



Irvine Unified School District

5050 Barranca Parkway, Irvine, California 92604-4652 / 949.936.5000 / FAX 949.936.5259 / www.iusd.org

Media Contact: Ian Hanigan
Public Information Officer
Phone: (949) 936-5002
Fax: (949) 936-5259
ihanigan@iusd.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Three top IUSD educators surprised with Teacher of the Year honors *Honorees from Irvine will be formally recognized at an awards dinner on May 8*

IRVINE, Calif. – The Exchange Club of Irvine, in cooperation with the Irvine Teachers Association (ITA) and the Irvine Unified School District (IUSD), has selected a trio of top educators to receive Teacher of the Year honors for 2008-09.

Kathy Sulack, a special education teacher at Meadow Park Elementary School, was named the Elementary Teacher of the Year; Kathy Marvin, a science teacher at Sierra Vista Middle School, was named Middle School Teacher of the Year; and Cindy Peronto, an English language development teacher at Irvine High, was chosen as this year's High School Teacher of the Year.

All three were surprised with the news by ITA leaders, district staff and IUSD Board of Education member Sue Kuwabara on Thursday, Feb. 26. The honorees will be formally recognized at the annual Excellence in Teaching Awards Dinner on May 8 at the Irvine Marriott.

“We are incredibly fortunate to have educators of the caliber of Kathy Sulack, Kathy Marvin and Cindy Peronto working in this district,” said Superintendent Gwen Gross. “These three exemplify passion, creativity and an unparalleled commitment to their chosen professions. In a district overflowing with talented staff, they represent the best of what IUSD has to offer.”

Now in its 23rd year, the Teacher of the Year program annually recognizes star instructors at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

About this year's winners

As a special day class teacher, Kathy Sulack helps children with significant disabilities achieve new levels of independence. Sulack uses innovative strategies to meet the specific needs of her students, incorporating visual aids, music and art into her lessons. As a result, students who cannot vocalize learn to communicate and students who cannot walk learn to navigate their environments. Through collaboration with other professionals, Sulack has become an expert in the areas of occupational therapy and physical therapy, as well as speech and language, and she continually shares her knowledge with her support staff and parents.

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IUSD ... providing the highest quality educational experience we can envision.

As an eighth-grade science teacher at Sierra Vista Middle School, Kathy Marvin consistently delivers lessons that are both technologically advanced and highly engaging. In addition to writing numerous grants to obtain state-of-the-art teaching tools and equipment, Marvin has developed a popular science/engineering exploratory class that features group projects on roller coaster physics, robotics, water rocket science and other inspiring topics. She also brings in scientific experts to deliver special lectures for her students. Moreover, Marvin has emerged as a leader in IUSD's energy conservation efforts, leading in-services at other schools and districts.

Cindy Peronto is the dynamic force behind Irvine High's English language development program. Prior to each school year, Peronto tests incoming students who have a primary language other than English and develops individualized learning plans, following up with regular grade checks to ensure that each is progressing properly. In addition to administering the state's English Language Development Test and serving on multiple committees, Peronto conducts an after-school tutoring program and teaches summer school to help students advance in their language acquisition. She also coaches the girls' varsity soccer and lacrosse teams and leads a troop of Girl Scouts.

Selecting Teachers of the Year

Nominations for Teacher of the Year were submitted by district employees, and candidates were later interviewed by a committee made up of teachers, principals and an Exchange Club member.

That committee ultimately narrowed the field to the final three using the following criteria: Evidence of a wide range of instructional strategies used effectively; commitment to the teaching profession; and demonstration of Irvine teachers' values of integrity, empowerment, learning, collaboration and trust.

Sulack, Marvin and Peronto will later be submitted as nominees for Orange County Teacher of the Year. In addition, The Irvine Company annually contributes a monetary award to the winners and their classrooms to "recognize great educators, encourage outstanding teaching, and help further improve the quality of education in the classroom."

Teachers of Promise

In addition to the Teachers of the Year, the Exchange Club, ITA and IUSD also annually recognize Teachers of Promise. These are first- or second-year instructors who demonstrate professional curiosity and an unbridled enthusiasm for teaching.

This year's Teachers of Promise, also announced Thursday, are: Harmony Hager, a fifth-grade teacher at Turtle Rock Elementary School; Ashley Hanna, who teaches elementary music; Corey Heddon, who teaches instrumental music at University High School; and Margot Johnson, a special education teacher at Lakeside Middle School.

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