

# School News

*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Fullerton School District**



Volume 12, Issue 35

February 2025

## **Congratulation to the 2024-25 Fullerton School District Dream Catchers!!**



The Dream Catchers initiative, celebrating its 7th year at Fullerton School District, recognizes 4th to 7th grade students who transform their learning into community impact. Part of the FSD Dream Big initiative, celebrates students who actively pursue their passions, making their dreams a tangible reality and showcasing their spirit of innovation and community service.



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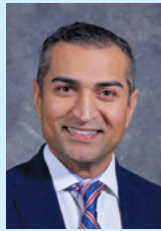
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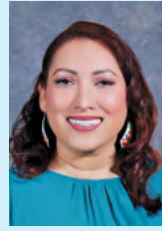
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## Superintendent

### Fullerton School District Students Outperform State Peers in Latest Assessment Data



**Dr. Bob Pletka**  
*Superintendent*

Students in the Fullerton School District (FSD) are outperforming their peers statewide in English and math and showing year-to-year academic growth, according to the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) data recently released by the California Department of Education (CDE).

The CAASPP, which replaced the State's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program in 2014, is administered each spring to all students in grades 3 through 8. It helps measure students' progress in meeting educational standards and serves as a statewide educational accountability system. Data from the CAASPP also enables educators to track progress and plan for targeted interventions to keep students on track in their progressive learning of core subjects.

Compared with state averages, FSD excelled in the 2024 data, outperforming the state by 10.91 percentage points in English Language Arts (ELA) and 14.8 percentage points in math.

Across FSD, 57.95% of students scored proficient in ELA, while 50.34% achieved proficiency in math. These scores reflect an increase of approximately half a percent in both subjects for FSD students compared to the previous year, indicating a continued positive trend for the district. Additionally, proficiency rates improved for nearly all student groups, including foster youth. Data sets did highlight room for improvement in the district's homeless student population, underscoring the importance of its ongoing efforts to support diverse learners.

FSD has taken matters into its own hands when it comes to supporting unhoused students and their families in the district.

"As a district that celebrates diversity and strives to meet the needs of all learners, we recognize the importance of supporting our students facing housing insecurity and other vulnerable groups," said Hilda Sugarman, past Vice President of FSD's Board of Trustees.

While proficiency rates offer just a tiny snapshot of performance, the CDE uses the "distance from standard" (DFS) metric for accountability purposes reflected on the California School Dashboard. This dashboard will be updated with current data in December 2024. To learn more about the CAASPP, visit [caaspp-elpac.ets.org](https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org), and for more information about FSD and its award-winning programs, visit [fullertonsd.org](https://fullertonsd.org).



# Innovation and Instructional Services

1401 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7400 • [www.fullertonsd.org](http://www.fullertonsd.org)



**Jeremy Davis**  
Assistant  
Superintendent

## FSD Fest Takes Home a Golden Bell Award

FSD is humbled to have received a prestigious Golden Bell Award from the California School Boards Association in the category of Student Engagement and Empowerment for FSD Fest. This annual district-wide celebration of student talent and innovation is a two-day conference for kids that showcases creativity through interactive exhibits, performances, and activities, including eSports tournaments,

a spotlight speaker series, and a Film Fest. FSD Fest highlights student voice, choice, and collaboration, inspiring pride and engagement among participants.

FSD Fest is a true districtwide effort led by FSD's Innovation and Instructional Support (IIS) team and made possible through the incredible volunteer support from FSD school and district staff and the invaluable financial backing of the Fullerton Education Foundation, which raised \$40,000 for this event last year. FSD Fest exemplifies the district's commitment to fostering exploration and achievement. Learn more at [www.fullertonsd.org/fsdfest](http://www.fullertonsd.org/fsdfest).



**Fullerton Education Foundation's Executive Director Monica Torres, President Hilda Sugarman, FSD's IIS Director Pablo Díaz and Assistant Superintendent Jeremy Davis**

# Personnel Services

1401 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7400 • [www.fullertonsd.org](http://www.fullertonsd.org)



**Dr. Chad Hammitt**  
Deputy  
Superintendent

## FSD Staff Named as 2024 Most Influential People in OC

We are so proud to share that Nicolas Junior High School woodworking teacher Mucio Vidales and Fullerton School District (FSD) Director of Innovation and Instructional Support Pablo Díaz have been named to the Orange County Register's 2024 Most Influential

People in OC Top 125 list! Their leadership in our district and their work with FSD's Tiny Home Project have been nothing short of transformative.

Thanks to the efforts of Mucio, Pablo, 22 dedicated eighth graders, and invaluable community partners, our first-ever 192-square-foot tiny home is now providing stability to a family in need in our district. This milestone was made possible

through the support of the Fullerton Education Foundation and many other generous donors.

We're excited to announce that our second tiny home build is underway this school year. Stay tuned for updates on this incredible journey of hope and innovation!



**Nicolas Junior High Woodshop teacher Mucio Vidales and FSD Director of Innovation and Instructional Support Pablo Díaz**



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# Acacia Elementary School

1200 N. Acacia Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7700 • [www.fullertonsd.org/acacia](http://www.fullertonsd.org/acacia)



**Rachel McCormick**  
Principal

## Celebrating Students

Welcome to 2025 and the start of a fantastic second semester at Acacia! We're thrilled to have our students back, ready to learn and grow together.

This semester, we're continuing to highlight the unique strengths and talents of our students through programs like Star Student. Each week, a student is celebrated and gets to share special things about themselves with the class—always a

highlight of our day! We're also enjoying visits from guest readers, where family members bring in a favorite book to share. These moments foster a sense of connection and community in our classrooms.

At Acacia we're proud to offer a wide variety of programs designed to engage and inspire all learners. From music classes to hands-on STEAM activities, there's something for everyone at Acacia.

We look forward to the incredible learning and memorable experiences ahead in 2025. Acacia is an amazing place where students shine!



**A guest reader reads a story with their kindergarten student.**

# Beechwood School

780 Beechwood Ave., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-2850 • [www.fullertonsd.org/beechwood](http://www.fullertonsd.org/beechwood)



**Hannah Lim**  
Principal

## No Place Like Beechwood!

We are excited to share that U.S. News & World Report has ranked Beechwood School as #54 in their list of top 100 middle schools. According to U.S. News, "...the top-ranked schools are all high-achieving and have succeeded at educating all their students." We are so proud of our staff, students, and community that continue to accomplish great things.

Beyond academics, Beechwood School also provides multiple opportunities for our students to participate in visual and performing arts. Each year, the Beechwood Foundation, partnered with Stagelight Performing Arts, sponsors a schoolwide musical. This year, our K-8 students performed *The Wizard of Oz* at the Curtis Theatre to 3 sold-out performances for each cast. We were so proud to see our Bobcats showcase their versatile talents by singing, dancing, and acting in their various roles. It proved to us again that there is no place like Beechwood!



# Commonwealth *Elementary School*

2200 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7705 • [www.fullertonsd.org/commonwealth](http://www.fullertonsd.org/commonwealth)



**Jean Summy**  
*Principal*

## Sensory Garden

What began as a little used corner of our Preschool wing at Commonwealth has blossomed into a sensory garden beloved by students of all ages! Started several years ago, in 2022, as a way to refresh the original project completed in 2013, the original garden was created with community support and volunteers. The refresh was made possible by a generous grant from the

Phelps Foundation. Through their generous funding, we removed older wood structures and replaced them with sustainable and kid-safe garden fixtures that will last for many years. The beautiful mural was completed along the wall and outdoor art and science supplies were added. The space is colorful and interactive for our youngest students, especially our Coteach and inclusion classes, and the garden is used daily for stimulating sensory activities. It provides a space where they can relax and collaborate with both peers and nature in a safe and nurturing environment.





# Fern Drive *Elementary School*

1400 W. Fern Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7710 • [www.fullertonsd.org/fern](http://www.fullertonsd.org/fern)



**Julie Lucas**  
*Principal*

## Micah Velte Honored as District Dream Catcher

Our school is thrilled to announce that Micah Velte, a sixth-grade student, has been recognized as one of the district's Dream Catchers for his exceptional achievements and leadership. This prestigious honor highlights students who inspire others through their dedication, kindness, and perseverance.

Micah is a nationally ranked tennis player who demonstrates incredible skill and discipline both on and off the court. His athletic accomplishments are matched by his impressive contributions to our school community. As our Student Council President, Micah is a true leader who sets a positive example for his peers. He is known for his kind

heart, a willingness to lend a helping hand, and a positive attitude that uplifts everyone around him.

In addition to excelling in academics, Micah consistently strives to do his best in all areas of school life. His dedication to his studies, leadership roles, and extracurricular activities embodies the spirit of a Dream Catcher—someone who turns aspirations into reality through hard work and determination.

We are incredibly proud of Micah and all that he has accomplished. His recognition as a district Dream Catcher is well-deserved, and we look forward to seeing how he continues to make a difference both within our school and beyond.

Congratulations, Micah, on this outstanding achievement! You truly are an inspiration to us all.



# Robert C. Fisler *School*

1350 Starbuck St., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-2890 • [www.fullertonsd.org/fisler](http://www.fullertonsd.org/fisler)



**Dr. Kimberly Benaraw**  
*Principal*

## **Robert C. Fisler & Team Kids for Community Partnership**

Team Kids is a non-profit organization that enables children to make a positive impact on the world through creative service initiatives conducted at home, school, and within their community. Fisler has been partnering with Team Kids to organize weekly school-wide challenges, leadership meetings, and the Team Kids carnival to raise money for one

organization. In November our Team Kids challenge kicked off with supporting animal welfare by collecting gently used blankets and towels for our local animal shelter, our second challenge was to collect letters and art supplies for CHOC, and our third challenge was a coin drive for St. Jude Cancer Research. For four weeks our student led leadership team worked tirelessly to host our annual Team Kids carnival. Our whole school came together to enjoy student created games and activities, and together raised money for St. Jude.



# Golden Hill *School for Creative & Performing Arts*

732 Barris Dr., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/447-7715 • [www.fullertonsd.org/golden](http://www.fullertonsd.org/golden)



**Dr. Neil Anderson**  
*Principal*

## Golden Hill School Introduces Musical Sound Sensory Garden

Golden Hill School for Creative and Performing Arts has unveiled a new musical sound sensory garden, an innovative space designed to inspire creativity and support diverse learners. This interactive garden features outdoor instruments, including xylophones, drums, and chimes, inviting children to explore sound and rhythm in a hands-on, inclusive environment.

The sensory garden is particularly beneficial for children with autism and other sensory needs, providing a calming yet stimulating space where they can express themselves through music. It also encourages collaboration, social interaction, and motor skill development as students experiment with instruments and create melodies together.

This garden reflects our commitment to fostering creativity and ensuring every child has the tools to thrive. By blending music with nature, the sensory garden enhances Golden Hill's mission of arts integration, offering all students a harmonious way to learn, grow, and connect.



# Hermosa Drive *Elementary School*

400 E. Hermosa Dr., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-7720 • [www.fullertonsd.org/hermosa](http://www.fullertonsd.org/hermosa)



**Dr. Caroline Llewellyn**  
Principal

## Exciting Performance

Hermosa Drive's STAGE production of *Seussical the Musical, Jr.* was a vibrant showcase of student talent, creativity, and collaboration! This exciting performance allowed students to build confidence, develop public speaking skills, and express themselves artistically. Through acting, singing, and dancing, students strengthened their teamwork, responsibility, and perseverance—skills that support academic success and personal growth. Behind the scenes, students learned problem-solving, time management, creative

thinking, and teamwork. This experience perfectly reflects Hermosa Drive's vision of being the most inclusive, family-friendly community school where high academic standards and kindness are at the core. The story's powerful message—that every person is important, no matter how small—beautifully aligns with our belief that every child's voice and contributions matter. The production brought together students, families, and staff, fostering a sense of belonging and pride. By providing opportunities for every child to shine, *Seussical the Musical, Jr.* celebrated our students' unique strengths and highlighted the joy of learning through the arts. Great job, Hawks!!



## School News

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# Ladera Vista *Junior High School of the Arts*

1700 E. Wilshire Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7765 • [www.fullertonsd.org/ladera](http://www.fullertonsd.org/ladera)



**Dr. Bill Lynch**  
*Principal*

## Ladera Vista Performing “Matilda”

Ladera Vista Junior High School for the Arts will be presenting the Broadway musical, “Matilda” with performances on April 10th and 11th, offering both matinee and evening shows. Our staff, parents and Fullerton community will be treated to a show that is packed with keen wit, an undeniably catchy score, and a sincere message for everyone. Our all-student

backstage crew keep the production running. LVA is also very fortunate to have a dedicated and involved group of

parent volunteers to help support the production in all phases, including costume and set design.

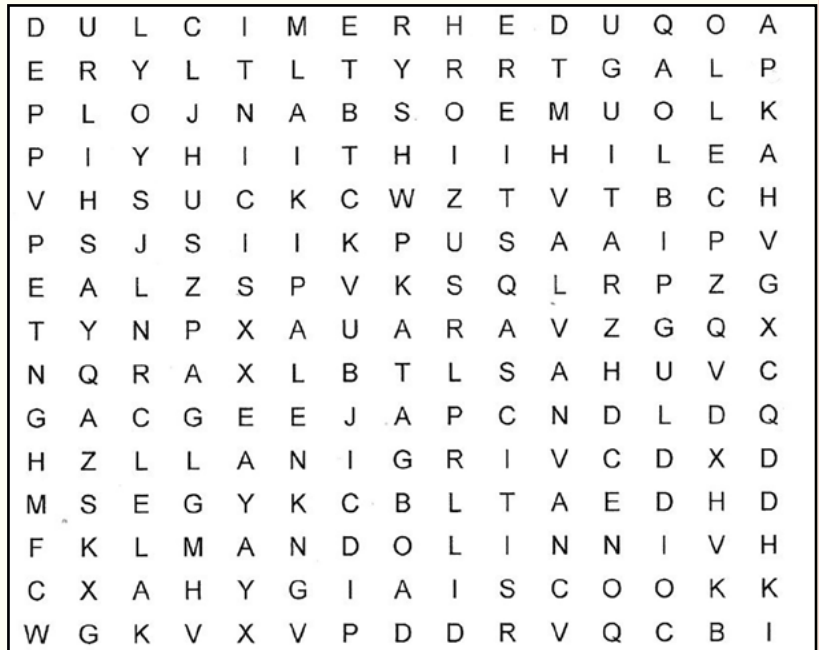
The student cast and crew comes exclusively from Ladera Vista Productions (LVP), our musical theater production class. LVP also includes our “Triple Threat” students, which includes students who take a dance, a choir, and a theater class in their student schedule. Students interested in joining the LVP program or other advanced performing arts electives can find information about auditions on our school website. Tickets for the performances are open to the public and available on our website.

## Musical String Instruments Word Search Contest

**Rules!** One word in the list is NOT in the word search.  
When you have completed the word search, one word will be left and that word you email to: [SchoolNewsKay@gmail.com](mailto:SchoolNewsKay@gmail.com) (Please put Fullerton in the subject line)

Entries must be received by **March 15, 2025**  
From the correct entries one name will be drawn to win  
a \$20 gift certificate redeemable at Barnes & Noble.

- |             |          |
|-------------|----------|
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| GUITAR      | VIOLIN   |
| HARPSICHORD | ZITHER   |
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Congratulations to **Lucinda Woodward** winner of our October Contest!

# Laguna Road *Elementary School*

300 Laguna Rd., Fullerton, CA 92835 • 714/447-7725 • [www.fullertonsd.org/laguna](http://www.fullertonsd.org/laguna)



**Stephanie Guppy**  
Principal

## Winnie the Pooh at Laguna Road

For the first time, Laguna Road proudly participated in the FSD STAGE program. A group of enthusiastic third through fifth grade students signed up for the exciting opportunity and auditioned for a role in Winnie the Pooh Kids. Their hard work and creativity was showcased in this fun and heartwarming production. They embraced the spirit of the Hundred Acre Wood, bringing to life characters like Pooh,

Piglet, Tigger, and Eeyore with energy and charm. From learning lines and choreography to mastering songs and working behind the scenes, participants developed their confidence, teamwork, and passion for the performing arts. The production was a great celebration of storytelling and community, with students entertaining their peers, teachers, and family. We are so proud of their dedication, perseverance, and enthusiasm. We thoroughly enjoyed watching our students grow and show off their remarkable talent. We look forward to additional opportunities to participate in the arts!



**Laguna Road students enjoy performing Winnie the Pooh Kids.**



**Dr. Amanda Sobremesana**  
*Principal*

## **Classroom Spotlight: TK-Kinder Special Day Class**

In our TK-Kinder Special Day Classroom, students engage in hands-on, meaningful learning experiences through Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Play-Based Learning (PBL). Recently, our young learners explored real-world skills by playing restaurant, where they took on roles as chefs, servers, and customers—practicing communication,

problem-solving, and teamwork in a fun, interactive way. Additionally, side-by-side learning through art play fosters creativity and collaboration, allowing students to express themselves while building social connections. Through these dynamic experiences, our classroom nurtures curiosity, independence, and a love for learning, ensuring that every child thrives in an inclusive and supportive environment.





**Jose Varela**  
*Principal*

## Introducing Our New Mariachi Band!

Nicolas Junior High School is thrilled to announce the formation of our brand-new Mariachi Band! This talented group, composed of nearly 30 dedicated students, is already making waves in our school community. Guided by the exceptional leadership of our music teacher, Ms. Rodas, these young musicians are learning the art of mariachi music while celebrating the rich cultural heritage it represents.

Under Ms. Rodas's expert direction, the students have been practicing diligently to master traditional mariachi instruments such as violins, trumpets, guitars, and vihuelas.

Their enthusiasm and commitment are a testament to the power of music to inspire and unite. Ms. Rodas's passion for teaching and her ability to connect with students have created a supportive and energetic environment where everyone can thrive.

The band has already started preparing for its first performance, and we can't wait to see them share their hard work and talent with the community. This program not only provides students with the opportunity to develop their musical skills but also fosters teamwork, discipline, and an appreciation for cultural traditions.

We are incredibly proud of our Mariachi Band and grateful to Ms. Rodas for her outstanding efforts. Stay tuned for upcoming performance dates—you won't want to miss it!





# Orangethorpe *Elementary School*

1400 S. Brookhurst Rd., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7730 • [www.fullertonsd.org/orangethorpe](http://www.fullertonsd.org/orangethorpe)



**Deborah Bennett**  
*Principal*

## Welcome to the Jungle!

The arts are an integral part of a child's development and theatre is no exception. For 10 weeks, Orangethorpe students took on the challenge of creating a showstopper musical in the form of *Jungle Book*. Under the watchful eye of director Tara and teacher Ms. Sixtos, the students were put to the test, learning dances, lines, songs and everything that goes into making a successful stage production. Throughout multiple rehearsals,

students acquired valuable skills in working on scenes, collaboration and they realized others were depending on them to learn their part so the show would all come together.

On December 6, 2024, the students presented two shows in the morning to their peers and were able to use this time as extra dress rehearsals before the big night performance. In front of a packed multi-purpose room the students of Orangethorpe, also known as the cast of *Jungle Book*, performed the story flawlessly and once again showed the amazing talent that is housed at Orangethorpe.



# Pacific Drive *Elementary School*

1501 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7735 • [www.fullertonsd.org/pacific](http://www.fullertonsd.org/pacific)



**John Leonard**  
*Principal*

## 10 Education Essentials Parent Workshop Series

Pacific Drive families and students celebrated their graduation from the 10 Education Essentials Parent Workshop Series, made possible by the Community Schools Partnership Program. Not only did family members attend multiple workshops to enhance their understanding of educational concepts like technology, social emotional learning and school safety, but they also

completed a project with their own children about future goals and what makes their family special and unique. Parents presented their posters with their students to the entire group, which was very inspiring!

We are so proud of our Pacific Drive community. This family workshop exemplified how parents and guardians work incredibly hard to support their students both in and outside of school. We are also incredibly grateful for the support of the Community Schools Partnership, as opportunities like this are directly related to Pacific Drive's involvement in that program. Congratulations to our graduates!



# Parks *Junior High School*

1710 Rosecrans Ave., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7785 • [www.fullertonsd.org/parks](http://www.fullertonsd.org/parks)



**Robin Mundschau**  
*Principal*

## Future Careers in Information and “Communication Technology”

Our Parks Networking elective students had an incredible opportunity to visit Cisco headquarters in San Francisco, sponsored by Cisco in collaboration with our Career Technology Education (CTE) department. This partnership supports CTE’s mission to inspire and prepare students for future careers in Information and Communications Technology.

Coach Chong, Mrs. Mundschau, and district representatives accompanied the students on this one-day trip, where they engaged with industry leaders, product developers, and toured Cisco’s state-of-the-art facilities. Students participated in hands-on activities in a Cisco lab, providing a firsthand look into the innovative world of technology.

This eye-opening experience not only showcased the inner workings of a leading tech company but also introduced students to potential career paths, the educational opportunities needed to achieve them, and the importance of developing both technical expertise and interpersonal skills.



# Raymond *Elementary School*

517 N. Raymond Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831 • 714/447-7740 • [www.fullertonsd.org/raymond](http://www.fullertonsd.org/raymond)



**Cristina Centeno**  
*Principal*

## Inspiring Music Makers

Raymond Elementary is proud to highlight Mr. Arturo Fuerte, our passionate General Music teacher. With 14 years of experience, Mr. Fuerte inspires our third through sixth-grade students during their weekly 30-40-minute music sessions. He aims to foster an appreciation for diverse musical traditions and empower students to see themselves as music makers, not just musicians. Believing everyone can create music, he helps students discover their unique musical potential.

Currently, students are exploring modern band instruments, including the guitar, keyboards, bass, and drum set. As they progress, they'll learn about additional instruments, culminating in the creation of their very own rock band.

Through his dedication and enthusiasm, Mr. Fuerte nurtures a love of music in his students and inspires them to embrace creativity and teamwork. Raymond is grateful to have such a talented educator enriching the lives of our students and fostering a lifelong appreciation for music.



# Richman *Elementary School*

700 S. Richman Ave., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/447-7745 • [www.fullertonsd.org/richman](http://www.fullertonsd.org/richman)



**Dr. Marci Rojas**  
*Principal*

## Richman Elementary Hosts a Successful Math Family Night

Richman Elementary recently hosted an engaging Math Family Night, bringing together students, parents, and teachers for an evening of hands-on math fun and learning. The event was a resounding success, with families enjoying interactive games, problem-solving challenges, and creative math activities designed to make numbers come alive.

The evening highlighted the importance of the home-school connection, where learning extends beyond the classroom. Engaging families in the educational process not only strengthens relationships between students and teachers but also fosters a supportive learning environment at home. When families participate in academic events like Math Night, they reinforce the value of learning and show

students that education is a community effort.

Math, often seen as a challenging subject, was made fun and accessible through games like “Math Tic Tac Toe” and “Math Coloring,” allowing children to practice key skills in an enjoyable setting. By making math vibrant, Richman Elementary is helping students develop a love for learning while building confidence in their abilities.

The event also emphasized the power of family involvement in a child’s education. Parents were encouraged to actively participate in activities, offering an opportunity to bond with their children over shared learning experiences. The night served as a reminder that when families and schools collaborate, students thrive academically and emotionally.

Richman Elementary is proud of the success of Math Family Night and looks forward to more events that foster a strong school community and make learning fun for all!





**Lindy McNutt**  
Principal

## Winter-themed STEM Fun in Kindergarten!

In Mrs. Crawford's kindergarten STEM activity, students embraced creativity and collaboration through a variety of cross-curricular tasks. The activity began with *The Biggest Snowman Ever* by Steven Kroll, sparking excitement and setting the stage for a snowman-building challenge. Armed with only three marshmallows and four toothpicks, students explored engineering and problem-solving by constructing snowmen. Kindergarteners measured their creations using

linking cubes, recording the height to integrate math and measurement skills. Creativity flourished as students experimented with their materials—some used toothpicks for arms or facial features, while others placed them in the middle to maximize height. Students later engaged in an art activity, designing snowman with their names, reinforcing literacy in a hands-on way. Number sense was woven throughout the day as students counted their materials, measured with linking cubes, and recorded their findings. This engaging, multi-disciplinary activity brought the magic of winter to life in a memorable and educational way.



**Students show off their unique snowman creations!**

# Sunset Lane *Elementary School*

2030 Sunset Ln., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7750 • [www.fullertonsd.org/sunset](http://www.fullertonsd.org/sunset)



**Dr. Tracy Gyurina**  
*Principal*

## Literacy Excellence

Sunset Lane is making strides in implementing balanced literacy, focusing on enhancing student learning through collaboration and effective teaching practices. Teachers engage in ongoing professional development, including ghost walks where they observe classroom environments and reflect on systems that support literacy. Staff members continue to refine their instructional strategies, share best practices, and design co-taught lessons that emphasize reading

skills, critical thinking, and student collaboration. Students are immersed in literacy practices daily, participating in interactive read-alouds, independent reading, guided practice, and phonics lessons while engaging in discussions that build comprehension, fluency, and a lifelong love for reading. Additionally, teachers continue to deepen their skills in conferring with students, getting to know them both as individuals and readers. These collective efforts are creating a strong schoolwide culture of literacy, ensuring all students receive consistent, high-quality instruction. Sunset Lane is excited to continue this journey of literacy excellence.



**4th grade teachers collaborating on a readers' workshop mini lesson to support our students' literacy.**

# Valencia Park *Elementary School*

3441 W. Valencia Dr., Fullerton, CA 92833 • 714/447-7755 • [www.fullertonsd.org/valencia](http://www.fullertonsd.org/valencia)



**Melanie Carmona**  
*Principal*

## “Tuesday Talent Time”

Valencia Park is thrilled to announce our new weekly program—Tuesday Talent Time—designed to spark creativity and connection among students! Each Tuesday during lunch recess, the Art Cart rolls out, offering paints, crayons, chalk, and other materials for students to use as they create alongside their friends.

We celebrated our first Art Cart day in January, and it was a hit! Students have been begging for more opportunities to express themselves through art. In addition to crafting their masterpieces, students are learning valuable skills like sharing materials and collaborating on projects, all while having fun.

This program is open to all grade levels and provides a welcoming space for students to explore their imagination and build friendships. It’s been exciting to see the positive impact this creative outlet has already had, and we look forward to many colorful Tuesdays ahead.



**VP Lions were thrilled to have a novel new recess activity added in January with the introduction of the Art Cart.**



# Woodcrest Elementary School

455 W. Baker Ave., Fullerton, CA 92832 • 714/447-7760 • [www.fullertonsd.org/woodcrest](http://www.fullertonsd.org/woodcrest)



**Christopher Wilkins**  
Principal

## Woodcrest Elementary Students Team Up with Move More, Eat Healthy for Healthy Cooking Initiative

Woodcrest Elementary's 4th and 5th-grade students have embarked on an exciting educational journey in collaboration with the Move More, Eat Healthy organization. This initiative aims to teach young learners the importance of cooking and preparing nutritious meals, promoting lifelong healthy habits.

The program combines hands-on culinary activities with engaging lessons on nutrition. Students learn to identify wholesome ingredients, understand the benefits of balanced meals, and explore simple, affordable recipes they can recreate at home. Under the guidance of Move More,

Eat Healthy instructors and their teachers, the children actively participate in the preparation of various dishes, fostering teamwork and practical skills.

The collaboration is about more than just cooking; it underscores the connection between diet and overall well-being. Students are encouraged to adopt active lifestyles alongside healthy eating, aligning with the mission of Move More, Eat Healthy. Parents and guardians are also engaged through take-home recipes and family challenges, ensuring the lessons extend beyond the classroom.

This partnership exemplifies how schools and community organizations can work together to inspire positive change. By empowering students with the knowledge and skills to make healthier food choices, the program is helping to lay a foundation for healthier futures for both students and their families.



# MyConnectAcademy

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**Lindy McNutt**  
Principal

## Field Trip to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory!

Recently, Mrs. Clemente, MyConnect multiage upper-grade teacher, had the opportunity to take her students on an exciting and engaging NASA TechRise Virtual Field Trip. During this field trip, they explored the wonders of space exploration and engaged in a live question and answer session with experts from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and astronaut

Jessica Watkins. The students were especially thrilled

when their questions were personally answered by an astronaut. A highlight of the trip was Astronaut Watkins' guided tour of the International Space Station (ISS), where students virtually explored all areas of the station. The most memorable moment came when they had the chance to view Earth from the station—a truly unforgettable experience. Following the virtual field trip, the students took part in a classroom coding event sponsored by NASA. Additionally, sixth graders were given the unique opportunity to participate in the NASA TechRise Student Challenge. Such a fun experience!



**Traveling to space with a NASA Astronaut!**

# Tegan's Book Review



**Tegan Y.**

## A Deceased's Identity Theft

Cunning, insightful, and provocative are all words that aptly describe R.F. Kuang's *Yellowface*. The novel offers a sharp look at appropriation, identity, and the intricacies of the publishing world. The story revolves around the life of June Hayward, a white author who, following the freak accident death of her Asian American friend Athena Liu—a successful writer who had recently made it big—seizes the opportunity to steal Athena's unfinished manuscript, "The Last Front". In a desperate bid for her own fame, June chooses to publish it as her own work.

The characters are richly drawn, revealing the moral complexities that can accompany ambition and the lengths to which people may go for popularity. The book as a whole is a timely and thought-provoking novel that raises questions on the consequences of exploiting another's identity for personal gain, making it a compelling read from start to finish. To conclude, R.F. Kuang's *Yellowface* unfolds with a lyrical precision and perfectly resembles what a beautifully written prose should be.

Tegan is a seventh grader who likes music and reading.

# Note-ables



**Kate Karp**

## Sing & Soar with Nanny Nikki

"Nanny Nikki" Rung, her ukulele and her two Dapper Dudes have cued up a musical outing for us! We're going to dance at the playground, rock to the beat, and learn some valuable lessons while we're having the best time ever!

The infectious ska rhythm on the opener, "The Beat," introduces a celebration of street musicians who pound buckets and pails on the streets of Nikki's native Chicago and who sometimes get run off by the police! "Yuk Your Yum" talks about not raining on someone's parade. "Almost Made It" begins with being too late to get to the bathroom, but that's just the attention-getter—it's really about supporting your friends and yourself in never giving up on anything. "Playground Day" welcomes all children to play, no matter what they look like, where they come from, or how dirty they get.

The collection closes on a soft, thoughtful note with "I Can't Hear the Moon." Of course, you can't. You can't hear a smile, a touch or love, either, but you know they're there.

Children deserve a nanny like Nanny Nikki, and so did we when we were little. We can all have one now!

Kate Karp is an editor for *School News Roll Call* and a freelance writer and editor.

## Winter Words Word Search Contest

**Rules!** One word in the list is NOT in the word search.

When you have completed the word search, one word will be left and that word you email to: [SchoolNewsKay@gmail.com](mailto:SchoolNewsKay@gmail.com) (Please put Fullerton in the subject line)

Entries must be received March 15, 2025

From the correct entries one name will be drawn to win a \$20 gift certificate redeemable at Barnes & Noble.

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| BLIZZARD      | MOUNTAINS    |
| BOOTS         | OLYMPICS     |
| CABIN         | POPCORN      |
| CHILLY        | RAINCOAT     |
| FIREPLACE     | SCARF        |
| FREEZING      | SLED         |
| FROST         | SNOWBOARDING |
| GINGERBREAD   | SNOWFLAKE    |
| HOLIDAYS      | SNOWMAN      |
| HOT CHOCOLATE | SOLSTICE     |
| ICE SKATES    | SOUP         |
| ICICLE        | TOBOGGAN     |
| MARSHMALLOW   | UMBRELLA     |
| MITTENS       | VACATION     |



# Orange County Department of Education

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## AI Signals a New Era for Teaching and Learning in Orange County



**Dr. Stefan Bean**  
Superintendent

As an eighth-grader, Ibrahim Memon from Tustin's Legacy Magnet Academy began working on an AI-powered app designed to allow rideshare drivers to keep 100 percent of their fares.

Today, Ibrahim is a high school junior. And his app? It's operational in Seattle.

Ibrahim's story highlights the extraordinary potential of Orange County's young innovators, especially when supported with cutting-edge educational tools like artificial intelligence. And his success is a prime example of the outcomes we hope to encourage and nurture at the Orange County Department of Education through our own AI initiative.

We already know that AI in schools is about more than just the adoption of a new technology. It signals a transformative shift in how we educate our students, and there's no choice but to embrace it.

Indeed, to quote the Borg from Star Trek, "Resistance is futile" — but I don't mean that in a menacing way. The fact is this wave of technology is already here, and now it's up to us to harness it responsibly and strategically to enhance educational outcomes for all learners.

So far, the feedback we've seen from introducing AI in classroom settings has been highly encouraging. These emerging technologies not only make learning more interactive but also tailor instructional experiences to individual needs, making education more effective and engaging. Survey data shows a 90 percent satisfaction rate among students participating in AI-driven activities.

That said, the foundation of our strategy must be to support educators. That's why OCDE will be advancing AI fluency programs and comprehensive professional development opportunities to

help make teachers' work more efficient and to maximize the impact of their instruction. Additionally, we will be promoting collaborative environments where students and teachers can explore the potential of AI together, fostering inclusive and innovative educational spaces.

### Our Vision and Goals

At the Orange County Board of Education meeting on Sept. 4, our staff outlined a new strategic vision for the integration of artificial intelligence and the empowerment of students and staff. This wasn't about mandating a new direction, but rather supporting our districts and scaling up the innovative work many are already doing.

As we stated at that meeting, we envision a future where AI revolutionizes education, unlocking unprecedented opportunities, and we are committed to harnessing its transformative power responsibly to enhance learning, inspire innovation and prepare every student for success in college, careers and beyond. By embedding ethical principles into our AI initiatives, we strive to create an educational environment where technology uplifts humanity, fosters creativity and builds a brighter future for all.

That's the overarching vision, but clear, measurable goals will be essential to ensure that OCDE's AI initiative achieves its intended objectives and enhances educational outcomes.

By 2025, for example, our target is for 90 percent of local districts to adopt ethical AI guidelines that promote responsible use across all educational settings. We also commit to holding regular meetings throughout the year to review progress and adjust strategies to make sure our efforts remain aligned with our broader educational objectives. Additionally, we want to work closely with district leaders to guarantee that all students have access to advanced technologies.