

# School News

*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Fountain Valley School District**



Volume 20, Issue 121

January 2025

## Honoring Our School Board Members During School Board Appreciation Month



**Mr. Dennis Cole, Mrs. Sandra Crandall, Mr. Steve Schultz, Mrs. Ashley Ramirez, Mr. Phu Nguyen**



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

## Long Term Influence of a Simple "Thank You" in Family Relationships

We all know how important it is to nurture strong relationships within our families. Research shows that small acts of appreciation, like saying "thank you," can significantly strengthen family bonds and create an environment of respect, kindness, and warmth that benefits everyone.

Gratitude isn't just about big gestures – it's about recognizing and valuing everyday efforts. A simple "thank you" can help family members feel heard and appreciated, improving trust and emotional connections. This can be especially important in families facing challenges, as expressing gratitude can provide emotional support and comfort during difficult times, and it can help families reframe what is happening to them.

When gratitude becomes a regular practice, children are more likely to carry this positive behavior into friendships, school, and beyond. Teaching your children to recognize and appreciate the small things at home sets a powerful example for their relationships with others.

Further, teaching children gratitude helps them develop important emotional and social skills. It encourages emotional regulation by helping children focus on the good and positive in themselves and

others, which can reduce stress and foster emotional resilience. Grateful children are more empathetic, socially connected, and confident. Research also shows that gratitude boosts self-esteem and promotes pro-social behaviors like kindness and cooperation, leading to stronger social bonds and better mental health.

Tips for Teaching Gratitude:

- **Create a Gratitude Routine:** Set aside time as a family to share things you're thankful for.
- **Praise Effort, Not Just Results:** Focus on praising children's efforts and kindness, not just achievements. This helps build a growth mindset.
- **Give Back:** Encourage children to give back to others through small acts of kindness or volunteering.

At Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach, we're committed to supporting families through every stage of life. The Stramski Children's Developmental Center offers invaluable resources to help parents and families foster emotional and developmental growth in their children. By integrating gratitude into family life, you can build stronger, more resilient relationships that last a lifetime.



**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.**

**Learn more at [millerchildrens.org/care](http://millerchildrens.org/care)**



MILLER CHILDREN'S & WOMEN'S HOSPITAL LONG BEACH  
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OUTPATIENT SPECIALTY CENTERS  
FROM THE SOUTH BAY TO ORANGE COUNTY

# Superintendent

## Honoring Our School Board Members During School Board Appreciation Month



**Dr. Katherine Stopp**  
*Superintendent*

January is School Board Appreciation Month, a time to recognize the incredible dedication and service of our Fountain Valley School District Board of Trustees. School board members play a vital role in shaping the direction of our schools, ensuring every decision supports the success of our students, staff, and families.

In FVSD, our board members—Dennis Cole, Sandra Crandall, Phu Nguyen, Steve Schultz, and newly elected board member

Ashley Ramirez—are champions for education. They devote countless hours to attending meetings, reviewing policies, and making decisions that prioritize whole child development, equitable opportunities, and excellence in education. Beyond meetings, they represent our district at community events and advocate for resources to support our schools.

We are grateful for their commitment to our students and the future of FVSD. Please join us in thanking them for their unwavering dedication to our schools and community!



## Board of Trustees



**Sandra Crandall**  
President



**Dennis Cole**  
President Pro-Tem



**Phu Nguyen**  
Clerk



**Ashley Ramirez**  
Member



**Steven Schultz**  
Member

*By Sandra Crandall, Board President*

After 12 years of service to our students, parents and community of Fountain Valley School District, Mrs. Jeanne Galindo is stepping aside. Her focus has been the students, their outcomes, a safe and welcoming environment for all, fiscal stability, up-to-date facilities and supports for those who teach and work in our district.

During her tenure, she has welcomed and then promoted thousands of students who experienced excellence in receiving a well-rounded education of character building and skill acquisition while staying true to our mission and which will ready them for high school and beyond.

Jeanne worked well with nine different trustees and many administrators who came and went. She was an integral and thoughtful board member through two

Superintendent searches and during the period when our schools were shuttered.

Technology integration, robust professional development, a \$63 million dollar facilities upgrade, a school site closure and subsequent sale of property, expansion of middle school electives and education partnerships and fair compensation for all are a few highlights of her time as an effective team member.

Jeanne was a dedicated public servant as she governed for all. We will miss her quick wit and her sound decision making.

Her open seat is being filled by newly-elected Mrs. Ashley Ramirez. We will welcome her as she begins her new role of working on behalf of our students, parents, and community as she follows Jeanne's example.

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## City of Fountain Valley Office of the Mayor

10200 Slater Ave., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/593-4400 • www.fountainvalley.org



**Ted Bui**  
Mayor

As we embrace the start of this new year, I want to take a moment to share my heartfelt gratitude for the honor of serving as your Mayor. It truly is a privilege to represent such a vibrant and diverse community, and I am continually inspired by the strength and resilience of our residents.

As a parent of four children in Fountain Valley Schools, I have personally witnessed the profound impact our local schools have on families like mine. Thank you to the teachers and FVSD's team for your passion and dedication to our students. To the parents, I encourage each of you to consider getting involved in our community—whether through volunteering at schools, supporting youth sports leagues, or participating in local non-profits. Together, we can make a difference.

This year, my focus will be on fostering community engagement, embracing innovation, ensuring fiscal responsibility, and celebrating our diversity. I am committed to enhancing public safety, improving city services with a compassionate and customer-first approach, and nurturing an inclusive environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Our local businesses are the heart of our community, and I will prioritize efforts to create more jobs and opportunities for all. Let's work together to make 2025 a year filled with growth, joy, success, and shared accomplishments. I encourage you to share your thoughts, concerns, and ideas with me—your voices matter as we move forward together.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you—let's make this our best year yet!

### Fountain Valley Library

17635 Los Alamos St., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/962-1324 • www.ocpl.org

### Welcome Back!

*Kimberly Tran-Hoang, Children & Teen Librarian*

OC Public Libraries' online Winter Reading program will end on Saturday, January 25, 2025. Sign up at [ocpl.beanstack.org](http://ocpl.beanstack.org) and check the library for scavenger hunts and in-person events at [www.ocpl.org/events](http://www.ocpl.org/events).

March is also our annual Kinderpalooza event. Check our website for more information as the time gets closer!

### Upcoming programs for the first half of 2025:

#### Children & Families

Read to a Dog: Second Mondays at 4pm – Registration is required.

**Lunar New Year Craft** – Monday, January 27 at 4pm

Celebrate the Year of the Snake by making...a snake!

**Lion Dance Performance** – Saturday,

February 8 at 12pm

Continue celebrations for the Lunar New Year with a Lion Dance performance with the Southern California Youth Dragon & Lion Dance team! This performance will be in the front of the library.

**Kinderpalooza Family Craft Night: Growing Veggies**

– Tuesday, March 11 at 4pm

Get your hands dirty and learn all about your vegetables by learning how to plant some seeds!

We also have weekly Toddler and Preschool Storytimes, monthly bilingual Spanish and Vietnamese storytimes, monthly painting workshops, family movie screenings, and more!

#### Teens

**Animescapes** – Third Saturdays at 2pm

**Amigurumi Workshop 101** – Tuesday,

February 18 at 4pm

Learn the basics of crocheting by learning how to make a cat! Registration is required.

#### Adults

**Cristina LePort Author Talk** – Saturday,

February 22 at 3pm

Local author and cardiologist, Dr. Cristina LePort will talk about her latest medical thriller, *Change of Heart*. Complimentary signed books are available while supplies last.

**One County, One Book Group** – Thursday,

March 13 at 2pm

Come and discuss *The Sympathizer* by Viet Than Nguyen. We also have monthly book groups, craft workshops, and more!

Check out our Program Calendar for all of our events at [www.ocpl.org/libraries/fountain-valley](http://www.ocpl.org/libraries/fountain-valley)

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**School News**

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**25 YEARS**

### SCHOOL NEWS ROLL CALL, LLC

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# Roch Courreges *Elementary (K-5)*

18313 Santa Carlotta, Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4280 • [www.courreges.fvdsd.us](http://www.courreges.fvdsd.us)



**Lisa Tanita**  
*Principal*

## Building Leaders and Innovators: PALS and Coding at Courreges

Our student leadership program, PALS (Peer Assistance and Leadership), is off to a fantastic start! PALS students are leading fun, inclusive activities during recess, encouraging positive interactions, and helping create a welcoming environment for everyone. Their efforts are promoting kindness, teamwork, and a strong sense of community here at Courreges.

In addition, we're excited to announce the launch of our coding program! Students are diving into hands-on learning with coding robots to complete various tasks, designing 3D structures, and even creating their own video games. This program is sparking creativity, building problem-solving skills, and giving students the tools to become future innovators in the world of technology.



# James H. Cox Elementary (K-5)

17615 Los Jardines E., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4240 • [www.cox.fvdsd.us](http://www.cox.fvdsd.us)



**Dr. Jennifer Ollila**  
Principal

## Cox Elementary Students Shine Bright

Cox Elementary students were celebrated for their incredible growth over the first trimester at the Trimester Award Ceremony on December 6 2024. Teachers selected exemplary students to receive special recognition in three categories: Eagle Spirit, All-Star Student, and Attitude is Everything. The *Eagle Spirit* award celebrated students who spread kindness, built community, and brought joy to their classrooms. The All-Star Student award highlighted academic excellence in English Language Arts or Math. Students were recognized for outstanding aptitude, hard work, or significant improvement. Finally, the *Attitude is Everything* award honored those students who displayed exceptional determination, perseverance, and positivity in

the face of challenges. One student from each grade level received a certificate, a gift certificate, and a pin. These awards highlighted the remarkable achievements of Cox Elementary students and their commitment to excellence!



**Transitional Kindergarten Award Winners and Teachers**



**Kindergarten Award Winners and Teachers**



**First Grade Award Winners and Teachers**



**Second Grade Award Winners and Teachers**



**Third Grade Award Winners and Teachers**



**Fourth Grade Award Winners and Teachers**



**Fifth Grade Award Winners and Teachers**

# Harry C. Fulton *Middle School (6–8)*

8778 El Lago St., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/375-2816 • [www.fulton.fvdsd.us](http://www.fulton.fvdsd.us)



**Jenny Salberg**  
Principal



**Molly Kuykendall**  
Assistant Principal

## New Elective at Fulton Middle School: Team Sports

Fulton Middle School is excited to introduce a new elective: Team Sports! This class goes beyond basic athletic skills, focusing on essential life lessons like

teamwork, leadership, and perseverance. Students will engage in various sports, including basketball, volleyball, soccer, and flag football, while learning rules, techniques, and strategies.

The elective emphasizes skill development, practice, and preparation, with a strong focus on character-building. Students will develop perseverance by overcoming challenges, learn the value of collaboration through teamwork, and gain confidence through consistent practice. Opportunities for leadership roles allow students to inspire and motivate others, while accountability fosters responsibility.

Open to all skill levels, this inclusive class creates a supportive environment where students can build friendships and grow as athletes and individuals. The lessons learned in Team Sports extend beyond sports, equipping students with skills that will benefit them in academics and future careers.



# Robert Gisler *Elementary (K-5)*

18720 Las Flores, Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4211 • [www.gisler.fvgsd.us](http://www.gisler.fvgsd.us)



**Dr. Katherine Pavidis**  
*Principal*

## New Year, New Beginnings at Gisler Elementary: Celebrating Our Hard Work

As we usher in January, Gisler Elementary is filled with excitement and optimism for the new year ahead. The theme of “New Year, New Beginnings” resonates strongly within our school community, as we reflect on the hard work and achievements from the past year.

The start of a new year is always a time for fresh starts and renewed goals. Our dedicated teachers and staff are committed to fostering a supportive learning environment where students can thrive academically and socially. With the foundation laid in the previous months, we are eager to build upon our accomplishments and embrace the challenges that lie ahead.

Throughout January, students will engage in various activities designed to inspire growth and motivation.

From goal-setting to collaborative projects, our focus remains on nurturing each child’s potential and celebrating their unique contributions to our school community.

As we move forward, we want to extend our gratitude to parents, guardians, and community members for their unwavering support. Together, we have made remarkable strides, and we look forward to an amazing year filled with learning, growth, and success.



**Counting Collections is more than just fun it is critical thinking, collaboration, math reasoning and so much more!**



**PAL- Peer Assistance Leadership- gearing up for the end of one season and the beginning of another! Thank you for all you do to support our school!**



**Library time is a great opportunity to seek out new interests.**

# Kazuo Masuda *Middle School(6-8)*

17415 Las Jardines W., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4250 • [www.masuda.fvsd.us](http://www.masuda.fvsd.us)



**Cara Robinson**  
Principal



**Jessica O'Malley**  
Assistant Principal

## After School Activities at Masuda

Masuda boasts an array of clubs and intervention support classes after school daily. Our generous PTSO funds a variety of enrichment clubs—knitting, FCCLA, multicultural club, E-sports, art, dance,

chess, board-games and others. These clubs accompany our after school intramural sports team offerings year-round—basketball, soccer, volleyball, and track-and-field. If students need assistance with homework, studying or tutoring, they can attend our math lab classes or our homework help classes after school. On any given day, we serve over 150 students after school in these activities. We are so grateful that Masuda has fun activities and programs that address a broad range of student interests, encouraging student attendance each day.



# William T. Newland *Elementary (K-5)*

8787 Dolphin St., Huntington Beach, CA 92646 • 714/378-4200 • [www.newland.fvgsd.us](http://www.newland.fvgsd.us)



**Matt Ploski**  
Principal

## 7th Annual Presents for Puppies Drive

It's the most wonderful time of the year in 1st grade when Mrs. Holliday's students bring Christmas cheer to rescue pups at Dachshund Paws and Pals Rescue of Southern California. Throughout the month of December, students are encouraged to bring in donations such as collars, food, bowls, and toys for dogs living in foster care.

They are then placed under the classroom

Christmas tree, where they are wrapped by the students at their annual holiday wrapping party. This is one of the most exciting days of the year, as the children are so excited to wrap gifts all on their own and celebrate the joy of the



season by spreading kindness throughout their community. Once decorated with bows, colorful wrappings, and thoughtful cards, the gifts were delivered to the rescue, where they provided many tail wags during the holiday season.

"This activity continues to grow in both size and love each year and has become a class favorite of our Kindness Counts projects," shared Mrs. Holliday. "I am so proud of what these children have accomplished all on their own. They are learning to be loving, caring, and kind young boys and girls. Of all the things I will teach them this year, this is by far the most important."



# Isojiro Oka *Elementary (K-5)*

9800 Yorktown Ave., Huntington Beach, CA 92646 • 714/378-4260 • [www.oka.fvsd.us](http://www.oka.fvsd.us)



**Julie Ballesteros**  
*Principal*

## Wolfpack Winter Sing a Long

The Oka Wolfpack Annual Winter Sing-Along was a joyous celebration of the holiday season, showcasing the hard work and talent of students from all grade levels. Each group performed a beloved holiday song, dressed in fun and festive attire that added to the spirit of the occasion. The performance was the result of weeks of vocal music lessons, where the children honed their voices and learned the joy of singing together. Families and friends filled the lunch area, eagerly awaiting the heartwarming performances. The energy was infectious, with the audience clapping and singing along, creating a festive atmosphere throughout the event. From classic carols to lively songs, each grade brought something special to the stage, demonstrating the dedication and enthusiasm that had gone into their preparation. The sing-along was a true testament to the power of music to unite and spread joy within the Oka Wolfpack community.



# Urbain H. Plavan *Elementary (K-5)*

9675 Warner Ave., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/378-4230 • [www.plavan.fvdsd.us](http://www.plavan.fvdsd.us)



**Dr. Patrick Ham**  
*Principal*

## Enriching Our Students' Learning for 2025!

The Plavan Panthers are excited to embrace a new year of enriching and diverse learning opportunities as we head into 2025! From transitional kindergarten to 5th grade, our students are engaging

in valuable lessons in Robotics, Computer Programming, and Coding, guided by expert consultants from CodeNinja. They are not only building robots but also programming their movements and making adjustments to complete various tasks.

In addition to these STEM initiatives, our students are thrilled to participate in our new Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) program, which highlights Dance, Theater, and Visual Arts. In Trimester 1, Plavan Panthers have enjoyed exploring Theater and Performing Arts with Mrs. Johnston and Mrs. Gersi. Looking ahead, Trimester 2 will focus on Dance and Artistic Expression, while Trimester 3 will celebrate Visual Arts.

With excellent physical education instruction and a vibrant music program with Ms. Hughes already in place, Plavan Panthers are truly immersing themselves in a well-rounded educational experience that enriches their learning journey!



# Samuel E. Talbert Middle School (6-8)

9101 Brabham Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92646 • 714/378-4220 • [www.talbert.fvsd.us](http://www.talbert.fvsd.us)



**Jay Adams**  
Principal

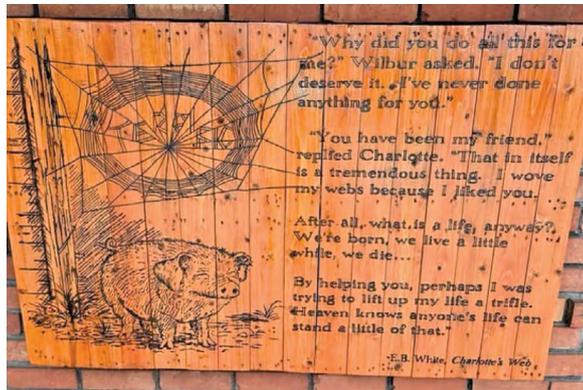


**Caitlyn Gregory**  
Assistant Principal

## Woodburning for the Win!

Talbert's Woodburning elective is certainly a favorite among the 7th and 8th grade students in our elective wheel. Each trimester, a new group of students gets a chance to work with teacher Mr. Loren Howard in what has become, arguably, the hottest class in town!

Students first complete a rigorous safety portion of the class, then move on to "practice burns," and then, finally, to their own projects of choice. They learn to utilize high-powered magnifying glasses to actually channel the sun's energy, burning the wood piece they've selected. After the burning, students may choose to stain or paint their projects. On occasion, students even come together as a group with Mr. Howard, to complete a large-scale piece for the purpose of school beautification. Pictured here is their most recent undertaking, a meaningful quote taken from the book, "Charlotte's Web." Next time you're on Talbert's campus, take a stroll through the 8th Grade Bowl and look at their beautiful creations on display!



# Hisamatsu Tamura *Elementary (K-5)*

17340 Santa Suzanne St., Fountain Valley, CA 92708 • 714/375-6226 • [www.tamura.fvsd.us](http://www.tamura.fvsd.us)



**Chris Mullin**  
*Principal*

## Tamura's Winter Sing-A-Long

This year's Winter Sing-A-Long was a heartwarming showcase of the incredible talent and community spirit at our school. From the joyful energy of our youngest performers to the impressive harmonies of our older students, the event was a delightful celebration of music and togetherness. Families filled our Bowl with smiles and applause, creating a festive atmosphere that brought us all closer during this holiday season.

The Sing-A-Long is more than just a performance, it's a testament to the invaluable role music plays in education. Music nurtures creativity, teamwork, and discipline while providing students with a powerful outlet for self-expression. It also fosters a sense of belonging and connection, which is essential for a thriving school community.

We are grateful to our dedicated music teacher, Mrs. Robles, and staff who made this event possible as well as to our students for their hard work and enthusiasm. Here's to continuing to celebrate the magic of music in our schools!



# Orange County Department of Education

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

## 5-3-1 Strategic Plan adds up to OCDE's path forward



**Dr. Stefan Bean**  
Superintendent

The holiday season is a natural time for reflection. For organizations like ours, it's also a chance to assess progress, refine approaches and pursue new opportunities for innovation.

With 2024 coming to a close, and as I near the six-month mark as county superintendent, this feels like an opportune moment to share where the Orange County Department of Education is headed — and

how we plan to get there.

Recently, we introduced a roadmap designed to guide our work, build on our strengths and set a unified vision for the future. Shaped through active collaboration with educational leaders and community partners, it's called the 5-3-1 Strategic Plan because it's built around five key initiatives, three objectives to support our districts, and one bold goal.

So, what exactly is in our 5-3-1 Strategic Plan? Let's take a look.

### Five Key Initiatives

Five forward-thinking initiatives anchor this plan, targeting areas where innovation can have the most significant impact on students and schools. These include:

- Expanding career technical education. Along with broadening and enhancing CTE programs, we are looking to sharpen our focus on inclusivity, ensuring that these opportunities are accessible to all students.
- Fostering emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence, or EQ, refers to the ability to understand and manage emotions effectively. These skills are essential for educators, administrators, support staff and students to build strong relationships and healthy learning environments.
- Integrating artificial intelligence. We are actively exploring and pursuing advanced AI technologies that will enhance learning experiences and streamline administrative processes.
- Ensuring school safety. Our commitment to creating secure educational environments will be stronger than ever, supported by comprehensive safety measures and processes.
- Providing innovative funding opportunities. We are looking to create new funding opportunities to back innovative educational projects that can transform learning environments — and ideally be replicated elsewhere.

### Three Support Objectives

Next are three objectives that are specific to the support we provide for our 28 local school districts. These are:

- Legal, legislative and fiscal support. We will equip districts with the tools and training they need to manage complex educational policies and fiscal challenges.
- Academic focus. We remain committed to educational excellence through targeted instructional services and programs that support student success.
- Local superintendent needs. We're providing customized resources to address the unique challenges faced by Orange County's superintendents in service of their districts.

Finally, we come to the last part of our plan.

### One Big Audacious Goal

Our big audacious goal refers to the work we are doing to improve outcomes and opportunities for all students enrolled in OCDE's Alternative Education program, known as ACCESS. This involves actively soliciting feedback from staff, local superintendents and other key partners to craft a comprehensive vision for ACCESS.

As part of this effort, we aim to improve mechanisms for measuring progress and ensuring continuous improvement across all student programs under the ACCESS umbrella. We are also moving forward with plans to develop an ethnic studies curriculum for ACCESS that uplifts our communities and enhances cultural awareness.

OCDE's 5-3-1 Strategic Plan reflects not only our collective aspirations but also our county's shared commitment to innovation and continuous improvement in support of students, families and schools. Think of it as a roadmap that draws on the strengths of our educators as well as the voices of our communities.

Six months into this role, I feel deeply honored to be on this journey with you. I am also confident that we have the people and resources to drive transformative, lasting change. Together, we can create a future where every student thrives, every school becomes a place of possibility, and every community benefits from a strong, cohesive educational system.

Thank you for your trust and partnership. Now let's make this vision a reality.