



# Mendez Minutes

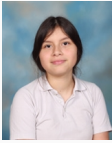
Mendez Fundamental Intermediate School

Edition 12 Tuesday, January 6, 2026

**HAPPY NEW YEAR, MENDEZ MUSTANGS!!**

## Quote of the Month

By: Diana Gallegos



I would like to offer you this quote for the month of **January**:

“You will face many defects in life, but never let yourself be defeated.” — **Dr. Maya Angelou**

**Meet the Journalism Staff:**  
**Ms. Yolanda Elmore, Editor**  
**Mrs. Yvette Cortes, Co-Editor**  
**Stacy Colin**

**Daisy Fernandez**  
**Diana Gallegos**  
**Alyssa Garcia**  
**Rosadelinda Gomez**  
**Paola Guillen**  
**Lylah Lamas**  
**Abygail Leon**  
**Tobias Lopez**  
**Mia Lua**  
**Jacob Martinez**  
**Joseph Martinez**  
**Ariannie Mendez**  
**Darian Mendoza**  
**Guadalupe Merino**  
**Guadalupe Pintor**  
**Melina Romero**  
**Hanna Salagado**  
**Juliana Vargas**  
**Mila Zamarripa**  
**Yoselin Zuniga**

## Feature Article

### “Semester of Successes”

By: Principal Gabriel Moreno

Mendez Fundamental had an outstanding first semester filled with success, pride, and exciting accomplishments. Our students worked hard, and it truly showed across academics, activities, and family engagement.

One of the biggest achievements this semester was that over 70 students reclassified, reflecting strong academic growth and the dedication of our students, teachers, and families working together to reach high goals.

We also celebrated a major milestone in strengthening our home-school partnership with the successful Mendez Family Literacy Night. With 150 students and family members in attendance, the evening was filled with learning, joy, and community connection. As a result of this event, students are now motivated to continue reading at home by participating in a Winter Break Reading Challenge, encouraging meaningful literacy experiences from the comfort of their homes.



## “Strategy of the Month - Self-Management”

By: Dr. Laura Castro



Welcome back, Mustangs! As you begin your second semester at Mendez, you now have a stronger understanding of our school expectations and what your teachers are asking of you. You’ve had time to learn what it takes to be successful both inside and outside of the classroom, and this is a great opportunity to build on those skills. This month, our focus is on self-management. Self-management means being aware of your own behaviors, habits, and choices, and taking responsibility for them each day. It includes knowing how to stay focused, manage your time, and respond when challenges arise. A major part of self-management is goal-setting, because growth happens when you are working toward something meaningful.

## *"Mr. Donovan Bean, Mendez's School Psychologist"*

By: Guadalupe Pintor



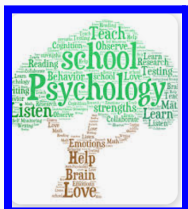
I interviewed Mr. Donovan Bean about his position at Mendez Fundamental.

Mr Bean is a new addition to our Mendez family. He is a school psychologist. A school psychologist is someone who helps students with developmental and mental health issues and can assist in determining the special education needs of students.

I asked Mr Bean what he enjoys most about his job. He told me that he enjoys helping students deal with different emotions and teaching students coping behaviors (e.g. slowly counting down from ten to one when feeling anxious).

According to him, scheduling is the hardest part about his job. It's sometimes challenging for him to make equal time for each student. He knows that his role as an advocate for Mendez students is important and he enjoys serving as such.

Finally, he told me he was inspired to become a school psychologist by a family of educators.



Our commitment to literacy continued schoolwide through our Beanstack reading program. During the OC STEAM Reading Challenge, 654 students participated, with 201 students successfully completing the challenge.

We are especially proud that 11 of our students were recognized at the OC Splashdown Celebration, earning awards for their outstanding reading accomplishments.

Students also shined outside the classroom through athletics. Both the boys' and girls' cross-country teams won their district championships, demonstrating determination, teamwork, and strong school spirit. In addition, our girls volleyball team, football team, and boys soccer team proudly competed this season, representing Mendez with effort and commitment. Our girls basketball team had an impressive season and earned 2nd place, showing resilience and teamwork.

Our Speech and Debate program had a standout semester as well. Several students earned individual event championships, and the school placed 2nd overall in competition—highlighting our students' strong communication skills, confidence, and critical thinking.

We also celebrate an incredible individual accomplishment. Former 8th grade student Jaden Vargas participated in the "Reach for the Stars" competition and was selected to travel to the Kennedy Space Center, where he had the unforgettable opportunity to watch a SpaceX rocket launch. This experience inspired curiosity, innovation, and big dreams for the future.

Adding to the excitement, our school mural is almost finished and will be revealed soon. As we move into the next semester, Mendez Fundamental looks forward to building on this momentum and continuing to support student

Practicing strong self-management can look different for everyone, but it often includes setting clear academic or personal goals and checking your progress regularly. It also means managing your time by using a planner or reminders, staying organized so you feel prepared, and monitoring your behavior by asking yourself whether your choices are helping you reach your goals. When things feel overwhelming, self-management includes using coping strategies such as deep breathing, taking a short break, or asking a teacher or trusted adult for support. Most importantly, self-management is not about being perfect; it's about reflecting, adjusting, and continuing to grow. Every positive choice you make moves you one step closer to success, and this semester is your chance to take ownership of your learning and continue growing as a Mustang and a responsible citizen.



*Dr. Laura Castro, ELA Teacher*

## *"New Year Traditions Around the World"*

By: Abygail Leon



New Year's is a holiday that most people look forward to every year. I celebrate New Year's every year with my family by staying-up past midnight and enjoying a glass of apple cider.

I wondered how people in three other countries ring-in the new year and here is what I learned.

## "Mendez Counselors Resolve to..."

By: Paola Guillen



When I asked our three counselors about their New Year's resolutions, here is what they shared with me.

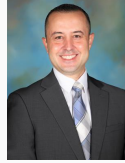
**Ms. Fuentes:** "I want to start a fitness plan. For me, the best way to stay on track is to share my goals with others. When others know what I'm working on, it helps me make healthier choices and stay motivated. It keeps me accountable."

**Mrs. Green:** "I really want to start a fitness plan. I've been putting it off, but this year I want to stay consistent. I think sticking with it all year will make me feel better and stronger."

**Mrs. Tran:** "I'm hoping to declutter my house. I want to go room by room and take my time with it so I don't get overwhelmed. If I stay patient and go slowly, I know I can finally get everything organized."



success both in and out of the classroom.



**Mr. Gabriel Moreno, Principal**

## "His Impact on the World"

By: Alyssa Garcia and Jacob Martinez



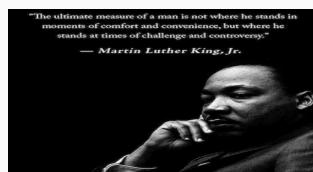
Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 25, 1929 in Atlanta Georgia.

Martin Luther King Jr. was an American civil rights activist who participated and led marches for the rights of Black men, women, and children. His mission was to end segregation so that all people would be judged by their character and not the color of their skin.

Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4th, 1968.

Martin Luther King Jr. had a big impact on the world. Martin Luther King was famous for his "I Have a Dream" speech.

We believe in dreams. Dreams are important because they can help us achieve what we want to do in life. We celebrate Martin Luther King Day on Monday, January 19, 2026, to reflect on his impact on our world.



**Greece** celebrates New Year's by cutting the lucky coin cake. Its original name is Vasiloptia. They say it's called the coin cake because it is known to give good luck to whoever finds the coin.

The **Philippine's** New Year tradition is opening their windows and doors. They do this to let good blessings into their home. They also make loud noises by setting-off fireworks to drive away misfortune.

**Brazil's** New Year tradition is jumping over 7 waves. Brazilians go out to the ocean and jump over 7 waves making a wish after every wave they jump over. They believe this brings them good luck for the rest of the year.

I think it's great that everyone in the world has different types of traditions that matter to them.

**What traditions matter to you, Mendez Mustangs?**

## "Mendez Journalists – Share their New Year Resolutions for 2026"

By: Juliana Vargas



I decided it would be fun to ask my Journalism classmates what they resolve to do in the New Year.

**Ariannie(Ari):**"My New Year's resolution is to end semester two with good grades."

**Abigail (Abby):**"My New Year's resolution is to get all A's."

## “Mendez Staff Resolve to . . .”

By: Darian Mendoza and Tobias Lopez



With the end of the year coming up, it had us wondering what about Mendez Staff’s New Year’s Resolutions?

First, we asked Nurse Jenny and Nurse Hellen and here are their New Year’s Resolutions.

**Nurse Jenny:** “My New Year’s Resolution is to stay calm and stay stress free.”

**Nurse Hellen:** “ My New Year's Resolution is to try to eat healthy for the year.”

Then, we asked Ms. Muniz and this is her New Years Resolution.

**Ms. Muniz:** “My New Year's Resolution is to walk more.”

Finally, I asked **Mrs. Pena** but she does not celebrate holidays, so she doesn’t have a New Year’s Resolution.

## “Mendez Staff Resolve to . . .”

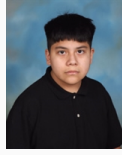
By: Mia Lua



I interviewed members of our Mendez staff, too, and here is what they shared with me.

## Jokes for January

By: Joseph Martinez-Garcia



**Question:** What do you tell people that you didn’t see on New Year’s Eve?

**Answer:** I haven't seen you in a year!

**Question:** Why should you put your calendar in the freezer?

**Answer:** To start off the New Year in a COOL way!



## “Did You Know?”

By: Stacy Colin & Ms. Elmore



Did you know that **January 9th is Word Nerd Day**? Take the time this Friday to appreciate many marvelous words (*e.g. astute, malleable*), languages (*e.g. Greek: agape*) and origins (*e.g. Latin, Greek, Roman*). Play a game of Scrabble with family and/or friends. Look-up words in a thesaurus and begin adding new words to your vocabulary.

Did you know that **January 19th is Popcorn Day**? Treat yourself to a bowl of popcorn (*e.g. Buttered, Kettle Corn, Caramel, Cheese, or Zebra*) while enjoying a great movie or reading a good book.



**Alyssa:** “My New Year’s resolution is to have a good relationship with God.”

**Daisy:** “My New Year's resolution is to get good grades.”

**Darian:** “My New Year's resolution is to eat healthy.”

**Diana:** “My New Year's resolution is to practice typing so that I can type faster.”

**Guadalupe P:** “My New Year's resolution is to be a better person.”

**Guadalupe M:** “My New Year's resolution is to learn how to play a new instrument.”

**Hanna:** “My New Year’s resolution is to be on good terms with my teachers and earn good grades.”

**Juliana:** “My New Year's resolution is to earn A's,B's, and C's but mostly A's in Semester Two.”

**Joseph:** “My New Year's resolution is to keep on having good grades.”

**Jacob:** “My New Year's resolution is to be more silly.”

**Linda:** “My New Year's resolution is to get good grades.”

**Lylah:** “My New Year's resolution is to maintain my good grades and avoid accumulating missing assignments in Semester Two.”

**Mila:** “My New Year's resolution is to get an A in Math.”

**Melina:** “My New Year’s resolution is to be nicer to people.”

**Mia:** “My New Year's resolution is to continue making new friends.”

**Ms. Mayra A.:** "I want to spend less on unnecessary things and spend more time with my son and daughter."

**Ms. Mayra L.:** "I want to read more."

**Mrs. Ornelas:** "I want to drink more water."

**Mrs. Garneri:** "I want to spend more time with my family."

**Mrs. Cortes:** "I want to exercise more often and spend more quality time with my family."

**DSO Hernandez:** "I wish for good health for my family and to work on my health as well."

**DSO Orozco:** "I want to have good health and wealth."

**Ms. Aguilar:** "I want to travel with my daughter a lot more in 2026."

### What is your New Year's Resolution, Mendez Mustangs?

Have your teacher record a video of you, and, then, ask him or her to submit it to GMM. 😊



### "Song of the Month"

By: Ariannie Mendez



The song that I chose for January is

### "Journalist Spotlight"

In Semester Two, *Mendez Minutes*, will shine a spotlight on our amazing journalists each month.

January showcases these three journalists:

#### "Figuring Myself Out"



I would describe myself as funny, talkative, and athletic. I've always had a passion for basketball, and I have been playing it since I was five.

I like watching movies and documentaries in my free time.

I'm proud that I have never missed a day of school in all my three years of middle school.

I want to attend CSU Long Beach and become a pediatrician.

In the new year, I will take time to figure-out my future. Dr. Salgado sounds pretty good to me!

-Hanna Salgado

#### "My Future"



8th Grade year is almost done. All my overwhelming fear is gone.

I see my future and it is bright. The path ahead brings no fright.

-Guadalupe Merino

#### "Maintaining a 3.0 GPA"



When Ms. Elmore asked me to share how I balance being an athlete and a scholar, I had to take a few days to think about how I have managed to do both successfully.

**Paola:** "My New Year's resolution is to get better at basketball."

**Stacy:** "My New Year's resolution is getting more sleep during the week."

**Tobias:** "My New Year's resolution is to spend more time with my cats."

**Yoselin:** "My New Year's resolution is to maintain a 4.0 GPA."

### "Changing for the Better"

By: Ms. Yolanda Elmore

*"Train up a child in the way he should go. And when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6.*



As I was walking to the parking lot to begin my Thanksgiving Vacation, a personable, funny, and smart 8th Grade scholar stopped me to talk about what he had learned in his three years at Mendez Fundamental.

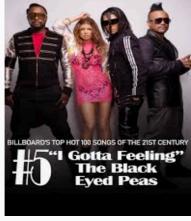
I remembered Cylus Geronimo, as I had subbed for his science teacher, Mrs. Bueno, two years ago. His period of transition from elementary to middle school was not easy for him. He admitted that in 6th Grade he did not do well in school—he said, "Ms. Elmore, I didn't do my work and I got bad grades."

Yet, there was a moment that resonated with him when I subbed for Mrs. Bueno that helped change his mindset.

Now, as an 8th Grader, he proudly shared with me that he has good grades, no missing assignments, and not one homework card. Way to go, Cylus!!

Cylus told me that he has a message for all 6th and 7th Grade Mendez Mustangs, "Do your best in school and make all of your dreams come true."

"I Gotta Feeling" by The Black Eyed Peas.



This song came out on May 21, 2009.

I like this song because it exudes joy. Another reason I like this song is because it makes me want to dance.

You know what. . . I gotta' feeling that 2026 is going to be an amazing year!



Mendez Fundamental teachers and students switch their Nutrition and Lunch Schedules in Semester Two.

If you had 1st Nutrition and 1st Lunch in Semester One, you will now have 2nd Nutrition and 2nd Lunch in Semester Two and vice-versa.

I realize that I've kept my GPA above a 3.0 so that I can stay on any sports' team. I know that if my grades drop below a C, I wouldn't be able to play.

I focus on getting my work done during class, and this helps me not stress about homework later in the day. This allows me to spend my time after school focusing on my sports and actually having fun.

In the first semester of my 8th Grade year, I joined the basketball team because it is something I'm really good at and it's a sport that I've always enjoyed.

I've been asked to play on different teams over the years. I've even made a few travel teams, which helped me improve a lot.

I'm really proud of myself and I hope that I can continue to balance my academic work and sports with the start of the girls' soccer season in January 2026.

-Lylah Lamas

### Beanstack Reading Challenge



Read with Benny  
January 1, 2026 - January 31, 2026

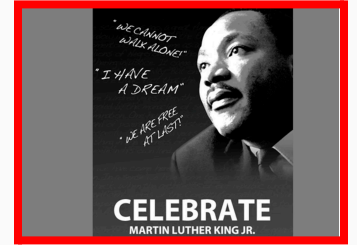


Cylus has his sights set on attending Godinez High School.

My message for Cylus that Friday and in this new year, "Work hard in school, delay gratification, become a voracious reader, and always be kind."

Don't Forget...

**NO SCHOOL on  
Monday, January 19, 2026**



**Martin Luther King Jr. HOLIDAY**

Mendez

Scholars

Are...

Respectful

Responsible

Ready

