

Press Release: *Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities Announces 2025 Teacher of the Year Award Recipient*

(For Immediate Release)

January 16, 2025

The Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities is pleased to announce Ms. Bhawna Sharma as the recipient of the 2025 Teacher of the Year Award sponsored by Attainment Company. This award recognizes Ms. Sharma's outstanding commitment to teaching students with autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities.

Ms. Bhawna Sharma, a Special Education teacher at Cuba Independent School District in New Mexico, is celebrated for her innovative and inclusive approach to teaching students with autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities. In a rural district where 70% of students come from the Navajo Nation, Ms. Sharma has created transformative learning opportunities, including engaging life skills activities. Her efforts, such as organizing field trips, have enriched her students' experiences while fostering independence, confidence, and social-emotional growth. "She makes parents feel their students are stars and safe," said Theresa Linney, while Laura Saucedo praised her as "diligent, organized, and student-centered" in addressing unique learning needs. Known for her empathy, creativity, and commitment, Ms. Sharma's work has profoundly impacted students, families, and colleagues, making her a standout leader in special education.

This distinguished award is presented by The Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD), a special interest association within the Council for Exceptional Children—the largest international professional organization dedicated to supporting the needs of students with disabilities. Since its establishment in 1963, DADD has been a leading voice in the field of education for students with autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities, actively contributing to research dissemination, the creation of nationally recognized professional practice standards, and fostering robust professional networking.

The award ceremony is scheduled for January 22, 2025, at DADD's annual conference in Clearwater Beach, Florida. For further information, please contact Dr. Melissa Savage, DADD Awards Chair, at mns029@uark.edu. Additional details about the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities can be found at <http://www.daddcec.com/>.