



Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 2, 2023

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Fontana Unified's Future Shapers Academy Earns Semifinalist Distinction in National School District Competition

FONTANA, CA – Fontana Unified School District's plan to expand its work-based learning (WBL) opportunities shifted onto the fast track after it was one of two school districts in California and 81 nationwide to secure a semifinalist spot in the U.S. Department of Education's Career Z Challenge, a \$2.5 million multi-phase prize competition.

Fontana Unified earned semifinalist honors in the inaugural Career Z Challenge for its proposal to launch the Future Shapers Academy (FSA), a systemic WBL ecosystem within its career technical education (CTE) program, in 2023-24. Through the Career Z Challenge, the federal government will provide FUSD with technical assistance, learning workshops, peer collaboration, and a monetary prize for rolling out the FSA during this school year.

Fontana Unified has designed the FSA to replicate authentic workplace situations that cultivate meaningful, professional relationships between students and local industry leaders. The District is currently recruiting 32 to 35 of its high school juniors to participate in the year-long program, along with 10 teachers who will serve as mentors in the Academy.

In March 2023, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education announced the debut of the Career Z Challenge to help identify opportunities for creating or enhancing WBL opportunities that could be successfully replicated for students across the country.

FUSD will assign its FSA students the task of designing an entertainment center, incorporating a series of smaller design challenges that contribute to the larger project in 2023-24. Local industry leaders will actively serve as master class instructors in the Academy, guiding and mentoring students through skill-attainment projects.

"It feels like this really big, pie-in-the-sky endeavor but the more people we talk to about it, the more people want to get involved," said Hillary Wolfe, Fontana Unified's Senior Director of College, Career and Economic Development. "We have received so much support from our District leadership, the city of Fontana and our business partners, which tells me we are on the right track. The technical support we will receive from the federal government through the Career Z Challenge will be invaluable throughout this process."

The city of Fontana has committed to serve as master class instructors in the FSA, as it continues its Downtown Core Project, a proposal to develop downtown Fontana to a local and regional destination. Honeywell, Disney, Birtcher Development and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department have also shown interest in providing FSA master class instructors.

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Throughout the FSA, students will build professional portfolios and will participate in mock job interviews led by master class instructors at the end of the school year. Students will then have the opportunity to request letters of recommendation from the Academy's instructors and mentors.

Fontana Unified will receive \$10,000 for the successful completion of Phase 2 of the Career Z Challenge, which runs from September 2023 through July 2024. From there, a selection committee will choose 10 finalists to participate in Phase 3 of the Challenge, spanning August 2024 to July 2025, with the opportunity to win a \$150,000 prize.

“Fontana Unified has truly put itself on the map as one of just two districts throughout California to qualify as a Career Z Challenge semifinalist. We are so grateful for all the tremendous resources the U.S. Department of Education will be providing us as we develop the Future Shapers Academy this school year,” Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. “The Academy will play a vital role in how we prepare our students to become leaders and future innovators, and we hope it can serve as a successful model for districts across the country.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_FSA1: Fontana Unified offers more than 50 career technical education (CTE) pathways across its seven high schools that prepare students for college or a career through hands-on experience. The District earned a semifinalist spot in the U.S. Department of Education’s inaugural Career Z Challenge for its plans to expand on its work-based learning opportunities with the launch of the Future Shapers Academy (FSA) in 2023-24.

FUSD_FSA2: Up to 35 Fontana Unified students from across the District’s career technical education (CTE) pathways will be chosen to help launch the Future Shapers Academy (FSA) in 2023-24. The District’s CTE pathways are designed to support students in improving college and career readiness as they gain college credit and receive relevant career training in high school.

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