

NEWS RELEASE

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Mandy Kelly, Saddleback Valley Unified Teacher, Named a 2020 California Teacher of the Year

Mandy Kelly, a sixth grade teacher at Trabuco Mesa Elementary in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District (SVUSD), has been named a 2020 California Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Kelly is one of five teachers throughout the state to earn the honor, with the announcement made by State Superintendent of Instruction, Tony Thurmond, on October 4th.

Thurmond shares, “These five incredible teachers receive this prestigious honor for their focus, drive, and determination to teach young people in California. They are not only wonderful representatives for our state, but they also make a profound difference in the lives of their students and their communities by employing innovative strategies to increase academic success and narrow the achievement gap among a broad range of students.”

In addition to sixth grade, Mandy has also taught kindergarten and fourth grade and is an exemplary educator both in, and outside of the classroom. As a teacher-leader, Mandy presents at numerous professional development events for her peers and is also a participant in an array of committees throughout SVUSD. Her focus includes language arts sequencing, math development, Next Generation Science Standards and engagement strategies. Outside of the classroom, Mandy is the founder (along with students) and adviser for the SAKtivists program, which has been recognized in various publications. The SAKtivists (Student Acts of Kindness) create weekly video challenges of performing acts of kindness, such as encouraging students to spend time with someone new on campus. The challenges have been accepted by more than 150 classrooms throughout the United States, as well as internationally.

SVUSD Superintendent, Dr. Crystal Turner shares “Mandy is truly a special educator. She empowers students to be their best selves and creates a learning environment that allows students to thrive both academically and social emotionally. We are lucky to have her in SVUSD.”

After being selected as an SVUSD Teacher of the Year in the spring, Mandy moved on to the county level, where she was selected by the Orange County Department of Education as an Orange County Teacher of the Year. After earning the county title, Mandy was nominated as a California Teacher of the year applicant. The California Department of Education selection committee reviews applications, conducts site visits to evaluate teachers' rapport with students, classroom environments, presentation skills, and teaching techniques. Additionally, interviews are held with the teachers, before the State Superintendent makes the final selection of the five California Teachers of the Year.