

Dear El Diamante Students, Families, and Community,

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I introduce myself as the new principal of El Diamante High School. My journey to this role has been anything but traditional—and that's exactly why I'm here. After two decades in the private sector as an area director in business and industrial engineering, I chose to shift my life's work toward public education. That decision was born from a deep belief: that every young person deserves a learning environment that not only sees who they are, but who they can become.

For the past 13 years, I've served in alternative education—walking alongside students who had been underestimated or overlooked. There, I saw firsthand the power of connection, the strength of high expectations, and the transformation that happens when adults believe deeply in the potential of young people. Those same principles are what drew me to El Diamante.

El Diamante High School is a place rich in legacy, talent, and opportunity. From our award-winning academic programs and pathways, to our thriving performance and visual arts, athletics, and extracurricular activities, our school is a microcosm of what is possible when students are challenged, supported, and inspired. Whether through our Ag and CTE programs, AP and dual enrollment courses, or championship-worthy athletic teams, El D has something for every student ready to engage and grow.

We know the world our students are walking into is vastly different than the one we grew up in. That's why we center our work around a clear, forward-focused purpose:

Through intentional system design, data-informed decisions, and unwavering collective commitments, we foster a culture of connection, excellence, and high expectations. Together, we aim to leave a legacy defined by belonging, student success, and a vision that inspires all to dream big.

This purpose aligns with Visalia Unified's *core beliefs and commitments* by driving innovative systems and supportive environments that ensure every student is known, empowered to grow, and inspired to build a legacy of excellence. It compels us to prepare students not just for the next test, but for the next decade—and beyond. We're committed to instilling strong values, a relentless work ethic, and the adaptability needed to thrive in an ever-changing world. Our graduates will leave El Diamante not only with knowledge, but with the character, skills, and mindset to lead with purpose and confidence.

I am humbled to join this incredible community and look forward to partnering with our families, students, staff, and greater Visalia community to ensure El Diamante shines as a beacon of excellence and hope. Let's build something extraordinary—*ALL IN as a Miner* together.

With Miner Pride,

Niels Burgess
Principal, El Diamante High School