

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 16, 2026 **CONTACT:** Nancy Yeang **PHONE:** (909) 204-6012

Lynwood Unified Names Washington Elementary Educator Kathleen Graham 2026 Teacher of the Year

LYNWOOD, CA – After nearly four decades dedicated to Lynwood Unified students, Washington Elementary School fifth-grade teacher Kathleen Graham has been named the District’s 2026 Teacher of the Year, recognized for her longstanding commitment to student growth, instructional innovation and campus leadership.

Graham began her journey with Lynwood Unified in 1988 after moving to California following her graduation from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Drawn to the District’s close-knit atmosphere and strong sense of community, she built a career centered on meaningful relationships with students, families and colleagues.

Over the course of 38 years, Graham has served as both a classroom teacher and a District Digital Learning Coach, supporting educators in integrating technology into instruction. She returned to Washington Elementary three years ago and currently teaches fifth grade.

“I was quite surprised to receive this honor because there were so many talented teachers nominated by their schools,” Graham said. “I felt incredibly honored and grateful to be recognized among such dedicated educators.”

Known for creating engaging and interactive lessons, Graham incorporates tools such as iPads and Canva into classroom instruction to help students collaborate and take ownership of their learning. She also works to build strong relationships with students by connecting lessons to their interests and encouraging them to embrace challenges with confidence.

“My favorite thing about being a teacher is watching students learn and grow as individuals,” Graham said. “It’s rewarding to see students discover their strengths, overcome challenges and become more independent learners.”

In addition to her classroom responsibilities, Graham serves on Washington Elementary’s School Leadership Team and Arts Leadership Team and is the school’s fifth-grade chairperson, helping lead efforts to support student success across the grade level. She has also led professional development sessions focused on educational technology and artificial intelligence integration.

Outside the classroom, Graham supports the broader school community as the Lynwood Teachers Association site representative and bargaining team member.

For the past two years, Graham has coached Washington Elementary's fifth-grade math team and has led them to a second-place finish in the District Mathathon competition this year.

"When you walk into Mrs. Graham's classroom, you will immediately sense a positive classroom culture, in which students are engaged in learning," Washington Elementary Principal Juanita Naranjo, Ed.D., said. "She uses engaging lessons that help students build important skills and think independently and critically, and she allows students to learn about each other to build classroom community."

Graham said the most meaningful part of teaching is witnessing students gain confidence and realize they are capable of more than they once believed.

"Teaching has really become part of who I am," Graham said. "Watching students develop academically and personally is still one of the most rewarding parts of the job."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

LUSD_TOTY1: Washington Elementary fifth-grade teacher Kathleen Graham was honored as the Lynwood Unified 2026 Teacher of the Year at the May 14 meeting of the Board of Education.

LUSD_TOTY2: Kathleen Graham, Lynwood Unified 2026 Teacher of the Year, reads and discusses a novel with fifth grade students at Washington Elementary.

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