

School News

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Covering the Fullerton School District



Volume 14, Issue 40

October 2026



**A New Chapter Begins:
2026-27 School Year**





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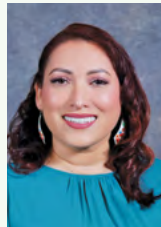
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Listening, Learning and Leading Together

Since joining Fullerton School District as superintendent on July 1, I have had the privilege of experiencing firsthand what makes this District such a special place: the people who bring care, dedication and a shared commitment to students each day.

I have visited campuses, met with principals and employees, welcomed students and connected with families throughout our community. Each conversation and school visit has helped me better understand the traditions, strengths and innovative programs that distinguish our schools, while learning more about the hopes our community holds for the future.



One especially meaningful experience brought me back to my roots as an educator. I spent a full day serving as a substitute kindergarten teacher at Commonwealth Elementary School – my first time leading a classroom in 22 years. From teaching students about the color orange and exploring different ways to make the number eight to sharing stories and building with blocks, the day was a joyful reminder of the curiosity, energy and possibility present in every classroom.

I am grateful for the warm welcome I have received and inspired by the students, staff and families I have met. I look forward to continuing to listen, learn and work alongside our community to ensure every student thrives.



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Dr. Rob Coghlan
*Assistant
Superintendent*

All FSD Students Receive Free Meals During the 2026-27 School Year

Fullerton School District will continue providing free breakfast and lunch to all enrolled students during the 2026-27 school year through its participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Because the District participates in CEP, no meal application is required for students

to receive free school meals. Nutritious meals help students stay healthy, focused and ready to learn throughout the school day.

While meal applications are not required, families are asked to complete the District's Alternate Income Form, available as part of the Annual Information Review (AIR). The information collected may help qualify households for additional benefits, such as discounted home internet service, college application fee waivers and reduced-cost bus passes, while also helping support educational funding for schools.



Educational Services

1401 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7400 • www.fullertonsd.org



Dr. Adaina Brown
Assistant
Superintendent

Two FSD Schools Capture National Speech & Debate Championship Title

Fullerton School District students once again proved they can compete with the best in the nation, bringing home two national championship titles from the 2026 National Speech & Debate Association National Championship, held June 14-19 in Richmond, Virginia.

Parks Junior High School and Fisler School were named Schools of Excellence, the highest honor a middle school can achieve at the prestigious tournament, which drew approximately 7,000 students from across the nation and around the world.

This marks the eighth year FSD students have competed at the national championship and the seventh consecutive year an FSD school has earned a national title, cementing Fullerton School District's standing as a premier middle school speech and debate program.

"Our students' success reflects not only their talent and hard work, but also the supportive culture they've built together," said Emily McDougall, Director of Educational Services who oversees the program. "Speech and Debate gives students the opportunity to find their voice, build confidence, and compete alongside some of the best students in the world, and we're so proud of what they've accomplished."



Representing FSD were 23 students from Beechwood and Fisler Schools and Ladera Vista, Nicolas and Parks Junior High Schools, competing in events ranging from storytelling and humorous interpretation to poetry and informative speaking. Ravenna G. of Fisler School and Hailey H. of Parks Junior High also advanced to the championship finals.

The program's continued success across its 20 campuses reflects the District's commitment to providing rigorous academic opportunities that help students develop confidence, critical thinking, leadership and communication skills for lifelong success.



Personnel Services

1401 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7400 • www.fullertonsd.org



Dr. Chad Hammitt
Director

FSD Earns Top State Recognition for Positive, Supportive Learning Environments

For the third consecutive year, Fullerton School District has demonstrated districtwide excellence in fostering positive student behavior and supportive school cultures, with all 20 schools earning Platinum status – the highest distinction

available from the California PBIS Coalition. Nearly 2,700 schools statewide applied for the 2026 awards program, placing FSD schools among California's top-performing schools in implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. PBIS is a research-based framework that teaches and reinforces positive behavior, helping students develop the social, emotional and behavioral skills to feel connected, supported and ready to learn.

"This recognition reflects the consistency and care our schools demonstrate every day to support all students," said Amy Sotolongo, Teacher on Special Assignment overseeing PBIS. "Whether students are in the classroom, cafeteria, playground or on the bus, they encounter shared expectations and caring adults who recognize positive choices and provide additional support when needed."

Fullerton schools will be honored during the California PBIS Conference October 7-9 in Sacramento, followed by recognition at the October 13 Board of Trustees meeting. At each FSD school, PBIS comes to life through clear expectations, predictable routines and positive reinforcement. School-wide behavior matrices show students what positive behavior looks like in different settings across campus, while point and ticket systems celebrate students for putting those expectations into practice. Students can redeem their points at school stores and carts or for special experiences such as board game days, popsicle lunches and "snack and chat" gatherings.

Schools also provide additional layers of support based on student needs, including small-group mentoring, Lunch Bunch groups, counseling circles and individualized interventions.



PBIS extends beyond FSD campuses through "PBIS on the Bus." District bus drivers receive ongoing training, use a transportation-specific behavior matrix and recognize positive choices with "bus bucks." FSD is the only known school district in Orange County implementing PBIS across its transportation system.

The districtwide accomplishment reflects significant growth since FSD began its PBIS journey during the 2016-17 school year, when two schools received recognition. Today, the work is supported by school administrators, teachers, PBIS teams, support staff, coaches, bus drivers, students, families and District leaders.

"Earning Platinum recognition at every school for three years in a row demonstrates what is possible when an entire district shares a commitment to student well-being and success," Superintendent Gretchen Janson, Ed.D., said. "This achievement belongs to our entire FSD community and reflects the intentional work taking place each day to ensure every student feels safe, included and supported."



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Orange County Department of Education

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A shared call for the year ahead: All. Together. Now.



Dr. Stefan Bean
Superintendent

Four lads from Liverpool known as The Beatles wrote plenty of songs about love, possibility and the human experience. (And at least one about an octopus.) But there's a title from their varied catalog that sounds less like a song and more like a call to action: All Together Now.

Of course, this is a phrase that a conductor, bandleader or music teacher might use just before everyone joins in. But when we separate those three words, the meaning becomes something more:

All. Together. Now.

Now it can be heard as an urgent rallying cry — and one that speaks directly to our work. It captures both the shared responsibility we have to support students, families, educators and school communities across Orange County and the gravity of this moment. As such, it's a theme I plan to return to throughout the year, including at our next State of Education event.

Let's quickly break it down.

See OCDE • Page 29

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Acacia Elementary School

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



Rachel McCormick
Principal

PBIS at Acacia

Acacia Elementary's first month of school has been filled with learning, growth, and joyful connections. Students have enjoyed getting to know their teachers and classmates while becoming familiar with the classroom routines and procedures that help everyone feel safe, supported, and ready to learn.

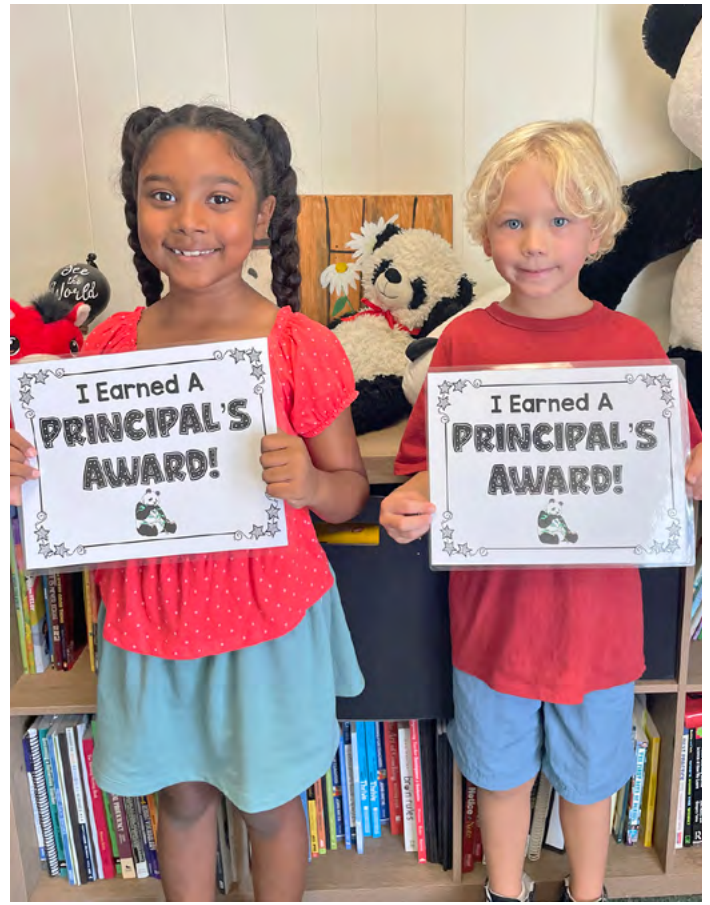
Across campus, students are also practicing Acacia's schoolwide PBIS expectations, known as the 3 R's: Respectful,

Responsible, and Ready. Being respectful means treating others and our school with kindness. Being responsible means making positive choices and taking ownership of our actions. Being ready means arriving prepared to learn and give our best effort.

Acacia's PBIS Matrix shows students what the 3 R's look and sound like in classrooms, hallways, the lunch area, the playground, and throughout campus. By practicing these expectations each day, our Pandas are creating a welcoming school community where everyone can learn and thrive. We are incredibly proud of their wonderful start together!



Students Working Together



Students Received a Principal's Award for Following the 3 R's

Beechwood *School*

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



**Hannah
Lim**
Principal

Orange County Impact School

We have been thrilled to welcome our Bobcats and the community back for another exciting school year. It has been wonderful to reconnect with familiar faces while welcoming many new members of our Beechwood family through middle school registration, TK–2nd grade teacher meet-and-greets, and school orientations for both new and returning Bobkittens and Bobcats.

During the first week of school, our Middle School team hosted their third annual “Middle School-palooza”, where students grades 6-8 rotated through twelve different teacher-led stations centered around personal passions, interests, and areas designed to cultivate curiosity. This much-loved tradition provides students and staff a fun opportunity to connect, build relationships, and strengthen the sense of belonging that makes Beechwood feel like a home for all involved.

Most recently, Beechwood School has been honored to be named an Orange County Impact School. This recognition highlights campuses leading the way with innovative practices that make a meaningful difference for students. Representatives from the Orange County Department of Education visited our campus, engaging with both staff and students and seeing firsthand the many ways our Beechwood community works together each day to support student successes.

All this could not be possible without the strong partnership with Team Beechwood. Comprised of our PTSA and Foundation, their generous support allows for us to invest in and provide opportunities for all of our students. We are incredibly proud that all of our students, staff, families, and community partners have accomplished so much in such a short time. The energy, creativity, and sense of community across Beechwood have made for an outstanding start to the school year, and we look forward to all that is still to come!



Commonwealth *Elementary School*

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



Christopher Wilkins
Principal

Commonwealth Gets a Fresh Look: New Marquee and Playground Upgrades

Commonwealth is kicking off the year with two exciting facilities upgrades that are already making a big impression on campus: a brand-new electronic marquee and a completely redesigned TK/Kinder playground — both made possible through the generous support of Fullerton School District and Bond Measure N.

The new electronic marquee, installed at the school's main entrance, replaces the old manual reader board and gives Commonwealth a modern, easy-to-update way to share announcements with the community. From upcoming events and testing dates to spirit days and reminders about early dismissal, families and visitors can now get up-to-date information at a glance as they drive by. The digital display also allows staff to quickly promote student achievements, fundraisers, and special programs helping Commonwealth put its best foot forward for everyone who passes through.



Just as exciting is the brand-new playground designed specifically for our youngest learners in TK and Kindergarten. The updated play area features age appropriate equipment, softer and safer ground surfacing, and shaded seating areas for staff supervision. The design encourages both physical development and social play, giving our littlest Tigers a space built just for their size and stage of growth.

Teachers have already reported that students are more engaged and excited for recess, with new opportunities for climbing, balancing, and imaginative play.

These upgrades are part of the ongoing investment Fullerton School District is making across our schools thanks to voter-approved Bond Measure N. We are so grateful to our community for supporting this measure and helping turn these improvements into reality for our students and families.



Fern Drive *Elementary School*

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



**Julie
Lucas**
Principal

Big Upgrades Bring New Adventures to Fern Drive's TK/K Playground

Fern Drive's youngest Falcons have even more reasons to look forward to recess this year! Our TK and Kindergarten playground received several exciting upgrades over summer designed to make outdoor play more fun, engaging, and interactive.

The updated playground now features a new playhouse where students can build friendships and use their imaginations through creative play. A spacious 12-by-12-foot sandbox gives children opportunities to dig, build, explore, and work together.

Students can also strengthen their coordination, balance, and confidence as they navigate the new bridge, tunnel, balance beams, and wooden platforms. In addition, a newly painted sensory playground offers colorful, interactive activities that encourage movement, exploration, and active learning.

Thanks to the generous support of the Fern Drive Foundation, the playground also has a new privacy windscreen, creating a more comfortable and secure space for our youngest students to play. These improvements provide meaningful opportunities for students to develop important physical, social, and problem-solving skills—all while having fun with their classmates. We are thrilled to offer our TK and Kindergarten Falcons a playground that inspires curiosity, creativity, movement, and connection every day!



Robert C. Fisler School

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



Dr. Caroline Llewellyn
Principal

Patriot Day Assembly at Fisler - Honoring the past and celebrating our heroes

At Fisler all students came together for a Patriot Day assembly centered on remembrance, gratitude, and kindness. It was an opportunity to honor the lives lost on September 11, 2001, and thank the people who care for our community today.

The day began with local Cub Scouts presenting the flags and leading everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance. Our second graders shared "America the Beautiful," and the school paused for a moment of silence to remember those we lost on 9/11.

We recognized the community workers who helped that day and those who continue to serve today. Among those honored were Fisler parents who attended in uniform, making the recognition especially meaningful for our school community.

Students also had their own words of thanks to share. Our middle school ASB presented letters of gratitude to the Fullerton Police and Fire Departments, while our elementary student council presented thank-you posters to the police department.

Our nonprofit partner, Team Kids, helped connect the day's message to students' everyday lives: everyone can show kindness and be an everyday hero. Through songs, quiet reflection, and student-created tributes, Fisler's gathering gave children a chance to remember, say thank you, and consider how they can help others.





**Dr. Neil
Anderson**
Principal

THE ART OF BECOMING...

At Golden Hill School for Creative and Performing Arts, we believe education is about more than what students know, it is about who they are becoming.

This year, our school community is embracing The Art of Becoming, a theme that reflects both our identity as a school for creative and performing arts and our commitment to helping every child grow academically, artistically, socially, and personally. Becoming is not about reaching a finished product. Like any great work of art, it happens through curiosity, practice, reflection, perseverance, and the willingness to try again.

Throughout the year, our students will be challenged to discover their strengths, take pride in their work, learn from mistakes, and recognize that growth happens one choice, one lesson, and one experience at a time. Whether solving a difficult math problem, stepping onto a stage, creating a piece of art, making music, or learning how to be a better friend, every experience contributes to who they are becoming.

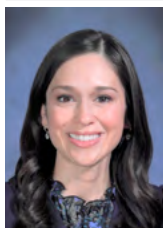
At Golden Hill, we want children to leave us better than we received them, not simply because of what we taught them, but because of what they discovered within themselves.

That is The Art of Becoming. Every Child. Every Day. No Exceptions.



Hermosa Drive *Elementary School*

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



**Julianne
Ettinger**
Principal

Beyond the Job

At Hermosa Drive Elementary, a strong school community is built by people who care deeply about the students, staff, and families they serve. Our day custodian, Mr. Sergio Flores, is one of those special people.

For 11 years, Mr. Sergio has served the Hermosa community, becoming a familiar and valued presence on our campus. He is known for his positive attitude, willingness to help, and the pride he takes in caring for our school. No matter how busy his day

may be, he makes time to lend a hand, solve a problem, or simply greet students, staff, and families with a smile.

Throughout the day, Mr. Sergio works closely with staff to make sure classrooms and campus spaces are ready for students and is quick to step in whenever something is needed. His kindness and helpful spirit have made him a well-loved member of the Hermosa community.

Mr. Sergio's impact goes far beyond keeping our campus looking its best. The relationships he has built and the care he shows each day help make Hermosa Drive a welcoming place where students and families feel at home. We are incredibly grateful to have Mr. Sergio as part of our Hawk family.



Ladera Vista *Junior High School of the Arts*

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



Dr. Jill Davis
Principal

World Paper Mache Project

At Ladera Vista Junior High School of the Arts, our Dual Language Academy (DLA) prepares students to thrive in an increasingly connected world. Students develop bilingualism and biliteracy while building academic skills, cultural awareness, creativity, and confidence.

And our students are seeing the results! This year, 12 of the 15 DLA students who took the AP Spanish exam earned a score of 3 or higher—a reflection of their hard work and the strong foundation they have built through years of learning in two languages.

This month, DLA students are bringing learning to life across the curriculum. In History, students are strengthening geography and map skills while exploring the rise and fall of Rome through hands-on, art-integrated learning. In Spanish Language Arts, students are reading *Ojos de Carmen*, set in Ecuador, and creating Spanish-language travel brochures highlighting Spanish-speaking countries.

In DLA, students don't simply learn a second language—they learn, think, create, and communicate in two languages, developing skills that will open doors for their future.

At Ladera Vista, bilingualism is more than a skill—it's an opportunity to connect with the world.



Laguna Road *Elementary School*

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



**Tracy
Kim**
Principal

Honoring September 11

Laguna Road Elementary students and staff gathered for a meaningful assembly honoring the lives lost and the heroes of September 11, 2001. The Laguna Road choir opened the assembly with a beautiful performance of The Star-Spangled Banner, bringing the school community together in a spirit of unity and remembrance. First responders from the Laguna Road community were recognized for

their courage, dedication, and service, with each receiving a tulip presented by their student. Students also shared a reading of Alan W. Jankowski's tribute poem, "We Shall Never Forget", honoring the bravery and sacrifice of first responders. The choir then performed Somewhere Over the Rainbow, offering a message of hope and reflection. The entire school concluded the assembly with a moment of silence to remember those who lost their lives and express gratitude to the first responders and all those who continue to serve and protect our communities.



Maple Elementary School

244 E. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/447-7590 • www.fullertonsd.org/maple



Jenny Saul
Interim Principal

Mustang Strong

There is something special about being a Maple Mustang. As I step into the role of Interim Principal, one of my greatest joys has been getting to know the students, staff, and families who make Maple such a unique and vibrant community.

This year, we are building on that strength by focusing intentionally on belonging, connection, and community. We want every student to walk onto campus knowing, I belong here. I am known. I am valued. I can be successful.

That begins with relationships. Our staff is working together to strengthen consistent schoolwide systems, create joyful and engaging learning environments, and ensure students have the support they need to thrive. We are also creating more opportunities for student voice and leadership while inviting families to be active partners in #TheMapleExperience.

Maple's hands-on, curiosity-driven approach to learning gives our Mustangs opportunities to explore, collaborate, advocate, and discover what they are capable of achieving.

Most importantly, we are building our Mustang Community together: students, staff, and families connected by a shared belief that when people feel they belong, they are empowered to learn, lead, and grow.

And that is what makes #TheMapleExperience so special.



Students Ready for the School Year



Excited for Learning



Maple Family

Nicolas *Junior High School*

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



**Jose
Varela**
Principal

2026-27 Nicolas Palooza Brings the Knight Community Together

Nicolas Junior High kicked off the 2026-27 school year with another exciting Nicolas Palooza, bringing students and staff together for a day filled with school spirit, teamwork, and fun. This year's theme, "You Only Fail When You Don't Try," encouraged students to take chances, support one another, and never be afraid to try something new.

During the event, students were introduced to Nicolas' four Houses, along with the staff members associated with each House. The friendly competition quickly began as the Houses faced off in two exciting games: The Worm and Tic Tac Hoops.

The competition did not end with the students! The winning House from The Worm earned the opportunity to compete against members of the Fullerton School District Cabinet, including our new Superintendent Dr. Gretchen and Trustee Vanessa Estrella. The winners of Tic Tac Hoops then took on a team of Nicolas teachers and Principal Varela.

The Palooza was filled with laughter, cheering, teamwork, and plenty of Knight pride. Most importantly, students and adults came together to build community and create lasting memories.

Everyone had such a great time that students are already asking one important question: "Can we have another Palooza in January?"

You Only Fail When You Don't Try! Go Knights!



**THE QUEST
BEGINS!**

FOUR HOUSES



ONE CROWN



Orangethorpe *Elementary School*

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



**Deborah
Bennett**
Principal

Lunch, Love & Laughter

Orangethorpe Elementary opened its gates to family, fun, and connection on Wednesday, September 2, for our special Lunch with a Loved One event! The campus was filled with smiles, laughter, and excitement as students welcomed their families to share a cherished lunchtime together. The joyful interactions between students and their loved ones were truly heartwarming, as families made memories

while enjoying quality time side by side. With so many families participating, seating quickly became a premium, proof of just how much our Orangethorpe community values these meaningful opportunities to connect. From happy conversations to shared meals and plenty of smiles, the event brought our school community together in a wonderful way. It was an exciting day that reminded us that when families and schools come together, students feel supported, celebrated, and loved. Thank you to all of our families for making Lunch with a Loved One such a joyful success!



Pacific Drive *Elementary School*

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



**John
Leonard**
Principal

PBIS Program

Pacific Drive's PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) program is in full swing for the 2026/2027 school year, and kicked off with the Splash Back To School assembly. Every year students are able to use their Dolphin Tickets to purchase a raffle ticket for the opportunity to "splash" their favorite staff member. Staff from playground supervisors, administrators, teachers and

counselors all got splashed, and students were excited to hit the target and dump the bucket of water.

Splash Back to School is one of several events planned for this year that take Pacific Drive's PBIS program in a direction focused on experiential rewards that create not only fun opportunities for students, but camaraderie, friendship and unique experiences. Pacific Drive's PBIS team has two experiences per month planned for students, and are still running the Dolphin Store where students can use their tickets to purchase tangible rewards like fidgets or water bottles. The next experiences planned include a painting activity as well as a DJ dance party for students.



Parks Junior High School

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



Jenna Breite
Principal

Panther Pride

We have started the school year strong at Parks! As our students transition into junior high, one of our biggest priorities is making sure every Panther feels safe, connected, and proud to be part of our school community.

We kicked off the year by learning what it means to live The Parks Way: Work with Purpose, Always Be Responsible, and Your Respect Matters. These expectations help create a campus where students feel supported and ready to learn.

We have also been bringing the black and gold spirit! From school-wide activities to Panther Pride Wednesdays, we are creating opportunities for students to connect, build relationships, and feel like they belong.

Junior high is a big transition, and we are proud of the way our Panthers have started the year. We look forward to continuing to build a school community where students feel connected, supported, and proud to be Panthers!



Raymond *Elementary School*

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



**Cristina
Centeno**
Principal

Eagle Scouts

Raymond Elementary has been fortunate to partner with local Eagle Scouts whose service projects have made a lasting impact on our campus and students.

Through this partnership, a gazebo in our kindergarten garden provides shade and a welcoming space for learning and play. In our main garden, an outdoor stage has become a gathering place for outdoor learning, performances, and our meaningful Día de los

Muertos altar. In the most recent project, our Buddy Bench will expand to serve even more students seeking friendship and connection.

Beyond these wonderful additions, our Eagle Scouts serve as outstanding examples for Raymond students. Their leadership, hard work, and commitment to community service show our students what it means to identify a need and take action to make a difference.

We are incredibly grateful for this partnership and the lasting contributions these young leaders have made to Raymond!



Richman *Elementary School*

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



**Devi
Sok-Huynh**
Principal

Richman's Read to Succeed Program

Richman is strengthening literacy instruction with its leveled and high interest Scholastic Reading Room in the STEAM & Dream Lab. Through the Center for Healthy Neighborhoods and ENCORE After School program, Richman is collaborating with CSUF interns. In the Read to Succeed program, the goal is to connect students with in person after-school tutoring in reading and homework.

Using students' most recent assessment information, third-grade teachers and the RTI Coach helped interns select appropriate texts, observe reading behaviors, and ask targeted comprehension questions. Students practice retelling, identifying main ideas and supporting details, finding text evidence, and making inferences alongside their tutors.

Richman is committed to closing achievement gaps through providing engaging, interactive opportunities for students to grow as confident readers. We cannot wait to share more news about the Read to Succeed Program!



Rolling Hills *Elementary School*

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



**Lindy
McNutt**
Principal

Rolling Hills Jogs Into a Great Year!

Rolling Hills kicked off the school year with one of our favorite traditions, our schoolwide Jog-A-Thon! The day was filled with energy, school spirit, and plenty of Roadrunner pride. Every student participated, proudly representing their grade level in a colorful T-shirt while running laps, cheering on classmates, and raising money to support our school. Students even had the exciting opportunity to meet a brand-new Roadrunner who joined in on the fun! What made the day especially meaningful was seeing our entire school community come together. Teachers, staff, parent volunteers, families, and students all played a part in making the Jog-A-Thon a success.



Beyond fundraising, the event gave our students a chance to encourage one another, work toward a shared goal, and strengthen the connections that make Rolling Hills such a special community. Our Jog-A-Thon was a wonderful reminder that when Roadrunners work to show the Roadrunner way, we accomplish more!



Sunset Lane *Elementary School*

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



Dr. Tracy Gyurina
Principal

Apple-tastic Learning in Kindergarten

Kindergarten students had a bushel of fun during Apple Week at Sunset Lane! Throughout the week, our young learners explored

apples through hands-on STEM activities, cooking, art, literacy, and of course the very best part, eating delicious apple treats!

Students made homemade applesauce while practicing important skills like measuring, peeling, and cutting. Along the way, they learned about the different parts of an apple, counted seeds, sequenced the steps for making applesauce, and discovered the life cycle



Building, creating, and collaborating one apple at a time!

of an apple from seed to tree. Our little scientists weighed apples and made predictions before conducting a sink-or-float experiment. Students also tasted apples of different colors, voted for their favorite, and created graphs to show their class results. They painted apples and used their creativity to create colorful apple-inspired artwork as well. The learning continued with kindergarten buddies, who worked together to build apple structures. This STEM challenge encouraged students to collaborate, problem-solve, design, and think creatively.

From experimenting and discovering to cooking and creating, Apple Week was a delicious, hands-on learning experience filled with curiosity, teamwork, and lots of smiles!



A delicious way to learn!
Our kindergarteners put their sequencing skills to work before enjoying their apple pie treats.



Sink or float? Our kindergarten scientists made predictions and gathered around to see what happened!

Valencia Park *Elementary School*

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



Melanie Carmona
Principal

Multisensory Education at VP

At Valencia Park, our schoolwide focus is helping every student learn through high-impact, multisensory instruction. Students use “Talk Moves” to share ideas, explain their thinking, ask questions, and build on the ideas of others. Teachers support learning with anchor charts, visual dictionaries, pictures, sentence frames, and hand movements that

help students understand and remember new words and concepts. Students also learn through hands-on practice, speaking, listening, reading, writing, and movement—giving every child multiple ways to access learning.

This year, students in kindergarten through sixth grade are benefiting from IMSE’s multisensory literacy programs, including Orton-Gillingham Comprehensive and Morphology. These programs strengthen reading, spelling, vocabulary, and word study through systematic, explicit, and hands-on instruction. We are excited to continue expanding these impactful practices across our campus—and we’re looking forward to bringing IMSE to TK soon, as well!



Woodcrest Elementary School

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



Soraya Ramos
Principal

Welcome Back Wildcats!

On August 20, Woodcrest Elementary welcomed students and families to campus for a wonderful Back to School Night! It was a special evening filled with excitement, connection, and Wildcat Pride as families visited classrooms, met teachers, and learned more about the great learning and opportunities planned for the school year.

One of the highlights of the evening was seeing so many of our families walking through classrooms alongside their children. Students were excited to share their learning spaces, and our teachers enjoyed connecting with families and strengthening the partnerships that are so important to student success. Families also had an opportunity to learn more about the many programs and resources available at Woodcrest. Information was available about Speech & Debate, Community Schools resources and counseling services, Response to Intervention (RTI), and our PTA. These programs are just a few of the ways we work together to support the academic, social-emotional, and overall success of every student.

It was a fantastic evening for our Wildcat community and a wonderful way to begin another great school year together!





Dr. Stefan Bean
Superintendent

“All” means every student, every family, every educator and every community. It’s about recognizing that students come to us with different experiences, strengths and needs while holding the same belief for each of them: You belong here. Your future matters. You deserve the opportunity to become the best version of yourself.

“Together” reminds us that education is a shared endeavor. Students succeed because people notice them, believe in them and open doors for them. Teachers work alongside families. Schools work alongside community partners. Districts learn from one another. Across Orange County, progress happens when we come together, listen, lift one another and build systems that help every student see what is possible.

And then there is “Now.”

We are at a defining moment of consequence and possibility for public education. Enrollment patterns continue to shift, creating financial pressures for school systems whose funding is closely tied to student attendance. Districts are being asked to plan carefully, manage rising costs and make difficult decisions while continuing to provide strong educational programs.

At the same time, new investments are creating opportunities to strengthen student supports, expand professional learning, advance literacy, support special education and sustain important work through community schools and expanded learning programs. Our responsibility is to use these opportunities wisely, thoughtfully and with a clear focus on results.

At OCDE, our work takes two forms: We support Orange County’s 28 school districts through fiscal oversight, technical assistance, instructional leadership and specialized services, and we directly serve the county’s

most vulnerable students through our own schools and programs. To bolster both responsibilities, we are aligning our organization around two complementary pillars: educational excellence and operational excellence.

Educational excellence reflects our commitment to strong instruction, innovative programs and meaningful support for students, schools and educators. Operational excellence ensures that the people, systems, resources and services behind that work are aligned, responsive and prepared for what comes next. Neither pillar stands alone. Together, they create a stronger foundation for everything we do, based on the vision of [our 5-3-1 Strategic Plan](#).

Now let’s get back to those three words: All. Together. Now.

As we begin a new school year, let this become more than a song title or familiar phrase. Let it be our shared cue for the year ahead — to include all, to work together, to focus on what matters and to begin immediately.

And yes, I realize I may have just put a Beatles song in your head. But maybe this particular earworm is a good thing.

It reminds us that inspiration can come from anywhere, and that timeless messages — like timeless songs — have a way of staying with us.

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