



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Poway Unified Teacher Chosen as San Diego County Teacher of the Year: *Katie Wu, English Teacher at Westview High School***



The Poway Unified Board of Education and Superintendent, Dr. Marian Kim-Phelps, congratulate and celebrate Katie Wu, English Teacher at Westview High School, for being selected as one of the five 2018-2019 San Diego County Teachers of the Year.

Katie was named during the "Salute to Teachers" awards show on Saturday, September 15, 2018. A total of 41 school district nominees for San Diego County Teacher of the Year were presented in an Academy Awards-style live television event, including the three nominees from PUSD: **Shantel Raquel** of Del Sur Elementary, **Ana Collins** of Valley Elementary, and **Katie Wu** of Westview High School. The 41 nominees represent San Diego County's 22,000 teachers. Each year, ten finalists are chosen during the two-hour program which culminates in the announcement of the five teachers chosen to represent San Diego County for the year.



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## The 2018-19 San Diego County Teachers of the Year are:



- **Sesha Haynes, Sweetwater High School** (Sweetwater Union High School District)
- **Jose Villegas, Nestor Language Academy** (South Bay Union School District)
- **Katie Wu, Westview High School** (Poway Unified School District)
- **Melissa Moreno, Rosebank Elementary School** (Chula Vista Elementary School District)
- **Stehanie Glanz, Rose Elementary School** (Escondido Union School District)

The five Teachers of the Year will represent San Diego County in the California Teacher of the Year program. The state winners will be announced later this Fall. Since 1974, 171 teachers have been named San Diego County Teacher of the Year. Of those, 22 were named California Teacher of the Year and three went on to be named National Teacher of the Year.

### About PUSD's Teachers of the Year:

**Katie Wu**, Katie has been teaching for 10 years – all of them with the Poway Unified School District. She is an English teacher at Westview High School. Katie considers teaching to be similar to gardening, where she plants seeds in students' minds; some seeds may sprout right away while other seeds may take months or years after the student graduates before the ideas she has cultivated begin to germinate.

Katie says that her upbringing lacked parental support for education, and she struggled as a low-income, first-generation immigrant who was not a native English speaker. She fondly remembers receiving Christmas gifts through an "Adopt A Family" program, inspiring a lifetime focus on social justice. As a frequent community service volunteer, she feels like she is paying it forward for those who need the same kind of assistance her family once did. Her past struggles also helped her to connect with her students when she began teaching English Prep, AVID, and Academic Success. She started a writing center at Westview where skilled writing students can tutor their peers. She also never forgot the support of her teachers that allowed her to blossom and develop into a person who is passionate about working with students. She was the first in her family to attend college.

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**Shantel Raquel** Shantel has been a teacher for 18 years and is currently teaching 2nd and 3rd grades at Del Sur Elementary School. Shantel has a special gift of connecting with even the shyest or hardest to reach children, and she uses that gift for her students' success. Shantel employs an eclectic teaching approach so she can customize what is needed for each one of her students, and she spends hours researching and planning the best strategies to reach them. Ironically, Shantel also wants every child to make mistakes in her classroom because she strongly believes that those mistakes help them learn and develop grit. Shantel strives to ensure her classroom will always serve as a safe place to fall and get back up again. Her goal is to develop global citizens who will continue to do good work far beyond elementary school and PUSD.

Shantel is known for her enthusiasm and collaborative spirit; she served as her school's liaison for PUSD's new literacy adoption and mentors student teachers year after year. Shantel is also the first to volunteer or to try something new to benefit students and families. From her school's Literacy Night to the PTA Reflections program to community service projects, she believes it is her responsibility to impact students and people beyond her classroom walls. She has applied rigor, relevance, and relationships to influence her teaching, taking her instruction to new levels and raising the expectations and meeting the core need of every student.

**Ana Collins**, a 14-year special education educator, is a resource specialist for grades TK-5 at Valley Elementary School, PUSD's only Spanish immersion program. As a bilingual instructor, Ana has not only been able to identify learning disabilities in Valley's bilingual student population, but also developed and adapted special education materials to serve Spanish-speaking students as well as those receiving academic instruction in Spanish. This represented a significant change as these student groups were previously only able to access services in English. Her work in this area has led to significant growth and improvement in students' confidence and test scores. Ana also uses her language skills to serve as both an educator and advocate for her bilingual students and their families in PUSD.

Ana is a PUSD parent and member of the community. She is not only a soccer mom, but a baseball mom, swim mom, Boy Scouts mom, and ice hockey mom! Her involvement in community teams and PTA sponsored events has allowed her to engage with Valley students and families outside of the school day. As a result, Ana is better able to understand and engage with her students in the school setting. That rapport has built trust with the families she serves.

Ana is a strong believer in education and being a lifetime learner, not just at school but wherever life takes you. Growing up in Spain, Ana acquired a strong appreciation for language and culture both at home and abroad. Her mom was a teacher, and even though Ana initially did not pursue teaching, she fell in love with the field as an after school volunteer.