

School News

Education + Communication = A Better Nation

Covering the Duarte Unified School District



Volume 6, Issue 18

May 2025



TRACY HALL

*Duarte Unified School District
Golden Apple Recipient*

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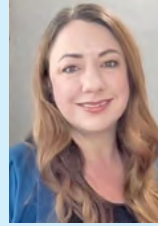
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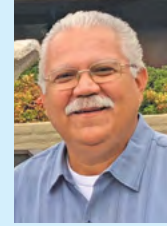
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Discover Duarte Unified School District: Where Everything We Do Touches the Future

At Duarte Unified School District, we believe that everything we do touches the future. This belief guides our work each day—whether in the classroom, on the playground, or behind the scenes. Our efforts are fueled by heart, passion, and an unwavering commitment to student success.

A Culture of Caring and High Expectations

We are a community of learners dedicated to providing the knowledge, skills, and inspiration each student needs to thrive in college, career, and life. We believe that strong relationships and high expectations lead to lasting success. True belonging goes beyond inclusion—it means every student knows their voice, efforts, and presence matter.

Innovative, Student-Centered Programs

Our academy-based learning model engages students through hands-on, relevant experiences that prepare them for the future:

- Early Childhood Education, welcoming students as young as two, builds language skills and confidence for a strong start
- International Baccalaureate (PYP & MYP) at Maxwell Academy
- Dual Language Immersion at Beardslee Academy
- STEAM & Creative Arts Academies at Royal Oaks and Valley View



**Dr. Nadia
Hillman**
Superintendent

Descubra el Distrito Escolar Unificado de Duarte: Donde todo lo que hacemos impacta el futuro

En el Distrito Escolar Unificado de Duarte, creemos que todo lo que hacemos impacta el futuro. Esta convicción guía nuestro trabajo diario, ya sea en el aula, en el patio de recreo o tras bastidores. Nuestros esfuerzos se basan en el corazón, la pasión y un compromiso inquebrantable con el éxito estudiantil.

Una cultura de solidaridad y altas expectativas

Somos una comunidad de estudiantes dedicada a brindar el conocimiento, las habilidades y la inspiración que cada estudiante necesita para prosperar en la universidad, su carrera profesional y la vida. Creemos que las relaciones sólidas y las altas expectativas conducen al éxito duradero. La verdadera pertenencia va más allá de la inclusión; significa que cada estudiante sabe que su voz, esfuerzo y presencia importan.

Programas innovadores centrados en el estudiante

Nuestro modelo de aprendizaje académico involucra a los estudiantes a través de experiencias prácticas y relevantes que los preparan para el futuro:

- La educación infantil temprana, que da la bienvenida a estudiantes desde los dos años, desarrolla habilidades lingüísticas y confianza para un comienzo sólido.
- Bachillerato Internacional (PYP y MYP) en Maxwell Academy
- Inmersión lingüística dual en Beardslee Academy
- Academias STEAM y de Artes Creativas en Royal Oaks y Valley View

See **SUPERINTENDENT** • Page 3

- Early College Program with Citrus College— 30% of Duarte High School students are enrolled in college-level courses
- CSArts Pre-Professional Conservatories for students in grades 6–8
- Cinematic Arts Instruction with industry internships and real-world experiences
- Culinary Pathway with a state-of-the-art teaching kitchen at Duarte High School
- Work-Based Learning Opportunities in partnership with City of Hope
- New Athletic Complex at Duarte High School

Join a district where every child is seen, supported, and inspired.

Enroll today at www.duarteusd.org

Welcome to Duarte Unified—let's make a difference together!

- Programa de ingreso temprano a la universidad con Citrus College: el 30 % de los estudiantes de Duarte High School están inscritos en cursos de nivel universitario
- Conservatorios preprofesionales de CSArts para estudiantes de 6.º a 8.º grado
- Instrucción en artes cinematográficas con pasantías en la industria y experiencias en el mundo real
- Trayectoria culinaria con una cocina docente de última generación en Duarte High School
- Oportunidades de aprendizaje basadas en el trabajo en asociación con City of Hope
- Nuevo complejo deportivo en la escuela secundaria Duarte

Únase a un distrito donde cada niño es valorado, apoyado e inspirado.

Inscríbese hoy mismo en www.duarteusd.org

Bienvenido al Distrito Escolar Unificado de Duarte.
¡Marquemos la diferencia juntos!

WE'VE SAVED YOU A SEAT.

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Beardslee *Dual Language Immersion Academy (TK-8)*

1212 Kellwil Way, Duarte, CA 91010 • 626/599-5200 • beardslee.duarteusd.org



Jennifer Romero
Principal

Celebrating a Year of Growth, Achievement, and Community Spirit

Beardslee Academy has had a vibrant and successful school year, full of learning, collaboration, and community engagement. Our students continue to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, and we are proud of all the accomplishments across our campus. We were thrilled to welcome families to two of our most popular school-wide events this spring: Open House and our Annual Family Game Night. These special evenings brought students, families, and staff together to celebrate learning and enjoy quality time as a community. During Family Game Night, our talented students also took the stage in a lively Talent Show, where they showcased their creativity, confidence, and diverse skills. We are looking forward to our end of year Annual Family Picnic. This year marks an important milestone for our Dual Language Immersion Program—we are proud to celebrate our first 8th grade graduating class! These incredible students have been in the program eight years

and recently demonstrated their bilingual achievement through impressive Biliteracy Portfolio Presentations to our dedicated Dual Language teaching team. Many of these students are on the pathway to earning the Seal of Biliteracy in high school—a testament to their hard work and commitment over the past eight years. As we reflect on the year, we are filled with gratitude for our students, families, staff, and community partners. Together, we continue to build a supportive and enriching environment where students are challenged, celebrated, and empowered to succeed. Beardslee Academy is achieving greatness—together.



Duarte High School

1565 E. Central Ave., Duarte, CA 91010 • 626/599-5700 • duartehigh.duarteusd.org



Luis Haro
Principal

Real-World Financial Skills through “Mad City Money” Simulation

Duarte High School recently brought financial literacy to life through an engaging and educational event called *Mad City Money*. Hosted in the gym by our long-standing partner in learning, The Center for Financial Empowerment, this simulation gave our learners invaluable hands-on experience in budgeting, money management, and decision-making, all within a fun, fast-paced environment.

Our Falcons were assigned identities, including careers, incomes, spouses, children, and debt. Then, they were challenged to navigate real-world financial responsibilities like paying rent, buying groceries, selecting transportation, and managing unexpected expenses. The goal was to balance their budgets and make smart financial choices, all while avoiding the common financial pitfalls adults often face.

“Going through Mad City Money was one of the most eye-opening experiences I’ve gone through,” said one participant. “I learned how hard it is to budget when you have limited money and a lot of responsibilities. I had to make some tough choices to make my budget work.”

In addition, the RIZE volunteers commended our Falcons for their knowledge of personal financial literacy, their enthusiasm, and overall respect. All soft skills consistent with our FALCON PRIDE.

The event was a collaboration between Duarte High School’s comprehensive Financial Literacy Program and the RIZE credit union. The RIZE employees volunteered their time to staff stations and guide our Falcons through the process. This was the 18th year that this event has occurred on DHS’ campus. Our Falcons walked away from the experience with a better understanding of the costs of living and the importance of making informed financial decisions.

By incorporating practical learning opportunities like *Mad City Money*, Duarte High School continues its commitment to developing responsible, well-prepared graduates who are ready to thrive in the global economy. In addition, Mad City Money is supportive of California’s Workforce Readiness Initiative.





Sofia Valdez
Director of
Child Development
Programs

Teaching Music in Preschool

In January 2025, Duarte Child Development kicked off the new year with the incredible opportunity to introduce the magic of music to our preschool students! With the support of a highly qualified music coach, our little scholars can receive music classes in small groups once a week for an hour. In addition, with the generous support of the Prop. 28 grants, our program was able to purchase a vast array of musical instruments for our children to

manipulate and demonstrate the expressive elements of music – including melody, harmony, rhythm, style, genre, texture, voicing/instrumentation, mood, tonality, and form. The music program in early childhood education has significantly enriched our program.

Just picture the sheer delight on their little faces as they immerse themselves in the enchanting world of music's rhythmic patterns and elements through expressive movement. Their joy is infectious and fills us with optimism about the transformative power of music in their lives.

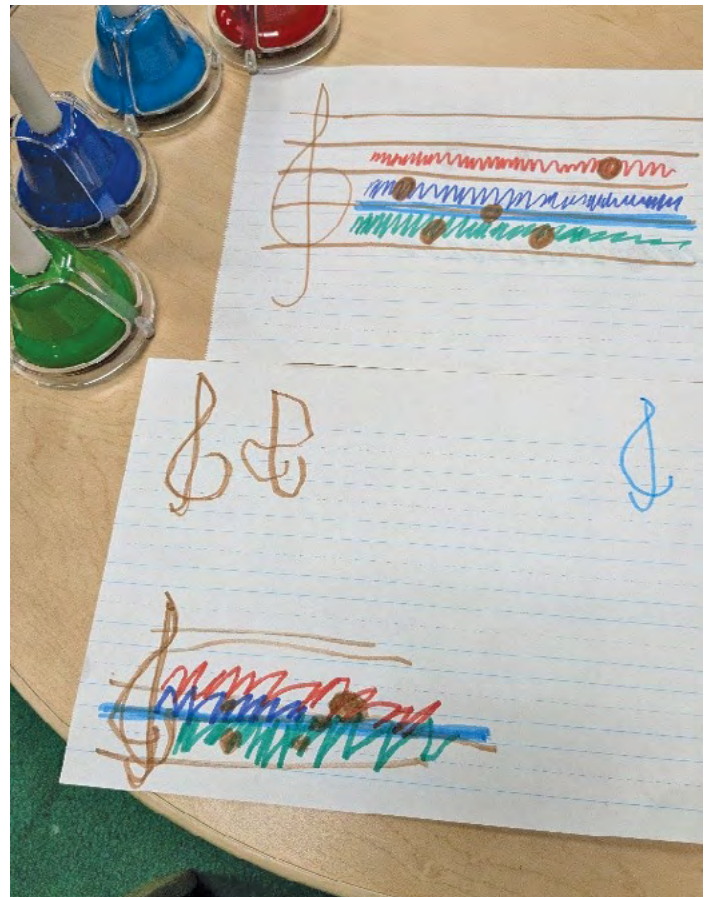
First and foremost, music fosters cognitive growth. Research shows that engaging preschool children with music enhances brain development in areas related to

language, reasoning, and problem-solving. By teaching our preschoolers to sing, play instruments, and explore sound, we are laying the foundations for their future learning. The skills they acquire through music, such as listening, concentration, and memory, will benefit them in every subject they encounter in their academic journey.

Furthermore, music education is a powerful tool for promoting social and emotional development. In our classes, children learn to collaborate as they sing and play together. They discover the joy of sharing, taking turns, and supporting one another in group activities. These experiences build confidence and self-esteem, and foster community and belonging, making them feel connected.

Additionally, music provides an excellent outlet for creativity and self-expression. As our preschoolers' experiment with different sounds and rhythms, they unlock their imaginations and learn to communicate in new ways. This creative exploration nurtures their artistic abilities and encourages them to think outside the box, a crucial skill in today's ever-evolving world.

Let's embrace this year as a pivotal moment in our Child Development Program by making music a central part of their learning experience. Together, we can inspire a new generation of musicians, thinkers, and dreamers!





Johna Stienstra
Principal

A Year to Remember: Celebrating Culture, Community, and Commitment at Maxwell Academy

As the school year draws to a close, the energy at Maxwell Academy is still going strong! We recently celebrated a vibrant and joyful tradition—our 2nd Annual International Fair—and what a fantastic event it was! Families, students, and staff came together to take a flavorful journey around the globe, sampling delicious dishes from a variety of cultures. In addition to the culinary delights, students enjoyed creating hands-on cultural crafts and dancing to lively multicultural music that brought smiles and movement across the blacktop. It was a beautiful reminder of the rich diversity that makes the Maxwell community so special.

Meanwhile, our students are wrapping up state testing, and we could not be prouder of the effort and focus they have shown. The Maxwell Mountain Lions have been working hard all year long, and this is their moment to shine. With encouragement from peers, teachers, and families, our students are giving it their all—and we are confident their progress will reflect the dedication and learning they have put in every day.

As we begin to wind down the school year, we take a moment to reflect on everything we have achieved together. From academic growth and personal development to community spirit and resilience, it is clear that Team Maxwell has made this a year to remember. TEAM Maxwell: Together, Everyone Achieves More. And as always... it's always a great day to be a Maxwell Mountain Lion!

Summer Fun 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 Duarte in the subject line)

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

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Awesome | Lessons | Sunscreen |
| Barbeque | Lifeguard | Surfing |
| Beach | Picnics | Swimming |
| Fireworks | Pool | Vacation |
| Fun | Popsicles | Volleyball |
| Hot | Sand | Water |
| Ice Cream | Summer | Wave |
| Lemonade | Sunny | |



Mt. Olive Innovation and Technology *High School*

1400 Mt. Olive Dr., Duarte, CA 91010 • 626/599-5900 • mountolivehigh.duarteusd.org



Kevin Morris
Principal

The Visionary Behind the San Gabriel Valley Continuation League (SGVCL)

The San Gabriel Valley Continuation League (SGVCL) is more than a sports league, it's a movement that empowers continuation high school students through athletics. It was born from the vision of Mr. Victor Champion, MIT school security and maintenance, and also USPTA Teaching Pro and former Duarte High School's

varsity tennis coach for the boys and girls. He believed continuation students deserved access to competitive sports.

The idea took root in spring 2009 when Mt. Olive Innovation & Technology High School partnered with the Duarte 66ers Senior Olympic Softball Team. Weekly games fostered intergenerational bonds and sportsmanship. Inspired, Mr. Champion asked: Why shouldn't continuation students have organized sports like traditional schools?

He connected with Lon Sellars, Principal of Del Mar Continuation School, to organize the first inter-school MIT 4 May 2025 SchoolNews basketball game at Smith Park. That single event sparked a growing network of

continuation schools across the San Gabriel Valley. By the 2010–11 school year, SGVCL officially launched with six schools: Canyon Oaks, Del Mar, Dr. Sears Learning Center, Mt. Olive, Whitcomb, and Sierra.

SGVCL was never about trophies, it was about inclusion, structure, and growth. With seasonal sports like basketball, flag football, soccer, and softball, students developed teamwork, discipline, and perseverance while staying engaged with school.

Mr. Champion's drive united educators and shifted the culture around continuation education. His vision gave overlooked students pride, purpose, and belonging. Over time, the league expanded to include up to 12 schools, including Coronado, Century, Rose City, and Fairvalley.

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, SGVCL's spirit endured. Today, schools like Mt. Olive, Sierra, Coronado, Chaparral, Rose City, San Antonio, and Mt. SAC Early College Academy continue the tradition with year-round sports including volleyball.

Victor Champion's legacy lives on in every game and student who finds connection through SGVCL. What began with one question led to a powerful answer: Every student deserves a team and a Champion!



MIT and the Duarte 66ers Softball teams pose after a friendly game.

Royal Oaks STEAM Academy (K-8)

2499 Royal Oaks Dr., Bradbury, CA 91008 • 626/599-5400 • royaloaks.duarteusd.org



Julia Castillo
Principal

Royal Oaks Band Program Builds Skills, Confidence, and Community

At Royal Oaks STEAM Academy, every fifth-grade student participates in band—a unique opportunity that introduces all students to the joy and discipline of music. Middle school students may continue by enrolling in beginning band or auditioning for advanced band, regardless of prior experience.

Under the direction of Mr. Isai Solis, Beardslee Teacher of the Year, the band program has become a source of pride and growth. His passion for music and tireless efforts have provided students with multiple performance opportunities, including opening STEAM Night, the District Winter Concert, and performing the National Anthem at Angel Stadium.

Participation in band goes far beyond music. Research shows that students involved in music perform better academically, build stronger executive functioning skills, and gain confidence through performance. At Royal Oaks, these benefits are evident. Students learn to collaborate, manage their time, and develop resilience as they practice and perform together.

Band is also a powerful tool for social-emotional growth. Students form lasting friendships, build self-esteem, and develop a sense of belonging through their shared musical journey. For middle school students, band becomes a meaningful elective and a stepping stone into high school music programs, which are UC A-G approved for college admissions.

From Trills and Thrills at Universal Studios to the SCSBOA Festival and our District Band Showcase, Mr. Solis has created a program that nurtures talent and opens doors. At Royal Oaks STEAM Academy, band is more than music—it's preparation for life.



Valley View Academy of Technology & Creative Learning (TK-6)

237 Melcanyon Rd., Duarte, CA 91010 • 626/599-5500 • valleyview.duarteusd.org



Erin Fish
Principal

Valley View Dolphins Race to the Finish

Over the last couple months, the students of Valley View have been preparing and practicing for the school and district track meet under the coaching guidance of our teachers, Ms. Jansen and Mrs. Rodriguez. On February 20th we held our school track meet where all of our classes and our families came out to cheer on our runners as they ran various races and participated in field events

to qualify for the district track meet. It was a fun day and a huge success! The students who qualified for the district track meet then began morning practices to prepare for the big day.

On March 29th, our Valley View Track Team, made up of about 75 students, spent the day at the Duarte High School track and field for the annual district meet. The event welcomed schools from across the district for a day of friendly competition, teamwork, and athletic excellence. From the opening races and field events to the final sprints, Valley View's athletes showed incredible determination and sportsmanship and every student ran hard and gave their best effort with every race. The team scored major points in the field events and many of the races.

At the end of the day, Valley View Dolphins brought home a big victory, earning first place at the district-wide track meet. We look forward to May 6th as many of our runners and field event participants move on to the next level of competition at the San Gabriel Valley Track and Field Championships. We wish our students the best of luck. Way to go Dolphins!



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Los Angeles County Office of Education

Leading the Way in Climate Action and Sustainability



Debra Duardo,
M.S.W., Ed.D.
Superintendent

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) is demonstrating what environmental sustainability and climate resiliency mean in practice for education.

Environmental sustainability isn't just about surviving—it's about thriving. LACOE is working toward a regenerative approach that goes beyond minimums, replenishing what is taken from the environment to create better futures for students.

LACOE is developing a comprehensive 5-year Sustainability Action Plan in partnership with the Greater Los Angeles Education Foundation. This strategic roadmap will guide efforts to reduce energy consumption and waste in LACOE-operated schools while also supporting local education agencies with their sustainability goals.

The importance of this work is underscored by student perspectives. LACOE's Student Advisory Council consistently ranks climate among their top three

priorities. Students have expressed that people cannot defend something they're not intimately familiar with, highlighting why environmental education matters.

On May 1st, LACOE hosted its 4th Green Schools Symposium at the Natural History Museum, designed to be "inspirational, educational, and actionable" for attendees. Participants will leave with practical knowledge about making their schools greener.

LACOE's green initiatives extend beyond planning to action, with programs including outdoor marine field study, Earth Month listening sessions and Clean Air Day pledges.

While some sustainability work happens behind the scenes—like HVAC upgrades, aerator faucets, and energy-efficient building materials—the impact is significant even when not immediately visible.

Environmental sustainability and education share the same goal: helping students thrive in the future. The work LACOE does today creates the conditions for that success tomorrow.

Word Search Contest Words Associated with School

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 **Duarte** in the subject line)

Entries must be received by July 5, 2025

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

Achievers	Focused	Principal
Character	Homework	Recess
Classrooms	Instructors	Reunion
Curiosity	Integrity	Student
Discipline	Learning	Success
Educators	Mentors	Technology
Encourage	Nutrition	Thinkers
Excellence	Parents	Workers

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