



PRESS RELEASE

15250 Avenue of Science ■ San Diego ■ California 92128-3406
Phone (858) 521-2707 ■ FAX (858) 485-1075

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Contact: Christine Paik, Director of Communications
(858) 521-2707

Poway Unified Announces the Selection of Three District Teachers of the Year

Mark Lantsberger, Susan Michelena, and Keith Opstad Receive District Honors

The Poway Unified School District is proud to announce Mark Lantsberger, Susan Michelena, and Keith Opstad as the three 2017 District Teachers of the Year. These teachers received surprise visits at their sites this morning.

A committee of District and site representatives selected the three PUSD Teachers of the Year based on criteria which included: innovations inside the classroom, contributions to their schools and the District, and commitment to their students.

The San Diego County Office of Education also sponsors a Teacher of the Year Recognition Program, honoring teachers from all of San Diego County. All three PUSD Teachers of the Year will be submitted for consideration for County Teacher of the Year.

Acting Superintendent Dr. Mel Robertson said, "Congratulations to our three teachers of the year! It is evident from their passion and expertise that they are inspiring their students each day to grow, learn, and develop their own passions. They truly represent all the incredible teachers we have throughout our school district."



Mark Lantsberger, a 20-year teaching veteran, is a computer science teacher at Del Norte High School. Mark developed his curriculum from scratch, giving students insight and a deeper understanding of both “C” and “JAVA” programming languages. His computer science club students developed an app that was recognized by Apple, and he also advises a new club “Girls in Computing,” to encourage more young women to pursue computer science. In addition to coding, Mark incorporates current social and ethical topics related to computer science and computing into his classes. He also tells stories and acts out abstract concepts in entertaining ways to aid his students’ understanding.

Mark acknowledges his unique appearance, explaining that he uses it to encourage his students and fellow educators to “think outside the box” in their approach to learning. The husband of an active duty member of the U.S. Navy, Mark has traveled the world, bringing his broad experiences into the classroom.

One of Mark’s greatest achievements is the long term mentoring relationship he has developed with his students into adulthood. Some of his former students now work at Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and have even become CEOs of their own software companies.



Susan Michelena has been teaching for 25 years in PUSD. Susan is a social studies teacher at Rancho Bernardo High School. From Advanced Placement U.S. History to Online Civics classes, Susan says one of her greatest accomplishments is teaching the values of American democracy and the principles of the Constitution that shape future public servants and leaders. She is proud that her students have gone on to serve their communities, in fields such as the military and public education.

Susan incorporates current events as well as active history lessons to simulate events such as the Stock Market Crash of 1929, World War II, experiencing Ellis Island, and a presidential campaign. As a C-SPAN teacher-fellow, she was recognized for her innovative methods of integrating those programs into the classroom. As part of the PBS Digital Innovators of 2016, Susan participated in a nationwide program that introduces teachers to new ways of implementing technology into the classroom.

Susan's classes are focused on the values of diversity, tolerance, and a strong work ethic. In every class, she strives to teach students the responsibilities and rights of citizenship as well as the struggle of many in this country to achieve those rights.



Keith Opstad, art teacher at Westview High School, has been teaching for 22 years in the Poway Unified School District. Keith is a strong advocate for the visual arts both in the District and San Diego County. His students consistently produce artwork of the highest caliber, winning top awards and scholarships at the San Diego Museum of Art, California Center for the Arts, and Scholastic Arts and Writing, to name a few.

An outstanding arts educator, Keith can transform students who have never even held a paintbrush, into creative, passionate artists. In addition to teaching art techniques and style, Keith also teaches his students the business aspect of art, so they don't have to be "starving artists." His colleagues are regular patrons and commission custom pieces from his students. Keith's students' Homecoming speed paintings are an annual highlight on the Westview campus.

Keith's impact on the arts community extends beyond his school. He was one of the first online teachers in the District, which resulted in him presenting to the U.S. Department of Education. During the summer, he employs former PUSD students to create large murals in the community. He also volunteers his time and expertise with the City of San Diego Arts & Culture Council.

2017 Poway Unified Teachers of the Year

This is a list of all PUSD 2017 school site Teachers of the Year. All of these finalists are outstanding candidates, representative of the high caliber of professionalism and commitment that is characteristic of Poway Unified School District teachers.

Name	Site
Alice Abalos	Abraxas
Kerrie Shank	Adobe Bluffs
Johanna Reynolds	Alt Programs
Robert Schumacher	Bernardo Heights
Julie Garcia	Black Mountain
Bruce May	CTAE
Linda Ford	Chaparral
Karen DeGrandmont	Creekside
Meg Katsiapis	Deer Canyon
Mark Lantsberger	Del Norte
Karen Garrett	Del Sur
Louis Martinez	Garden Road
Sandy Hardy	Highland Ranch
Sheri DeCremer	Los Penasquitos
Shauna Koelzer	Meadowbrook
Aston Ward	Mesa Verde
Kirst Brenman	Midland
Amy Halley	Monterey Ridge
Debra Brennan	Morning Creek
Gretchen Triebel	Mt. Carmel
Traci Jackson	Oak Valley
Paula Allison	Pomerado
TeriAnne Libby	Poway High
Susan Michelena	Rancho Bernardo
Junko Kajita	Rolling Hills
Jessica Poggemoeller	Shoal Creek
Jeremy Vincent	Stone Ranch
Susanna Buell	Sundance
Erin Rozelle	Tierra Bonita
Jennifer Bivin	Turtleback
Holly Lingenhol	Twin Peaks
Adrienne Wright	Valley
Keith Opstad	Westview
Mary Mihalik	Westwood
Casey Ridgley	Willow Grove