

Fresno County

EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

November 30, 2023



*This evening is
proudly sponsored by*



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Message to Educators



Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher

Superintendent
Fresno County Superintendent of Schools

Tonight, we are celebrating those employees, administrators and teachers who shape future generations with their commitment, kindness, and compassion. I join them in believing the dreams of every parent for their child's bright future live in our Fresno County classrooms. Together, with our shared mission, we will continue to amplify the abilities of our students to achieve through the power of education. That power, when applied with equitable access and opportunities, can truly transform lives!

Thank you to our honorees for your dedication to education. You are the generators of hope, which is what makes the world go round. And thank you to our exclusive sponsor, Educational Employees Credit Union, for your steadfast commitment to our educators and honoring them at this event for more than 30 years.



Elizabeth J. Dooley

President/Chief Executive Officer
Educational Employees Credit Union

It is an honor for EECU to sponsor the prestigious Fresno County Educator of the Year awards program celebrating outstanding teachers, administrators and school employees.

Those who work in education have demonstrated just how resilient and resourceful they can be in the face of adversity, particularly these past few years. The honorees should take great pride in their accomplishments and the amazing work they are doing daily to enrich the school experience for all students.

We extend our sincere congratulations to this year's nominees, finalists and winners. These extraordinary people represent the best of the education profession and we are proud to be part of this event to shine a spotlight on their achievements, talents and dedication.

Special Thanks

2023 Selection Committee

Jennifer Quinn-Yovino, Chairperson
Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools

Terry Allen
Richard Delgado
Kelly Eichmann
Carmen Garvis
Gabriel Hughes
Jeff Hunt

Sherri Johnson
Shannon Koontz-Monis
Kim Leslie
Alma McKenry
David Navarro
Jason Stricker

Praxades Torres
Joy Uyeki
Valerie Vuicich
Ellen Youssef

Educational Employees Credit Union Staff

Joe Doyland
Nicole Franzen
Mark Perez

ABC30 Action News

Michael Carr, President and General Manager
Warren Armstrong
Margot Kim

Production

Dan Aldape - W.O.W. Productions
Kyle Lowe - CMAC

Entertainment

Kerman Unified Mariachi León
under the direction of Emily Adams and Jesus Plascencia

Event Support

Dr. Lisa Benham-Lewis
Lisa Birrell
Stephen Bock
Lexi Carlon
Phouvanh Chaimontree
Rita Contreras

Barbara Daniel
Manraj Dhaliwal
Jeff Hunt
Rhonda Lodridge
Kim Leslie
Erika Lopez

Christopher Mora
Joe Ricardi
Dan Serrato
Janet Sloan
Isela Turner

Superintendent's Cabinet

Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher, Superintendent

Jeff Becker
Lisa Birrell
Christina Borges
Rubén V. Castillo
Trina Frazier
Laurie Gabriel

Dr. Corey Greenlaw
Brad Huebert
Dr. Diane Lira
Teresa Martinez-Treviño
Kevin Otto
Tannon Pafford

Jason C. Parkin
Mike Pronovost
Helena Silva
Janet Sloan

Program

Entertainment.....	Kerman Unified Mariachi León under the direction of Emily Adams and Jesus Plascencia
Greetings from the Superintendent	Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
Master of Ceremony	Warren Armstrong Margot Kim ABC30 Action News
Welcome from Educational Employees Credit Union.....	Elizabeth J. Dooley President/Chief Executive Officer
Administrator of the Year Award Presentation.....	Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher Elizabeth J. Dooley Jason Stricker 2022 Administrator of the Year
Employee of the Year Award Presentation.....	Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher Elizabeth J. Dooley Gabriel Hughes 2022 Employee of the Year
Barnett Award Presentation.....	Aaron Bryan 2020 Administrator of the Year
Teacher of the Year Award Presentation	Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher Elizabeth J. Dooley Dr. Kelly Eichmann 2022 Teacher of the Year
Closing Remarks	Warren Armstrong Margot Kim ABC30 Action News

Administrator Finalists



Tumani Heights

Manager II - Foster and Homeless District Liason
Fresno Unified School District
Dr. Robert Nelson

I am honored to be a finalist for the Fresno County Administrator of the Year award. Thank you, FCSS, EECU, and community partners for recognizing the dedication and hard work it takes to improve the educational outcomes for all students. Additionally, FUSD for recognizing the vital need of Project ACCESS and entrusting me to lead this transformative work. I'm blessed to work alongside my dedicated staff, who accept the challenge of reshaping the narrative for the students we serve. Thanks to my husband, for the dedication, encouragement, and sacrifices; and my children, siblings, mentors/friends. Lastly, the two most influential women in my life – Great-grandma, thank you for wisdom, believing in me, and exemplifying the value of education/hard work. Mom, your guidance, support, sacrifices, and prayers have fortified my strength and a sense of purpose. I enthusiastically accept the challenge of being the catalyst and positive “game changer” for all students.

Sam Polanco

Principal, Sanger West High School
Sanger Unified School District
Dr. Dennis Wiechmann



It is an amazing honor to represent Sanger Unified and Sanger West High School as a finalist for the FCOE Administrator of the Year. Thank you to Fresno County Superintendent of Schools and EECU for honoring the work and sacrifices that all educators make as we do our part to have a positive impact on the lives of the students who come into our buildings. The work I've been a part of is only possible because of the support system that surrounds me, to all the amazing team of adults which I have worked alongside of, to my mentors, family and friends, I thank you. A special wholehearted thank you to my amazing wife, Patricia and daughters Gabrielle and Danielle for all of their support, encouragement and sacrifices they have made to ensure all the students and staff needs were met.

Administrator Finalists



Matilda Soria

Senior Director of Early Care and Education
Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher

It is an honor to be an Administrator of the Year finalist, representing the Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS), Early Care and Education (ECE) Department. Working in the field of education for the past 22 years has truly been a rewarding experience. Knowing that I'm contributing to the foundational years of a human life is so powerful. Thank you to my FCSS co-workers and ECE Department team members. I'm honored to work alongside all of you to ensure children reach their full potential in life. Thank you to my family and friends for their unconditional love and support. Thank you to the FCSS and Educational Employees Credit Union for recognizing those who make children their mission.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership

"The great leaders are like the best conductors - they reach beyond the notes to reach the magic in the players."

-Blaine Lee

Administrator Nominees



Fatima Anguiano
Selma Unified School District
Edward Gomes



Sheryl Boe
Clovis Unified School District
Dr. Corrine Folmer



Rayshawn Hightower
Central Unified School District
Ketti Davis



Randy Jarrett
Mendota Unified School District
Dr. Paul Lopez



Jock Millspaugh
Kerman Unified School District
Gordon Pacheco



Amy Winchell
Kingsburg Elementary
Dr. Wesley Sever

Administrator Nominees



Terrance Brown
Washington Unified School District
Randy Morris



Jenna Chavez
Parlier Unified School District
Dr. Rafael Iniguez



Sandra Kirk
Riverdale Joint Unified School District
Jeff Percell



Rick McCollum
Kings Canyon Unified School District
John Campbell



May Yang
Fowler Unified School District
Lindsay Sanders



Gerrett Suarez
Firebaugh-Las Deltas School District
Dr. Roy Mendiola

Employee Finalists



Andrew Nabors

Coordinator, Administrative Services
Clovis Unified School District
Dr. Corrine Folmer

I am incredibly humbled and honored to have been nominated and recognized as a finalist for Educator of the Year and to represent Clovis Unified. Special thanks to FCSS and EECU for their dedication to showcasing the remarkable educators who are transforming the lives of our students.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to our district leadership team and colleagues for the nomination and enabling the flexibility that allows for me to continue to coach and mentor students on Buchanan High School's robotics team. That's where I found my passion, and the opportunity to give back to those students is invaluable. Finally, I want to thank my family, especially my wife, Jeannie, for your support and encouragement. Your inspiration has empowered me to reach my fullest potential.

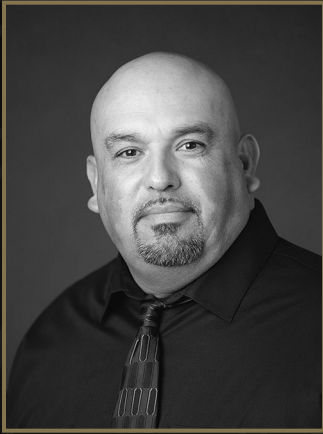
Bernadette Sanchez

School Social Worker
Kings Canyon Unified School District
John Campbell



Thank you to EECU and Fresno County Superintendent of Schools for this recognition. I am grateful for the opportunity to represent Kings Canyon Unified School District. As a School Social Worker, I deal with some of the most difficult situations in a students' lives. I hope in a small way I can help them overcome life's most serious challenges and find some light to the darkness. I am especially honored that my students trust me and have let me be part of their journey onto the next phase of their lives. I would like to thank my husband, Steve, you have stood by my side through it all and continue to make me a better person, I love you. And, to my parents, you are the best parents anyone could ask for, los quiero mucho.

Employee Finalists



Robert "Bobby" Zavala

Maintenance and Operations Site Team Lead
Kerman Unified School District
Gordon Pacheco

First off, I would like to give thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for without him, nothing is possible. It's an honor to be here on behalf of the Kerman Community and Kerman Unified School District. Thank you to Fresno County Superintendent of Schools and everyone involved in this process. Thank you to Mr. Matthew Toews for giving me the opportunity to lead my Department. To Mrs. Jessica Ness for the wisdom and encouragement she gives. To Mr. Gordon Pacheco and Barbara Kramer at the District Office for all the support. To the best coworkers anyone can have... I share this with you all and thank you for trusting and believing in me. To my beautiful wife of 31 years who supports me, you are my rock and the foundation of our family. To both my son and daughter who keep me young and have always had my back, you two have been blessings in my life. To my Mom and Dad who set the example of hard work, perseverance, dedication, loyalty, and unconditional love, I miss both of you! To my siblings, thank you for being role models and setting the standard and upholding it for me. Love you always. Thank you again for such an honor, it too has been a blessing.

SERVICE
Service

"Ability is what you're capable of doing.
Motivation determines what you do.
Attitude determines how well you do it."

-Lou Holtz

Employee Nominees



Christine Christensen
Sanger Unified School District
Dr. Dennis Wiechmann



Marissa Estrada
Parlier Unified School District
Dr. Rafael Iniguez



Lorenzo Madrid
Firebaugh- Las Deltas School District
Dr. Roy Mendiola



Angelina Maravilla
Washington Colony
Jesus Cruz



Roberto Montoya-Vega
Kingsburg Elementary
Dr. Wesley Sever



Mac Souvannasane
Office of the Fresno County
Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher

Employee Nominees



Rodolfo Frutis
Selma Unified School District
Edward Gomes



Cathy Lopez
Fresno Unified School District
Dr. Robert Nelson



Mary Matos
Laton Unified School District
Lupe Nieves

Not Pictured: Felipe Labrada, Burrell Union • Vue Moya, Fowler Unified • Jodie Velasquez, Central Unified

Teacher Finalists



Emmelin Herrera

Elementary Teacher
Fresno Unified School District
Dr. Robert Nelson

It's my privilege to be selected as a finalist for this prestigious award. I am grateful to everyone who has always been a part of my journey, from my family to friends, from Fresno Unified to my Herrera Elementary colleagues and community. As a first-generation Mexican immigrant, who came to the United States at a young age, I thank my parents, who left everything behind to provide us with a more promising future. My Fresno Unified family and leaders have inspired me to be who I am today. My family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement which has been instrumental in helping me to achieve this recognition. Lastly, my husband and kids who are my rock and my motivation to be the best I can be. Thank you to all who have been there for me every step of the way, I sincerely express my heartiest thankfulness to you all.

Dominique Rowden

Speech Language Pathologist
Kerman Unified School District
Gordon Pacheco



It is an honor to be a finalist for Teacher of the Year representing school-based Speech Language Pathologists. I am blessed to work in Kerman Unified with the most amazing staff, students and parents who work collaboratively to ensure the success and continuous growth of each individual student. I would like to thank Fresno County Superintendent of Schools and EECU for allowing me this opportunity and recognizing the hard work that all school employees put into supporting our students. Last but not least, thank you to my daughter Mia who always inspires me and reminds me why I do what I do each and every day and encourages me to reach into the community, beyond the walls of my classroom.

Teacher Finalists



Alana Woodin

Teacher/ Activities Director
Orange Cove High School
Kings Canyon Unified School District
John Campbell

I am in a continual process of learning how to live a life of love. I am reminded daily by students, Orange Cove High staff and Kings Canyon Unified leaders of what sacrificial love really looks like as we all work together to serve our community. I am honored to be invited to represent such a remarkable group. I am also beyond thankful for the love of my family, best friends, and kids for their support throughout the years—no matter how crazy the dress up day or idea, they are always in! Ultimately, I thank King Jesus for His plans and purposes unfolding in my life. Living for Him is the most exciting adventure—and the best is yet to come!

INSPIRATION.
Inspiration

“Come to the edge he said.
They said: We are afraid.
Come to the edge he said.
They came.
He pushed them, and they flew. . .”

—Guillaume Apollinaire

Teacher Nominees



Stephanie Blodgett
Parlier Unified School District
Dr. Rafael Iniguez



Sarah Burress
Clovis Unified School District
Dr. Corrine Folmer



Julie Dunn
Office of the Fresno County
Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher



Sierra Gerling
Riverdale Joint Unified School District
Jeff Percell



Stacy Partlow
Washington Colony
Jesus Cruz



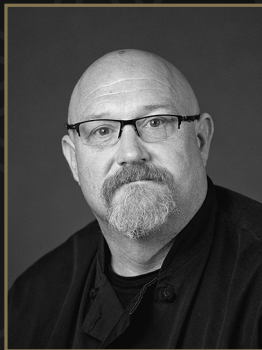
Sandra Prewitt
Sanger Unified School District
Dr. Dennis Wiechmann

Teacher Nominees



Michael Cerrillo

Washington Unified School District
Randy Morris



Michael Crockett

Firebaugh- Las Deltas School District
Dr. Roy Mendiola



John Marquez

Kingsburg Joint Unified School District
Don Shoemaker



Desiree McDougal

Selma Unified School District
Edward Gomes



Sarah Schmal

Kingsburg Elementary
Dr. Wesley Sever



Carlos Tamayo

Mendota Unified School District
Dr. Paul Lopez

Past Winners

	TEACHERS	ADMINISTRATORS	EMPLOYEES
2022	Dr. Kelly Eichmann Clovis Unified	Jason Stricker Sanger Unified	Gabriel Hughes Clovis Unified
2021	Sherri Johnson Clovis Unified	Alma McKenry Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools	Richard Delgado Clovis Unified
2020	Catherine Cooper Sanger Unified	Aaron Bryan Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools	Annette Montague Fresno Unified
2019	Greg Barragan Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools	Dr. Dr. Dennis Wiechmann Sanger Unified	Praxades Torres III Parlier Unified
2018	Carmen Garvis Sanger Unified	Valerie Vuicich Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools	Marco Franco Kerman Unified
2017	Ellen Youssef Clovis Unified	Rick Church Sanger Unified	Ray Zavala Clovis Unified
2016	Jacqueline Ruiz Fresno Unified	Bob Kampf Clovis Unified	Danny Alberty Fresno Unified
2015	Renee Gomez Washington Unified	Rodolfo Garcia Edison Bethune Charter Academy	Linda Amparano Clovis Unified
2014	Magdalene Bowman Washington Unified	Hank Gutierrez Fowler Unified	Selena Rico Fresno Unified
2013	Roy Swift Selma Unified	Marcus P. Johnson Sanger Unified	Setha J. Nhim Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
2012	William Magnusson Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified	Edward Gomes Fresno Unified	Salvador Cisneros Jr. Burrel Union Elementary
2011	Jill Delano Sanger Unified	Norm Anderson Clovis Unified	Albert Mendoza Sanger Unified
2010	Peggy Foletta Kingsburg Jt. Union High School	Tim Lopez Sanger Unified	Suzanne Dias Washington Union High School
2009	Kent Hammons Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools	Rosario Sanchez Fresno Unified	Amanda James Central Unified
2008	Neriada Barba Kerman Unified	Victoria Armstrong Selma Unified	Steve Fusi Washington Union High School
2007	Donna Vincenti Sanger Unified	Samuel M. Hines Fresno Unified	Arturo Huizar Washington Union High School
2006	Angela Ballew Sanger Unified	Peter Tozlian Central Unified	Victor Lemus Kerman Unified
2005	Bill Feaver Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools	Carlo Prandini Clovis Unified	Tim Crow Clovis Unified
2004	Carol Stone Kingsburg Elementary	Chris Williams Central Unified	Valentino Vital Central Unified
2003	Karen vonFelten Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools	Elaine Beyer Fresno Unified	Robin Lund Kingsburg Joint Union High
2002	Karin Larka Fresno Unified	Daniel Safreno Raisin City Elementary	Gabriel Gutierrez Fowler Unified

Past Winners

	TEACHERS	ADMINISTRATORS	EMPLOYEES
2001	Gary Nelson Central Unified	Phil Stovall Kingsburg Elementary	Linda Dominguez Orange Center Elementary
2000	Diana Decker Central Unified	Joe Faria Clovis Unified	Lydia Martinez Parlier Unified
1999	Gina Gravatt Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified	Teresa Wood Selma Unified	Christine M. Lopez Sanger Unified
1998	Linda Coleman Fresno Unified	Jeff Eben Clovis Unified	Barbara McColm Fowler Unified
1997	Anthony Ayerza Kerman Unified	Alfred Sanchez Mendota Unified	Cheryl Craddock Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified
1996	Stephen Bock Selma Unified	John Marinovich Fresno Unified	Gerald Chames Kerman Unified
1995	Laura Allen Washington Union High	Terry Simerly Fresno Unified	Charles Roberts West Fresno Elementary
1994	Pauline Sahakian Clovis Unified	Linda Hauser Clovis Unified	Savonia Sharp Sierra Unified
1993	Glenn McFall Selma Unified	Diane Parrish Fresno Unified	Bill Jackson Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools
1992	Julia Hollenbeck Clovis Unified	Gary Kinsey Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified	George Cisneros Burrel Elementary
1991	Robert Bullwinkel Fresno Unified		Linda Terry Pine Ridge Elementary
1990	Mario Guerrero Selma Unified		
1989	Lee Skidmore Clovis Unified		
1988	Elizabeth Sullivan Pine Ridge Elementary		
1987	Sherla A. Cox Clovis Unified		
1986	Lyn Swanson-Natsues Kerman Unified		
1985	John Panzak Kings Canyon Unified		
1984	Finian John McGinn Fresno Unified		
1983	Kathy Soligian Mesple Central Unified		
1982	Valerie Welk Clovis Unified		
1981	Carl Gong Sanger Unified Helen Hoyt Parlier Unified		
1980	Verna Benzler Clovis Unified		



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