



PRESS RELEASE

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NLMUSD Teacher’s Passion Takes Her to China

Waite Middle School Resource Specialist Cindy Gonzalez’s passion for education took her more than 6,500 miles across the globe this summer – to the bustling community of Tongxiang, China, where she and other U.S. educators taught sixth-graders the English language, American culture and the benefits of working together.

“It was a great experience, working with students from another country,” said Gonzalez, a Norwalk–La Mirada Unified teacher of seven years. “The Chinese education system is very different from ours, but kids are kids, and they are very eager to learn English, especially when the lessons are fun.”

As a resource specialist, Gonzalez provides educational instruction and guidance to special needs students, modifying the curriculum, incorporating adaptive technology and conferring with special education teachers.

Gonzalez is starting her first year at Waite Middle School after working with students at Dolland, Sanchez and Edmondson Elementary schools.

Her three-week trip to Tongxiang’s Qiushi Middle School was sponsored by the Character Champion Foundation, an education organization that promotes mental wellness.

The Foundation’s book, *Character Champions: Conquering the Extremes*, implements a metacognitive system, “Colors 4 Success,” a research-based, field-tested set of learning and communication tools. In the book, different colored animal characters represent universal values and principles, such as courage, knowledge, kindness and responsibility.

“The lesson is that if you use all of your colors, you will be successful in life,” Gonzalez said. “The students loved it because we encouraged them to role-play and dress up as all of the different animals.”

Norwalk-La Mirada USD Board President Jesse Urquidi said Gonzalez’s work reflects the District’s key focus areas that support both the academic and emotional development of students. “Ms. Gonzalez is an example of the passion our teachers bring to their work when it comes to supporting the whole child,” he said.

Gonzalez also took the opportunity to learn from her summer students, mastering new methods of communicating with students that she hopes to apply at Waite and share with other instructors at the District.

“Connecting with students is a top priority for our teachers because it is the key to narrowing the achievement gap,” NLMUSD Superintendent Dr. Hasmik J. Danielian said. “The District greatly values distinguished instructors like Ms. Gonzalez, who are tireless in their pursuit of serving their student population, finding new and innovative ways to provide a high quality education and develop lifelong learners.”

Gonzalez also enjoyed being an ambassador for American culture, while finding time to visit Shanghai, Beijing and tourist attractions like the Great Wall and the Forbidden City. She hopes to return to China next summer.

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