

Armando Johnson

2021 FLAM Distinguished World Language Educator Award



The Distinguished World Language Educator Award honors members of the foreign language teaching profession for long-term achievements and dedication of service in education.

Armando Johnson is our Distinguished World Language Educator Award recipient and he teaches Spanish at Central High School in Springfield, MO. He was recently honored as the 2020-2021 Teacher of the Year for Springfield Public Schools, and was a Teacher of the Year finalist for the state of Missouri. Armando first became interested in language when his high school Spanish teacher recognized his natural ability. "My teacher told me that I would one day become a translator or a teacher. I told her that I was going to become an NBA player. Of course, one of us was right." He translated for Spanish speakers in his community and drafted a curriculum that would help police officers conduct traffic stops in Spanish. In 1999, Armando was chosen as a Fulbright-Hayes Scholar and traveled to Ecuador. His travels inspired him and guided his teaching. In

and out of the classroom, Armando makes local connections with the Spanish-speaking community of Springfield: "In our school district Wednesdays are a designated virtual class day. In teaching out-of-the-box, I would host my virtual classes at the businesses of Latinx owners and organizations. This allowed my students to connect with the community and it in turn, increased their engagement."

Besides advocating for Spanish language and culture, he strives to recruit students of color into studying a second language: "During my own language study I carried the stigma of being "the only black male" in the program. This has been similar for me as a language teacher. I do not see many if any people who look like me when I attend conferences or language gatherings." Some of Armando's professional contributions include the Student African-American Brother to Brother Program, Black Girl Talks, African American Academic Achievers, Equal Opportunity Schools and Diversity Club.

"Students from all backgrounds respond well to this larger than life Master Teacher. His engaging smile, his charismatic personality, and a 'we can do this together' attitude provide support for students, parents, and colleagues. When he walks into a room, people notice, and when he speaks, people listen - but he's listening too. He respects all students, and they respond accordingly."

- Mrs. Judy Brunner, Principal, Central High School

"He is an advocate and champion for all students--especially for marginalized students. He gives them voice throughout our building through his efforts as the Equity and Diversity Champion."

- Veronica Smith, Special Ed Department Chair, Central High School