

# 2025 STAR AWARDS

Recognition of Dedication & Staff Excellence

# NLM

NORWALK - LA MIRADA  
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

# *Sponsors*

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# *A Special Thanks*

**Division of Human Resources**

**ITS**

**Benton Middle School**

**Southeast Academy**

**Steve Fericean, Director, Purchasing & Warehouse**

**Christopher K. Hargraves, Public Information Officer**

**Esther Lin, Music Teacher, Benton Middle School**

**Jennifer Nitschke, Drama Teacher, Benton Middle School**

**Matthew B. Roberts, Publications Specialist**

# NLM

## *Welcome to the 2025 Star Awards*

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Narcis Brasov, Esq., President, Trustee Area 5  
Dr. Robert Cancio, Vice President, Trustee Area 4  
Espie Free, MPA, Member, Trustee Area 1  
Norma Amezcua, Member, Trustee Area 2  
Jose M. Rios, Member, Trustee Area 3  
Dr. Lorena Vidaurre, Member, Trustee Area 6  
Becky Langenwalter, MS, LMFT, Member, Trustee Area 7

### **SUPERINTENDENT**

Dr. Natasha Baker

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S EXECUTIVE CABINET**

Michael R. Gotto, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources  
Estuardo Santillan, Assistant Superintendent, Business Services  
Kristine H. Cvar, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services  
Jessica R. Medrano, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services  
Robert Jacobsen, General Counsel  
Christopher K. Hargraves, Public Information Officer

**April 9, 2025**

Welcome to the 2025 STAR Awards!

Tonight, we celebrate the incredible accomplishments of our colleagues who are the heart and soul of our school district community. The amazing work of our honorees changes lives while their dedication creates the foundation for our students' success.

We shine a light on our exceptional team members who believe in the power of public education and the strength of our mission: to develop in our students the knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes to empower them to become life-long learners and successful, productive citizens in an ever-changing world.

To all of our honorees, we are forever grateful for your unwavering dedication and commitment. I hope everyone enjoys this incredible celebration in honor of our inspiring group of professionals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Dr. Natasha Baker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Dr.", "Natasha", and "Baker" being capitalized and prominent.

Dr. Natasha Baker  
Superintendent

# Program

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Southeast Academy Color Guard

## NATIONAL ANTHEM

Geraldine Aiono  
Student, La Mirada High School

## WELCOME

Dr. Natasha Baker  
Superintendent

## RETIREE RECOGNITION

Michael R. Gotto, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources

## EMPLOYEE YEARS OF SERVICE RECOGNITION

Mike A. Garcia  
Director, Human Resources

## STUDENT SHOWCASE PERFORMANCE

Benton Middle School Advanced Choir

## PRESENTATION OF STAR AWARD WINNERS

Martha Jauregui, CSEA President  
Maureen Quiros Gray, TANLA President

## PRESENTATION OF DISTRICT WELLNESS AWARD

Michael R. Gotto, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources

## PRESENTATION OF ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

Mike A. Garcia  
Director, Human Resources

## CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR

## CLOSING

Michael R. Gotto, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources

# Committee Members

## **CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE**

Martha Jauregui, CSEA President  
Christian F. Macias Solis, CSEA Vice President  
Jonathan Mata, Educational Services  
Angela Torres, John Glenn High School

## **TEACHER OF THE YEAR COMMITTEE**

Maureen Quiros Gray, TANLA President  
Sarah Malec, Corvallis Middle School  
Jackie Nguyen, Escalona Elementary School  
Minu Singh, Benton Middle School  
Natalia Valadez, Norwalk High School

## **CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS**

Gabriela Moctezuma, Human Resources  
Maricela Vargas, School Safety  
Guadalupe Zarate, Ramona Head Start

## **TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS**

Alison Boisseranc, Morrison Elementary School  
Jessica Murray, Benton Middle School  
Natalie Rodriguez, Corvallis Middle School

# STAR AWARDS

## *Employee Years of Service*

### 25 Years

Jesse Beaver  
Lydia Boek  
Carmen Castanon  
Injoon Choi  
Sharon Corpuz Stivers  
Michael R. Craddock  
Gloria Da Silva  
Hong Dang-Nehme  
Roberta De Shazo  
Blanca E. Delgado  
Gabriela Duarte  
Julia C. Fontes  
Gabriela Galvez-Reyna  
Ruby Garcia  
Lydia L. Garcia  
Miguel A. Garcia Jr.  
Tami Gifford  
Sean M. Gohn  
Alicia Gonzalez  
Nancy Gonzalez-Rios  
Diahann N. Greenidge  
Colleen M. Hanners  
Maria Hernandez  
Doris D. Hesse  
Heidi J. Hubbard  
Ardell R. Hucko  
Allissa J. Kinsella  
Janice A. Kroupa  
Aimee A. Lee  
Michelle R. Lee  
Manuel Lopez  
Veronica M. Lorenzana-Bobic  
Jessica F. Lozano  
Maria G. Luna  
Maricela Maldonado  
Liliana Mariscal

Nina Montoya  
Christopher E. Moton  
Jennifer J. Murrey  
Ruben S. Neves  
Susan L. Newcomb  
Linda C. Nichols  
Maria F. Ohara-Brown  
Ruth L. Ohlson  
Renata Ortega  
Sherry R. Ortega  
Ryan C. Patterson  
Nicole C. Pena  
Alejandro Perez  
Monica Plascencia  
Cecilia M. Ramirez  
Jesus M. Ramirez  
Jose C. Raposo  
Socorro Rivera  
Skye N. Roberts  
Raquel Romo  
Angela Routh  
Steve Salcedo  
William Seals  
Lori A. Silva  
Lisa E. Sims  
Angela C. Togia  
Maria A. Torres  
Gina A. Townsend  
Jose V. Valenzuela  
Sandra M. Vazquez  
Kenneth C. Vernon  
Benjamin Villarreal  
Daniel J. Vivillacqua  
Linda Warden  
Sophia M. Woo-Gallardo

# STAR AWARDS

## *Employee Years of Service*

### 30 Years

Allen P. Acosta  
Ayline Amirayan  
Sharlene Bang  
Maureen M. Bixby  
Danielle Burson  
Sofia Espinoza  
Carmen Guerrero  
David Hallum  
Xochitl Hernandez  
Melisande Maytorena  
Cynthia McDonnell

Gary M. Roels-Leoncio  
Maria G. Sanchez  
Lynn D. Schaulis  
Donald W. Schultz  
Yvonne M. Shryock  
Carmen Vallier  
Kathleen S. Vela  
Laura Messersmith  
Loreen Miyoshi  
Michelle L. Ramos

### 35 Years

Corina Anguiano  
Steve Bueno  
Martha Buenrostro  
Irma Campos  
Marino Chavez Jr.  
Terri Conner  
Ronald Della Valle  
Deborah Fort  
Patricia Frazier  
Randall Frazier  
Dean Gray

Michelle Lazalde  
Stephan T. Matthies  
Irma Moya  
Djalma Oliveira  
Maria Robledo-Hooghkirk  
Rosemary E. Segal  
Kristie Zolman  
Alicia M. Juarez  
Ruhan Kainth  
Kelly Katayama-Johnson

### 40 Years

Bernadette P. Garcia  
Irene Gonzalez

Cecilia Llamas-Dixon  
Genevieve Mendez

### 45 Years

Rosa Barragan

# DOLLAND *Elementary School*

**Lorena Sierra, Ed.D., Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Carmen Castanon*

Carmen Castanon is an exceptional educator who creates a joyful and enriching early childhood learning experience. Her kindness, dedication, and musical talent inspire students to love learning. Whether playing guitar, fostering creativity through hands-on projects, or exploring the world with her class, she makes learning engaging, meaningful, and unforgettable.

## *Olivia Ortiz*

Olivia Ortiz is a true gem, bringing warmth, organization, and teamwork to our school. Her friendly and approachable nature makes everyone feel welcome. She helps create a smooth, supportive office environment by building strong bonds with staff and families. Thoughtful and caring, Olivia's dedication strengthens our school community every day.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# DULLES *Elementary School*

**Shanti Gallegos, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *James Morin*

James Morin is our Teacher of the Year, recognized for his positive attitude, sense of humor, and innovative teaching methods. He creatively incorporates music into math lessons, making learning engaging. A lifelong learner, he also demonstrates leadership through his organization of our annual talent show.

## *Amy Contreras*

Amy Contreras is our Classified Employee of the Year, recognized for her dedication, teamwork, and leadership. She builds strong rapport with students, staff, and families, always prioritizing student success. Her caring, collaborative approach makes her an invaluable asset to our school community.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# EASTWOOD *Elementary School*

**Darryll Ramsey, Jr., Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Rose Bakh*

Rose Bakh serves as Eastwood's iTOSA and is one of our coding coaches. She has served the NLM community at various sites for 21 years. Mrs. Bakh collaborates with others, diligently works to keep students engaged, and implements effective strategies that move their thinking and learning forward.

## *Hortencia Silva De Suarez*

Hortencia Silva De Suarez is one of Eastwood's amazing Supervision Aides. She has been a part of the Eastwood family for 8 years. Affectionately known as "Mrs. H.", she consistently supports students, staff, and school events. From supervising recess periods to dressing up, we thank you for all you do.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# EDMONDSON *Elementary School*

**Sharon Stewart, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Tracy Bassaj*

Congratulations on an extraordinary 35 years of dedication at Edmondson! Ms. Bassaj has impacted countless students and colleagues, teaching across nearly every grade level and shaping multiple generations, with current parents once being her students. She has served on our Site Leadership Team and held the esteemed role of Annual Schoolwide Olympics Coordinator for decades. Ms. Bassaj is a true cornerstone of our community!

## *Gina Galvan*

Congratulations to our incredible Supervision Noon Aide, Mrs. Galvan! Always positive and professional, she has stepped up to lead our supervision team, working seamlessly with teachers, ESSS, counselor, principal, and all staff. Her dedication goes above and beyond, and her huge heart for our students makes a lasting impact on our Mighty Eagle community.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# ESCALONA *Elementary School*

**Nnenna Okpara, Ed.D., Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Renee Ivy*

Mrs. Renee Ivy stands out as an exceptional educator, seamlessly combining warmth and high academic standards. Her modern, flexible-minded teaching techniques inspire students daily, helping them reach their full potential. With dedication and a vibrant approach, Mrs. Ivy is a cherished part of our community, making her a well-deserved recipient of the Teacher of the Year award.

## *Jose Raposo*

Mr. Joe is the heart and soul of our school, known for his kindness, dedication, and unmatched work ethic. His ability to inspire and uplift our students and staff makes him a worthy recipient of the Classified Employee of the Year award. Escalona is truly fortunate to have him!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# FOSTER ROAD *Elementary School*

**Salvador Villagomez, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

*Emily Klauk*

Emily Klauk is Foster Road's Teacher of the Year. It is clear to all that have come to work with her that she has a true desire and love for teaching. Her students clearly see that she is driven to steer them towards success. Her positive demeanor brightens our school. The Foster Road family is proud to congratulate Emily.

*Lynn Turigliatto*

Foster Road would like to congratulate Lynn Turigliatto for being selected as our Classified Employee of the Year. Her leadership and guidance in the cafeteria is crucial for the smooth operation of the school. She epitomizes the Foster Road culture of being positive, supportive, and flexible. Congratulations Lynn for being a super star!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# GARDENHILL *Elementary School*

**Sarah Gilbert, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Sharmayn Beaton*

Congratulations Mrs. Beaton for being an incredible Teacher of the Year! Your kindness, enthusiasm, and dedication to learning shine through in your engaging lessons that always beautifully blend and incorporate elements of Art, Science, and SEL. Your legacy and compassion for students and team members have created a lasting impact.

## *Daysha Segrest*

Thank you, Daysha Segrest, for being an incredible Supervision Aide and coordinator of our Junior Coach program. Your dedication to ensuring students feel loved and safe, along with your initiative to incorporate new games and systems, truly makes a difference. Your teamwork and kindness are greatly appreciated by all!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# GLAZIER *Elementary School*

**Susan Newcomb, Ph.D., Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Allyson H. Citizen*

Ms. Allyson Citizen re-joined the Glazier team in the 2021-22 school year as a Transitional Kindergarten teacher. During her 31 years in education, she has served in a variety of teaching capacities. At Glazier, Ms. Citizen has supported our PTA to provide teacher input and support across a variety of events. Thank you, Ms. Citizen!

## *Yvonne Vasquez*

Mrs. Yvonne Vasquez is a Direct Intense Behavior Support (DIBS) Paraeducator. She has made an amazing impact on the individual student she supports, as well as a positive impact on the classroom and campus community, working on proactive approaches to help align student behaviors with clear expectations. Thank you, Mrs. Vasquez!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# JOHNSTON *Elementary School*

**Krystal Jones, Ed.D., Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Rosina Padilla-Gonzalez*

Johnston Elementary proudly honors Rosina Padilla as Teacher of the Year. As a dedicated third-grade teacher and leadership team member, she goes above and beyond for her students. Mrs. Padilla builds strong relationships with students, families, and staff, creating a supportive learning environment. We are grateful to have her in our Roadrunner family!

## *Maria Contreras*

Our Roadrunner family proudly honors Maria Contreras as Classified Employee of the Year. As a dedicated Supervision Aide, she ensures student safety with kindness and respect. Maria's strong relationships and dedicated commitment make our school a better place. We appreciate her hard work—congratulations, Maria!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# LA PLUMA *Elementary School*

**Maureen Bixby, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Sandra Esteves*

Congratulations, Sandra Esteves, La Pluma's Teacher of the Year! Sandra's dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment to student success inspires us all. Her kindness, creativity, and ability to engage and uplift every learner makes a lasting impact. She demonstrates excellence in teaching while bringing out the best in our students!

## *Bessie Ramirez*

Bessie Ramirez, La Pluma's secretary, is the heart of our school. Bessie's dedication, organization, and warmhearted support help to keep our school running smoothly. Her kindness, efficiency, and commitment to students, staff, and families make a meaningful difference on our campus each day. Congratulations Bessie!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# LAMPTON *Elementary School*

**Ana Quiroz, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Cynthia Villa*

Cindy is a dedicated educator who prioritizes her students' social-emotional well-being. She delivers lessons with enthusiasm, making learning both engaging and enjoyable for her students. A collaborative team player, she is always eager to share ideas and support her colleagues. As a school leader, she brings warmth, humor, and positivity to staff meetings, fostering a strong sense of community.

## *Jessica Flores*

As our ESSS, Jessica is hardworking and resilient, never backing down from a challenge. She remains positive even in difficult situations and builds strong relationships with students, understanding their unique needs and the strategies that work best for them. Her warmth and sense of humor bring joy to those around her, creating a supportive and uplifting environment wherever she goes.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# MOFFITT *Elementary School*

**Gabriela Galvez-Reyna, Ed.D., Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Rebecca Schroeder*

Rebecca Schroeder joined the Moffitt teaching staff this year, and in this short time, we have already noticed her passion for education. Her growth mindset, kindness, and positive attitude are evident and greatly appreciated. Ms. Schroeder diligently works to keep students engaged in her kindergarten classroom, ensuring they thrive.

## *Sophia Melendez*

Sophie Melendez has been an essential part of the Moffitt Elementary staff for 24 years. She is passionate about student safety and goes above and beyond in her supervision duties to support staff, students, and families. She maintains a positive attitude and treats others with respect and kindness. Her proactive and supportive approach truly makes a difference at Moffitt.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# MORRISON *Elementary School*

**Patrick Lazo, Principal**



District  
Finalist

**Teacher of the Year**

## *Alison Boisseranc*

Alison Boisseranc, a dedicated educator at Morrison Elementary leads with passion and dedication. As Science Camp Lead, PBIS team member, and grade-level ELPAC tester, she fosters an inclusive, "all means all" learning environment. Her commitment to student success and leadership enriches the entire school community.

## *Edevina Mora*

Edevina Mora began at Morrison in 2019 as a supervision aide, quickly proving her dedication to students. Through hard work and commitment, she advanced to the role of Clerk Typist, Junior. Now, she plays a vital role in supporting the needs of the school community, always prioritizing the well-being of others.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# NEW RIVER *Elementary School*

**Jody Gardner, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Laura Iovino*

Congratulations to Laura Iovino, New River's Teacher of the Year! Laura's dedication, creativity, and trauma-informed practices create an engaging and supportive learning environment. She strives to give students the best experiences, making learning fun and meaningful. Her passion for teaching shines every day. Well-deserved, Laura!

## *Erica Martin*

Congratulations to Erica Martin, New River's Elementary Student Support Specialist Employee of the Year! Erica's dedication, organization, and kindness make a lasting impact. She goes above and beyond to support students, creating a safe, welcoming environment. Her hard work and willingness to help others is truly commendable. Well-deserved, Erica!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# NUFFER *Elementary School*

**Makara Sar, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Courtney Campbell*

Courtney Campbell's passion for teaching and unwavering dedication to student success make her an outstanding educator at Nuffer. She creates a supportive and engaging learning environment, inspiring students to grow academically and personally. Her commitment, creativity, and kindness positively impact the entire school community, making her truly deserving of Teacher of the Year.

## *Claudia Amaro*

Claudia Amaro is the heart of Nuffer Elementary, bringing dedication, kindness, and efficiency to everything she does. Her hard work and positive attitude create a welcoming environment for students, staff, and families. Claudia's commitment to excellence and unwavering support make her truly deserving of Classified Employee of the Year.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# SANCHEZ

## *Elementary School*

**Alicia Rubio, Principal**



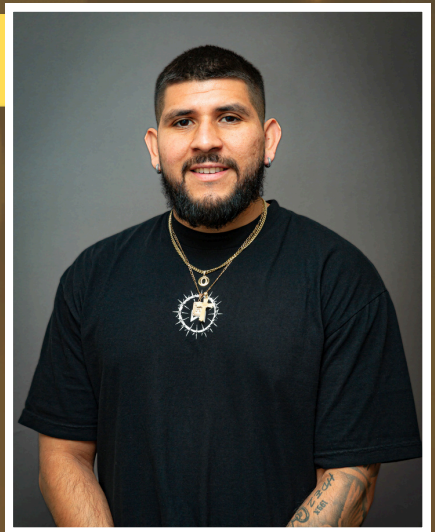
**Teacher of the Year**

### *Alice Aguilar*

Alice Aguilar, our transitional kindergarten teacher, was chosen by her colleagues as Teacher of the Year because of her tireless commitment to students and colleagues. Ms. Aguilar is exceptional about guiding her students toward achieving high levels of learning. It has been exciting to see how well the students who leave her classroom continue in their learning as a result of the base they established in TK. She's always excited about working with students and eager to offer colleagues a helping hand. All our students and staff are fortunate to have Ms. Aguilar at Sanchez. Congratulations Alice, well-deserved!

### *Steve Hernandez*

Steve Hernandez was chosen by his colleagues as the Classified Employee of the Year because of his exceptional work as our Sanchez Senior Custodian. Mr. Hernandez has established practical and useful organizational ideas that allow for quick repairs and clean ups, which are appreciated by the team. He is an extremely dedicated, hardworking, enthusiastic and kind colleague who is always happy to support in whatever way he can. His attitude about ensuring we are providing a beautiful environment for both our students and staff is amazing! Congratulations Steve, for this well-deserved recognition!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# BENTON *Middle School*

**Robin Ridgeway, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

*Jessica L. Murray*

Ms. Murray is an asset to Benton. An effective ELA and Leadership teacher who connects with her students, her classroom is a bright, cheerful environment that is student-centered and arranged to facilitate learning and academic discourse. Her students are engaged, learning, and demonstrate that they know what is expected of them.

*Denise Rodgers*

Denise Rodgers is a dedicated Supervision Aide who volunteered at Benton long before she was officially employed. She knows the campus, the students, our families, and seeks out ways to improve systems to enhance safety and the smooth running of our campus. She goes above and beyond for Benton.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# CORVALLIS *Middle School*

**Alejandra Rosales, Principal**



District  
Finalist

**Teacher of the Year**

*Natalie K. Rodriguez*

Natalie Rodriguez, member of the Corvallis family for almost 4 years, has cemented herself by being an engaging Social Studies Teacher, Volleyball & Softball Coach, Yearbook Advisor, PBIS Team Member and Academic Pentathlon Coach. If that's not enough, this year she is also our Site Technology Lead and is teaching Advanced Art. Ms. Rodriguez motivates students and staff and she is innovative in her classroom.

*Gabriel A. Perez*

Gabriel Perez, Senior Custodian of Corvallis Middle School, has found his way back home to CMS. Staff and students are appreciative of his hard work in keeping our campus looking great everyday. He has great rapport with all our students, they love to help him.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# HUTCHINSON

## *Middle School*

**Jenny Bae, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

*Terri Clay*

Terri Clay started with NLMUSD in 2012 as a Substitute Teacher after moving here from Northern California, where she was a general education teacher. After completing a special education credential, she taught an Academic Support class at Los Coyotes Middle School for 3 years, transferring to Hutchinson Middle School as an RSP teacher in 2017. Terri Clay is an asset to our Special Ed Program and instrumental in helping students meet their IEP goals. She is collaborative, dedicated, and an inspirational educator.

*Roberta De Shazo*

When Bobbie's grandson began his journey in kindergarten at Gardenhill, she felt a deep desire to contribute to his school experience. Bobbie jumped at the chance to volunteer as the room mom, chaperoning field trips and actively supporting PTSA. Her love for the school and its community inspired her to take on the role of Supervision Aide in 1999, marking the start of an incredible journey. As she transitioned to Hutchinson in 2002, Bobbie remained committed to fostering the same sense of community as a Supervision Aide for Hutchinson and subsequently had the honor of serving as Hutchinson's PTSA President and Treasurer for eight years. Now, 23 years later, Bobbie is an asset to our Hutchinson community and has been instrumental in helping our campus be a safe and welcoming learning environment.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# LOS ALISOS *Middle School*

**Tania Magana, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

*Jose Martinez*

As a social science teacher, Mr. Martinez has demonstrated exceptional dedication, innovation, and a profound commitment to the academic and personal growth of his students. Mr. Martinez brings a wealth of knowledge to his classroom, combined with a passion for making social sciences come alive for his students. His ability to connect historical events, political concepts, and sociological issues to real-world experiences engages students in meaningful discussions that deepen their understanding. His lessons are dynamic, thought-provoking, and tailored to challenge each student's thinking, ensuring that all learners are actively involved.

*Jackie Sheek*

Over the course of her time at Los Alisos, Ms. Jackie has consistently demonstrated exceptional work ethic, dedication, and a deep commitment to supporting both students and colleagues. She possesses outstanding organizational and problem-solving skills. She consistently goes above and beyond in her role, tackling even the most challenging tasks with grace and professionalism. Her ability to handle multiple responsibilities with precision is truly remarkable, and she consistently meets and exceeds expectations, often taking the initiative to improve processes and outcomes. Her contributions are integral to the success of our organization and have earned her the admiration of all who work with her.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# WAITE Middle School

**Adriana Nakano, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

*Denise E. Dunphy*

Denise has served the students and families of the NLMUSD for years as Social Science teacher and Art teacher. Our students and staff at Panther Land are impacted by Denise's love for education and promoting Art & Creativity. Denise has been teaching effective Art & Graphic Design skills and she understands the importance of mentoring students to express themselves through VAPA. Denise is fully committed to support our students and staff by also being our GATE Program Coordinator and she collaborates with our teachers and administrators as our Field Trips Coordinator, this enhances our students' education and middle school experience. Congratulations to our Certificated Employee of The Year, Denise Dunphy!

*Rosie S. Mawson*

Rosie has served the students and families of the Norwalk - La Mirada Unified School District for 32 years and Waite Middle School for 14 years as a Supervision Aide. Rosie has consistently demonstrated exceptional dedication, a positive attitude, and an unwavering commitment to fostering students' safety and supportive environment for all students.

Rosie approaches every task with enthusiasm and a genuine desire to make a difference. Rosie's commitment to the betterment of the school community is evident. Congratulations to our Classified Employee of The Year, Rosie Mawson!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# EL CAMINO *High School*

**Mark Hunter, Director/Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Janet Ramont*

Mrs. Janet Ramont is an outstanding representation of the teaching staff at El Camino. She provides daily feedback and creates positive relationships with her students. She supports all school and club activities. On top of that, Mrs. Ramont serves on the Site Leadership Team and is El Camino's WASC Chairperson.

## *Gabriel Guzman*

Mr. Gabriel Guzman is a favorite amongst staff and students on the El Camino campus. He sets the tone on campus each morning by greeting everyone that comes through the door. El Camino students know they trust Mr. Guzman with student and staff issues. He has a very calming influence on the campus.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# JOHN GLENN *High School*

**Jennifer Padilla, Ed.D., Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Cynthia Johnson*

Mrs. Cynthia Johnson has been an English-Language Arts Teacher at John Glenn High School for 22 of her 24 years as an educator. This is not her first award as Teacher of the Year, and she continues to strive for excellence in every role she assumes. Currently, Mrs. Johnson is an ERWC Teacher, English Language Arts Department Chair, AVID Core Elective Teacher, and CSF Advisor. She is a very active member of JGHS, always working to provide opportunities to our students and lifting up the Glenn Community.

## *Denisse Mena*

Denisse is important in fostering communication between school and families. She is always willing to assist whether that means supporting her colleagues or volunteering at school/community events. She actively seeks learning opportunities and builds relationships. She is welcoming, supportive, and brings a sense of community and fun to Glenn.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# LA MIRADA *High School*

**Ben Webster, Principal**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Lawrence Stroup Jr.*

Mr. Stroup is a consummate professional. In his second career, Mr. Stroup brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his Public Safety classroom. His students love to learn about crimes, the law, and law enforcement. Mr. Stroup's friendly disposition and positive nature allows him to make positive connections to his students and fellow staff members. Mr. Stroup volunteers to help out around campus and we are proud that he represents the Matadores as our Teacher of the Year.

## *Deborah Willey*

Debbie Willey is our Back-To-Back Classified Employee of the Year. Ms. Willey understands the importance of a well-run office staff and she works every day to make sure the school runs smoothly. Her vast knowledge of the NLMUSD and La Mirada High School have been invaluable to the staff. Ms. Willey cares deeply for students and she has an uncanny knack for connecting with kids, even when they are having a tough day. She goes out of her way to help others and we are grateful she is at LMHS.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# NORWALK *High School*

David Olea, Ed.D., Principal



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Shanon Williams*

Mrs. Shannon Williams exemplifies servant leadership in her role as an educator and leader on campus. Shannon serves as an Education Specialist (RSP), Department Chair, and Testing Coordinator for NHS. In doing so, she supports all students and colleagues on campus. She is quick to lend a helping hand and always a part of the solution!

## *Criseida McMurray*

Criseida McMurray exemplifies Lancer Pride. She is an alumna that has dedicated herself to the wellbeing of our students and staff at Norwalk High School for the past 18 years. Serving in various capacities and currently as the Secretary supporting our college and career center. Criseida is a national treasure at NHS!



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# SOUTHEAST ACADEMY *High School*

**MSgt Marty Schafer, Director**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *MSgt Steven Allard*

As the Leadership, ASB and PT Instructor, MSgt Allard has been one of the most influential teachers on campus year in and year out. He provides support and expertise that is foundational to Southeast Academy High School. As the senior faculty member, he supports teachers and staff, and the philosophy of Southeast Academy. He gives his all to his cadets creating an environment where cadets can be successful! Congratulations on a job well done!

## *Christina Ocon*

Ms. Ocon enjoys coming to work, she goes out of her way in her generosity towards others. Beyond providing cadets with information, she is welcoming and gracious to all who visit Southeast Academy. She is mindful in doing the little things that make people feel important and an integral part of our school. Ms. Ocon is deserving of this honor because of the many hats she wore this year, she is a superhero.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# NORWALK-LA MIRADA

## *Adult School*

**Mindy Chung, Director**



**Teacher of the Year**

### *Janis Gevirtzman*

Mrs. Gevirtzman is an exceptional ESL and Language Arts Teacher at the Adult School. She is a key member of the Site Leadership Team, and also serves as the High School Diploma Chair. A passionate leader, she inspires students and staff through innovation, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to education.

### *Djalma Oliveira*

Djalma Oliveira has been the dedicated Head of Plant for the Adult School since 1992. With a deep sense of pride in his work, he ensures a clean, safe environment for students and staff. Known for his warm connections and commitment, he truly cares about the school's success and community.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# PRESCHOOL *Programs*

**Laurel Parker, Director**



**Teacher of the Year**

*Amalia C. Reta*

Amalia is phenomenal in her position of Curriculum Coach. She works with teaching staff members in small groups or 1-1, she assists the staff in making materials for the units of study, and she is a key player in the planning of the staff development days. And...she does it all with a big smile and positive attitude!

*Guadalupe Zarate*

Lupe is simply the best Kitchen Manager that anyone could hope for! She has excellent customer service, making sure that she does whatever is needed for the children to have everything for breakfast, lunch, and snack. She is friendly and kind, and will help however she can to ensure that all deadlines are met.



District  
Finalist

**Classified Employee of the Year**

# BUSINESS SERVICES *Division*

**Estuardo Santillan, Assistant Superintendent**



**Classified Employee of the Year**

*Daisy Vuong*

Daisy is an outstanding Fiscal Services team member. Her efficiency and attention to detail heightens her performance continuously. Most importantly, Daisy has an excellent attitude and is a pleasure to work with every day. She is a greatly valued employee of NLMUSD.

# EDUCATIONAL SERVICES *Division*

**Jessica R. Medrano, Ed.D. & Kristine H. Cvar, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendents**

*Yvonne G. Sierra*

Yvonne's compassionate care and dedication to her students set her apart from her peers. Her empathy, tireless work ethic, and ability to create a calming presence in the most challenging situations inspire both her colleagues and staff, making her an invaluable asset to the Student and Family Services team.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT *Department*

**Marco A. Sanchez, Ed.D., Director**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Nancy Gonzalez-Rios*

Nancy Gonzalez-Rios has been with NLMUSD for 25 years. In that time Nancy has served as a teacher, Literacy TOSA, and Literacy Coach at New River Elementary. In 2013, she was hired as a district-level Intervention TOSA for K-5 and continues to serve in that position to this day. Nancy also attended NLMUSD schools during her K-7 journey. Nancy is married to a wonderful husband and has two kids and wants to thank them for their continued support.

## *Sharlene Bang*

Sharlene Bang has dedicated 30 years of exceptional service to the district, providing invaluable support to the Education Services department. She is a wealth of knowledge and a trusted resource, always willing to lend a hand and support our team. Her commitment to the district and school sites has made a lasting impact, ensuring the success of students and staff. Her dedication, expertise, and unwavering support make her a deserving recipient of the Classified of the Year award.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# HUMAN RESOURCES *Division*

**Michael R. Gotto, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent**



*Gabriela Moctezuma*

What truly sets Ms. Moctezuma apart are her remarkable work ethic and positive attitude. She is a consummate professional who consistently demonstrates a solutions-oriented mindset no matter the challenge. She is always willing to lend a helping hand to her colleagues, and she approaches every task with dedication and a collaborative spirit. She helps create a positive work environment in our Division. Ms. Moctezuma is exceptionally adaptable, embracing changes in processes and policies with ease and efficiency. Congratulations, Gabriela!

**Classified Employee of the Year**

# MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS *Department*

**Gerald Mitchell, Director**

*John Cobian*

John consistently excels in his role as our carpenter. His exceptional skills significantly reduce downtime during critical repairs. His commitment to safety and willingness to mentor colleagues contribute to a positive work environment. With his dedication, expertise, and uplifting spirit, John truly deserves the title of Employee of the Year.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

## Department - Grounds

Gerald Mitchell, Director



### *Daniel Ballejo*

Daniel is a dedicated Groundsperson who for the last 7 years demonstrated exceptional performance. This is his second consecutive year being recognized by his peers. He always has a positive attitude and is willing to help others. Daniel Ballejo is a valuable asset, consistently going beyond to achieve outstanding results.

**Classified Employee of the Year**

# NUTRITION SERVICES

## Department

Alexis Wahl, Director

### *Nellie Hernandez*

Nellie Hernandez has dedicated 20 years to NLMUSD, starting as a Nutrition Services Assistant III at El Camino. After 14 years in the Central Kitchen as an Assistant, she recently became an Assistant Lead. Nellie's infectious smile and uplifting attitude bring energy and joy to the entire central kitchen team.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# SPECIAL EDUCATION *Department*

**Maricela Lopez-Harvin, Director**



**Teacher of the Year**

## *Amanda Cobian*

Since 2006, Ms. Cobian has exemplified dedication and passion in her service to the district. Her unwavering diligence and resourcefulness have made a significant impact on both students and colleagues alike. Always focused on student success, Amanda consistently goes above and beyond to ensure every child thrives. Her long-standing academic commitment is a testament to her investment in the future of education and the community she serves.

## *Jess Licano*

For almost 30 years, Jess has been a pillar of unwavering dedication to students and the school community, currently serving the students in our Adult Transition Program (ATP). His willingness to step in and assist wherever needed, whether supporting student independence or aiding teachers with instruction, has made a lasting impact. Always positive, going above and beyond, Jess ensures that students receive the care and attention they deserve to thrive both in and out of the classroom. His selfless commitment and expertise are a true testament to the invaluable role in the educational journey of every student he serves.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# SCHOOL SAFETY *Department*

Lawrence Luna, Jr., Interim Chief



*Maricela Vargas*

Maricela has been a member of the School Safety Department for 12 years and in the district for 27 years. Mrs. Vargas' role "behind the scenes" makes a significant impact supporting students, staff and the district. She is to be commended for her commitment to education and safety. Thank you and congratulations, Maricela.

**Classified Employee of the Year**

# SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION *Program*

Francisco Ramirez, Coordinator

*Laura Y. Roybal*

Ms. Laura Roybal has been with the School Age Child Care (SACC) Program for over 15 years. Her commitment and dedication to serving children has taken her from her first role as Daycare Assistant to her current position as a Child Care Teacher I for SACC. Ms. Laura loves collaborating with her colleagues to create fun and stimulating learning activities for students. She is an inspiration to the families she serves and hopes to continue to awaken the creativity and love of learning to all of the students she serves.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

## Department

**Andrew Rutz, Chief Technology Officer**



### *Lisseth Hernandez*

Lisseth Hernandez has been a dedicated member of the district for 10 years, excelling in roles from Attendance Clerk to School Operations Secretary, and now as a Student Information Systems Support Technician in IT. She is smart, quick to learn, and always eager to help others, elevating the entire IT department with her skills and dedication. Lisseth's commitment to service and excellence makes her a deserving candidate for Classified Employee of the Year!

**Classified Employee of the Year**

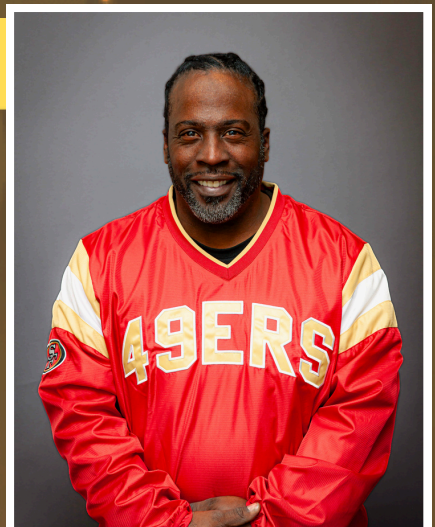
# TRANSPORTATION

## Department

**Raul Chavez, Director**

### *Eric Catching*

Mr. Eric Catching has been employed with NLMUSD for over 3 years and during this time, he has established himself as an exemplary team member whose commitment and persistent support is significantly noticed. Mr. Catching exhibits a can-do-attitude, goes above and beyond, demonstrates exceptional work ethics, and is dedicated to our students and community.



**Classified Employee of the Year**

# HONORING OUR *Retirees*



**MSgt Steven Allard**



**Mirna Ambriz**



**Sharlene Bang**



**Tracy Bassaj**



**Sharmayn Beaton**



**Kathleen A. Canham**



**Ernesto Centeno**



**John K. Clausson**



**Marisol Garcia De Ruiz**

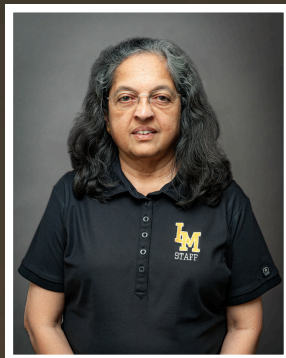
# HONORING OUR *Retirees*



**Silvia L. Guerra**



**Lorie Jones**



**Padmini Kishore**



**Lorenzo Kohn**



**Elizabeth Mcclenary**



**Laurel Parker**



**Yolanda Sandoval**



**Jesse J. Toscano**



**Dolores O. Ybarra**

# HONORING OUR *Retirees*

## Not Pictured

**Billie Bixby**

**Jorge Cazares**

**Carol J. Clausson**

**Sharon Corpuz Stivers**

**Yolanda De Villa**

**Sandra B. Gallagher**

**Frances Gangloff**

**Terrie R. Gilliland Velez**

**Linda M. Hodo**

**Heidi J. Hubbard**

**Gerald J. Jaimez**

**Inhee Kim**

**Jodie H. Kim**

**Tawney L. Kneifl**

**Francisco Laguna**

**Ann Mounou**

**Anthony Nahale**

**Clifford Phillips**

**Monica Plascencia**

**Jeannie L. Pooler**

**Christine Ramirez**

**Linda Rico**

**Lucinda Roberts**

**David Robles**

**Lillian Y. Robles**

**Gary W. Routh**

**Tomas Santana**

**Lynn Schaulis**

**Maria E. Silva**

**Maria Teresa E. Subol**

**June Summers**

**Kelly Tito**

**Viet D. Tran**

**Louis H. Trumbo**

*Congratulations to all of our award recipients at the 2025 STAR Awards! Your hard work, dedication, and lasting impact on our students and families are truly inspiring and greatly appreciated.*

*A special thank you to our generous sponsors for their support and to all of our amazing staff who helped make this event possible. To our wonderful retirees, we wish you all of life's blessings as you take this next step in your journey.*

*Thank you to all who attended to make this celebration a success.*

**#NLMPRIDE**

*Every Student.  
Future Ready.  
Our Promise!*