

School News

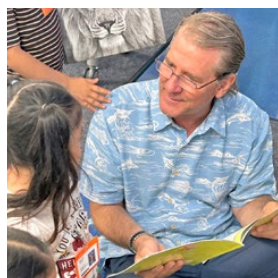
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Covering the Fullerton School District



Volume 13, Issue 37

October 2025



Fullerton School District Superintendent, Dr. Robert 'Bob' Pletka, Retiring in 2026.





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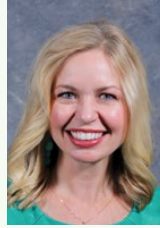
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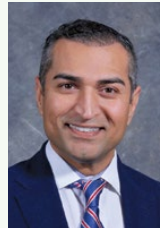
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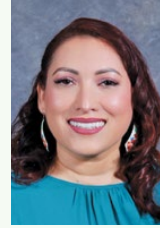
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**Dr. Bob
Pletka**
Superintendent

Fullerton School District Superintendent Dr. Bob Pletka Announces Retirement

After more than 13 years of dedicated leadership in the Fullerton School District (FSD), Superintendent Dr. Robert “Bob” Pletka has announced his plans to retire on February 1, 2026.

In a letter to the FSD community, Dr. Pletka expressed deep gratitude to students, staff, families, and community members, calling his time as superintendent “one of the greatest honors of my life.”

“This district is so much more than a system of schools—it’s a true community, woven together by people who care deeply about children and one another,” Dr. Pletka shared.

During his tenure, Dr. Pletka has championed innovative instructional programs, expanded access to technology and personalized learning, and strengthened community partnerships to ensure students are prepared with the skills they need for the future. Under his leadership, the district has continued to live its motto, “Great Schools – Successful Kids,” through academic excellence, creativity, collaboration, and a strong sense of belonging for all students.

“Dr. Pletka’s leadership has left a lasting impact on the Fullerton School District,” FSD Board of Trustees President Beverly Berryman said.

“His vision for innovation, his unwavering belief in our students, and his ability to connect with people have strengthened our schools and our community. Many superintendents have vision and leadership, but Dr. Pletka has a true heart and compassion for all students, committing himself to doing all he can to provide them with the best educational experiences and opportunities possible because he knows that is what every child deserves. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we are

deeply grateful for his years of service and his dedication to ensuring that every FSD student has the opportunity to achieve success.”

Dr. Pletka began his career in education more than 35 years ago as an elementary and middle school teacher in the Lake Elsinore Unified School District. He later served in leadership roles including Director of Instruction and Technology at Covina-Valley Unified, Associate Superintendent at Vista Unified, and Superintendent of El Centro Elementary School District before joining Fullerton in 2012.

A recognized leader in educational technology and 21st-century learning, Dr. Pletka is the author of two books—*Educating the Net Generation: How to Engage Students in the 21st Century* and *My So-Called Digital Life*. He earned his Doctorate in Education from the joint program at UC Irvine and Cal Poly Pomona, his Master’s in Educational Technology from National University, and his Bachelor’s in Communications from Cal State San Bernardino.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Dr. Pletka has become a respected leader through his passion for cultivating a lifelong love of learning in students, his collaborative and caring leadership, and his gift for uniting the community in both moments of celebration and times of challenge.

As he looks ahead, Dr. Pletka says he is most eager to spend more time with his wife Katie, their six children, and grandchildren.

“I leave this role with deep appreciation—and deep peace—knowing that the Fullerton community will continue to care fiercely for its children and for each other,” Dr. Pletka reflected.

The Fullerton School District Board of Trustees will begin the process of selecting the district’s next superintendent in the coming months, ensuring a smooth transition of leadership.

Superintendent



Dr. Bob Pletka

Superintendent

Fullerton School District Speech and Debate Team Wins Sixth Consecutive National Championship

The Fullerton School District (FSD) Speech and Debate team has once again earned top national honors winning a sixth consecutive national championship at the 2025 National Speech and Debate Tournament, held in Des Moines, Iowa this June.

The prestigious event brought together more than 6,000 students from over 1,500 schools across the nation and world. At the middle school level, 829 students from 198 schools representing 40 states and five countries competed for top honors. This year also marked a historic milestone through the centennial celebration of the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA). Students kicked off the tournament with a 100th birthday celebration at the Blank Park Zoo and explored a century of debate history through a special Centennial Timeline at the Iowa Events Center.

Representing FSD were students from Beechwood and Fisler Schools, Ladera Vista, Nicolas, and Parks Junior High Schools. Nearly every FSD school advanced students into the final rounds, a remarkable achievement with competitors reaching the top eight in the nation across 36 different events. Several FSD students placed among the top six competitors nationally in categories that included Original Spoken Word Poetry, Informative Speaking, Humorous Interpretation, and Poetry Interpretation.

One of the district's standout moments came when Parks Junior High's newly minted alumna Sabrina Samidon claimed first place in the nation for Original Oratory, a persuasive speech event focused on advocacy and

social impact. A runner-up finish for first for Informative Speaking featured a Fisler competitor, and two other FSD students saw top-three finishes in Humorous Interpretation and Poetry Interpretation.

FSD's championship win was reinforced by both Parks Junior High and Beechwood School receiving National Schools of Excellence awards.

Reflecting on the impact of the program during a recap meeting of the tournament with FSD's student-competitors, Cindy Hye Lee, an FSD teacher on special assignment supporting FSD's Speech and Debate program, shared that students overwhelmingly agreed this was a "surreal experience."

"It reminded me that Speech and Debate is about so much more than winning rounds—it's about finding our voice and using it to better the future," Lee paraphrased as the students' overall takeaway from the tournament.

Echoing that sentiment was FSD Speech and Debate competitor Arjun Parikh, Parks Junior High Class of 2025.

"Joining Speech and Debate was not only about winning rounds; it was truly about the friendships and experiences gained through competing and supporting teammates, all while using our voices to better the future."

With its sixth straight national title, FSD continues to set the standard for middle school Speech and Debate excellence. Students, teachers, and coaches alike say the victory reflects not just skill, but also the lasting values of teamwork, leadership, and the power of student voices.

For more information about the Fullerton School District's Speech and Debate program, visit bit.ly/speechanddebatefbsd, and for more about the 100-year-old National Speech and Debate Association, visit www.speechanddebate.org/.



Fullerton School District's National Speech and Debate team, made up of 20 students in grades sixth through eighth representing various schools from across the district, took top 2024 NSDA honors.



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Dr. Rob Coghlan
Assistant Superintendent

A New Era

On September 17, Nicolas Junior High marked a historic milestone with the ribbon cutting of its brand-new Arts and Recreation Center (ARC). Though the facility will officially open later this Fall, the celebration symbolized the beginning of a new era for students, families, and the wider community.

Made possible through Measure N, passed in November 2024, the \$13 million, 10,000-square-foot ARC is more than just a building—it represents vision, investment, and opportunity. At its core

is a full-size basketball court designed for athletics, fitness, and physical education. Just as significant is a professional stage, giving students the chance to shine in performances, assemblies, and productions. Together, these features transform the ARC into both a gymnasium and a cultural hub.

The ARC also fulfills practical and lasting needs: a safe indoor space during inclement weather, a gathering place for community events, and even a shelter in times of emergency. Feeder schools will benefit as well, gaining access to a modern venue for night programs. With so much potential waiting within its walls, we look forward with excitement to all that will unfold in this new space.



Orange County Department of Education

200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa CA 92628 • 714/966-4000 • www.ocde.us

A New School Year, a Strategic Roadmap, and How One Experience Can Change a Student's Life



Dr. Stefan Bean
Superintendent


I can still see the sun-splashed blacktop at Green Elementary School in San Diego. In third grade, I navigated recess in my wheelchair, eager to play games but often uncertain how to break in. Then one day, something changed.

A Paralympic athlete — strong, confident and seated in a sleek racing wheelchair — visited campus to share his story and challenge students to a 100-meter dash. One by one, he left every competitor in the dust.

Later, I saw his car, outfitted with hand controls. I noticed the way he carried himself — capable, independent and assured. Until that day, I hadn't fully imagined those possibilities for myself. That single moment expanded my vision of what was possible and, in subtle but lasting ways, shifted how my classmates saw me, too.


The experience taught me something I carry to this day: Every student needs a connection that inspires them — a spark.

See **OCDE** • Page 30



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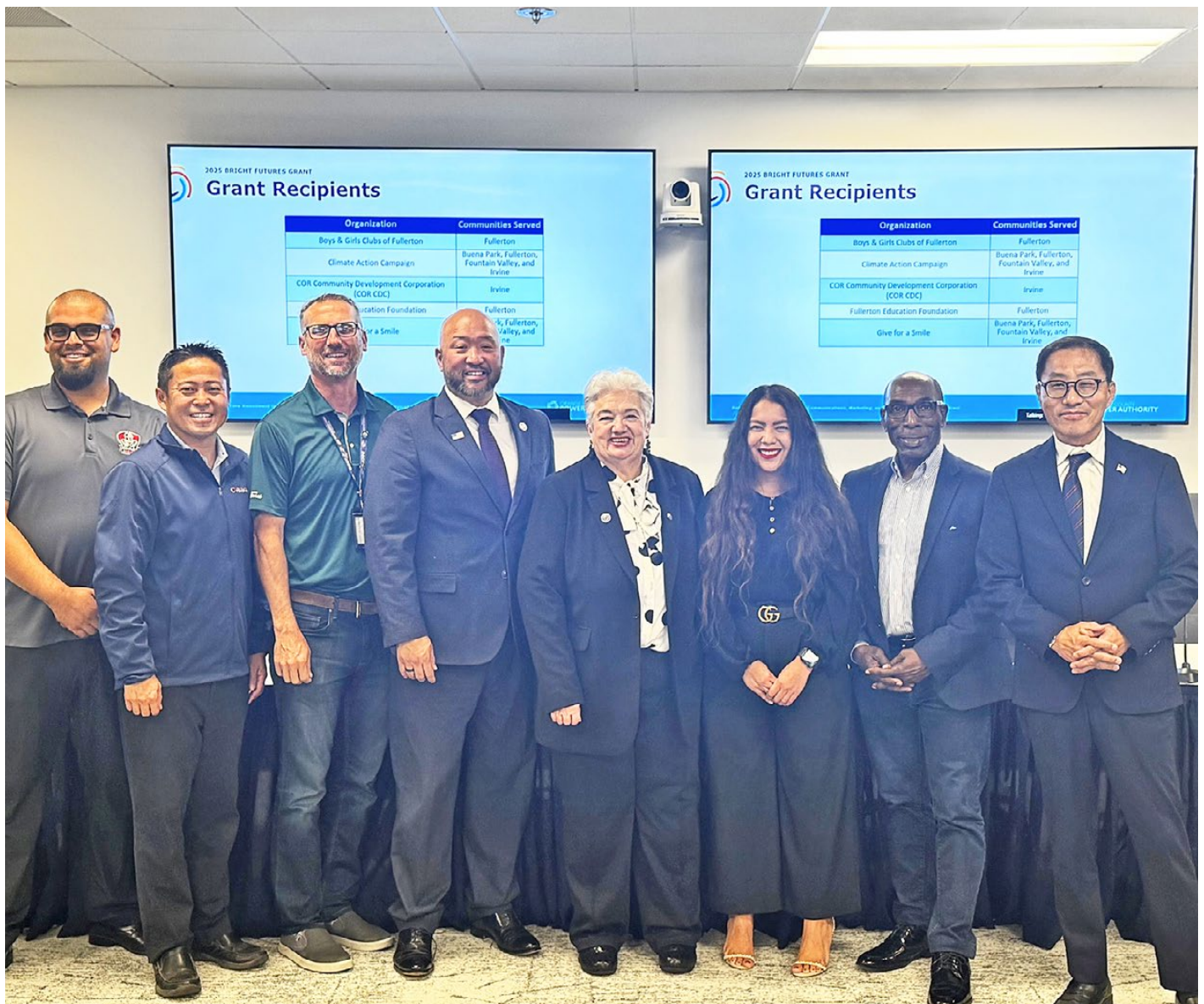
Jeremy Davis
Assistant
Superintendent

Solar-Powered Learning

Thanks to a \$20,000 Bright Futures Grant awarded to the Fullerton Education Foundation by the Orange County Power Authority, Nicolas Junior High's innovative Tiny Home Project is shining brighter than ever. Students will soon build a third tiny home, featuring lessons on solar installation. Funding will also allow the school's two existing tiny homes to be retrofitted with solar power.

In addition, the Tiny Home Project has sparked the creation of a new Construction Trade Academy at Nicolas Junior High. Through this program, students dedicate two class periods each day to hands-on building, learning directly from industry guest speakers, and exploring the entrepreneurial side of construction. Collectively, these opportunities empower students with real-world skills, teamwork, and a deeper understanding of sustainable building practices.

The future is bright—literally and figuratively—as FSD students continue to innovate and lead in career-connected learning.



Nicolas teacher, Mucio Vidales, (far left) attends grant award announcement.

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Dr. Chad Hammitt
Deputy
Superintendent

Celebrating the Unstoppable Work of PBIS in FSD Schools! ALL TWENTY SCHOOLS Awarded Platinum State Recognition for 2024–2025!

The Fullerton School District (FSD) has once again proven that when it comes to supporting our students, we set the standard! We are absolutely thrilled to announce that for the second year in a row, ALL TWENTY FSD schools have earned the prestigious Platinum State-level PBIS recognition from the California PBIS Coalition.

This isn't just any accomplishment—it's a powerful testament to the incredible growth and unwavering commitment each of our schools has shown in implementing PBIS with fidelity, based on a nationally recognized framework.

PBIS, or Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, prepares students for success by teaching behavior expectations directly and explicitly, just as we do with reading and math. It's not a curriculum; it's a research-based framework filled with proactive strategies to define, teach, and support positive behaviors. From classrooms to buses to playgrounds, PBIS is a tiered system of evidence-based support that reaches into every school setting.

This year marks a historic milestone: ALL 20 FSD schools have now achieved Platinum recognition two years in a row!

Platinum Recognition:

- Acacia Elementary School
- Beechwood School
- Commonwealth Elementary School
- Fern Drive Elementary School
- Fidler School
- Golden Hill Elementary School
- Hermosa Drive Elementary School
- Laguna Road Elementary School
- Ladera Vista Junior High School of the Arts
- Maple Elementary School
- Nicolas Junior High School
- Orangethorpe Elementary School
- Pacific Drive Elementary School
- Parks Junior High School
- Raymond Elementary School
- Richman Elementary School
- Rolling Hills Elementary School
- Sunset Lane Elementary School
- Valencia Park Elementary School
- Woodcrest Elementary School

This extraordinary achievement is the direct result of tireless dedication from our administrators, teachers, PBIS teams, and staff across the district.

FSD's PBIS Journey Since 2016

- 2024–2025: All twenty schools Platinum—for the second consecutive year!
- 2023–2024: All twenty schools Platinum—for the first time ever!
- 2022–2023: All twenty schools recognized—18 Platinum, 2 Gold.
- 2021–2022: Twelve schools Platinum, eight Gold—our first year with all schools at the top two tiers.
- 2020–2021: All twenty schools recognized—twelve Platinum, the highest in California.
- 2019–2020: All twenty schools recognized with California Cares Recognition (COVID-specific).
- 2018–2019: Eighteen schools recognized at various levels.
- 2017–2018: Eight schools recognized.
- 2016–2017: Two schools recognized.

The progress we've seen over the past nine years has been nothing short of TREMENDOUS, and we couldn't be prouder of the unstoppable work happening in every FSD school!



Acacia Elementary School

1200 N. Acacia Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7700 • www.fullertonsd.org/acacia



Rachel McCormick
Principal

Leaders in Action

At Acacia, every 6th grader has the chance to shine through Student Leadership! Students rotate through a turn as leaders, giving each child the opportunity to grow and contribute. Working under the leadership of 6th grade teacher Mrs. Cockerill, students plan spirit days—starting with our first one, Sports Day! They also make morning announcements, create posters, and work together to spread school spirit. Along the way, they build valuable life skills such as organization, teamwork, and study strategies, while also practicing important executive functioning skills like planning ahead, managing time, setting priorities, and staying flexible when plans change. Student leaders also bring our school community together by hosting activities such as writing thank you notes to staff members such as our custodians during Appreciation Week. We are so proud of our 6th graders for stepping up as role models and setting a positive example for the entire school community.



Leadership students dressed up for Sports Day.



Leadership students take pictures of students dressed up for Sports Day for the yearbook.

Beechwood School

780 Beechwood Ave., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-2850 • www.fullertonsd.org/beechwood



**Hannah
Lim**
Principal

Welcome Back, Bobcats!

Beechwood has had the pleasure of welcoming our Bobcats and the community to another great start to a new school year. We welcomed back many familiar faces and quite a few new ones at our middle school registrations, TK-2nd grade teacher meet-and-greets, and orientations. During the first week of school, our Middle School team hosted their third annual “Middle School-palooza”, where 6th-8th grade students

rotated through twelve different teacher-hosted stations pertaining to their personal passions and interests. This popular event allowed for students and staff to cultivate and maintain the crucial rapport and relationships that help our students to feel at home at Beechwood.

As we enter our second month of school, we continue to be grateful for Team Beechwood, comprised of our PTSA

and Foundation. Both community groups are generous supporters of our programs and school-wide initiatives. PTSA has been busy with Bobcat Spiritwear and welcoming students to school with festive decorations and photo backdrops. Arranged by our Foundation, casting will begin later this month for this year’s musical, *Aladdin, Jr.* In the meantime, thanks to Foundation, our after-school Gate Enrichment Academy and Speech and Debate programs have begun.

We are proud to share that Beechwood School was recognized by the state as a California Distinguished School. The California Distinguished School designation is awarded to schools for exemplary academic achievement, which can include significant progress in closing achievement gaps, as well as maintaining a positive school climate. Beechwood School will hold this title for two years. We are delighted that the hard work and dedication of our staff and students are both appreciated and celebrated!



Commonwealth *Elementary School*

2200 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7705 • www.fullertonsd.org/commonwealth



**Jean
Summy**
Principal

Remembering September 11th

In Mrs. Zoellner's Kindergarten class at Commonwealth Elementary, learning about the history of September 11, 2001, is introduced in a gentle and age-appropriate way. Instead of focusing on the tragedy, the emphasis is on kindness, helpers, and the strength of community. Students read picture books that highlight firefighters, police officers, doctors, and everyday people who stepped forward to help others.

The children talk about what it means to be a helper in their own school and families, sharing simple stories of friendship and caring.

Through art projects and discussions, students express gratitude for the helpers who keep us safe and create a "wall of kindness" celebrating these everyday heroes. This lesson connects naturally to the class's ongoing social-emotional learning, teaching that even in hard times, people show bravery, compassion, and teamwork. In this way, our youngest learners honor history while focusing on hope, courage, and community.



Fern Drive *Elementary School*

1400 W. Fern Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7710 • www.fullertonsd.org/fern



**Julie
Lucas**
Principal

Fern Drive Welcomes New Student Council Officers

Fern Drive is proud to announce our newly elected Student Council officers for the school year. Leading our student body as President is Ava, joined by Vice President Matthew, Service Representative Sofia, and Photographer Benjamin. Together, this dynamic team will guide our Falcons with dedication, spirit, and creativity.

Student Council officers play a vital role at Fern Drive. They will hold monthly meetings to share ideas, listen to student voices, and set plans into motion. Their responsibilities include organizing spirit days that bring our school community together, coordinating service events that give back, and inspiring classmates to show

pride in being Falcons. With their leadership, students can look forward to a year filled with exciting activities and opportunities to make a difference.

This year's election process was both exciting and inspiring. Candidates not only created campaign posters and signage to share their vision, but also delivered speeches in front of all our 3rd–6th grade students. Speaking before such a large audience took courage, and each candidate showed confidence and a commitment to serving their peers. After listening carefully, students cast their votes, ensuring every voice had a say in the outcome.

We are thrilled to see Ava, Matthew, Sofia, and Benjamin take on their new roles. With integrity, enthusiasm, and a passion for Fern Drive, these student leaders are ready to represent their classmates and lead our school with Falcon pride. Congratulations to our 2025 Student Council officers!



Robert C. Fisler *School*

1350 Starbuck St., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-2890 • www.fullertonsd.org/fisler



Dr. Caroline Llewellyn
Principal

Robert C Fisler's Palooza: Building Connections and Belonging

This year, we introduced our Palooza event with the purpose of helping our new middle school students feel connected to their peers and supported by their teachers. Transitioning into middle school is a big step, and we wanted our students to know from the very beginning that they are part of a caring and inclusive community.

The week began with a joyful welcome on the first day of school. Balloons, music, and a live DJ greeted students as they arrived, creating an atmosphere of celebration and excitement. Throughout the week, teachers and staff created opportunities for students

to participate in interactive games that encouraged teamwork, relationship-building, and a sense of belonging. These activities were carefully designed to help students feel more comfortable in their new learning environment and to strengthen bonds with classmates and staff.

The week culminated in a fun and silly assembly that students will remember for years to come. Teachers and staff dressed in inflatable costumes, danced across the stage, and invited students to guess who was hidden inside each character. Laughter filled the room as students cheered and encouraged one another. Our creative and joyful assembly was even featured on two local news channels, ABC and NBC, highlighting the spirit of fun and connection that defines Fisler.



Golden Hill *School for Creative & Performing Arts*

732 Barris Dr., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/447-7715 • www.fullertonsd.org/golden



**Dr. Neil
Anderson**
Principal

Explore. Imagine. Achieve.

Golden Hill School for Creative and Performing Arts is excited to begin another inspiring school year, continuing our journey of arts integration across all grade levels. This year, we proudly launched the second year of our Clay Lab, where every student from Transitional Kindergarten through 6th grade has the opportunity to experience the full process of working

with clay. Students learn essential techniques as they shape their pieces, fire them in the kiln, and add vibrant glazes, transforming their ideas into lasting works of art. The Clay Lab offers a hands-on, creative way to connect artistic expression with core learning, while encouraging problem-solving, perseverance, and pride in craftsmanship. At Golden Hill, the arts are not just an addition to academics, they are woven into the heart of our learning community, inspiring students to explore, imagine, and achieve.



Hermosa Drive *Elementary School*

400 E. Hermosa Dr., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-7720 • www.fullertonsd.org/hermosa



**Julianne
Ettinger**
Principal

Meet Mrs. Julianne Ettinger

Hello Fullerton Community,

My name is Julianne Ettinger, and I am honored to introduce myself as the new principal of Hermosa Drive Elementary School. This year marks my twentieth year serving in the Fullerton School District and my first year as principal. Prior to this role, I served as an Assistant Principal at Raymond Elementary, where I supported staff, students, and families with instructional

programs, student services, and campus initiatives. Earlier in my career, I was a classroom teacher, where I developed a deep commitment to creating safe, engaging, and inclusive learning environments for all students.

As I step into this new role, I am eager to continue Hermosa Drive's tradition of excellence while also fostering strong community partnerships that support student growth and success. I look forward to collaborating with staff, families, and the Fullerton community to ensure every student thrives academically, socially, and emotionally.



Ladera Vista *Junior High School of the Arts*

1700 E. Wilshire Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7765 • www.fullertonsd.org/ladera



**Dr. Bill
Lynch**
Principal

LVA-O-Rama

At Ladera Vista Junior High School of the Arts we focus on our four core values of A.R.T.S - positive Attitude, showing Respect, being Thoughtful and striving for Success. With a focus on building lasting relationships and community on campus this year, Ladera Vista Junior High hosted our annual “LVA-O-Rama”. Students were placed into coordinated teams by Advisory to travel through week long rotations geared towards building knowledge of campus expectations and school-wide community building.

Throughout the year we will continue to foster positive relationships and build character towards our A.R.T.S. core values. Students who demonstrate positive behaviors aligned with our A.R.T.S expectations have the opportunity to earn PBIS tickets and purchase prizes from our PBIS store.

Another way we encourage students to demonstrate Spartan ARTS is with our Super Spartan Quarterly celebrations! Each quarter, teachers select one student who best demonstrates Spartan A.R.T.S.! Students receive certificates, special treats, and enjoy an elongated break!



Laguna Road *Elementary School*

300 Laguna Rd., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-7725 • www.fullertonsd.org/laguna



**Stephanie
Guppy**
Principal

Greeting Campaign at Laguna Road

In September, Laguna Road launched a school-wide Greeting Campaign to teach and celebrate the power of connection. Each week, students practiced using friendly greetings in English. KDLA students also learned important greetings in Korean. Common phrases were modeled in class and practiced daily with teachers and peers. Students also shared greetings in their home languages, giving classmates

the chance to learn new greetings and to appreciate the unique traditions that come with them. Teachers used slides, songs, and short discussions to explicitly teach why greetings matter and how they show respect in different settings, from classrooms to the grocery store. By greeting teachers, friends, and community members, Roadrunners strengthened relationships, built belonging, and created a warm school culture where everyone feels seen, valued, and included. It is truly a joy to be greeted each day at Laguna Road by our Roadrunners!



Students enjoy greeting one another!



**Dr. Amanda
Sobremesana**
Principal

Play It Forward: Sharing Joy through Kindness

At Maple, our students had the opportunity to spread kindness through the Play It Forward program in partnership with Giving Children Hope, Toys for Tots, and our Community Schools program. Each student wrote a heartfelt letter or drew a special picture for a classmate, adding a personal touch to the spirit of giving.

The joy didn't stop there—students then experienced the excitement of seeing which toy their friends had thoughtfully selected for them. Smiles and laughter filled the room as children watched their classmates light up with surprise and gratitude. This experience reminded our students that kindness is powerful, whether it's through words, art, or thoughtful choices. By coming together as a community, our Maple students learned that giving is just as meaningful as receiving, and that even small acts of kindness can create lasting memories.



Nicolas Junior High School

1100 W. Olive Ave., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7775 • www.fullertonsd.org/nicolas



**Jose
Varela**
Principal

Nicolas Junior High School Hosts Annual Palooza Celebration

On Friday, August 15th, Nicolas Junior High School proudly hosted its annual Nicolas Palooza, a much-anticipated tradition that brings together students, staff, and community members in a spirited day of teamwork and competition.

Students were divided into houses and took part in a variety of team building challenges designed to promote collaboration, perseverance, and school pride. Each event showcased the determination and energy of the Nicolas Knights, as students worked together to earn victories for their teams.

The excitement reached its peak when the top-performing student teams faced off against a spirited staff team. The friendly competition highlighted the strong bond between students and teachers, with laughter and encouragement echoing across the campus. Adding to the thrill, board member Vanesa Estrella joined in on the fun, competing side by side with students and staff, a true testament to the community spirit that defines Nicolas.



The day concluded with smiles, cheers, and a renewed sense of unity. Palooza once again proved to be more than just a day of games; it was a celebration of the culture, pride, and resilience of the Nicolas Knights. Events like this embody the heart of the school—where every student and staff member is part of one team.



Orangethorpe *Elementary School*

1400 S. Brookhurst Rd., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7730 • www.fullertonsd.org/orangethorpe



**Deborah
Bennett**
Principal

Lunch with a Loved One

Orangethorpe recently opened its doors for a special Lunch with a Loved One event, inviting grandparents, parents, and special friends to join students for a warm and memorable lunch. The joy was evident as families gathered together, sharing smiles, stories, and laughter over a meal. This celebration created a wonderful opportunity for loved ones to experience the energy of

our campus and see firsthand the sense of belonging we strive to cultivate. Events like these are more than just a meal, they are powerful moments of community building and inclusivity. By welcoming families onto campus, we strengthen the connections between home and school, showing students that they are surrounded by a network of love and support. The turnout was incredible, and everyone left with full hearts, grateful for the time spent together. We look forward to making this cherished tradition a continuing part of our school community.



Pacific Drive *Elementary School*

1501 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7735 • www.fullertonsd.org/pacific



**John
Leonard**
Principal

Student Council

Pacific Drive Elementary's Student Council empowers students to take on leadership roles and actively serve their school community. Candidates began by designing creative posters to campaign for positions and received guidance from IIS TOSAs to prepare and film their campaign speeches. After sharing their ideas with peers, students participated in a voting process to elect officers for president, vice

president, treasurer, and historian. The program not only teaches the value of responsible leadership but also provides opportunities for students to collaborate, plan school events, and represent the voice of their peers. Through this process, students gain valuable skills in public speaking, teamwork, and decision-making while contributing to a positive and inclusive school culture. Student Council at Pacific Drive fosters confidence, community pride, and a sense of ownership, inspiring students to make a meaningful difference in their school and beyond. Let's go Pacific Drive Dolphins!



Parks Junior High School

1710 Rosecrans Ave., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7785 • www.fullertonsd.org/parks



Robin Mundschau
Principal

Importance of Healthy Nutrition

We were thrilled to welcome the Nutrition Services team to our first PTSA meeting! They shared important nutrition guidelines, explained how every student can receive a free daily breakfast and lunch, and invited parents to be active partners in shaping future recipes and menu items. Families were excited to learn more about the district's commitment to providing healthy, balanced, and delicious meals for all students, ensuring that no child goes without the nutrition they need to thrive at school.

Parents also had the opportunity to sample some of the latest menu creations, including a yogurt parfait with homemade granola, beef and broccoli, and an oat "Choconana" muffin that tasted just like grandma's recipe. In addition, families got to meet our wonderful Nutrition Services lead, Ms. Janessa, and discovered that our very own district chef is also a proud Parks parent! The meeting was not only informative but also filled with connection, laughter, and plenty of tasty bites — a true reminder of how strong and supportive our school community is.



Raymond *Elementary School*

517 N. Raymond Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7740 • www.fullertonsd.org/raymond



**Cristina
Centeno**
Principal

Raymond DLA Milestone

Raymond Elementary is proud to celebrate a major milestone: the completion of our Dual Language Academy (DLA) program after ten incredible years! This year, our school opened its very first Transitional Kindergarten (TK) DLA classroom, completing our program from TK through 6th grade. The new TK classroom follows the 50/50 dual immersion model, where students learn in both English

and Spanish each day, building strong foundations for bilingualism, biliteracy, and cross-cultural understanding.

Leading the way is Maestra Rubalcava, whose energy and passion for teaching bring the classroom alive with song, dance, and joyful learning. Her students are already thriving as they build confidence in two languages while discovering the joy of learning through music and movement.

This expansion marks a full circle moment for Raymond's DLA program, which began a decade ago with a single kindergarten class. Today, we celebrate its growth into a schoolwide pillar of pride and achievement.



Richman *Elementary School*

700 S. Richman Ave., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/447-7745 • www.fullertonsd.org/richman



**Devi
Sok-Huynh**
Principal

Lights, Camera, Leadership! Broadcasting Club Brings the Excitement to FSD

Say hello to the stars behind the scenes! The Fullerton School District's Broadcasting Club is where upper grade students turn up the volume on creativity, teamwork, and tech-savvy skills. From writing scripts to filming and editing, these young broadcasters are the voice of the school—and they're making announcements cooler than ever.

Kicking off the school year, the club is sharing must-know updates about school celebrations and safety rules—think hallway etiquette, kind vibes only, and how to stay safe while having fun. And the best part? It's all created by kids, for kids!

With green screens, mics, and a lot of teamwork, under the leadership of Mr. Daniel Hall and Genevieve Maldonado, Broadcasting Club members are learning how to lead, create, and communicate like pros. It's not just news—it's the daily buzz that brings students together and starts the day with energy, fun, and a whole lot of school spirit.



Richman Elementary is happy to partner with all the arts.

Rolling Hills *Elementary School*

1460 E. Rolling Hills Dr., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-7795 • www.fullertonsd.org/rolling



**Lindy
McNutt**
Principal

Family Reading Day

Every Wednesday at Rolling Hills Elementary, the Primary Multiage Classrooms come alive with Family Reading Day. As you walk the campus, you'll find parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles gathered alongside students, sharing the joy of a good book. For children whose grownups can't attend, there are always plenty of families eager to share their circle, reminding us that reading is a community

experience. Groups of students get lost in the pages of a story, sometimes breaking into smiles or laughter as they make discoveries together. This simple but powerful tradition builds more than literacy—it strengthens the social and emotional connection to learning and nurtures a lifelong love of reading. It's also an opportunity for students and families to connect with one another, deepening the understanding that stories bring us together. Family Reading Day is just one of the many things that make Rolling Hills and our Multiage Programs so special.



The Tradition of Family Reading at Rolling Hills

Sunset Lane *Elementary School*

2030 Sunset Ln., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7750 • www.fullertonsd.org/sunset



Dr. Tracy Gyurina
Principal

Nutrition Lessons

A recent nutrition lesson at Sunset Lane gave students a hands-on opportunity to prepare a healthy and delicious meal—Kimbap! While nutrition lessons often emphasize Western foods that can be processed or high in sugar, this activity took a fresh approach by highlighting cultural connections and real-life skills.

Mr. Tao, our PE teacher, led the lesson with our 6th grade students, guiding them through each step of rolling their own Kimbap. His focus on health and wellness extended beyond the gym, showing students how food choices are an important part of living an active lifestyle. Kimbap, a beloved Korean dish, is both flavorful and nutritious. Each roll combined rice for carbohydrates, egg for protein, and fresh vegetables like carrots, cucumbers, and pickled daikon for fiber and flavor.

By celebrating and introducing foods like Kimbap to our students, we not only promote health and wellness, but also honor the vibrant diversity of our community.



Rolling into healthy choices—one kimbap at a time!

Valencia Park *Elementary School*

3441 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7755 • www.fullertonsd.org/valencia



**Melanie
Carmona**
Principal

Roary's RV Rolls In!

Valencia Park launched its brand-new Roary's RV (Reward Vehicle), our mobile student store, during the second week of school, and it's already a huge hit! Open every other Friday, Roary's RV gives students the opportunity to trade their Pride Tickets—earned for showing Readiness, Respect, Responsibility, and Safety—for exciting prizes and experiences.

In its very first week, students cashed in over 400 Pride Tickets! Choices ranged from small treats like snacks, pencils, and squishy toys to bigger rewards that students can save up for, such as: Art or Games with the Principals, Movie with a Friend, Picnic with the Principals, and DJ for the Day.

The Student Store is more than just fun—it encourages students to practice positive behaviors every day and rewards them for modeling our LION Expectations: Lead Responsibly, Interact Respectfully, Own Your Actions, and Navigate Safely.

We're so proud of our Lions for their hard work!



Woodcrest *Elementary School*

455 W. Baker Ave., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/447-7760 • www.fullertonsd.org/woodcrest



Christopher Wilkins
Principal

Woodcrest's Positive Alternative to the Normal Recess

At Woodcrest Elementary, every student's well-being is a priority. Woodcrest's counseling program, started by Counselor Carolyn Conley, has introduced the Alternative Recess Program a supportive and welcoming option for students who prefer a structured "indoor" environment over traditional outdoor recess.

The Alternative Recess space is designed to be both comfortable and engaging, providing opportunities for relaxation, socialization, and skill-building. With the counselor present, students receive encouragement to participate, while also having a safe space to share any concerns they may be experiencing, particularly with friendships or peer relationships. This added support helps ensure that all Wildcats feel included and valued.

Inside the program, students can choose from a variety of board games that encourage sportsmanship, teamwork, and problem-solving. Music adds to the lively atmosphere, often leading to spontaneous sing-alongs or learning the latest dance moves. Conversations are encouraged, helping students build connections and strengthen positive peer interactions in a safe, smaller group setting.

For many students, especially those who may feel overwhelmed by the busy playground environment, Alternative Recess provides the perfect balance of fun and comfort. It allows them to recharge, practice social skills, and enjoy recess in a way that feels right for them.

Woodcrest's goal is simple: to support emotional well-being and foster a true sense of belonging for every student. The Alternative Recess Program is another example of the school's commitment to creating a caring, inclusive environment where all Wildcats can thrive.





Dr. Stefan Bean
Superintendent

For some, that spark is found on the athletic field or in a club. For others, it might be a guest speaker, a hands-on project or a trusted adult who sees their potential and makes them feel like they belong.

Last year, I worked alongside educators, parents and members of our community to develop a shared vision for how we can ensure all students in Orange County have the opportunities and support they need to thrive.

We called it our 5-3-1 Strategic Plan because it's based on five goals, three priorities for supporting our districts, and one bold audacious goal for OCDE's own alternative education program. Components of the plan include expanding inclusive career technical education, fostering emotional intelligence, integrating AI in education, improving school safety and exploring new funding strategies to fuel innovative programs.

The Orange County Department of Education is uniquely positioned to lead this charge. Not only do we provide direct instruction to some of the county's most vulnerable student populations through programs like ACCESS and Connections, we also deliver essential support services to the 28 local school districts we serve.

In both capacities, our mission is to help schools and communities create the kinds of experiences that inspire students to see their own potential and find their place.

As we begin this new school year, I encourage every educator, mentor, coach and community partner to consider the difference they can make. Sometimes all it takes is one activity, one opportunity or even one conversation to change the trajectory of a student's life.

I know this because it happened to me. And I believe it can happen for every child in Orange County.

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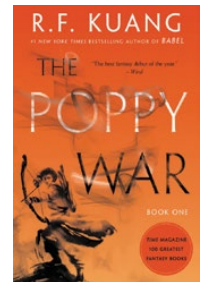
Tegan's Book Review



Tegan Y.

The Cost of War

R.F. Kuang's *The Poppy War* is a haunting, beautifully composed masterpiece that weaves the physically taxing process of training with the emotionally draining devastation that follows.



Kuang's prose is sharp, addictive, and incredibly poignant.

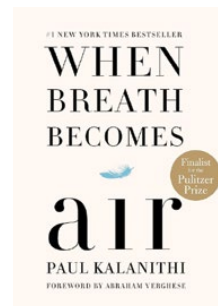
Fang Runin (Rin), the ambitious protagonist, learns from the beginning of her orphaned life that survival demands sacrifices. After escaping a forced marriage, Rin earns a place at the prestigious Sinegard Academy and discovers she possesses shamanic powers.

The story soon plunges into the absolute nightmares of war; from pathetic bargains to soulless, brutal warriors, Rin struggles to find humanity in herself after being stripped away of all but her survival instincts.

The Poppy War is a stunning work of art, and has quickly become one of my all-time favorites. It is a must-read for mature readers over 12.

A Passionate Breath

When Breath Becomes Air is an eloquent, poignant memoir by Paul Kalanithi. After being diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer, Kalanithi confronts the fragility of life and the inevitable question of his confusing purpose. His love for literature rivaled his passion for science- two opposites that regularly clashed, but sometimes, beautifully intertwined. This deep understanding of literature, combined with first-hand experience as a doctor, allowed Kalanithi to capture his journey of accepting his fate; and all the tensions- ups, downs- that accompanied it.



As a doctor, Kalanithi was immensely familiar in escorting patients into life and back- a raw sensation; either heart-warming or heart-breaking. However, being the patient escorted by a doctor was truly different. This touching reflection invites us to seek meaning in our lives, reminding us of our own morality. In my opinion, *When Breath Becomes Air* deserves 5/5 stars.

Tegan is an eighth grader who enjoys music, books, and art.