United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

**Name:** Amber C. Wilton  
**School:** 107th Street/STeM Magnet School  
**Grade/Subject:** K-5/ Reading Intervention

**Bio:** Ms. Wilton’s passion for uplifting inner city youth is fueled by her uncompromising commitment to students and their families. Her student-centered approach transcends the traditional classroom by bridging the gap between home and school which fosters an optimal learning environment for all students. Empowering students to take an active interest in their own education has been one of Ms. Wilton’s many accolades. Her belief that literacy is a civil right enables her to focus her talents on providing reading intervention to at risk youth. Working hand in hand with other teachers and parents has been her greatest accomplishment as an educator. Her innate ability to bring these key stakeholders together to address obstacles that hinder educational success increases the impact of her educational footprint.

She completed her teaching credential and Master’s in Education in Curriculum Development at California State University Dominguez Hills, where she was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society in recognition of her 4.0 GPA. Her doctoral studies in Urban Leadership commenced at USC, where she was inducted into the Phi Delta Kappa educational honor society. Amber is a National Board Certified Teacher and Common Core Fellow. Throughout her career, she has been a recipient of the Heroes in Education Award, AEMP Teacher of the year and numerous educational grants. Ultimately, she plans to utilize her array of experiences and talents to transform urban education to ensure all students are supported with the necessary resources they need to achieve and become productive global citizens.
Name: Carolyn Fagan  
School: Hollywood High School  
Grade/Subject: 11th and 12th grade English

Bio: Carolyn Fagan is in her tenth year at Hollywood High School, where she teaches eleventh and twelfth grade English in the New Media Academy, a Linked Learning certified pathway. Prior to working at Hollywood High School, she taught in the Boston area and coordinated an arts literacy grant in the Boston Public Schools. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English and Theater from the University of New Hampshire and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Boston College. At Hollywood High School, Carolyn was a member of the design committee for the Media, Entertainment, and Technology small learning community, of which she now serves as Lead Teacher. She was also a member of a team of teachers who, under the guidance of the Center for Powerful Public Schools, designed and implemented the interdisciplinary project-based model of the New Media Academy. Committed to a fully inclusive student-centered approach in her English classes, Carolyn has worked for the past eight years with Resource Specialist, Ali Nezu, to implement a co-teaching model. As a team, Carolyn and Ali have presented their work in co-teaching and project based learning at district and regional conferences. Carolyn has also served as a member of Hollywood High School’s School Site Council, Inter Coordinated Instructional Council, and WASC Leadership Team, and facilitates a partnership grant with Los Angeles City College.
United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

Name: Dana Carli Brooks
School: East Valley High School
Grade/Subject: Leadership (all grades), 10th grade World History, 12th grade Government

Bio: Dana Carli Brooks is a National Board Certified teacher of history at East Valley High School (Go Falcons) where she also is Leadership Advisor. She graduated in 1980 from USC with a degree in International Relations, from Loyola Law School in 1983 with a law degree and from CSUN in 2007 with a teaching credential. Dana left her law practice in 2006 to become a founding faculty member at East Valley. Dana’s goal is to provide rigorous educational opportunities as she believes a quality education is the best route for her students to improve not only their lives, but the lives of their families and their communities. Seeing her students graduate and go on to college and careers confirms for Dana that education is the key to success.

Dana’s passion for excellence in education extends to her colleagues as well. Dana is a teacher leader at East Valley and worked with a team of coworkers to create a year-long lesson design professional development program focused on helping teacher develop students’ Common Core skills. She works in partnership with UCLA Center X History-Geography project to improve history-social studies instruction at East Valley. Dana was recently chosen as one of two Investment School Mentor Teachers at East Valley and has been Master Teacher for teaching candidates from USC and CSUN. She thanks her husband Greg and her two children, Matthew and Carli, for their support of her passion for education.
United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

Name: Eric Ennis  
School: John C. Fremont High School  
Grade/Subject: 11th and 12th /History  

Bio: Eric Ennis is an Advanced Placement (AP) History and AP Government teacher at John C. Fremont High School. He has additionally created a Philosophy course that currently partners with Banneker Special Education Center to create lessons covering such topics as ethics and metaphysics, and helps his students personalize many of the ethical dilemmas facing students and families with special needs.

Eric graduated from California State Fullerton with Bachelors of Arts in History. After beginning his teaching career in Orange County, he was recruited to teach in Saudi Arabia. After two years abroad, he moved back to California in 2003, and promptly found his home amongst the Pathfinders. Within the Fremont community, Eric serves in numerous leadership and mentorship roles: the History Department Chair, a member of the Instructional Leadership Team, and as Mentor teacher conducting school-wide professional developments. He is also a National Board Certified teacher and trainer, as well as an instructional coach and guiding teacher for multiple universities (including USC and Mount Saint Mary’s University). He is currently collaborating on a book with a colleague on developing interdisciplinary lesson plans designed for the Common Core Standards.
**United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher**

**Name:** Fedora Schooler  
**School:** El Sereno Middle School  
**Grade/Subject:** 6th Grade- All Subjects and Yearbook

**Bio:** After 15 years as an educator, all spent at El Sereno Middle School, my alma mater, I am proud of my accomplishments. I earned my Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology at Occidental College and my Master’s Degree in Educational Administration at California State University of Los Angeles. Last year, I had the honor of being a Guiding Teacher to two students enrolled in the Teacher Education Program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). This year, I now call one of them, my colleague—she teaches 7th grade math and science to students she taught in my class as a student-teacher. This year, I was also grateful to be one of the finalists for Educator of the Year for the California League of Middle Schools (CLMS).

Currently, I am the USC Neighborhood Academic Initiative (USC NAI) Lead-Teacher. I am also part of the Academic English Mastery Program Team (AEMP) and Curriculum Assessment Team at my school. However, what I am most proud of is continually challenging myself to better my teaching and challenging my students to reach beyond what they think is possible.
Name: Guadalupe Bermudez  
School: Manual Arts High School  
Grade/Subject: Biology 9th grade

Bio: Ms. Bermudez was born and raised in South Los Angeles. She is a product of Los Angeles School District schools. Ms. Bermudez has always been passionate about giving back to her community. As a result, when a teaching position opened at her high school alma mater, she applied for the position. She has now been teaching at Manual Arts Senior High School for over eleven years as a Science teacher. While at Manual she has been the cosponsor of student centered projects, as the creation of the school garden, and the Earth Day Fair celebrations. She has also taken on leadership roles as Department chair. Ms. Bermudez plans to continue to teach students and encourage them to apply to science fields. She hopes that her students become very passionate about the science field and give back to their community as well.
Name: Hector V. Perez-Roman  
School: Arleta High School  
Grade/Subject: 10th & 12th  

Bio: Hector V. Perez-Roman is a National Board Certified teacher at Arleta High School where he teaches AP World History and Geography. Hector was named a Teacher of the Year from the Los Angeles County of Education (2015) and LAUSD (2014). He was also named a California State Teacher of the Year (2015) semi-finalist. He established the Student Traveling Club, partnering with local community organizations, Explore America, and Education First to offer engaging educational traveling opportunities for all his students. His most recent trips included Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, New York, and Washington, D.C. He has also taken students to the 2013 Presidential Inauguration, Spain, France, and Italy. During the summer of 2015 he will travel with students to Boston, New York, Greece, Italy, and Spain. Currently, he is a member of the School Site Council, coach for the Aspen Challenge 2015, parent engagement coordinator, and member of Educators4Excellence. He has served as the Social Studies department chair, taught at Nightingale Middle School, instructor at Occidental College’s Upward Bound program, and a Teach Plus Los Angeles Teaching Policy Fellow alum. He received his B.A. in Public Policy from Occidental College, where he was a James Irvine Scholar, and his M.Ed. from UCLA Teacher Education Program.
United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

Name: Hedyeh  
School: Wadsworth Ave Elementary School  
Grade/Subject: 4th-5th grade/ Special Education for moderate to severe students with Autism

Bio: I have been teaching for the past eleven years at various LAUSD school sites and have taught special education for the past five years at Wadsworth Elementary in South Los Angeles. I have two teaching credentials and a masters in special education. I am currently working on a third credential and a second masters in education administration . This year, I got the opportunity to become the chair of the special education department for students with autism. For the past three years, I have facilitated all standardize testing as the coordinator at the school site. I'm thrilled to be the first special education teacher to be selected by United Way!

I feel my biggest contribution to my students has been to prioritize identified needs and adjust their curriculum, while continuing to challenge myself to seek resources and opportunities to further increase their classroom experience. I've successfully secured several grants for my classroom. The grants enabled my students with autism to receive a classroom full of technology, such as a smart board for interactive lesson plans, tablets for my non-verbal students to communicate with, and touch screen desktops, with wonderful apps, to help them achieve success learning as well as meet the vocational demands of the 21st century. Many parents have been emotionally moved seeing their child comprehend basic communication skills that were lacking and were made possible through technology.
Name: Ioana Ciuperca  
School: Orthopaedic Medical Magnet High School  
Grade/Subject: English 11 and 12  

Bio: I am the Curriculum Leader of our school's Instructional Leadership Team, working on developing curricular maps that are aligned with AP standards and provide access to all students, especially English Learners. I was awarded Teacher of the Year by ECCLA in 2013. I am passionate about teaching students how to think critically and how to take ownership of their education.
Name: Isagani Celzo
School: School of Social Justice at Marquez High School
Grade/Subject: 9th-12th Math Instructional Coach and AP Calculus teacher

Bio: Extreme poverty did not keep Isagani Celzo from fulfilling his dream of becoming a teacher. In the Philippines, while working as janitor, he earned an academic scholarship and graduated magna cum laude with a degree in mathematics at age 20. Mr. Celzo, a National Board Certified math teacher, is an inspirational educator who cares passionately about his students’ success. His life story and experiences in conquering poverty and insurmountable struggles inspires his students to persevere and reach for their own dreams. He maintains a positive learning environment where students feel safe and never feel threatened or afraid to try. Teaching from the heart is a key to his classroom achievements.

Advocating for students, Mr. Celzo collaborated with three other teachers in founding School of Social Justice to bring educational transformation in a traditionally underperforming Huntington Park community. School of Social Justice is making monumental gains as highly evident in Mr. Celzo’s students test scores. His students’ 2013 state assessment scores ranked the Best CST Summative High School Math out of 71 LAUSD-ISIC high schools. In 2014, through Mr. Celzo’s instruction and leadership, School of Social Justice ranked 2nd Best CAHSEE Math scores with 91.5% passing rate. Mr. Celzo is truly a student advocate, and has the expertise and determination to ensure that every student achieves at the optimum level.

Mr. Celzo has earned impressive accolades, including being named People Magazine’s People All Star Teacher, Fishman Prize for Superlative Classroom Practice, LAUSD Teacher of the Year, UTLA Platinum Apple Award, LAUSD-ISIC Model Math Classroom, and Teacher Recognitions from US Second Lady Jill Biden and 27th District Congresswoman Dr. Judy Chu. Mr. Celzo also helps elevate the teaching profession as Teacher Growth and Development Cycle Lead, LAUSD Newly Hired Teachers support provider, and National Board Certification support provider.
Name: Jason Torres-Rangel  
School: UCLA Community School  
Grade/Subject: 11 & 12, English, AP English, Ballet Folklorico  

Bio: Jason Torres-Rangel has taught High School English and Ballet Folklorico for 11 years, currently at the UCLA Community School at the Robert F. Kennedy Community Schools complex, and before that at Los Angeles High School. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Pomona College, and a Masters in Education from Harvard University. He has served in a number of leadership positions at his school, including English Lead Teacher, UTLA Chapter Chair, School Site Council member, and Senior Council Advisor. At UCLACS he has helped develop the school’s unique Seminar elective program that includes classes such as Yoga, Electrical Engineering, Sign Language, Entomology, Sailing, and more. Outside of school Mr. Torres-Rangel is a teacher consultant for the UCLA Writing Project and the California Writing Project. He has also presented at a number of conferences including the California Association of Teachers of English, the Coalition for Essential Schools Fall Forum, and With Different Eyes at UCLA. He has created curriculum for the Discovery Channel's online Literature series and the Getty Museum. Mr. Torres-Rangel's own parents were both LAUSD teachers at Wilson High School, and they serve as continual inspiration for him.
**Name:** Kat Czujko  
**School:** Hollenbeck Middle School  
**Grade/Subject:** Robotics and Engineering, 7th & 8th Grades  

**Bio:** Kat teaches the engineering and robotics elective class at Hollenbeck Middle School in the Boyle Heights community of East Los Angeles. As the advisor for the FIRST Robotics Team, Kat has her students collaborate with professionals and high school students in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields to create competition robots. She is a Partnership for Los Angeles Schools Pioneer in implementing the new Teacher Growth and Development evaluation cycle. Kat earned her BA in political science and her Masters of Education from the University of California, San Diego. She was named a Los Angeles Unified School District Teacher of The Year for the 2013-2014 school year, and is Nationally Board Certified in early adolescent science.
Name: Katie Rainge-Briggs  
School: Augustus F. Hawkins Responsible Indigenous Social Entrepreneurship (RISE) School  
Grade/Subject:

Bio: Katie Rainge-Briggs is in her tenth year teaching Social Studies and seven year at Manual Arts High School. She has taught a variety of Social Studies courses, from Advanced Placement Government to World History. She was the co-lead teacher for the small learning community, the Academy of Business, Education, Specialized Arts, and Technology, for two years during which she created and led professional development for staff members and helped create the Single Plan for Student Achievement. In 2009, Katie applied for a Teacher Innovation Grant, alongside Tony Terry, and together they created an 8-week Community Asset Mapping curriculum to integrate within the yearlong World History / Geography 10th grade program. Furthering her commitment to help young people claim their academic voice, she works with UCLA’s Council of Youth Research and has coached students in presenting to several policy-making bodies, including Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. As Manual Arts transitioned from Local District management into the Innovation Division, Katie served on the transition team to help set the stage for MLA and WestEd to become effective non-profit managers of our school site. As UTLA representative at Manual Arts High School during the 2009-10 academic year, Katie co-chaired the School Decision Making council and supported teachers with mediation and professional development. Additionally, Katie has mentored student teachers in the USC and UCLA teacher preparation programs. Katie has also worked on a two year UCLA TIIP grant that engaged youth in critical action research, examining and transforming their own communities through an innovative curriculum that combines the use of GIS mapping technologies, web 2.0 and film media, and a critical and participatory understanding of public policy. Presently she is a teacher, member of the Instructional Leadership Team and was a design team member for the Responsible Indigenous Social Entrepreneurship School (RISE).
Name: Laura J. Park  
School: Granada Elementary Community Charter School  
Grade/Subject: Kindergarten  

Bio: Mrs. Park began working at Granada Elementary Community Charter School as a Teacher's Assistant in 1993. She has been teaching at the same school since 1997. She is a phenomenal kindergarten/transitional kindergarten teacher who inspires students and teachers alike to use technology as a creative learning tool in the classroom. She has introduced and expanded the use of computers, iPads, and Smart Boards in classrooms as well as established a computer lab for students, teachers, and parents to use on a daily basis. With limited funding, Mrs. Park has become adept at securing donations for everything from classroom furniture to Smart Boards and inspiring others to do the same.
Name: Lauryn England  
School: 99th Street Elementary School  
Grade/Subject: 3rd Grade

Bio: A National Board Certified teacher, Ms. Lauryn England teaches 3rd grade at 99th Street Elementary in the neighborhood of Watts in South Los Angeles. At 99th Street Elementary, Ms. England is very passionate about engaging students’ families and community members through her work with the Family Action Team and School Site Council. Ms. England taught 1st and 2nd grade for five years at an urban school in Nashville, Tennessee, before moving to Los Angeles in 2013 to pursue her M.Ed. in the Principal Leadership Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles. That same year, she was named the Random House Children’s Books Magic Tree House Educator of the Year, and was the recipient of the Tennessee Education Association’s Distinguished New Teacher Award. Lauryn is a teacher leader as a Partnership for Los Angeles Schools Pioneer as well as a Teach Plus Policy Fellow.
Name: Maricela Rodriguez  
School: Amanecer Primary Center  
Grade/Subject: Elementary, All Subjects

Bio: Ms. Rodriguez is an immigrant from Mexico. She cultivates dreams and achieves them. She understands the value of education. She is a product of the Los Angeles Unified School District, graduating from Belmont High School. As an alumna of U.C. Berkeley she became the first in her family to attend college. Her experience at the Harvard Graduate School of Education allowed her to reflect on her craft and obtain knowledge of practices to best develop the language and literacy skills of English Language Learners. She is committed to creating a nurturing and stimulating classroom environment for her students. As a reader and writer, she delights in bringing the written word to life, making teaching the love of reading as easy as 1, 2, 3. She is a life-long learner and believes in improving her craft through opportunities such as the UCLA Writing project, which transformed her writing instruction and reconnected her to her personal writing dreams. Ms. Rodriguez believes deeply in contributing to her colleagues. Working with the organization BetterLesson and the NEA, she created 142 English Language Arts lessons aligned with the Common Core State Standards for second grade. Her work can be found on the website: www.betterlesson.com. Throughout her educational career in Los Angeles and Boston, Ms. Rodriguez has held various leadership roles for the purpose of creating value and making a difference in the communities she has served. In making her dreams come true, Ms. Rodriguez wants us to know that "we must dream not only for ourselves but also for our communities."
United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

Name: Mark Gomez
School: Critical Design and Gaming School
Grade/Subject: 10th grade World History By Design, 11th US history

Bio: Mark is in his 10th year teaching in the Los Angeles Unified School District. He began his career teaching 7th grade World History at John Muir Middle School. While at Muir, Mark served as a mentor teacher to UCLA teachers in training and as a Faculty Advisor to Teach for America. He was department chair, SLC lead teacher, GATE co-coordinator, instructional coach, and UTLA chapter chair. He taught there for five years before moving to Manual Arts High School to take part in the development of their Freshmen Preparatory Academy. There, he taught the 9th grade social studies elective for two years before becoming involved in a project to design four small, public community schools through the Public School Choice 3.0 application process. Mark was a core member of the design team for the Schools for Community Action at the newly constructed Augustus Hawkins Campus. He has since concluded his 2nd year of teaching for the Critical Design and Gaming School, teaching the Geography and Urban Ecology elective for the Freshmen and World History by Design.

Mark also currently serves as Adjunct Faculty in both Antioch University and UCLA’s Teacher Education Program (TEP), teaching graduate courses in Language Development, Social Studies Instructional Methodology, and Critical Media Literacy. His work in secondary social science classrooms has been presented at many conferences including AERA, Mt. St. Mary’s Critical Teaching in Action, and Teachers for Social Justice conferences. Mark is also certified in Gifted and Talented Education through UCSD extension, and Teaching students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities through UCLA extension. He is fortunate to be able to combine his passions and interests in the creative arts, social sciences, and experiential education throughout the duration of his teaching career.
United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

Name: Michelle Youngblood Jarman
School: Eagle Rock Jr. /Sr. High School
Grade/Subject: Language and Literature - currently magnet 8th grade - but also other grades, yearbook and class of 2017 sponsor

Bio: Ms. Youngblood Jarman has proudly served as an SSC member, is currently an NBC candidate - and especially enjoys her roles as the Totem yearbook advisor (where she enjoys seeing her student's creativity come to life with real life skills put to work celebrating the enormous work at Eagle Rock Jr./Sr. High School - an IB campus where you'll find diverse students who are creatively and academically engaged), the graduating Class of 2017 Sponsor, and a Language and Literature teacher (where the highlight of her work can be found in the eighth grade Holocaust curriculum with visits to local museums).
Name: Patricia Kay Hanson
School: Augustus F. Hawkins Community Health Advocates School
Grade/Subject: 9th Grade Geography of Health, 11th Grade US History, 12th Grade Senior Internship/Exploration of Health Careers

Bio: Ms. Hanson is a Social Studies teacher and the Internship Coordinator for the Community Health Advocates School (CHAS) at Augustus F. Hawkins High School. In her fifth year teaching for LAUSD she became core member of the design team for the Schools for Community Action Pilot Schools at Augustus Hawkins Campus. She along with Erica Ramirez wrote the school plan for CHAS. The school is designed to prepare the future Social Workers and Health Advocates of South Central by providing them a rigorous course sequence that equips them with the skills, knowledge and disposition to be college, career and community ready while simultaneously addressing the high rates of PTSD and other major health needs present in the local community. Ms. Hanson helped to design three of our core elective classes – 9th grade Geography of Health, 10th Grade Introduction to Social Work and the 12th grade Senior Internship class.

She has worked closely with St. John's Well Child and Family Center, LA Child Guidance Clinic, the USC School of Social Work and the YMCA to develop a program for our students to build relationships with professionals in the Social Work and Health Advocacy field. Patricia is a graduate of the UCLA Teacher Education Program and the UCLA Principal Leadership Institute. She has developed and published curriculum with USC's Center for Active Learning in International Studies, the Museum of Latin American Art, the USC Roybal Institute on Aging and with the USC School of Social Work. She is very thankful for the opportunities and growth she experienced through the Teacher Initiated Inquiry Project from 2011-2014. She is presently the Lead Teacher for our Instructional Leadership team, Social Studies chair, the internship coordinator and the advisor for our Gay Straight Alliance. She is also a board member of Trauma Aware Schools and for Action Civics LA.
United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

Name: Roxana Dueñas
School: Roosevelt High School
Grade/Subject: 9th grade Cultural Geography/History

Bio: Roxana Dueñas is a history teacher at Roosevelt High School in Boyle Height—the same community that she grew up in. Roxana graduated from UC Santa Barbara with Bachelors in Women’s Studies and Chicana/o Studies. It is her gender and ethnic studies coursework that inspired and influenced her to pursue a teaching career with a specific emphasis on social justice and transformative education in urban schools. Through UCLA’s Teacher Education Program, Roxana obtained her credential and Masters in Education. In the last seven years, Roxana has taught AP US History, Government and Economics and Cultural Geography. Through an inquiry-based and student-centered approach, namely Socratic seminars, experientials and simulations she enjoys bringing history to life—making it relevant and hands-on. This year, she has the unique opportunity to teach and co-create the curriculum for an ethnic studies course titled Boyle Heights and Me. The course places an emphasis on community history, student activism and civic and artistic engagement, particularly with local organizations. In addition to her teaching experience, Roxana has co-written a grant for UCLA’s Teacher Initiated Inquiry Project that allowed her and her colleagues to design their own professional development, participate in research and education conferences throughout the country and purchase technology for the classroom. As a two-time, Gilder Lerhman fellow, she has participated in professional development courses through Columbia University and NYU. And now, as Reed Mentor teacher, Roxana can continue to share her work and experience with fellow educators at her school site.
Name: Sasha Guzman
School: Social Justice Humanitas Academy
Grade/Subject: 11th grade U.S. History

Bio: I have a Bachelors degree in Communications from UC San Diego, a Secondary Teaching Credential and Masters in Education from UCLA, and an Administrative Credential from CSU Dominguez Hills.

I spent the first ten years of my career teaching high school Social Studies in South Central Los Angeles, and this is my first year working at Social Justice Humanitas Academy in Pacoima. I am active on the Teacher Leadership Committee for Facing History and Ourselves and have been involved with the UCLA History-Geography Project. I have presented several years at the California Council for Social Studies, UCLA’s With Different Eyes, and National Historian’s Association conferences. I am also a recipient of the Social Studies Teacher of the Year and Los Angeles County Teacher of the Year for Financial Literacy awards.

My passion is working in urban schools and with underrepresented communities. I continue to be amazed by the incredible students I am privileged to work with, and strive to provide my kids with a rigorous and high level of learning so that they may be successful in a 21st century global community.
Name: Shanika Honeycutt  
School: Luther Burbank Middle School  
Grade/Subject: 8th Grade Math, Leadership  

Bio: Shanika works collaboratively with her colleagues to make her campus a safe place where students can participate as active community members and practice sharing kindness. She is an alumnus of UCLA’s Principal Leadership Institute, a Students Run LA coach, Gay Straight Alliance advisor and Leadership Class teacher. Shanika believes that with positivity, support and guidance, all students are capable of accomplishing big things.
United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

Name: Sharon Nakata
School: San Pascual Avenue Elementary School
Grade/Subject: K-6; Special Education

Bio: Sharon Nakata is the Resource Specialist Teacher at San Pascual Avenue Elementary School in Highland Park. She grew up here and attended local LAUSD schools, and is elated to serve and support her “hometown.”

Sharon holds a B.S. in General Studies from the University of Southern California; she earned a M.S. in Special Education through USC/John Tracy Clinic and M.A.’s in Computer Education and Educational Leadership from CSULA.

Sharon’s special focus is identifying and developing her special education students’ strengths. This has taught her that Project-Based Learning is a powerful tool, incorporating special education learning goals through relevant projects and allowing students to take ownership of their learning. Expanding that learning to the San Pascual student body, she has founded student clubs around her students’ strengths and interests. She started the 350 Club (honor society), re-established the school’s defunct Cheer Team, and in 2014 formed a Glee Club and a Recycling Club. Sharon delights in seeing her special education students participate in and lead these groups where the students’ strengths shine and their confidence develops, which positively affects their academic achievements.

As a teacher leader, Sharon’s passion is environmental education. In 2014 she served on the District’s Instructional Task Force on Nature-based Schoolgrounds, and is currently in the first cohort of the Los Angeles Audubon Society’s Teacher Training Fellowship. She also established community partnerships between San Pascual and the Audubon Center at Debs Park and the National Park Service; both organizations provide outdoor experiences to urban schoolchildren. In 2014, Sharon won four grants to fund bus transportation (to outdoor events) and science supplies. In Spring 2015 she will work with first graders as citizen scientists in the National Audubon Society’s “Hummingbirds at Home” project.

Sharon is serving her second biennium as local chapter president of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International.
United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

Name: Tajuana Johnson
School: Dolores Huerta Elementary School
Grade/Subject: 5th

Bio: I am the educator who is positive and passionate about empowering others to excel in their areas of strengths and struggles. My name is Ms. Johnson and I believe in the change I would like to see in our diverse world of education. I have had the honor to collaborate with several leaders who have inspired me to be a better educator for our deserving youth. I am passionate about educating others to utilize their strengths and struggles as a gateway to success. I teach from the heart by modeling and promoting a culture of respect, fairness, and trust where individuals feel appreciated and valued for their unique contribution. My recognition and celebration of growth of individuals' achievements, knowledge, and capabilities assist with an open and honest dialogue which creates a safe environment to learn, give and receive feedback.
United Way 25 Inspirational Teacher

Name: Tammy Bird
School: Carson High School
Grade/Subject: 9-12 Science

Bio: Tammy Bird is a National Board Certified Teacher, who has taught all levels of Biological Sciences including AP Environmental Science and Environmental studies at Crenshaw and Carson High Schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District for the past 27 years. She and her students disseminated an environmental radio piece for National Public Radio/Living on Earth. One of her most famous program, which she co-founded, is the international youth entrepreneurial program, Food From the ‘Hood.

Currently at Carson High School, Tammy involves her students in many outdoor and environmental experiences ranging from her project-based Edible Urban Forest and Sustainability Outdoor lab, school-wide recycling/waste reduction programs, was instrumental in developing an engineering career pathway and robotics program, to the Teton Science School and Murie Center in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. She continues to broaden her knowledge base and experience with environmental education, as well as STEM programs, which manifest its benefits into her classroom curriculum.

Tammy also is the lead faculty member for the Environmental Science, Engineering, and Technology Academy which serves over 500 students interested in the afore mentioned fields. Duties include master scheduling, academic and industry partner relations, grant writing and administrating, professional development.