

Advancing Quality Education: Spotlight on Mandi Smith and the Bridges Math Program

Mandi Smith, a teacher on special assignment at Sun Terrace Elementary STEM Magnet School, has gone above and beyond to ensure that the students there have access to high quality, hands-on, accessible math. The Bridges math program, funded in part by MDUSD Education Foundation (MDEDF), has resulted in student achievement growing in “leaps and bounds” and has been successfully adapted to distance learning.

When Ms. Smith was assigned to oversee the math and science program three years ago at the fledgling magnet school, she aimed to provide a consistent math curriculum for all grade levels. Through tireless fundraising, Ms. Smith was eventually able to roll out the Bridges math program for all students school-wide. The staff was “ecstatic” to have the new program in the classrooms, and the curriculum matched the common core testing standards. Smith assisted with in-classroom teaching and promoted use of the bilingual parent education materials that reinforced the math skills at home. Bridges was also integrated into the after-school program, which is attended by over half the Sun Terrace students.

As the COVID-19 pandemic led to a shutdown of the district schools, Ms. Smith found the Bridges program “easy to push online” for distance learning. Videos of the lessons, along with the assignments, are posted online, and two times a week, Smith holds Zoom office hours to go over the math problems with students. Although Sun Terrace was able to provide Chromebooks to each student for distance learning, the biggest challenge has been ensuring that students have access to adequate WiFi for the online learning. Fortunately, Bridges parent handouts also include hands-on math games that can be done offline with everyday materials.



Despite the challenges of distance learning, Ms. Smith has received very positive feedback about the Bridges program and works hard to ensure that it provides all students with a consistent and relevant math curriculum—whether in the classroom or through distance learning. MDEDF is proud to have funded part of the Bridges program and congratulate Ms. Smith on her hard work!

MDEDF is able to help fund programs like Bridges and other quality STEAM-based curriculum thanks to donations from community members and local businesses. You can help us to keep building on these successful efforts by donating today! Any amount helps, and if you make a contribution by June 30, your name will be included in our annual report! Right now, you can donate to our General Fund or to the Coronavirus Remote Learning Fund, which goes towards purchasing electronic devices and hotspots to support distance learning. **(Please note: the Coronavirus Remote Learning Fund closes on June 30).**

If you have already given to the Foundation this year, thank you for your support! We are so close to reaching our goal of \$100,000 - if you haven't had an opportunity to give yet this year, here's your chance to help bring across the finish line!