



PRESS RELEASE

Poway Unified School District

15250 Avenue of Science ■ San Diego, California 92128-3406 ■ powayusd.com

Phone (858) 521-2707 ■ FAX (858) 485-1075

For Immediate Release

March 17, 2020

CONTACT: Christine Paik, Chief Communications Officer

PHONE: (858) 521-2707 **EMAIL:** cpaik@powayusd.com

Poway Unified Announces Selection of Three 2020 ‘District Teachers of the Year’

Laura Snow, Aaron Smith, and Amy Hillebrecht Receive District Honors

(SAN DIEGO, CA) – The Poway Unified School District is proud to announce Laura Snow, Aaron Smith, and Amy Hillebrecht as the three District Teachers of the Year for 2020.

A committee made up of District and site representatives selected the three PUSD Teachers of the Year based on criteria that included innovation inside the classroom, dedication to students, and overall contribution to the school site and the Poway Unified School District. Each year, the San Diego County Office of Education sponsors a Teacher of the Year Recognition Program, which honors teachers from across San Diego County. Laura Snow, Aaron Smith, and Amy Hillebrecht will all be submitted for consideration for County Teacher of the Year for 2020.



Laura Snow, Special Education Teacher, Pomerado Elementary School

Laura is actively shifting the climate in education to become inclusive toward all learners, no matter their ability. For that, she is at the forefront of change at Pomerado Elementary School. As an Autism Spectrum Disorder Special Day Class Education Specialist, Laura shifted her role to supporting as many adults and children as possible. She supports children engaged in the general education learning community and also supports teachers to better meet the needs of their students. Her goal is to always work toward what will most benefit each and every student, each and every day.

She is a proud member of the Poway Unified Technology and Innovation Team’s Voyager program. Through every coaching session or training, Laura is able to immediately embed more blended learning opportunities into the classroom so students have a personalized learning experience. Through a Project Based learning approach, she has addressed needs of group work, collaborative skills, and peer communication by implementing coding in the classroom. She utilizes the Launch Lab at Pomerado in unique ways to encourage students’ strengths and

passions, including connecting second graders to a professor in Minnesota to help develop solutions for his agriculture problems.



Aaron Smith, Physical Education Teacher, Bernardo Heights Middle School

Aaron's core belief as a teacher is that every student he encounters has their own story that is being developed and that can be impacted for the better. During his time as a physical education teacher at Bernardo Heights Middle School, Aaron adapted and employed a program that used special education instruction methods to include students with different physical abilities. He also incorporates unique games and sports activities from different cultures around the world to build understanding, appreciation, and tolerance among his diverse students.

He applies an innovative mindset to P.E., including utilizing a video application which allows students to self-analyze movements and build up their skills in different P.E. units. This has transformed the way his students value health and wellness. Aaron is known to take the less-than-desired requirement of fitness and connect it to a competitive, fun, interactive lesson that leaves students wanting more.

Aaron has also made it his life mission to impact the hearts and minds of students to help guide them to a successful path. Even students who don't currently have him as their teacher feel comfortable going to him with their struggles or for connection and support. His passions range from working alongside under-served youth to create a relief pantry for the holidays to establishing a "men's club" for students identified as prone to violence or from dangerous neighborhoods.



Amy Hillebrecht, Science Teacher, Twin Peaks Middle School

Amy is known to strive for student success beyond the walls of the classroom. She is committed to seeing students through struggle all the way to the finish line of subject mastery. Her drive to connect with students in a one-on-one environment during the school day has seen many students make it past all the barriers life throws at them.

Amy has taught students the importance of community involvement through environmental consciousness. She routinely advocates for students who desire to care for the environment, and encourages her students to use classroom science knowledge to positively impact the environment.

In her 14 years of teaching, her passion has been to reach all students and help them discover their love of science by developing their curiosity. She routinely develops new and fun ways for

students of all learning abilities to grasp difficult scientific concepts. For example, this year, she developed a black light escape room activity to make science even more exciting for her students. She is an advocate for learners who struggle with reading, starting tasks, and have test anxiety – and has adapted her teaching style to accommodate such learners. Students have appreciated this so much that, in addition to performing better in the classroom, they are able to move beyond the stigma of accommodated learning in other classrooms. It should come as no surprise that she is also a teacher involved in the Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI) pilot program at Twin Peaks.

2020 Poway Unified Teachers of the Year

Below is the list of all PUSD school site Teachers of the Year for 2020. Congratulations to all of our excellent teachers, who represent the best of #TeamPUSD:

Abraxas High School	Janice Pepin
Adobe Bluffs Elementary School	Kyle Luciani
Bernardo Heights Middle School	Aaron Smith
Black Mountain Middle School	Alex Anella
Career Technical, Adult and Alternative Education	Dawn Hester
Chaparral Elementary School	Christopher Koreerat
Creekside Elementary School	Michelle Magana
Deer Canyon Elementary School	Sarah Hobbs
Del Norte High School	Kristen James
Del Sur Elementary School	Sharelle Venable
Garden Road Elementary School	Allison Leedom
Highland Ranch Elementary School	Lindi Clark
Los Penasquitos Elementary School	Jackie Sweet
Meadowbrook Middle School	Stacy Hitchcock
Mesa Verde Middle School	Kelly Kangas
Midland Elementary School	Nicole DiCarlo
Monterey Ridge Elementary School	Jennifer Medved
Morning Creek Elementary School	Kathryn McKinney
Mt.Carmel High School	Melanie Bada
Oak Valley Middle School	Tanya MacMartin
Pomerado Elementary School	Laura Snow
Poway High School	Heidi Hensey
Rancho Bernardo High School	Tracy Stowe
Rolling Hills Elementary School	Rebecca Golden
Shoal Creek Elementary School	Geralyn Murray
Stone Ranch Elementary School	Jin Hong
Sundance Elementary School	Vera Constantino
Sunset Hills Elementary School	Matthew Aneshansley
Tierra Bonita Elementary School	Carol Parkes
Turtleback Elementary School	Kim Capriola-Juza
Twin Peaks Middle School	Amy Hillebrecht

Valley Elementary School
Westview High School
Westwood Elementary School
Willow Grove Elementary

Angela Kennedy
Chris Fousek
Amber Graver
Alyssa Huckleberry

###