



Winter 2020 – Volume 10, Issue 1

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

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Superintendent's Messages: Educating During COVID

As 2020 comes to a close, I want to recognize the incredible work, persistence and flexibility displayed by our TUSD staff to provide the best possible education to all students under very difficult circumstances. In the last nine months, teachers, have provided distance learning and livestreaming, changed instructional platforms, learned new technology, worked from home, met with colleagues, students and families through Zoom and Google Meet, and tried to find new ways to connect and engage with students. All of this was done as all staff members juggled the needs of their own health, children and families during the pandemic. I am very proud of the TUSD staff.

Even with the great effort described above, our students are struggling. Distance learning, hybrid schedules and livestreaming simply do not provide sufficient support to ensure academic success and social-emotional well-being for many students. The District is beginning to measure the learning loss of the last several months and it is significant – especially in reading and math. Supplemental and intervention programs are being developed by the Educational Services Department, principals and teacher leaders; however, the most productive strategy will be to get students back to school full time when it is safe to do so.

The pandemic continues to make getting back to normal very difficult. The District staff is implementing the safety protocols and are successfully preventing community spread within schools and District work locations. During this current surge, the number of cases on campuses has increased, but the virus has not been spread within the schools. That is completely due to the planning and vigilance of the entire staff and cooperation of students and parents. The commitment to safe distancing, wearing masks, hand washing, symptom checks, and sanitizing is allowing students and staff to continue with the hybrid learning model. I appreciate everyone's continued efforts to provide a safe work and learning environment.



Photo above: Sycamore Magnet Academy Principal Rafael Plascencia “elbow bumps” student Elliot Ku.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the psychological toll the pandemic is taking. Students – whether livestreaming full time or half time – are fatigued. Many have trouble staying engaged, and parents describe students who are isolated and depressed. Staff have never worked harder, but see students are learning less. TUSD teachers, who are proud of student accomplishments and take great satisfaction from seeing their progress, are struggling themselves with the loss of that satisfaction due to the pandemic. We each have our own story of how the pandemic has taken a toll on our lives and well-being.

So, as 2020 comes to a close, I want to say you are not alone. The TUSD team continues to work on behalf of students under the current restrictions with an eye toward recovery. This current surge will ebb, and vaccines are on the way. 2021 will be a better year – not just because of progress against COVID, but because of the work we did together this year. I am proud of you.

Go TUSD!

Gregory A. Franklin, Ed.D.

High School Athletics

The high school sports season that was scheduled to begin in December and January has been delayed until further guidance is issued by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), the organization that governs interscholastic athletics, initially postponed the start of high school athletics this year due to the Stay-at-Home order issued by the governor and the subsequent guidance issued by the CDPH that restricts youth sports (including high school athletics) to conditioning and small group drills.

Tustin Unified student athletes continue to work out with teammates and coaches under strict safety protocols that include cohorting and social distancing. Tustin Unified School District is committed to the return of high school athletics as soon as the state and county health officials deem it safe to do so.

Equity and Justice Task Force

Each year the Board of Education sets goals and priorities that guides the District's work. For the 2020-21 school year, there are two major areas of focus. The first is responding to the COVID pandemic by providing a safe working and learning environment, a hybrid educational program that provides choice to parents, and addressing the learning loss that has occurred since regular schooling was interrupted in March 2020. The second major area of focus is ensuring all students in the District – regardless of race, religion, home language, gender or income – achieve at high levels and feel welcome and respected at school.

In response to this second area of focus, the District is taking many steps that includes a review of social studies and literature curriculum to ensure it represents a diverse set of experiences and perspectives, the creation of a high school ethnic studies course, and a review of District practices and policies that could unintentionally hamper the achievement of some students. An Equity and Justice Task Force has been formed that is helping with this review.

I want to thank the teachers, counselors, parents, students, classified staff, principals and community members who have volunteered to serve on this task force. They are committed to providing every student in TUSD with an outstanding educational experience. One of their first steps is to collect data from students, parents and staff about perceptions and experiences regarding diversity, equity and inclusion in Tustin Unified. I appreciate everyone who has participated in the surveys. The TUSD community will receive updates on the task force progress through future articles in the Franklin Almanac.

The TUSD Equity and Justice Task Force includes the following members:

Parents – Anna Abdou, Gina Arreola, Donna Marshall, and Jin Thatcher

Staff – Yesenia Barajas, Maurita De La Torre, Enrique Espinoza, Marisol Flores, Ray Hernandez, Maribel Herrera-Olmedo, Davina Leung, Gia Meade, Jorge Osorio, Deanna Parks, Olga Reardon, Katrina Shaw, David Smith, Keli Villegas, April Vu, Nicholas Warburton, Chandra Wran and Monique Yessian

Students – Valeria Bustos, Irene Hossain, Jose Lopez Gallego and Wismick Saint-Jean

Community Members – Margie Sepulveda and Javon Smith



Newly elected school board members Allyson Damikolas, James Laird and Jonathan Stone

Allyson Damikolas, James Laird and Jonathan Stone Elected to TUSD Board of Education

Allyson Damikolas, James Laird and Jonathan Stone have been elected to the Tustin Unified School District Board of Education. Damikolas, Laird and Stone represent Trustee Areas 1, 2 and 4, respectively. This will be the first term for Damikolas and Stone. Laird was re-elected and will begin his fifth term on the Board.

Damikolas, Laird and Stone will be sworn in at the TUSD Board meeting on Monday, December 14 at 6 p.m. in the Board Room at the District Administration Center. TUSD Superintendent Dr. Gregory Franklin will administer the oath of office to Laird and Stone at the Board meeting. Tustin Mayor Letitia Clark will administer the oath of office to Damikolas.

Due to the current spike in COVID-19 cases across Orange County, TUSD will hold the Dec. 14 Board meeting in person for Board members and invited guests only. The public can request a link at dhendrickson@tustin.k12.ca.us to view the meeting via Zoom. Public comments may be sent to this same email address by 1 p.m. Dec. 14. The District's goal is to limit the number of people in the Board Room in order to meet the state's social distancing guidelines.

Allyson Damikolas is an engineer, parent, PTO president, member of the PTA/PTO Coordinating Council and active community volunteer. Her three children attend TUSD schools.

"I look forward to working with everyone on the TUSD leadership team and building on the success that has distinguished our district in Orange County and throughout the state," Damikolas said. "The opportunity to serve on the TUSD Board is truly an honor, and I look forward to dedicating myself to the challenges that lie ahead. As we move TUSD forward, I will continue to rely on and expand upon the strong relationships with teachers, classified staff members, administrators and TUSD families that I have developed over the years."

James Laird has served on the Board for 16 years – he was elected in 2004. He has been appointed Board president and vice president three times each. Laird is an Orange County deputy district attorney. He is a product of Tustin Unified schools and a graduate of Foothill High School. His children also attended TUSD schools.

"I'm grateful for another term of public service working alongside our employees and community who make TUSD nationally recognized as an exceptionally successful school district," Laird said.

Jonathan Stone attended Tustin Unified schools and is a graduate of Foothill High School. Stone served as co-chair of the TUSD Measure N Bond campaign and was a member of the District's Measure S Citizens' Oversight Committee. He has a background in technology and corporate training before a 10-year stint as a small business owner. He also served on the board of the Tustin Chamber of Commerce, including a term as chairman. Stone's daughter is currently a TUSD student.

"I am honored to join the Tustin Unified school board," Stone said. "I look forward to continuing the excellent work done by our current board members. The school district is the pride of our community due, in large part, to the hard work and devotion of our teachers, classified employees, administrators and Board members. I am delighted to join this team effort."

"I wish to congratulate Allyson, James and Jonathan, and look forward to working with them in the years ahead," TUSD Superintendent Dr. Gregory Franklin said.



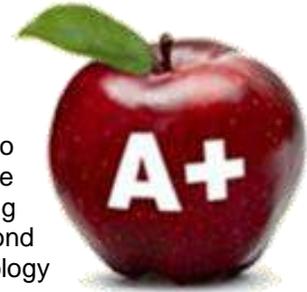
Outgoing school board members Tammie Bullard, left, and Francine Scinto

Tammie Bullard and Francine Scinto Leave TUSD School Board

After 24 Years of Dedicated Service to Students and Schools

After serving 24 years on the Tustin Unified School District Board of Education, members Tammie Bullard and Francine Scinto finished their final term and left the Board on November. 16. Bullard and Scinto were elected in 1996 and have both served six consecutive terms on the Tustin school board.

"On behalf of the TUSD community, I want to thank Tammie and Francine for their dedicated service and leadership over the past 24 years," TUSD Superintendent Dr. Gregory Franklin said. "Since 1996, they have both contributed greatly to educational excellence in our school district and have provided a stable foundation both educationally and fiscally, a clear vision for our administrators, teachers and staff, and new instructional programs and school facilities for our students to excel. Tammie and Francine have served the needs of all students and left a legacy of excellence."



Under their direction and leadership on the school board, Bullard and Scinto have made an impact on countless students over the past three decades. During this time, Tustin Unified opened 10 new schools, including Legacy Magnet Academy which opened this year, and passed three bond measures to improve school facilities and enhance instructional technology throughout the District.

Tustin Unified initiated the Early College Program with Irvine Valley College at Beckman High School and International Baccalaureate program at Foothill High School. The District began the Kindergarten Readiness Program, Tustin Connect blended online school and several magnet programs or schools, including Heritage Elementary School, Tustin Memorial Academy, Columbus Tustin Middle School Pre-International Baccalaureate, Legacy Magnet Academy and Sycamore Magnet Academy.

The District began the elementary music program, Spanish Dual Language Immersion Program for elementary students and science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) programs. Tustin Unified has also focused on career technical education (CTE) pathways, including applied medical, biotechnical, culinary arts, engineering, film/video production, global communications, graphic design, marketing, media arts, small business entrepreneurship and robotics at all grade levels.



Tammie Bullard has represented TUSD on the Coastline Regional Occupational Program (ROP) Board of Trustees for 22 years, where she has served as president and vice president, and provided oversight for the exemplary career technical education program. She was elected to the California Schools Board Association Delegate Assembly and served for 14 years, and has been a member of the Orange County Schools Boards Association.

"It has been an honor to serve on the Tustin school board for the past 24 years," Bullard said. "I am so proud of what our leadership team has accomplished and how many new innovative programs and opportunities we have created for our students. I know Tustin's legacy of excellence will continue due to the dedicated professionals that rise to meet any and all challenges and continue to put our families and students first."

For the past 22 years, Francine Scinto represented TUSD at the California Association of Suburban School Districts (CALSSD), a lobbying organization for schools in Sacramento. She also served as CALSSD's president. Scinto was elected to the Orange County School Boards Association Board of Directors, where she served for 11 years as its president, vice president and member. She was also elected three times to the California Schools Board Association Delegate Assembly.

"It has truly been one of the great honors of my life to serve our community on the Tustin Unified school board for nearly a quarter century," Scinto said. "We have in place a great hard-working, supportive team of educational leaders who year after year produce outstanding results. TUSD has been a beacon, proving that all students can learn."



TUSD 2021 Administrator of the Year Honorees Announced

The Tustin School Management Association has announced its 2021 Administrator of the Year Honorees. They have been nominated to represent the Tustin Unified School District in the 2021 Orange County Administrators of the Year Awards Program, sponsored by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), Region 17:

- ▶ Secondary Principal of the Year – **Michelle England**, Principal, Foothill High School
- ▶ Middle Grades Principal of the Year – **Maggie Burdette**, Principal, Columbus Tustin Middle School
- ▶ Elementary Principal of the Year – **Lauren Steinmann**, Principal, Loma Vista Elementary School
- ▶ Central Office Administrator of the Year – **Karen Knudson**, Coordinator of Elementary Education (K-5), Educational Services
- ▶ Elementary Co-Administrator of the Year – **Jaclyn Spangler**, Assistant Principal, Orchard Hills School
- ▶ Secondary Co-Administrator of the Year – **Ryon Tanara**, Assistant Principal, Tustin High School
- ▶ Career Technical Education Administrator of the Year – **Heather Bojorquez**, Principal, C.E. Utt Middle School
- ▶ Special Education Administrator of the Year – **Jennifer Solano**, Coordinator of Special Education, Special Education Department
- ▶ Curriculum and Instruction Administrator of the Year – **Ali Del Castillo**, Coordinator of Secondary Education (9-12), Educational Services
- ▶ Continuation/Educational Options Administrator of the Year – **Erick Fineberg**, Principal, Tustin Connect K-12 Online Blended Learning School
- ▶ Professor of Education – **Kathie Nielsen**, Retired TUSD Deputy Superintendent
- ▶ Technology Administrator of the Year – **David Smith**, Chief Technology Officer

ACSA annually recognizes outstanding administrators for their leadership skills, professionalism, creativity, innovation, and commitment to a quality education. Orange County Administrators of the Year will be announced in the spring. The 48th annual ACSA “Administrators of the Year and Friends of Education Awards” Dinner will be held in May. Region 17 represents 28 school districts in Orange County.



Top photo: Members of the TUSD Board of Education and Tustin City Council participated in a special ribbon-cutting ceremony at Legacy Magnet Academy. Bottom photo: TUSD Board members, from left, Lynn Davis, Tammie Bullard, Jonathan Ablove, TUSD Supt. Dr. Gregory Franklin, Francine Scinto and James Laird accepted a dedication plaque from Balfour Beatty President Brian Cahill (center).

Photos courtesy of John Garrett

TUSD Holds Ribbon Cutting at Legacy Magnet Academy

The Tustin Unified School District held a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony at Legacy Magnet Academy on November 18. The new state-of-the-art middle and high school is located in the Tustin Legacy development (near Tustin Ranch Road and Valencia Avenue). The school is focused on Technology, Innovation, Design and Entrepreneurship (TIDE). Due to COVID-19 safety protocols, a limited number of people were invited to attend the ceremony. The school staff is led by Principal Dr. Jennifer Harrison.



Tustin High School T-Tech engineering teacher Ed Hernandez uses several cameras and computers to engage his students each day of hybrid instruction. TUSD teachers have each found their own way to innovate their tech set-ups to engage students at home and in the classroom.

Information Technology: Career Technical Education – From a Distance

Tustin Unified School District students and teachers have made an incredible set of transitions from in-person instruction, to distance learning, and now into a hybrid model for teaching and learning. Career Technical Education (CTE) teachers like Ed Hernandez, T-Tech engineering teacher at Tustin High School, have had to make these adjustments and more. It takes incredible effort to shift traditionally hands-on classes like engineering and make them productive for students even when building, welding, 3D printing, C02 cutting, or milling in a workshop isn't possible. Because this hands-on piece is more challenging under distance learning, TUSD engineering programs have pivoted to utilize their Surface Pro devices to focus more on SolidWorks certification, 3D modeling, and computer science/coding. Teachers are also finding unique ways of engaging students from using multiple cameras to vary perspectives to doing video demonstrations with machines to shorten the learning curve once students return.

Other CTE programs like graphic design are appreciating the flexibility and stability offered by TUSD devices and software. Beckman High School graphic design teacher Gigi Manning can continue as planned with much of her award-winning program, even if students chose not to physically come into her lab. This is true thanks to the power of the Surface Pro student devices provided to all students by TUSD's Measure S technology bond. In addition, having industry standard software like Adobe Creative Suite for all TUSD high school students gives Manning's students a leg up on those from other districts who may be limited by Chromebooks or less capable software.

Another major shift involved with executing CTE at a distance involves shifting the growing TUSD Internship program to one that is virtual but still provides a great experience for students. Having real-world modeling of what industry looks like for students is extremely valuable. Practicing the skills of work with industry professionals often steers students into or out of certain majors or post-secondary training programs. For years, Boeing has provided the model internship for students in TUSD engineering programs and experiences like the CubeSAT built by Beckman and the other Irvine area schools was also huge for building coding-related experience. This year, TUSD has secured an E-prize grant through Chapman University, and Judy Park is guiding the TUSD internship program toward rapid expansion. Applications for summer virtual internships will be announced through high school counseling departments soon.

Innovative teachers and industry standard tools are just a couple more reasons it's great to be a student in TUSD!

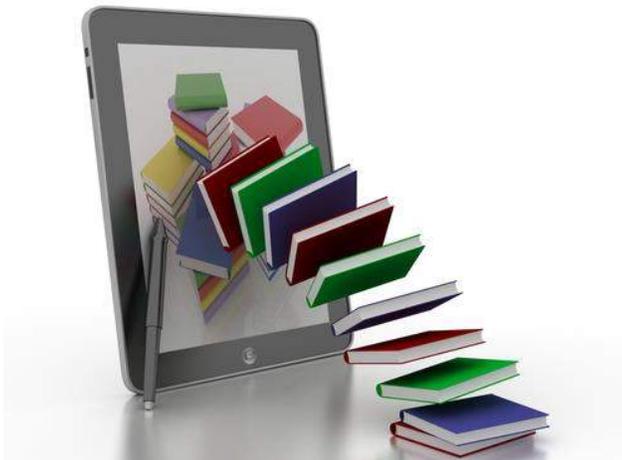


Leilani Carranza, a third-grade student at W.R. Nelson Elementary School, enjoys reading online while participating in distance learning.

Educational Services: New Digital Library for Students

The TUSD Educational Services Department is excited to introduce Sora, the District's new district-wide digital library platform, which is now accessible for eBook and digital audiobook checkouts for students in grades TK-12.

Sora was designed around the modern student reading experience. It empowers students to discover and enjoy ebooks and audiobooks from their school for both leisure and assigned reading. Students and staff can search, borrow, and place holds on eBooks and digital audiobooks 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The program is personalized with book recommendations and learning tools like dyslexic font, enlarged text, read-alongs and audiobooks.



Currently, the Tustin Unified Sora collection has a selection of 6,013 eBook and audiobook titles with 9,108 copies available for use, with more selections being added weekly.

Students can access and log in to Sora through Clever or by going to soraapp.com.

We hope this new resource and learning tool will encourage TUSD to read and explore new titles. If you have questions, please reach out to your school's library media technician for assistance or view Sora information on the [TUSD Library Services eBooks & Audiobooks webpage](#).



A school custodian is hard at work disinfecting a classroom at night.

Maintenance, Operations and Facilities: Preparations for a Challenging School Year

The 2020-21 school year continues to be extremely challenging for staff, students and families in the Tustin Unified School District. The District commends all who have worked so tirelessly to adapt to these unprecedented times and continue to maintain commitment to student learning. In preparation for a safe return to in-person learning last August, the Business Services and Maintenance, Operations and Facilities departments have worked jointly to ensure TUSD schools were prepared and adequately stocked with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies.

The Purchasing Department began placing orders for PPE and safety supplies well in advance of schools returning to in-person instruction to secure adequate supplies, including face masks (cloth and disposable), face shields, gloves, disinfecting supplies, bottled hand sanitizer dispensers for all classrooms/workspaces, portable handwashing stations, wall-mounted thermometers and hand-sanitizing dispensers for all classrooms, student desk partitions and signage for proper social distancing.

Additionally, school site staff has done an excellent job of maintaining and enforcing the use of PPE, disinfecting supplies, hand-washing and daily screenings for COVID-19 related symptoms.

The Maintenance, Operations and Facilities Department was tasked with preparing the school sites for safe in-person instruction and maintaining daily disinfecting protocols. In order to implement thorough cleaning and disinfecting procedures, all M&O staff completed required COVID-19 training and will continue to follow all guidance from state and federal health agencies.

M&O invested in electrostatic sprayers for every school site and the custodians are tasked with using these devices to disinfect the classrooms every day. Furthermore, various projects were completed over the summer including building plexiglass partitions for all high traffic areas at the schools, organizing classroom furniture to allow for social distancing, and performing maintenance and disinfecting to all heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) units. Tustin Unified will continue to move forward into 2021 with the safety of its staff, students and families as a top priority.



TPSF President Kristin Simpkins, left, presents a large check to TUSD Board President Francine Scinto at a recent school board meeting. Photo courtesy of John Garrett

Tustin Public Schools Foundation: Helping Students Connect to Learning

The Tustin Public Schools Foundation offered on-line learning support to students at all Tustin Unified schools with a \$65,000 grant. These funds will assist each of the District's schools in upgrading their remote learning platforms to provide the safest and most effective educational environment. Schools will have the availability to upgrade to Zoom Pro or to purchase other software to enhance distance learning. These licenses will help all Tustin Unified elementary, middle and high schools to continue to communicate securely with students, whether they are at school or learning from home. This grant is part of the Foundation's ongoing effort to respond to emerging needs in Tustin Unified schools. TPSF appreciates its partnership with community members, local businesses and others committed to excellence in education to help where needed most. For more information about the Foundation, visit www.tpsf.net.

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!



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▶▶ Happy Holidays to You and Your Family! ◀◀