CABE 2020

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Maria E. Dorn
Manzanita Elementary School
Palmdale School District

Maria Dorn has more than 25 years of experience working as an educator with the Palmdale School District. Apart from having taught at numerous grade levels, Ms. Dorn has also worked as an administrative intern, a Special Projects teacher, and an assistant principal. Her involvement in several school site committees and programs are a testament to her strong work ethic and unique drive to best serve her community.

Ms. Dorn was born in Mexico City. She arrived to the United States as a teenager and established her residency in rural Pennsylvania. Not having material luxuries, she and her brother were fortunate to have been raised by caring parents who were true believers that education is the key to change one's life and open doors in the future. Their high expectations and encouragement were essential in guiding her on her educational path. Her father's favorite phrase to say was, “Education is not a race of speed, but one of endurance. Those who persevere will reach their goals.” His words motivated her through difficult times where the temptation to give up was overwhelming.

As a young adult, Ms. Dorn encountered challenges similar to those confronted by immigrants who come to the United States today. Apart from learning English, adapting to a new culture was necessary. In 1991, she moved to California where she would graduate from Antelope Valley College with an Associates' degree in Early Childhood Education. At this time, Ms. Dorn became employed with the Palmdale School District as an instructional assistant. To continue her education, she transferred to Chapman University. By 1993, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Science and completed her teaching credential program. She began her new role as a classroom teacher at Tumbleweed Elementary School, working with ESL students for five years before transferring to Los Amigos in 2002.

In 2008, Ms. Dorn received her Master’s degree in School Administration. She would later work as an assistant principal at Mesquite Elementary School from 2016 to 2018. Her work as an administrator further improved her strengths and knowledge in diverse areas of management. As a result, she developed excellent communication, interpersonal, organizational, and leadership skills. Having reinforced these attributes, Ms. Dorn cultivated a supportive learning environment that upheld the school’s standards, policies, and goals while simultaneously promoting the district’s academic beliefs and outlook for students.

Throughout her extensive career in education, Ms. Dorn has established a strong understanding of dual language education and dual immersion programs. Having returned to teaching as a bilingual teacher due to family-related concerns, Ms. Dorn is currently teaching Spanish to kindergarteners at the Palmdale School District’s Manzanita School. She enjoys interacting with her students and observes their academic growth each day, and it is of special value to Ms. Dorn that her students grasp the importance of learning a second language as she believes to be bilingual is to live in a world without borders. She also believes, “An educator is tasked with one of the most important functions of any given society. Teaching is not just a job and therefore, it should not be measured by profits or gains. Teaching is not only the delivery of knowledge but the molding and shaping of the future generations, who ought to be ready for the crucial changes that lay ahead in our world. I believe that education is the path to open doors of opportunity, that can improve the lives of our students, providing them with equal access in society to achieve success.”

After twenty-seven years in education, the words of her father still ring true. She reiterates these words to her own children and to all of her students. She tells them to keep going; though life may be difficult and may not always go as planned, remember that it does not matter how fast one completes their education but that they achieve it in the end. “It is my job to ensure that all have an equal opportunity to learn in the classroom. It is my responsibility to find ways to reach students of all sociocultural backgrounds. I must use whatever skills and tools I have to help them expand their creativity and critical thinking so that they may adapt to our fast-changing world. I recognize that this is not only a job but an opportunity to shape the lives and futures of the new generations.”

CABE is proud to present Maria Dorn the CABE 2020 Teacher of the Year Award!