



# Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Dec. 15, 2021

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## Fontana Unified Superintendent, Educators Recognized by UC Davis as C-STEM Instruction Innovators

**FONTANA, CA** – For overseeing the successful implementation of an innovative new curriculum designed to help struggling students discover a love for mathematics, Fontana Unified Superintendent Randal S. Bassett was recognized by the UC Davis C-STEM Center as its 2021 Superintendent of the Year.

Additionally, North Tamarind Elementary School fourth-grade teacher Janice Taylor and Elementary Instruction Coordinator Dr. Honey Sacro Swem were recognized as C-STEM Teacher of the Year and C-STEM Administrator of the Year, respectively, during the center's annual conference, held online Nov. 29 to Dec. 2.

"C-STEM is empowering our students to reclaim their passion for mathematics and put themselves on the path to success," Bassett said. "We've seen the success at the middle school level and are thrilled at the immediate impact C-STEM has had at our elementary schools. Congratulations to Janice Taylor, Honey Sacro Swem and our talented team of educators and staff for their hard work and dedication in making C-STEM a success throughout the District."

Fontana Unified introduced C-STEM (computing, science, technology, engineering, math) into its middle school curriculum in 2018, as both an intervention measure and a pathway, and made it available to elementary school teachers at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. C-STEM is now available at 23 FUSD elementary schools, five middle schools, and one high school.

Taylor was just two days into her C-STEM training when she decided to implement the curriculum into her daily studies. Helped along by several tech-savvy students who responded enthusiastically to the new approach, Taylor was astounded when students started asking for more assignments on the first day.

"I was shocked to win the award; I'm doing this because I see the difference it's making in the students, and their attitude toward learning," Taylor said. "I've seen their mindset and attitude change immediately. Students that are not inspired by traditional math programs are excited by this, and they are working together and want to help each other. It tells me this program is worth our time."

Using RoboBlockly coding software, elementary students work with a grid, loading blocks of code onto a workspace, a trial-and-error process that allows students to see immediately if they have made the right choice. Through C-STEM, Fontana Unified teachers have found that students are more engaged in their studies, find many ways to solve problems and consider many different points of view.

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“This is genuine committed learning. The willingness to learn from each other, it’s just beautiful,” Sacro Swem said. “Sadly, many students don’t have a positive mathematics identity or have lost interest. C-STEM gives them learning experiences in which they practice multiplication and fractions in a meaningful context. They can also write stories through robotics. I can’t take credit for this. It takes a village to make this happen.”

Taylor and Sacro Swem joined Bassett for a well-received PowerPoint presentation on “Rethinking Education” during the second day of the conference, highlighting the progress made in District math instruction since implementing C-STEM in 2018.

Bassett, Taylor and Sacro Swem join previous Fontana Unified C-STEM award winners, including Coordinator of Secondary Mathematics Kristen Sandler (2020 C-STEM Administrator of the Year), Fontana Middle School math teacher Yesenia Escobar (2020 C-STEM Teacher of the Year), and Southridge Tech Middle School science teacher Pamela Matea (2019 C-STEM Teacher of the Year).

**PHOTO CAPTION:**

**FUSD\_CSTEM\_2021:** Fontana Unified Superintendent Randal S. Bassett was recognized by the UC Davis C-STEM Center as its 2021 Superintendent of the Year. He is joined by North Tamarind Elementary School fourth-grade teacher Janice Taylor, center, and Elementary Education Coordinator Honey Sacro Swem, right, who were recognized as C-STEM Teacher of the Year and C-STEM Administrator of the Year, respectively.

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