



Tucson Values Teachers

Great Teachers. Successful Students. Prosperous Community.

Press Release For Immediate Release

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RAYTHEON LEADERS IN EDUCATION AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

TUCSON, Ariz. — Tucson Values Teachers and Raytheon Missiles & Defense today announced the winners of the fifth annual Raytheon Leaders in Education Award. Three local teachers were selected as the recipients and will be honored at Tucson Values Teachers' [Stand Up 4 Teachers](#) ceremony, scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020.

The Raytheon Leaders in Education Award program recognizes and rewards Pima County teachers in grades K-12 who are achieving outstanding classroom performance, demonstrating leadership in their schools and communities, and supporting their peers in a committed teacher workforce.

Through a rigorous evaluation process, judges selected three awardees from among nine finalists. Raytheon will award the three winners separate \$2,500 gifts, plus an additional \$2,500 in matching gifts to each of the teacher's respective schools, for a total of \$15,000. The award recipients will meet with local business and political leaders over the next year to share success stories and find common ground in advocating for advancements in education. The six finalists who were not selected as the winners will receive \$500 each from Tucson Values Teachers.

"The Raytheon Leaders in Education Award honors and recognizes the very best educators we have in our community. Highlighting the contributions and professionalism of local teachers is especially important during such an unprecedented time in education as teachers have faced new and unique challenges," said Andy Heinemann, Chief Executive Officer of Tucson Values Teachers. "We value our partnership with Raytheon and we're once again excited to bring together the business and education community to celebrate teachers and education champions."

In addition to honoring the Raytheon Leaders in Education Award winners and finalists, Stand Up 4 Teachers will also feature the presentation of the Spirit of Education Award, recognizing the contributions of Ron Shoopman, member of the Arizona Board of Regents and one of the founding members of Tucson Values Teachers.

Stand Up 4 Teachers will be an interactive event streamed live from the University of Arizona from 6pm to 7pm on Nov. 4. There is no fee to attend virtually but [pre-registration](#) is requested.

2020 Raytheon Leaders in Education Award winners:

- **Shelley Valencia:** Kindergarten teacher, Centennial Elementary School, Flowing Wells Unified School District

Shelley Valencia has spent her entire 21-year career in education as a kindergarten teacher at Centennial Elementary School in Flowing Wells Unified School District. Over those years, Valencia has held many leadership positions including grade level chair, teacher assistance team coordinator, mentor teacher, member of the school improvement team, and cooperating teacher where she has personally supported 16 student teachers in her classroom. Currently she serves as Head Teacher at Centennial, assuming principal duties on campus as needed. She was also a vital member of the team that wrote the A+ School of Excellence application, which was subsequently awarded to Centennial. Valencia is also active with the school's PTA, having held board positions and volunteering for school events such as the annual Holiday Hoopla. In the 2011-2012 school year, Valencia was awarded the Centennial Elementary Teacher of the Year award.

- **Jessica England:** 6th-8th grade music teacher, Sahuarita Middle School, Sahuarita Unified School District

Jessica England has been the band, orchestra, and choir director at Sahuarita Middle School in Sahuarita Unified School District for the past four years. England serves as a member of her school's Site Council, coordinator of the district's

orchestra festival, and clinician for beginning instrumentalists in Sahuarita's Jumpstart program. England also offers music tutoring, a ukulele class, and facilitates the Kindness Club on campus. As part of her role as the band and orchestra director, England began a jazz band program, which earned the spot in the Jazz in the Desert Festival. She has recently completed her first year in candidacy for National Board Teacher Certification. Prior to teaching in Sahuarita, England has been a band and orchestra director in Tucson Unified School District and Benson Unified School District. England has volunteered with numerous local organizations, such as Tucson Concert Band, TSO Chorus, Tucson Repertory Orchestra, Green Valley Concert Band, and Desert Hills Lutheran Church.

- **Christopher Pankratz:** 9th-12th grade theatre arts teacher, Flowing Wells High School, Flowing Wells Unified School District

Christopher Pankratz has been a theatre arts teacher at Flowing Wells High School in Flowing Wells Unified School District for the past five years. Pankratz has overseen the production of 33 plays, including creating original works of theatre. He has written and produced eight original plays each tailored to his specific classes, such as an adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to feature more substantial female characters. Pankratz is responsible for developing Teatro Habla, giving his Spanish-speaking students the opportunity to translate and later perform in both Spanish and English in a back-to-back double feature. Pankratz was named Best Director in 2019 for the Regional High School Musical Theatre "Monte" Awards. As a stagecraft teacher, he also provides CTE instruction and has served on a statewide committee to align the stagecraft curriculum with newly adopted ADE standards. He is active in the local theatre community as a professional actor and director at The Rogue Theatre and has served as a member of the Tucson Mayor and Council's GLBT Commission.

2020 Raytheon Leaders in Education Award finalists:

Grades K-5

- Latricia Ferguson, Cottonwood Elementary School, Vail Unified School District
- Vanessa Schiess, Hendricks Elementary School, Flowing Wells Unified School District

Grades 6-8

- Gricelda Meraz, Hollinger K-8 School, Tucson Unified School District
- Adam Scafede, Dove Mountain CSTEM K-8, Marana Unified School District

Grades 9-12

- Eric Freitchen, Desert View High School, Sunnyside Unified School District
- Julie Ramsey, Amphitheater High School, Amphitheater Public Schools

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Tucson Values Teachers (TVT) is a business and education partnership focused on helping schools and districts attract, retain and support the very best teachers for every PreK-12 classroom in Southern Arizona. The organization recognizes the critical role teachers play in student achievement and the vital influence they have on Tucson's future. It does this work by raising public awareness of the value of the teaching profession while providing programs that benefit teachers economically and professionally. For more information and to support TVT, visit tucsonvaluesteachers.org or call (520) 327-7619.



Shelley Valencia



Jessica England



Christopher Pankratz

Vision:

*Great Teachers. Successful Students.
Prosperous Community.*

Mission:

*To inspire support of PreK-12 teachers in
Southern Arizona through community
collaborations that attract, retain, and
celebrate teacher excellence.*



**Tucson
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