



NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Teacher Named Amazon Ambassador, Aims to Expand STEM Opportunities for Students

FONTANA, CA – Zahra Razi has always had the heart of a teacher and can trace her passion for computer science back to her high school years in Iran, where she was born and raised. Those two characteristics helped bring her to Wayne Ruble Middle School, where she has taught for more than a decade.

Over the past five years, Razi has used the Amazon Future Engineer program to share her enthusiasm for computer science with her students. Now, she's one of 50 educators nationwide selected for a two-year, paid fellowship as a teacher ambassador for the program, aiming to expand science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and tech opportunities for students.

"It is a true honor being selected from all the educators who applied because now I have the opportunity to advocate for computer science education to a bigger audience and a broader community," said Razi, who teaches math and computer science at Wayne Ruble and comes from a family of teachers, including her mother and three aunts. "I am able to share my knowledge, my experience, and my skills with a lot more educators across Southern California."

Amazon chose its 2024 Future Engineer Teaching Ambassador cohort, including Razi, through a highly competitive process based on expertise in computer science and commitment to providing equitable access to computer science education. Through the program, Razi will play a vital role in bringing computer science education and career exploration to students across Fontana and California.

"Zahra is a good candidate for this, she doesn't wait for things to happen. I know with this program she's going to take it and run with it," Wayne Ruble Principal Anne-Marie Cabrales said. "She is completely student-focused, it's always about the outcomes for the kids with her."

Razi strives to give her Wayne Ruble students a "sample platter" of what that world entails and has to offer them, with her students learning about computer coding and programming, artificial intelligence, robotics, data science, cybersecurity, or even the stock market from one day to the next.

Over her decade-plus career teaching, Razi has developed an educational philosophy cemented in a practical, real-world approach that simultaneously instills life skills like self-discipline, self-regulation, and organization in whatever subject she is teaching.

To those ends, she helped bring a career technical education (CTE) pathway, Animaker Robotics, to Wayne Ruble. The program starts in sixth grade for those students passionate about learning and doing more in computer science, and is open to special education students.

“I believe it is very important to teach students about the societal impact of computer science,” Razi said. “We need to teach our students to create responsibly with technology, especially now that with the advancements in artificial intelligence, the line between real and synthetic content is becoming increasingly blurred.”

As an Amazon Ambassador, one of Razi’s first major projects will be to conduct a local listening tour, engaging with students, parents, educators, and community leaders to understand the barriers and challenges they face in STEM and computer science education.

Razi will also pilot innovative instructional strategies for teaching computer science in the classroom and receive professional development training opportunities. She will also connect with a nationwide network of like-minded STEM educators to share best practices.

The Ambassador program is a core part of Amazon's global effort to increase access to computer science learning, especially for groups underrepresented in tech fields. The program also develops customized curricula and provides virtual resources like career tours that expose students to real-world technology jobs.

“I have been empowered through the knowledge, access to resources, and experiences offered in the Amazon Future Engineer program. I have been able to bring that all back to my classroom, which really benefits my students,” Razi said. “One of my main goals is to support more educators within my community, not only with my school district or county but a broader audience in Southern California so that way more students will benefit from this.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_RAZI1: Wayne Ruble Middle School teacher Zahra Razi, second from left, is one of 50 educators nationwide to be named to Amazon’s Future Engineer 2024 Teaching Ambassador cohort. The two-year, paid fellowship aims to expand STEM education and tech opportunities for students.

FUSD_RAZI2: Zahra Razi, second from right, teaches math and computer science at Wayne Ruble Middle School and is one of 50 educators nationwide selected for the prestigious Amazon Future Engineer Teaching Ambassador fellowship. She will use this platform to advocate for equitable access to computer science education across Southern California.

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