



Spring 2021 - Volume 10, Issue 2

**News and Information from Superintendent Dr. Gregory Franklin
for employees of the Tustin Unified School District**

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Superintendent's Messages: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in TUSD

Great progress is being made throughout the Tustin Unified School District since the school board prioritized diversity and equity in the District's goals and priorities last summer. Highlights from the Educational Services Department include:

A team of TUSD teachers and administrators have been trained in the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Act and are using that lens to screen new social studies curriculum materials for all schools in the District. Piloting these materials will happen throughout the spring and fall of 2021.

Another team of District teachers who have also been trained in the FAIR Act are creating a high school elective course in ethnic studies that should be ready for the next school year.

The Educational Services staff created and distributed excellent materials for use throughout the District to learn about Black history and celebrate February as Black History Month. I have received many positive comments from parents about these activities being used in their children's classrooms.

The Foothill High School Student Equity Club has designed and produced beautiful posters celebrating famous Black Americans that have been distributed to schools throughout the District.



Educational Services is providing teachers opportunities to participate in a Culturally Responsive Learning Series throughout the year.

In addition to the great progress above, the District's Equity and Justice Task Force continues its work. Most recently, the group reviewed the District's equity survey that was taken by students, staff, and parents before the winter break. A couple of the positive key findings include:

- 86% of students agree that adults at school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures fairly.
- 88% of teachers report feeling comfortable interacting with people of different races, ethnicities, and cultures.
- 86% of staff would recommend TUSD to friends and colleagues who are looking for a job.
- 91% of parents value diverse friendships for their children.

While these responses are good news, there are clear areas for improvement. For example:

- In the area of diversity and inclusion, Hispanic and Black students consistently responded less positively (about 10 points lower) than other students.
- Only 35% of students are encouraged to learn about people from other cultures.
- Only 36% of students are encouraged to discuss issues of race and equity in their classrooms.
- Only 59% of teachers report being comfortable leading conversations about race and equity in their classrooms.

Based on these findings, the Task Force has identified several next steps that include:

- Further conversations with Black and Hispanic students and their families to better understand their challenges.
- Provide training and materials for staff to gain confidence in leading conversations with students about race and equity.
- Create a resource list of books, podcasts, documentaries, or other materials that can be accessed by staff to learn more about diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Provide safe spaces and times on campuses for students and staff to engage in these important conversations.

The Tustin Unified School District is committed to providing an outstanding, safe, inclusive, and equitable learning experience for all students. I appreciate the work by so many in the District who continue to make us better.

Go TUSD!

Gregory A. Franklin, Ed.D.



Students work in the classroom while COVID safety measures are in place at TUSD schools.

Tustin Unified Looks Ahead to 2021-22

Tustin Unified School District staff have begun turning attention to the start of the 2021-22 school year. It is impossible to confidently predict the state of the pandemic when school resumes in August; however, three principles will continue to guide the District's decision making. They are:

1. The District is committed to returning students to in-person learning and regular school activities as soon as possible.
2. The District will continue to follow the guidance and directives of the local and state health officials.
3. The District will provide parents with choices for students' schedules and activities.



So, the question is, "Will we resume a normal school schedule in the 2021-22 school year?" The answer depends on the state of the pandemic and the guidelines in place in August from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA). Based on Tustin Unified's experience with hybrid schedules, in-person school can be safely done by following the current COVID safety protocols, including mask wearing, symptom monitoring, sanitizing, desk shields, uni-directional traffic flow, and physical distancing.

Of all the above protocols, the one that will keep schools from returning to normal is the physical distancing requirements. The key to a normal start to 2021-22 is for distance requirement to be lowered. There are several positive developments that might lead health officials to change that recommendation. They include:

- Schools that have reopened to in-person classes, like in Tustin Unified, have been able to conduct school without adding to the community spread of the COVID virus.
- After a tremendous surge in COVID cases in December and January, the case counts have steadily decreased.
- The COVID testing positivity rate continues to decrease and in the week of February 15, 2021, reached the level that would put Orange County into the Red tier on the state's reopening plan.
- Vaccinations of senior citizens and high-risk school employees have begun. OCHCA predicts that all school employees will have the opportunity to be vaccinated by summertime.
- Vaccination trials are currently underway for children, which may lead to approved vaccines for that age group before the next school year.

In addition to these developments, Tustin Unified has taken additional precautionary steps that include:

1. The addition of a free-standing HEPA air purifier in every classroom installed before the end of the current school year.
2. Weekly COVID testing is available within the District to all students, employees, and their dependents.

The Tustin Unified School District will continue to take steps to reopen schools and resume school activities as normally as possible given current health and safety protocols. As we progress through the year, additional information will be provided to staff and TUSD families.

Keep strong, stay well and wear a mask.

Gregory A. Franklin, Ed.D.

Superintendent Dr. Gregory Franklin Inducted Into the 2021 USC Dean's Superintendents Advisory Group Hall of Fame

TUSD Superintendent Dr. Greg Franklin has been inducted into the 2021 Dean's Superintendents Advisory Group (DSAG) Hall of Fame for his leadership and contributions to the USC Rossier School of Education. Dr. Franklin received this prestigious honor at the virtual DSAG awards celebration on January 28. He was recognized for his outstanding leadership of DSAG, as well as being an inspirational role model and mentor. He was also honored for his commitment to public education and dedicated service to students, educators and parents. Well done and congratulations to Dr. Franklin! TUSD is grateful for his leadership and dedication to Tustin Unified students.



Sycamore Magnet Academy first-grade dual immersion teacher Adriana Zamora, left, and Tustin High School instrumental music teacher Michael Fisk, right, celebrate being named TUSD 2021 Teachers of the Year.

Photos courtesy of John Garrett

Tustin Unified Announces 2021 Teachers of the Year

Adriana Zamora, first-grade Spanish dual language immersion teacher at Sycamore Magnet Academy, and Michael Fisk, instrumental music teacher at Tustin High School, have been selected as the 2021 Teachers of the Year by the Tustin Unified School District. They will represent the District in the 2021-22 Orange



County Teachers of the Year program, sponsored by the Orange County Department of Education. Tustin Unified's annual awards program recognizes outstanding teachers who have displayed extraordinary teaching, creativity and excellence at their school and community.

Zamora and Fisk were chosen from a field of 30 candidates. Additionally, Zamora was named Elementary (grades PreK-5) Teacher of the Year and Fisk was selected as Secondary (grades 6-12) Teacher of the Year.

Adriana Zamora has been a teacher for 21 years – the past 13 years teaching kindergarten and first-grade Spanish dual immersion for a science and arts

elementary school in Santa Ana and the Tustin school district. She is a leader and coach to dual immersion teachers, has developed and refined the dual immersion curriculum, believes in engaging her students in a safe and valued environment, and creating a culture of lifelong learners. She also serves as a Cal State Teach mentor teacher and supports nonprofit groups such as the American Red Cross.

Michael Fisk has taught instrumental music for 14 years – all at Tustin High. He teaches advanced and intermediate band, jazz band, marching band, orchestra, colorguard, drumline and winterguard. Fisk organizes concerts on campus, supports school spirit assemblies, has his band students play at athletic events and promotes the Tustin High music program to feeder schools, which has increased student participation. His students have won several championships at various competitions and tournaments, and participated in many community events, including the City of Tustin's 90th Anniversary Celebration, Disneyland's Community Arts Showcase Parade, and Tustin Tiller Days. Fisk is also a member of the Tustin High Century Task Force, which is organizing the school's 100th anniversary celebration in the 2021-22 school year.

The other 2021 School Site Teachers of the Year include:

Elementary School: Nichole Siller, specialized academic instructor at Arroyo School; Katy Stahovich, fourth/fifth-grade teacher at Barbara Benson School; Cathy Lien, second-grade teacher at Benjamin Beswick School; Kristin Morel, third/fourth-grade teacher at Helen Estock School; Kirsten Watson, second/third-grade teacher at Guin Foss School; Renee Sandoval, fourth-grade teacher at Robert Heideman School; Katie Fitch, specialized academic instructor at Heritage School; Rachelle John, fifth-grade teacher at Hicks Canyon School; Lisa O'Connell, second/third-grade teacher at Ladera School; Liz Hoglebe, third-grade teacher at Loma Vista School; Jennifer Bruckler, third/fourth-grade teacher at Myford School; Michelle Zuelzke, second-grade teacher at Nelson School; Amy Jones, kindergarten/first-grade teacher at Orchard Hills School; Becky Salazar, fifth-grade teacher at Peters Canyon School; Kristen Montgomery, fifth-grade teacher at Red Hill School; Emily McCourtney, third/fourth grade teacher at Tustin Connect; Debbie Mulligan, fourth/fifth-grade teacher at Tustin Memorial Academy; and Jessica Guns, fourth/fifth-grade teacher at Tustin Ranch School.



Middle School: John Isaacson, sixth-grade science Magnet Program teacher at Columbus Tustin School; Susan Moffat, seventh-grade Core teacher at Hewes School; Matt Ireland, eighth/ninth-grade science teacher at Legacy Magnet Academy; Marisa Parker, sixth/eighth-grade math teacher at Orchard Hills School; Theresa Payne, sixth-grade math teacher at Pioneer School; Zachariah Samarin, ASB and seventh-grade Core teacher at Sycamore Magnet Academy; and Sandra Martinez, sixth-grade Core teacher at C.E. Utt School.

High School: Brad Bohn, AP psychology teacher at Beckman; Becky Duesler, ninth-grade AVID and AP statistics teacher at Foothill; and Leslie Hastings, English, film analysis and U.S. history teacher at Hillview.

The two winners and all nominees will be honored by the Tustin Public Schools Foundation and Tustin Unified School District in May.

Photos above: Top left, Sycamore Magnet Academy teacher Adriana Zamora is seen with her family and, top right, Tustin High School teacher Michael Fisk is joined by his family. Both teachers received surprise visits at their respective schools when the District announced the 2021 TUSD Teachers of the Year.

Photos courtesy of John Garrett

Parenting OC Magazine Names TUSD Teacher Phillip Chow as Top Teacher for 2021



Beckman High School AP biology teacher Phillip Chow has been named Parenting OC Magazine's Top Teacher for 2021. He is featured on the cover of the March issue (see photo on the left) and main story inside the magazine.

Additionally, Tustin Unified School District teachers Katherine Fitch at Heritage Elementary School, Nancy Chung and Kimberley Gullo at Orchard Hills School, and Celeste Kelly at Tustin High School were selected by Parenting OC as among the Top Teachers of 2021.

Chow and TUSD's other finalists were nominated by staff, parents or community members, and were eligible for the highest award – Parenting OC's Top Teacher of Orange County.

The Top 25 Teachers and Top 10 Employees were honored with a special online ceremony on February 24 and are featured in the magazine's annual School Heroes Awards issue this month. The magazine also announced the Top 10 Teachers and Top Employee of the Year, as well as the winner of the new Leadership Award.

Find out why Beckman teacher Phillip Chow was selected as Parenting OC's 2021 Top Teacher by visiting the magazine's website at www.parentingoc.com.

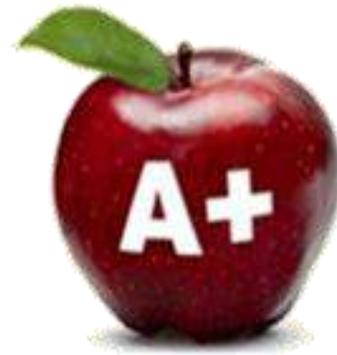
TUSD Educators Win Rotary Club Good Idea Awards

The Tustin-Santa Ana Rotary Club has announced the winners of its 2021 Good Idea Awards. Approximately 14 educators in the Tustin Unified School District were honored at the Rotary Club's annual awards program. Their projects were chosen among many proposals submitted by teachers and staff in the school district.

The club awarded more than \$4,500 in grants to individuals for the development of quality educational programs in the classroom or school. Either a new concept or a supplement to an ongoing project was eligible for consideration. The winners will use the money to purchase materials, supplies, or equipment. Individual awards varied in amount according to requirements of the proposed projects.

The purpose of the Good Idea program is to encourage classroom teachers' ideas and methodology, to enhance the instructional program offered to students in the District, and to recognize the more exemplary efforts of the "eager beavers" in the TUSD school system. The winners and their projects are as follows:

- Dr. Beth Rabel Blackman, principal of Heritage Elementary School, for "Learning in the Great Outdoors: Creating Student Learning Zones Outdoors."
- Phillip Chow, AP biology teacher at Beckman High School, for "Online Community Groups!"
- Jennifer Gause, kindergarten teacher at Heritage Elementary School, for "Coding Express for Lego Education."
- Gloria Henderson, special day class teacher at Myford Elementary School, for "Empathy and Responsibility Through Nurturing Life."
- Allison Hoang, first-grade teacher at Tustin Ranch Elementary School, for "Growing Together Through Social Emotional Learning (SEL)."
- Elizabeth Holcomb, first-grade teacher at Heritage Elementary School, for "Team Building on the Playground."
- Matt Ireland, science teacher at Legacy Magnet Academy, for "It Ain't Rocket Science!"
- Roland Jones, history teacher at Legacy Magnet Academy, for "Learning and Sharing Via Podcasting and Digital Storytelling."
- Christian Manalo, physical education teacher at Legacy Magnet Academy, for "Pickleball? What's the big dill?"
- Kelly Morgan, fourth-grade teacher at Peters Canyon Elementary School, for "Voice of Our Nation's Native American Heritage."
- Tootie Nienow, library media technician at Barbara Benson Elementary School, for "I Can See Myself in this Book: Building a Library that Represents All Students."
- Jonny Parker, assistant principal at Columbus Tustin Middle School, for "Ground Control to Major Rotary."
- Positive Behavioral and Support (PBIS) Team and Mayra Aguilera, third-grade Spanish dual language immersion teacher at Sycamore Magnet Academy, for "Howling for Five Stars."
- Hillary Yerkish, library media technician at Robert Heideman Elementary School, for "Roadrunners Read Across Heideman During Read Across America Week."



Educational Services: TUSD Mental Health Specialists Provide Ongoing Support

The Tustin Unified School District's Mental Health Specialist team expanded this year from five to 13 therapists in response to students' mental health needs during the pandemic. Each member of this team possesses a unique variety of skills and backgrounds matching the District population's diverse needs. The Mental Health Services Team was originally developed in 2014 and initially revolved solely around crisis assessment and therapeutic interventions. Since that time, the team remains focused on prevention and awareness of mental health and continues to evolve to match the needs of the students and families in TUSD.

The Mental Health Team provides direct services to Tustin Unified students. They collaborate with other departments in the District, predominantly with school counselors and administrators.



School counselors serve as the liaisons between parents, students, and mental health specialists. They submit referrals to the team, and then short-term therapy is provided either individually or in group settings.

Currently, families have the option of having virtual or in-person sessions with social-distancing protocols. Henry, the Therapy Dog, is another resource utilized by the team to provide a sense of calm and comfort to TUSD students.

Another prevention focus this year has been professional development for teachers and staff. They provide ongoing support for self-care and stress management. This year, the team has developed a large amount of educational materials, workshops, and resources to support teachers specifically.

Joanne Cabrera, the mental health professional at Tustin High School, also held a very successful virtual conference with speakers and breakout rooms focused on developing trauma-informed educators, which will be replicated at other school sites.

A virtual mental health fair through Instagram that included weekly speakers and activities was also held and received positive feedback. Additionally, a new newsletter titled *Building Resilience* has been created this year which consists of a variety of helpful information, including articles, community events, tips, entertainment, media reviews, and more.

During these especially challenging times, TUSD continues to prioritize the District's mental health services for students and families accessible so that everyone can find the support they need.

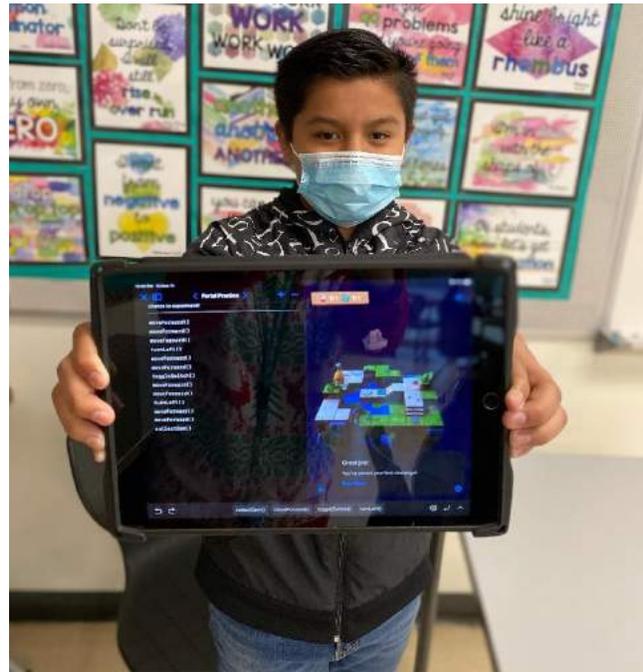
Photo above: Yenyfer Bullock, one of TUSD's Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT), prepares to take Henry the Therapy Dog onto a campus for a visit.

Information Technology: TUSD Hour of Code Promotes Career in Technology

The Tustin Unified School District's Hour of Code started as a one-hour introduction to computer science, designed to demystify "code" and promote interest in this essential career field that automates the technologies we depend on every day.

Since the launch of this initiative during Computer Science Education Week in 2013, the Hour of Code has reached millions of students worldwide.

Tustin Unified has led a districtwide Hour of Code initiative since 2014 each December. Using apps on iPads and physical robots, students learn the logic and structure of coding using symbols and blocks before learning how to write code.



The self-paced coding activities provided on the TUSD Hour of Code website then moves students into learning how to write code in the JavaScript, Python, and html coding languages. It is TUSD's goal to provide all students with the opportunity to learn how to code.

Photo above: Sycamore Magnet Academy seventh-grade student Hector Galeana Mejia displays his work during TUSD's Hour of Code.

TUSD Students Participate in Virtual Coding Competition

Tustin Unified School District Robotics has innovated its programs this year in order to continue to learn and compete in virtual spaces.

Students learned how to code virtual robots using a new application called VEXcode VR. This program allows students to select different "playgrounds" or game fields to draw on with a pen integrated into the virtual robot, navigate mazes using sensors, or move game objects around the field using electromagnets.



After spending several weeks learning how to code, each school site held a competition to select six students to send to the quarterfinals. After a five-week bracket system, students from multiple schools competed against each other to determine who could be the first to complete coding challenges while being broadcasted on YouTube Live.

The students impressed the viewers with remarkable speed and precision while being cheered on by their peers and parents via the live stream. Congratulations to all of the finalists!

Nutrition Services: Hybrid and Distance Learning Meal Service Update

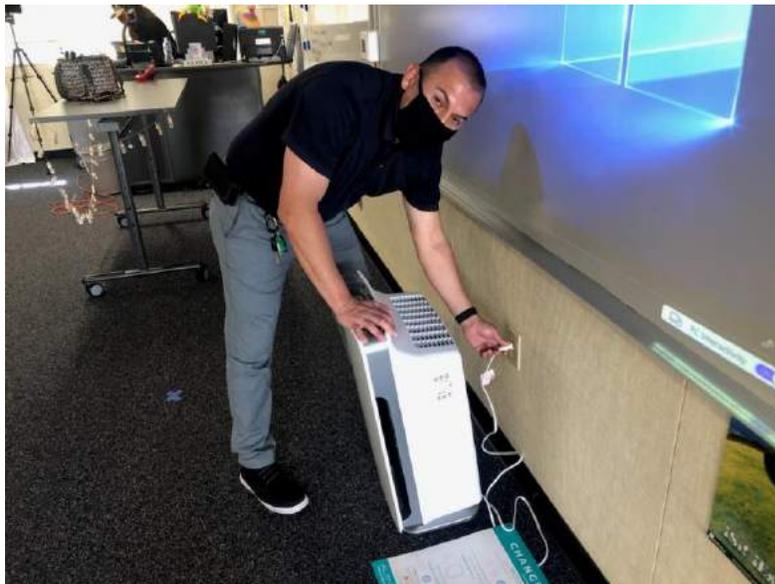
During the 2020-21 school year, meals remain free of charge to all Tustin Unified students. Traditionally, the Nutrition Services Department provides meals for school days only. Due to COVID-19, Nutrition Services can provide up to seven days of meals – seven breakfasts and seven lunches.

Starting in March, both elementary and secondary students will be offered seven days' worth of food per week – seven breakfast and seven lunches. Elementary students' meals are not eaten at school. Secondary students are offered a hot lunch on their in-person day. All students are offered to-go meals as they leave campus for the day. Each meal bag contains both breakfast and lunch for the student to heat up at home. In addition to the entrée, the meal contains fruit, vegetables, and milk.



Drive-through meal pickup is available free for all students enrolled in Distance Learning. Students do not need to be present to pick up school meals. Parents must present a Distance Learning meal card or show verification that their child(ren) are enrolled in Distance Learning. Meals are served every Wednesday from 7 to 9 a.m. at the following sites: Columbus Tustin and C.E. UTT middle schools, Sycamore Magnet Academy, and Tustin High School.

Photo above: Lynda Richards rolls out to-go meals for students at Helen Estock Elementary School.



Maintenance & Operations: TUSD Installs Air Purifiers in Classrooms and Offices

The Tustin Unified School District continues to make every effort to maintain a safe and healthy environment for students and staff. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, warehouse and maintenance and operations staff have worked diligently to ensure schools sites and office spaces continue to receive everything they need, including personal protective equipment, disinfecting supplies, plexiglass shields, handwashing stations, and more.

These safety measures, as well as vigilant contact tracing protocols, have been very successful in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 within Tustin Unified schools and offices.

As statewide plans continue to evolve regarding the possibility of students returning to full-time, in-person instruction, Tustin Unified leadership staff decided it was time to invest in another safety measure. Therefore, the District made the decision to purchase 1,500 air purifiers that will be distributed and installed in occupied classrooms, offices spaces, and common areas as soon as the units are received.

Ongoing research has proven that the virus that causes the coronavirus spreads through droplets in the air after an infected person coughs, sneezes, or exhales air in any other manner. The air purifiers that were purchased have the capability of purifying air in rooms every 30 minutes. Additionally, the HEPA filters will remove 99.99% of particles greater than 0.1 microns, while the virus that causes COVID-19 is 0.12 microns in size. The addition of air purifiers in classrooms and offices are another tool to help lower the risk of spreading the virus in Tustin Unified schools and offices.

Photo above: TUSD Assistant Operations Supervisor Eddie Oregel installs an air purifier in a classroom.

Tustin Public Schools Foundation: Staff Appreciation Program and Summer Academy for Students

The Tustin Public Schools Foundation is creating digital certificates of recognition with personalized messages sent to teachers and staff when a gift is made to the TPSF Staff Appreciation Campaign. All funding will go back into programs and classrooms for TUSD students and schools. To make your gift and create your recognition message, go to www.tpsf.net.

In other news, TPSF will offer engaging enrichment programs June 7 – July 1 through the Tustin Summer Academy. This year, kindergarten through high school students can choose in-person or virtual classes and participate from home, while traveling or onsite at Orchard Hills School. All two-week sessions are created and taught by credentialed Tustin Unified teachers.



Students can focus on coding or robotics, explore cooking, photography, or baking. Fast Forward classes will help students be prepared for a strong start to the next grade level in the fall. There is a wide range of opportunities available for all ages. Early bird registration is available now and class information can be found at www.tpsf.net/summer. Follow the Foundation on social media for ongoing updates

Follow Superintendent Franklin and TUSD on Social Media!

During the year, get the latest news and information! You can always follow Superintendent Gregory Franklin and the Tustin Unified School District on Twitter: @SuptFranklin and @tustinUSD / Facebook: tustinUSD / Instagram: @tustinUSD. Stay in touch with us!



The Franklin Almanac is produced by the TUSD Communications Office.

For questions, comments or information, contact:
Mark Eliot, Director of Communications
and Public Information
(714) 730-7339 or meliot@tustin.k12.ca.us

