

2006 HONOREE

## Carmen Munnelly

De Portola Middle School, San Diego, CA  
Middle School Humanities Education • 8th Grade History



**Years Teaching:** 16  
**Average Class Size:** 34  
**Classes Taught Per Day:** 5  
**School's % of ESL Students:** 3%  
**School Type:** Public, Large City  
**Type of Class:** Self-contained

“Every day as I unlock the door to my small bungalow and welcome 173 thirteen-year-olds through the door, I am acutely conscious that my challenge is not easy. I am to take dozens of standards that are posted on my wall, standards the great state of California has selected for all of its U.S. History teachers, standards obviously written and approved by committee, and use magical powers to make them come alive. That is a tall order. But this is the part of my job that I relish most, next to actual interaction with students. I love mapping out a lesson, prescribed by the standards, tweaking it so it’s student-friendly and memorable. It’s not all songs and skits of course; tackling 18th and 19th Century primary sources is no tea party. But that is what historians do, so our class does it too. We also DO history over again. We recreate it to experience it for ourselves. Consider for a moment the relationship between the words ‘re-creation’ and ‘recreation.’ Such thinking and interaction promotes both intellectual and social growth. Such serious play is welcome because it makes history come alive, creating both memories and learning that last far beyond next Friday’s test.”

“Mine is no ordinary ‘names and dates’ history class. I adhere to Mary Poppins’ philosophy: ‘In every job that must be done, there’s an element of fun.’ It is my job to find that element of fun, to spark imagination, to ignite curiosity, to stir passion. It’s my responsibility,



through the content and our interaction, to move all students closer to their potential. Imagination abounds in my classroom. Variety and novelty are enemies of apathy and boredom – they are the history teacher’s mightiest allies.”

“As my eighth-grade year came to a close, I realized how much I had learned from Miss Munnelly in such a short period of time. As I’ve moved onto high school, it has become clear that she truly inspired me to reach my full potential as a student and as an individual. Every month or so, I go back to De Portola to visit her, and she always amazes me. She remembers everyone’s name that was in my class and even where we sat. She remembers our inside jokes and happy memories. I have the greatest respect for Miss Munnelly.”

– former student

### OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

Middle School Teacher of the Year Runner Up - San Diego City Schools (2005) • California Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year (2005) • Nominee for Region Nine’s Educator of the Year - California League of Middle Schools (2005)