



# Bellflower Unified School District

## Media Release

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## Bellflower Unified Names Reading Specialist as 2016 Teacher of the Year

**BELLFLOWER** – Shannon Slager, a reading and writing specialist whose infectious enthusiasm inspires students at Ramona Elementary, was honored in a surprise ceremony Tuesday as Bellflower Unified School District's 2016-17 Teacher of the Year.

Slager, who has been with Bellflower Unified since 2000 and at Ramona for seven years, was celebrated during a morning flag salute by Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs, Ramona Principal Dr. Deirdre Reyes and other District leaders.

Slager took over the role of intervention teacher for grades three, four and five in August 2015, working with students who struggle with elements of English language arts. She employs an arsenal of tools – along with her patented enthusiasm – to help them succeed.

"Shannon's impact on the program was immediate," Bellflower Unified Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs said. "She brought immeasurable enthusiasm and boundless creativity to a task that is critical to the success of our students."

A quick visit to Slager's classroom helps to tell the story: Reading and writing tools fill her room. Charts blanket the walls with tips, vocabulary and writing rules. And a steady supply of hints and advice are an ever-present element of her patient work with students, with whom Slager balances high expectations and the support they need to succeed, according to colleagues.

"Her enthusiasm is that of a first-year teacher," Reyes wrote in Slager's nomination form. "She has never lost the substantial sense of joy and excitement for teaching children to read and write. This enthusiasm is contagious."

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## Standard of Excellence - Nothing Less

Bellflower Unified School District provides a pathway for all students to attain the expertise and develop skills of academic excellence that will empower them to become lifelong active learners, demonstrate respect for themselves and others in a dynamic, diverse and global society, become responsible, informed, productive, independent and contributing citizens, and perform successfully in their chosen field and in society.



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Slager's students see themselves as scholars because she sees them in that light, Reyes wrote.

In an interview, Reyes recalled how Slager connected with a fourth-grader who had been a challenge for teachers to motivate.

"She racked her brain for ways to get him to engage. Then, she found a cape at a dollar store. She brought it and told the students that whoever worked the hardest would get super powers and get to wear the cape. The boy managed to earn the cape pretty much every day," Reyes said. "The cape isn't even there anymore, but he's still putting out his best efforts because she figured out how to connect with him."

Slager is equally dedicated to sharing her expertise with colleagues. As the intervention teacher, she works with teachers at each grade level during regular collaboration meetings. She is helping lead an effort to use a shared blog to add depth to teacher collaboration efforts.

Slager is involved with developing Bellflower Unified's strategies for teaching English language arts, noted by colleagues for her depth of understanding of the rigorous new California Standards.

She also takes time to mentor new teachers through Bellflower Unified Beginning Teachers Support and Assessment program.

"We are proud of what Shannon brings to the classroom daily. She is a wonderful example of one of our many fantastic educators in Bellflower Unified," Board of Education President Dr. Paul Helzer said. "Her talent, dedication and especially her enthusiasm are key tools in our efforts to ensure all students receive the skills they need to master the standards and content necessary to succeed in college and careers."

## PHOTO

**BUSD\_TOY:** Ramona Elementary intervention teacher Shannon Slager (second from left) was named Tuesday as Bellflower Unified's 2016 Teacher of the Year. Pictured with her (L-R) are Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Personnel Lisa Azevedo, Associate Superintendent Marcy Delgado, Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Stacey Larson-Everson and Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Support Tracy McSparren.

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