



El Monte Union High School District

Community Committed to College and Career

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Juliette Funes, William Diepenbrock

PHONE: (909) 445-1001

El Monte Union Teacher Named 2020 California Visual Art Educator of the Year

EL MONTE – El Monte High School art teacher Patrice Cooley has a flair for connecting with her students, encouraging beginning and experienced artists alike to bring a unique voice and passion to their art.

For her exceptional ability to empower students, set standards for quality education and achieve the highest level of professionalism in art education, Cooley has been recognized as the California Art Education Association (CAEA) 2020 Outstanding Visual Art Educator of the Year.

She will be honored at CAEA's virtual state conference in November and will represent California at the 2021 National Art Education Association convention.

"I am incredibly grateful to my mentors and all the people I've worked with at El Monte Union and CAEA who have helped and encouraged me," said Cooley, a 22-year art teacher who has been with the District since 2016. "They are great partners. I would also like to thank my students for being open-minded and willing to learn. I have the best job in the world."

Cooley says art education encompasses more than mixing colors and mastering the illusion of three-dimensional perspective. Cooley instills in her students the importance of critical thinking, problem solving and resilience, skills that are necessary for academic success and career planning.

"It's important for students to see art in a bigger context," Cooley said. "Art gives you an appreciation of well-being and self-expression. The key is understanding that you are connecting the overarching concepts and principles of art to something in your life, whether it be in a class, at a job or developing your own business."

Embracing art at a young age, Cooley worked hard to develop her technique and constantly pushed herself to do better. Gaining insight from life lessons and wanting to share her knowledge with young students, Cooley realized her calling was art education.

"Art was always my passion. Although I wasn't amazing, I was good at thinking and having ideas. I had to keep at it," Cooley said. "These values are essential for developing minds. It's important for students to

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establish a starting point, to grow from there and enjoy the process. When students improve their craft, it empowers them, they tell themselves ‘I’m better than I thought.’”

The CAEA supports art educators and promotes state and national content standards for the visual arts and serves as a networking platform for educators. In addition to being honored at the CAEA conference, Cooley will deliver a presentation on the California Department of Education’s new art framework.

“Patrice Cooley brings a tremendous amount of enthusiasm to her classroom and her approach really resonates with her students, who learn to embrace and appreciate their own creativity,” Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. “Patrice personifies El Monte Union’s commitment to the arts and motivates our students to be college and career ready. She is truly deserving of this honor.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

091520_EMUHSO_COOLEY: El Monte High School art teacher Patrice Cooley has been recognized as the California Art Education Association (CAEA) 2020 Outstanding Visual Art Educator of the Year.

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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.