

School News

Education + Communication = A Better Nation

Covering the Saddleback Valley Unified School District



Volume 7, Issue 25

April 2024

SVUSD Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap



Congratulations to Saddleback Valley Unified School District's three 2024 California Distinguished Schools: La Paz Intermediate School, Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate School, and Mission Viejo High School!

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Behind Every Success: The Role of Dedicated Educators and Staff



Dr. Crystal Turner
Superintendent

Behind every successful student in Saddleback Valley Unified School District (SVUSD) is a team of dedicated educators and staff members who work tirelessly to support and guide them along their educational journey. By prioritizing equitable, intentional, and engaging practices which provide opportunities for each and every student to be successful, they have created a school community where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered to be their best. I am pleased to share with you some of the successes of our faculty and staff, as well as some of the programs in place to recognize and highlight the important work they do each day:

Three of SVUSD's schools have been named 2024 California Distinguished Schools: La Paz Intermediate School, Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate School, and Mission Viejo High School. This prestigious award recognizes schools for exceptional student performance and for closing the achievement gap. The California Department of Education (CDE) uses multiple measures to identify eligible schools based upon their performance on state indicators as specified in the California School Dashboard. The opportunity to achieve this honor alternates between elementary and secondary level schools each year. Congratulations to the students, faculty, staff, and leadership of these exemplary schools!

Rachell Chasteler, Health Aide at Linda Vista Elementary School, was named a Finalist in the 2024 Orange County Classified School Employee of the Year program in the category of Health and Student Services. Rachell actively engages with every student on campus and emphasizes the importance of physical and mental health. She loves to see the students laugh and builds relationships with them by engaging in activities that students love, including fun and silly dance moves, joining a game of soccer, or playing a game of Uno. She quietly

meets the needs of students and makes sure they know they are important, whether it is helping to make sure students have clean clothes to wear, supporting their medical requirements, or attending camp. Rachell is adored by both students and staff.

I shared earlier this year that SVUSD was named the Top South Orange County School District by *Parenting OC* magazine. Recently, the publication has honored some of our employees for their ability to both innovate and inspire staff and students to reach their full potential. Congratulations to de Portola Elementary teacher Leslie Harrison for being recognized as a Top 10 Teacher! We also congratulate Jacque Fait, Aimee Mella, Annie-Laurie Gorrien, Cynthia Micka, and Heather Waldvogel for being Top Teacher Finalists, as well as Heidi Suszek and Susan Saladino for being Top Employee Finalists.

SVUSD recognizes the essential contributions each individual employee makes to support the successes of our students. Our Appreciating Classified Employees (ACE) event invites a member of the management team to job shadow a classified employee to learn about their position and the integral work they do every day. We also invite community business owners to participate in our Principal for a Day program where they spend some time engaging in the important work of school leadership. This event often results in continuing partnerships between our schools and local businesses.

As we move into spring, we would like to thank the former Saddleback Valley Educational Foundation (SVEF) for their many years of service to our District, raising funds to provide scholarships for our students and supplemental monies for various programs and technology. In turn, we welcome the new SVEF Board, led by President Michele Sparks. We look forward to a reinvigorated partnership that promotes community and continues to benefit our schools.

SVUSD student success does not happen on its own. We are thankful to our faculty, staff, families, and community members for their important roles.



Kay Coop
Founder/Publisher



Netragrednik

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24 YEARS

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endorse the advertisers in this publication.

Dr. Crystal Turner begins this issue with her message on page 3 highlighting some of the SVUSD educators and staff.

This year seems to be going faster than usual and reading the articles in this issue definitely makes your head spin. Students are busy with so many activities besides their usual academic classes. You will read articles about Gardening Club, Teamwork, Career Week, Principal for a Day, Jog-a-Thon, Running Club, Community Service, Fundraisers, and so much more. The choices and opportunities for students are endless.

We had a record number of entries in our Word Search Contest for February. This issue there are contests on pages 23 and 28. The deadline is May 15 to enter. Have fun!

Our next issue is May 22.



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Educational Services

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



Liza Zielasko
Assistant
Superintendent

SVUSD – Early Childhood

Early childhood learning supports children’s path for academic success, and SVUSD offers a variety of options for children 3-5 years of age. In an environment that nurtures curiosity and sense of belonging with emphasis on play-based learning, our early learning programs promote physical health and

well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills that prepare children for school success. For students turning 5 years old by April 2, 2023, Transitional Kindergarten is provided at our regional elementary schools. For children not yet eligible for TK, there is an interactive parent-and-me option through the Learning Link program which fosters strong

connections between parents and their children while supporting learning. In addition, our Expanded Learning Services Department also offers preschool programs that support kindergarten readiness. In partnership with our families, SVUSD provides a solid academic start for our youngest learners!



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Robert Craven
Assistant
Superintendent

Second Interim Fiscal Report

During the March Board of Education meeting, the Business Services department presented the second interim fiscal report. The second interim budget provides information on the current 2023-24 school year funding, spending, reserves, and impacts. Additionally, it provides a multi-year projection, or MYP. The MYP includes the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school year projected budgets.

This past January, Governor Newsome released his 2024-25 budget proposal which addresses a state budget deficit of \$37 to \$73 billion; this deficit will directly impact school district funding throughout the state.

Under the Governor's proposal, district revenue is anticipated to decrease by \$8 million in 2024-25. This decrease, combined with declining enrollment, is creating a budget shortfall. Even after spending down reserves, the 2025-26 school year budget will be unbalanced. As this school year began, District commitments to long-term

projects included a budgeted \$37 million. This funding was designed to complete projects including classroom audio-visual technology; facilities, modernization, and deferred maintenance; core infrastructure technologies; TK implementation; and safety. At this time, those projects are being placed on hold or scaled back, and the \$32 million is being returned to the general fund to balance the budget. The district will still require an additional \$17 million to balance the 2026-27 school year budget.

California districts are currently funded on Average Daily Attendance (ADA). This means the district only receives funding when children are present at school. Our current ADA is at 93%, more than 4% below our pre-pandemic averages. This lower ADA significantly impacts district funding. Please help by getting your student to school every day.

The current budget situation is one that requires an examination of spending and identifying the programs that best support our students. To learn more about our budget please visit: <https://www.svusd.org/departments/business-services/fiscal-services/budget-information>

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Human Resources

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



Dr. Darvin Jackson
Assistant
Superintendent

Super Saturday

SVUSD is seeking highly qualified staff and continues to offer a \$500 incentive for referring candidates to fill classified positions. The candidate must complete probation in order for the referring employee to receive the incentive. In addition, the classified candidate would receive \$500 as a hiring

incentive contingent on passing probation. This incentive is for employees hired through June 30, 2024.

On April 13, 2024, SVUSD will be hosting a hiring fair, entitled “Super Saturday”, for all interested teachers, with a significant focus on Education Specialist and Transitional Kindergarten. This Super Saturday Event will be held at the District Office. Candidates may apply through EdJoin for all vacant certificated positions.

Student Support Services

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



Dr. Francis Dizon
Assistant
Superintendent

SPARK

Students Promoting Acceptance, Respect, & Kindness (SPARK) is a program at Del Cerro Elementary that seeks to empower all students through inclusion. SPARK allows students to embrace their similarities and celebrate their differences in a fun and supportive environment. SPARK aims to promote unconditional appreciation for what each

child can contribute to our school community based on their diverse experiences. All of the students in our SAI programs are paired with a buddy for the entirety of the school year. General education students who apply and are selected attend a training to learn more about disabilities and how to support their buddy, as well as how to create an inclusive school community where all students can thrive. Students in SPARK meet for 30 minutes each week for fun and interactive activities that are accessible for all students.





Barry Steinmetz, M.D.,
medical director,
Gastroenterology & Nutrition
Center, MemorialCare
Miller Children's & Women's
Hospital Long Beach

Shielding Little Tummys: Foods to Safeguard Against IBS Flare-Ups

Children living with irritable bowel syndrome face distinct dietary challenges. Certain foods may aggravate IBS symptoms, leading to discomforts like cramping, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and constipation.

The unpredictable flare-ups associated with IBS can disrupt a child's daily life, making it challenging to participate in activities they enjoy or attend school on a regular basis. However, adopting appropriate dietary strategies can significantly reduce IBS symptoms and enhance a child's quality of life.

To mitigate symptoms, children with IBS should limit their intake of gas-producing foods, such as cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, dried peas and lentils. By avoiding these foods, children can prevent uncomfortable symptoms and flare-ups. Steering clear of lactose, caffeine, and carbonated beverages can also minimize gas, cramping, or diarrhea. Encouraging the intake of small, frequent meals, and ample fluids can further support your child's digestive health.

During periods of intense flare-ups, adhering to a low fiber, low residue diet (which limits other foods that can stimulate bowel activity) can offer relief from abdominal pain and diarrhea. Opting

for easily digestible foods like plain white rice, white breads, corn or flour tortillas, plain cooked pasta, or tender, well-cooked meats, poultry, fish, and eggs can be beneficial to alleviate or prevent symptoms. Urge children to drink more fluids, including electrolyte solutions, clear broths or diluted fruit juices to make up for loss of water when diarrhea is a symptom.

Since every child's IBS triggers can be unique, it's important to monitor your child's symptoms after meals to identify specific problems in foods. Consulting with a pediatric gastroenterologist can help identify alternatives to triggers and ensure a well-rounded diet.

MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital has a dedicated Gastroenterology & Nutrition Center that helps children and families diagnose and manage IBS symptoms. Having a dedicated pediatric Gastroenterology & Nutrition Center ensures that children with IBS receive specialized care tailored to the unique needs of children with this condition.

For more information, call (562) 933-5437 or visit millerchildrens.org/gastroenterology.



Pablo, Age 6



At 11 months, Pablo was fighting for his life.

Today, he's got six candles on his cake.

Failing organs. Eight months in a coma. Fighting for every breath. At 11 months old, this is what Leukemia brought Pablo. The one bright spot, he was at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital where a team of top doctors, nurses, and specialists helped save his life. For over a year in the PICU, our highly-trained staff never stopped caring for Pablo and his family. **Caring is our calling.**

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Cielo Vista *Elementary School*

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



Dr. Frances Hansell
Principal

Growing Further Together

Cielo Vista teachers are celebrating an increase in student achievement this year for our multilingual students with over 10% reclassified! We are very proud of their accomplishments and celebrate their success. We are also celebrating our Students with Disabilities exiting the ATSI and CSI state sanctions. It is not always easy to succeed

with a learning difference but our students are showing perseverance and resilience as they succeed in achieving their annual goals and strive to meet grade level standards. This is done in part by the support from all our staff and families and especially our team of teachers who are relentless in their pursuit of excellence for each and every student. With our teachers 'Growing Further Together,' Cielo Vista will continue to provide inclusive, educational opportunities for all students. Go Hawks!



de Portola *Elementary School*

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



Brendon Morrow
Principal

Congratulations Mrs. Leslie Harrison

Meet 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Leslie Harrison, recently recognized by a local magazine for being one of the Top 10 Teachers in Orange County. She was our Multilanguage Learner

Coordinator for many years, with students reclassifying at an admirable rate due to her encouragement and communication. She co-coordinates our PAL program that has been recognized



by the County Department of Ed. She gives back to the profession by serving as a cooperating partner for several fortunate student teachers, she serves as an instructor at Concordia for those up and coming in our profession, and she relentlessly continues her own learning by participating in countless professional developments. Mrs. Harrison is a staunch supporter of a statement eventually becoming our school's unofficial motto, "Love before learning." This was the foundation of our school's recognition by the United States Department of Education for a Blue Ribbon Award in 2022.



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Del Cerro *Elementary School*

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



Dawn Lam
Principal

Dolphins Diving into School Spirit

On Wednesday, March 13, Del Cerro hosted their annual Jogathon hosted by PTA. In less than a month of fundraising, the school raised close to \$33,000. The event was emceed by parent, Beth Marcus, who was in full costume. To show unity, each grade level picked a color scheme. Dolphin 6th graders had a special color run, and were doused with color by community

members and families. Following the run, each student received a popsicle and families had the opportunity to take photographs and congregate as a Del Cerro community. Even Principal Lam joined in on the fun, as students were awarded the ability to choose a silly costume for her to wear to celebrate the day. Everyone had a good laugh, as she waddled around in her blow-up ballerina costume. The event would not have been possible without the amazing organization and support of the Del Cerro PTA.



Del Lago *Elementary School*

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



Jonathan Kaplan
Principal

STEAM Night/Variety Show

Our fabulous PTA has done it again - TWICE! First, Del Lago Elementary will host STEAM Night on March 27. Spearheaded by our own Mr. Cullen, parent, PTA star, and a professor at Irvine Valley College, students will participate in activities that span the sciences, technology, engineering, art, and math. Students and their families will use a "passport" to record their journeys

through every station, where volunteers will host a variety of activities. Our Dolphins will go on a journey through everything that is STEAM! It should be a wonderful night of learning and exploration. Second, the Variety Show is

making a comeback! Formerly a staple at Del Lago, our PTA, teachers, and parents have revived this exciting evening focused on the arts as a showcase for fun. We are in the process of getting information out to students and families so they can begin the process of choosing which art platform to demonstrate – singing, dancing, playing an instrument, reading poetry, telling jokes, and much more! Next, students can get their acts together (solo or with a group), share ideas, and be ready to rehearse in the time following our Spring Recess. There is a ton of work to do to be ready for the excitement of the performance evening on Friday, May 17. We know both evenings will be filled with students and families learning and having fun together! Go Dolphins!

El Toro High School

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



AP Research

Eighty-three of El Toro's top seniors have been completing their AP Research, "Presentation and Oral Defense," the final step of their academic journey through the College Board's AP Capstone Diploma Program. In this course, El Toro students develop the skills and discipline necessary to conduct independent research to produce and defend a scholarly academic thesis. This final course in the AP Capstone experience allows students



to explore deeply an academic topic, problem, or issue of individual interest and through this inquiry, students design, plan, and conduct a year-long mentored, research-based investigation. The course culminates in an academic thesis paper of approximately 5,000 words and their presentation with an oral defense. Students have been presenting to a panel of three staff members including their teacher and other site and district staff such as ETHS administrators, members of the Board of Education, and Dr. Turner! Congratulations to our amazing AP Research students!

Dr. James Martin
Principal

Esperanza Special Education

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



Congratulations Heidi Suszek

Our Office Manager, Heidi Suszek, was recognized as a finalist for the *OC Parenting* magazine's Top School Employee. Heidi's remarkable ability to listen attentively and empathetically sets her apart. Her capacity to connect on a personal level and provide effective solutions is nothing short of commendable. She is always responsive to the needs of our community, ensuring that everyone, from parents

seeking guidance to educators seeking support, feels heard and genuinely understood. Heidi's organizational skills are masterful, ensuring that our school site operates harmoniously. She juggles multiple tasks masterfully, maintaining a delicate balance that optimizes resources, coordinates schedules seamlessly, and keeps records meticulously. Heidi's kindness transcends her professional responsibilities. It creates a positive and inviting environment and fosters a sense of community. Heidi's contributions are invaluable; we are lucky to have her on our team. Congrats Heidi!

Raymund Bueche
Principal



Foothill Ranch *Elementary School*

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



Christina Stevenson
Principal

Kindness at Foothill Ranch

Foothill Ranch Elementary is dedicated to promoting kindness in our school community. This week we celebrated Kindness. At lunch, students visited the Kindness Table where they made cards to give to their friends, teachers or other staff members expressing their appreciation for the other person's kindness.

Students were able to show off their artistic skills by writing kind messages on the ground using chalk. Bobcats also celebrated Kindness by writing down the acts of kindness they have done or seen others do on big pieces of confetti that are displayed in our new MPR. Parents were treated to kind messages held up by students at morning drop off. All year long, Positive PAL students from 5th and 6th grade have worked with kinder, first and second graders to develop their literacy and number skills to foster a sense of confidence and love of learning as they begin their academic journey.



Gates *Dual Language Immersion Elementary School*

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



Diana Clearwater
Principal

Los Pollitos en Gates

Each year, one of the highlights in kindergarten land at Gates is the hatching of the baby chicks and ducklings in the spring. Every kindergarten classroom has its own egg incubator. Our kindergarten Gators learn all about the life cycle of these fine-feathered

friends as they observe the eggs rotating in the protective incubator. The excitement increases as the little eggs start to wiggle and wobble until eventually a little beak breaks through the shell. And, finally, baby chicks hatch and our kindergarten students get to care for them as they grow into noisy, fun, little feathered friends. This is an experience our students remember always, and when we attend the senior celebration at Laguna Hills High School, each year during a graduating senior speech, there is mention of their kindergarten experience with the chicks as one of their fondest memories!



Glen Yermo *Elementary School*

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



Jennifer Televik
Principal

Out of This World

Glen Yermo Elementary hosted an Out of This World Family STEAM Night in March featuring math, technology, and science activities for all ages. Our awesome teachers helped to lead many of

the stations including math games, art projects, engineering challenges, and robotics. Students created space-inspired art, coded with Ozobots, and shared their engineering projects completed through a partnership with Fluor Corporation. We also highlighted literacy in the sciences and celebrated famous individuals who contributed to the field. To complete the evening, our fabulous PTA provided pizza and pie, in honor of National Pi Day, for all of our Mountain Lion families.



La Madera *Elementary School*

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



Jennifer Gass
Principal

A Champion for our Students

La Madera Elementary proudly celebrates our 2023-2024 Teacher of the Year, Mr. Mark Smith. As a dedicated 5th-grade educator, Mr. Smith exemplifies excellence in teaching and compassion for his students, particularly those facing significant challenges.

Beyond academics, Mr. Smith is a true student champion, ensuring that every child feels seen, heard, and empowered to succeed. His kindness and dedication leave a lasting impact on the lives of those he teaches, fostering a love for learning and resilience in the face of adversity.

Mr. Smith's unwavering commitment shines brightest in his support for our homeless and foster youth. He goes above and beyond to assist families and help connect them with available resources. His empathy and dedication inspire his students, colleagues and the entire school community.

Congratulations, Mr. Smith, on this well-deserved recognition!



La Paz Intermediate School

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



Tiffany Harville
Principal

Take Time Out to Read

La Paz Intermediate partnered with the Clippers organization to encourage students to take time out to read. The Read to Achieve Minutes Challenge was a six-week program that provided incentives for students to read over 500 minutes. I am excited to announce that our collaboration with the Clippers organization in this challenge was a success. La Paz was the top Intermediate school who participated with the most minutes read! Former Clippers player, Mr. Craig Smith, came to school to celebrate our students and also spent some time working with students in PE in a 3-point shootout. As a former NBA player, he spoke to them about staying focused on their goals and working hard to achieve their dreams.



La Tierra Early Childhood Center

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



Emily Arias
Principal

Author Visit

La Tierra Early Education Center was ecstatic to have authors and illustrators, Mr. and Mrs. Macleod, back again to present their new book *The Door That Had Never Been Opened Before*. The Macleods made a special stop at La Tierra on their California book tour sponsored by Barnes and Nobles Bookstore. Mrs. Macleod shared how she created the illustrations in the book by cutting out the pictures, putting them all together in diorama fashion and then taking pictures of the diorama. The students enjoyed Mr. Macleod's dynamic performance as he became the characters in his book. It was a wonderful experience for the students to practice their active

listening skills that they have been working on daily in class. The students (and staff) helped the Macleod's plan for a sequel to their book series by giving them ideas about what to write next.



Laguna Hills *High School*

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



Bill Hinds
Principal

LHHS to Introduce the Well-Nest Center

LHHS is a proud recipient of the Assistance League of Saddleback Valley (ALSV) Links to Learning Program Grant for \$1,600. The grant will be used to create and furnish a wellness center which will be dubbed the “LHHS Well-Nest Center” The Well-Nest Center will act as a safe space for all LHHS students as well as a mental health resource center. Available resources will range from mental health pamphlets, to fidget toys, to yoga and meditation videos. Our goal is to create a space where students can release stress and recover from overstimulation. Additionally, the details in the development process of the center are essential; we plan to implement color psychology into the center by using lots of blue for calm energy and hints of yellow for energy stimulation. The Well-Nest Center is anticipated to open later this year.



Lake Forest *Elementary School*

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



Caryn McGrew
Principal

Gardening Club

We are so excited about our new LFE Gardening Club! The garden provides the opportunity for students to learn about gardening and work together towards a common goal: To get all eight garden planters filled.

So far we have...

- smelled and identified herbs.
- removed weeds and planted succulent cuttings.
- learned about earthworms and how they make soil healthy.
- observed how composting works: How bananas, avocados, potatoes, apples, and cilantro broke down into soil.
- used a tape measure and our math skills to find out how many cubic feet/yards of soil we need to add to the planters.

Next week, we will be making two worm compost bins for fruit and vegetable leftovers. We can't wait for the baby California Poppy flowers to bloom! They will be flowering in a few weeks in our CA Native Plants planter, along with our purple flowers and sage plants.



Linda Vista *IB Magnet Elementary School*

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



Dr. Shannon Wyatt
Principal

Finding Nemo Kids was a Huge Success!!

On Thursday and Friday, March 14th and 15th, 55 students from Linda Vista lit up the stage in our performance of Finding Nemo Kids. Through a partnership with Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Linda Vista Magnet was chosen as a Disney Musicals

in Schools school. For the last seven months, a group of 4 dedicated teachers and two teaching artists from Segerstrom have been rehearsing songs and dances, building sets and making costumes. Our school community even came together for an underwater craft night and transformed the Multi purpose room into Sydney Harbor. We are immensely proud of every student who brought this musical to life. Their commitment to rehearsals, their willingness to

push themselves out of their comfort zones, and their unwavering support for each other truly exemplified the spirit of teamwork and collaboration.



Lomarena *Elementary School*

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



Grace Cruikshank
Principal

Celebrating Community

The month of March is National Reading Month and Lomarena has been celebrating in style. Included in our "Lomareada" month is our daily Stop Drop and Read time, our Book Fair, our Pick-A-Book Picnic with families, and our

Community Read In. Our "Read In" featured guests from all over Laguna Hills and from Saddleback Valley Unified School District. Among our many generous readers were our School Resource Officer, the Orange County Fire Authority, SVUSD School Board Members, our Superintendents, a train conductor from Irvine Park, principals from the past, retired teachers, and even our District Coordinator for TK- 6 Humanities and Literacy, Alison Couch.



Los Alisos *Intermediate School*

25171 Los Lobos Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • 949/830-9700 • www.svusd.org/losalisos



Michael Marzilli
Principal

Celebrating Our Lobos!!!

This month we are celebrating many accomplishments. We started with our ABCOS celebration for students who received all A's, B's, C's, Outstanding and Satisfactory grades. We also had our Honor Roll Egg Hunt

for students who achieved a 3.5 or above GPA. Our Students of the Month were honored for Unity, their ability to unite and bring people together. Finally, we honored our Teacher of the Year, Mr. Werner. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication. Congratulations to all of our Lobos for their achievements.



Melinda Heights *Elementary School*

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



Kathryn Martin
Principal

Teamwork

In the bustling corridors and classrooms of Melinda Heights, the team of teachers and support staff is second to none. These remarkable individuals embody dedication and empathy in their tireless efforts to support ALL students and meet their diverse needs. Their unwavering commitment to inclusivity and

success is evident in every interaction, as they navigate challenges and celebrations with grace and compassion. Through their boundless patience and creativity, the Melinda Heights staff ensures that every student feels valued and empowered. The teams of educators at Melinda Heights are our heroes, quietly shaping the fabric of our school community and the lives of children and their families. Their profound contributions leave an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of every member of the Melinda Heights Family. In the tapestry of Melinda Heights, the teachers and staff are threads of resilience and hope, weaving a narrative of acceptance and possibility for all.



Mission Viejo High School

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



Tricia Osborne
Principal

Career Week

Mission Viejo High School's Guidance Team hosted their inaugural Career Week, a four-day immersive experience that brought together over 26 professionals from our local community and the broader Orange County area. Our Career Week aimed to provide our students with insights into various professions, fostering a direct connection between aspirations and real-world success. Each day, students selected a profession of interest, engaging in conversations with professionals who shared the intricacies of their respective fields, including the journey they took to reach their success. We were fortunate enough to have professionals from various career fields such as education, medicine, law, athletics, broadcasting, social media, and business. Career Week provided invaluable insights for our students and exemplified the power of collaboration and community involvement in shaping the educational journey. Go Diablos!



Montevideo Elementary School

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



Lisa Graham
Principal

Learning Today to Solve Tomorrow

Montevideo Mathematicians develop the academic discourse necessary to explain their rationale, critique the reasoning of others, and grapple with problem solving. Teachers ensure that students are building and demonstrating a strong conceptual foundation within lessons and by providing time for ST Math. This math program is provided by SVUSD and offers visual learning through puzzles, non-routine problem solving, and formative feedback. Through its use, students are challenged and better equipped to tackle unfamiliar math problems, recognize patterns, and build important conceptual understanding. Through teacher (and animated) formative feedback, students are intrinsically motivated as they form and shape their

understanding. As a school, we celebrate each student's personalized journey, and class accomplishment, as they achieve mastery within the program. The joy in our K-6 math instruction is that our Montevideo Mountaineers will be well prepared to meet the challenges of communicating ideas, problem solving, inventing, and creating!



Olivewood *Elementary School*

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



Alex Perez
Principal

Principal for a Day

Olivewood had the privilege of hosting author, Celina Frenn, as our Principal for a Day. Here is what Celina had to say about her experience: “I recently participated in Olivewood Elementary’s Principal for a Day program. I had

a blast getting a sneak peek into what a principal does! As a writer who works in the entertainment industry and publishing, I was very excited to talk to the students and answer any questions that they might have. They did not disappoint! The students had fantastic questions about what it takes to write a book or a television script and were very engaged. Not only did I get a first-hand look at how hands-on Principal Perez is with his students and faculty, but I loved getting a close look at how hard the entire staff works and how passionate they are about inspiring their students to grow and learn.”



Portola Hills *Elementary School*

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



Ed MacNevin
Principal

Principal for a Day

PHE recently participated in SVUSD’s Principal for a Day program. PHE was honored to have Mr. Sustacek at Portola Hills Elementary School. Mr. and Mrs. Sustacek own First Class Pizza and their children Mary Jane and Jack attend PHE.

This event provided a hands-on opportunity for local business and community leaders to explore what is happening in our schools and experience the role of school administrator. During Mr. Sustacek’s school visit, he made an intercom announcement to our student body, he visited classrooms, and he tended to playground duty. Mr. Sustacek was even provided with his own whistle. The site visit was followed by a luncheon at the Saddleback

Valley Unified School District Education Center Board Room. The luncheon was hosted by our Superintendent, Dr. Crystal Turner, and served as an opportunity to reflect on the day with other site principals, District leadership, and other business and community leaders.



Rancho Cañada *Elementary School*

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



Jennifer Kajdasz
Principal

Our Eagles' Closet is SOARING!

Rancho Cañada is always looking for ways to support our families so that our Eagles can SOAR at school. We know that having the basic necessities is an essential element of feeling successful while learning, so this year we have opened up our very own closet... an Eagles' Closet to be exact. This new program is a win-win situation as parents have a place to donate gently used clothing items and shoes, knowing these items will be going to support other families in the community. Once enough articles have been collected, we open our doors and offer our families to come "shop" throughout the year. If a family is not able to make it to our campus after school, no problem...an order form

is available so we can send items home. Thank you to the program lead, Leah White, and all the volunteers who pitch in to make this happen.



Students enjoy dropping off clothing items to our new Eagles' Closet cart.

Rancho Santa Margarita *Intermediate School*

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



Tyler Morgan
Principal

Congratulations Helbert

Helbert is our 8th-grade student and recipient of the ACSA 17 "Every Child Succeeding Award." It is an award for students who have overcome obstacles in their lives and have succeeded. In 2021, Helbert and his two siblings lost their mom to an accident. Helbert started last year with some expected bumps transitioning to middle school and struggled academically. With support from his teachers and staff and not letting him give up, Helbert is thriving and has a 3.4 GPA. Helbert has always been characterized as a student with a positive attitude and always trying to help his classmates and friends. Helbert has a passion for music and has participated in the band for the

last two years. Teachers, staff, and the community have wrapped around this family, and Helbert and his siblings have been rising above and beating all odds, succeeding in all areas.



Robinson *Elementary School*

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



Suzy McMasters
Principal

Jog-A-Thon Event

Excitement filled the air on March 15th as the Robinson Rattlers participated in an amazing Jog-A-Thon event. Each year, our Rattlers lace up their athletic shoes and run, while raising funds for our school. All of our scholars participate and are cheered on by family and friends, while a DJ provides theme-inspired, high energy music to keep us moving. Each grade level warms up with some fun group dance moves and

then they begin running their laps. Our parent volunteers keep our athletes hydrated, help mark the laps they run and provide them with a sweet treat when they are done. Beyond the physical benefits of running, the Jog-A-Thon helps our Rattlers give back to our school for engaging enrichment activities and events, both during and after school. The scholars not only ran miles but also made a meaningful difference for our school community. Thank you so much to our PTA and our community sponsors for making our annual Jog-A-Thon a great success! Go Rattlers!

San Joaquin *Elementary School*

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



David Shun
Principal

Thank You Ms. Cynthia Piel

As part of our SVUSD Appreciating Classified Employees (ACE) Program, I had the amazing opportunity to experience the integral work of Cynthia Piel, an Instructional Assistant, at SVUSD's Esperanza Education Center.

Our time together was kicked off by an energetic introduction and then I was off "shadowing" her through her educational routines and duties. The peak of our adventure was when I rode along with Ms. Piel and her class to a local cafe that provides paper and plastic products to her students. Her students then exercise their vocational skills by adding the cafe's logo to all the items.

Ms. Piel proudly shared that this opportunity helps to connect students with community partners while providing valuable learning experiences and helping her students become contributing members of their



community. This experience truly warmed my heart as I marveled at Ms. Piel's combination of dedication and love for serving her students.

Seek 'n Find Contest

This chicken is in this issue. When you find it, email the page number to SchoolNewsKay@gmail.com by May 15, 2024

From the entries one will be drawn to win a \$20 gift card to Barnes & Noble.



Thank you Barkate / Nehi Orthodontics for sponsoring our fun contests!

www.BarkateNehiSmiles.com

Santiago STEAM Magnet

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



Kristin Thomsen
Principal

Empowering Students through Service: Santiago STEAM Students Make a Difference

In a heartwarming display of community spirit and compassion, students at Santiago STEAM have dedicated themselves to making a positive impact over the past four weeks, with the invaluable support of Team Kids.

The students took the initiative to choose four distinct charities that resonated with their values and desires to help others. Their efforts included collecting gently used towels and blankets for the OC Animal Services, gathering coins for the Pacific Marine Mammals Center, supplying art materials and crafting heartfelt kindness letters for Choc Children's Hospital, and contributing the proceeds from a student-organized Team Kids Carnival to benefit St. Jude's Hospital.

Not only did the 5th and 6th grade students wholeheartedly commit to this noble cause, but they also dedicated one day each week to design and create carnival games for an event that brought joy and excitement to the entire school community. The carnival, held during lunch recesses, provided a fun-filled opportunity for students to come together and support a meaningful cause.

The impact of Team Kids' involvement in this initiative cannot be understated. By guiding and empowering the students, they have instilled in them a sense of purpose and the belief that they can truly make a difference in the lives of others.

Through their selfless acts of service, Santiago STEAM students have not only demonstrated kindness and generosity but have also embodied the true spirit of community and compassion. Their dedication serves as an inspiration to us all, showcasing the profound impact that young hearts and hands can have on the world around them.

Serrano Intermediate School

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



Jordan Reed
Principal

Zero G Flight

Serrano Science teacher Ms. Berekian recently embarked on a groundbreaking journey of being on a Zero G flight and being

in microgravity. She bravely took along Serrano student experiments to investigate the intriguing effects of microgravity on different variables. Her dedication to pushing scientific boundaries and nurturing student curiosity knows no bounds. Ad Astra, Ms. Berekian, as you continue to inspire the next generation of innovators!



Silverado High School

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



ASB Fundraiser

The Silverado Eagles are SOARing! Our ASB fundraiser, “Penny Wars” raised more

than \$1,300 in support of those battling childhood Leukemia and Lymphoma. The giving continued as our second blood drive of the school year brought in 19 pints of blood and saved 57 lives. The end of Trimester II saw 13 students earn their high school diplomas. Silverado is proud of our newest graduates!

David Gordon
Principal



SVUSD Virtual Academy K-12

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

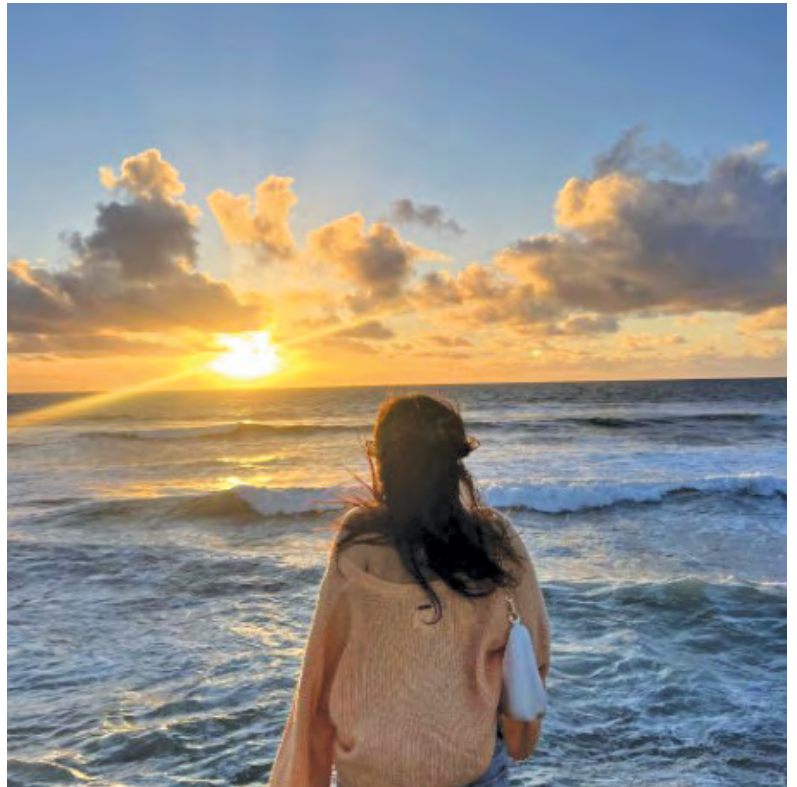


Advisory Class

A cornerstone of the SVUSD Virtual Academy’s ability to provide both flexible and personalized education for students is our Advisory class. Every Monday, students meet with their advisor and grade-level cohort group in Advisory. During Advisory, teachers and our school counselor lead

students through activities that support academic planning, improve organization skills, build a sense of community, expose students to different career paths, and encourage personal development. One of the latest multi-week activities that students completed was the Horizons project. The project encouraged students to “chart their own course” by expanding their horizons, both locally and globally. Students have ridden up in the Great Park balloon, taken up knitting, and hiked new trails in the last month. The culminating project is to plan for a BIG future bucket list item: running the New York City Marathon, road tripping to all 50 States, studying in a foreign country.

Glenn Giokaris
Principal



Trabuco Elementary School

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



Dr. Lindsey Gatfield
Principal

Congratulations Mr. Conor McAlinney

Trabuco Elementary's very own Mr. Conor McAlinney was honored as a 2024 SVUSD Teacher of the Year. This is a well-deserved recognition of Mr. McAlinney's dedication to meeting the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of each one of his

students. Mr. Mc, as our community refers to him, teaches our 5th and 6th graders, is on our leadership team, and helps to lead our work in both cultural proficiency and positive expectations.

Mr. McAlinney found out he earned Teacher of the Year when Board President Wong, Board Member Schulman, Superintendent Turner, Mrs. Estling, Mrs. Zielasko, and Ms. Goodfellow surprised him in his classroom in December. Mr. Mc's

students witnessed the surprise and supported him with cheers. Last month, families and staff members gathered to celebrate and then Mr. Mc's family and our Trabuco team cheered him on at the SVUSD Board Meeting.



Trabuco Hills High School

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



Alicia Foulk
Principal

Engineering Students Earn Industry Standard Certificates

At Trabuco Hills High School, students enrolled in our Engineering program recently received industry standard certifications in SolidWorks. SolidWorks is an industry-standard software used globally for product design, mechanical engineering,

and other related fields. A SolidWorks certification thus carries significant value in many fields of engineering. SolidWorks software is commonly used in the automotive, manufacturing, and aerospace industries. With a certification in SolidWorks, students are able to demonstrate proficiency within one of the four levels of certification offered, and they also gain a competitive advantage for further achievement across the fields of engineering. Twenty-one Trabuco Hills students have recently earned certifications in the first two

levels offered with both Associate and Professional level achievement specifically in the area of mechanical design. Trabuco Hills is proud to offer Career and Technical Education opportunities providing our students with essential skills as they progress beyond high school and into their professional lives.



Trabuco Mesa *Elementary School*

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



**Dr. Kristan
Bruce**
Principal

4th District PTA Recognition

Congratulations to Mandy Kelly who was the recipient of the Outstanding Teacher Award for the 4th District PTA. Ms. Kelly is a 6th grade teacher who also leads our SEAKers (Students Engaging in Acts of Kindness) Program. This year, she expanded the program to a Student Leadership Team, an on-campus club consisting of 6th

grade students who plan and coordinate kindness challenges, raise funds for charity, and lead in multiple service projects to benefit the school and larger community. Each week they present our students with a weekly kindness challenge. They show up to many school events and plan fun and engaging activities. This year they ran “Candy Grams for a Cause” and raised over \$650. As a team, they decided that half of the money would benefit our school library to purchase more diverse books, and the other half would be donated to Water for South Sudan to help provide clean, safe water to vulnerable communities.



Valencia *Elementary School*

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



Carolyn Fries
Principal

Valencia Running Club

Valencia has started training for the Kids Run the OC Marathon in January. The 12-week training program aims to help students accumulate the equivalent of 25.2 miles of fun activity and complete their final mile at the Orange County fairgrounds on May 4th. There are 46 students from kindergarten

to 6th grade participating in the running club, which meets on Tuesday and Thursday mornings before school. Melinda Baer, a 1st-grade teacher, is the coach of the Valencia Running Club. She leads students through weekly activities and challenges, including games and running practice that improve speed, agility, and overall fitness. Additionally, students receive a nutritional challenge every week that encourages small changes that can make a big impact on their health and wellness. The Valencia community is thrilled to participate in such a fun event and cheers on our Oranges!



Football Word Search Contest



Rules!

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

Entries must be received by May 15, 2024

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

Contest Sponsored by Barkate / Nehi Orthodontics

BarkateNehiSmiles.com

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| Clipping | Personal Foul |
| Coach | Possession |
| Conversion | Quarterback |
| Cornerback | Roughing |
| Defense | Safety |
| Field Goal | Scrimmage |
| Flanker | Special Teams |
| Goal Post | Super Bowl |
| Interference | Tackle |
| Kicker | Tailback |
| Linebacker | Touchdown |
| Loss of Down | Yardage |
| Offsides | |



Lacrosse-Word Search Contest

Rules!

One word in the list is Not in the word search.
When you have completed the word search,
one word will be left and that word you email to:
SchoolNewsKay@gmail.com
(Please put SVUSD in the subject line)

Entries must be received by May 15, 2024

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Contest Sponsored by Barkate / Nehi Orthodontics

BarkateNehiSmiles.com

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| ATTACK | MOUTH GUARD |
| CLEATS | NET |
| COACH | PLAYERS |
| CREASE | RULES |
| DEFENSE | SCORE |
| FIELD | SHAFT |
| GOAL KEEPER | SIDE LINES |
| HEAD | STICK |
| HELMETS | TEAMS |
| MIDDIES | UNIFORMS |



Congratulations

Emily Broad and Keaton Hawk

winners of our February contests