



## News Release

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### Region One Selects Regional Teachers of the Year

*United ISD and Brownsville ISD Educators Take Top Honors*

**Edinburg, TX** – The Region One Education Service Center held its annual Teacher of the Year recognition dinner on Thursday, August 15, 2019, to honor the region’s District Teachers of the Year and to announce the names of the two teachers that will represent the region at the Texas Teacher of the Year competition.

Roberto Valdez, Jr., a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Juarez Lincoln Elementary School (United ISD) was named Regional Elementary Teacher of the Year and Nicole Ordaz, a Mathematics teacher at Porter Early College High School (Brownsville ISD) was named Regional Secondary Teacher of the Year. Both were selected from an esteemed group of educators, nominated by their own school districts, to represent the region in the statewide Teacher of the Year program. In all, 50 District Teachers of the Year, representing 27 school districts/charter schools were honored for their excellence in the classroom at the annual Region One event.

Roberto Valdez, Jr., has been teaching for a total of 8 years and has served the students on his campus not only as an instructional leader but as a coach, cub scout leader, club sponsor, mentor, crisis prevention responder, and most importantly, as a friend. In these areas Valdez believes he is positively impacting his students’ lives. As a teacher in a Priority One school, Valdez has witnessed the “It takes a village” adage in action as broken families, single parents, grandparents, and extended family members rally in support of their children to help them achieve their goals. He understands that the students in his classroom “see the world through a different lens than most kids” and it is why he is so dedicated to his craft, because he knows that through education his students have the opportunity to have a different life.

Nicole Ordaz is an 11 year teaching veteran and currently teaches Algebra I to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. Ordaz’s success in the classroom is due to her persistence in discovering ways to be a better teacher by researching new materials, attending professional development, streaming videos, observing other teachers, and networking with colleagues in order to hone her craft. She writes in her submitted essay that one of the major issues for public education today is that the world is changing so rapidly and the way we teach has to keep up with those changes. “Innovation in the classroom is vital today. As teachers we need to learn to cultivate student learning and bring the world to them. We need to get them involved in their learning, showing them how they will apply the content we teacher to the real-world.”

**Region One Education Service Center** ([www.esc1.net](http://www.esc1.net)) serves over 436,000 students and educators in seven counties in south Texas including Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Starr, Webb, Willacy and Zapata counties. Region One works to assist school districts in improving student performance, assist districts to operate more efficiently and economically, and implement initiatives assigned by the legislature or the Commissioner of Education.

Nominees submitted an application consisting of essay questions asking nominees to describe a lesson or unit that defines them as a teacher, describe a project or initiative that has contributed to the improvement of overall school culture, an explanation of how they ensure that education transcends the classroom, what they consider to be a major public education issue, and finally, as a spokesperson for teachers and students what is their message to the profession and to the public. A committee comprised of representatives from various teacher and administrator groups evaluated the essay applications.

Each district teacher of the year nominee received a commemorative gold apple bell for their achievement. Dr. Cornelio Gonzalez, Region One ESC Executive Director, awarded each regional teacher of the year with a *Star Polisher Award*, a statue of four children, hands held high, holding a star. Melissa Aguero Ramirez, Region One Human Resources Administrator read a poem, which accompanied the award, *"You see, I'm a teacher, an educator, a mentor. The stars are the children in my class, my job is to take them in, whatever shape they come, and shine and buff them and then send them out to take their places as bright twinkling beacons in the sky."*

Each Regional Teacher of the Year recipient also received a personalized *Teacher of the Year* ring from Jostens, *The Class Ring Company*. This is the tenth year that Jostens, *The Class Ring Company*, has served as a sponsor of the Region One Teacher of the Year celebration.

Each of the state's twenty regional education service centers submit their regional elementary and secondary teachers of the year for the Texas Teacher of the Year award; Region One ESC will nominate Ordaz and Valdez for the Texas Teacher of the Year award. Semi-finalist judging will take place at the Texas Association of School Administrators headquarters in Austin, Texas to determine the six Texas Teacher of the Year finalists. The Texas Elementary and Texas Secondary Teachers of the Year will be announced in October 2019 at the Texas Teacher of the Year Awards Ceremony in Austin, Texas.

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