



PRESS RELEASE

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RUSD's Kelley Elementary School Dual Language teacher earns CABE's Teacher of the Year

March 29, 2021 – Rialto Unified School District invests in highly qualified teachers of which one is **Graciela Ballardo**. The California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) selected RUSD Dual Language Immersion (DLI) Teacher, Mrs. Ballardo, from J.P. Kelley Elementary School, as their 2021 State *Teacher of the Year*.

CABE presents Annual Awards to recognize the work of educators and community members across California who advance the vision of biliteracy and educational equity in the State's schools and communities.

Although the 39-year-old classroom teacher and her husband, **Diego Ballardo, Sr.**, live in Jurupa Valley, their two sons: **Diego, Jr.**, age 8, and **Damian**, age 7, both attend Kelley Elementary School. Diego Jr., is active in his mother's DLI class. Damian will be in her classroom next year. The couple's youngest son, **Daniel**, age 5, will begin DLI kindergarten at Kelley Elementary School, next school year.

Mrs. Ballardo said she feels honored to be recognized by CABE.

"Being awarded as CABE's 2021 *Teacher of the Year* is a true honor. I am extremely grateful to work for Rialto Unified School District, and be able to serve my community as a bilingual teacher," Mrs. Ballardo replied. She continued, "I believe that all students are capable of learning and giving education the value and respect that it deserves; especially, when *they* are valued and respected, as individuals. My teaching philosophy results from my experiences growing up bilingual, and now, as a bilingual teacher."

Mrs. Ballardo was hired by the RUSD in 2006, as a kindergarten and first grade teacher at Morgan Elementary School. From the years of 2008 to 2017, she taught English and social science at Frisbie Middle School before transferring to Kelley Elementary School where she now teaches DLI to third grade students. San Bernardino County CABE chapter #53 nominated Mrs. Ballardo for the *Teacher of the Year* recognition.

Kelley Elementary School Principal **Dr. Raymond Delgado** said, "As a Dual Language Immersion Teacher, Mrs. Ballardo continues to break the mold by creating learning experiences that engage students, connect learning to life and real-world experiences, providing students with individualized language-rich and thematic learning experiences. Students are always full of joy and proud to join and engage each other in class."

Mrs. Ballardo was among the selected honorees at the CABE Annual Awards, which were held on March 25, 2021, through the CABE Virtual Conference.

"On behalf of the RUSD Board of Education and the District, we are extremely proud of Mrs. Ballardo's recognition," stated **RUSD Superintendent Dr. Cuauhtémoc Avila**. He added, "Ms. Ballardo exemplifies CABE's vision of biliteracy, multicultural education and competency, and equity for all. Through distance learning, and during the most challenging of times, she honors our District's mission of representing the highest level of commitment, which is the service to our students."