

Covering the Saddleback Valley Unified School District

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Unified School Games Unite 13 SVUSD Schools in a Celebration of Inclusion and Teamwork



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Unified School Games Unite 13 SVUSD Schools in a Celebration of Inclusion and Teamwork



Thirteen schools from the Saddleback Valley Unified School District came together for the 6th annual Unified School Games, hosted at Trabuco Hills High School on April 24. With more than 700 students in attendance, the event was a vibrant celebration of inclusivity, teamwork, and school spirit.

Dr. Crystal Turner Superintendent

The day was packed with fun and engaging Unified Sports activities, including Unified Flag Football, Cheer, Fitness, Catching and Throwing, Water Relays,

and Soccer. Students of all abilities had the opportunity to participate side by side in a supportive and spirited environment, exemplifying the power of inclusion.

Today, the SVUSD Unified School Games stands as one of the largest Unified Champion School events in Southern California—a testament to the district's strong commitment to fostering inclusive opportunities for all students. The success of the Unified Games was made possible through the collaboration of SVUSD Unified teacher liaisons, administrators, district and school staff, school board members, activity directors, and students. A special thanks goes to Kara Johnson, Trabuco Hills High School special education teacher, whose leadership and unwavering commitment to all things Unified continue to elevate inclusion efforts across the district.

SVUSD is proud to lead the charge in fostering inclusive school environments through Unified programs. The Unified Champion Schools initiative, supported by Special Olympics Southern California, brings inclusive sports, whole-school engagement, and youth leadership opportunities to SVUSD campuses. These efforts create meaningful connections and shared experiences that benefit all students—those with and without disabilities.

Human Resources

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



Celebrating Teachers and Classified Employees

The Board of Education at its April 3, 2025, meeting adopted resolutions to recognize and honor the many contributions of the Saddleback Valley Unified School District (SVUSD) Teachers as well as Classified Employees. In addition, SVUSD administration created a new employee

Dr. Darvin Jackson Assistant Superintendent

Classified Employees. In addition, SVUS administration created a new employee recognition program born out of its Leadership Academy. The Leadership

Academy is held on an annual basis for certificated and classified staff members interested in transitioning into leadership roles. The Class of 2024 Leadership Academy developed several ideas in collaboration with the SVUSD administrative team to be able to recognize staff for their length of service and commitment to SVUSD, the community, and, most importantly, the students we serve. SVUSD administration started earlier in the year identifying those who have worked in the district 35 years or more. Most recently, we have recognized staff members working 30-34 years in the district. Congratulations to all of our most recent recipients. The SVUSD administrative team is currently identifying those who have worked in the district 25-29 years and will be recognizing them once all information has been verified. We look forward to continuing these celebrations on an ongoing basis. Recipients are receiving a pin with the number of years served and a certificate to commemorate their efforts.

Educational Services

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



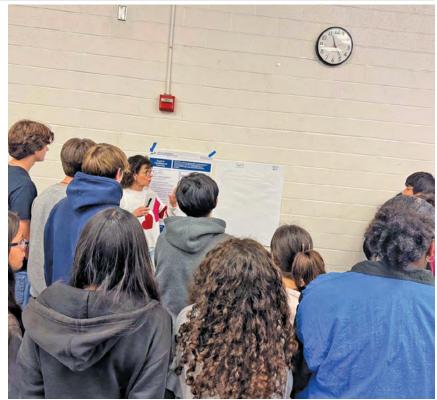
Listening to Our Students and Families: SVUSD LCAP Engagement

This year, Saddleback Valley Unified School District worked hard to include more voices in our Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)

Liza Zielasko Assistant Superintendent

process. A big part of this effort included holding special focus groups where students,

families, and staff could share their thoughts and ideas. District leaders visited every high school and met with student groups, hearing directly from 388 high school students across SVUSD. At each meeting, students shared what is working well and where the district can do better. Every comment was carefully listened to and recorded to help shape our plans for the future. These important conversations help to ensure that our schools provide what our students and families need the most.





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Business Services

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



Dedicated to Maintenance & Operations

Demonstrating our continued commitment to safe, high-quality learning environments, the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) team completed 142 work orders over just five days during spring break, maximizing this brief window to carry out essential repairs

Robert Craven Assistant Superintendent

instruction. Highlighted projects included:

and improvements without disrupting

- **MVHS:** 100 building HVAC duct cleaning; 200 building HVAC controls replacement
- Lighting Repairs: MVHS, Melinda Heights, Montevideo, De Portola, and THHS
- **Plumbing:** Los Alisos and Olivewood mainline repairs; Portola Hills plumbing
- Asphalt: Gates, Trabuco Mesa, THHS, Rancho Canada
- **Concrete:** ETHS pool deck; Cielo Vista, Olivewood, Portola Hills, MVHS ETHS: Laser cutting machine installation
- Shade Structures: Reinstalled at Trabuco Mesa
- Roofing: Leak and fascia repairs at Gates and Cielo Vista

• Other Work: Tree trimming at five sites; fire alarm repairs (THHS, Del Lago, La Madera); fencing at RSM; furniture moves from San Joaquin; drainage rerouting at Foothill Ranch; surplus disposal district-wide; window sealing at Robinson; new TLC siding (Robinson, Olivewood, Del Cerro); storage bin relocations (THHS, Trabuco Mesa)

Additional 2024-25 projects include roofing replacement at El Toro High School and repairs at 13 sites. Shade structures were installed at THHS, Del Cerro, Glen Yermo, and La Madera to enhance outdoor usability and sun protection. At the Food Services Center, the exterior shade structure was demolished and rebuilt.

Asphalt repairs were completed at Santiago, Valencia, Montevideo, Los Alisos Intermediate, Trabuco Hills, El Toro High (student lot), Mission Viejo (quad), and Laguna Hills High (sports lot). Extensive concrete improvements were made at 20 sites to enhance safety, prevent deterioration, and ensure functional surfaces.

These efforts demonstrate our ongoing dedication to maintaining clean, safe, and functional facilities that support the success and well-being of students and staff across the District. The upcoming summer break is going to be busy with numerous projects lined up.



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Student Support Services

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



Dizon Assistant

Superintendent

Parent Training Series

This school year, La Tierra Early Childhood Center hosted a series of seven monthly parent trainings to support and empower families of young children with diverse needs. The sessions covered a range of essential topics including Physical development, Speech and Language Development, Behavior Support, Potty Training, Understanding the IEP Process and Supporting the Transition from

Preschool to Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten. The presentations provided families with information about how they can support their child's development in the home and community.

Each training was led by knowledgeable and compassionate specialists who provided practical strategies and answered questions with care and clarity. Recognizing the importance of accessibility, all sessions were offered in Spanish to ensure that every family could benefit from the information. The response from those in attendance was overwhelmingly positive. La Tierra's commitment to family engagement continues to strengthen the bridge between home and school.







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Orange County Department of Education

200 Kalmus Drive, Costa Mesa CA 92628 • 714/966-4000 • www.ocde.us

Celebrating Orange County's 2026 Teachers of the Year



Most of us can point to a teacher who changed our lives — someone who saw us clearly and believed in what we could become.

As a newly adopted Vietnamese orphan in

struggled to find my footing. In sixth grade,

Mr. Geisinger told me not to worry about any

a wheelchair and still learning English, I

For me, that teacher was Donald Geisinger.

Dr. Stefan Bean Superintendent

of that. Instead, he encouraged me to give

oral presentations.

That invitation changed everything. I gained confidence, improved my English and discovered a love of public speaking. A few years later, I spoke in Washington, D.C., representing youth with disabilities — all because a teacher believed in me.

This month, I had the privilege of celebrating six Orange County educators who are making that same kind of impact every day. As we surprised each of them on May 1 with the news that they'd been named 2026 Orange County Teachers of the Year, I saw that same spark — the unmistakable bond between teacher and student. At every stop, the energy was electric. Students cheered, staff members teared up, and each honoree stood in humble disbelief. These weren't just moments of recognition — they were powerful reminders of what can happen when a teacher truly connects with their students.

Our 2026 honorees reflect the very best of what teaching looks like across Orange County.

Tracy Havens, a second-grade teacher at Hicks Canyon Elementary in Tustin Unified, begins each day with highfives, hugs and a Morning Meeting that sets the tone for connection and growth.

At Fullerton College, Dr. Catherine Reinhardt-Zacair introduces her French students to study abroad opportunities, internships and global experiences that expand their horizons and confidence.

Megan Lee, who teaches transitional kindergarten at Loara Elementary in Anaheim Elementary School District, builds a strong sense of community from day one — hosting family meetups, pairing students with preschool buddies and making sure every child feels seen and valued.

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OCDE • From Page 7



Jeannette Aguilera, a third-grade teacher at Centralia Elementary, draws on her experience as a first-generation college graduate to empower students through daily community circles and a focus on growth mindset.

Dr. Stefan Bean Superintendent

At Ladera Vista Junior High in Fullerton, Darcy Blake uses literature and creative writing to spark empathy, voice and selfdiscovery — inviting students to share their

stories and explore tough topics in a safe, supportive space.

And at San Clemente High School, Erin Bro has led the AVID program for over 15 years, helping first-generation college-goers gain skills, direction and belief in their ability to succeed — with a 100 percent college acceptance rate for her students.

Each of these educators was selected from a pool of district-level honorees through a thoughtful review and interview process, and they'll be formally celebrated this fall at a gala sponsored by SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union at the Disneyland Hotel.

There, each Teacher of the Year will receive a \$25,000 award from the Orange County Teachers of the Year Award Foundation — a program established by the William, Jeff and Jennifer Gross Family Foundation. They're also now in the running for California Teacher of the Year — an honor that has gone to six Orange County teachers since 2019. That legacy speaks to the exceptional work happening in our schools every day, and this year's honorees are clearly part of that tradition.

A lot of profound words were exchanged on May 1, but sometimes a student delivers the day's best line. Aguilera's third-grade class decided that if their teacher had been named Teacher of the Year, they must be the Students of the Year. One student, noting that their teacher was expecting a child, proudly added, "That's the Baby of the Year."

It was a joyful moment — and a reminder that teaching is about more than lessons and standards. It's about relationships, belief and the lasting impact of a caring educator.

To this year's Teachers of the Year: Thank you for showing up, lifting others and reminding us all of what's possible when a teacher truly believes.

Be sure to enter the Word Search Contest on pages 26 & 28. Have a fun summer!

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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

this year too!



Rock the Test

Cielo Vista Elementary kicked off CAASPP testing with an exciting "Rock the Test" week, designed to motivate and prepare students for success. The week featured

Janette Tyrone Principal

a variety of activities that built enthusiasm and focus. Students signed

an autograph wall and wrote personal goals on their "tickets to success." Lower grade classes, the PTA, and families created encouraging posters that were displayed throughout the campus. To mark the first day of testing, each classroom rolled out a red carpet to welcome students in style. On the Friday before testing began, staff and students dressed like rock stars and celebrated more than 100



de Portola Elementary School

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



De Portola Elementary Celebrates 2025 California Distinguished School Honor

We are proud to share that De Portola Elementary has been recognized as a 2025 California Distinguished School! Our students continue to achieve

Kimberly Slawson Principal at high levels, earning Blue performance ratings in both English Language Arts and Math. Among the highlights, our students with disabilities

showed exceptional growth, advancing enough in both subjects to move from the Yellow to the Blue performance band on the state dashboard.

We also foster strong student leadership through programs like PAL (Peer Assistance Leadership) and Student Council, with over 75 students leading initiatives to create an inclusive and welcoming campus. Our positive climate is supported by SEL and PBIS programs, with STAR expectations that emphasize Safety, Taking Responsibility, Kindness, and Respect. Strengthened by family and community partnerships, we continue to grow and thrive. Staff, students, and families remain united in their commitment to excellence, inclusion, and leadership, building a bright future together.

students-alongside their families-who had demonstrated

excellence on the 2023-24 CAASPP. These students were

go, HAWKS! We can't wait to watch you ROCK THE TEST

also honored during the monthly HAWKS assembly. Way to



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



Diving into Careers: Del Cerro's RIASEC Adventure!

I'm thrilled to share exciting developments in our Career Connected Schools initiative. This month, we welcomed Ed Hidalgo from Connect the Work, who introduced the RIASEC personality assessment model to our

Dawn Lam Principal

five pilot classrooms. Students discovered their unique

RIASEC codes—identifying themselves as Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, or Conventional—which helped them understand how their personal interests connect to potential career paths. Through collaborative centers, students explored activities aligned with different RIASEC types and discussed how these interests might shape their futures.

The energy in these classrooms was palpable! Students were engaged and excited to learn about themselves in this new context. One sixth grader remarked, "I learned that I was Enterprising, Social and Investigative, which matches my goal of being a lawyer!" This is just the beginning of our career-connected learning journey. We look forward to expanding this program and helping all Del Cerro students discover their unique strengths and interests.



Del Lago Elementary School

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



Celebrating Excellence In Our School Community

We are proud to celebrate two outstanding members of our school community: Mrs. Diaz, our Teacher of The Year, and Mrs. Griffin, our Office Manager of The Year. Mrs. Diaz brings energy, creativity, and passion to

Dr. Frances Hansell Principal

energy, creativity, and passion to her classroom, inspiring students to learn, grow, and believe in themselves. Her dedication to excellence leaves

a lasting impression on every student she teaches. Mrs. Griffin is the heart of our front office, welcoming every family, student, and staff member with warmth, professionalism, and care. Her commitment to making our school a welcoming and supportive place shines through every day. Together, Mrs. Diaz and Mrs. Griffin represent the spirit, heart, and excellence that define our school community. We are grateful for their incredible contributions and the positive impact they continue to make. Congratulations, Mrs. Diaz and Mrs. Griffin — we are proud to celebrate all you bring to our school and community!



SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

El Toro High School

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



CA Green Ribbon School

El Toro High School (ETHS) has been named a 2025 California Green Ribbon School by the California Department of Education. The recognition celebrates ETHS's efforts in reducing environmental impact, promoting health and wellness, and integrating sustainability into student learning.

Dr. James Martin Principal

El Toro now joins Santiago and Trabuco elementary schools as SVUSD's third Green Ribbon School—a testament to the district's growing leadership in environmental stewardship.

ETHS has made major strides in campus sustainability, including installing solar panels, upgrading to energyefficient lighting, and reducing water usage by 42%. The school also diverts 50% of its waste from landfills and has moved toward digital tools to cut down on paper usage. Health and wellness initiatives include the use of green cleaning products, upgraded HVAC systems, and The rETreat—a dedicated student wellness center created in partnership with the Children's Hospital of Orange County and the Orange County Department of Education.

Sustainability is also woven into the student experience at ETHS. Through the STEAM Academy and Green Campus Action Plans, students are encouraged to tackle real-world challenges through project-based learning and cross-disciplinary coursework.

"Being named a 2025 California Green Ribbon School is a profound honor that reflects our unwavering commitment to sustainability, student wellness, and environmental education," Principal Dr. Jimmy Martin shared. "This recognition celebrates the collective efforts of our students, staff, and community in creating a learning environment that not only educates but also inspires stewardship of our planet. We are proud to stand among California's leading schools dedicated to fostering a greener, healthier future for all."

This recognition is a proud milestone for ETHS and a reflection of SVUSD's continued commitment to creating greener, healthier learning environments.

Esperanza Education Center

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



Raymond Bueche District Coordinator, Special Education

Celebrating Esperanza's Retirees

After dedicating their lives to shaping young minds, we joyfully celebrate the retirement of two extraordinary educators: Mel Coe and Denise Hunt!

Denise's journey in SVUSD began in 2008 at Laguna Hills High, later moving to El Toro and culminating her teaching career at

Esperanza ATP in 2022 – a place dear to her heart since 2005. Mel's incredible 39-year career includes 25 impactful years at Esperanza (1999-2025), where he enriched the school community by planning countless dances, advising ASB for 12 years, composing original music, and fostering community engagement. Their passion and dedication have left an indelible mark on countless students. We wish them both a happy and fulfilling re-retirement!



Foothill Ranch Elementary School

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



Spring Fun Fest Brings Joy and Fun to **Our School Community**

This year's Spring Fun Fest brought the community together for an unforgettable evening full of fun, food, and festivities. The "Wicked"

Christina Stevenson Principal

theme cast a playful, whimsical atmosphere across the school's blacktop, filling the space with colorful decorations, creative games, and lively entertainment that kept

smiles on every face. Students, families, and neighbors enjoyed an afternoon of classic carnival games, hands-on crafts, upbeat music, and a mouthwatering selection of snacks.

Local vendors added even more excitement by lining the grounds with booths offering handmade crafts, community services, and sweet treats, turning the event into a true celebration of local spirit and talent. Everywhere you looked, there were signs of community - kids laughing with friends, parents catching up, and volunteers working hard behind the scenes to make the event run smoothly.

More than just an event, the Spring Fun Fest has become a beloved annual tradition that showcases the heart of our school.



Ralph A. Gates Dual Language Immersion Elementary School 23882 Landisview Ave., Lake Forest, CA 92630 • 949/837-2260 • www.syusd.org/gates



Thank You Volunteers

Gates has amazing volunteers who plan memorable events. At the SVUSD community recognition event, we celebrated PTA president Kelly Miclot and a parent who is a playground assistant and representative for our dual immersion parent group, Silvia Flores. We began the year with our

Diana Clearwater Principal

Día De Los Muertos event with food, music, traditional Baile Folklórico dancing, and altars or "ofrendas" to honor loved ones who have died. In winter, there was a traditional Mexican "Las Posadas" event with games like "lotería", food, and of course...Baile Folklórico. In May, Children's Day is celebrated with "Festival de los Niños" in which every class breaks a piñata, and there is food, music, community resources, and representatives from consulates such as Mexico and Spain. We end the year with a giant overnight family campout. Families sleep in tents, kids participate in a nighttime flashlight hike, and the night ends with delicious s'mores. We couldn't do all of this without our parent volunteers.



SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Glen Yermo Elementary School

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



Jennifer Televik

Principal

Celebrating 50 Years

Last month. Glen Yermo Elementary proudly celebrated its 50th anniversary with a memorable evening showcase and family picnic. The event brought together past, present, and future families and staff, including three former teachers and staff who helped open the school in 1974. Guests enjoyed food, festivities, and a walk down memory lane.

A highlight of the evening was the unveiling of a beautiful new hallway mural, designed and painted by school staff. Every current student left their mark on the mural with a handprint, creating a vibrant symbol of community and connection.

Adding to the excitement, the school recently discovered a hidden time capsule behind a wall plaque. Inside were class lists from 1974, documents from Saddleback Valley, the Mission Viejo Company, and the local Masonic lodge ---offering a fascinating glimpse into the school's early days. Here's to 50 years - and many more to come!



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



Camp Read-a-Lot

La Madera Elementary School recently hosted a heartwarming Family Literacy Night, inviting students and their families to come dressed in their coziest pajamas for a night of reading fun. Themed "Camp Read-A-Lot," the event transformed

Jennifer Gass Principal

the MPR into a camping wonderland, complete with camp-themed decorations. Organized by La Madera's dedicated teachers, the evening featured a variety of engaging phonics, reading, and writing activities designed to spark a love for literacy in all ages. Families rotated

through interactive stations, sharing stories, reading with flashlights under the stars, creating word games, and building writing skills together. The joyful atmosphere was a beautiful reminder of how reading can bring people closer. Seeing students and parents bonding over books and learning made the night a memorable success. "Camp Read-A-Lot" was more than just fun-it was a celebration of community, creativity, and the power of literacy.



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



Inclusion Week Celebration

La Paz proudly celebrated Inclusion Week, an important part of our No Place for Hate journey, as we came together to celebrate abilities rather than disabilities. Each day was filled with spirit and connection!

Tiffany Harville *Principal*

On Monday, students wore camo to recognize invisible disabilities and kicked off the week with an inspiring announcement. Tuesday brought an incredible show of unity as students signed our Inclusion Pledge poster and enjoyed Otter Pops at lunch. Wednesday focused on Communication Awareness with fun activities and a thrilling Leopard Hunt!

Thursday, our amazing Unified athletes competed at THHS, showing true teamwork and sportsmanship. We wrapped up Friday by lighting up the campus blue for Autism Awareness, hosting a sensory booth at snack, and dancing and playing games during our lunch celebration.

The success of Inclusion Week showed the heart of La Paz, a community where everyone belongs and every ability is celebrated!



La Tierra Early Childhood Center

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



La Tierra Honors Teacher and Classified Employee of the Year

La Tierra Early Childhood center is thrilled to recognize two amazing members of our educational community as this year's Teacher and Classified Employee of the Year. A beloved preschool teacher for 23 years, Melinda Sicard has created a classroom

Emily Arias District Coordinator

A beloved preschool teacher for 23 years, Melinda Sicard has created a classroom environment where learning comes to life. Her creative lessons and engaging themes

capture the imaginations of her students. Through hands on activities, she brings joy to learning and helps students grow in all developmental domains. She goes the extra mile in creating engaging activities for the entire school and staff and is a master at making parent information flyers. With her 24 years of service in SVUSD, Laura Schirmuhly is known for her tireless commitment to meeting students' physical needs across multiple school sites. As a key provider of physical therapy services, she brings energy and care to every campus she visits. Her connection with families begins at the assessment center, where she builds trust and rapport. Parents are always excited to continue working with her at La Tierra, knowing their children are in good hands. Laura is always willing to lend an extra hand and provide her expert input to support the students. She also goes above and beyond by creating developmentally appropriate physical activity lessons for the preschool teachers to implement.

Laguna Hills High School

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



Thank You!

On April 22, 2025, we honored two remarkable women whose unwavering support has profoundly impacted Laguna Hills High School. Ms. Mirna Ceja and Ms. Poly Pantelidou were

celebrated at our SVUSD

Community Recognition

Brent Dohling Principal

Dinner for their long-standing dedication to students and educational programs. Ms. Ceja, ELAC President, has transformed our site ELAC and infused creativity, collaboration, and connectivity within our school community while Ms. Pantelidou, PTSA President, has provided ongoing support for students, staff, and an exciting vision to increase participation and funding for the organization.

We are very grateful for their partnership and look forward to what the future holds. And as always, Go Hawks!



Jackie Nia, Mirna Ceja, Poly Pantelidou, Brent Dohling

Lake Forest Elementary School

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



LFE Celebrates Campus Transformation with Ribbon Cutting

Lake Forest Elementary School celebrated the completion of its modular building project with a ribbon-cutting ceremony led by Principal Caryn McGrew. The event brought together students, families, staff,

Caryn McGrew Principal

several project partners and Saddleback Valley Unified School District leaders to

commemorate this significant milestone. "This project is more than new

buildings—it's an investment in the future of our school and community," Principal McGrew remarked during the ceremony. The upgrades include a reimagined Innovation Lab, modern classrooms, and outdoor learning spaces designed to enhance the school's commitment to STEM education.

The transformation aligns with Lake Forest Elementary's forward-thinking approach, providing "Dolphins" with expanded opportunities for hands-on learning and creative exploration. These student-centered spaces create an environment where classroom concepts connect meaningfully to real-world applications.

With strong support from district leadership, these improvements will serve the Lake Forest community for years to come, preparing students for success in a rapidly changing world.





Lion King Kids a Huge Success!

Linda Vista Magnet recently staged a vibrant production of The Lion King Kids, featuring nearly 50 students in grades

3-6. This Disney Musicals in Schools performance, in partnership with Segerstrom

Dr. Shannon Wyatt Principal

Center for the Arts, showcased the

power of arts education. Guided by four dedicated teachers, students spent weeks rehearsing choreography, lines, and songs to deliver a high-energy show that captivated the school community. The production celebrated creativity, teamwork, and confidence. with colorful costumes and dynamic musical numbers bringing the Pride Lands to life. With professional support from Segerstrom, the performance

reached a high level of quality and authenticity. More than just a school play, The Lion King Kids reflected the joy, growth, and collaboration that come from investing in the arts.



Lomarena Elementary School

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



Sense of Belonging

Lomarena is a community school with a strong sense of belonging! Our staff is dedicated to building meaningful connections with every student, and we strive to help each child grow into the best facilitating games, resolving conflicts with care, or simply offering a kind word, Cara embodies the spirit of empathy and diligence that defines Lomarena. Our Core Values here at Lomarena are Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Diligence, and Empathy and we love to celebrate our students and staff for showing their Lomarena Lion PRIDE!

Grace Cruikshank Principal

16 JUNE 2025

version of themselves We are thrilled to announce

that our amazing Playground Supervisor, Cara Hegeduis, has been named our Classified Employee of the Year! Each day on the playground, in the parking lot, and in the office, Cara creates a welcoming, safe, and joyful environment where students feel supported, encouraged, and connected. Whether



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



Champions!

The Los Alisos Boys Soccer team triumphed in the Intramural Soccer Tournament, bringing home the championship trophy after a series of intense and exciting matches. Demonstrating skill,

school community is proud of their achievement, and the victory has sparked excitement and school spirit among students and staff. The win not only highlights the team's talent but also sets a high standard for future competitions. Congratulations to the Los Alisos Boys Soccer team on their well-deserved tournament win!

Michael Marzilli Principal

teamwork, and determination, the team remained undefeated

throughout the tournament. In the final match, they showcased their dominance with a strong offensive performance and solid defense, thrilling fans on the sidelines. Each player contributed to the victory, with standout plays and excellent communication on the field. Their success is a result of hard work during practice, commitment to improvement, and strong leadership from both coaches and team captains. The



Melinda Heights Elementary School

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



Student Advocate

Last year, inquisitive Kindergarten student, Reed Wallace, noticed that trash trucks come to Melinda Heights each week, but not recycling trucks. Knowing that recycling trucks come to his home, he wondered

Wendie Hauschild Principal

about recycling at his school. His mom, Jill Kingdon, began a factfinding mission that evolved into advocacy. Good ideas and perseverance pay

off. Now in first grade, Reed and his mom have partnered with MHES principal, custodial staff, and PTA to kick-off a pilot recycling program at the school that will go school-wide in 2025-2026. In front of over 1,000 students and staff, Reed proudly spoke about the program at a recent Power of the Paw assembly. He then delivered blue recycling bins to all first and fourth grade classrooms. MHES is well on its way to greater learning about stewardship for our environment due to the voice of one small student who asked questions and shared ideas.



Mission Viejo High School

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



Mission Viejo High School's Award Winning Agriscience Program Celebrates State Achievement and Leadership!

MVHS Agriculture and FFA program is truly exceptional. Led by two dedicated teachers, Meagan Dunlap

Tricia Osborne Principal

and Lauren Jenrich, our program provides students with hands-on, real world

learning experiences that inspire leadership ad career readiness. From labs to competitive FFA events, Ms. Dunlap and Ms. Jenrich are dedicated to student success and developing a strong sense of community. Recently, 11th grade student Payton Mansfield received top honors for outstanding achievement at the California FFA State Speaking Finals! MVHS agriculture program continues to expand, with the addition of UC-approved courses and new industry standard equipment. The hands-on, real-world experiences on the farm and enriching extra-curricular experiences of the FFA student organization guarantee that students will gain the knowledge and skills needed to be a competitive and successful individual in today's job market. The FFA mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success and this is exactly what we do at MVHS. Go Diablos!



Montevideo Elementary School

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



Montevideo Young Historians at Work!

This week, our 4th grade scholars have been reading the historical children's book titled, "Patty Reed's Doll." It tells the story of Patty Reed, a young girl who traveled with the Donner Party during their westward journey to California in the mid 1800's. This narrative is centered

Lisa Palomino Principal

around Patty's doll, which becomes a symbol of hope and comfort amid the hardships they faced.

We had classroom pioneer life simulations where students experienced various aspects of pioneer life. They learned about a cozy morning on the trail when Patty's mother made bacon and Johnny Cakes fried in beef tallow—can you imagine waking up to those smells? Their mouths watered as they enjoyed eating these delicious pioneer recipes. Then they began building their own "Palace Car" (also known as a wagon) and made simple crafts that pioneers would have made, such as weaving, or making simple tools.



SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Olivewood Elementary School

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



Congratulations Jennifer Smith

Olivewood Elementary is proud to recognize Jennifer Smith as our 2024–2025 Teacher of the Year! As a dedicated firstgrade teacher, Ms. Smith creates a warm, inclusive, and engaging classroom where every student feels valued, safe, and inspired to learn. Her commitment to early literacy, social-emotional learning, and differentiated instruction ensures that all students,

Alex Perez Principal

including English learners and those with additional needs, are supported and challenged to reach their full potential.

Beyond her classroom, Ms. Smith is a collaborative team member, a resource to new teachers, and always willing to share her knowledge. She plays a vital role in shaping a strong school culture through her dependable leadership and consistent involvement in schoolwide events and initiatives.

Ms. Smith's passion for teaching, care for her students, and her unwavering commitment to excellence make her a beloved and respected member of the Olivewood community. We are honored to celebrate her achievements!



Portola Hills Elementary School

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



Ed MacNevin

Principal

Retirement Awaits

After 33 wonderful years in education and six incredible years as principal of Portola Hills Elementary Mr. MacNevin will be retiring this summer. His time at Portola Hills has been the highlight of his career, filled with meaningful relationships, joyful memories, and shared accomplishments. Working alongside dedicated staff and amazing families has been a true honor. He is especially grateful for the strong sense of community that defines Portola Hills and for the trust and support he has received throughout the years. While retirement is an exciting new chapter, saying goodbye is bittersweet. Mr. MacNevin will always hold this school close to his heart. The district will begin the process of selecting a new principal who understands and values this unique school community. In the coming months, Mr. MacNevin remains committed to finishing the school year strong and supporting a smooth transition.

SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rancho Cañada Elementary School

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



Rancho Cañada Named 2025 California Distinguished School

We are thrilled to announce that Rancho Cañada has been honored as a 2025 California Distinguished School! This

Jennifer Kajdasz Principal

is a testament to our school's dedication to closing achievement gaps and making significant

prestigious recognition

academic progress. Our improved attendance rates have led to more learning opportunities and improved behavior processes through PBIS has resulted in fewer suspensions.

Since its inception in 1985, the California Distinguished Schools Award has celebrated exceptional schools, teachers, and staff for their innovation, dedication, and success in supporting students. This year, 336 elementary schools were chosen across California, with only 45 being recognized in Orange County.

This achievement is a result of the hard work and dedication of our staff and students, as well as the incredible support from our community. We are proud to share this recognition with everyone who contributed to our success. Keep up the great work, Eagles!



Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate School

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



RSM MUN

This year, the RSM Model United Nations (MUN) team has soared to new heights, achieving incredible success across seven major conferences! From SOCOMUN to Mater

We couldn't be more proud of our delegates and their accomplishments. Here's to their continued success and many more victories ahead! Go RSM MUN!



Dei, our delegates showcased their talent, earning Best Delegate, Outstanding Delegate, and Commendable Delegate awards—often

competing against high school students. On top of that, they brought home multiple Research Awards, a true testament to their preparation, dedication, and commitment to excellence.

These achievements speak volumes about their hard work, teamwork, and passion for international relations and diplomacy. Every conference was an opportunity for our students to shine, and they truly made RSM proud! Since 2012, RSM MUN has consistently earned top honors, and this year continues that incredible legacy.



SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Robinson Elementary School

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



A Proud Moment

Robinson Elementary School is excited to share two celebrations, recognizing both individual excellence and overall school achievement. Playground Assistant Julie Augustine was named the 2025 Robinson Classified Employee

of the Year for her exceptional

Suzy McMasters Principal

dedication to student safety, engagement, and positive behavior during recess and lunch. Ms. Julie promotes an inclusive and positive environment, where every child feels valued and respected. She is a valued member of our school community. Adding to the celebration, Robinson Elementary was awarded the California Distinguished School designation by the California Department of Education, recognizing our 2025 academic performance shared on the California Dashboard.

This is a proud moment for our community and we look forward to celebrating both achievements. Go Rattlers!



San Joaquin Elementary School 22182 Barbera, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 • 949/581-3450 • <u>www.svusd.org/sanjoaquin</u>



San Joaquin Elementary Celebrates Classified Employee of the Year

San Joaquin Elementary is proud to announce this year's Classified Employee of the Year honorees — Julie Counter and Nubia Cordero! In a rare and exciting tie, both outstanding employees were recognized for their dedication, hard work, and positive impact on our school community. After much

Kristin Fowler Principal

consideration, Nubia Cordero was selected to represent San Joaquin at the district level.

Nubia serves as our exceptional community liaison, playing a vital role in connecting students, families, and staff. Her compassion, resourcefulness, and unwavering commitment to supporting every member of our community make her a true asset to San Joaquin. Whether helping parents navigate school resources or ensuring students feel supported and valued, Nubia's work strengthens the fabric of our school.

We are grateful to both Julie and Nubia for their outstanding service, and we are thrilled to have Nubia represent San Joaquin Elementary at the district level!



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



Santiago STEAM Magnet Elementary Honored as 2025 California Distinguished School

At Santiago STEAM Magnet Elementary, students are more than learners—they are leaders, innovators, and changemakers. Our

Kristin Thomsen Principal

students to think creatively, act compassionately, and lead with purpose.

school culture empowers

Students showcase their voices and ideas through events like our student-led STEAM Rallies and our 6th-grade TEDx Youth presentations. Leadership and service shine through our PAL program, where students mentor peers and build a positive school climate, and through student-created events like a charity carnival that blended fun with purpose.

Innovation thrives across our campus, from vibrant STEAM Green Gardens tied to project-based learning, to our Innovation Lab where students explore robotics, sewing, pottery, and more. At Santiago STEAM Magnet, students don't just imagine the future—they design it with creativity, heart, and purpose. We are honored to be recognized as a 2025 California Distinguished School and celebrate the incredible community that makes it possible.



Serrano Intermediate School

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



Student-Designed Duckweed Experiment Launches to the International Space Station

Middle school students from Serrano Intermediate School in Lake Forest, California, and Larson Middle School in Troy, Michigan, launched a unique science experiment to the International Space

Jordan Reed Principal

Station (ISS) on April 21 aboard SpaceX CRS-32.

Their research explores how microgravity affects the growth of Lemna minor, or duckweed—a small, fast-growing aquatic plant with promising applications for future space missions.

Guided by science teachers Bev Berekian (Serrano Intermediate) and Colleen Cain (Larson Middle School) through the Space for Teachers Embedded Teacher Project (ETP), students collaborated across 2,000 miles to develop and test their experiment. "The work we've accomplished from opposite sides of the country is a powerful testament to long-term research opportunities," said Berekian.

The experiment, housed in a Voyager Space Mixstix, will be activated by astronauts aboard the ISS. Students will later compare space-grown samples to those on Earth, gaining firsthand experience in scientific inquiry, data analysis, and collaboration—mirroring real NASA research practices.



SpaceX Falcon 9 Launches NASA CRS-32 to ISS

Silverado High School

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



New Swag!

The Eagles are flying toward the end of the school year and graduation. At Open House we welcomed families and friends to our campus to visit classrooms and participate in our student award night. Open

David Gordon Principal

House led us into Spring Break, but before we left for break, ASB

sponsored an Egg Hunt. Students searched for eggs which were stuffed with candy, PBIS points or both. Our PBIS team, in partnership with PALS, hosted a spring movie party. With their teachers' approval, students were able to purchase tickets to the Spring movie which included movie themed snacks. Silverado students participated in the Saddleback College Senior Day on April 22nd. They toured the campus, visited vendor booths and enjoyed learning about the different programs Saddleback College offers. Lastly, this past weekend Mr. Gordon attended the California Continuation Education Association Gala where he was awarded the Silverado Model School plaque and banner. Stop by Silverado to check our new swag.



SVUSD Virtual Academy K-12

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



Glenn Giokaris Principal

Charting a Future Beyond High School: College and Career Readiness at SVA

At SVUSD Virtual Academy (SVA), students chart their own course in a flexible, supportive, and engaging online learning environment. A key part of SVA's mission is to prepare students for success beyond high school-whether in college, career, or both.

Now in its fifth year, SVA's Early College

Pathway (ECP) partnership with Saddleback College offers students the opportunity to earn both high school and college credit, along with industry-recognized certificates in Business and Cybersecurity. Starting next year, the program will expand to include a new pathway in Sports Nutrition, allowing students to earn a Certificate of Achievement through Saddleback's Nutrition Department.

SVA also launched a new initiative this year to prepare students for the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP). The program began with psychology and will expand next year to include English and American Government. A passing CLEP exam score can earn students college credit at over 2,900 colleges and universities, including all California State University (CSU) campuses. Even better—thanks to a partnership with Modern States, the CLEP exam is completely free for participating students.

These programs reflect SVA's commitment to offering flexible, forward-thinking opportunities that empower students to get ahead-academically and professionally. Whether pursuing college credit, industry certification, or simply exploring areas of interest, students at SVUSD Virtual Academy graduate with real-world experience and a head start on their future.

Trabuco Elementary School

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



Dr. Lindsey Gatfield

Principal

Mindfulness Garden

The natural environment surrounding us on campus at Trabuco Elementary is extremely important to our school

community. One of the natural areas on our campus is our mindfulness garden. For our Earth Day celebration on April 22, a plant was donated for each student to add to our

mindfulness garden to support the use of nature and our five senses as a way to promote calm, reflection, and emotional well-being. Students were encouraged to observe the textures, colors, and scents of the plants they added, and many shared how peaceful and connected they felt while working in the garden.

We are so thankful for our parent volunteers who planned this special celebration of nature, and to our donors for the supplies. It was a beautiful way for our school to come together, give back to the earth, and grow something meaningful—both literally and emotionally. We look forward to watching our mindfulness garden flourish throughout the seasons, just like our students do.



Trabuco Hills High School

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



Alicia Foulk

Principal

THHS Hosts Inaugural Best Buddies Friendship Walk

On Saturday, April 19, Trabuco Hills High School had the honor of hosting the inaugural Orange County Best Buddies Friendship Walk, welcoming Best Buddies Chapters from local elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, and community programs. It was a huge event with over 600 walkers, supporters, family, and friends! Trabuco Hills students, staff, cheerleaders, and alumni came together to help make this event a success. As always we are proud to support Best Buddies California in making our schools, communities, and world more inclusive and accepting.



SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

Top New School!

Trabuco Mesa recently participated in its first Best Buddies Friendship Walk and was honored to receive the Top New School Award! We had many students and their families participate in the event, held at Trabuco Hills High School, which raised over \$33,000 for its local programs. In addition to the team

walk, there was music, local sports mascots, a sensory room, and prizes for children and adults. Best Buddies is a non-profit organization dedicated to ending the social, physical, and economic isolation of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They provide opportunities to build friendships between people with and without disabilities, offering social mentoring while improving the quality of life and level of inclusion. Trabuco Mesa is a proud new member of this wonderful organization and we look forward to supporting and participating in more events in the future.



Valencia Elementary School

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



Celebrating Students

We are proud to host monthly STRIVE assemblies to celebrate students exceeding our expectations. On what is typically the last Friday of each month, each of our big and little Oranges gather in The Grove to recognize students nominated by their

Brendon Morrow Principal

teachers for achieving excellence with our STRIVE rules. Several students from each grade level are acknowledged for their striving to be Respectful, Responsible, and Safe. Honored students join Student Council members to receive their STRIVE certificates and recognition. Our mascot "Squirt" is also there to cheer each student onto the stage with the rest of the attendees joining in applause. Each student's family is invited to join the ceremony and take pictures to commemorate their work prior to our ceremony ending. We love to honor our STRIVE students!



Football Word Search Contest One word in the list is NOT in the word search.

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

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Congratulations to Liam Schlepp Winner of the April Word Search Contests!				L	I	Ρ	Ρ	I	Ν	G	Е	F	J	Ρ	т	R	1

Musical String Instruments 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 July 15, 2025 From the correct entries one name will be drawn to win a \$20 gift certificate redeemable at Barnes & Noble.								Sponsored by Barkate / Nehi Orthodontics BarkateNehiSmiles.com												
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We always treat your children like they are our own!

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The Selfie

Many years ago, when one wanted an image of oneself, an artist was hired. There was a rumor that because these artists charged by the limb, the term *it costs an arm and a leg* came about. If one could not afford an artist, the practice of silhouettes became popular — tracing a shadow of a profile on a piece of black paper and then cutting it out. The 19th century saw a breakthrough with the photographic camera that produced an image on a plate of glass.

These first cameras required one to sit or stand very still for a long period to expose the plate. Therefore, the old tin plates never showed one smiling, for the smile would not hold and would distort the final result. Photographers were used during the Crimean War in the 1850s and were widely used during the American Civil War. Most of the battlefield photo plates were too graphic for the public, so the glass plates were used to make greenhouses.

The next big jump in the camera came with the Eastman Company and paper film. Eastman-Kodak produced the Brownie Box camera that was affordable. The camera was sent off for development and later turned into a disposable camera. The next innovation was the Polaroid camera with self-developing film. The photos often had one person left out of the picture, so the time delay was invented to include everyone at the same time. The camera operator would set the timer and then run to get into the picture frame. Each new change allowed for a faster image and development, so that today, we have the digital age.

The digital camera allows one to take still photos and videos with the same device. This new invention created a fad—the selfie. One would hold out their arm and take a picture of themselves. Then, people felt that their arms were not long enough, so the selfie stick was invented. Social behavior shifted from respect of someone else's photo to a craze of "photo-bombing" other people's photos. It isn't unusual now for people to take photos of their meals, items in a store they are considering buying or want to share with others... So, smile! Now there are cameras everywhere!

D.H.Coop is a retired fire/paramedic and retired teacher having taught IB and AP World History 30 years. He continues to substitute, tutor and consult. www.HistoryDepot.com

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: Kay@schoolnewsrollcall.com (Please put SVUSD 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.																			
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