

INNOVATIVE SPIRIT VISION AWARDS 2024

The recipients were selected based on the following criteria:

- Actively takes risks to seek and implement change by considering different perspectives to improve the educational setting
- Participates in collaborative relationships which promote or support a dynamic environment for learning
- Consistently creates projects that exceed conventional standards
- Inspires enthusiasm for change and risk taking

BALDWIN ELEMENTARY

Allen Cotton – 3rd/4th Grade Teacher

Allen is always willing to learn and grow so all his students can succeed. He collaborates with his teammates and across grade levels. He takes the time needed to create a positive relationship with his students and creates a safe environment where students can express themselves creatively, socially, and individually. He brings learning to life through visuals, music, experimentation, movement, and diversity. Allen continually encourages strong, positive interdependence among his students. When you walk into his classroom, you will see his students working collaboratively, inventing, and demonstrating hands-on learning through any academic content. He is a passionate teacher dedicated to fostering his students' talents and will often be found participating in a guitar jam session with former students. Allen most recently has been dedicating his summer to becoming a Tech Fellow through the San Jose Tech Museum. It is with great honor that we at Baldwin recognize Allen as a lifelong learner who constantly seeks ways to keep his passion for education alive.

Kristin Weiss – 1st Grade Teacher

Kristin has consistently participated in ways that go above and beyond collaboration and innovation to create a dynamic learning environment for students. She has completed both the SEAL 4-6th model as well as the TK-3rd model and took on becoming a Tech Fellow which is another 2-year commitment. She has consistently pursued ways to further her development and growth all the while inspiring young minds to do the same. Her classroom environment is warm and welcoming where students feel safe and cared for. This past summer, she volunteered to create lessons for our Book of the Month program that would afford buddy classes the opportunity to work collaboratively together to complete design challenges and/or art projects that directly related to the books and the social justice standards. It is with great honor that we at Baldwin recognize Kristin as a lifelong learner who constantly seeks ways to further herself and others.

CHRISTOPHER SCHOOL

Eileen Castaneda – 5th/6th Grade Teacher

Eileen works hard and collaborates with her teammates. She is always working to better herself for her students and creates a learning environment where all her students are engaged in their learning.

Cynthia Ceja – 1:1 Instructional Assistant

Cynthia works hard to be part of a team environment to help ensure that her student as well as the other classroom students' needs are being met. She is creative and will think out of the box to better things around her.

INNOVATIVE SPIRIT VISION AWARDS 2023

DAVIS INTERMEDIATE

Jose Rodriguez – School Counselor

Mr. Rodriguez is a vital support to our school. In his role as a counselor, he supports our students' academic, behavioral and socio-emotional success. He collaborates well with all school system staff and is reliable and dedicated and strives to do his best and advocate for students and families. He extends himself as a mentor and also organizes engaging sports activities at lunch so that our students are included and engaged in a safe and fun environment. His energy and work ethic contributes to a positive climate and culture at Davis School.

Sue Stapleton – School Counselor

Sue is an amazing leader and positive contributor to the Davis campus. She is collaborative and a team player. She follows through and is very approachable. She has been a joy to work with and those who work with her can always count on her. Sue created a Cheer Club for the first time in a couple of decades at Davis. This Cheer team of students has been a game changer for the Davis students as they feel included and proud to model positive behavior and involvement. Mrs. Stapleton goes above and beyond her counseling duties and makes Davis a positive place to be for students and the community.

DEL ROBLE ELEMENTARY

Alejandra Martinez –Kindergarten TWBI Teacher

Alejandra is the consummate professional that embodies that vision of Del Roble: biliterate, culturally proud, while being a lifelong learner and leader. As an experienced educational leader, she has served the Oak Grove School District as an educational leader through the lens of a parent and teacher. She always puts the interests of students first. She has a highly structured but warm and inviting classroom space with high expectations. As a teacher she is high energy, culturally proud and allows students to see themselves in her. She brings her full self by supporting culturally sustaining lessons, projects and school community events. She is a pillar of the Del Roble school community.

EDENVALE ELEMENTARY

Tony Carriles – 3rd Grade Dual Language Teacher

Tony plans engaging and hands-on activities for his students. He actively considers diverse perspectives and fosters collaborative relationships with students and families. Tony also cultivates a dynamic learning atmosphere that encourages innovation.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Jimmie Brown – School Counselor, LMFT

Jimmie has done an incredible job creating and sustaining a district mental health team through his collaboration with the district and various universities in the area. Jimmie, Natalie Mora, and Jimmie's Interns provide invaluable systemic mental health support to all of our District's schools. Great job Jimmie and team! We appreciate you!

Catherine Le – Lead District Nurse

Nurse Catherine has worked tirelessly to ensure that students are safe in our schools by advocating for them and to provide them with equitable access. This often means thinking outside the box, including moving her office to another site to better case manage some of her students with health needs. Additionally, she provides mentoring support to new credentialed school nurses, drawing on her vast experience of over 20 years in school nursing.

INNOVATIVE SPIRIT VISION AWARDS 2023

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Xochitl Macias – SLS Coordinator, Community Liaison 2

Xochitl is always thinking of creative ways to engage our families! Whether it be the Back to School Resource Fair, the Holiday Fair, or providing sweatshirt "swag" to our families, Xochitl is always thinking of new ways to support all families and students!

Maria Meza – Lead School Secretary, DLC

Cheryl Snyder – Lead School Secretary, BLC

Kayleigh Sustaita – Lead School Secretary, HLC

Cheryl, Maria and Kayleigh are going on their 2nd year as Lead Secretaries for the Oak Grove School District. They consistently are taking risks to seek and implement change by considering different perspectives to improve systems and processes in our school front offices. From taking on the challenge of moving to fully online registration to piloting a new process for our Emergency Cards this year, this strong team of dynamic secretaries is always willing to take on a new challenge to support their colleagues. The lead secretaries participate in collaborative relationships with not only each other (through monthly meetings), but with their teammates by being a resource and go-to person for innovative ideas to streamline their job duties and responsibilities. Cheryl, Maria and Kayleigh inspire enthusiasm for change and risk taking and often will look for new innovative ways for the secretaries to complete their sometimes tedious and mundane tasks. It is my great pleasure to nominate Cheryl, Maria and Kayleigh for the Innovative Spirit Vision Award!

FROST ELEMENTARY

Deborah Torrens – 3rd Grade Teacher

Ms. Torrens creates projects, sings and uses a plethora of strategies to engage students. When one doesn't work, she retools and keeps trying until she finds something that does. She meets with her team and induction mentor regularly as well as the principal constantly seeking to improve her skills.

HAYES ELEMENTARY

Denny Reyes – Boys & Girls Club Unit Director

For over the past six years, Denny has served as the Unit Director for the Boys & Girls Club Program at Hayes Elementary. In this role, he has been an effective leader and collaborative partner, seamlessly bridging the gap between the school day and the after-school program.

Denny actively participates in various extracurricular initiatives, including the Apple Coding Program and the Cal Ripken Badges for Baseball Program. He recently engaged with the Tech Academies and STEM Pathways Program Communities of Practice alongside Hayes teachers, demonstrating his commitment to supporting youth from underrepresented backgrounds in STEM fields

As the Lead Trainer for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Silicon Valley in the Physical Education Department, Denny plays a vital role in training all Youth Development Professionals within the Oak Grove School District. His leadership not only enhances the quality of our District's Boy & Girls Club programs but also inspires Hayes students to strive for excellence, earning the Hayes Clubhouse the title of A Home of the Champions.

Denny's eagerness to bring new experiences and innovative programs to the Hayes Boys and Girls Club reflects his passion for providing diverse and enriching opportunities for the students at Hayes Elementary.

INNOVATIVE SPIRIT VISION AWARDS 2023

HERMAN INTERMEDIATE AND ADVENTURE PROGRAM

Maria Medrano – Biliterate School Secretary

Maria actively takes risks to seek and implement a change in culture in our front office by engaging students, staff and the community on a daily basis. She promotes collaborative relationships which promotes a dynamic environment. She is openly enthusiastic about being at work and designs fun and engaging activities to build community.

Michelle Trejo – US History and Leadership Teacher

Michelle consistently creates projects that exceed conventional standards in her history classes; but especially in her leadership class. She has inspired enthusiasm for change and risk taking among her students, and they have developed fun activities, service projects, fundraisers, socials and dances. Her innovative spirit has motivated her students to take on leadership roles responsibly and gives the freedom and guidelines to create amazing things for our staff, students and community!

HUMAN RESOURCES

Yolanda Hernandez – Confidential Administrative Secretary

Yolanda has helped to grow and innovate our District recruitment practices with ideas to hold recruitment fairs at school sites, in the communities that we serve. Traditionally, our District would count on mostly job fairs and online postings to attract new hires, but our on-site recruitment events have really widened our pool of applicants. She has a passion for human resources, and is always thinking of ways to streamline systems, provide quality customer service and support Oak Grove's people power!

LEDESMA ELEMENTARY

Desiree Major – Home and School Club President

Desiree is currently serving in her second year as our Home and School Club president. She has truly hit the ground running and consistently makes the extra effort to deepen relationships between HSC members and school staff. She is extremely collaborative with all Ledesma community members and has been instrumental in developing and facilitating our school-wide events and fundraisers. She often goes the extra mile and dresses up as Lynxie, our school mascot! We are very lucky to have Desiree on the team and her spirit truly is contagious!

OAK RIDGE ELEMENTARY

Olena McLin – 3rd Grade Teacher

Olena is always at the forefront of best practices and strategies and how to support our students, especially around the area of math. She collaborates with others on staff to show them different approaches to increasing engagement and success with students in math. She is always willing to open her classroom to observations of other teachers and will even bring in a second class to join hers in a math activity. When she receives professional development outside of the school and District, she brings back what she learned and shares with the staff at a staff meeting or professional development.

SAKAMOTO ELEMENTARY

Linette Miranda – 1st/2nd Grade SDC Teacher

Linette is consistently seeking new and creative ways to enhance the learning environment of her students. She explores different perspectives through teaching methodologies and curricular innovations to meet the needs of her students. Collaboration is at the heart her work. She is an active participant in her team and frequently works with colleagues to develop and support learning experiences for teachers and students.

INNOVATIVE SPIRIT VISION AWARDS 2023

SANTA TERESA ELEMENTARY

Allison Rice – 1st Grade Teacher

Mrs. Rice consistently participates in collaborative relationships which support a dynamic learning environment at Santa Teresa. She is mentoring a grade level colleague. Her team together is looking at foundational reading instruction, and studying how their instruction impacts students. Their work will result in improved reading skills for all of our students.

STEAM AT STIPE ELEMENTARY

Matteo Enna – Kindergarten Teacher

Mr. Enna consistently seeks ways to incorporate new learnings into his instruction. He always works very hard to find ways that truly engage all students in their learning. He has also taken on a variety of new teaching practices related to STEAM learning during the past several years. He collaborates and shares his work in PLCs and has joined the leadership team to support professional learning at a schoolwide level. Mr. Enna is an excellent, innovative teacher, and we are fortunate to have him at STEAM@Stipe!

TAYLOR ELEMENTARY

Debbie Cogliandro – Kindergarten Teacher

Last school year, Mrs. Debbie Cogliandro, a dedicated second-grade teacher, found herself eager for a change. After years of working with second grade students, she felt drawn to the foundational years of early education and requested a transfer to teach Kindergarten. Her passion for nurturing young learners combined with a desire to immerse herself in new teaching strategies.

Mrs. Cogliandro expressed a strong interest in being trained in SEAL (Sobrato Early Academic Language) strategies. She saw SEAL as a valuable tool for promoting language development and inclusivity, particularly for English Language Learners. Eager to build a classroom environment where every child thrives, Mrs. Cogliandro believed that SEAL's approach aligned perfectly with her goal of creating a language-rich, engaging, and supportive space for her Kindergarten students.

This request for change was not just about teaching a new grade; it was about embracing growth as an educator. Mrs. Debbie Cogliandro is committed to learning new methods, improving her teaching practice, and being an advocate for all her students. Her enthusiasm to take on Kindergarten and the SEAL model reflects her dedication to being a lifelong learner and a champion for the success of all children.

Tracey Matsui – Kinder/1st Grade Teacher

Mrs. Tracey Matsui is a dedicated educator who consistently goes above and beyond conventional standards. She embraces innovation and inspires both students and colleagues with her enthusiasm for change and risk-taking. For example, when faced with reorganization for this school year, Mrs. Matsui willingly volunteered to teach a combination Kindergarten/1st grade class, demonstrating flexibility and commitment to student success.

Additionally, Mrs. Matsui played a key role in piloting the new math curriculum and continuously seeks out fresh, creative ways to integrate technology into her lessons. Her humble dedication and openness to growth are truly commendable.