

## Norwalk-La Mirada Unified Recognizes Benton Arts Educator as Teacher of the Year

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**Norwalk**~Benton Middle School art teacher Jennifer Hodge has been recognized as Norwalk-La Mirada Unified's 2016-17 Teacher of the Year for inspiring her students to adopt a lifelong appreciation of the arts and apply their creative, critical thinking skills in other subject areas.

"It's such a privilege to work alongside students as they gain the confidence and skills to communicate an important message and use art as a creative tool for self-expression," Hodge said. "It's a pleasure to work in a district that allows student choice in selecting electives and pathways that inspire them."

Hodge started as a substitute teacher at Gardenhill Elementary School 16 years ago and transitioned into Benton's visual and performing arts magnet as an art teacher in 2010.



She immediately noticed Norwalk-La Mirada Unified's high value on teacher input and collaboration, and various professional development opportunities. Hodge also takes part in the annual Caring Beyond the Classroom event, when teachers provide school supplies to students at the beginning of each year.

"It's an incredible honor to represent the hard-working and highly qualified teachers of Norwalk-La Mirada Unified," Hodge said. "I look forward to spreading awareness about the

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great things our teachers do to help students be the best versions of themselves at school and at home.”

Norwalk-La Mirada Unified recognizes outstanding teachers, staff and administrators at each school during its annual Stars Award Night April 6. District-level recognitions went to:

- Chris Moton, Student & Family Services: District Administrator of the Year
- Michael Gotto, Benton Middle School: School Site Administrator of the Year
- Darlene Reyes, Educational Services: Classified Manager/Confidential Employee of the Year
- Heather Yeager, Hutchinson Middle School: Classified Employee of the Year

“Jennifer is an example of the high-quality teachers we have throughout our schools who inspire our students to pursue their dreams,” Superintendent Dr. Hasmik Danielian said.  
“Congratulations to all of our teachers, staff and administrators who were recognized for their hard work.”