

# School News

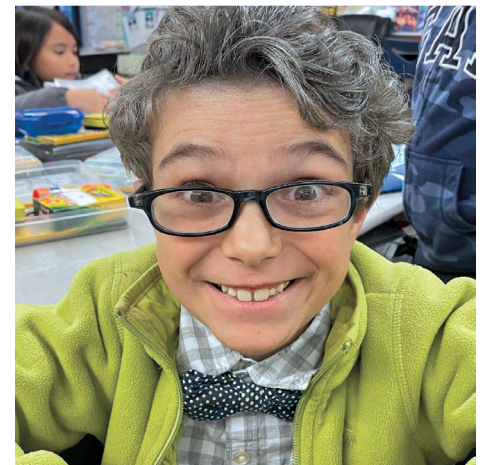
*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Fountain Valley School District**



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**100 Days Smarter**



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## SUPERINTENDENT

### Masuda Middle School Named a California Distinguished School, 2024



**Dr. Katherine Stopp**  
*Superintendent*

Masuda Middle School has been recognized with the prestigious California Distinguished School award. This accolade celebrates the school's commitment to fostering academic excellence, innovation, and community engagement. Just visit the campus and you will feel the Monarch spirit—good stuff!

Principal Cara Robinson expressed her pride in the school's achievement, attributing it to the dedication of the entire school community, including students, teachers, staff, and parents. "This award is a testament to our collective efforts in creating a nurturing and inspiring learning environment," she remarked.

The award highlights Masuda School's innovative teaching methods, comprehensive extracurricular programs, and its emphasis on holistic student development. Through a combination of rigorous academics, creative opportunities, and a supportive atmosphere, the school has succeeded in empowering students to excel both inside and outside the classroom.

The Fountain Valley School District extends its congratulations to Masuda Middle School for this well-deserved recognition, affirming its commitment to providing exceptional education to its students. Go, Masuda Monarchs!

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES



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## Navigating Fiscal Challenges:

### Implications of California's 2024-2025 Budget on Fountain Valley School District

*By Dennis Cole, Board Clerk*

In January, the Governor unveiled the details of the 2024-2025 budget, revealing a staggering \$37.9 billion state deficit. Despite this, education emerges unscathed this year, thanks to the utilization of the "rainy day fund." However, the Governor emphasized a shift towards budget "normalization" after years of inflated revenues and one-time spending. We expect more clarity in May when the Governor releases his May Budget Revisions.

What does this mean for education in the Fountain Valley School District (FVSD)? While no cuts are proposed for the upcoming year, the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) has dwindled from a predicted 3.94% to a mere 0.76%. This, coupled with declining enrollment and lower attendance rates, translates to reduced ongoing funding for FVSD in 2024-2025.

Despite financial constraints, the Governor remains committed to after-school opportunities through the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) and Transitional Kindergarten expansion for the upcoming school year. However, FVSD will rely on one-time dollars from previous years to sustain vital programs such as summer school, elementary counseling, and reading intervention.

That said, FVSD is beginning from a position of strength. For further insights into this year's budget implications, we invite you to join us for the Second Interim Budget presentation at the March 14th Board meeting. Together, let's navigate these fiscal challenges and ensure continued education excellence for all Fountain Valley School District students.





**100  
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## March is for Kinderpalooza!

By Kimberly Tran-Hoang,  
Children & Teen Librarian at Fountain Valley Library

Join OC Public Libraries at any Kinderpalooza event and enjoy performances, photo opportunities with your favorite storybook characters, early learning activity stations, giveaways, and resources from our many community partners! More details can be located here:

<https://ocpl.org/kinderpalooza-2024>

Below are some highlights of upcoming programs:

### Children & Families

Spanish Bilingual Storytime: Last Tuesdays at 4pm

Vietnamese Bilingual Storytime:

Saturdays, March 16 and April 27 at 11am

Family Craft Night: Second Tuesdays at 4pm

Unplug & Play: Fourth Saturdays at 2pm

Lifestyles of the Slimy and Squishy with Blue Submarine

Tidepools: Monday, April 15 from 4pm

Experience marine life up-close and personal with live tidepool animals and specimens. For the safety of the animals, this program will be limited to 40 people.

We also have weekly Toddler and Preschool Storytimes, monthly painting workshops, movie screenings for families, and more! Check out our Program Calendar.

### Teens

Animescapes (Anime Film Screenings for Teens & Adults) – Third Saturdays at 2pm

How to Bento Lunch Workshop:

Saturday, March 30 at 2pm

Instant Spicy Ramen Challenge:

Saturday, April 13 at 2pm

Teen Slime Workshop: Tuesday, April 16 at 5pm

### Adults

Tech Help Hour: Second Tuesdays at 11am

Basic Budget Bites: Thursday, April 11 at 4pm

Alzheimer's Association Talk:

Tuesday, March 5 & Tuesday, April 2 at 5pm

Learn about the 10 warning Signs to Alzheimer's and learn what research has shown about lifestyle choices that may keep your brain and body healthy as your age.

We also have monthly book groups, classic movie screenings for adults, unique craft & paint workshops, etc. Check out our Program Calendar for more!

# SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS!

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# Roch Courreges *Elementary (K-5)*

18313 Santa Carlotta, Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4280 • [www.courreges.fvsd.us](http://www.courreges.fvsd.us)



**Lisa Tanita**  
Principal

## Shining Stars: Celebrating STEM Astronomy Night and Teacher of the Year

On January 26, the Courreges family gathered for an extraordinary STEM Astronomy Night, transforming our school into a hub of scientific

curiosity and creativity. The evening was dedicated to exploring science, technology, art, and engineering in innovative ways, all while fostering a sense of community and shared learning.

Families engaged in various hands-on activities, from crafting luminescent rockets to designing constellation flashlight projectors and celestial jewelry. The highlight of the night was the opportunity to gaze at stars with



the Leisure World Astronomy Club, creating an unforgettable experience for our students and families.

In February, we had the pleasure of honoring Mr. Doherty as our 2024 Teacher of the Year. Mr. Doherty is a dedicated 4th-grade teacher who consistently inspires his students with creative teaching and high expectations. When you walk into his classroom, you see innovative works of art and scholarliness on every wall and hear students engaged in deep conversations and critical

thinking. His commitment to excellence in teaching and his ability to motivate and support his students truly sets him apart. Congratulations Mr. Doherty!





## James H. Cox *Elementary* (K-5)

17615 Los Jardines E., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4240 • [www.coxfvsd.us](http://www.coxfvsd.us)



**Dr. Jennifer Ollila**  
*Principal*

### Cox Elementary Celebrates Ms. Klusmeyer

The Cox Elementary family is proud to celebrate Ms. Ari Klusmeyer as our teacher of the year. For over twenty years, Ms. Klusmeyer has shared her heart and love for our community. Ari is a lifelong learner, dedicating her time to a CGI Fellowship and opening her classroom to demonstrations and observations. She's willing to take risks in her teaching and implement new methods, strategies, and best practices in math. Additionally, she commits her time and energy to school-wide events and activities such as organizing and fundraising for the 5th Grade Outdoor Science Camp, organizing the Multicultural Fashion Show, and advising Student Council and PALs. She builds strong and meaningful connections with her students. She knows her students deeply and finds the best in each of them. Because she invests in her students' lives, they invest in learning. Congratulations Ms. Klusmeyer!



**Ms. Klusmeyer and Dr. Ollila pose to celebrate the teacher of the year announcement.**



**Students in Ms. Klusmeyer's class programming robots.**



# Harry C. Fulton *Middle School* (6–8)

8778 El Lago St., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/375-2816 • [www.fulton.fvdsd.us](http://www.fulton.fvdsd.us)



**Jenny Salberg**  
Principal



**Molly Kuykendall**  
Assistant Principal

## Enhancing School Climate at Fulton Through Dual Electives: Unleashing Student Passion

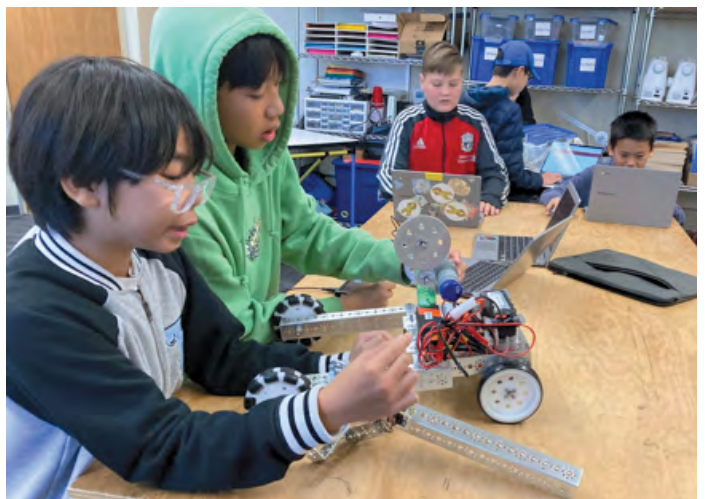
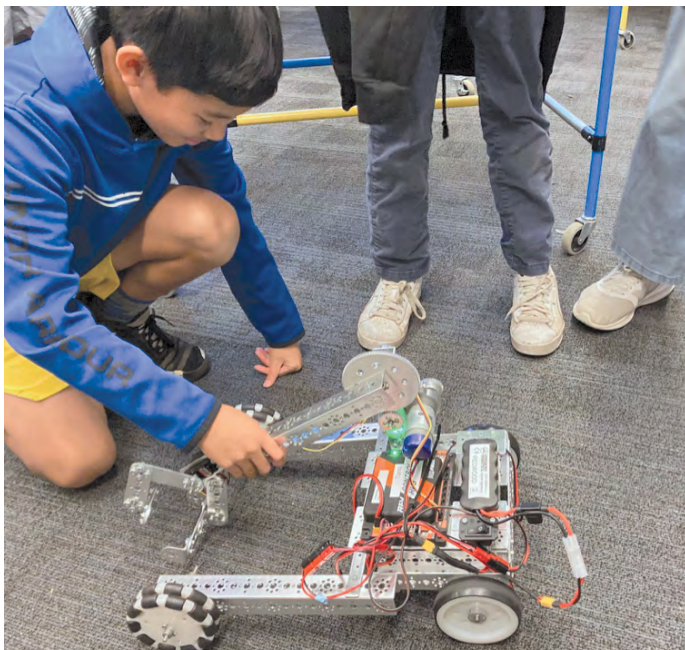
In the bustling halls of our middle school, fostering an environment where students feel engaged, connected, and valued is paramount to their holistic development. One innovative approach we've

adopted to enrich their educational journey is offering the opportunity for students to take two electives during the school year. This decision isn't merely logistical; it's a deliberate strategy to enhance the school climate and nurture individual passions.



Diving into the world of dual electives opens up a plethora of benefits, both academically and socially. Firstly, it allows students to explore various subjects and interests beyond the core curriculum. Students can discover hidden talents, cultivate new skills, and ignite their curiosity by delving into areas such as music, art, technology, or foreign languages alongside their regular coursework. This exploration enriches their academic experience and fosters a sense of fulfillment and purpose as they connect with subjects they are genuinely passionate about. Our students bond over their mutual passions, creating a sense of camaraderie and belonging that transcends traditional classroom boundaries. These relationships enrich their school experience and contribute to a more inclusive and supportive school community.

The decision to offer dual electives is more than just a scheduling choice; it's a commitment to nurturing the holistic development of our students by fostering a vibrant school climate where every individual feels valued, supported, and empowered to pursue their passions.





# Robert Gisler *Elementary* (K-5)

18720 Las Flores, Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4211 • [www.gisler.fvgsd.us](http://www.gisler.fvgsd.us)



**Katherine Pavidis**  
*Principal*

## One School, One Book

In March, Gisler Elementary is buzzing with excitement for the second year of our “One School, One Book” reading program. This time, we’re diving into the captivating world of “Nim’s Island” by Wendy Orr. The program aims to create a shared reading experience, where every child, staff member, and family in our school community reads the same chapter book over four thrilling weeks.



### Setting the stage for reading fun!

As the weeks unfold, our students will dive into morning trivia sessions in their classrooms, gather for weekly whole-school assembly trivia days, and have the optional opportunity for Wednesday evening Zoom chapter chats. The Gators of Gisler are ready to chomp through the chapters of Nim’s Island together, creating lasting memories and a community bonded by the joy of reading. Let the adventure begin!



**Mr. Phu Nguyen (board member), Dr. Stopp (Superintendent), Mrs. Sandra Crandall (President Pro-tem school board), and Snappy are ready for Nim’s Island reading fun!**

Our mission is clear - to foster a culture of literacy in every home. Research supports the idea that reading aloud to children enhances their reading skills, and we’re on a quest to make that happen for every Gisler household.

The adventure began with a lively school assembly, introducing the main characters and the story’s setting. Even our spirited school mascot, Snappy, joined in the reading fun. March 4th brought a special treat as our school connected with the real-live author of Nim’s Island, Wendy Orr, in an engaging Zoom author chat.



### The excitement of a new book!



**Every student went home with a book, bookmark, reading calendar, and an array of fun activities to go along with the book.**



## Kazuo Masuda *Middle School(6–8)*

17415 Las Jardines W., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4250 • [www.masuda.fvdsd.us](http://www.masuda.fvdsd.us)



**Cara Robinson**  
Principal



**Jessica O'Malley**  
Assistant Principal

### **PAL means Peer Assisted Leadership**

Masuda Middle School boasts three student leadership programs, including our PAL program. PAL stands for Peer Assisted Leadership and is a program

designed to teach 7th-grade students how to support inclusivity and support throughout our school campus. Our fearless teaching advisor to our program, Mrs. Kim Nguyen, has been our PAL advisor since it began in the early 2000's. PAL students regularly go on walking field trips to visit our elementary feeder schools to read with first-grade students, organize Red Ribbon Week, and promote anti-drug influences over the school. This week, PAL organized our annual Kindness Week with loads of student-driven activities at lunchtime, specialized morning announcements, and a kindness incentive program designed to catch students in the act of kindness and acknowledge their goodwill.





## William T. Newland *Elementary (K-5)*

8787 Dolphin St., Huntington Beach, CA 92646 • 714/378-4200 • [www.newland.fvgsd.us](http://www.newland.fvgsd.us)



**Matt Ploski**  
Principal

### Newland Teacher of the Year, Mr. Plummer

I am thrilled to announce that Mr. Brandon Plummer has been selected as this year's Teacher of the Year for Newland Elementary!

Mr. Plummer exemplifies the true spirit of education through his unwavering dedication, inspirational teaching methods, and a heartfelt commitment to fostering meaningful connections within our school community.

In the classroom, Mr. Plummer goes above and beyond, creating an environment that not only stimulates academic growth but also nurtures the personal development of each student. His passion for education is infectious, igniting a love for learning that extends far beyond the curriculum.

What sets Mr. Plummer apart is his exceptional talent for building relationships. He forms connections that extend beyond the classroom, providing a supportive and encouraging space for growth. Mr. Plummer prioritizes community building and creating a warm and inclusive atmosphere where every student feels seen, heard, and valued.

Beyond the classroom walls Mr. Plummer actively engages in community initiatives, demonstrating a commitment to the well-being of our school's larger ecosystem. His tireless efforts extend to collaborating with colleagues, always sharing insights and resources to elevate our practices. He consistently goes the extra mile, ensuring that the best interests of students, families, and colleagues are at the forefront of every decision. Mr. Plummer's passion, empathy, and genuine care make him one of the cornerstones of our community.





# Isojiro Oka *Elementary* (K-5)

9800 Yorktown Ave., Huntington Beach, CA 92646 • 714/378-4260 • [www.oka.fvdsd.us](http://www.oka.fvdsd.us)



**Julie Ballesteros**  
*Principal*

## Oka Wolfpack Supports Pediatric Cancer Research

In a heartwarming display of unity and compassion, Oka Elementary School and its community joined forces to raise funds for pediatric cancer research. The school organized various initiatives that showcased the incredible spirit of giving among its students and staff.

One remarkable effort was the Positive Pennies competition held among classes, which raised an impressive \$2,344.86. To further support the cause, students enthusiastically participated in the Go Gold Pediatric Cancer Awareness Day, dressing in gold attire and contributing a dollar each, collecting a total of \$329.

The Students of Service (SOS) created and sold friendship grams in classrooms, generating an additional \$400 for the cause. All these endeavors culminated in a grand total of \$3,073.86 to be donated towards pediatric cancer research.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the Oka Elementary School community, students, and staff for their remarkable generosity and commitment to such an important cause. Together, they have made a meaningful contribution to the fight against pediatric cancer.



**Oka students and staff had a great time participating in our classroom Positive Pennies competition to support Pediatric Cancer research.**



# Urbain H. Plavan *Elementary (K-5)*

9675 Warner Ave., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4230 • [www.plavan.fvdsd.us](http://www.plavan.fvdsd.us)



**Dr. Patrick Ham**  
Principal

## Celebrating Plavan's Teacher of the Year – 2024!

It is with great joy to announce that Plavan's Teacher of the Year candidate for 2024 is Mrs. Britanya Hughes. Britt is an exceptional teacher who exhibits a strong commitment to professional growth, implementation of innovative strategies, and the promotion of a positive and caring school wide culture for all of our students.

She has made significant contributions to our school, including championing our signature practices such as CGI and playing a key role in bringing the Peer Assistance Leadership Program to Plavan and other district sites. Mrs. Hughes has also emerged as a respected leader on our campus serving on leadership, School Site Council, and Union Leadership. These accomplishments make her a deserving candidate. Thank you, Ms. Hughes for all you do and Congratulations for being selected as Plavan Elementary School's Teacher of the Year for 2024!





## Samuel E. Talbert *Middle School (6–8)*

9101 Brabham Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92646 • 714/378-4220 • [www.talbert.fvdsd.us](http://www.talbert.fvdsd.us)



**Jay  
Adams**  
Principal



**Brandon  
LoMonaco**  
Assistant Principal

### 2024 Teacher of the Year

Talbert is proud to honor Mrs. Leilen Shelton, History Teacher, as our 2024 Teacher of the Year. Mrs. Shelton's nominating peers value how she "has an absolute HEART for students. She loves them, and it shows in every interaction she has every day." Mrs. Shelton is touted

as being "extremely organized, conscientious, and able to bring the world of the past to life for students like you wouldn't believe!" She is enthusiastic, passionate, and is undoubtedly a prized member of the Talbert family.

We at Talbert are blessed by Mrs. Shelton's positive energy and outlook. Not only the kids, but the parent community and her teaching peers benefit immensely from all that she has to offer! We are proud to present her as our Teacher of the Year on the basis of her outstanding contributions to the lives of the children (and adults) whose lives she touches daily.





# Hisamatsu Tamura *Elementary* (K-5)

17340 Santa Suzanne St., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/375-6226 • [www.tamura.fvgsd.us](http://www.tamura.fvgsd.us)



**Chris Mullin**  
Principal

## Tamura STEM Night

Tamura Elementary along with our PTA recently hosted a STEM Night for students and their families. Families worked as a team to launch marbles the greatest distance using science, mathematics and engineering. Both fun and learning were present the entire evening as families created all manner of structures to get their marble to go the farthest.

Introducing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) in elementary education is crucial for

fostering early cognitive development. These subjects lay the foundation for analytical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation. Engaging young minds with hands-on STEM activities not only cultivates curiosity but also enhances critical thinking and teamwork. Early exposure to STEM subjects sparks interest and confidence, encouraging students to pursue higher education and careers in these fields. Ultimately, integrating STEM in elementary education ensures that students develop the skills necessary for success in today's world.

Overall, the night was a success filled with plenty of opportunities to learn and ample fun!





## Orange County Department of Education

200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa CA 92628 • 714/966-4000 • [www.ocde.us](http://www.ocde.us)



**Dr. Al Mijares**  
*Superintendent*



**Dr. Ramon Miramontes**  
*Deputy Superintendent of Instructional Programs*

Here's a common question we hear: Why are you called the Orange County Department of Education when other county offices of education across California are known as, well, county offices of education?

The answer takes us back to a decision

made under the leadership of Dr. Robert Peterson, who served as county superintendent from 1966 through 1991. Early in his tenure, Dr. Peterson proposed changing the name of the then-Orange County Schools Office to the Orange County Department of Education, saying it was more in line with other county departments.

It was also reflective of the organization's expanding role. Our office had evolved into an agency that coordinated academic programs and provided technical and special services to all school districts, according to a resolution. The change was approved in March 1969.

This spirit of evolution and adaptation has been the hallmark of the Orange County Department of Education since its inception almost exactly 135 years ago.

On March 11, 1889, California Gov. Robert Waterman signed a bill that led to the formation of Orange County — and the office that would become OCDE. An annual report from 1890 documented a combined enrollment of 3,426 students, served by a total of 34 districts — though some operated less than six months out of the year. Total annual expenditures for the entire county were less than \$65,000.

Fast forward to today. Under the leadership of current County Superintendent Dr. Al Mijares, our department now supports nearly half a million students and approximately 600 schools as a cornerstone of Orange County's educational community.

Our role is multifaceted, yet it can be understood through two primary functions:

First, we provide direct instruction to our county's most vulnerable student populations through our Alternative Education and Special Education divisions, the latter of which includes our newly rebranded "Connections" schools.

Second, OCDE offers a comprehensive suite of services to local school districts. These range from meaningful training opportunities and high-speed internet access to legal and fiscal guidance, payroll systems, Local Control and Accountability Plan assistance and approval, student enrichment and much more.

When districts face hurdles in meeting specific performance goals on the California School Dashboard, OCDE and other county offices of education are also called upon to provide targeted support. This process, known as differentiated assistance, complements districts' own efforts to ensure that students' needs are met.

As we continue to grow and adapt, it's important to underscore that OCDE's core principles have remained unchanged. Driven by a commitment to empower all learners, we approach our roles not merely as administrators of the Orange County Department of Education but as stewards of a legacy of service and continuous improvement that dates back over a century.

Change is more than a chapter in our history. It is the very essence of our DNA. And it will be the engine that propels us forward, fueling our journey toward a brighter, more innovative and prosperous Orange County.