



NEWS RELEASE

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Two Fontana Unified Staffers Honored with Regional Administrator of the Year Awards

FONTANA, CA – Two Fontana Unified School District (FUSD) administrators, Michele Mower and Yubleni Cazares, will be honored by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Region 12 for their achievements and dedication to public education.

Mower, Beech Avenue Elementary School's principal, has been named the ASCA Region 12 Elementary Principal of the Year. Cazares, FUSD's Expanded Learning Programs manager, has been named Classified Leader of the Year by a selection committee. ASCA Region 12 serves the educational administrators of San Bernardino County and holds an annual awards program to honor students, administrators, and community organizations for excellence in public education.

"Michele Mower and Yubleni Cazares embody Fontana Unified's commitment to empowering all students for success," Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "Their leadership has had a profound impact on our students, staff, and families. We are incredibly proud to see their hard work recognized on a regional level and grateful for their continued leadership in our District."

ACSA Region 12 will honor Cazares and Mower at its annual Administrator of the Year Award Celebration on Monday, May 19.

Founded in 1971, ASCA strives to foster an equitable, world-class education system by developing and supporting inspired educational leaders who meet the diverse needs of all California students.

Cazares' leadership has helped transform the District's after-school and intervention programs, ensuring thousands of students receive enrichment and academic support. She leveraged Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) funding to eliminate waitlists for after-school programs and expand before-school programming to 18 elementary schools, providing greater access for families.

Cazares has also strengthened partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club of Fontana and the City of Fontana while overseeing the After School Education and Safety (ASES) grant, maintaining compliance with state requirements, and expanding access to critical services.

When schools were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, she played a key role in establishing learning centers across the District, where students facing housing insecurity could access safe spaces, meals, and tools for online learning.

“Like all of us in Fontana Unified, I put students at the center of my work. There are so many wonderful classified leaders in the District and in the region for whom I have a lot of respect, so to be named the Classified Leader of the Year is unexpected,” Cazares said. “I am grateful for and appreciate this recognition, but it would not be possible without all of our Expanded Learning program partners. FUSD is a great place to grow, with wonderful learning opportunities and exemplary leaders.”

Mower has served as Beech Avenue Elementary’s principal since the school’s founding in 2007, and her leadership has fostered a culture of care and achievement for staff and students alike. The school was recognized as a model of equity and student success as it earned [national recognition from the National Center on Education and the Economy](#) for its effective implementation of the Teaching for Effective Learning (TEL) program.

Beech Avenue has seen measurable academic gains over recent years, including increased proficiency in reading and writing across all grade levels and double-digit growth among students with disabilities. At the same time, Mower has ensured Beech Avenue prioritizes the overall well-being and social-emotional development of students, along with their academic success.

Mower said she strives to set the example from the top and foster a sense of belonging through personal connections by greeting students daily at the crosswalk, appointing a student leadership team empowered to give students a voice in school initiatives, and regularly meeting with teachers throughout the year.

“I am blessed to be a part of a community that has rallied together for the good of the students and families we serve – I would be nothing without them,” Mower said. “My teachers and staff believe with me that our students are capable of excellence, they are willing to try anything to create a better space for learning. They have answered the call for their lives; I may be their leader, but their hard work has earned me this honor.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_ASCA1: From left, Fontana Unified administrators Michele Mower and Yubleni Cazares have been recognized by ASCA Region 12 for their outstanding leadership and dedication to public education. Mower, principal of Beech Avenue Elementary, has been named Elementary Principal of the Year, while Cazares, the District’s Expanded Learning Programs manager, has been named Classified Leader of the Year.

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