

**For Immediate Release
May 28, 2025**

Orange County's First Middle School Promise to Talk "Green Bench" Unveiled at Nicolas Junior High for Mental Health Awareness Month



FSD administrators, trustees, students, and educators join Providence St. Jude partners in the Green Bench debut at Nicolas Junior High.

(Fullerton, CA) – Nicolas Junior High School is now home to a powerful symbol of mental health advocacy, thanks to Fullerton School District's Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) team and a generous partnership with Providence St. Jude. Utilizing grant funding from and as aligned with Providence St. Jude's "Promise to Talk" initiative, FSD's SEL team has helped successfully install a signature "Green Bench" on the Nicolas campus, marking the first of its kind at a middle school in Orange County.

The [Green Bench and Promise to Talk](#) initiative encourage open, compassionate conversations around mental health. Painted in lime green, which is the internationally recognized color for mental health awareness, the bench serves as a designated safe space for students to connect and speak freely. It also features a QR code linking passersby and anyone who might use the bench to mental health resources and support information.



Eighth grader Kenia Flores, a leader in Nicolas' Care Club, shares about the importance of student mental health.

Nearly 30 Green Benches have been installed in public locations across Orange County, but this marks the first to be placed on a middle school campus. Providence St. Jude has been a substantial supporter of FSD's programs and services, donating nearly \$365,000 annually. Through this funding, FSD's SEL and Maintenance and Operations teams worked together to ensure the bench was the bright lime green color of the initiative and bolted in a place visible and easily accessible for students.

To help ring in Mental Health Awareness Month, a ribbon-cutting debut of the Green Bench was hosted just ahead of May, where FSD Board of Trustees, students, district administrators, staff, and community partners came together to celebrate the impact this sitting symbol will have on the school community.

Leaders from Nicolas' Care Club, which has played a key role in fostering student-led mental health and wellness support on campus, shared student perspectives on the importance of finding ways to help students decompress and normalize talking about their emotions with others. Nicolas' Care Club is a facet of and supported by the [Orange County Department of Education's Student Advocates for Mental Health Program](#).

Tanya Gustin, Nicolas' Mental Health Counseling Specialist and Care Club advisor, was also a featured speaker, providing commentary on the ongoing commitment of the school and district to creating safe, inclusive environments where students are empowered to talk openly about mental health.



Bustamante (far right), FSD staff, and members of Westbound Communications make the promise to listen.

Representing Providence St. Jude at the event was Cecilia Bustamante Pixas, Senior Director of Community Health Orange County/High Desert with Providence St. Jude, who underscored that these promise to talk efforts also mean the promise to listen. This is just one of many ways Providence St. Jude demonstrates its county-wide commitment to ensuring all students and all residents have access to mental health support and know where to go when they are in need.

To learn more about Providence St. Jude's Promise to Talk initiative, visit <https://www.promisetotalk.org/about>, and for more information about FSD's SEL programs, visit <https://www.fullertonsd.org/SEL>.

The Fullerton School District (FSD) is located in northern Orange County, California, and serves over 11,400 students in transitional kindergarten (TK) through eighth grade. FSD is home to 15 elementary schools, two TK through eighth-grade schools, three junior high schools, and a distance learning and home school program. FSD features unique programs for students, including a Dual Language Academy for Spanish and Korean languages; a Performance Academy Sports Program that offers a traditional in-person learning experience with time for advanced athletic training integrated into the school day; and robust before, after, and summer school programs. FSD also offers a middle college program, where students can earn college credits and sit for advanced placement (AP) exams administered by the College Board. Additionally, fine arts and performing arts opportunities are available on all 20 campuses. The mission of the Fullerton School District is to work collaboratively with the community to provide an innovative, high-quality educational experience for all students in a safe learning environment. FSD's motto, "Great Schools - Successful Kids," signifies that all FSD students will be given the tools and

instruction to achieve academic excellence, hone interpersonal skills, and develop technological expertise to contribute as productive citizens in a democratic society.

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*For more information, please feel free to contact Amber Muños/Public Information Officer,
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