



PRESS RELEASE

Poway Unified School District

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Poway Unified: Home to Three ACSA Administrators of the Year

(San Diego, CA) – The Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) recently released the names of the 2021 Administrators of the Year for Region 18 (San Diego and Imperial counties), three of which proudly belong to the Poway Unified School District.



- ❖ **Marian Kim Phelps, Ed.D.**, Superintendent: Superintendent of the Year
- ❖ **Joe Austin**, Career Education Specialist: CTE Administrator of the Year
- ❖ **Carol Osborne**, Associate Superintendent of Learning Support: Valuing Diversity Award

The Administrator of the Year awards recognize outstanding performance and achievement by individual administrators, and are given at both regional and state levels. The Valuing Diversity Award is given to an administrator who epitomizes ACSA’s Mission Statement by their efforts in promoting diversity and support for all of the children, parents and staff at their school or district. It is also given at the regional and state levels.

Marian Kim Phelps, Ed.D., Superintendent of the Year

Dr. Phelps has served as the Superintendent of Poway Unified since 2017, having previously served as Superintendent of the Westminster School District and Area Superintendent in the San Diego Unified School District. She has worked tirelessly to enact positive changes in PUSD, including advancing educational technology and innovation, specialized academic instruction, and racial equity.

Dr. Phelps’ leadership was tested and proven during this pandemic. “In this year that has challenged education leaders like few others in history, Superintendent Phelps has led Poway Unified with creativity and courage through the dual imperatives of educating students during a pandemic and improving racial equity and inclusion in our schools,” PUSD Past Board President Michelle O’Connor-Ratcliff said. “While the



Superintendent Marian Kim Phelps, Ed.D.

world was preparing to shut down and people were beginning to ask what “distance learning” meant, Dr. Phelps and her team were creating the plan to make it happen [including the implementation of PUSD’s 1:1 device initiative]. Dr. Phelps’ vision and leadership is a beacon for education leaders everywhere.” Under Dr. Phelps’ leadership, PUSD was also among the first and largest public school districts to successfully reopen programs and schools for on campus learning.

In a statement to the ACSA Committee, former PUSD Student Board Member Mariana Akins described Superintendent Phelps’ natural ability to “embrace ideas, listen to student concerns, and incorporate feedback into the education system in positive ways.” Akins said she was especially honored to witness Dr. Phelps’ commitment to racial equity and social unity through initiatives such as No Place for Hate with the Anti-Defamation League, the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council, and the District’s Racial Equity and Inclusion Plan.

Joe Austin, Career Technical Education Administrator of the Year

Mr. Austin has proudly held the title of PUSD Career Education Specialist since 2017, effectively serving more than 7,000 CTE students each school year. Previously he was an administrator, teacher, and program specialist in the San Diego Unified School District for over 20 years.

Mr. Austin led the District’s implementation of Project Lead the Way (PLTW), a program that provides students with access to high quality, relevant curriculum in STEM pathways. Additionally under Mr. Austin’s leadership, PUSD became a PLTW training center that hosts STEM training for teachers throughout the state and nation. Finally, Mr. Austin developed and implemented a data analysis tool to measure the Career and College Readiness (CCI) component of California’s new Accountability Model and School Dashboard, to support school leaders in increasing the percentage of students from special and underserved populations to meet the college preparedness threshold.



Joe Austin, Career Education Specialist

“Through Joe’s leadership, K12 students in Poway Unified have opportunities to discover their passions, explore careers, and create long-range goals that connect to their educational experiences,” Associate Superintendent of Learning Support Carol Osborne said. “Joe’s enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment to ensure each and every student has the opportunity to explore their passions through powerful career pathways is apparent to all who know and engage with him.”

Kathleen Porter, PUSD’s Executive Director of Career Technical Adult and Alternative Education, said Mr. Austin is “well-known in the region and the state as an educational leader whose commitment and interest may start with CTE, but go beyond to encompass public education as a whole.”

Carol Osborne, Valuing Diversity Award

Ms. Osborne has served as the Associate Superintendent of Learning Support in PUSD since 2018. Her career in education spans over 30 years, having served in positions ranging from teacher and principal, to curriculum and school improvement director throughout San Diego County. Most recently, she was named the “2021 School Turnaround Leader” by the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) as part of their Lighthouse Equity Awards program.

Ms. Osborne has taken on the vital and challenging role of leading Poway Unified efforts to implement a district wide Racial Equity & Inclusion Plan, and ensure all PUSD campuses are No Place for Hate schools. Under her leadership, PUSD is implementing professional learning for site leaders focused on cultural proficiency, anti-bias training, and racial equity. From this, each school site has implemented their own equity team to continue the work in their respective school communities. Ms. Osborne has spearheaded PUSD’s Community Conversations on Racial Equity with staff and families, creating a space for honest and open discussions in collaboration with Concerned Parents Alliance. She is leading the review of curriculum across grade levels to better reflect the diversity of students and works collaboratively with student and parent representatives to critically examine decisions through an equitable lens. Under her leadership, PUSD is also introducing Ethnic Studies and Ethnic Literature courses for the first time.

“Ms. Osborne understands that change and improvement can only happen if there are relationships and trust to build upon,” PUSD Superintendent Phelps said. “Her leadership has ensured that even in the midst of a global pandemic and the daily challenge of reopening schools, the momentum is not lost and real improvements are being made in improving cultural awareness and celebration of diversity. She is an outstanding administrator and exceptional leader who is tireless in her commitment.”

All three honorees will be forwarded for consideration at the state level ACSA awards.



Carol Osborne, Associate Superintendent of Learning Support

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