



Fontana Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Dual Language Immersion Teacher Recognized for Commitment to Social Justice

FONTANA, CA – Ashley Silva believes that providing students an opportunity to learn a second language will create a community empowered to fight for social justice and guide future generations. Inspired by the Hawaiian concept of ‘Ohana, the Dolores Huerta International Academy (DHIA) sixth-grade Spanish dual-language immersion teacher considers each student in her classroom to be part of her family.

In Silva’s classrooms, students support and encourage each other, even in their most difficult moments, and grow as a family, sharing stories and building on personal connections. For providing these unforgettable learning moments, Silva was recognized with the fifth annual Alma Flor Ada Award for Social Justice. Silva received her award during the Jornada Pedagógica Professional Development Conference, held Feb. 4 at Loyola Marymount University.

“Thank you so much for this experience. It’s a privilege to accept this honor,” Silva said. “Being a teacher is my dream job and my passion, and each day I get to help guide our children into the future. This is what motivates me the most. My hope is that through my achievements our students will see that with enthusiasm, everything is possible. As we always say at Dolores Huerta, ‘si se puede!’”

Silva, who was recognized as DHIA’s 2021-22 teacher of the year, is known for dressing up as Ms. Frizzle, the exuberant teacher from “The Magic School Bus” and infusing her inquiry-based transdisciplinary International Baccalaureate curriculum with science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) concepts, such as Ozobot robots and Makey Makey coding software.

In 2022, Silva was one of just 10 teachers across the U.S. to be accepted into the Teacher Innovator Institute (TII) professional development program, where she met with education and STEAM experts to explore the connections between STEAM education and authentic learning. After the TII summer program was completed, Silva brought back innovative practices to share with her colleagues.

“As a woman and a Chicana, being able to be part of this select group of teachers has helped me professionally and at the same time helps in closing the equity gap, regardless of race, socioeconomic level or gender,” Silva said. “Learning and sharing new strategies with my colleagues has not only helped me as a teacher, but also allowed equitable access to learning experiences for our community.”

Silva’s bond with her students and their families is conceptualized in ‘Ohana, a word with roots in native Hawaiian culture and popularized in the animated movie “Lilo and Stitch.” In Silva’s classrooms, all students are part of her ‘Ohana, forming a family support group where students are instilled with confidence, while challenging themselves to be independent and self-directed learners.

Silva's quest to build positive relationships often takes her outside of the classroom. She regularly participates in the City of Fontana's "Fontana Walks" program, joining her students and their families for Saturday morning fitness excursions. After reading the Holocaust novel "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" to her class, Silva arranged for a field trip to the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles so that her students could make connections with the real world and reflect on the context of what they read.

"Ashley Silva is a treasure at our school and in our community," DHIA Principal Sandra Loudermilk said. "Her enthusiasm for teaching is genuine, and she serves as a role model not just for our students and their families, but also for her colleagues at Dolores Huerta International Academy."

Alma Flor Ada, a Cuban-American author and Professor Emerita at the University of San Francisco, is recognized as one of the leading proponents of bilingual and multicultural education in the United States. The Jornada Pedagógica is an annual multilingual conference coordinated by Loyola Marymount's Center for Equity for English Learners.

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_SILVA_DHIA: Dolores Huerta International Academy sixth-grade Spanish dual language immersion teacher Ashley Silva (front row, second from left) receives the Alma Flor Ada Award for Social Justice during Jornada Pedagógica Professional Development Conference, held Feb. 4 at Loyola Marymount University. Silva encourages her students to support each other and grow as a family, empowered to fight for social justice and guide future generations.

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