



PRESS RELEASE

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El Monte Union Names Jorane Barton 2026-27 Teacher of the Year

EL MONTE – With an innovative approach to teaching and a commitment to ensuring every student feels seen, supported, and empowered to succeed, Fernando R. Ledesma High School (FRLHS) English teacher Jorane Barton has earned El Monte Union High School District's 2026-27 Teacher of the Year honor.

Barton has taught in El Monte Union for two decades, continuing a long family tradition in education. Her approach centers on the whole child, beginning with making sure students' basic needs are met – that they feel safe, supported, and ready to learn – before turning her attention to academics.

"When you have students that need an opportunity to show off their talent and I'm able to provide that space for them to shine, that's really rewarding," Barton said. "It's very humbling to be named Teacher of the Year. We have so many great teachers in our school and District and I'm very honored to be chosen."

When students returned to campus following the COVID-19 pandemic, Barton said she made it a priority to create a classroom environment that felt welcoming, warm, and fun. She transformed her classroom with colorful decorations, including paper tissue flowers and inspirational posters, creating a more immersive space that students continue to appreciate to this day.

Barton also developed a raffle system to encourage verbal participation in class. Students earn raffle tickets for speaking up, and each class period holds two raffles a month for a chance to win gift cards.

"I wanted to give students who were not used to winning things at school a chance to win in my class," Barton said. "Even if a student could muster up the courage to participate verbally once in two weeks, they would still have a chance to win a prize. It's gotten some kids to participate who normally would be really shy."

In addition to teaching English, Barton leads the school's creative writing class. Each quarter, she compiles the poetry students write and binds their work into a book, a tradition Barton said has become a meaningful accomplishment for her students.

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“Jorane has a remarkable ability to see what each student needs to feel confident and capable in her classroom,” FRLHS Principal Freddy Arteaga said. “Whether she is creating opportunities for a quiet student to find their voice or giving others a place to showcase their creativity, she consistently goes above and beyond. We are incredibly proud to see her recognized as El Monte Union’s Teacher of the Year.”

Barton said she hopes her students remember her as a patient teacher who was always willing to offer extra attention, encouragement, and help when they needed it.

“Congratulations to Jorane on this well-deserved recognition,” Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. “Jorane represents the very best of El Monte Union and her dedication is a powerful example of the difference a caring and creative educator can make in a student’s life.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

EMUHSD TEACHER OF THE YEAR 1: Fernando R. Ledesma High School English teacher Jorane Barton is recognized as El Monte Union High School District’s 2026-27 Teacher of the Year during the Oct. 7 Board of Trustees meeting. Barton received a certificate of recognition from the Board and the office of Senator Susan Rubio and was honored with a plaque commemorating her achievement.

EMUHSD TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2: Surrounded by her Fernando R. Ledesma High School family, English teacher Jorane Barton celebrates her recognition as El Monte Union’s 2026-27 Teacher of the Year during an Oct. 7 Board meeting.

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The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.