



Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

9680 Citrus Avenue | Fontana, CA 92335 | Phone: (909) 357-5000 | www.fusd.net

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 11, 2024

CONTACT: Andrew Shortall

(909) 204-6013

Fontana Unified Celebrates District Teacher of the Year for Dedication to Supporting Her Students, Colleagues

FONTANA, CA – Surrounded by cheering students, Chaparral Academy of Technology teacher Alexandra Cruz was surprised when Fontana Unified School District administrators and colleagues came into her classroom carrying a bouquet of flowers and a sign to announce she had been named the 2023-24 District Teacher of the Year on Feb. 20.

Cruz was recognized as the FUSD Teacher of the Year, out of the District's 45 schools, for her dedication to supporting both her students and colleagues, along with her engaging classroom lessons and how she has embraced new technology in the classroom.

"I was completely shocked and honored by the classroom announcement," said Cruz, who has taught at Chaparral Academy for six years and currently teaches a combination fourth-and-fifth grade class. "It was very powerful and moving to see my students' reactions. I always tell them how proud I am of them, so to see them proud of me made me realize that this class is a family and we really care about each other."

The recognition continues a surreal 2023-24 school year for Cruz, who was also selected the Computers, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (C-STEM) Teacher of the Year by the UC Davis C-STEM Center in October 2023 for her work with RoboBlockly, a program that teaches students coding and robotics principles. Chaparral Academy was also named a C-STEM Distinguished School, while principal Dr. Andrea McClain was also named the C-STEM Administrator of the Year.

Known as a team player and technology wizard on campus, Cruz is the go-to on campus whenever her fellow teachers need help with any tech-related issues.

"Alexandra Cruz means so much to us – I am incredibly honored for this recognition to take place at Chaparral and I'm not even a little bit surprised – she is amazing," Dr. McClain said. "Teaching a combo class is enough of a task, but her passionate conversations with her students make them excited to learn."

In Cruz's class, social-emotional learning takes a front seat as each morning starts with a journaling question for students to write their thoughts and share with the class – with the main rule being students listen and respect other's ideas and feelings.

"Building a supportive community with my students, where I get to see them learn, grow, succeed, and thrive, are the biggest things that keep me going as a teacher," Cruz said.

– more –

Each week, Cruz also engages her classroom with Math Word Problem Wednesday, which Dr. McClain describes as “the stuff of legends” on campus. Students work collaboratively in small groups toward a solution for the math problem, and then share their solution to the class, leading to a group discussion of possible ways to figure out the answer and find a resolution.

“Congratulations to Alexandra Cruz for this incredible honor, and thank you for serving as a role model to not only her colleagues but to our Fontana Unified students as well,” Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. “We are so proud of all Alexandra has already achieved this year and we will be supporting her every step of the way as she moves on to the county recognition.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_TEACHER1: From left: Chaparral Academy of Technology Teacher Alexandra Cruz assists fourth-grade students Destiny Hernandez and Isabella Servin with a RoboBlocky challenge in class. Cruz has been named the 2023-24 Fontana Unified District Teacher of the Year for her dedication to supporting her students and colleagues.

FUSD_TEACHER2: Fontana Unified Associate Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Douglas Staine (left) and Superintendent Miki R. Inbody (right) surprise Chaparral Academy of Technology teacher Alexandra Cruz with the District Teacher of the Year award on Feb. 20.

###