Santa Barbara County Education Office
Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent

Introducing Santa Barbara County's 2027 Distinguished Educators

Honoree photos | Full press release

2027 Distinguished New Educators	
 **Laurie Geronimo** Pioneer Valley High School Santa Maria Joint Union High School District *2027 Distinguished New Educator*	Laurie Geronimo is a math teacher at Pioneer Valley High School, where she inspires students through engaging, real-world learning. In her first year of teaching, she launched the school's robotics program, served as a track coach, and created meaningful opportunities for students to build confidence both inside and outside the classroom. As a proud Pioneer Valley alumna, Laurie is passionate about giving back to the community that shaped her. "Laurie is an educator who goes above and beyond in service of students and the school community. Her kind and approachable demeanor fosters strong relationships with students, while her high expectations promote growth and achievement," said her principal.
 **Wendy Marin** Fairlawn Elementary School Santa Maria-Bonita School District *2027 Distinguished New Educator*	As a Transitional Kindergarten teacher at Fairlawn School, Wendy Marin is known for creating meaningful, play-based learning experiences that helps set up her young learners for success. She thoughtfully adapts lessons to meet the needs of multilingual learners and students with diverse abilities. Beyond the classroom, Wendy coaches Fairlawn's cheer team and serves in several leadership roles that strengthen connections among students, families, and staff. Her principal shared, "Wendy possesses a rare, profound blend of instructional skill, natural leadership, and unwavering dedication to student learning."



Stephanie Rosas
Battles Elementary School
Santa Maria-Bonita School District
2027 Distinguished New Educator

An Extensive Support Needs Special Education teacher at Battles Elementary School, Stephanie creates a classroom that empowers students with diverse learning and communication needs. Through innovative use of assistive technology, individualized instruction, and close collaboration with families and colleagues, she ensures every student has meaningful access to learning. Stephanie continually reflects on her practice and works closely with her classroom team to provide individualized support to her students. “Stephanie’s dedication to her students, her innovative use of inclusive technology, and her collaborative leadership within her team make her a truly outstanding educator,” said her principal.

2027 Distinguished Mentors



Becki Naranjo-Gonzales
Cold Spring School
Cold Spring School District
2027 Distinguished Mentor

With more than 20 years in education, Kindergarten teacher Becki Naranjo-Gonzales provides thoughtful instruction, builds strong relationships with students and families, and is committed to meeting the needs of every learner. As a mentor, Becki generously shares her experience, helping new teachers build confidence while modeling student-centered teaching. Her superintendent/principal shared, “Becki represents the very best of what this award seeks to recognize. She is an extraordinary educator, a trusted leader, and an exceptional mentor.”

 **Savannah Schindele** Lompoc Valley Middle School Lompoc Unified School District *2027 Distinguished Mentor*	Savannah Schindele is an English Language Arts teacher at Lompoc Valley Middle School, where she serves as department chair and a mentor to new educators. Savannah is known for fostering collaboration, encouraging professional growth, and helping colleagues strengthen their instructional practice, through thoughtful coaching, active listening, and modeling best practices. “It is rare to encounter an educator who combines instructional excellence, genuine compassion, and collaborative leadership in the way that Savannah does,” said her principal.
 **Billy Silvola** Santa Ynez Valley Union High School Santa Ynez Valley Union High School District *2027 Distinguished Mentor*	As a special education and math teacher at Santa Ynez Valley Union High School, Billy Silvola is respected for his leadership and commitment to students, colleagues, and families. As a mentor, Billy helps new educators navigate the complexities of the profession with patience, empathy, and practical guidance, emphasizing strong relationships as the foundation of learning. As his principal said, “What distinguishes Billy as a mentor is his belief that relationships are at the heart of education and his remarkable ability to make others feel heard, valued, and capable.”