San Bernardino County **School Boards Association**

together with

San Bernardino County
Superintendent of Schools

are proud to present the

2025 SPRING AWARDS

a celebration of excellence for

Education Medal of Honor and Distinguished Service Award Recipients

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY EDUCATION MEDAL OF HONOR

Distinguished Service Award

April 21, 2025

San Bernardino County **School Boards Association**

Spring Awards Program

April 21, 2025 | 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Opening	Cindy Gardner, SBCSBA President *Trustee, Rim of the World Unified School District*
Presentation of Colors	Cajon High School Cadet Color Guard *Under the command of Chief Michael Esparza* *San Bernardino City Unified School District*
National Anthem and Pledge of Allegiance	Nanami Solis, Student *Fontana Unified School District*
Words of Inspiration	Cyrus Moss, Student *Fontana Unified School District*
Dinner Announcements	Cindy Gardner

2025 Education Medal of Honor and Distinguished Service Awards

Recognition of Recipients	Ted Alejandre, County Superintendent *San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools* Cindy Gardner





San Bernardino County

Education Medal of Honor

2025 Award Recipients

Volunteer in Action
Community Volunteer
Jade Centeno and Maria Medina
Fontana Unified School District

Volunteer in Action
Service Group
Redlands Educational Partnership
Redlands Unified School District

Partners in Education
Small Business or Franchise
Culver-Newlin
East Valley Communities

Partners in Education
Corporation or Government Agency
San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office
San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

Excellence in Education
Education Professional
Nicole Robinson
Fontana Unified School District

Excellence in Education
Student Alumni
Dr. Lynne Kennedy
Chaffey Joint Union High School District

San Bernardino County

Distinguished Service Award

2025 Recipients

Ofelia Hinojosa
Principal
Fontana Unified School District

Vivian Shaw
Chairperson
RIMS AVID Scholarship Foundation



San Bernardino County

Education Medal of Honor

2025 Award Recipients

The Education Medal of Honor program recognizes individuals and groups who provide outstanding service and support to public education within San Bernardino County. Five of the six categories underscore the contributions, commitment and dedication of community and business supporters of public schools. One category seeks to recognize an exceptional education professional who is making a lasting impact on students and/or the community. This year, 28 extraordinary nominations were submitted for the San Bernardino County Education Medal of Honor, and tonight, six awards will be presented across this category.

San Bernardino County
Education Medal of Honor
2025 Award Recipients



Jade Centeno and Maria Medina

Volunteer in Action
Community Volunteer

As the inspiration and founding members of Little Leaders for a Bigger Tomorrow, Jade Centeno and Maria Medina have shaped a program that has impacted hundreds of students over the past decade. The foundation for Little Leaders for a Bigger Tomorrow was built in 2012 when Redwood Elementary School counselor Eduardo Valencia saw the need for a leadership program. At the time, Jade, a fourth grader passionate about leadership, had few opportunities to develop her skills. Maria, a sixth grader with strong leadership qualities, was eager to make a difference. Recognizing their enthusiasm, Mr. Valencia engaged Maria to collaborate with him and Jade in shaping Redwood's first leadership program.

Maria and Jade exemplify leadership through service. A UC Berkeley graduate and teacher, Maria, has returned to Redwood Elementary every year since 2011 to mentor students and lead initiatives like food drives and the Elementary School Leadership Summit, which she helped establish. Her work has empowered hundreds of young leaders in Fontana.

Jade, a founding mentor of Little Leaders for a Bigger Tomorrow, turned early setbacks into opportunities, co-creating the Leadership Summit and guiding K-12 students. Her resilience and dedication prove that true leadership lifts others. Both women have shaped a legacy of service, showing that the best leaders don't just achieve, they inspire.

Now, over a decade later, Jade and Maria continue to mentor and inspire new Little Leaders. Their dedication has helped transform the program into a model of leadership, service and community engagement. As proud FUSD graduates, they demonstrate their unwavering belief in the power of student leadership, leaving a lasting impact on future generations of Fontana students.

San Bernardino County
Education Medal of Honor
2025 Award Recipients



Redlands Educational Partnership

Volunteer in Action
Service Group

Founded in 1987, Redlands Educational Partnership (REP) was established by a group of dedicated parents and community stakeholders with a shared vision: to prioritize education, enhance learning opportunities, and prepare students to become contributing members of society.

REP has provided RUSD students and staff with critical resources and enrichment opportunities, helping bridge educational gaps and ensuring all students have access to the tools and experiences they need to succeed. In the 2024-2025 school year alone, REP has awarded $72,500 in teacher grants, funding unique and engaging educational experiences such as Snap Circuit kits for third graders exploring electricity, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) field trips exposing students to college and career opportunities, high school physics lab upgrades, artistic enrichment tools for AP art students, and even an LED dance floor for Redlands East Valley High School's PossAbilities Prom, fostering inclusivity for students of all abilities. These grants enhance learning for thousands of students while allowing educators to bring engaging lessons to life.

In addition to teacher grants, REP has also distributed $32,500 in principal grants, funding impactful projects such as sensory gardens for elementary students, murals and artistic enhancements, preparedness efforts and library updates. REP is primarily funded through community donations, corporate sponsorships, and grants, reflecting the community's strong dedication to supporting education.

Beyond grants, REP supports district programs through musical instrument purchases, summer learning camps, and employee recognitions—enhancing the educational experience for students and staff.

For nearly four decades, REP's initiatives have ensured that RUSD students are not only equipped with the academic skills they need to succeed, but also with the confidence, creativity and character to achieve their goals in life.

San Bernardino County
Education Medal of Honor
2025 Award Recipients



Culver-Newlin

Partners in Education
Small Business or Franchise

Culver-Newlin, an Inland Empire-based educational furniture provider, creates flexible, comfortable, durable, and fun learning spaces. Since 1963, they have partnered with schools across California, evolving their designs to meet the changing needs of students and staff. Believing furniture is integral to learning, Culver-Newlin tailors each project to foster inclusive and adaptable environments where every student can thrive. Their smart designs ensure every student can learn in the way that suits them best.

What began as a small two-man operation has grown into a 40-employee enterprise with 12 delivery trucks and a 60,000-square-foot warehouse and showroom. Today, they collaborate with over 180 public school districts, as well as private and charter schools and local colleges.

Culver-Newlin's commitment extends beyond furniture. In an effort to better utilize their resources and platform, they take the time to recognize and uplift educators. Since 2018, their Sharp Idea Awards have recognized outstanding teachers, with students, parents and administrators nominating educators who go above and beyond. To date, 25 teachers—including six from San Bernardino County—have been honored with $7,000 worth of furniture to transform their classrooms.

Each year, awardees receive a commemorative award and are celebrated at Culver-Newlin's annual tradeshow. The honorees participate in a panel discussion about their passion for teaching and innovative use of tools to create engaging learning environments. Their contributions go beyond material support; it is a powerful statement of belief in the value of education and the impact of teachers.

Culver-Newlin continues to support students and teachers alike, proving that the right learning space can make all the difference.

San Bernardino County
Education Medal of Honor
2025 Award Recipients



San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office

Partners in Education
Corporation or Government Agency

The San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office is deeply committed to the success of students across San Bernardino County, actively supporting multiple student-focused programs such as the Countywide Mock Trial competition and the Civil Liberties: Know Your Rights project. Through its involvement, the District Attorney's Office provides students with valuable opportunities to deepen their understanding of the law, their rights, and their responsibilities as citizens.

These programs go beyond expanding students' legal knowledge—they foster meaningful interactions between students and professionals in the field, including attorneys, judges, and law enforcement officials. By engaging directly with these leaders, students gain a clearer perspective on the justice system and develop the skills to navigate their interactions with government entities confidently and positively. This firsthand engagement strengthens communication, collaboration and trust between students and legal professionals, ensuring that their voices, concerns and experiences are acknowledged.

Whether they are arguing cases in a mock courtroom or learning about their rights in real-world scenarios, students can connect their studies in history, government and social science to the legal system that impacts their daily lives.

The ongoing partnership between SBCSS and the District Attorney's Office has significantly impacted student engagement. By making legal education relevant and accessible, this collaboration fosters a sense of civic responsibility, builds trust in public institutions, and equips students with practical knowledge that extends beyond the classroom.

Whether it's supporting students in our general or alternative education programs, the partnership and support the District Attorney's Office provides SBCSS has had a transformative impact on students throughout the County.

San Bernardino County
Education Medal of Honor
2025 Award Recipients



Nicole Robinson

Excellence in Education
Education Professional

Nicole Robinson has dedicated over 25 years to the Fontana Unified School District, with a career specialized in transforming dance education and ensuring equitable access to the arts for all students. As a dancer, teacher, choreographer, and advocate, Nicole has demonstrated her commitment to student success and a passion for developing inclusive, high-quality arts education.

Nicole's vision and passion has transformed the presence of dance education in FUSD. She founded the A. B. Miller Dance Program and later established the A. B. Miller Conservatory of Dance, providing tuition-free training to marginalized students and increasing diversity in the field. Through her leadership of the FUSD Dance Collaborative, she built a district-wide PK-8 dance education program, ensuring students have a strong foundation for high school and career pathways in the arts.

She also directs and produces A. B. Miller's dance concerts, supervises guest artists and oversees curriculum alignment as Department Chair for Visual and Performing Arts, ensuring FUSD's arts programs are comprehensive and of the highest quality.

Beyond FUSD, Nicole's influence extends nationally. As President of the California Dance Education Association and a Content Director for the Connected Arts Network, she advocates for equity and inclusion in arts education. Her work has earned her prestigious recognitions, including the 2024 National Dance Education Organization's National K-12 Leadership Award and the 2017 Carlston Family Foundation Teacher of the Year.

Nicole Robinson's legacy showcases her unwavering commitment to arts education. Her work has helped reach many students, including communities that are underserved, created pathways for future artists, and ensured that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

San Bernardino County
Education Medal of Honor
2025 Award Recipients



Dr. Lynne Kennedy

Excellence in Education
Student Alumni

Dr. Lynne Kennedy has had a professional career spanning over four decades as an educator, school administrator and civic leader. She began her journey in education in 1976 as a math teacher at a junior high school and soon rose through the ranks, serving as an assistant principal, principal, Associate Superintendent, and Superintendent. After retiring in 2012, she became Executive Director of the Alliance for Education for San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, fostering partnerships among business, labor, government, and education to improve the Inland Empire's quality of life. She retired again in 2019, concluding a 40-year career that left a lasting impact on students, educators and communities.

As Chaffey Joint Union High School District's Executive Director of Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Kennedy has championed policies ensuring all students have access to high-quality education and support. Her ability to bridge gaps, engage stakeholders, and champion systemic change has strengthened CJUHSD's commitment to inclusivity and student success. Dr. Kennedy was instrumental in founding CJUHSD's African American Parent Advisory Committee, creating a vital space for parents to engage, advocate and collaborate with district leadership. This initiative has empowered families and strengthened the bridge between home and school, ensuring that parent perspectives shape district decision-making.

Beyond education, Dr. Kennedy serves as Rancho Cucamonga's Mayor Pro Tem and is a charter member of the San Bernardino Valley Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, advocating for marginalized communities. Her work, defined by equity, innovation and student success, unites education and public policy to support students, families and regional well-being.



San Bernardino County

Distinguished Service Award

2025 Recipients

The San Bernardino County School Boards Association and the San Bernardino County Committee on School District Organization created the Distinguished Service Award program to celebrate exceptional service sustained over many years by an individual. The award recognizes significant leadership and outstanding contributions to education in San Bernardino County. Additional partners in the awards program are San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools and Fifth District PTA.

San Bernardino County
Distinguished Service Award
2025 Award Recipients



Ofelia Hinojosa

Principal, Fontana High School
Fontana Unified School District

Ofelia Hinojosa has dedicated over 30 years to the Fontana Unified School District, with more than a decade committed to the students and staff of Fontana High School as principal. Throughout her career - as a math teacher, an assistant principal, and principal - Ofelia has demonstrated exceptional leadership, an unwavering commitment to student success and a passion for fostering an inclusive school community, transforming the school climate and elevating the student and staff experience.

Her passion for education has been met with results. Ofelia's strategic vision and tireless efforts have propelled Fontana High School from a school in need of improvement to one of the district's top-performing sites. She has opened doors for students by providing them with equitable opportunities despite their socio-economic circumstances and empowering them to excel. Having once been told she was not "college material," Ofelia is committed to dismantling similar barriers for her students by expanding career-based pathways for those entering the workforce while reinforcing that all students can succeed in higher education.

One of Ofelia's most notable accomplishments is the increase in student achievement. She has introduced initiatives such as targeted faculty professional development and the integration of AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) strategies in all classrooms, directly improving instructional quality. Additionally, she expanded the Seal of Biliteracy program, increasing participation from 50 students in 2013 to 246 in 2024, making Fontana High School the district's leader in this recognition.

Beyond academic achievements, Ofelia is a pillar of support, known for her open-door policy, compassionate leadership, and dedication to fostering a positive school culture.

San Bernardino County
Distinguished Service Award
2025 Award Recipients



Vivian Shaw

Chairperson
RIMS AVID Scholarship Foundation

As a dedicated leader in the AVID College Readiness System, Vivian Shaw has been a transformative force in Southern California, influencing the academic futures of students across San Bernardino, Riverside, Inyo, and Mono counties for decades.

Her journey with the AVID program began in 1991 when she became the first AVID teacher in San Bernardino County at Colton High School. During her time, she equipped students with essential skills - time management, note-taking, writing and interview techniques – while guiding them through the college application process. In addition to practical skills, Vivian organized field trips to various colleges across the state, exposing students to possibilities they might not have otherwise considered. Because of her encouragement, her legacy lives on in the success of her students, many of whom have gone on to become educators, professionals and leaders in their communities.

Even in retirement, her dedication to student success by way of AVID has never wavered. As Chairperson of the RIMS AVID Scholarship Foundation, she has provided crucial financial support to college-bound AVID seniors who demonstrate both academic potential and a commitment to higher education. Under her leadership, the program has grown substantially from awarding 37 scholarships of $1,000 to 118 scholarships of $1,500. Since its inception, under Vivian's leadership, the fund provided over $1,000,000 in college scholarships for graduating AVID students and now distributes more than $110,000 in AVID scholarships annually. Vivian remains a driving force in expanding educational access for underrepresented students. Her vision, advocacy and unwavering commitment continue to empower future generations, leaving a lasting legacy in the region.

Thank you!

We thank the nominators for their efforts in recognizing and spotlighting individuals and organizations who are making positive contributions to educating our youth in San Bernardino County. We also thank this year's judging panels for their time and effort assessing the competitive nomination entries.

Mission Statement

The mission of San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools is to transform lives through education.

Working in collaboration with school districts, families, community partners and other agencies, we provide leadership, advocacy and services to ensure equitable, innovative and inspiring educational practices. This endeavor is essential to the quality of life and economic vitality of our communities.

View event photos by scanning the QR code or by visiting **https://bit.ly/4ibwodX**.

Photos will be available in 48 hours.

Transforming lives through education

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