



Students and staff gather to celebrate in honor of National Teacher Day

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By Brandi Williams

SAN DIEGO (KUSI) — Hundreds gathered Tuesday to attend the annual celebration in honor of National Teacher Day.

The Day of the Teacher event honors three outstanding educators who have been named San Diego Unified 2017 Teachers of the Year at the elementary, middle and high school level. The three Teacher of the Year runners-up and more than 130 Teachers of the Year from individual school sites were also recognized.

Nominees for Teacher of the Year are first selected by their school sites. These individuals have the option to apply for District Teacher of the Year, a process that includes written essays, interviews, and classroom observation.

The Teacher of the Year winners and runners-up are selected by a six-member committee made up of previous District Teachers of the Year. All district winners have the option to apply for the county-wide award program.

This year's winners are:

- **Claudia Sanchez-Guevara**, fifth-grade, Bethune K-8. She had such an impact on her fourth-grade students, that they successfully petitioned to have her become their fifth grade teacher. There is little question Sanchez-Guevara has a tremendous impact on her students. She relates to them. She cares for them. She sets high expectations for them.
- **Vanessa Hart**, six- and seventh-grade English, De Portola Middle. She strives to create a relaxed, fun environment so that students feel comfortable and aren't afraid to take risks with their learning. Hart uses a lot of historical fiction to fuel compassion, and will often turn lessons into games in order to motivate students to learn.
- **Jean-Paul Balmat**, music teacher, Mission Bay High. He became a music teacher because of the influence his own music teacher had on him when he was a student at Mission Bay. If there was ever any doubt about the impact a teacher can have on a student, Balmat is proof. He shares his love of music with students and teaches them about more than just notes on a page. He teaches music concepts, leadership, respect and how to carry oneself like a professional musician.

This year's runners up are:KUSI

- **Robert Daluraya**, science prep, Hickman Elementary
- **Denise Tayco**, seventh-grade science, Pershing Middle
- **Jaime Brown**, 12th-grade IB English and IB film, San Diego High School of International Studies

In addition to the Teachers of the Year, there was a reception prior to the special Board of Education meeting.

Students from San Diego Unified's award-winning culinary arts programs at Garfield and Morse high schools were prepping and serving appetizers and desserts. The string quartet from Patrick Henry High School provided entertainment.

Sponsors for the event included: California Coast Credit Union, California Schools VEBA, eLiveLife.com, Mission Federal Credit Union, San Diego Education Association, San Diego Education Fund, San Diego Unified – College, Career and Technical Education, The San Diego Padres, The Standard, and the Art Institute of California – San Diego.