

School News

Education + Communication = A Better Nation

Covering the Saddleback Valley Unified School District



Volume 9, Issue 33

May 2026



**Celebrating SVUSD
Excellence Across
Academics, Athletics,
Activities, and the Arts**



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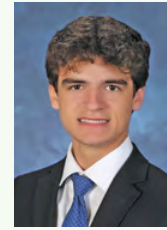
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Celebrating SVUSD Excellence Across Academics, Athletics, Activities, and the Arts

Saddleback Valley Unified School District students and staff continue to demonstrate excellence across academics, athletics, activities, and the arts—reflecting the depth of talent, dedication, and support found throughout the district.

Academic achievement remains a hallmark of SVUSD schools. This year, La Paz Intermediate School was recognized as a California Distinguished School, a designation that reflects its strong academic performance, positive school culture, and commitment to student success. In addition, Trabuco Hills High School earned the 2026 California Exemplary Arts Education Award, underscoring the school's outstanding integration of arts education within a rigorous academic environment.

SVUSD athletic programs continue to set a high standard for competition and teamwork. Just one example of this is Laguna Hills High School's major milestone as

its girls and boys basketball programs each secured a CIF title, marking exceptional seasons and highlighting the dedication of student-athletes and coaches across the district.

Districtwide activities continue to strengthen community connections and highlight the people who make SVUSD thrive. The annual SVUSD Teacher of the Year Celebration and Community Recognition Dinner each brought together educators, families, and community partners to honor outstanding staff contributions and recognize individuals who go above and beyond in supporting students.

Creativity is flourishing across SVUSD campuses, with student artists earning recognition at the county level. This year, 22 SVUSD students were named Orange County Artist of the Year nominees, showcasing exceptional talent in visual and media arts and reflecting the district's continued commitment to fostering artistic expression.

From classrooms to courts, performance spaces to community events, SVUSD continues to shine through the achievements of its students and staff—demonstrating excellence in every corner of the four A's.

School News

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A Moment to Reflect – and a Look Ahead



Dr. Stefan Bean
Superintendent

As the room began to fill for the Orange County State of Education event on March 13, I paused for a moment to take it all in. Educators, school leaders, elected officials and community partners were all coming together, each bringing a unique perspective and area of focus.

What stood out wasn't our different roles. It was what brought us together — the collective belief in our students and in what is possible for them.

That sense of shared purpose stayed with me throughout the day, especially as we heard from our guest speaker, Adán Correa. A Santa Ana High School graduate, Cal State Fullerton alum and advocate for the neurodivergent community, Adán is known to many from the Netflix series "Love on the Spectrum." He shared his journey with humor, honesty and a genuine sense of joy.

Adán is a remarkable young man and the perfect speaker for our event, not just because of who he is, but because of how he got there. In his own words, he is where he is today because of the steady presence of people who believed in him and supported him, including

teachers, coaches, counselors and family. It's a reminder of something we all know and the recurring theme of my address: No one gets there alone.

That idea feels especially important right now. We are seeing real progress in Orange County's schools — higher-than-ever graduation rates, improving attendance and expanded opportunities through career pathways and innovation.

At the same time, our work is becoming more complex. Student needs are growing, expectations continue to evolve, and schools are being asked to do more, often with fewer resources. The question, then, isn't only how we respond to challenges. It's how we continue building on what's working.

For me, that means staying grounded in what matters most, like continuing to center belonging and connection so our students feel seen and supported, while staying aligned in our efforts so the work happening across classrooms, schools and districts adds up to something greater.

It also means being intentional about how we support the adults doing this work by protecting their time,

See OCDE • Page 5

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reducing unnecessary burdens and keeping the focus on students. Just as important is continuing to listen, because the most meaningful insights often come directly from the students and communities we serve.

When I look across Orange County, I'm proud to say I see these efforts in action every day. I see educators showing up for students in ways that often go unseen. I see leaders making thoughtful and sometimes difficult decisions in service of their communities. I see partnerships forming that strengthen this work.

That is what progress looks like.

As we look ahead, I keep coming back to a simple question that I posed on March 13: Where can we better align our efforts so that no student walks alone?

It's a question we will continue to answer together, not necessarily through high-level decisions but in more subtle ways like how we as educators collaborate, how we prioritize our work, and how we support students, communities and one another. Because in the end, what defines us is the consistency of how we show up for each other and for our students.

The 2026 State of Education is in the books. But the state of education? It continues to grow stronger, thanks to the collective efforts of educators, families, students and community partners.

I'm grateful to be part of this work with you.

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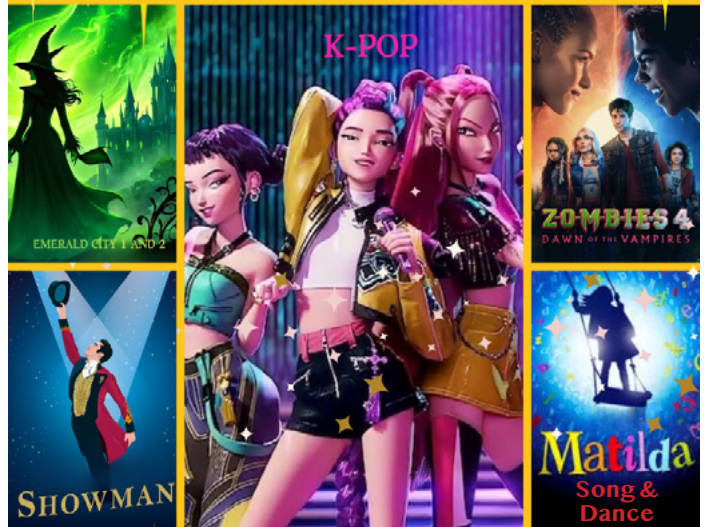


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Business Services

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



Serrano 2-Story Classroom Building Project

The Serrano Intermediate School 2-Story Classroom Building represents a major milestone in the District's commitment to providing modern, safe, and flexible learning environments for students.

Robert Craven
Assistant
Superintendent

The project broke ground in March 2025 and was completed on schedule in April 2026. Early site preparation included relocating portable classrooms and

demolishing outdated portables to clear space for the new facility.

The new building includes 12 classrooms, restrooms, and a two-stop elevator, providing full accessibility. Site improvements include new utilities, landscaping, upgraded bike storage, security fencing, improved campus signage, and a new school logo mural that enhances campus identity and pride. Outdoor enhancements add six new basketball



courts, including a solar-reflective feature court and a multi-use court designed for both basketball and volleyball.

Developed with PBK Architects, Balfour Beatty, and DSA oversight, the project reflects strong collaboration and delivers a lasting investment in student success and future-ready learning environments for Serrano.

Educational Services

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



Intermediate Schools Celebrate Intramural Tournaments

Across our district's four intermediate schools, the energy of friendly competition and collaborative spirit comes alive through a dynamic series of intramural tournaments spanning the entire school year. Rotating between campuses, each school takes a turn as host, with boys' and girls' teams squaring off in flag football, soccer, volleyball, basketball, track, and chess. Entering its third year, the program has grown into one

of the most anticipated traditions in the district, building camaraderie and campus pride among participants.

At the conclusion of each event, a boys' and a girls' champion earn the honor of taking home a trophy, a lasting symbol of their hard work and dedication. The traveling format gives every school a chance to open its doors, show off its campus, and welcome the competitive excitement. Beyond the scoreboards, students walk away with lasting friendships and valuable life skills developed through every practice and match.

Year after year, the intramural program proves to be a powerful force in uniting school communities, championing healthy rivalries, physical well-being, and the kind of teamwork that leaves an impression long after the final whistle blows.

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Human Resources

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



Dr. Darvin Jackson
Assistant Superintendent

Recruitment and Retention

Many school districts in California are experiencing declining enrollment, as is Saddleback Valley Unified School District (SVUSD). Over the past several years, SVUSD has attended many career fairs to recruit highly qualified staff members and has successfully placed them at many sites within our district. This year's recruitment is slightly different, as we will be seeking candidates for hard-to-fill positions, specifically in the Dual

Language Immersion program and our Special Education Department. We are optimistic that many of our vacant general education positions may be filled by those who have previously served in permanent positions at other sites or in temporary positions. As a result, the Human Resources

Department has spent the past several months identifying vacant positions and ensuring that SVUSD adheres to the respective Association's Collective Bargaining Agreement and all fair hiring practices.

To further the creation of teaching profession pathways in Special Education for those interested among our classified staff, Dr. Dizon, Assistant Superintendent, Student Support Services, and Dr. Jackson, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, met with the Dean of Education at Chapman University in April to discuss viable options. The initial meeting was positive as the team identified financial opportunities that could reduce, if not eliminate, the cost of earning a credential for our classified members. As a result, the team agreed to further research the efforts required to create clear pathways to a Special Education teaching credential for those classified members who are interested.

Student Support Services

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



Dr. Francis Dizon
Assistant Superintendent

Special Olympics of Southern California Heart of A Champion Gala

On Saturday, April 18, 2026, Special Olympics of Southern California held their annual Heart of a Champion fundraising Gala at Pasea Hotel & Spa in Huntington

Beach. The event was sold out, and efforts raised \$263,217 to support year-round training and competitions at no cost to athletes. Saddleback Valley Unified School District was proud to have 14 administrators and teachers in attendance supporting the cause. This year's theme was "U.N.I.T.Y" celebrating every voice, nurturing acceptance, inspiring inclusion, and putting teamwork into action. SVUSD's partnership with the Special Olympics continues to grow stronger and has greatly benefited our students. The district looks forward to continuing this partnership for the benefit of the SVUSD and broader community.





Jennifer Rodriguez
coordinator,
Injury Prevention Program,
Miller Children's & Women's Hospital

Playing it Safe on the Playground

Miller Children's & Women's Hospital offers tips to help keep children safe on the playground.

Visiting the playground is more than fun. It's an opportunity for children to develop physically, mentally, and socially through unstructured play. However, in the United States, approximately 200,000 children seek medical attention in emergency departments each year for injuries related to playground equipment.

At Miller Children's & Women's Hospital, the Injury Prevention Program is dedicated to providing safety education to children and families in our community.

Playground safety tips:

- Supervision isn't negotiable; it's imperative
- Ensure playground equipment is suitable for your child's age
- Check for hazards such as broken equipment, sharp edges or protruding screws
- Teach children how to use equipment properly and avoid risky behaviors like pushing or shoving

"Even on safe, age-appropriate playgrounds, adult supervision is the best way to prevent injuries," says Jennifer Rodriguez, injury prevention coordinator, Miller Children's & Women's Hospital. "Nearly half of all playground injuries could be avoided with proper supervision. It's crucial to maintain a visual line of sight with children at all times and be ready to intervene at any moment."

Avoid playgrounds with concrete footings, rocks or tree stumps. The safest surfaces around playground equipment are wood chips, mulch, sand, or mats made of safety-tested rubber.

"Concussions are a common injury on playgrounds," says Rodriguez. "I urge parents to learn the symptoms, and if you think your child has a concussion, seek medical attention right away."

Additionally, encourage children to drink water regularly, especially on hot days. Sunscreen and hats should be used to protect against ultraviolet rays, even if it is an overcast day. Avoid clothing with drawstrings or accessories like necklaces that could pose a safety risk.

Finally, having a first aid kit handy is paramount; scrapes and bruises are bound to happen on the playground, but being prepared can help address minor injuries and prevent infection – keeping playtime on track.



[Learn more.](#)



Pablo, Age 6

At 11 months, Pablo was fighting for his life.

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

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

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Cielo Vista *Elementary School*

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



Janette Tyrone
Principal

Cielo Vista Hawks are Soaring Toward College and Career Readiness

Excitement filled the campus as Cielo Vista Hawks celebrated College and Career Week. Throughout the week, students had the opportunity to engage with a diverse group of guest speakers representing a wide range of professions, including a representative from Saddleback College, a professional makeup artist, a chiropractor, law enforcement officers, a firefighter, an interpreter, and SVUSD's very own internet influencer, Clinton Schooler.

Students were able to attend multiple presentations based on their personal interests, giving them the chance to explore various college and career pathways in a meaningful way. Each session encouraged active participation, allowing students to ask thoughtful questions and gain firsthand insight into the skills, education, and experiences required in different fields. The event inspired many students to begin thinking more seriously about their future goals and the steps needed to achieve them.



de Portola *Elementary School*

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



Kimberly Slawson
Principal

Students Make an Impact through Kids' Heart Challenge

At the beginning of March, de Portola proudly launched its third philanthropic event of the year, the Kids' Heart Challenge. Throughout the program, students learned about heart-healthy habits, including staying active, making nutritious choices, and understanding how their hearts work. This meaningful initiative promoted wellness and encouraged students to make a positive impact beyond the classroom.

Thanks to the generosity and dedication of our school community, we raised a total of \$4,850.32 for the American Heart Association. We are incredibly proud of our students for their enthusiasm, effort, and participation in this important cause.

Additionally, 10 students completed Finn's Mission and were recognized at our STAR Assembly. Their hard work, big hearts, and positive energy truly showed what it means to make a difference while having fun!



Del Cerro *Elementary School*

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



Dawn Lam
Principal

Del Cerro Showcase: My Strength, My Superpower

Del Cerro hosted its Showcase evening in April, a career-centered celebration aligned with this year's school theme, "My Strength, My Superpower." The night began with a sixth-grade play featuring the Artistic RIASEC theme, setting an energetic and creative tone for the evening.

Families then explored open classrooms where students proudly displayed work highlighting all six RIASEC career themes—Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. PAL leaders shared informative posters about each theme throughout the hallways, helping families connect strengths to real-world careers. Parents were encouraged to share their own careers and RIASEC themes

with their children and submit them for a raffle, sparking meaningful family conversations. We were also delighted to welcome our school resource officer, who connected warmly with students and families. Kona Ice rounded out the night with a sweet treat for all. It was a wonderful evening celebrating the strengths and superpowers of our entire Del Cerro community!



Del Lago *Elementary School*

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



Garrett Kerr
Principal

Teaching with Heart: A Dynamic and Inspired Educator

Nicole Sparks is an exceptional teacher who brings energy, compassion, and purpose into every aspect of the classroom. Dynamic in approach and deeply caring in spirit, she creates an environment where students feel valued, supported, and inspired to reach their full potential. Her dedication to student success is evident

in the time, effort, and thoughtfulness she invests each day, always going above and beyond to meet individual needs.

What sets Nicole apart is her collaborative nature. She works closely with colleagues, families, and students to build meaningful relationships that strengthen learning and foster growth. Her supportive presence encourages confidence, resilience, and curiosity in everyone around them. Through her passion, leadership, and unwavering commitment, she not only teaches academic content but also inspires character, perseverance, and a love of learning that lasts far beyond the classroom.



El Toro High School

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



Dr. James Martin
Principal

ETHS Recognized as CA "School of Excellence"

El Toro High School is proud to be recognized as California's "School of Excellence" by ACT's American College Application Campaign, a national honor awarded to just 26 schools nationwide. This distinction highlights ETHS as a leader in expanding college access and supporting students

in pursuing higher education.

The ET school counseling team, led by Kami Kurisu, ensured that students received guidance, encouragement, and the resources needed to navigate the college application process with confidence. The results speak for themselves, as El Toro seniors submitted an exceptional record number of college applications during the Fall 2025 season—opening doors and expanding opportunities for their futures. Through this campaign, ETHS continues to live out its commitment to preparing students to be truly "Future Ready."

ETHS is honored to be recognized on a national stage and remains committed to ensuring that every student can envision—and pursue—a successful path beyond high school.



Esperanza Education Center

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



Raymond Bueche
District Coordinator, Special Education

Winter Dance at the Mission Viejo Elks a Huge Success

The Esperanza School Dance, held on February 1, 2026, at the Mission Viejo Elks Lodge, was a night filled with joy, community, and unforgettable memories. Approximately 100 students, guests, and staff came together to dance, laugh, and enjoy a wonderful evening of music and great food. The energy on the dance floor lasted all night as everyone celebrated friendship and

school spirit in a warm and welcoming setting.

A huge thank you goes to Amy Hernandez and Eric Bunyan Esperanza, teachers and former SVUSD educator, Michelle Scaglione of the Mission Viejo Elks, whose generosity made the evening possible. The donation of the space and food created a truly special experience for our students and staff, and we are incredibly grateful for her continued support of Esperanza School.

The night was a tremendous success, and we are already looking forward to making this cherished tradition even bigger and better next year.



Foothill Ranch *Elementary School*

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



Christina Stevenson
Principal

Spring Music Informances

FRE hosted its spring music informances in March, inviting families to participate in their children's music classes. These special events gave guests a firsthand look at what students have been practicing in their music classes throughout the year. Families were invited to sing, move, and participate alongside their children, creating a lively

and engaging atmosphere. Among the special guests was School Board member Mrs. Barbara Shulman, who enjoyed singing and moving with the students. Festivities featured songs such as our kindergarten students singing "Apple Tree," second grade singing "Tideo," and third grade singing "I Love the Mountains." Guests and third-grade students sang together in rounds. Vocalists performed "Somewhere Over

the Rainbow," fourth graders played recorder pieces, and the fifth-grade strings group performed music from Star Wars. Instruments such as boomwhackers, rhythm sticks, ocean drums, scarves, and other Orff instruments accompanied performances by students and parents. The music informances highlighted the importance of art education and were a great way to celebrate the talents of our students.



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

Dual Immersion CABE Recognition

Gates Elementary has been recognized by The California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) as a "Pioneer Dual Language Immersion Program," an honor reserved for programs with a long history of excellence in bilingual education that have helped shape the field in California. Pioneer programs, established between 1968 and 1990, continue to make a lasting impact on students, families, and communities. Gates' DLI program has exemplified this legacy by

promoting bilingualism, biliteracy, academic achievement, and cultural understanding for decades.

CABE is the state's leading organization supporting multilingual learners, and this recognition places Gates among a select group of influential programs. At Gates, students learn in both English and Spanish, preparing them for global success.

This achievement reflects the leadership of Principal Diana Clearwater, Assistant Principal Heidi Bolaños, Assistant Superintendent Yvonne Estling, dedicated district and school staff, and supportive families working together to ensure high levels of success for all students.



Glen Yermo *Elementary School*

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



Jennifer Televik
Principal

2025-2026 Teacher of the Year

We are excited to celebrate our 2025-2026 Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Stefanie Chiljian. Mrs. Chiljian found her passion for teaching early on while volunteering in a fifth-grade special education classroom. She still remembers the students and the joyful atmosphere of the classroom. Seeing how every small success

was celebrated showed her just how powerful teaching can be, and she knew this was the path for her.

Mrs. Chiljian has always had a special connection with students who need a little extra support. Helping them build confidence and discover their strengths is what drives her every day. Nothing beats hearing a student say, "I got this."

In Mrs. Chiljian's classroom, everyone is welcomed and valued. She focuses on positivity, using a "10-to-1 positives" approach to encourage students and highlight what's going well. By setting clear expectations, she creates a space where kids feel supported, confident, and ready to grow.



La Madera *Elementary School*

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



Jennifer Gass
Principal

A World of Fun at Our International Fair

Our campus came alive with color, music, and connection at this year's La Madera PTA International Fair, one of our most cherished traditions. Organized by our dedicated family volunteers, the event celebrated the rich cultures that make up our La Madera Koala community.

Families hosted tables representing over 16 countries, each offering a unique glimpse into their heritage. Displays included cultural artifacts, traditional foods, games, and hands-on activities that invited students and families to explore and learn together.

The evening also highlighted the talent within our community. Performers shared cultural dances and songs, including several La Madera Koalas who took the stage with confidence and pride.

The International Fair continues to be a meaningful way to build understanding, celebrate diversity, and strengthen our sense of belonging. We are grateful to all the volunteers, performers, and families who made this event such a memorable experience for our school community.



La Paz *Intermediate School*

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



Tiffany Harville
Principal

Back-to-Back Excellence

Receiving the California Distinguished School Award again this year is a true honor. Earning this recognition back-to-back is a reflection of the hard work of our entire La Paz community, and we're already motivated to keep pushing toward a three-peat. Every day, we work with purpose to ensure each student reaches their personal best. At La Paz, we hold all students to high expectations

and prioritize relationships and meaningful connections. Our focus on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching has empowered our staff to design experiences where students feel seen, valued, and connected to the curriculum. When students see themselves in their learning, success follows. This award reflects more than academic achievement; it reflects a belief in all our students and a community that shows up for one another every day. I am proud of our students and staff and grateful for the passion and care they bring to La Paz.



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



Emily Arias
District Coordinator

Drum Party

Our school enjoyed an energetic and interactive drum circle experience led by SoCal Drum Party! Students were introduced to a variety of hand drums and percussion instruments, where they explored rhythm, movement, and sound in a fun and engaging way. The drum circle created an exciting, hands-on learning environment

where our preschool and TK students practiced listening skills, turn-taking, and following directions while expressing themselves through music. The joy and confidence on their faces as they created rhythms together was truly wonderful to see.

Beyond the fun, this experience supported important developmental skills, including coordination, social interaction, and self-regulation. Music brings our community together, and this event was a perfect example of learning through joyful participation. Thank you to all those who

supported Proposition 28, the visual and performing arts grant. The funds have allowed us to bring in professional art, dance, and music educators to enhance student growth and development.



Laguna Hills *High School*

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



Brent Dohling
Principal

Laguna Hills High School Celebrates Historic Basketball Season

Laguna Hills High celebrates a historic season for both its girls' and boys' varsity basketball teams, whose success energized the entire school community.

The girls' team captured the CIF State Regional Championship and advanced to the CIF State Championship in Sacramento. Led by State Coach of the Year Jim Martin, the Hawks showcased resilience and teamwork, defeating multiple playoff opponents, including four CIF Southern Section champions. They also excelled academically with a 3.47 team GPA.

The boys' team earned the first CIF Southern Section Championship in program history. Under CIF-SS Coach of the Year Sean Sargeant, the Hawks embraced a "Why Not Us" mentality, winning their first league title in 18 years. They finished with a 3.51 team GPA and 22 scholar-athletes.

Both teams energized the campus and community, drawing strong support from students, staff, families, and alums. These accomplishments reflect the strength of Laguna Hills athletics and the dedication of its student-athletes and coaches.



Lake Forest *Elementary School*

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



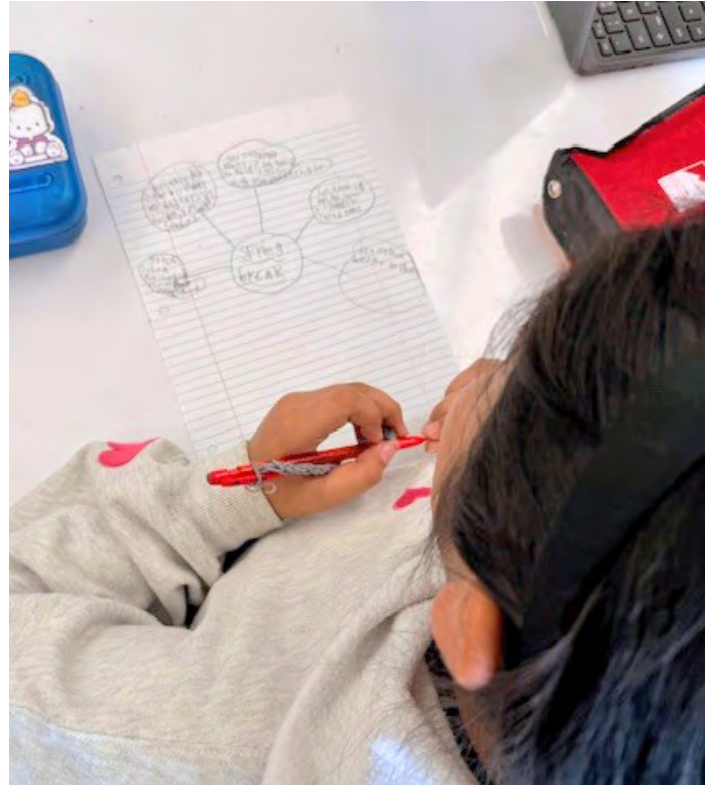
Alfredo Torres
Principal

Students Dive Back Into Learning After Spring Break

Upon returning from Spring Break, students at Lake Forest Elementary quickly re-engaged in meaningful learning, demonstrating focus, creativity, and strong academic habits. In this snapshot, a student is actively using a Thinking Map to organize her ideas in preparation for writing. This visual tool supports students in structuring their thoughts, making connections, and developing clear, well-supported responses.

Thinking Maps are an integral part of our instructional approach, helping students develop critical-thinking and academic-language skills across all content areas. By mapping out ideas before writing, students gain confidence and clarity, leading to stronger, more organized written work.

This moment reflects the seamless transition back into learning after the break, as well as our students' ability to apply strategies independently. It is a great example of how structured supports empower students to take ownership of their learning and continue growing as thoughtful, capable writers.



Linda Vista *IB Magnet Elementary School*

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



Dr. Shannon Wyatt
Principal

Aladdin Kids a Huge Success!

Linda Vista IB Magnet's production of Aladdin Kids was an incredible success! After seven months of rehearsals, learning lines, practicing songs, building sets, and perfecting choreography, the young performers delivered

a truly memorable show. Their confidence, teamwork, and dedication were on full

display as they entertained audiences with energy, humor, and heart.

This production also represents a special milestone in Linda Vista's continued partnership with the Segerstrom Center for the Arts through the Disney Musicals in Schools program. Their journey began with Finding Nemo Kids, continued with The Lion King Kids, and this year's Aladdin Kids production showcased just how much the program has grown. In addition to the talented

cast on stage, we also want to recognize the many students who worked behind the scenes on the crew—helping with props, sets, and stage support. Their hard work made the show possible. Thank you to Linda Vista families, staff, and community for supporting the arts at our school and celebrating the incredible talents of our students!



Lomarena *Elementary School*

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



Dr. Grace Cruikshank
Principal

Laguna Hills Leaders Participate in Lomarena's Community Read In!

At Lomarena Elementary School, we take great pride in our commitment to serving the children and families of our Laguna Hills Community. We are proud to be a warm neighborhood school that celebrates the leaders in our community and inspires students to become future leaders!

We recently hosted a successful

Community Read-In event in March, where students enjoyed a day of special guests from our local community who came in to read stories and share about their careers. Guests included School Board Members Michele Sparks and Barbara Schulman, Superintendent Dr. Crystal Turner, Assistant Superintendents sYvonne Estling and Robert Craven, our esteemed local principals from Laguna Hills High Brent Dohling and La Paz Intermediate's Tiffany Harville, firemen, police officers, district office leaders, and other local professionals. Our guests read aloud to enthusiastic students, answering questions and

sharing insights. The event was a wonderful opportunity for students to connect with community leaders while fostering a love of reading.



Los Alisos *Intermediate School*

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



Michael Marzilli
Principal

Los Alisos Winter Olympics

Los Alisos brought the excitement of the Winter Olympics to campus through an engaging and well-organized Physical Education program. Students were divided into six countries, each competing in a variety of events such as bobsledding, speed skating, and hockey. The experience began with a spirited opening ceremony that built anticipation and school pride, setting the tone for friendly competition.

Throughout the events, the PE department thoughtfully incorporated curriculum standards, ensuring students developed skills in teamwork, strategy, and physical fitness. The competition encouraged participation, sportsmanship, and perseverance. At the conclusion, a celebratory medal ceremony recognized the top three



countries, awarding Gold, Silver, and Bronze based on overall points. This memorable event not only energized students but also highlighted the creativity and dedication of the PE department in making learning both active and meaningful.

Melinda Heights *Elementary School*

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



Wendie Hauschild
Principal

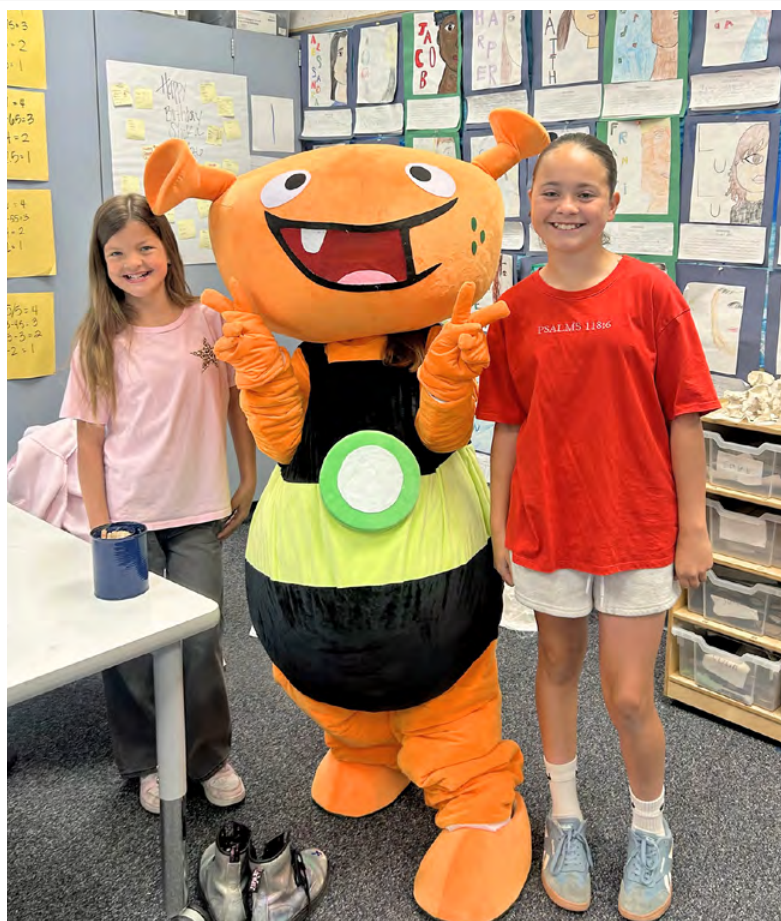
Growth Matters!

This spring, Melinda Heights Elementary School launched an exciting “Growth Matters” challenge! With student leaders (MELT) at the helm, Mountain Lions were encouraged to rise to their best and showcase their reading growth on the iReady diagnostic.

Each morning, students were greeted by Plory, iReady’s cheerful mascot, who helped kick off the day with energy and excitement. MELT leaders spread words of encouragement, reminding every student to give their very best effort.

Every Mountain Lion received a blue beaded necklace—a symbol that every step forward matters. Classrooms were also surprised with iReady “merch,” adding to the excitement along the way.

As the Diagnostic window came to a close, students earned acknowledgment for their achievements: a green necklace signifying any growth, a silver necklace for reaching typical growth, and a gold necklace for achieving stretch growth. Melinda Heights was shining bright, with students proudly wearing their “bling” as symbols of their dedication and success!



Mission Viejo *High School*

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



Tricia Osborne
Principal

MVHS Drama: A Tradition of Talent and Heart

Mission Viejo High School's Drama program is well-known in Southern California for its award-winning productions. Led by Theatre Director Christopher Hixson, the MVHS fall play *Parfumerie!* earned the highest recognitions at the California Educational Theatre Association, receiving an Excellence in Play Production award as well as numerous other awards. MVHS

Drama continues to build strong community connections, and their children's production *Rotten Apples* welcomed over 500 elementary school students from across the area, creating an engaging and memorable theatrical experience for younger audiences. Further, Mr. Hixson's VAPA Unified class performed *Peter Pan* at the Special Olympics Southern California Conference. Their performance was incredible and highlighted how Unified creates meaningful connections for students of all abilities. By participating in drama classes, students learn valuable life skills, such as public speaking, confidence, empathy, and collaboration.

Montevideo *Elementary School*

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



Lisa Miller
Principal

Building Inclusion, One Brick at a Time

April is Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month, a time to build understanding, encourage inclusion, and celebrate the strengths of individuals on the autism spectrum. At Montevideo Elementary School, this month helps promote empathy and create a supportive environment where every student feels valued and respected.

Students in all programs joined special lunchtime activities organized by SAI Educational Specialist Ms. Delfin, parent volunteers, and 6th-grade leaders. These activities focused on kindness,

awareness, and inclusion. A key project was decorating "bricks" for an inclusion mural, showing how each student contributes to a stronger community.

Students also explored sensory activities that provided hands-on ways to understand different sensory needs. These experiences helped build awareness and appreciation for individual differences.

Through these meaningful activities, Montevideo Elementary continues to strengthen a culture of acceptance, compassion, and belonging, ensuring all students feel included and supported every day within the school community.



Olivewood *Elementary School*

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



Alex Perez
Principal

Teacher of the Year - Jenny Larkin

Jenny Larkin has been named Olivewood Elementary's Teacher of the Year, an honor that reflects her dedication, expertise, and lasting impact on students and colleagues alike. Mrs. Larkin began her career as an Instructional Assistant, where she supported students with special needs and developed a strong foundation in meeting diverse learning styles. She went on to teach for 13 years in Garden Grove before joining SVUSD and Olivewood in 2022.

At Olivewood, Mrs. Larkin is known as an exceptional educator who skillfully identifies student needs and provides targeted small group instruction to help every child succeed. Beyond the classroom, she is an active member of the Leadership Team, collaborating with colleagues to analyze data and make informed decisions that guide the school's success.

Outside of school, Jenny enjoys traveling, playing pickleball, and building puzzles. Her passion for teaching and commitment to students make her truly deserving of this recognition.



Portola Hills *Elementary School*

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



Alison Bruner
Principal

Celebrating Children's Literature at Portola Hills Elementary

From March 30 through April 3, our school celebrated children's literature during the Scholastic Book Fair, bringing together students, families, and staff to promote a love of reading. Thanks to strong community support, the fair raised just under \$15,000. Our PTA added to the excitement by dressing in fun, book-themed attire,

creating a joyful and engaging atmosphere for students throughout the week. Families generously donated 87 books to classroom libraries and the school library, expanding access to high-quality and engaging reading materials for all students. In addition, the PTA provided each teacher with \$125 in Scholastic Dollars, and our librarian, Ms. Loro, received \$1,000 to enhance the library collection. Every class visited the Book Fair during the week, and it was also open before and after school, allowing more families to participate. This successful event highlighted our community's strong commitment to fostering a lifelong love of reading



Rancho Cañada *Elementary School*

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



Kristin Fowler
Principal

Rancho Cares

The Rancho Cañada PTA, through its Rancho Cares leadership group, recently partnered with the Jesse Rees Foundation (NEGU—Never Ever Give Up) to support children battling cancer. In a heartfelt effort to give back, students organized an after-school fundraiser selling ramen to raise money for creating “Joy Jars”—care packages filled with toys, games, and encouraging messages for children undergoing treatment.

The event brought together students, families, and staff, creating a strong sense of community while supporting an important cause. Rancho Cares members took the lead in planning, promoting, and running the fundraiser, demonstrating leadership, compassion, and teamwork.

Thanks to the generosity of our school community, the fundraiser was a great success, and proceeds will go toward assembling Joy Jars that bring comfort and smiles to children in need. Rancho Cañada is proud to support NEGU’s mission and inspire students to make a meaningful difference in the world.



Rancho Santa Margarita *Intermediate School*

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



Tyler Morgan
Principal

RSM Counselors

RSM Intermediate is truly fortunate to have two exceptional School Counselors, Karley Blake and Lynnette Bills, whose dedication and care make a lasting impact on our school community. They have made it a priority to meet individually with every student—an incredible commitment given our student population of 1,200. Through these connections, they provide

meaningful support, including strategies/tips for stress management, academic success, and navigating personal challenges. They conduct classroom lessons and facilitate parent meetings throughout the year. Their leadership in promoting student wellness and fostering a positive school climate is invaluable. Karley and Lynnette’s openness, warmth, and genuine care help build strong, trusting relationships with both students and families. This trust is reflected in the positive culture we see every day at RSM. Their work goes far beyond expectations, and we are incredibly grateful and fortunate to have them as such an integral part of our team.



Robinson *Elementary School*

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

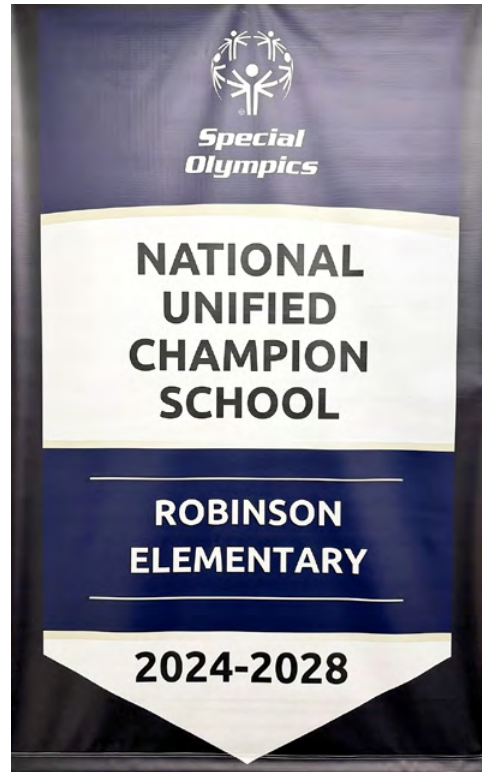


**Suzy
McMasters**
Principal

Robinson Celebrates Unified Sports

Robinson Elementary is proud to introduce Unified Sports, an inclusive program that partners with the Special Olympics organization. Just like our fourth through sixth-grade Unified Club on campus, Unified Sports will bring together Kindergarten through third-grade students with and without disabilities to learn and play sports together, building friendships, teamwork, and understanding.

Our Unified Sports program meets on one Friday each month on the Robinson Elementary campus. Activities include age-appropriate sports and movement games led by two teachers and student peers. By participating, our scholars are part of a program that helps Robinson Elementary continue to grow as a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, a national recognition for schools that promote inclusion and acceptance for all students.



Santiago *STEAM Magnet Elementary School*

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



**Dr. Lindsey
Gatfield**
Principal

Space Garden Transformation

The transformation of our Space Garden at Santiago STEAM is well underway, and we are excited to share our progress with you! While projects like this typically begin with design features, we made a strategic decision to start with planting to take full advantage of California's peak planting season. This ensures our plants have the strongest chance to thrive through the summer months—and we're happy to report that the foundational

plantings are now complete!

With this important first step behind us, we are shifting our focus to the "hardscaping" elements—the non-living features that will bring structure, creativity, and interactivity to the space. In the coming weeks, we will begin by regrading part of the garden area, creating a gentle slope from the basketball wall using fresh soil and compost. This will help shape the landscape and improve both function and flow.

Another exciting addition will be our "moonscape" boulders. These specially selected rocks will help define the garden's layout and bring our space theme to life. With support from the district, we'll be using equipment to carefully place these larger features.

We're also looking forward to installing approximately 60 round pavers that will form a "moon circle" and pathway. As part of this project, our fifth-grade students will have the opportunity to paint some of the pavers as planets, connecting their learning to a meaningful, creative contribution on campus.

Alongside these larger elements, we will be adding ISS-inspired planter boxes, a space-themed reading box, and signage. These smaller features will be incorporated into the process and will continue to build the garden's character.

We anticipate completing the core of the project by May. From there, the Space Garden will continue to evolve with student-driven ideas and interactive additions. We look forward to inviting families to upcoming Community Build Days to help bring this vision to life!

Serrano *Intermediate School*

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



**Jordan
Reed**
Principal

Serrano Goes Gold for Pediatric Cancer Research Foundations (PCRF)

Serrano Intermediate School is proud to share that our school community raised \$1,744.69 in support of the Pediatric Cancer Research Foundation. This meaningful effort

reflects the compassion and generosity of our students, staff, families, and community. Special thanks to our PAL and ASB Leadership students for organizing the donation drive. Together, we not only raised funds but also helped bring awareness and hope to children and families battling pediatric cancer.



Silverado *High School*

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



**Justin
Stanfield**
Principal

Eagles are Flying High!

The Eagles are soaring this season! We are proud to share that our 11th-grade students have successfully completed their CAASPP testing—a fantastic achievement that reflects the hard work, focus, and perseverance of our students and the unwavering support of our dedicated staff and families.

We are also excited to announce our new Student Board Representative, Arianna Bonilla. Arianna is a welcome addition to our Board Meetings, and we are confident she will represent Silverado High School with great pride and purpose. We look forward to hearing the student voice she brings to the table.





Glenn Giokaris
Principal

SVA Rocha Siblings Excel in Rowing

To become elite rowers requires dedication, perseverance, and a high degree of pain tolerance. Isaac (10th grade) and Lily (9th grade) Rocha embrace these demands, driven by their love for the sport and their willingness to put in the work.

Each afternoon, they drive to Newport Sea Base for three hours of training, nearly 20 hours a week. The flexibility of SVUSD Virtual Academy allows them to balance high-level training with their academics. “It allows us to train at a higher level and still stay on top of school,” they shared.

That investment is paying off. Isaac is aiming to qualify for the national championships in Florida for the third consecutive year and is pursuing an invitation to a United States Junior National Rowing Team camp this summer. Lily is working to qualify for nationals for the first time this spring



Trabuco *Elementary School*

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



Erin Hansen
Administrative Designee

Trabuco Farm Improvements Support Student Learning

This year has brought meaningful improvements to our school farm, enhancing student access and hands-on learning. Through a generous BOSCH grant, we installed an updated mare motel, providing shade and comfort for our animals while creating a welcoming space for students

to observe and interact. Improvements to the ground surface around the farm ensure safe, consistent access to animal pens. These upgrades benefit both students and visiting field study groups, enriching each experience. Additionally, new grooming tools and supplies have expanded students' ability to care for the animals directly. Under the guidance of our animal care custodian, Farmer Darcie, students learn to groom, feed, and support the health of animals. Her creative approach engages Trabuco students while connecting these experiences to life science standards. We

are also grateful to our PTA for donating a new farm sign. We look forward to a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the grand re-opening of our animals' home sweet home and this shared learning space.



Trabuco Hills *High School*

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



**Alicia
Foulk**
Principal

THHS EAEA Awardee

Trabuco Hills High School is a 2026 California Exemplary Arts Education Awardee! Congratulations to our Visual and Performing Arts and Unified Arts programs

and teachers! THHS is one of only two schools in Orange County to be awarded this recognition in 2026.

At THHS, students participate in drawing, painting, ceramics, theater, dance, choir, and instrumental music as part of a comprehensive visual and performing arts program. Students participate in multiple pathways and programs through flexible scheduling and unique opportunities that highlight their talents through a variety of performances, school-wide events, and exhibits.



Our commitment to sustained access and equity, as well as preparing students with a standards-aligned curriculum, makes THHS an EAEA recipient. THHS will serve as a model arts program for CDE for the next two academic years.

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

Principal for the Day Event

Trabuco Mesa had the pleasure of participating in the SVUSD “Principal for a Day” event, where schools welcome a local business leader to step into the role of school leadership and experience a day in the life of our campuses. This year, we were excited to partner with Connor Spence, the general manager of Sgt. Pepperoni’s Pizza, a favorite local restaurant within our community.

Mr. Spence brought enthusiasm and curiosity to his position and provided a much-appreciated lunch to our staff!

Throughout his time with us, Mr. Spence immersed himself in the rhythm of the school by visiting classrooms, observing lessons, and engaging with students during their learning activities. He asked thoughtful questions, listened carefully, and showed a sincere interest in understanding how our school operates and supports student success. Students were thrilled to share their work and experiences,

and many students recognized him from his store and were excited to interact with someone from the business world in such a meaningful way.

In addition to spending time in classrooms, Mr. Spence took the opportunity to connect with staff, gaining insight into the dedication and collaboration that drive our school community.

The SVUSD Principal for a Day event highlights the powerful partnership between local businesses and schools. It provides community leaders with a firsthand look at education while giving students the opportunity to see how their learning connects to the broader world. Experiences like this strengthen relationships, foster mutual understanding, and remind us that supporting education is a shared community effort.

We are grateful for the time, energy, and generosity Mr. Spence brought to our campus. This event continues to be a meaningful way to build bridges between our school and the community we proudly serve. Thank you, Sgt. Pepperoni’s Pizza in RSM!

Valencia *Elementary School*

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

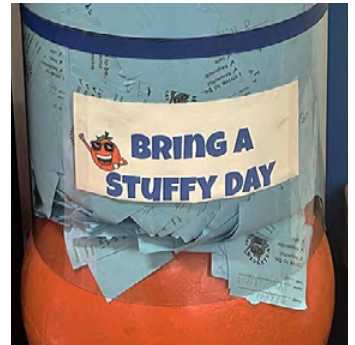


Brendon Morrow
Principal

Valencia Strives

We are proud to host monthly STRIVE assemblies each month to celebrate students exceeding our expectations. On the last Friday of each month, Oranges gather together in The Grove to recognize students nominated by their teachers for achieving excellence with our STRIVE rules. Four students from each class are acknowledged for their work in the areas of respect, Responsibility, and Safety. Honored students

join their principal at the front of assemblies to receive a certificate of recognition. Our pom pom-waving PALs are there to cheer each student onto the stage, with the rest of the attendees joining in applause as well. Each student's family is invited to join the ceremony and take pictures to commemorate and celebrate their work. All students are invited to spend their STRIVE tickets at the student store throughout the day, while also contributing them to our school goal thermometer, which earns incentives for everyone.



Vacation–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, 2026

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

CAR
BUS
TRAIN
AIRPLANE
BOAT
SUITCASE
BACKPACK
SWIMSUIT
MAPS
PASSPORT

GAMES
SNACKS
PUZZLES
PAJAMAS
JACKET
SNEAKERS
SUNBLOCK
HAT
WATER
SOCKS

E	Y	T	R	S	I	T	E	K	C	A	J	Y	I
N	C	H	H	N	J	U	C	F	K	A	Z	Y	B
A	G	A	M	E	S	A	C	T	I	U	S	B	K
L	N	T	R	A	P	U	Z	Z	L	E	S	U	B
P	T	G	Y	K	P	G	N	A	W	O	V	Z	R
R	A	I	C	E	J	S	U	B	S	V	D	M	M
I	O	A	U	R	E	T	A	W	L	R	R	T	S
A	B	M	A	S	J	R	D	X	S	O	C	K	S
U	P	A	J	A	M	A	S	X	S	Z	C	U	P
J	F	Q	Z	Q	F	I	S	T	H	A	E	K	U
V	T	C	K	R	D	N	W	J	N	H	L	T	D
M	V	N	Z	E	V	B	E	S	R	J	T	H	H

Congratulations to: Nathaniel Arronte and Sophia Chacon
Winner of Our February Word Search Contest!