

School News

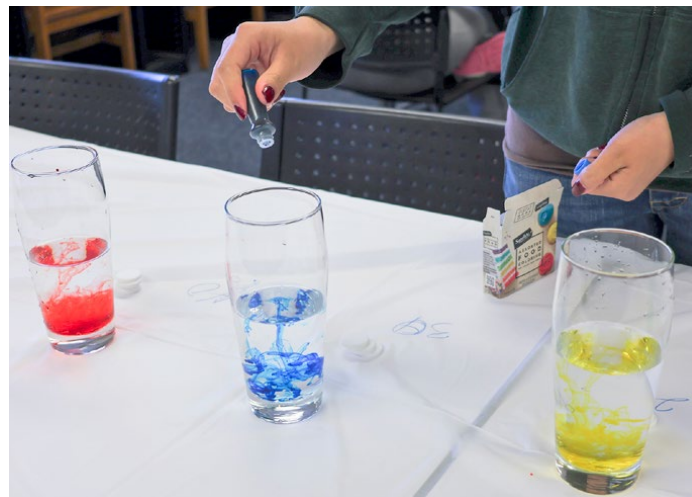
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Covering the Saddleback Valley Unified School District



Volume 9, Issue 31

October 2025



From Classroom to Career: SVUSD Students Explore Cosmetology and Beyond





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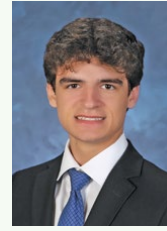
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Dr. Crystal Turner
Superintendent

Saddleback Valley Unified School District empowers students with a wide range of college and career readiness opportunities designed to support their success now and in the future.

Through secondary career technical education (CTE) programs, SVUSD intermediate and high school students connect classroom learning to real-world applications, gain industry-specific skills, build professional networks, participate

in internships and job training, and earn credits or certifications that support a seamless transition into college or the workforce.

For the 2025–26 school year, more than 4,750 students are enrolled in 81 CTE courses across 14 career pathways. These pathways span a wide range of industry sectors, including agriculture and natural resources, business and finance, fashion and interior design, health science and medical technology, and information and communication technologies. While many courses are led by Saddleback Valley teachers, additional options are offered both during and after school in collaboration with the Coastline Regional Occupational Program.

One of the especially popular pathways is design, visual, and media arts, with 42 sections offered this year at the district's four comprehensive high schools—El Toro, Laguna Hills, Mission Viejo, and Trabuco Hills. This pathway includes courses such as broadcast news, TV & video production, multimedia communications design, and computer graphics.

Among the district's newest offerings is the Principles of Cosmetology course at Silverado High School. This hands-on, career-focused course introduces students to hairstyling, skincare, nail care, and salon safety while providing opportunities to practice techniques, build a personal brand, and develop a polished professional image. Students also explore the history of beauty trends, learn about career pathways in the cosmetology industry, and acquire skills that prepare them for advanced training and licensure. The class has already proven to be a hit, filling quickly in its inaugural year.

The Principles of Cosmetology course at Silverado is just one example of how SVUSD equips students with the skills, experiences, and confidence to excel in higher education and thrive in the high-demand careers of the future.

Saddleback Valley Unified School District

25631 Peter A. Hartman Way Mission Viejo, CA 92691 • (949) 586-1234 • svusd.org

School News

Education + Communication = A Better Nation

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Ioana Pal, Psy.D.,
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Stramski Children's
Developmental Center,
Miller Children's & Women's
Hospital Long Beach

Bullying Prevention Starts at Home and in the Classroom

October is National Bullying Prevention Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the impact of bullying and promoting safe, supportive environments for children and teens. In today's world, 1 in 5 children experience bullying, either online or in person. As one of the most frequently reported disciplinary issues in schools, bullying includes behaviors such as being the subject of rumors or lies, being made fun of, name-calling, insults, threats, physical harm, and social exclusion.

Bullying is defined by deliberate and persistent behavior aimed at asserting power over others. It is categorized as an Adverse Childhood Experience—a potentially traumatic event that can have long-lasting effects on a child's development.

Unfortunately, bullying is often dismissed as a childhood rite of passage. Many children feel reluctant to tell adults due to embarrassment or fear, which is why recognizing early signs is essential to preventing long-term consequences.

Signs of bullying parents should be aware of:

- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares

- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away, self-harm, or suicidal thoughts
- Planning revenge or retaliation against others

Bullying can impair cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development, and increase the risk of health issues such as depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and substance abuse.

Caregivers recognizing the impact of bullying is often the first step. Open communication and creating an environment where children feel safe expressing their emotions helps build resilience and emotional well-being. Caregivers should also initiate conversations with teachers to discuss any concerns about a child's behavior or well-being.

Addressing bullying requires teamwork between caregivers, educators, and health care professionals. Child psychologists and school counselors can offer tailored interventions to support a child's mental and emotional health.



Scan to learn more about the various psychosocial program resources at Miller Children's & Women's



Pablo, Age 6

At 11 months, Pablo was fighting for his life.

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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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Educational Services

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




Yvonne Estling
Assistant
Superintendent

Expanded Music Choices


SVUSD is proud to share that we have expanded our Elementary Music program to offer Winds, Strings, and Vocal ensembles to all 5th and 6th grade students. Students in instrumental pathways have the opportunity to borrow from SVUSD an introductory strings (violin) or winds instrument (clarinet or trumpet), along with minor percussion, or they may bring expansion strings (cello or viola) or winds (alto saxophone, baritone, flute, or trombone) instruments for instruction. Through investments from the Arts and Music in Schools (AMS) Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act (Proposition 28), and in collaboration with K-12 music educators in our district, our program prepares students with the essential skills necessary for our Intermediate and High School music programs. These pathways will enhance our district's focus on providing intentional and engaging learning opportunities to students, all while developing their life-long love of music that benefits all future experiences they will undertake.





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Business Services

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



Robert Craven
Assistant
Superintendent

Completed Projects

This summer, the Maintenance and Operations Department completed projects across the district using funds required to be set aside for facilities. Work this year included removing and installing new turf and extensive grass field upgrades at Trabuco Hills High. Asphalt work was undertaken at Foothill Ranch, Olivewood, Gates, and other sites. Roof restorations and concrete work were completed at

Laguna Hills High. Numerous campuses saw refreshes with exterior painting and repairs to create safe, functional, and visually appealing learning environments. Finally, the Grounds crew spent the summer undertaking large landscaping projects, including clearing slopes, repairing irrigation systems, and enhancing campus beauty.

Using restricted Kitchen Infrastructure funds, all secondary schools received new outdoor lunch tables and the kitchens were repainted. In the last 15 months, all district school sites received new lunch tables.



Human Resources

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



Dr. Darvin Jackson
Assistant
Superintendent

Human Resources

Saddleback Valley Unified School District takes the safety of its students, staff, and community with the utmost importance. In support of this effort, SVUSD is in the process of adhering to the annual requirement of updating the Workplace Violence Prevention Plan (WVPP). Specifically, the prior plan only identified three levels of violence. The new plan now reflects a fourth type: Workplace violence committed in the workplace by a person who does not work there but has or is known to have had a

personal relationship with an employee. Also new to the plan is the "Online Form," which will allow employees to provide suggestions, feedback, or report concerns regarding the WVPP or potential safety hazards without fear of reprisal.

This plan also requires review by both the Saddleback Valley Teachers Association and the Classified School Employees Association. Representatives of both Associations were provided a draft revision of the WVPP during the week of September 15, 2025. We look forward to a collaborative process as we continue to focus on providing a safe learning and working environment for all involved.



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Water District

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Registration is required. Visit [SMWD.com/Events](https://www.smwd.com/events).

Student Support Services

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



Dr. Francis Dizon
Assistant
Superintendent

SV Respects

We are proud to celebrate the launch of SV Respects, our very own districtwide anti-bullying initiative, now rolling out at every elementary school. Created by our MTSS SEB TOSAs, SV Respects is designed to build a culture where every student feels safe, valued, and supported.

Students are learning the STOP-WALK-TALK routine through engaging lessons, activities, and even a song written by our music department. Students are creating classroom Respect Agreements and practicing how to be Upstanders—speaking up and acting with courage and kindness.

By integrating with Second Step, our existing social-emotional learning program, SV Respects ensures these lessons are reinforced all year long. This initiative represents a powerful step forward in strengthening connections, fostering kindness, and equipping students with the tools to respond to disrespect in positive ways.



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Dr. Stefan Bean
Superintendent

What Do you Get a Country Turning 250?

It's not a question we ask often — or even every generation. But as the United States approaches its semiquincentennial in 2026, this milestone invites us to reflect on where we've been, who we are, and where we're headed.

Here in Orange County, we have a pretty good idea for a gift: We're inviting young people to help write our nation's soundtrack.

Marking the occasion with a celebration of student voice, the USA 250-OC Theme Song Competition: Celebrating America's 250th Anniversary Through Song is encouraging high school students in grades 9 through 12 to compose original music that honors the founding of our country and the enduring principles that continue to shape our democracy.

Co-hosted by OC Music & Dance, USA 250 Orange County and the Orange County Department of Education, the contest encourages students to reflect creatively on themes of freedom, unity, perseverance and hope. Each song must be no longer than 250 seconds — that's 4 minutes and 10 seconds — and fall into one of eight genres: pop/adult contemporary, rock, hip-hop/rap, country, jazz, R&B/soul, folk or classical.

Top entries in each genre will receive a cash prize and the opportunity to perform live at a countywide Fourth of July celebration in 2026. Students may submit individually or in teams of up to three, and winners will also have the chance to copyright their work.

Submissions are due by Nov. 30, and full contest details are available at link.ocde.us/usa-250-oc.

The contest was introduced earlier this month during a free songwriting workshop hosted by OC Music & Dance and Fender, where student musicians gathered to learn from professionals and collaborate with their peers. It was a powerful reminder of the creativity that lives in our classrooms — and how music continues to inspire connection, storytelling and purpose.

As county superintendent, I'm incredibly proud of the student artists in our schools — and grateful to the educators, mentors and families who nurture their creativity. This competition is more than a celebration of music. It's an invitation to reflect, to express, and to help shape the story of our country through the power of song.

Because maybe, just maybe, what you get a country turning 250 is a generation of young people who are ready and inspired to sing its next verse.



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✉ cosette@coastkeeper.org

☎ 714-850-1965 x1005

Cielo Vista *Elementary School*

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

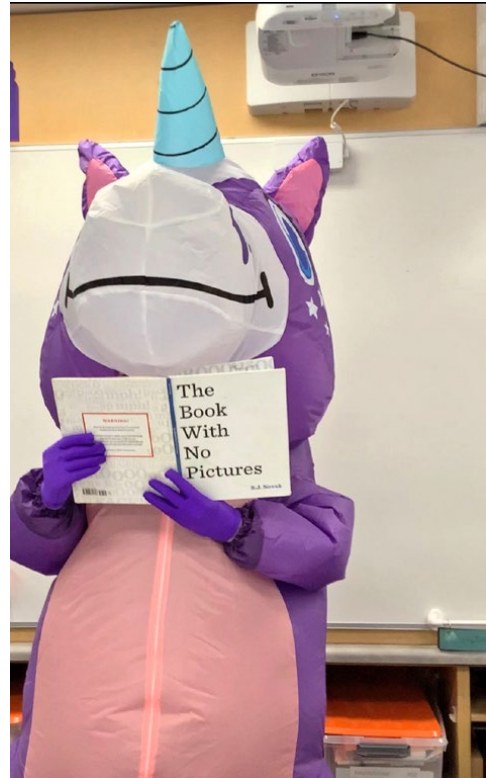


Janette Tyrone
Principal

Masked Reader Contest

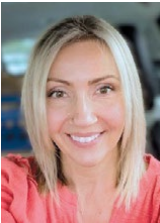
As part of an ongoing effort to promote literacy and foster a love of reading, Cielo Vista students enthusiastically participated in the “Masked Reader” contest. This creative and engaging event featured staff members who disguised both their identities and voices while reading a story on camera. Each day, a new video was released showcasing a different staff member in costume reading a unique book selection.

Students were invited to view the videos and submit their guesses as to who the “Masked Reader” might be. The initiative sparked curiosity and excitement throughout the campus, making reading a fun and interactive experience. The contest was held in conjunction with the school’s Book Fair, organized by the PTA to provide students with greater access to diverse reading materials and to support literacy development. Students who correctly identify the masked readers will be recognized during Monday morning announcements, celebrating their participation and encouraging continued engagement with reading.



de Portola *Elementary School*

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



Kimberly Slawson
Principal

Shining Bright with STAR Expectations

The school year is off to an excellent start at de Portola! We are pleased to welcome 79 new students to our campus and are excited to see them quickly become part of our school community. This year, students are engaging in our district’s new elementary initiative, SV Respects, which emphasizes fostering a culture where every individual feels safe, valued, and supported. This important focus aligns

closely with our commitment to maintaining a positive and inclusive learning environment.

We are also proud to recognize students who demonstrate our STAR expectations: Safety, Taking responsibility, Acting with kindness, and Showing respect. These expectations serve as guiding principles for our campus, and it is inspiring to see students consistently modeling them in their daily interactions.

To further highlight these efforts, we hold monthly STAR Assemblies, where two students from each class are recognized for exemplifying our schoolwide expectations.



Del Cerro *Elementary School*

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



Dawn Lam
Principal

Del Cerro Dolphins Launch 2025-26 with "My Strength, My Superpower"

Del Cerro is off to a fantastic start this school year with our new theme, "My Strength, My Superpower." This message connects perfectly to our school's Career Connected Schools initiative, supported by Connect the Work and the OC Pathways Grant.

Students are beginning the year learning about the RIASEC framework (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional), a tool

that helps them discover their personal strengths and interests. By exploring RIASEC, Dolphins are building early awareness of the many career pathways that might be a good fit for them in the future.

Our teachers and staff are sparking career conversations in age-appropriate ways, empowering students to see their unique talents as superpowers. By recognizing their strengths now, Dolphins will grow confident, future-ready, and prepared to dive into opportunities ahead.

At Del Cerro, every Dolphin's superpower matters — and this year, we're celebrating them all!



Del Lago *Elementary School*

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



Garrett Kerr
Principal

Warm Welcome to Del Lago

Garrett Kerr is starting his first year at Del Lago Elementary as well as his first year as a principal in SVUSD. In the past 25 years, and prior to coming to the Saddleback Valley Unified School District, Garrett worked in Orange Unified and Tustin Unified. His roles have been instructional assistant in special education, teaching at the elementary level, working as

an assistant principal at two different middle schools and a K-8 dual immersion school, coordinating educational technology at the district level, and short stints as an interim principal at various sites.

Since starting at Del Lago Mr. Kerr has been warmly welcomed. He is grateful for all the work that was done prior to his arrival. He is excited to get to know the students, staff, and the community and to build relationships that will help Del Lago grow and continue its strong family feel. GO DOLPHINS!

El Toro High School

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



Dr. James Martin
Principal

Toro Tokens in Action: Chargers are Respectful, Responsible, & Kind

El Toro High School is excited to launch our new MTSS Positive Behavior system! Students are earning "Toro Tokens" by being Respectful, Responsible, and Kind on campus. Toro Tokens can be redeemed at our online store, "Benny's Boutique," where Chargers will find a wide variety of popular rewards. Options include gift cards, special cameos from staff,



front-of-the-line passes, and many more fun incentives. This system not only celebrates students for making positive choices but also reinforces the Charger values that make our school safe, supportive, and welcoming for all. By recognizing and rewarding the everyday actions that build our community, our new MTSS Positive Behavior system helps every Charger thrive while making El Toro a place where respect, responsibility, and kindness shine. Go Chargers!

Esperanza Education Center

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



Raymond Bueche
*District Coordinator,
Special Education*

Welcoming New Staff to Esperanza

Welcome back to a new school year at Esperanza Education Center! We are excited to continue building independence, self-determination, and opportunities for all of our students. This year, we are thrilled to welcome new teachers Sovey Long-Latteri and Michelle McNeal, along with instructional aides Cullen Warren, Darien Nuckols, and Susan Puchalski. Their dedication, energy, and fresh perspectives will strengthen our community and enrich the learning experiences we provide. Together, with our returning staff and families, we look forward to a year of growth, collaboration, and celebrating the many successes of our students.



Foothill Ranch *Elementary School*

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



Christina Stevenson
Principal

Kicking Off a New Year at Foothill Ranch

Foothill Ranch Elementary was thrilled to welcome our Bobcats as we embarked on a new school year! There's something truly special about starting kindergarten, transitioning to first grade, or knowing

that you'll soon be heading off to intermediate school. At Foothill Ranch, we believe that building connections and creating memories is at the heart of this exciting time.

To kick off the year, we hosted a self-guided walking tour of our campus for our families, followed by many parent coffee gatherings. Our new Bobcat kindergarten students were invited to an ice cream social with the PTA, where they could meet new friends.

Families also joined us for a special back-to-school lunch, an opportunity to meet playground supervisors and connect fellow parents. We can't wait for a fantastic year ahead filled with fun and learning!



Ralph A. Gates *Dual Language Immersion Elementary School*

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



Diana Clearwater
Principal

Grammy Award Winners 1, 2, 3 Andrés at Gates!

Gates Gators were so excited to host the Grammy award-winning children's music duo 1, 2, 3 Andrés, known as "rock stars for little language learners," at assemblies for our TK-2nd grade classes. This is the second time they have

performed at Gates. Andrés comes from Colombia and Christina from a Colombian family in the Midwest. Not only do they perform lively concerts in Spanish and English on stages across the United States and Latin America, and are co-hosts of an award-winning PBS podcast, but their songs and videos are part of our Spanish Language Arts curriculum. Students and staff danced and sang together in a high energy show in English and Spanish! At the end of each show, students and staff were able to take photos with the performers and get a hug or a high five. It was a fun time and a great experience for all.



Glen Yermo *Elementary School*

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



Jennifer Televik
Principal

CA PBIS Gold Award

At Glen Yermo, our mountain lions ROAR by being Respectful, Offer Kindness, Always Safe, and Responsible. We are excited to be recognized this fall with the CA PBIS Gold Award for the incredible work our staff does to teach, reinforce, and respond to student behavior across campus. In addition to recognizing students daily for their great behavior,



we come together as a school to celebrate individual students who go above and beyond in demonstrating what it means to ROAR. Our PBIS Team also helps to recommend additional supports for students who need a bit more help with daily behavior. This year, we have added a new focus on scholarly behaviors, such as asking thoughtful questions and collaborating with others to solve problems, as well as the SV Respects program, which teaches students how to stand up for themselves and others in tough situations.

La Madera *Elementary School*

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



Jennifer Gass
Principal

Koalas Shine Bright at Back-to-School GLOW Dance

La Madera Elementary kicked off the 2025–2026 school year with energy and excitement, highlighted by the PTA's Back-to-School GLOW Dance. Our koala families came together for a night full of neon lights, music, and fun, setting a positive tone for the year ahead. Students and parents enjoyed

dancing under the glow, capturing memories at the photo booth, and savoring delicious treats from local food trucks.

The GLOW Dance provided a wonderful opportunity for families to connect with one another and celebrate the start of a new school year. Events like this reinforce the strong sense of community at La Madera and promise a year filled with learning, friendship, and school spirit.

The 2025–2026 school year is officially off to a glowing start!



La Paz *Intermediate School*

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



Tiffany Harville
Principal

Connect, Reflect, Empower

This year, La Paz is embracing the theme Connect, Reflect, and Empower, and our recent Lunch with a Leopard event was the perfect example of that spirit in action. Over 500 students, families, and community members joined us for a wonderful afternoon celebrating the vibrant La Paz community. Families had the opportunity to share lunch with their students while connecting with other families and staff. ASB and Lenny the Leopard, our mascot, made the event extra special, leading games that everyone could enjoy, from students to siblings. Music, laughter, and fun filled the lower field as families engaged with one another and celebrated what it means to be a Leopard. It was inspiring to see the diverse families that make up our school community coming together in support of our students. Events like this truly reflect our commitment to connecting, reflecting, and empowering every member of La Paz.



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
*District
Coordinator*

La Tierra ECC Celebrates First Spirit Day in Red

La Tierra Early Childhood Center kicked off its very first spirit day with a bright and energetic celebration of the color red. Staff and students alike dressed head to toe in red, filling the school with a vibrant sea of color. The day wasn't just about school spirit; it was a hands-on learning experience. Teachers incorporated the theme into classroom activities that align with the California Preschool Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations. Students used the color red to support knowledge in color identification, sorting, patterning, color mixing, and counting activities. By integrating academics with fun, the spirit day fostered both a sense of community and hands-on learning. Students strengthened their early math, literacy, and problem-solving skills while proudly showing off their red outfits. The excitement of this first color spirit day sets the stage for more color-filled celebrations to come.



Laguna Hills *High School*

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



Brent Dohling
Principal

LHHS Student Sworn in as Student Board Member

At the September 11 Board Meeting, Laguna Hills Senior Ethan Keschner was sworn in as the SVUSD Student Board Member. Each year, one student from each high school is selected as a student representative to report news from their site at the monthly board

meetings. Of these students, only one gets chosen as the SVUSD Student Board Member. For the past two years, this role has been bestowed upon an LHHS student, and Ethan is honored to carry that responsibility. Ethan describes his role as “The bridge or liaison between every student in SVUSD and the Board of Education.” When asked what he is most excited about, Ethan replied, “I am excited to represent LHHS, but also to ensure that every student, regardless of their background, has a voice”. The Hawks wish Ethan the best and are confident in his ability to represent the students of SVUSD. And as always, Go Hawks!



Lake Forest *Elementary School*

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



Alfredo Torres
Principal

Morning Greetings

Each morning at Lake Forest Elementary begins with a simple ritual that sets the tone for the entire day: welcoming students and families at the gate. A smile, a handshake, or a high-five signals to every child, “You belong here.” I see the difference immediately—students walk onto campus

energized, ready to learn, and eager to connect with their teachers and peers. Those few minutes are powerful. They calm nerves, spark joy, and create a shared sense of purpose.

Greeting parents and guardians is just as important. A brief conversation or nod of recognition reassures families that their children are in caring hands. It's also a daily opportunity to listen, celebrate wins, and partner on challenges. Over time, these small moments stitch together strong relationships and a campus culture defined by trust and optimism. Starting the day together reminds us why we're here: to help every Dolphin learn, grow, and shine.



Linda Vista *IB Magnet Elementary School*

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



Dr. Shannon Wyatt
Principal

Disney Musicals in Schools Aladdin Kids is Coming to Linda Vista IB Magnet!

Linda Vista IB Magnet School is thrilled to announce that this year's school musical will be Aladdin Kids, presented in partnership with the Segerstrom Center for the Arts. Now in our third year with this program, our students are ready to take the stage with more confidence and experience than ever before. Through this partnership, our school receives valuable support and resources that make it possible to produce a high-quality performance while also helping students discover the joy of musical theater. Aladdin Kids is a wonderful story filled with colorful characters, unforgettable songs, and timeless lessons about friendship, courage, and staying true to oneself.

To make the experience welcoming for all, we will begin with an "Introduction to Musical Theater"

workshop during the school day for students who are curious but may not have participated before. This session will introduce the basics of acting, singing, and stage performance in a fun and supportive environment. Students of all experience levels are encouraged to participate—whether they are hoping for a lead role, joining the ensemble, or simply excited to try something new. The excitement will build throughout the year as our cast prepares for the big performances of Aladdin Kids in March 2026, when our community will be invited to come together and celebrate the incredible talents of our students.

Being part of a school musical is about more than just performing on stage; it builds confidence, teamwork, and creativity. Thanks to our continued partnership with the Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Linda Vista students have the opportunity to grow as performers and as learners. We cannot wait to see our community come together to celebrate the magic of Aladdin Kids!

Lomarena *Elementary School*

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



Dr. Grace Cruikshank
Principal

Lomarena Lions have PRIDE!

At Lomarena Elementary we take great pride in our commitment to serve the children and families of our Laguna Hills Community. This year, we joyfully welcomed several of our San Joaquin neighbors into our Lion PRIDE.

We are proud to be a warm neighborhood school, holding high expectations for ourselves and our students. At Lomarena, students will experience a hands-on learning approach with real-world applications. Our acronym of PRIDE is at the core of our school culture as our entire staff aims to promote and explicitly teach our shared community values. These values are: Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Diligence, and Empathy. As a result of our efforts, we recently earned a Gold Level State recognition for our Positive Behavior

Intervention Systems. Pictured here is a glimpse of our students preparing for our Heroes Breakfast Student held on September 11, where our Lomarena Lions honored all first responders, active military, and veterans.



Los Alisos *Intermediate School*

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



Michael Marzilli
Principal

A Great Start to the School Year

Los Alisos is off to an incredible start as our Lobos have returned to school with energy, enthusiasm, and pride! The DEN is buzzing with excitement as students dive into learning, connect with classmates, and show what it means to be part of our PACK. Our students have shown up with positivity, purpose, and a passion for being part of something bigger, and it's only just beginning!

One of the biggest highlights so far? Our first PBIS Pawsitive Exchange! Students have been proudly earning Pawsitive Points by showing Respect, Responsibility, and Readiness all around campus, and last week, they cashed them in for some seriously awesome rewards. The smiles, cheers, and celebrations were a perfect reminder of what makes our school so special.

With this kind of momentum, there's no limit to what we can accomplish. The PACK is BACK and stronger than ever! Let's go, Lobos!



Melinda Heights *Elementary School*

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



Wendie Hauschild
Principal

2025 CA PBIS Gold Award Recipient

Melinda Heights Elementary is proud to be recognized as a 2025 CA PBIS Gold Award recipient! MHES students ROAR each day by being Responsible, Owning their choices, and Acting with integrity and Respect!

Expected positive student behavior is explicitly taught by teachers and playground assistants at key campus locations during our ROAR Safari, followed



up by an assembly with the principal to learn about SV Respects. Positive behavior is recognized by ROAR tickets, visits to the ROAR store, positive phone calls home, ROAR cart activities, trimester ROAR button awards, and monthly student-led Power of the Paw assembly drawings and recognitions. Our Tier 1 and Tier 2 behavior teams, composed of dedicated teachers and administrators, meet monthly to discuss behavior data and to determine both individual student support needs and schoolwide behavior reteaching topics.

Parents are our ROAR partners, regularly collaborating on individual behavior support needs and sharing in the celebrations.

Mission Viejo *High School*

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



Tricia Osborne
Principal

MVHS - Best Public School Award Again!

Mission Viejo High School welcomes you to the 2025-26 school year! Our tradition, academics, co-curricular programs, exceptional school spirit, and culture remain strong. MVHS received an award as a 2025 Best High School in U.S. News and World Report. For the third consecutive year, MVHS has been awarded the Best Public High School in ParentingOC Magazine's Readers' Choice Awards. We

are excited to share that MVHS was recently named a National Banner Unified Champion School, which is the highest honor awarded to Unified Champion Schools. We are committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environment for all students. It is our goal that every Diablo student feels connected, supports each other, and embraces diverse and global perspectives. We are proud of our Associated Student Body for their work in promoting a positive culture, and our amazing Diablo spirit is evident on campus and at school events! Go Diablos!



Montevideo *Elementary School*

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



Lisa Miller
Principal

Montevideo's Long Standing Patriotic & Leadership Tradition

Every Monday morning, Montevideo begins the week with a long-standing tradition—a school-wide patriotic “Flag Assembly,” proudly led by our sixth-grade student leaders. This unifying event starts with our Color Guard, who walks through the middle of the audience proudly holding and crossing the California and United States flags. All Montevideo Mountaineers and families then join in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and singing a monthly patriotic song together.

Student leaders stand at the podium to share exciting school news, deliver an inspiring challenge to show “ROCK” positive behaviors, and present the Playground Supervisors’ “Good Behavior” award to one primary and

one upper-grade student who stood out during recess and lunch as a model of being Responsible, Optimistic, Courageous, and Kind. One student shared, “Good behavior is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.” Another student added, “When we lead with kindness and respect, others will follow.”

Attendance is another area that is acknowledged and celebrated at these assemblies. A special shout-out goes to one primary and upper grade classroom that had the best weekly attendance. Then, at the end of the month, the primary and upper grade classrooms that have the best monthly attendance will receive an incentive or special activity together.

The assembly concludes where everyone participates in spirited cheers and chants, filling the room with Montevideo pride. What an exciting day it is to be a Montevideo Mountaineer!

Olivewood *Elementary School*

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



Alex Perez
Principal

Olivewood Elementary Welcomes Students to the 2025-2026 School Year

Welcome to the 2025–2026 school year at Olivewood Elementary! Our Mustang family is truly excited to begin another year of learning, growing, and celebrating together. This year is especially meaningful as we warmly welcome the San Joaquin community of students and families to Olivewood. The joining of our two school communities brings new friendships, shared traditions, and an even stronger spirit of unity that will benefit every child.

At Olivewood, our mission guides our daily work: we help every child grow by focusing on strong instruction, clear language, active participation, and meaningful collaboration. This approach ensures that every student is supported in reaching their potential, while also developing the skills to learn from one another and contribute to our school community.

Our vision reflects who we are and what we strive for: we see Olivewood students as curious, confident learners who are ready for the future. With respect, teamwork, and a love of learning as their foundation, our Mustangs will leave Olivewood prepared not only to succeed academically but also to make a positive difference in their world.

The 2025–2026 school year promises to be filled with engaging instruction, new opportunities, and lasting memories. Our dedicated teachers are committed to building strong foundations in reading, writing, math, and beyond, while keeping learning both challenging and fun. We will celebrate student progress at every step, and encourage resilience, kindness, and collaboration in all aspects of school life.

With the tremendous support of our caregivers, families, and PTA, Olivewood continues to be a place where students thrive both academically and socially. Together, as one Mustang family, we are ready to create meaningful experiences, achieve great things, and make this year an incredible one for every student.

Portola Hills *Elementary School*

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



Alison Bruner
Principal

Portola Hills Elementary Fall Festival Brings Families Together

On September 5, Portola Hills Elementary School hosted its annual Fall Festival, an after-school tradition fully funded by the PTA. The campus was transformed into a lively, Super Mario-themed celebration where families gathered to enjoy an evening of food, fun, and community spirit.

The blacktop was lined with food trucks offering a variety of delicious choices, and the giant cotton candy quickly became a student favorite. Families also enjoyed visiting community booths, trying their luck at carnival games, and stopping by the hair-color station, face painting, and temporary tattoos.

The back area was full of excitement with a giant inflatable obstacle course and a bubble station, which happened to be Principal Bruner's top pick of the evening.

This three-hour event was more than just fun—it was a wonderful way to bring our Portola Hills families together and celebrate the start of the school year.



Rancho Cañada *Elementary School*

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



Kristin Fowler
Principal

New Faces and Traditions

Rancho Cañada Elementary is buzzing with excitement as the new school year kicks off with many new faces and traditions! Leading the way is Principal Kristin Fowler, who brings energy and a student-first focus to the Rancho Cañada community. Joining her is Plant Foreman Fernando Quintino, who is already hard at work keeping the campus safe and welcoming. The school has also welcomed several new teachers and

many new students, each bringing fresh enthusiasm to classrooms and playgrounds.

Another exciting addition this year is the Friday Flag tradition. Each Friday morning, the school gathers as a community for the Pledge of Allegiance, MTSS SEB raffle drawings, important announcements, and student presentations. This weekly event fosters school spirit and provides a positive way to celebrate achievements together. With strong leadership, new energy, and a focus on connection, Rancho Cañada is off to a fantastic start to the school year.



Rancho Santa Margarita *Intermediate School*

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



Tyler Morgan
Principal

Welcome to the 2025–2026 School Year!

My name is Tyler Morgan, and I am honored to serve as the Principal of RSM Intermediate. Now entering my sixth year as part of this amazing community, I remain committed to building strong relationships and ensuring that every student receives the highest quality education.

My wife Kristen and I, along with our four children—Presley (18), Charlotte (16), Hudson (11), and Robert (6)—feel truly blessed to be part of the RSM family. This summer, we enjoyed camping, surfing, and soaking up the California sunshine.

Our theme for this school year is "Be Your Best Self." This message challenges and inspires our students to show up each day with effort, resilience, and a

commitment to growth. As we look ahead, we're excited about all that lies ahead and confident in our ability to achieve great things—both individually and as a school community.

Throughout the year, we will focus on empowering students to realize their full potential. With the right support, guidance, and hard work, our students are capable of incredible accomplishments. Together—with our outstanding teachers, counselors, and staff—we will provide a meaningful and engaging educational experience that fosters a lifelong love of learning.

I look forward to meeting each of you and beginning this year's journey together as we all strive to be our best selves. Your partnership and involvement are essential to our shared success. Thank you for trusting us with your child's education and well-being.

Robinson *Elementary School*

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



Suzy McMasters
Principal

Robinson - A National Banner School

Robinson Elementary School is proud to be named a 2024-2028 National Unified Champion School for the second time in a row. We are proud to have been the first elementary school in California to become a National Unified Champion School through the Special Olympics from 2020-2024. We received this honor again by demonstrating a commitment to inclusion by meeting ten

standards of excellence, earning a national banner! The ten components and achievement standards encompass Young Athletes, inclusive youth leadership, whole school engagement, and sustainability. If you'd like to learn more, please see the National Standards for Elementary Schools or contact Robinson Elementary School. Way to go Rattlers!!!



NATIONAL UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOL

Santiago *STEAM Magnet Elementary School*

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



Dr. Lindsey Gatfield
Principal

SVUSD Board Member Visits Santiago STEAM

Santiago STEAM Magnet welcomed a special guest last week as SVUSD Board Vice President Barbara Schulman spent the morning touring the campus, connecting with students, and showing her appreciation for teachers.

Vice President Schulman visited each classroom, taking time to engage with students in every grade level. Students were eager to share their ideas, and many expressed excitement at having her take such an interest in their learning. In addition to sharing excitement about their projects, she spoke with students about the concept of "safe strangers" and reminded them how essential safety and kindness are on a school campus.

In addition to visiting with students, Vice President Schulman made a point to thank teachers for their dedication and innovative instruction. She highlighted the role of educators in inspiring lifelong learning and preparing students for the future. Her visit underscored SVUSD's commitment to fostering safe, supportive, and inspiring schools.



Serrano *Intermediate School*

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



Jordan Reed
Principal

First Day of School

As part of our MTSS-SEB program for positive student supports, our teachers led students through tours on the first day of school. At each station, teachers shared the best ways for students to SOAR, or

to be Safe, Organized, Accountable, and Respectful. By communicating clear expectations for student behavior, Serrano staff members encourage students to be their best selves in middle school. We reinforce these objectives during homeroom classes through our Serrano Flight School program lessons, which further highlight Serrano's values.



Silverado *High School*

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



Justin Stanfield
Principal

Eagles are Inspiring

I am thrilled to begin my journey as Principal of Silverado High School and to be part of this incredible community. The energy and enthusiasm I've witnessed in these first weeks have been truly inspiring, and it's clear that our Eagles are ready to SOAR to new heights this year!

We have had an outstanding start to the school year. Walking through our halls, I see engaged students diving into their coursework, dedicated teachers bringing innovative lessons to life, and support staff going above and beyond to create a welcoming environment for everyone. The commitment to learning that our staff and students at Silverado have demonstrated is nothing short of amazing.

This year, we're building on our strong foundation of academic excellence while embracing new opportunities for growth. Whether it's in our classrooms, through our arts programs, or in our numerous activities, every Eagle has the chance to discover their passions and reach their full potential.

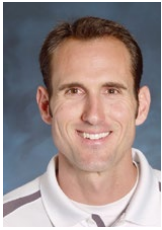
I'm excited to work alongside our exceptional faculty, support staff, students, families, and community members as we continue to foster an environment where every student can succeed.

Together, we will ensure that Silverado High School remains a place where learning thrives, relationships flourish, and dreams take flight.

Here's to an incredible year ahead – let's watch our Eagles SOAR!

SVUSD *Virtual Academy K-12*

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



Glenn Giokaris
Principal

SVA Student is World Cup Ready

SVA senior Ethan Scally is charting an extraordinary path on and off the field. In April 2025, he made his professional soccer debut with LAFC2. Additionally, Ethan represents his mother's home country of Japan as the goalkeeper and captain of the U-17 National Team, which he recently led to victory in Saudi Arabia, qualifying

the squad for the World Cup in Qatar this November. Though offered a professional contract, he has decided to attend Cornell University to play soccer and study Applied Economics and Management. While Ethan maintains his goal of playing full-time in MLS, he also values preparing for a career beyond his playing days.

SVA is grateful to play a role in supporting him with the academic flexibility and teacher support that allows him to pursue his passion and chart his own course.

We are looking forward to cheering him on at the World Cup in Qatar!



Trabuco *Elementary School*

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



Erin Hansen
Administrative Designee

A Strong Start at Trabuco Elementary

Trabuco Elementary welcomes new leadership this year as Mrs. Erin Hansen steps into the role of TOSA – Administrative Designee. While new to this position, Mrs. Hansen is beginning her third year at Trabuco and is eager to continue the wonderful work already happening on campus. She

will partner with Ms. Jan Tyrone, principal of Cielo Vista Elementary, to support a school community known for its academic excellence, environmental stewardship, and strong family connections.

Mrs. Hansen looks forward to building on Trabuco's strengths by supporting Green Team initiatives, collaborating with PTA to create meaningful parent connections, and working alongside staff to provide engaging and innovative instruction. The school also celebrates the addition of new staff members who are already making a positive impact.

With SV Respects underway, farm and garden lessons in full swing, and families coming together, Trabuco is off to a strong start to an exciting year ahead.



Trabuco Hills *High School*

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



Alicia Foulk
Principal

Saddleback College Business Dual Enrollment CTE Pathway at THHS

During the 2024–2025 school year, Trabuco Hills High School launched a new three-year Career and Technology Education (CTE) Pathway in partnership with Saddleback College. Through this collaboration, students have the opportunity to complete six college-level business courses on the Trabuco Hills campus as part of dual enrollment. The sequence includes Introduction to Business and Social Media Marketing in Year 1, Marketing and E-Commerce in Year 2, and Entrepreneurship in Year 3.

In its first year, more than 175 students enrolled in this innovative program. Due to continued high demand, the pathway has expanded to six sections of Year 1 courses taught by THHS teacher Mr. Cooper, along with three sections of Year 2 courses led by Saddleback College professor Mr. Hariri. By engaging in this pathway, students gain valuable exposure to college-level coursework, strengthening both their academic preparation and their readiness to succeed in future educational and professional pursuits.

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

Welcome Back, Bulldogs!

The Trabuco Mesa Bulldogs are in the full swing of a new school year! The first day of school was filled with cheers and excitement thanks to our “Welcoming Squad”—a team of volunteer 6th graders who brought signs, pompoms, whistles, and clappers to welcome students onto campus for what’s sure to be a great school year. The OC Register was on hand as well,

capturing photos and stories from our families as they came back to school. We are also excited to welcome some new faces to our teaching staff—Mrs. Thompson, Ms. Cross, Mrs. Diaz, Mrs. Larson, Ms. Alvarez, and Ms. Ferro! And welcome back to Mrs. Alhanati, Ms. Jones, Mrs. Dooley, and Ms. Anderson! They are wonderful additions to our already amazing team of dedicated teachers and staff. Trabuco Mesa is a great place to be, and we are ready for another awesome year together. Go Bulldogs!



Valencia *Elementary School*

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



Brendon Morrow
Principal

Valencia Strives

It is with pleasure that I welcome our community to another fantastic school year. Along with academics, our staff will continue to focus on kindness and safety amongst both our children and adults this year. I am so thankful our community understands some of our safety procedures may include things that are more time-consuming or less convenient for our parents. I am equally

thankful that our staff and parents continuously set high expectations and remain stellar examples of kindness each day.

Our school's first Expectations Rotations have taken place. With the focus on STRIVING to be Respectful,

Responsible, and Safe, students will earn STRIVE Tickets from our staff for exhibiting these taught expectations. Individual, classroom, and school-wide incentives will be available at our STRIVE Store throughout the year.

For anyone who has not already done so, please feel free to introduce yourself in writing or as you see me around. I am excited to continue this journey and be your partner in education. On behalf of our entire staff, it is an absolute pleasure and a huge responsibility to take your most prized possession into our care each day. Thank you for your trust, your open mind, and most of all, your support.

For additional resources beyond this message, please visit the other links on our website, where you will be able to access useful information, including links for PTA and electronic newsletters.

Orange County Department of Education

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



Dr. Stefan Bean
Superintendent

A New School Year, a Strategic Roadmap, and How One Experience Can Change a Student's Life

I can still see the sun-splashed blacktop at Green Elementary School in San Diego. In third grade, I navigated recess in my wheelchair, eager to play games but often uncertain how to break in. Then one day, something changed.

A Paralympic athlete — strong, confident and seated in a sleek racing wheelchair — visited campus to share his story and challenge students to a 100-meter dash. One by one, he left every competitor in the dust.

Later, I saw his car, outfitted with hand controls. I noticed the way he carried himself — capable, independent and assured. Until that day, I hadn't fully imagined those possibilities for myself. That single moment expanded my vision of what was possible and, in subtle but lasting ways, shifted how my classmates saw me, too.

The experience taught me something I carry to this day: Every student needs a connection that inspires them — a spark.

For some, that spark is found on the athletic field or in a club. For others, it might be a guest speaker, a hands-on project or a trusted adult who sees their potential and makes them feel like they belong.

Last year, I worked alongside educators, parents and

members of our community to develop a shared vision for how we can ensure all students in Orange County have the opportunities and support they need to thrive.

We called it our 5-3-1 Strategic Plan because it's based on five goals, three priorities for supporting our districts, and one bold audacious goal for OCDE's own alternative education program. Components of the plan include expanding inclusive career technical education, fostering emotional intelligence, integrating AI in education, improving school safety and exploring new funding strategies to fuel innovative programs.

The Orange County Department of Education is uniquely positioned to lead this charge. Not only do we provide direct instruction to some of the county's most vulnerable student populations through programs like ACCESS and Connections, we also deliver essential support services to the 28 local school districts we serve.

In both capacities, our mission is to help schools and communities create the kinds of experiences that inspire students to see their own potential and find their place.

As we begin this new school year, I encourage every educator, mentor, coach and community partner to consider the difference they can make. Sometimes all it takes is one activity, one opportunity or even one conversation to change the trajectory of a student's life.

I know this because it happened to me. And I believe it can happen for every child in Orange County.