

For Immediate Release

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Fullerton School District's Maple Elementary TK Classroom Receives Reggio-Inspired Makeover



Transitional kindergarten (TK) students at Maple Elementary School in the Fullerton School District started the 2024-25 school year in a new Reggio-inspired classroom.

(Fullerton, CA)— Some of Fullerton School District's youngest learners at one of its oldest campuses have started the new school year, and for many, their first classroom experience, in a modern learning environment with historical roots. Maple Elementary School's newly unveiled Reggio-inspired transitional kindergarten (TK) classroom was developed and provided in partnership with School Specialty, a leading provider of educational products for school campuses.

"This classroom not only honors the history of this 100-year-old school but also represents our district's commitment to providing engaging classroom environments that truly benefit our students," said Fullerton School District Board President Leonel Talavera to attendees at the room's unveiling.

"Reggio-inspired," short for the "[Reggio Emilia approach](#)," refers to an educational philosophy that emphasizes a child-centered, exploration-based learning environment. The Reggio Emilia approach is named after a town in Northern Italy where the community decided to use post-World War II stimulus

funds to invest in education. Centered on the Reggio Emilia idea that children are naturally curious and capable learners, the classroom at Maple Elementary is designed to nurture these qualities by encouraging active participation, imaginative play, and social interaction. According to educational experts, such environments are particularly beneficial for young children, helping them develop essential skills in critical thinking, creativity, and social-emotional learning.

“In the Reggio philosophy, the learning environment is the third teacher,” explained Maple Elementary TK teacher Katie Bezayiff during her remarks at the classroom’s unveiling event.



Maple TK students enjoy a lightbox with colorful plastic shapes, which is one of several stations students can explore in the classroom.

Bezayiff is one of the [California League of Educators’ 2024 Educators of the Year](#). Correspondingly, she was chosen to have her classroom participate in the School Specialty remodel due to her exemplary work in early childhood education.

“School Specialty has helped us open the doors to a new world of exploration, investigation, and wonder for our students.”

Bezayiff’s new TK room is filled with flexible furniture, natural materials, and spaces designed for hands-on learning, hallmarks of the Reggio Emilia method, which has been increasingly recognized by modern education professionals for its ability to foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking in young learners.



Bezayiff's new classroom space, with its natural materials and hands-on learning spaces, exemplifies the aesthetic of a Reggio-inspired learning environment.

Newly minted Maple Elementary School principal, Dr. Amanda Sobremesana, spoke to the importance of student voice and choice and how learning spaces like this help champion those.

“This helps us support the growth of the whole child,” shared Dr. Sobremesana, who brings over 25 years of decorated educational experience and whose exemplary work in cultivating social-emotional support for students saw her lead her previous school’s team to a 2022 California Pivotal Practice award.



Attendees at the Maple TK classroom's unveiling joined for a ribbon-cutting before seeing the room.

The unveiling of the new classroom is not just a milestone for Maple Elementary but also a significant development for the Fullerton School District as it continues to invest in innovative educational practices and find community partners that will support this work.

“When AB22 got implemented across California, children got younger in school districts,” noted Gary Tanner, a Senior Category Manager for School Specialty who specializes in the educational areas of early childhood, science, and special needs.

Tanner went on to explain that the addition of younger students on campus underscored the need for schools to have learning areas that allow students to explore and learn from interacting with their space.



Maple TK students in Bezayiff’s class are seen here enjoying their space during their first week of the school year.

Fullerton School District’s purchasing director, Mike McAdam, worked with Tanner and the School Specialty team in the initial phases of exploring how they could collaborate to illuminate and demonstrate the impact of a Reggio-inspired classroom for young learners and to showcase what is possible with the support of community partners.

Fullerton School District Superintendent Dr. Bob Pletka encouraged the adults at the unveiling event to imagine seeing the new classroom from the vantage point of the students who will be using it.

“Education is about inspiring wonder, and when you go into that room and look at it through the eyes of a 4-year-old, what you’re going to see is wonder and curiosity.”

Fullerton School District is located in northern Orange County, California, and serves over 11,600 students in grades TK through 8. It includes 21 schools, 15 elementary schools, two K-through-8 campuses, three middle schools, and an online and home school model. Fullerton School District also

has Dual Language Academies for Korean and Spanish languages and a Performance Academy Sports Program for advanced student-athletes. The mission of the Fullerton School District is to work collaboratively with the community to provide an innovative, high-quality educational program for all students in a safe learning environment. The District motto, “Great Schools - Successful Kids,” exemplifies the belief that all students will achieve academic excellence, acquire interpersonal skills, and develop technological expertise to contribute as productive citizens in a democratic society. For more information about the Fullerton School District’s award-winning schools, call (714) 447-7400 or visit www.fullertonsd.org, and to learn more about School Specialty’s products and services, visit www.schoolspecialty.com.

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