OCDE NEWSROOM
EDUCATION NEWS FROM ORANGE COUNTY AND BEYOND
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2026

Congratulations to the 2027 Orange County Teachers of the Year

DREAM BIG





Megan Avalos
Rossmoor Elementary School
Los Alamitos
Unified School District



Kathryn Cerasuolo
Hope School
Anaheim Union
High School District



Kate Green, Ph.D.
Golden West College
Coast Community
College District



Ryan Healy
Marco Forster Middle School
Capistrano Unified
School District



Wendy Saldivar
Loara Elementary School
Anaheim Elementary
School District



Brittany Walters
Dr. Peter Marshall
Elementary School
Magnolia School District

This evening, at the Disneyland® Resort Hotel, many of Orange County's best and brightest teachers will be honored at the 2027 Orange County Teachers of the Year gala. The event celebrates teachers who have made extraordinary contributions to quality education.

"Every great dream begins with someone who believes it is possible," said Stefan Bean, Ed.D., County Superintendent of Schools. "For countless students across Orange County, that someone is a teacher. This year's theme, 'Dream Big,' honors the Orange County educators who inspire students to imagine what's possible and instill the confidence to pursue those aspirations with courage and determination. Each day, teachers do far more than deliver lessons. They encourage curiosity, nurture resilience and create opportunities for students to discover their strengths. By believing in their students and walking alongside them every step of the way, teachers uplift students to dream boldly and achieve more than they ever thought possible. On behalf of the Orange County Department of Education, I am honored to congratulate the 2027 Orange County Teachers of the Year. Thank you for believing in your students, challenging them to grow and helping them realize their fullest potential. The impact you make extends far beyond the classroom, empowering future generations to dream big and shape a brighter future for Orange County and beyond."

The Orange County Teachers of the Year gala is proudly sponsored by SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union. Since 1992, the credit union's contribution has exceeded $3 million. In addition to sponsoring the event, SchoolsFirst provides a cash award of $500 and a personalized gift to every nominee.

Each teacher will also receive a cash award from the Orange County Teachers of the Year Award Foundation, established by Bill, Jeff, and Jennifer Gross. The Gross family has generously contributed over $6 million to more than 1,900 teachers since 1992.

Semifinalists

Randi Beckley, Thurston Middle School, Laguna Beach Unified School District

Rebecca Bonet, Valencia High School, Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District

Jennifer Douglas, Tustin High School, Tustin Unified School District

Kelly Heard, Clarence Lobo Elementary School, Capistrano Unified School District

Kristen Mulder, El Modena High School, Orange Unified School District

Stephanie Nhim, Sonora High School, North Orange County Regional Occupational Program

Jamie Ostrander, Kinetic Academy, Charter School

Jenner Rasic, Golden Elementary School, Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District

Katie Unland, Moffett Elementary School, Huntington Beach City School District

Devon Zangger, Solis Park School, Irvine Unified School District

Nominees

Jeannie Alkire-Brewer, Orangeview Junior High School, Anaheim Union High School District

Lareina Ayers, Sierra Vista Elementary School, La Habra City School District

Jennifer Ballogg, Hansen Elementary School, Savanna School District

Kristin Bartus, Connections at Irvine High School, Orange County Department of Education

Taylor Brooks, Saddleback College, South Orange County Community College District

Darren Canejo, Sierra Vista Middle School, Irvine Unified School District

Julie Chaicharee, Fountain Valley High School, Huntington Beach Union High School District

Karen Chavez, Olita Elementary School, Lowell Joint School District

Christina Chong, Parks Junior High School, Fullerton School District

Courtney Collins, Laurel Elementary Magnet School, Brea Olinda Unified School District

Ashley Corlett, Trabuco Mesa Elementary School, Saddleback Valley Unified School District

Michael Covey, Mendez Fundamental Intermediate School, Santa Ana Unified School District

Kristen Currie, San Clemente High School, Capistrano Unified School District

Maria Elena Enriquez-Carrillo, Garfield Elementary School, Santa Ana Unified School District

Carolina Escobar, Wilson Elementary School, Newport-Mesa Unified School District

Loni Gallo, Laguna Hills High School, Saddleback Valley Unified School District

Shannon Gard, Serrano Intermediate School, Saddleback Valley Unified School District

Kathryn Geha, Capistrano Valley High School, College and Career Advantage

Lisa Gordon, San Joaquin High School, Irvine Unified School District

Cindy Herrell, Estock Elementary School, Tustin Unified School District

Heather Irwin, Panorama Elementary School, Orange Unified School District

Scott James, Santiago Canyon College, Rancho Santiago Community College District

Jeannie Kim, Frank Vessels Elementary School, Cypress School District

Amanda Kitahara, William T. Newland Elementary School, Fountain Valley School District

Rich Liem, Troy High School, Fullerton Joint Union High School District

Karissa Lovero, Ph.D., Orange Coast College, Coast Community College District

Patricia Macias, Orange Grove Elementary School, Anaheim Elementary School District

Rufaro Eunice Matikinyidze, North Orange Continuing Education, North Orange County Community College District

John McGilligan, Marina High School, Huntington Beach Union High School District

Kelly Nelson-Wright, Fullerton College, North Orange County Community College District

Erica Neumann, Lutheran High School of Orange County, Private School

Kim Nguyen, Oxford Academy, Anaheim Union High School District

Dennis Nicolosi, Mesa View Middle School, Ocean View School District

Donna Page, Genevieve Crosby Elementary School, Garden Grove Unified School District

Roxana Rain, Horace Ensign Intermediate School, Newport-Mesa Unified School District

Tara Roberts, Lampson Elementary School, Orange Unified School District

Gabriel Shweiri, Santa Ana College, Rancho Santiago Community College District

Rachael Skoug, Laguna Road Elementary School, Fullerton School District

Bill Snyder, Godinez Fundamental High School, Santa Ana Unified School District

Foster Stanback, Cypress College, North Orange County Community College District

Kat Terhune, Gordon H. Beatty Middle School, Buena Park School District

Jen Torshizi, George B. Miller Elementary School, Centralia Elementary School District

Melissa Towning, Dr. Russell I. Johnson Middle School, Westminster School District

Larinda Val Kotani, R.F. Hazard Elementary School, Garden Grove Unified School District

Deanna Valdez, Irvine Valley College, South Orange County Community College District

Kelly Virden, Sonora High School, Fullerton Joint Union High School District

Hao-Nhien Vu, Coastline College, Coast Community College District

Jeanne Wu, Santiago High School, Garden Grove Unified School District

Daniel K. Zimmerman, Coastline Regional Occupational Program

ORANGE COUNTY TEACHERS OF THE YEAR
COORDINATED BY: Orange County Department of Education
STEFAN BEAN, Ed.D. | County Superintendent of Schools
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