



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Fontana Unified Teacher, Administrator Recognized by UC Davis for Excellence in C-STEM Instruction

**FONTANA, CA** – Fontana Middle School math teacher Yesenia Escobar is continually searching for ways to engage her students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects. On the advice of her teenage niece, Escobar incorporated the popular app Among Us into her lesson plan, using aspects of the multi-player game to introduce students to computer science and coding fundamentals.

Escobar's students responded enthusiastically, leading to increased comprehension of the role data entry plays in creating software programs and building an atmosphere that inspires students to learn from their mistakes and challenge themselves to work harder to solve problems.

Escobar was recently named a UC Davis Center for Integrated Computing and STEM Education (C-STEM) 2020 Teacher of the Year, joining Fontana Unified Coordinator of Secondary Mathematics Kristen Sandler, who was named a UC Davis C-STEM 2020 Administrator of the Year.

"I'm a little shocked. This is just my second year teaching the C-STEM curriculum," Escobar said. "When you engage students, whether through a game app or having them code a sales receipt, it brings out the creativity in them. My students like the freedom of activity and being able to come up with answers on their own. They look forward to the challenges presented them."

The awards recognize contributions by educators, schools and districts for providing excellent integrated computing and STEM education for K-12 students throughout the year and inspiring students to pursue careers and post-secondary study in C-STEM fields.

Fontana Unified is in its third year of C-STEM instruction, with more than 1,000 middle and high school students participating in coding classes and robotics contests. All seven District middle schools have C-STEM classes, using the instruction as an intervention measure and alternative for students struggling with traditional math courses. Summit High School offers C-STEM as a math replacement class.

"Math is not everyone's favorite subject, but we have found in C-STEM a way to make math fun and accessible for our students," Sandler said. "We have an amazing group of teachers who are able to connect with their kids. Our goal is to provide more students access to computer science and narrow the achievement gap in mathematics."

Sandler and Escobar received their awards during the 10th annual UC Davis/C-STEM Conference, held Dec. 7-10. Sandler moderated a panel discussion on CS and Math Education with Robotics for High School Students, while Escobar joined with Southridge Tech Middle School teacher and 2019 C-STEM Teacher of the Year Pamela Matea as CS and Math Education for Middle School Students panelists.

The District begun implementing C-STEM as a middle school elective at some sites in order to create math replacement courses in 7th and 8th grade. They hope this will provide more options for math courses at the middle school level.

“Implementing C-STEM curriculum in our schools has helped boost student engagement in computer science and STEM fields,” Superintendent Randal S. Bassett said. “This is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our outstanding administrators and teachers like Kristen Sandler and Yesenia Escobar. Congratulations to Kristen, Yesenia and all our C-STEM instructors on their well-deserved recognition.”

**PHOTO CAPTION:**

**FUSD\_CSTEM\_ESCOBAR:** Fontana Middle School math teacher Yesenia Escobar has been named a UC Davis Center for Integrated Computing and STEM Education (C-STEM) 2020 Teacher of the Year in her second year of teaching C-STEM curriculum.

**FUSD\_CSTEM\_SANDLER:** Fontana Unified Coordinator of Secondary Mathematics Kristen Sandler has been named a UC Davis C-STEM 2020 Administrator of the Year, recognizing the District’s success in providing excellent C-STEM education and inspiring students to pursue careers and post-secondary study in C-STEM fields.

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