

Javier Marquez-Classified Employee of the Year, 2013 (California Department of Education)

When we consider what it should mean to be an outstanding educational professional, we often think of teachers and principals, but it is all too easy to overlook the school's classified personnel. These professionals also deserve recognition, especially when they make meaningful contributions that are above and beyond their job description. Javier Marquez is one such educational superstar.

Work Performance: One of Javier's key attributes is that he is unfailingly proactive, placing work orders to repair items around school before anyone else even notices a problem and always looking for ways to make Washington sparkle and shine. Everywhere you look, there are signs of the care and commitment Javier has for his job. He completes his custodial assignments with ease and uses a variety of methods, materials, tools, and equipment to complete each of his daily tasks. Custodians often get the worst of the worst jobs but Javier never complains and does everything with grace and the utmost of care.

School Community Involvement: Not only does Javier perform his regular duties at Washington Elementary in an exemplary way, but a day does not go by that Javier does not improve a child's school experience in some way. The title "Custodian" doesn't even come close to describing the impact Javier has on a typical day. He's more like the custodian/counselor/security officer/green team coordinator, and one could add even more titles! Javier is an excellent communicator and constantly updates staff by email. He is fluent in both Spanish and English and even acts as a translator for Spanish speaking parents while speaking with the principal, who does not speak Spanish. Javier has positive relationships with teaching staff, classified staff, and district personnel and is always

proactive in taking care of classrooms, the multipurpose room and the grounds. He takes it upon himself to make sure our staff is taken care of from turning on heaters on cold days so the classrooms are warm when teachers arrive to dropping everything to carry a child to the health office who has twisted an ankle.

Leadership and Commitment: This year, recycling has become a priority at Washington. As a result of the Grades of Green program, daily trash has gone from 23 bags to 2. Javier has almost single-handedly made this program work, and despite the fact that it triples his workload, he has never complained. The program is led by a working mom and is supposed to be supported daily with parents. Because many of our parents work, they have been unable to keep the program running smoothly, so each day at breakfast and lunch, Javier can be found at the lunch benches helping kids make decisions about where to put their trash. He gently reminds them or jokes with them about landfills, compost, and recycling and has motivated our students to do their best with conservation. In many schools, when adults can't support a program, it quickly dies out, but Javier has stepped up and made it work. He has earned the respect of parents, teachers and most importantly, kids!

In addition to exceeding expectations for his normal duties and running our Grades of Green program, Javier goes much further every day to improve the school experience for our children. He can often be found talking with kids, jumping rope, or kicking a soccer ball around. If a teacher is late to recess duty in the morning, Javier covers the yard so that children are safe. All of the students know him and he knows each of them by name. If a child is upset, Javier counsels them. He has a loyal following of students and often commissions them to do odd jobs, paying them with Explorer Cash.

Javier takes the lead during all safety drills and staff members rely

on him to maintain the safety of the site, from turning off gas mains to securing gates every day. Every year during the annual district-wide earthquake drill, he completes his assigned duties, which include opening the storage shed and pulling out all of the emergency supplies, turning off water and gas mains, and securing the perimeter. He then immediately helps others who have not completed their assignments, all the while helping to maintain a calm environment.

A teacher said the other day, “How is it that Javier has time to do his job, run the green program and still have time to play soccer with kids on the yard?” The answer is that some employees are so devoted to their school, its staff, and its students, that they find the time to perform their normal duties and much, much more. Javier Marquez deserves recognition for being such an integral part of the Washington Elementary family and the Redondo Beach Unified School District.