



Fontana STAR

Sherry Hamilton

shares how she is inspired



Profile in Excellence:

Sherry Hamilton, Teacher

FUSD Schools Attended:

- Maple Elementary School
- Alder Jr. High School
- Fontana High School

Higher Education:

- California State University, San Bernardino
B.A. Social Science – History, Political Science, and Geography

FUSD Career Experiences:

- 10 years at Almeria Middle School
- 6 years at A.B. Miller High School
- Third year at Summit High School

Who were the FUSD staff that affected you most as a student?

I had so many wonderful teachers and mentors who taught me some of life's most valuable lessons, and I hope I am passing down their lessons to my students. Mrs. Schneider, my kindergarten teacher, taught me the importance of caring. Her empathy won our hearts and minds. Mr. Gianni showed me that when you love what you do, your excitement rubs off on others. Every day was a production in his class. Miss Baker, at Alder Jr. High, taught me to never say "no" to a student's request. It is what inspires an excitement for learning. Mr. Warren, my favorite history teacher, demonstrated to all of us that history is meaningful, relevant, and a story well told. At Fohi, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Eitelman pushed me to do my best and taught me that sometimes bending the rules for a student is the right thing to do. I am grateful to these teachers, and other mentors, who helped shape my life and my career.

What did you dream of growing-up to be as a child that would lead you to your work with FUSD?

When I was a child, I wanted to be an actress, a veterinarian, and a forest ranger. Believe it or not, the last thing I ever thought I would do with my life is teach. It was later in life, when I diagnosed with cancer, that I made a promise to do something significant for others if I could just have one more day, week, or year on this planet. When the prognosis changed, I remembered a conversation I had with Mr. Dobos, who was then the principal at Sequoia Jr. High. I was working for the Fontana YMCA and sponsored a teen club for girls at his school. One day he brought me into his office and told me that I needed to become a teacher. I laughed and told him that I had dropped out of college and liked what I was doing. He looked at me with a stern expression and said, "We need people like you in this profession." He planted a mighty seed that day – one that led me to this career and chance to do something significant for others every day. Whew! That was 24 years ago. Thank you, Mr. Dobos!

<p>Since you've joined FUSD as staff, what experience(s) have you been most proud of?</p>	<p><i>This career gives us so many opportunities to shine. I have won quite a few teaching awards, written several funded grants, and coached a number of National History Day winners. But, what I am most proud of is when a former student tells me I made a difference in his or her life. My students are the reason I teach and if I have inspired them, then my life has meaning.</i></p>
<p>What keeps you up at night about your work for FUSD?</p>	<p><i>I continually ask myself, "Am I doing enough?"</i></p>
<p>What do you think is the biggest misconception the public has about our work?</p>	<p><i>Many people think teachers only work 6 hours a day and go home when the last bell rings. For the majority of us, that last bell signals when the real work begins – lesson planning, paper grading, collaborating with colleagues, and preparing for the next day and week. There is also a perception that teaching is simple. While I think most people could easily survive one day in a classroom, the majority would be challenged by an entire week.</i></p>
<p>What can the community do to strengthen public education?</p>	<p><i>We are in a partnership with the community to raise the next generation of citizens, workers, and parents. We need to hear the community's voice on school governance boards, we need to use the public's expertise in our classrooms, and our students need mentors who can help them successfully transition into colleges and careers. Join us, get involved in our schools, we all have a stake in the outcome.</i></p>
<p>What inspires you to give your very best for the students of FUSD?</p>	<p><i>My students inspire me by giving me the best of all gifts – the chance to be their mentor, counselor, advocate, mother, creative consultant and coach, but most of all; they let me be their teacher.</i></p>
<p>What might staff or students be surprised to learn about you?</p>	<p><i>I flunked out of college my first time through. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life and saw no purpose in my education. My students' parents might be happy to know that when I graduated from college, the second time through, I was a member of a National Honor Society and had a 3.85 GPA. Guess my teachers were right again – you need to have a vision for yourself, set high goals and work towards accomplishing them.</i></p>

If you know of a "Fontana Star," particularly one who was an FUSD alumnus, you can nominate him or her to be featured by emailing webmaster@fUSD.net. Please provide your name, the name of the individual being nominated, contact information for both of you and a brief description as to why you think the individual qualifies as a Fontana Star.