She continues to mentor young educators like myself, pushing us to be better, while at the same time giving us the confidence to dream big."



SUPERINTENDENT'S EXCELLENCE AWARDS

As Superintendent, Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell selects her recognition awards based on individuals who exemplify the best in what we seek from our employees—that is, individuals willing to take risks, innovate and collaborate with fellow employees to further the District's mission.



Robin Sasada

Senior Executive Assistant, Superintendent

"Robin is my right hand, and I simply could not thrive in my role without her. She is a strategic thinker who is incredibly knowledgeable about the OUSD system and gracefully manages my schedule; ensuring I sustainably attend to the priorities of the District. Robin is an authentic listener who consistently goes above and beyond to help employees, families, and community members navigate our school system and find the information they need to resolve issues of uncertainty or concern. Anyone who works with her can attest to benefiting from her wit and great sense of humor, in addition to the deep care she contributes to coaching and mentoring new administrative and executive assistants. Robin is always a step ahead of me and politely reminds me that I am not Superwoman. I absolutely won the lottery having Robin Sasada as my Executive Assistant."



Shelia White

Coordinator, PreK-12 Systems & Operations & LCFF, Operations Leadership Team

"Shelia is a longtime and dedicated OUSD educator who epitomizes daily what it means to work in service of schools. Her exemplary project management leadership has resulted in the District consistently passing attendance audits and most recently increasing our Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) percentage resulting in significantly increased revenue for our schools. Shelia is a responsive problem solver who leads with a smile on her face. She recently diagnosed a need to create a structure of professional learning for Attendance Front Office staff and cultivated a space for their continued development. As Superintendent, I have had the pleasure of partnering with Shelia for over a decade and I can say with sincere confidence that she embodies the core values of OUSD in her longtime leadership in the District."

ENTERTAINMENT

Oakland Tech Cheerleaders

Ajanae' Castle

Asha Bryant

Asha Glenn

Califia Andrews

Chesoni Blake

Christiana Masters

Claire Beattie

Devynn West-Woodhouse

Emily Machado

Eslie Cheeks

Gianni Townsend

Jada Tryal

Jaiya Hall

Janiyah Johnson

Jordan Brown

Keiarra Willis

Lailah Taylor

Lauren McDaniels

Mehki Ashworth

Miya Ikeda

Nyla Hunter

Paris Robertson

Sanai Avery

Sarai Johnson

Shaniya Brown

Taliyah Williams

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SPECIAL THANKS

City Bloom

Hil's Cooking & Catering

Oakland Minuteman Press

Oakland Scottish Rite Center

Stoller Design Group



GIFT BASKETS

Gift items for this evening's raffle graciously donated by
the Oakland-based business

Nathan & Co.



OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Community Schools, Thriving Students