



Fenton Charter Public Schools

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May 24, 2021

Dear Fenton Community:

On June 28, 1991, the LAUSD Region Superintendent of the Northeast San Fernando Valley, Sara Coughlin, called to inform me that I would be transferred to Fenton Avenue Elementary on Monday, July 1st. I was devastated at the thought of leaving Canterbury Elementary, but in the Los Angeles Unified School District, “norms” for determining the number of administrators and other staff are revised regularly, so I knew I had to leave and reluctantly packed my things and moved to Fenton. My reluctance was related to the memory of my visit to Fenton when I was a relatively new teacher. The principal at the time called to ask me to transfer to the school, and offered me any grade, and any position – even the position of full-time coordinator, which I did not want. It was 1976, and I had been teaching for five years, so I was quite inexperienced, but I knew enough to recognize a challenging situation, and Fenton was certainly that. Targeted by vandalism and graffiti, even substitute teachers would not accept assignments at Fenton.

When I arrived at the school on Monday, July 1, 1991, I was pleasantly surprised. The principal, Joe Lucente, had definitely cleaned up the facility and implemented procedures to improve the environment and safety conditions, but there was still much to be done. The Region Superintendent, for whom Sara Coughlin Elementary is named, had shared that Joe had done an exceptional job of ‘cleaning up’ the school site. Now, I was being sent to ‘clean up’ the instructional program.

Two years after arriving at the school, Joe and I led the effort to convert Fenton Avenue Elementary to charter status. In 1993, Fenton became the Los Angeles Unified School District’s seventh charter school, and after approval by the State Board of Education in September, Fenton Avenue Charter School became charter number thirty in the state of California. As of the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, 1,306 charter schools were open and operating in the state, and five of those schools are part of the Fenton Charter Public Schools, a charter management organization we established in 2011 to ensure our sustainability.

On February 1st of this year, I celebrated my 50th anniversary as a public school educator: eighteen years as a classroom teacher and thirty-two years as an administrator. Most of you know that I formally retired in 2010, and now it is time to genuinely retire and pass the leadership baton to two exceptional individuals whom I admire and respect, and in whom I have total confidence: Dr. David Riddick will assume the role of Chief Executive Officer on July 1, 2021, and Mr. Jason Gonzalez will support Dr. Riddick as the second-in-command as he assumes the role of Chief Operating Officer.

Fenton Charter Public Schools Leadership

Chief Executive Officer (CEO): Dr. David Riddick

Dr. Riddick has been associated with our organization since 2010, when he was selected as the Director of Fenton Avenue Charter School after an intensive search process. Holding a Bachelor of Arts Degree, Master of Arts Degree and Educational Doctorate from California State University, Northridge, he was an accomplished educator even prior to his move to Fenton. In July 2012, The Fenton Board of Directors asked him to lead the transformation of Santa Monica Boulevard Community Charter School (SMBCCS), a failing school that was divested to the Fenton Charter Public Schools in an effort to improve the academic program of the conversion charter school in East Hollywood. His efforts at SMBCCS have been well noted by the District as the school made such significant progress, the school moved from the worst performing to highest performing in the community in just one year. On July 1, 2018, Dr. Riddick was named Fenton’s Chief Academic Officer, and again served with distinction as he oversaw the efforts of Fenton’s five schools. Parents and community most likely know him best because of his outstanding efforts to reopen the Fenton schools during

the pandemic. The planning and preparation, and extraordinary effort and hours given to the monumental task speak to his outstanding work ethic and desire to do everything possible for the communities Fenton serves.

During the past three years, I have worked closely with Dr. Riddick in the Fenton business office and am confident he is more than ready to take on the role of Chief Executive Officer. As he becomes the highest ranking executive, he will provide educational and management leadership while continuing to do what he has done so brilliantly to date: implement the organization's goals, priorities, guiding principles, standards and accountabilities to ensure student achievement and employee performance meet the highest standards of excellence.

Chief Operating Officer (COO): Mr. Jason Gonzalez

Mr. Gonzalez has a long history at Fenton, and was even a student at Fenton Avenue Elementary as a sixth grader. He has been employed at Fenton since after high school graduation, serving as a paraprofessional prior to joining the technology team, and then becoming the Information Technology Manager. He has consistently demonstrated a desire to learn and grow professionally, and holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Art, with a Graphic Design emphasis (California State University, Northridge), a Master of Business Administration (California State University, Northridge, including the M.B.A. Study Abroad Program at Brighton Business School, University of Brighton, England) and a Master of Science Degree in Consumer Psychology from the University of Southern California (USC). His service to Fenton during the course of more than twenty years speak to his loyalty and commitment to the Fenton community where his parents continue to reside. Mr. Gonzalez's varied educational background will serve him well as he assumes the role of Chief Operating Officer of the organization and accepts the responsibility of overseeing all operations and management teams.

I have the unique perspective of observing Mr. Gonzalez from his first efforts as a part-time teacher assistant, to full-time technology assistant, to full-time manager of Fenton's technology efforts. His knowledge of how best to establish a technology-rich environment date back to our first Technology Director, Doug Bean (for whom the two-story building at Fenton Avenue is named). Mr. Gonzalez worked under Doug's direction as a teenager, and his potential obviously shone through, as Doug pointed to Jason working late one evening in 1995 and said, "There's your 'technology future'". I had no idea that what Doug shared with me that evening would become reality as Mr. Gonzalez has successfully led our efforts to bring the best and most to our students and staff since Doug Bean's passing. His efforts during the past year as the pandemic changed the instructional program forever have been commendable. The purchase, roll-out and continued assistance for students, families and staff for all technology-related needs were remarkable, and the same thoughtful, meticulous attention to detail, and outstanding work ethic will serve him well in this new position.

Changes to School-Site Leadership

As the transition of the leadership of the Fenton Charter Public Schools begins, there will also be changes at two of the Fenton school sites.

Fenton Avenue Charter School - Mrs. Leticia Padilla Parra Returning to the Classroom:

Mrs. Leticia Padilla Parra has asked to return to the classroom and will move to Fenton STEM Academy as a teacher when the 2021-2022 school year begins. Mrs. Padilla Parra began her career as an educator at Fenton Avenue Elementary soon after graduating from high school. Her first position at Fenton was as a paraprofessional and the year was February 1993 – just prior to the conversion of the school. When ready to take on her own classroom, she applied and was hired as a first grade teacher on July 1, 1999. From first grade (for four years), she moved on to teach second grade (for four years), and then fifth grade (for six years), demonstrating outstanding teaching skill and ability at each grade level. She then moved into administration serving as an Administrative Coordinator (from 2013), and then Assistant Director (from 2013 to 2018) – all at Fenton Avenue Charter School. Since July 1, 2018, she has served as the Director of the school. Clearly, she has devoted her career to Fenton's flagship school and has stepped up to any challenge when called upon. It is very fitting that as Mrs. Padilla Parra returns to the classroom, she returns to the school whose charter she co-authored. She and former FACS Director Mrs. Stacy Hutter wrote the Fenton STEM Academy charter petition, and successfully pursued its approval by the Los Angeles Unified School District in June 2013. Soon, she will experience firsthand the fruits of her labor and assume a teaching position at the school she envisioned!

Santa Monica Boulevard Community Charter School - Ms. Monica Castañeda Stepping into Director's Position at Fenton Avenue Charter School:

Ms. Castañeda began her career at the Fenton Charter Public Schools on July 1, 2017 as an Assistant Director at Santa Monica Boulevard Community Charter School (SMBCCS), served briefly at the Fenton Primary Center before returning to SMBCCS, and will now take the helm of Fenton Avenue Charter School. Prior to joining Fenton, she served as a teacher, Assistant Principal and Principal at St. John Baptist de la Salle Catholic School in Granada Hills from 2007 to 2017. I am confident she is well prepared to assume the new responsibilities of Director at Fenton Avenue Charter School and will easily transition into her new role.

The school site administrative teams for 2021-2022:

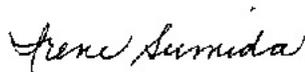
Fenton Avenue Charter School	Santa Monica Boulevard Community Charter School	Fenton Primary Center	Fenton STEM Academy	Fenton Charter Leadership Academy
Monica Castañeda, <i>Director</i>	Cary Rabinowitz, <i>Director</i>	Richard Parra, <i>Director</i>	Jennifer Miller, <i>Director</i>	
Barbara Aragón, <i>Assistant Director</i>	Walter Gomez, <i>Assistant Director</i>	Wendy Kaufman, <i>Assistant Director</i>	Jennifer Pimentel, <i>Assistant Director</i>	
Jessi Tello, <i>Assistant Director</i>	Beth Henschel <i>Administrative Coordinator</i>	Sirui Thomassian, <i>Assistant Director</i>	Cecilia Quijano, <i>Assistant Director</i>	
	Nicole Langlois <i>Administrative Coordinator</i>			

Continued Stability and Commitment to Service

Joe Lucente has served the Fenton organization since 1988. First as the Principal of Fenton Avenue Elementary, and then as the first Executive Director of Fenton Avenue Charter School. Mr. Lucente has continually stepped forward to oversee our efforts to expand and improve, supporting every innovative and creative endeavor no matter how challenging or time consuming. Since the formation of the Fenton Charter Public Schools in 2011, although retired since 2005, Joe agreed to lead the Board of Directors and continues to serve as the Board Chair. He has committed to continuing to serve the organization well into the future to ensure stability, consistent expectations, and continued success.

Finally, although I will be leaving Fenton and the position of Executive Director, I will continue to serve Fenton in the capacity of Executive Advisor to ensure the CEO, COO and Board are advised on all matters pertaining to the history of Fenton and assisted as questions arise. As we transition to this new leadership team, please support them as you have supported me. It has been thirty wonderful years and I thank you for the memories I will always cherish and your continued friendship!

With gratitude,



Irene Sumida