



Teachers on Special Assignment Supporting. Connecting. Guiding Success.

This story is the third in a series highlighting Manteca Unified's Plan for Instruction structured by Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, known as MTSS. This series explores Tier 1 of the MTSS, which is the District's baseline of inclusive instruction. Tier 1 supports ensure that all students are able to meet essential academic and behavioral standards.

"You did what you knew how to do, and what you knew better, you did better"
- Maya Angelou

Exceptional teaching is the kind that stays in a student's heart forever, leaving them with questions and inspiration to learn more about the world around them. It is also vital for someone who chooses to become an educator, to continue to improve their teaching style and materials. In Manteca Unified School District, teachers frequently come together to share best practices and strategies to ensure students don't just pass classes, but that their entire learning experience is one full of curiosity, support, and success.

This is where Teachers on Special Assignment, or TOSAs, come into play.

TOSAs are credentialed educators with leadership experience who mentor other teachers. In their role, TOSAs organize innovative training programs and professional development opportunities to provide teachers with support tools and resources. They create training materials based on grade-level curriculum in line with essential standards. To borrow a science metaphor – If teachers are the backbone of the education system,

then TOSAs are the ligaments that connect and support them.

"Helping students reach Grade Level Standards by supporting effective data-driven instructional practices drives our focus," explains Kristi Novara, an Elementary Education TOSA in the Department of Teaching & Learning.

Along with other members of the Teaching & Learning team, Ms. Novara designs research-based trainings that support teachers as they collaborate in their Professional Learning Communities (teams of educators who share ideas and strategies) to design lesson plans. These trainings are driven by district data with the goal of supporting growth for all students.

Teachers regularly analyze data with their school-specific grade level PLC team. to identify areas of instructional need for students. Next, they determine what support systems are needed to meet students "where they are" in their academic journey. School administrators also regularly analyze data and monitor the progress of their site with teachers to set instructional goals. The Department of Teaching & Learning supports both teachers and administrators in these efforts by



Bonnie Stogner, MUSD TOSA



Learn about Cooperative Learning in MUSD!



Learn more about TOSAs!



Kristi Novara, MUSD TOSA

providing quality, data-driven trainings.

Bonnie Stogner, a high school English Language Arts TOSA, also serves on the Teaching & Learning team. When school administrators reach out to her department for ELA support, Ms. Stogner attends and leads



various committees and workshops designed to help teachers target specific areas for intervention or improvement. Her style of training focuses on building relationships between teachers, which opens the floor for dialogue and discussion.

"Teaching high school helped prepare me to teach adults," shares Ms. Stogner, who previously taught language arts and visual and performing arts classes at Weston Ranch High School. "Adults react to lessons differently. I respect their experience and expertise, and in return they also share their wealth of knowledge."

Recently, TOSAs and high school teachers have been

focused on implementing cooperative learning strategies to boost student engagement in the classroom. TOSAs across the District have been encouraging high school teachers to implement activities such as "Mix, Pair, Share" by pairing up classmates who do not typically interact to collaborate during class, which increases positive student engagement and supports learning. To learn more about how teachers and TOSAs are utilizing this strategy, [check out Manteca Unified's latest Board video on Cooperative Learning.](#)

No matter what kind of support teachers need, the TOSAs of Manteca Unified School District will work to provide various opportunities and resources. **At the end of the day, the heart of a TOSA's job is straightforward – supporting teachers to help students thrive.**

