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CONTACT: Andrew Shortall

(909) 204-6013

Fontana Unified Teacher Secures Two National Awards for Transforming STEAM and AI Education

FONTANA — A school year filled with prestigious recognitions continued for Wayne Ruble Middle School math and computer science teacher Zahra Razi, who recently earned two national honors for creating transformational learning environments and enriching students' understanding of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Razi was named one of the International Society for Technology in Education and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ISTE+ASCD) 20 to Watch Award recipients, making her one of just 20 early-career educators worldwide recognized for innovation and impact. She was also selected as a Generation AI Luminary, one of 10 educators nationwide honored for advancing AI-powered instruction and ethical technology use. Razi is the only educator in the country to be selected for both awards this year.

"It's an incredible honor to be recognized by ISTE+ASCD for this work," said Razi, who was honored at the 2025 ISTE Live+ASCD Annual Conference, which took place in San Antonio from June 29 to July 2. "We now live in an era where we exist in two worlds at once, the natural world and the digital world. While some of the skills needed to navigate these worlds overlap, our school systems must prepare students to contribute meaningfully to both."

At Wayne Ruble Middle School, Razi has combined her passions for teaching with a mission to expand access to computer science and real-world learning opportunities. Over more than a decade at the school, she has made it her mission to empower students through engaging math and computer science instruction, introducing them to everything from coding and robotics to AI and data science.

About three years ago, Razi launched an initiative called "Teaching With and About AI" in her math and computer science classes, designed to both enhance student learning outcomes and build awareness of AI's societal impacts and ethical implications.

When it came to teaching with AI, Razi developed chatbots to serve as real-time tutors. Razi said that these tools offered students personalized, on-demand support and increased assignment completion, improved mastery of math skills, and greater student confidence.

To help students understand how AI works, Razi designed hands-on projects that combined math with real-world technology. In one project, students built an AI model to recognize different types of slopes in graphs, learning how machine learning works and how biased data can affect outcomes.

According to Razi, the initiative not only deepened students' engagement and critical thinking but also sparked interest in technology careers and helped students see themselves as innovators and problem-solvers in an AI-driven world.

Razi has also helped develop Wayne Ruble's career technical education (CTE) offerings, launching the school's Animaker Robotics CTE pathway, a hands-on, project-based curriculum that introduces students to coding, robotics, and animation. The program begins in sixth grade and is open to all students, including those in special education, providing early and inclusive exposure to science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) fields with opportunities to continue following Fontana Unified's pathway in high school.

"Systematically planned computer science education equips students with the tools and understanding to shape the digital world in ethical and impactful ways. It also helps them explore the societal effects of technology and learn how to innovate for social good," Razi said. "My goal has always been to make learning more meaningful, engaging, and connected to the real world and to provide opportunities for my students to see themselves as innovators, problem-solvers, and change-makers."

The ISTE+ASCD honor continues a distinguished year for Razi, who was one of 50 educators nationwide selected to serve as an [Amazon Future Engineer Teacher Ambassador in fall 2024](#). Throughout the 2024-25 school year, she connected with a broader community of educators and shared practical strategies for integrating computer science and AI into the classroom. She led a series of listening interviews with students, families, teachers, and community partners to better understand barriers to computer science access and identify ways to create more inclusive and impactful learning experiences.

Additionally, Razi presented at several high-profile events in 2024-25, including the California Department of Education's AI Webinar Series; ISTE, Computer Science Teachers Association, and Computer Using Educators webinars; the California Mathematics Council Conference; the Arizona State University and Global Silicon Valley AI Show Summit; and the California STEAM Symposium, where she highlighted classroom examples and lesson ideas focused on AI, computer science, and data science integration in middle school math instruction.

"Zahra Razi's passion, innovation, and unwavering commitment to student success continue to elevate Fontana Unified and inspire those around her," Fontana Unified Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "These well-deserved recognitions showcase the incredible impact she has made in the lives of our students and in shaping the future of STEAM education here in Fontana and across the state and country."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_RAZI1: Wayne Ruble Middle School teacher Zahra Razi, second from right, has earned the ISTE+ASCD 20 to Watch Award and Generation AI Luminary honor for her innovative work in STEAM education and her dedication to expanding access to real-world learning opportunities in Fontana Unified.

FUSD_RAZI2: Zahra Razi, right, teaches math and computer science at Wayne Ruble Middle School and secured two national honors at the 2025 ISTE Live+ASCD Annual Conference.

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