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School News



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Covering the Saddleback Valley Unified School District

Volume 4, Issue 14

April / May 2021

Happy Spring!



Del Lago Office Staff



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Superintendent



Dr. Crystal Turner

Happy Spring! In addition to the warmer weather and longer days this time of year brings, it also marks the opportunity to have more students on campus. While SVUSD students have had the opportunity to be on campus since September through the Hybrid Instruction model, on April 19th, school sites opened up their doors for these students to be on campus for longer periods of time due to the updated health and safety guidelines that were recently released by the CDPH. For our elementary students that were previously enrolled in the Hybrid option, this means they are now on campus full-time. For our Hybrid secondary students, they are in person for classes on campus four days a week in lieu of the two day a week option. The full Distance Learning option is still available to students in K-12 for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.

I'd like to thank our staff for the incredible amount of work they've done all year to serve our students, and especially over the last few weeks in preparation for

bringing students back for more on-campus instructional time. There have been many changes and challenges throughout 2020-2021 and our teachers, staff, and administration continue to show their resilience, flexibility, and dedication to their students. They truly are #svusdheroes. Fittingly, the 2021 SVUSD Teachers of the Year have been selected for each school site, with a full list of honorees below. The 3 SVUSD district-wide winners (noted with an asterisk) were selected to submit an application to the Orange County Department of Education's (OCDE) county-wide Teacher of the Year program. The county program is the precursor to the state and national programs, culminating with the selection of the National Teacher of the Year at the end of 2021. We've just been notified that Alondra Diaz and Monica Hinds have been selected as two out of fifteen semi-finalists in all of Orange County for the OCDE program! Please join me in congratulating all of our Teachers of the Year, and best of luck to Mrs. Diaz and Mrs. Hinds as they continue in the county program. We truly are fortunate to have so many outstanding teachers in SVUSD!

Teachers of the Year

Cielo Vista Elementary	Anissa Wallace	Mission Viejo High School	Shay Sharp
Cordillera Elementary	Jill Snyder	Montevideo	Cindy Pieterse
Del Cerro	Robyn Fischbach	Portola Hills Elementary	Pam Thomas-Padian
Del Lago	Courtney Wessel	Rancho Canada	Nikki Portnoff
de Portola	Rhonda Gaedicke	Rancho Santa Margarita	
Esperanza Education Center	Mary Margheim	Intermediate School	Ann Diabeti*
El Toro High School	Monica Hinds*	San Joaquin	Karla Turner
Foothill Ranch	Christina Jimenez	Santiago STEAM Magnet	Laura Escutia
Gates Elementary	Alondra Diaz*	Serrano Intermediate	Andi Suter
La Madera	Linda Peterson	Silverado High School	Rachael Curtis
La Paz Intermediate	Shavaun Gonsior	Trabuco Hills High School	Lindsay Casserly
Lake Forest Elementary	Paula Obermeyer	Trabuco Mesa Elementary	Ashley Evans
Linda Vista IB Magnet	Michelle McGrew	Valencia Elementary	Jay Grimm
Lomarena	Tracey Higgins		
Los Alisos Intermediate	Chris Hixson		
Melinda Heights	Tammy Strand		

* SVUSD TEACHER OF THE YEAR

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We are nearing the end of this school year and in some ways it seems like we have just begun.

In this issue you will read about the safety protocols in place as students return to in-person instruction. Each school article brings you up-to-date on their activities directly from the classroom.

We have included several special articles including Positive Parenting on page 7, Parent to Parent on page 27, student book reviews page 26, a Word Search Contest on page 25 (contest open to all ages), and Real Estate Matters on page 28.

Our next issue is May 26.



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Liza Zielasko
Assistant
Superintendent

SVUSD Heroes

This Spring finds SVUSD students physically back in school more than they have been in over a year. Getting to this point has required so much of all school site and district employees. Our tremendous teachers transitioned from teaching in a Full Distance model in August, to Hybrid instruction in September, and now with more students coming to in-person instruction starting in April. All of these changes have been extremely challenging for the families, students, teachers, and the entire staff at each site. Preparing the sites for the return of students in September was a huge task for school site personnel, which involved massive furniture changes as well as planning for the implementation of the many safety protocols that were necessary to keep students and staff safe. Then preparing for more students to attend in person in April created another major shift.

Keeping education moving forward for our students took a colossal effort on everyone's part. Certificated staff were forced to totally change how they instruct over this past year, and administrators have had to implement site changes that they have never had to deal with before. Classified staff have also been instrumental in making incredible shifts in their work efforts. It is important to remember that all of this has been done under the uncertainty and underlying fear created by the pandemic. In short, these amazing SVUSD teachers, administrators, and support staff are nothing short of heroes. Putting students first is what our educators and staff do, and that has been dramatically proven over this past year. Thank you to our SVUSD heroes!

Operations

25631 Peter A. Hartman Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-1234



Robert Craven
Assistant
Superintendent

Safety Protocols

SVUSD is excited for the full time return to student in-person learning on April 19. SVUSD continues to follow guidance from the California Department of Public Health and the numerous COVID-19 safety protocols implemented this year remain in place. A few notable changes with the most recent guidance updates include desk spacing which can now be set at 3 feet apart in all classrooms, and playgrounds are now open.

It's exciting to see students on the playgrounds once more; to ensure proper hand hygiene after using playgrounds, hand washing stations were installed at campuses and more continue to be installed, hand sanitizer stations and hand sanitizing wipes are also available throughout campuses.

Other measures that remain in place include the custodial staff cleaning and sanitizing classrooms and frequent touch points throughout the school day. Also, students are utilizing areas throughout the campus for lunch to ensure proper physical distancing and desk partitions are available for students. HVAC systems continue to be maintained on a regular schedule, and air purifiers are installed in all classrooms.

Everyone on an SVUSD campus must wear a mask, even if they've been vaccinated. Students and staff must continue to complete a daily symptom self-check prior to arriving at an SVUSD campus; anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should remain at home and consult their primary care physician. Parents or guardians of students who are COVID-19 positive or a close contact to a COVID-19 individual should notify their principal.



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Connie Cavanaugh
Assistant
Superintendent

Recruitment

SVUSD is always looking to recruit the best and brightest. During this recruitment season the district participated in the UCI Teacher Employment Fair and the South Orange County Virtual Job Fair. These have been great opportunities to highlight the benefits of working for the district, and to attract amazing staff to serve SVUSD students and families.

The district also promotes positions through local junior colleges, city job boards, Facebook, websites like Indeed, and the district website. Open positions are added on a regular basis, and vary from elementary and secondary teaching positions to office and support staff. Please visit svusd.org, click on Departments, then Human Resources, to see a listing of open positions through EdJoin.

In addition to providing safe and nurturing environments for students, SVUSD provides stable and enriching work experiences, as well as an outstanding benefits package. The district was recently named a Top Employer 2021 by Chapman University.

English Learners

25631 Peter A. Hartman Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-1234



Dr. Rowena Mak
Coordinator

Pathways to Biliteracy Awards

461 students from our Dual Language Immersion program (DLI) were nominated for the 2021 Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) Pathways to Biliteracy awards. This award is given to students from preschool through 8th grade in recognition of their ongoing studies toward bilingualism and biliteracy. This award further affirms our DLI program's goals toward bilingualism,

biliteracy, enhanced awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, and high levels of academic achievement through instruction in two languages. DLI students, who were nominated by their teachers based on their overall performance in Spanish language development, will be awarded with certificates, medals or ribbons of recognition. The SVUSD Dual Language Immersion program is a proud member of the International Spanish Academies (ISA), which has developed a quality English-Spanish educational program through a network of selected schools in order to promote the study of the Spanish language and culture.



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Positive Parenting



Sandy Spurgeon McDaniel

What's Next Parents?

After a year of changes in school schedules, the parent may ask, "Now what is my role as their parent?"

(1) See that a child does follow-up work (homework) each day. Most teachers have information as to what is required of each child on the computer. Have the child show you what work is to be done. If help is required, choose a time that's best for you. Otherwise, have the child show you completed work before the media is used again.

(2) Whenever possible, have dinner together. If not possible, have a "just us" ten minutes to talk about (that means the parent contributes to each topic as well,) What was your favorite thing today? Least favorite? What happened that was new today?

(3) LISTEN! As a teacher and family consultant, my instinct is to jump to "fix it" when a problem is presented. Allow the child to solve the problem. "

(4) Plan family gatherings: Have dinner together, play a board game, go for a walk, play croquet, ride bikes, swim, go for a picnic. Emotional health is often strengthened from a feeling of belonging. Make kindness a non-negotiable rule and glue all your family experiences together with love.

Sandy Spurgeon McDaniel is an author, taught school, raised two children, worked as a consultant to schools and has worked with children and families for 52 years. Sandy now lives in Meridian, Idaho. ParentingSOS.com.

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Cielo Vista *Elementary*

21811 Avenida de Los Fundadores, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/589-7456 • svusd.org/cielovista



Dr. Frances Hansell
Principal

Depth and Complexity

Stephanie Weeks and Anissa Wallace are just one example at Cielo Vista of teachers providing equity and access for all students. Recently they designed a series of lessons featuring Depth & Complexity Thinking Prompts developed by Sandra Kaplan for Gifted and Talented Students. These lessons featured looking at text through multiple perspectives. All students used the thinking prompt to analyze historical events.

Students evaluated interactions among American Indians, European explorers and settlers in California from multiple perspectives in grade 3. Students had the opportunity to examine the California Mission system through the lens of both a missionary and Native Californian viewpoint in grade 4. Students extended their thinking by creating replicas of their mission in Minecraft. These lessons allowed students to dig deeper into understanding history and the world around us. We encourage you to come fly with us at Cielo Vista and soar like a Hawk!



Cordillera *Elementary*

25952 Cordillera Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-3400 • svusd.org/cordillera



Jennifer Kajdasz
Principal

The 2021-2022 School Year will Bring New Changes!

Cordillera Elementary has served the Mission Viejo community for 50 years! However, the time has come to move towards new opportunities. SVUSD formed a Facilities Focus Group (FFG) to provide solutions for operational and instructional issues for sites with enrollment under 400 students. The FFG met several times and provided a recommendation that the Cordillera student body merge with the Montevideo student body which was approved starting in the 2021-2022 school year. Cordillera will always hold a special place in many people's hearts. Many laughs, lots of learning, tons of new friendships

and even some scraped knees have taken place in these hallways, on our playgrounds and in the classrooms. Our cougars will continue to be in amazing hands next year and it will help seeing fellow classmates and many familiar teacher's faces over at Montevideo. This site will still be able to service students as it will be making room for the SVUSD Virtual Academy. If you have any old photos or memories you would like to share with us for an end of year event, please email to cordilleralegacy@gmail.com. And for those of you who are interested in joining us as we bid farewell to this chapter, please save the date for Saturday, May 29th for a fun end of year event that will be taking place here on site. This is not a good bye, this is a see you soon (across the street)!

De Portola *Elementary*

27031 Preciados Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-5830 • svusd.org/deportola



Brendon Morrow
Principal

Kindergarten Garden

Nestled in a quiet neighborhood in Mission Viejo, de Portola's student population is representative of the community it serves. Delivering instruction to Kindergarten-

6th graders, we host children from a diversity of cultures. Our families are known to be hard-working, supportive, and

understanding of the value of education. All students receive general education, with groups of students with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and English language learners having additional access to special services. Gifted and talented students attend de Portola as one of five GATE magnet schools in SVUSD.

Just as our train caboose was originally added to our campus to provide a space for students with exceptional needs, our school family has embraced those who come to us by residence or by choice.

While innovative, impactful, and purposefully-planned instruction has traditionally helped yield outstanding assessment scores, our staff continues to take steps of examining our practices to recognize additional levels for improvements.



Del Cerro *Elementary*

24382 Regina St., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-5430 • svusd.org/delcerro



Kristin Thomsen
Principal

Our Amazing Librarian

Meet Mrs. Betsy Denny, Del Cerro's amazing librarian...and more! During this past year of Distance and Hybrid Learning Mrs. Denny has been a fun, innovative and creative member of our team. While our Library, aptly named the Surf Zone, has been closed to students this year, Mrs. Denny has continued to spark

interest and enthusiasm for reading with weekly classroom book visits, posting book talk flyers around campus, designing an engaging website, in-class mobile book check-out, and a Bubbles and Music outdoor book checkout during our student breaks. Our virtual learners have their own dedicated remote check-out every two weeks.

Mrs. Denny has generously given to Del Cerro students and teachers this year by supporting our students, teachers, and Principal with weekly fluency practice with our primary students, math support, plus daily tutoring and supporting students in grades K-6 during our Extended Learning Time.



Del Lago *Elementary*

27181 Entidad, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/855-1125 • svusd.org/dellago

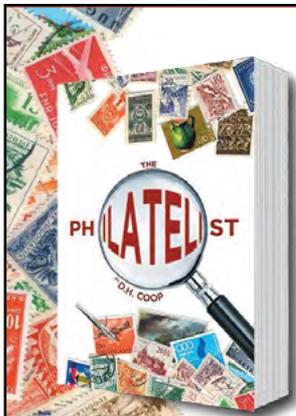


Jonathan Kaplan
Principal

Teacher of the Year – Ms. Wessel!

The teachers at Del Lago have voted and Ms. Courtney Wessel is our Teacher of the Year! Ms. Wessel is an incredible educator, not just for her instructional skills, but also in the way she interacts with students. Incredibly positive, emotionally supportive, and always searching for innovative ways to help all students be

their best. She is super creative too – her classroom is a Harry Potter dream! She has the students work collaboratively in “houses” (yup, including Slytherin and Hufflepuff), blending educational strategies with social emotional support. She has developed otherworldly technology skills to include helpful links for students such as chapters of books read, her own bitmojis of herself guiding students through her slides, and even daily reminder checklists for some students who need additional organizational help. Ms. Wessel is a teacher who really goes above and beyond for her students and parents, making our school an amazing place to learn!



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The death of an elderly German lady sets off a series of events that leads to murder and links to the historical past. The key to the events is an international stamp book that C. E. Hall, a fire insurance investigator/philatelist, purchased from a stamp store. The stamp book is a record of a mysterious organization that links back before World War II. Powerful figures are trying to find the stamp book as C. E. Hall tries to unravel the mystery held within the stamp book. As C.E. Hall goes through the book he discovers a sinister organization that had possibly tried to assassinate world leaders during World War II.

El Toro *High School*

25255 Toledo Way, Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/586-6333 • svusd.org/eths



Terri Gusiff
Principal

Charger Charity

ASB Community Service Commissioner Aidan Machesky, organized the famous ET Canned Food Drive which supports South County Outreach. SCO has shifted its focus from just providing canned items, to providing items that allow families to make complete meals.

They supplement their non-perishable items with fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, milk, cheese, etc. and are able to have families pick up complete meal kits of high quality food. ETHS was able to donate 7 bins of food as well as a generous cash donation to help local families in need.



Esperanza *Special Education*

25121 Pradera Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-5470 • svusd.org/esperanza



Raymund Bueche
Principal

Farm to Classroom, An Agricultural Journey

Since October 2019, the Saddleback Valley Adult Transition Program and the University of California South Coast Research and Extension

Center(UCSCR) have been developing a vocational training program for ATP students. Starting on April 16, students placed at UCSCR assist with propagating vegetables in the greenhouse, harvesting, post-harvest processing, maintenance of vegetable row crops, pruning, irrigation, and insect detection and identification. This unique partnership and experience allows students real-world applications



A student enjoying a carrot grown on campus.

that can be applied in various settings vocationally, at home and on campus. The Master Gardner program was used in the development of a more robust full school garden. Pictured here is a student enjoying a carrot grown on campus.

As the community starts to reopen, we look for further integration of the fruits and vegetables produced within our micro businesses for all students. This includes the processing of produce and vegetables in the Educafe and Esperanza kitchens for student consumption. The addition of fresh items including smoothies and juices in Hope Café, a student-run coffee cart, and The Cutie Pie Café, a student-run restaurant.

Foothill Ranch *Elementary*

1 Torino Dr., Foothill Ranch, CA 92610 • 949/470-4885 • svusd.org/foothillranch



Deborah Shaver
Principal

Crazy About Kindness

Staff, students, and families at Foothill Ranch Elementary spent two weeks being Crazy about Kindness which also included Raise Craze, a fundraiser for the school. During the two weeks of kindness, students logged 1,424 acts of kindness, including things like picking up trash and goodies for delivery drivers. The students were tasked with three different goals and then voted on what “craze-y” things Mrs. Shaver and Mrs. Fries would do if they met their goals. Students not only met, but they exceeded all the goals which left the principal and assistant principal to lead the school in the chicken dance while they were dressed as chickens. They also both kissed a pig and the finale was that Mrs. Shaver duct taped Mrs. Fries to a wall. Students dedicated themselves to kindness and with the help of PAL leaders and their daily motivational videos, students were very successful!



Gates *Dual Language Immersion Elementary*

23882 Landisview Ave., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/837-2260 • svusd.org/gates



Diane Clearwater
Principal

International Spanish Academy

Ralph A. Gates Dual Language Immersion Elementary is proud to be one of only about 69 International Spanish Academies (ISA) in all of the United States and Canada! Gates is proud to be a member of this exclusive group of schools that is recognized by the Ministry of Education of Spain. The Ministry makes resources and programs available to ISA

schools throughout the world to assist them in preparing the students to participate in international university programs. Students may continue in the dual immersion program through 12th grade and have the opportunity to earn an ISA certificate, the Seal of Biliteracy, and the Diploma de Español Como Lengua Extranjera (DELE) or Diploma in Spanish as a Foreign Language.



Glen Yermo *Elementary*

26400 Trabuco Rd., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-6766 • svusd.org/glenyermo



Jennifer Televik
Principal

Teacher of the Year

Glen Yermo is pleased to recognize our 2021 Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Julie Gries.

Mrs. Gries ensures the success of her 5th and 6th grade students using critical thinking strategies from our AVID program and differentiated instruction to support all levels of academic performance. This year, Mrs. Gries has embraced the challenges of teaching online by providing quality instruction to students through distance learning.

In addition to her work with students, Mrs. Gries is a valued member of our site leadership team and participates in ongoing professional development, including her current work toward becoming certified in teaching students in our Gifted and Talented Education program.

Mrs. Gries shared, “the patience and calm I bring to the classroom and the students’ lives are my top priority.” This strength has been particularly beneficial to her students this year, and we are proud to celebrate her success!



La Madera *Elementary*

25350 Serrano Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/770-1415 • svusd.org/lamadera



Building Student Leaders

This year a new student leadership team, La Madera LEADS, was founded to

help interested students acquire and develop leadership skills, learn the value of helping others, and support our school community. The group is made up of both distance and in-person learners of all ages and meets via zoom twice a month. They create spirit days, focus on specific character traits, and promote community service. Each month our LEADS group creates videos to introduce monthly challenges. During Kindness month, students were challenged to complete 2,000 acts of kindness in a



Our LEADS team holding a virtual meeting.

week. Our students exceeded that challenge by completing 3,781 acts of kindness! They also collaborated with El Toro High School ASB to participate in a food drive to support South County Outreach. Our students donated more than two and half barrels of food. We are so proud of the positive impact these students are making.

La Paz *Intermediate*

25151 Pradera Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-1720 • svusd.org/lapaz



Welcome

La Paz welcomes 6th grade students and their families to the Leopard family!

Red and yellow balloon pillars marked the entry to a dazzling fair-like experience where students, teachers, and staff created a visually engaging window into La Paz Intermediate

School for incoming families. La Paz WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) students cheered and waved hello to all arriving new students and their families. Families in cars continued along to enjoy the spectacular displays. Drama students dressed as characters from “The Little Mermaid” and other productions captivated everyone’s attention. The La Paz Jazz Band played as families moved onto the last stop to greet the Principal and receive their La Paz Welcome Folder complete with a hand-written welcome note from a La Paz student as well as a new La Paz school t-shirt! ASB students waved good-bye, saying “You are going to love La Paz!”



Miranda Reza, Alison Banno, and Lera Shcherba, and Ms. Peterson (left to right) spotlight La Paz student art and the La Paz Art Program.

Laguna Hills *High School*

25401 Paseo de Valencia, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/770-5447 • svusd.org/lhhs



Bill Hinds
Principal

Homecoming in March

We had a fun-filled Willy Wonka Homecoming Week in March! This week was full of traditional Homecoming activities such as dress up spirit days, decorating campus, voting for Homecoming Queen & King, pep rallies, giveaways, and highlighting various student groups. We ended the week with an extended snack Homecoming Pep Rally featuring performances by pep squad, KPop Dance Crew, the Drama Department, and ComedySportz. Confetti cannons went off as we announced our Homecoming Queen and King, Lani Jacobson and Jeremy Lenard Prudencio. We loved continuing one of our campus traditions in a new and exciting way.



Lake Forest *Elementary*

21801 Pittsford Dr., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/830-9945 • svusd.org/lakeforest



Audra Bailey
Principal

Kindness Rocks

Lake Forest Elementary focuses on kindness, and social emotional learning along with academics. This year, students celebrated kindness week a little differently. In a typical year, students are on campus and perform random acts of kindness for one another. They challenge themselves to do a random act of kindness every day for someone.

This year, the students joined together to create a kindness rock garden for the school. Students went on nature hikes with their families to find the perfect rock, and then decorated it and brought it to school. The rocks were all put together to form our Kindness Rocks! Garden at the front of the school. Seeing the positive messages on the rocks, as parents and students enter the school brings smiles to their faces. Many families stop in front of the school just to see the different inspirational pictures and messages on the rocks. We will continue to encourage students to add to the garden each year with their messages of joy and kindness.



La Tierra *Early Childhood Center*

24150 Lindley St., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/707-5276 • svusd.org/schools/elementary-a-l/la-tierra-early-education-center



Marion Springett
Principal

Let's Get Physical!

School-based physical therapy serves an important, supportive role in helping ensure that students can access and participate in their school environment! Areas addressed by school-based physical therapists relate to the child's performance within his/her school setting, such as the school campus, classroom, or playground. At the La Tierra Early Childhood Center, Mrs. Laura Schirmuhly, Physical Therapist, strives to make physical therapy fun so that her students don't even realize just how hard they are working! On a daily basis, Mrs. Schirmuhly develops treatment plans that challenge her students and are geared to develop muscle tone and increase endurance. When interviewed, Mrs. Schirmuhly stated "I love creating obstacle courses to challenge a child's balance and strength!" Mrs. Schirmuhly also frequently uses the playground equipment because her students don't realize how many repetitions of stairs they are doing when they get to go down the slide after each turn!



Linda Vista *Magnet Elementary*

25222 Pericia Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-0970 • svusd.org/lindavista



Suzy McMasters
Principal

Meet Mrs. McGrew

Linda Vista Magnet Elementary School celebrates teacher of the year, Mrs. Michelle McGrew. Mrs. McGrew has been an integral member of the Linda Vista Magnet family for five years.

She is an extraordinary teacher, celebrated by her scholars and parents, chosen as the teacher of the year by her peers. Mrs. McGrew guides her students in becoming globally minded citizens with rich, innovative and engaging units of inquiry through the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program. Through her journey as a life-long learner, Mrs. McGrew created a webpage in the area of Educational Technology to use with her students and support her colleagues. We celebrate our Linda Vista Magnet Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Michelle McGrew!



Lomarena *Elementary*

25100 Earhart Rd., Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/581-1370 • svusd.org/lomarena



Mona Montgomery
Principal

A True School Family

Lomarena is so proud of the students, teachers, parents, and community. The PTA coordinated a food drive which collected 2500 pounds of food from our past and present families, as well as back to our school families and community.

A true full circle endeavor which had everyone that gave and received feeling part of a true school family.

Our teacher of the year is Mrs. Higgins. She is the teacher you always remember. She looks into your heart and teaches to your soul. She makes you laugh WITH her. She makes you WANT to come to school each day. You know when you come to school you are loved for just being you. She helps you reach for the stars and believes in you. Mrs. Higgins is a very deserving Teacher of the Year.



Los Alisos *Intermediate*

25171 Moor Ave., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-9700 • svusd.org/losalisos



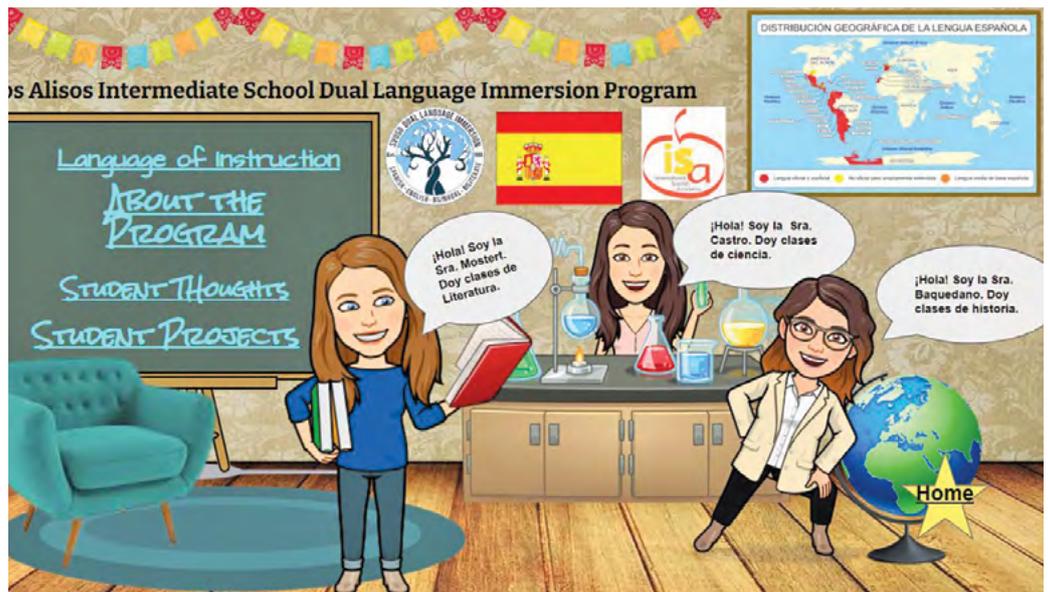
Rich Freda
Principal

Dual Language Immersion Program

The multi-award winning SVUSD Dual Language Immersion Program began in 1991 and is designed to provide English speaking and Spanish Speaking students an exciting, enriching, and challenging educational opportunity for the 21st century. All intermediate

students in the dual language program attend Los Alisos for their intermediate school years. The program has grown significantly and will reach 25% of the student body next year. Pictured are the bitmojis of: Sra. Mostert (Spanish Language Arts, grades 7, 8), Sra. Castro (Science, grade 7) and Sra. Baquedano (History, grade 8). According to Sra. Mostert, daily Spanish is one way

to promote respect and diversity. To quote one student, "being in immersion is a very important power that I believe will help me in the future and in my day-to-day life. It's an opportunity for me to talk and communicate with many more people, and be able to understand people from different cultures."



Melinda Heights *Elementary*

21001 Rancho Trabuco, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/888-7311 • svusd.org/melindaheights



Kathryn Martin
Principal

Meet Lily Marchiondo

Lily is an incredible fifth grader at Melinda Heights and SVUSD's "Every Student Succeeding" winner. This award honors students throughout California, who have succeeded against all odds. Lily was born with Spina Bifida and was adopted from China at age 20 months by amazing parents who

have loved her and encouraged her since she was six months old. At school, Lily's wheelchair does not slow her down; she never shows discouragement, frustration or anger about her circumstances. Lily keeps a radiant smile on her face through every challenge and looks forward to her tomorrows with eagerness; this limitless positivity is contagious. Lily is the pebble in our Melinda Heights pond. Everywhere she goes, with everyone she meets, Lily creates a beautiful ripple. She is pure joy. With the support of her sweet friends, teachers and parents, alongside her own determination, positive mindset and love for life, our Lily continues to blossom.



Mission Viejo *High School*

25025 Chrisanta Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/837-7722 • svusd.org/mvhs



Tricia Osborne
Principal

MVHS Agriculture Students Persevere

We are so excited to have the opportunity to return to the 2021 Orange County Fair in July, where MVHS students will once again be able to showcase their livestock in competition!

Our agriculture students have been challenged this past year to analyze sustainable agriculture practices while maintaining their production livestock & farm facility. MVHS is home to more than 350 FFA members who have chosen to study agriculture; the science of cultivating plants and livestock to provide a healthy sustainable food source for our growing population. Despite the stresses of this pandemic year, students have adapted and excelled in their classroom instruction and applied agriculture experiences. They are utilizing the farm facility and a powerful UC A-G approved Agri-science curriculum to



Students work with their livestock every day to prepare for a return to the OC Fair in 2021!

become educated consumers and agriculturists, preparing for a variety of careers in science, veterinary services, horticulture, nutrition, engineering, education, and many more!

Montevideo *Elementary*

24071 Carrillo Dr., Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-8050 • svusd.org/montevideo



Lisa Graham
Principal

Thank you, Mrs. Pieterse!

Looking for a teacher who is caring, will do whatever it takes to reach students, help whenever needed, and lead with a calm, thoughtful attitude... Cindy Pieterse is that teacher! Cindy implements systems that create a classroom environment of mutual respect. The learning activities and projects are always thoughtfully planned with the needs and benefits of her students at the heart. You can walk into her classroom anytime and find students engaged in their work and Cindy meeting with students to individualize learning. She herself is a learner at heart and readily implements new ideas. Mrs. Pieterse is not only an outstanding teacher, she is a dedicated colleague whose strong, positive impact is felt across our campus. She is on Montevideo's Leadership Team and is our school's Student Council ASB Advisor. That is why the Montevideo School Family is thrilled to honor her as our 2021 Teacher of the Year!



Cindy Pieterse, Making Everyone and Every Day Matter

Olivewood *Elementary*

23391 Dune Mear Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/837-6682 • svusd.org/olivewood



Alex Perez
Principal

Friendship Day Virtual Event

Who said in-person is the only way we can have fun! Our school counselor, Ms. Nancy Marroquin, united three schools Gates, Lomarena, and Olivewood, for a "Friendship Day Virtual Event." Over 100 students meet their school counselor, and participated in fun games and activities. Additionally, "Mindful Creations with Ms. Nancy" launched at Olivewood. This program allows students to express and explore their emotions through creative imagination and art. Another resource Ms. Nancy has provided for our families and students is the "Mindful Minute" videos on YouTube. The series of videos promote academic success and social emotional resilience. We can't wait to see what our school counselor puts together next, stay tuned!



Portola Hills *Elementary*

19422 Saddleback Ranch Rd., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92679 • 949/459-9370 • svusd.org/portolahills



Ed MacNevin
Principal

Students are Excited and Curious at PHE

The past seven months have been like no other in all our years in education and probably like no other in the history of American education. Despite the many challenges, we are inspired daily by the heartfelt actions of our teachers, staff and parents to support our students. Of our 671 students, 511 selected to be at school full time, and the remaining 160 are virtually learning. It is hard to find words that adequately describe how much we miss seeing all of our students together on campus. Regardless of which program, seeing their faces on ZOOM or in the classrooms, (the masks could not hide the smiles) and hearing their voices brought an energy to the campus and lit a fire in our hearts. Our teachers at Portola Hills Elementary, home of the Explorers, are well versed in the balance between synchronous and

asynchronous work. The distance learning model we use lends itself to individualized learning, collaboration via live online discussions, and a multitude of ways for interacting. Instead of delivering direct instruction for large chunks of time, teachers are able to step back and facilitate learning in a way that allows students to work at their own pace and on their own readiness level. Additionally, our face-to-face Hybrid program allowed students to flourish with curriculum being delivered in a more traditional way within the classrooms. We were so excited to welcome our Hybrid students back to school in a fulltime manner on April 19th. Through the use of iPads, laptops, Google Classroom, Seesaw and Zoom students both distance learning and in person students are engaged in learning. At Portola Hills Elementary we are cultivating an environment in which students are excited and curious about learning. Go Explorers!

Rancho Canada *Elementary*

21801 Winding Way, Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/786-5252 • svusd.org/ranchocanada



Dr. Larry Hausner
Principal

New Office Manager

Mrs. Brenda Haney is Rancho's new Office Manager. She started at Rancho 16 ago as a Clerk II. Since then, she has worked at a number of SVUSD schools-most recently in the attendance office at LHHS. "I enjoy working here because the staff is wonderful. They are receptive, friendly, hard-working and always concerned about our great students. In addition, the parents and PTA are exceptional to work with," she said.

As for her goals, Mrs. Haney said, "I would like to familiarize myself with our students, parents and PTA, as well as those teachers that were teaching distance learning this year. Since Rancho Canada is a close-knit community, I would like to be a part of keeping it a fantastic 'home town' feeling school."

Mrs. Haney is also the proud parent of three daughters who attended SVUSD schools.

Also, she enjoys the beach, the river, crafting, painting, woodworking, and refurbishing furniture.



Rancho Santa Margarita *Intermediate*

21931 Alma Aldea, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/459-8253 • www.rsmintermediate.com



Tyler Morgan
Principal

RSM's Teachers of the Year

Our school is thrilled to announce that two RSM teachers were named as Teacher of the Year and Top 25 Teacher of Orange County.

Mrs. Ann Diabeti was nominated as SVUSD Teacher of the Year because she inspires students to do their best, always. Ann states, "I want my 7th graders to know learning new math skills is a lot like learning life skills, if you stumble or fall, pick yourself up, look at where you went wrong, and try to improve on your next attempts."

Mrs. Mary Creager was named a Parenting OC Top 25 Teacher of Orange County. According to Mary, "The most rewarding part of teaching is when you see the moment where one of your students 'gets it.'" Mrs. Creager has truly established herself as a leading educator at RSM.



We are proud of both teachers for their continued efforts and excellence in teaching at RSM.

Robinson *Elementary*

21400 Lindsay Dr., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92679 • 949/589-2446 • svusd.org/robinson



Megan Hannen
Principal

Celebrating the Arts

Robinson Elementary is excited to continue the tradition of celebrating the arts! In partnership with the PTA, Robinson students will participate in an intentionally planned, COVID safe Chalkfest! This will mark Robinson's 10th Annual Chalk Festival. Each class will create a collective mural as usual but this year each student will receive a paper gridded section that when connected will contribute to the completed compilation of selected works of art.

The completed chalk murals will be displayed on-line and will be viewable at our virtual Spring Showcase on April 28th. The PTA will also host a Walk your Chalk event, an at-home activity where students and families can create a real life chalk mural at home. Photos of these works will be submitted, shared, and celebrated as well.



San Joaquin *Elementary*

22182 Barbera, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/581-3450 • svusd.org/sanjoaquin



David Shun
Principal

eSports at San Joaquin

The phrase, “Ready Player 1? Player 2? Game On!” was commonly heard during our eSports sessions last year, which combined team based competitive gameplay with a focus on digital citizenship. Our eSports program was part of our STEAM elective initiative, which also

included programs like coding drones, robotics, and engineering challenges.

As video games, gaming related employment, and eSports pathways provided by colleges continue to rise in popularity, it was important for our program to engage our students by helping them practice healthy ways to game and interact with others in a virtual environment.

This year, our eSports program is still going strong and connected to our PBIS program. Students who exercise our PBIS expectations of Practicing

Kindness, Acting Responsibly, Working Together, and Showing Respect (PAWS) have opportunities to cooperatively and competitively game with each other as a way to reinforce positive citizenship, build team dynamics, and practice digital citizenship.



Santiago *STEAM Magnet*

24982 Rivendell Dr., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/586-2820 • svusd.org/santiago



Howard Johnston
Principal

Supporting the Cause

Santiago STEAM Magnet Elementary School continues to support the American Heart Association each year by participating in their Kids Heart Challenge. Santiago outdid themselves this year by raising over \$14,000 – twice as much as last year. The 75 students who raised over \$100

had the opportunity to SLIME Principal Johnston! Students also had the opportunity to participate in a virtual Dance Brain Break Party with some of the dancers from So You Think You Can Dance. Overall, it was a WIN-WIN and showed the generosity of all Santiago families!

Santiago continues to focus on High Quality Project Based Learning even during Distance Learning and Hybrid instruction. Santiago’s Showcase is scheduled for May 27th where student work will be shared and celebrated.



Serrano *Intermediate*

24642 Jeronimo Rd., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/586-3221 • svusd.org/serrano



David Young
Principal

Serrano is Growing

Serrano's 7th grade STEAM Village students have been faced with this driving question: How can locations with limited natural resources grow food quickly using hydroponics? From this question our STEAM Village science teacher, Holly Danielson, prompted students to create variables such as type of water (distilled, filtered, rain) and the amount and type of light. Next, they made hypotheses regarding these variables and planted tomato, mint and jalapeño seeds in their classroom hydroponic growing system. For the next 8 weeks, growth data will be collected (as seen in picture) in order to test their hypothesis and answer the driving question. Students will create graphs in math, collect time lapse photographs in digital media arts as well as conduct background research in English and history. Following this, students will sell their established plants with an attached QR code to show the buyer their research and the results of their experiment.



Silverado *High School*

25632 Peter A. Hartman Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/586-8800 • svusd.org/silverado



David Gordon
Principal

PBIS Program Support

Through the hard work of Assistant Principal, Cindy Garamoni, Silverado High School became the beneficiary of Kellytoy. Kellytoy donated 84 Squishmallows to Silverado in support of our PBIS program. On January 28, 2021, ten Silverado students participated in our Squishmallow Unboxing event. Many Squishmallows sold out on the first day they were offered in the PBIS store and generated excitement on campus. After our initial meeting with Kellytoy and the subsequent success of the Squishmallows in the PBIS store, Kellytoy has increased their generous support of Silverado and will fund the purchase of all items in the PBIS store next Fall. Thank you Mrs.Garamoni and thank you Kellytoy!



SVUSD *Virtual Academy K-12*

21001 Rancho Trabuco Rd., Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/580-3457 • svusd.org/virtualacademy



Glenn Giokaris
Principal

Flexible Program

The SVUSD Virtual Academy provides a flexible online and blended learning program for students in grades K-12. Even though much of the work is completed online or independent from the traditional structure of school, building a sense of community and belonging among our students is one of our highest priorities and a key to maximizing

student learning and growth. One way the SVA facilitates community is through Advisory. Weekly, students meet with their advisory teacher and grade level cohort to ensure they have the most current information and build community. In addition, teachers spend time explicitly teaching important social-emotional skills and discussing important topics such as belonging and purpose.

Trabuco *Elementary*

31052 Trabuco Canyon Rd., Trabuco Canyon, CA 92678 • 949/858-0343 • svusd.org/trabuco



Lisa Paisley
Principal

Spring has Sprung!

The farm at Trabuco Elementary is full of new life. We have two baby goats that are keeping us busy. Our students and staff are bottle feeding them four times each day, and it sure is a delight. The white and black one is named Sage, and she is a Nigerian dwarf goat. The black and brown one is named Indigo, and she is a miniature silky fainting goat. Trabuco Farm loves having these new family members. Our miniature donkey, Francis, just loves to talk to them. They are a highlight of every recess time. Staff and students would really like to thank Farmer Kelly for being willing to take on this added responsibility that brings so much love to our lives. Trabuco looks forward to growing our ecologically responsible and sustainable agricultural practices on the farm and in the garden. We love to be outside, appreciating nature and diversity.



Trabuco Hills *High School*

27501 Mustang Run, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/768-1934 • svusd.org/thhs



Alicia Foulk
Principal

Guidance Department

Trabuco Hills High School would like to highlight our Guidance Department. They are currently engaging students in a Tier 1 counseling lesson on HOPE. “Hope is the belief that your future can be better than your past and that you play a role in making it so by the goals you set and pathways you identify to get to your goals” (Casey Gwinn, 2018). Hope is the most predictive indicator of well-being in a person’s life in all the research done on trauma, illness, and resiliency. The purpose our team is using to deliver this content is to help our students see a path toward opportunity and feel empowered to create connections between what they do now and what lies ahead for them. The Guidance Team has created a google drive folder and video lessons students will receive in their English classes beginning the week of April 12th.



Trabuco Mesa *Elementary*

21301 Ave de las Flores, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 • 949/858-3339 • svusd.org/trabucomesa



Caryn McGrew
Principal

Better Together

We are excited to be expanding our on-campus instructional time to a full day beginning Monday, April 19th. Our amazing teachers and support staff are ready for this transition and dedicated to providing a positive and safe learning environment for all students. Our school community has shown their resilience through the many changes we have had this year. We are so thankful for our dedicated staff who persevere and provide the best distance and in-person instruction to support our students this year. We have continued our focus on monthly character traits this year, with students and staff definitely exemplifying how to: Be Resilient, Responsible, Empathetic, Humble, Determined, Inquisitive, Patient, and Cooperative. We look forward to our students playing on the playground and experiencing our new sensory walk together. Trabuco Mesa Bulldogs are better together and we look forward to all of our students being together in the 2020-21 school year!



Valencia *Elementary*

25661 Paseo de Valencia, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/830-3650 • svusd.org/valencia



Wendie Hauschild
Principal

Supporting the Whole Child

The social-emotional well-being of our students is very important to us at Valencia Elementary. With such a different school year, we have looked for ways to inject fun for our students and continue to build community for our families.

Approximately every other Friday, we host a fun Dress-Up Spirit Day for our students. Staff joins in on the fun by dressing up and greeting our students at the curb with music and signs, letting them know how glad we are to see them and how lucky we are that they are Valencia Oranges. Our PTA recently hosted a Virtual Craft Night. It was a great opportunity for families to virtually visit and for students to create darling wooden bunnies, just in time for spring. Looking ahead, our students are going to get a chance to virtually share their talents in a Variety Show format, sponsored by our PTA.



Gardening Terms –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: Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com Please put Saddleback in the subject line.

Sponsored by **Barkate Orthodontics**
BarkateSmiles.com

Entries must be received by **May 15, 2021**
From the correct entries one name will be drawn to win a \$20 Barnes & Noble gift card!

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| SHOVEL | ROW |
| RAKE | FERTILIZER |
| HOE | SPADE |
| TRANSPLANT | SNAIL |
| POT | FOOD |
| NEMATODE | STAKE |
| WORM | HOSE |
| SOW BUG | SPRINKLER |
| FENCE | SEEDS |
| BED | PRUNERS |

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R Q Q Z D G F J O H S X S F
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F V Z F N R D E B U Z L K K
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F E D J O I F L A S O Y U T
C N U X L X T F C T P D N H
G U B W O S N R E D G A I V
X R E D O T A M E N E D D Y
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M T R A N S P L A N T E N Z
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A U F V G E R V X X J C T S
    
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Congratulations to Lindsay Riley Winner of our February Word Search Contest!

Daniel's Review



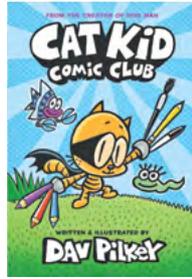
Daniel H.

Funny and Silly

Title: *Cat Kid Comic Club*

Author: Dav Pilkey

Do you like funny and silly books? If you do, you will love *Cat Kid Comic Club* because it's about Li'l Petey from the Dog Man series and this book will make you laugh!



Li'l Petey starts the Cat Kid Comic Club where he and his friend, Molly the tadpole, teach their friends how to make comics.

My favorite part of the book is the show and tell party where everyone in the club shows the comics that they created. Everyone agrees that it's okay to make mistakes because you can always improve yourself.

You should read this book because it is a funny book that has no scary parts, no violence, and teaches a good lesson. The author also uses silly words and pictures in this book. I read this book very quickly with a smile on my face and you will too!

Daniel is in first grade and he likes to spend time with his family playing board games, reading, and playing sports like tennis, soccer, and basketball.

Jenna's Review



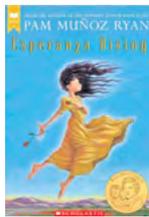
Jenna C.

Riches to Rags

Title: *Esperanza Rising*

Author: Pam Muñoz Ryan

Have you ever wondered what it was like to be rich almost your whole life then become poor all of a sudden? Well this is the story of a girl named Esperanza. She used to live a luxurious life



but one day when her father died everything went downhill. Esperanza's Uncle asked Esperanza's mother for a hand in marriage, of course she denied but then Esperanza's Uncle wasn't expecting that answer. Later one night her uncle set their nice house on fire! Then, Esperanza's mother accepted the proposal. But, something no one knew was Esperanza's mother planned an escape for California where they were free. They managed to escape secretly with a few friends, leaving her grandmother behind. They later landed in California in a camp that provided food and a place to stay as long as they worked. But, a few months later her mother got sick! Do you think Esperanza can save up enough money to bring her grandma? Do you think her mother will survive? I give this book 5 out of 5.

Jenna is a 5th grader. She enjoys playing soccer and painting. She likes to read fiction novels. Someday she wants to publish a book.

David's Review



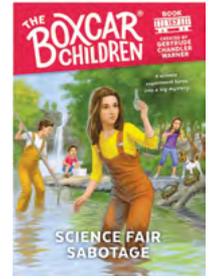
David H.

Funny Mystery Book

Title: *The Boxcar Children #157 – Science Fair Sabotage*

Author: Gertrude Chandler Warner

Would you like to read a funny mystery book? If so, you should read *Boxcar Children #157 Science Fair Sabotage*.



The main characters are siblings Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny Alden. Henry is calm, Jessie is curious, Violet likes photography, and Benny loves food.

Jessie is doing a science fair project on pollution and finds that the stream she's studying is shrinking but can't figure out why. The plot is tricky but the kids work together to solve the mystery. You have to pay attention to the story and details, but if you do, it's worth it because you get to solve the mystery and feel good about yourself!

I liked the book because the author wrote the book in a witty and funny way that makes you feel like you're right there with the Alden kids.

If you love puzzles like I do, this is the book for you!

David is in third grade and he loves to read and play piano. He likes math and outdoor activities such as rock climbing, tennis, and basketball.

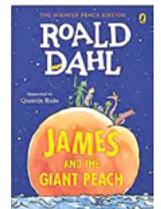
Kailani's Review



Kailani T.

Whoa, a Giant Peach!

James and the Giant Peach is a classic children story written by Roald Dahl. The story is about James, an orphan boy who was forced to live with his wicked aunts after he lost his parents in a horrible rhinoceros accident. One day,



James received a bag of magic crystals from an old man. The man said these crystals would change his life forever. James accidentally spilled the crystals on his aunts' peach tree. The peach fruit kept growing bigger and bigger. It grew big enough for James to fit inside. From that point on, his adventure began.

The story is magical and suspenseful. Reading this book taught me the importance of friendship and having hopes and dreams. I recommend this book for anyone who loves magic and mystery. Since this book is not very warm and fuzzy, it may be best for kids who can separate facts and fiction or younger kids to read with parents.

Kailani is a 3rd grader who loves to read. When not playing with her baby brother, Kailani likes to color and draw. She started taking Spanish lessons while sheltering-in-place. Horseback riding and skate boarding are the new activities she enjoys. Hope everyone stays well and healthy.

Parent To Parent



Jodie Lynn

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, often our kids were on their devices upwards of eight hours per day. What can parents do to keep them safe online and on their cell phones? It seems like more than ever, kids are getting spam emails, calls and texts from unknown sources. This is not acceptable, quite scary and exhausting to try to constantly monitor.

COVID-19 has isolated the majority of us and leaves us with levels of uncertainty, unusual scariness and frequent loneliness. Individuals are in a vulnerable place, especially our kids. This is the perfect time for sexual predators to approach them as it can come in many forms.

Give your kids a set of online safety rules that they will understand with explanations that they will believe and take to heart.

It's important for you to know which online games that your kids are playing. Many are multiplayer games where several online players can be together playing at once or just watching. These games have text and voice chat capabilities from around the world. This is highly dangerous because people can pretend to be someone else and of a certain age and can expose kids to unsuitable and unacceptable predatory language and content. These individuals can develop friendships with kids and eventually encourage them to meet in real life. It's important to recognize that each game has specific settings which you should check out and change for better online safety.

Remember not only to talk with your kids frequently about staying safe online, but also explain that anyone at any age can be cyberbullied. If a person or group want them to chime in about someone, tell them to ignore the request and don't return to that area and group. Explain why it's so important to think about what they are going to post at any given time or in any area before doing so, to keep their passwords safe, to always log off and not to click on links from people that they don't know. The right thing to do is to report the cyberbullying to an authoritative figure as well. They may just save a life.

You could also take their electronic devices away for a few hours each day, but for those hours that they're on them, rules and guidelines still need to be in place. Even if your kids seem to have level heads on their shoulders and you feel like you can trust them, they can still be sneaky.

It's easy to hide all kinds of online activities from parents with various apps:

Snapchat is a program where people can send images, videos, etc. to friends which will disappear within 10 to 30 seconds. It's pretty popular among teens. The hidden danger is that those "private" moments are not really deleted. They're hidden in files on most phones. Even more devastating and scary is that if someone takes a screen shot, the message, image or whatever can be posted anywhere.

Finsta is a fake Instagram account where anyone can create photos, conversations, etc., staying anonymous and keeping everything private through sharing with a few close friends and can be hidden on devices. But again, just like anything else, if a screen shot is taken, boom, it can show up anywhere online.

Be sure to read about popular apps and arm yourself with knowledge for options that you as the parent can do to help your kids be safe. Below you'll find a few but there's many others that you can find by doing an online search: Instagram, YouTube, Kik, Telegram, TikTok

There's also several phone apps offered to parents to help them monitor their kids' phone and online activities.

For unwanted calls or texts, it's simple to register landlines and cell phone numbers with the office of your state Attorney General's No-Call list for unwanted calls or texts. It's available online, free and will cut down on both. While it does take a few weeks to actually go into effect, it's best to get that done straight away. Do a little research and you'll also find several other government agencies where complaints can be made. Unfortunately, it's not going to totally eliminate them and that is even truer for robot calls. Learning some basic rules to share with your kids can also help.

For example: Don't answer any calls that are not in your contact list. If it's truly someone trying to reach you, they'll leave a message. If they don't, the number can quickly be blocked. The same goes for unwanted texts. The exception in this situation is going to be from "Unknown" or "Private" numbers, which are really hard to trace because no number shows up. However, there are phone apps to help with this. As far as spam email goes, if it's opened, don't click on any links. Look up how to set up filters and teach your kids how to recognize, delete and block it.

As you are well aware, this whole cyber safety situation is extremely exhausting. But, there's no way of getting around it if you're going to be proactive in protecting your children.

Jodie Lynn is an award winning, internationally syndicated family/health and education columnist and best selling author. Her column Parent to Parent™ (www.ParentToParent.com) has been successful for more than 20 years. She is a regular contributor to several sites including *School News Roll Call* and has written four books and contributed to three others, one of which was featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show. *Mom CEO (Chief Everything Officer)*, *Having Doing*, and *Surviving it All!* and *Syndication Secret—What No One Will Tell You!* www.ParentToParent.com

Real Estate Matters



**CathyLyn
Brooks**

Should You Submit to Dual Agency?

In California the representation of both the buyer and the seller is legally allowed. This is referred to as dual agency, and several states do not permit this.

Real estate brokers and agents are fiduciaries, meaning that they are legally bound to place the needs of their clients above their own, especially as it relates to compensation and disclosures. You should understand the ramifications of allowing one agent to act for both parties.

The job of the listing agent is to get top dollar for the seller, among other things. The job of the buyer's agent is to negotiate a price that the buyer is pleased with and assist the buyer to a successful closing. By working with an agent who is expected to serve two masters, be aware that your needs, and protections, may not be fully served.

While you may, or may not, be able to negotiate for the agent to reduce the commission, the lack of an advocate for you during the transaction can cost you more than a little money. Some agents, but not all, love to represent both parties, certainly because they will receive both "sides" of the brokerage fee. It also may make the transaction go more swiftly or smoothly, but clearly there exists a conflict of interest.

Technically, if your agent works for the same firm as a home you see while viewing property with an agent of the same firm, that too is dual agency, but at least with separate agent for each party. While real estate professionals are bound ethically to work together toward the success of any transaction, and the process is not typically adversarial in nature, issues do arise. Home inspections reveal matters to be dealt with, disclosures are required, contract terms may need to be adjusted, and appraisals can fail to meet the mark. When these things occur, it really is best to have your needs and requirements represented so that negotiations can be fair to both parties.

Proposition 19 Means Lower Property Taxes for Many

Effective April 1, 2021 many residents in California can move to a new home and carry with them their existing property tax base. Despite the timing, this is not an April Fool's Day prank. It is a bill that will enable many to make a move without incurring a tax penalty.

Last November voters approved Proposition 19, entitled The Home Protection for Seniors, Severely Disabled, Families, and Victims of Wildfire or Natural Disasters Act.

This legislation will allow qualified individuals wishing to move to a more suitable property to transfer the property tax base of their existing home to a new home anywhere in California, regardless of location or price with an upward adjustment to their tax base if the replacement property is of greater value.

Previously this was allowed only in a limited number of counties, was only a one-time option for seniors, and could only be used to buy an equal or less expensive home than was sold. Now transfer is allowed up to three times, if the original and the replacement property are principal residences.

When purchasing "up" in value, the property owner can now "blend" the tax base by adding to the portable tax base the difference between the former home and the new home in the annual property tax calculation.

While the objective of this legislation is to aid seniors, the disabled, disaster, and wildfire victims, it is believed that the release of long (and shorter) term ownership dwellings onto the marketplace will provide increased inventory for families and first-time homebuyers throughout the state. Many owners do not make a move as the new property tax rate is such a financial burden.

With inventory levels currently at a remarkable and quite challenging low, this is indeed a welcome prospect.

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