

# School News

*Education + Communication = A Better Nation*

**Covering the Savanna School District**



Volume 17, Issue 66

March 2024

## Teacher of the Year – Mr. Matt Clinton!



**Board Members Mr. Shook, Ms. Winkler, Mrs. Brown, Reid School Mascot 'Rammy', Mr. Clinton, Board Member Mrs. Karanick, Reid Principal Mrs. Garcia, and Superintendent Dr. Johnson.**



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What an exciting, eventful school year this continues to be for students and staff in the Savanna School District as we continue to prepare Today's Learners to be Tomorrow's Leaders! We're proud of the wonderful things that are happening throughout the district that support and enhance learning for our students. A combination of a rich, well-rounded curriculum, highly qualified and caring staff and a long-standing commitment

to excellence is continuing to prepare our students to be successful 21st Century citizens. Our dedication to integrating STEM across the curriculum ensures we provide students with real-life applications to meet the demands of an ever-changing global society as we create the workforce of tomorrow.

We're excited to share the success of our students as they utilize a variety of technological tools on a daily basis. It's amazing to see how proficient even our youngest students are on electronic devices; these children are indeed digital natives using technological tools to support their learning! As we visit classrooms, it's very common to see students listening to audiobooks on handheld devices, identifying ending consonants using a variety of apps, accessing personal math trainers on classroom computers, demonstrating their comprehension of library books with online assessments, practicing keyboarding, creating finished projects using videos and green screen technologies, and accessing reading and math lessons to further their understanding of concepts and skills. It's a new world our children are growing up in with access to tools never imagined a few years ago; I'm so proud that they have risen to the challenge! The continued focus on infusing the use of technology into the curriculum will help ensure that we are indeed preparing Today's Learners to become Tomorrow's Leaders with digital literacy skills that will propel them into college and career readiness.

As our students engage in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) lessons, they are embracing concepts of engineering where they've built bridges and robots, programmed micro-computers and created electrical circuits, demonstrated effects of push and pull as they built and tested their own pinball machines, tested

concepts of magnetism and gravity, and built mechanical hands. They've learned basic computer science skills such as coding tiny pint-sized robots. These students are indeed the dreamers, designers, and architects of tomorrow; that we are indeed preparing Today's Learners to become Tomorrow's Leaders as they continue to excel in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math!



**Board Member Dr. Zambrano, author Laura Numeroff, and Board Member Mrs. Karanick at the District's Reach the Reader Family Reading Night.**

It's imperative that we continue to partner with parents to support students both at school and at home in order to prepare Tomorrow's Leaders. This partnership was evidenced during our 30th annual 'Reach the Reader' family reading night. Throughout this fun-filled evening, parents and children were involved in activities that focused on literacy. Parents participated in a keynote session led by children's author Laura Numeroff and an expert in the field of reading, with National and International acclaim. Parents learned strategies they could use at home to help support their children in reading while children were involved in a variety of reading-related activities. With nearly 700 parents and children in attendance, it was apparent to us that our school

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**Kay Coop**  
Founder/Publisher



# School News

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Covering the  
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Superintendent Dr. Sue Johnson begins this issue on page 3 with her informative message. Her enthusiasm is contagious! So many wonderful things are happening in the Savanna School District as today's learners become tomorrow's leaders under her leadership.

This issue is full of the most beautiful pictures of happy students having fun while learning.

Have a fun Spring Break (and enjoy reading)! We'll be back with our next issue May 8.



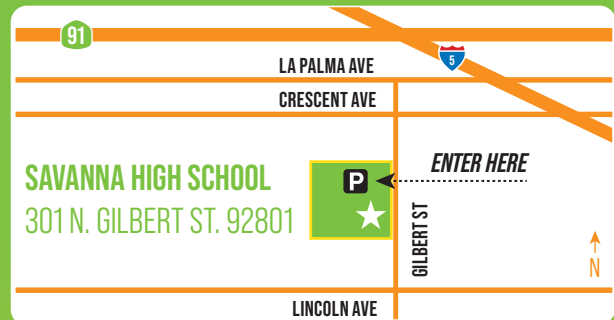
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**Dr. Sue Johnson**  
Superintendent

community is eager to learn how they can help children become better readers, how to motivate children to read for fun, and how to instill a lifelong love of learning in children! This annual event would not have been possible without the tremendous support of the entire Savanna School District staff, with over 70 volunteers who generously donated their time to present student sessions, provide infant care, assist with parking and serving dinner, and much, much more, demonstrating once again that we will do all we can to ensure Today's Learners become Tomorrow's Leaders.

We're excited to announce that Mr. Matt Clinton has been selected as Savanna School District's 2025 Teacher of the Year! Mr. Clinton has impacted the lives of hundreds of students and their families in Savanna since 2011. He began his teaching career at Hansen School where he taught a fourth/fifth grade combination class; following that he taught at Cerritos in a third/fourth combination class. In 2013, Mr. Clinton transferred to Holder School where he taught fifth and sixth grades. In 2022, he transferred to Reid School where he continues to teach Title I classes. He has provided strong leadership throughout his tenure in Savanna, serving as a grade level team lead, volunteer at the annual Reach the Reader night in various roles, member of the School Site Council, the District Advisory Committee, the Student Study Team, and site leadership teams. In addition, he assisted with Holder and Reid School's Field Days, has been a member of the PBIS team at Holder and Reid Schools, and has been instrumental in establishing an organized games program for students during lunch recess both at Holder and Reid. Through recess organized games, he's provided an opportunity for students to be active and involved in flag football, nation ball, soccer, and basketball. In addition, Matt served as the Summer Academy Principal for the past two years. Selecting just one teacher to represent all those that work tirelessly to help our students achieve their potential was an extremely difficult task. We're proud that Matt Clinton will be representing all of the outstanding teachers we have, demonstrating that Savanna truly is a special place to teach!

We can't wait to showcase our students' learning at Open Houses at each of our schools. Students and teachers alike are excited about the opportunity to share the writing, reports, projects, and more that demonstrate the tremendous work students have completed throughout the year. We invite our community to come and see all that our students have learned this year, demonstrating indeed that the next generation is on track to become Tomorrow's Leaders.



When I reflect on what makes a good school district a GREAT school district, I recognize that it is "people;" people like our staff who are committed to what they do each day to ensure student success that we can be proud of; people like our parents who provide the home support for our students so that they can reach their potential; and people like all those in our community who have contributed to our successes in so many ways. I cannot tell you how proud I am of all that has been accomplished by students and staff throughout this year! I've witnessed our teachers, support staff and administrators welcome students to school daily; marveled at the support students received from teachers and support staff when they were having 'off' days; and witnessed an incredible team step up to ensure support was provided in ways we couldn't have imagined necessary a few short years ago.

I'm truly honored to serve alongside such a dedicated, committed team to ensure that each and every one of our students is provided the best—as they deserve nothing less. Because of all of the support from a wide variety of people in our community, the 2023-24 school year is continuing to be a successful one in which we take tremendous pride; it is through these successes that we believe today's learners will be amazing future leaders!

# Cerritos School

3731 Cerritos Ave., Anaheim, CA 92804 • 714/236-3830 • [www.savsd.org/school/cerritos](http://www.savsd.org/school/cerritos)



**Lauren Stuart**  
Principal

## Cerritos Cheetahs Celebrate

Cerritos School celebrated their 5th annual Kindness Week from January 22nd- 26th. Each day students were asked to demonstrate different random acts of kindness. Cerritos

Cheetahs were able to show various ways to be thoughtful, respectful, polite, and kind to all. The students wrote thank you cards to staff that have impacted their lives. Cheetahs also made cards for the elderly that were delivered to a local nursing home. The residents cherished receiving these notes!

In the spirit of celebrating, Cerritos students, staff, and families celebrated Valentine's Day with a fun Valentine's Day Dance. Students had the opportunity to play games, enjoy a meal with friends and family, participate in a raffle to have lunch with a staff member in the teachers' lounge, make Valentine's Day crafts, and dance the night away. All of the students, staff, and families had a wonderful time at the Valentine's Day Dance.

Students and teachers alike were excited to continue the random acts of kindness as students were selected to have



lunch with the teacher in the teachers' lounge. This was a highlight for many, having time to sit together and learn about one another.

Each month students and staff are asked to focus on a specific character trait and those displaying the trait are given a special award during the school-wide Flag Ceremony. During the month of February, Cerritos celebrated students who displayed good friendship qualities. It was amazing to see all the students being kind to one another and being good friends to one another.

These celebrations show that Cheetahs are kind, considerate and caring. They embrace the fun times and enjoy learning. They find creative ways to make learning an adventure each and every day. They are truly Respectful, Organized, Accountable and Resilient

each day, showing their ROARing school pride! We are Cerritos Cheetahs! Sceantruly Respectful, Organized, Accountable and Resilient each day, showing their ROARing school pride! We are Cerritos Cheetahs!





**Amy Slevcove**  
Principal

## Reach the Reader Encourages Families to Embrace the Love of Reading

Hansen School was the host to Reach the Reader, a district-wide event that welcomes families for an evening of fun and promotes the importance of reading. This year, well-known author Laura Numeroff (If You Give a Mouse a Cookie, If You Give a Moose a Muffin) was invited as the keynote speaker. Hundreds of families attended this highly anticipated event. The evening's activities included two 30-minute sessions led by Savanna staff for students to enjoy. In these sessions, students listened to a story and completed an accompanying activity while their parents/guardians listened to Ms. Numeroff's presentation in the school's multi-purpose room. At the closing of the event, students received a book and multiple incentives gifted by generous donors. Attending families were entered into a raffle which included wonderful prizes. Additionally, Ms. Numeroff generously signed her books and took photos with our Savanna families. It was a wonderful evening celebrating the love of reading.

## Hansen Huskies Celebrate the 100th Day of School

On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, our Hansen Huskies were officially 100 days smarter. It was a wonderful day focused on acknowledging the success of our students' academic growth. Staff and students celebrated this milestone by partaking in fun activities. Some of these educational activities included making necklaces using 100 Fruit Loops, writing stories about 100 things the students would like to own, designing "100th Day" hats, and completing mini challenges in 100 seconds. However, the activity that stands out the most is seeing our sweet kindergartners and their teachers dressed up as 100-year-olds. It was such a fun and exciting day for all. While every day is a celebration toward success, Hansen students truly embrace these special milestones and are eager to grow academically and socially each day. We are so proud of our Huskies!





**Jason Blade**  
Principal

## Fun with Crazy Hats and Bubbles!

I'm so very proud of the Holder School community that came together to hold our second annual "Crazy Hats and Bubbles Fun Run." It was an exciting day for our students, staff and parents to be able to laugh, run, dance and have fun together, all while helping to support our school. Because the fun run was planned, organized and carried out entirely by the Holder staff and parents,

all funds raised will go directly back to our students in the form of assemblies, field trips, and art curriculum. In addition, funds have been allocated to teachers to purchase items from their classroom wish list. A very special thank you goes out to fourth grade teacher Ms. Carly Hays and second grade teacher Mr. Jacob Sidebottom. Because of them and their team of staff and parents, this wonderful event was a success and has left an indelible mark in the lives of our students.

## Celebrating 100 Days of Growing Our Brains!

On January 22, 2024 students and staff celebrated the hundredth day of school--100 days of students' learning and success for the 2023-24 school year. Teachers celebrated this milestone with activities, certificates and lots of fun! From making posters with 100 items to designing images of what they believe they will look like when they are 100 years old, students found many ways to show their knowledge of how much one hundred is!

The only thing better than seeing and experiencing all the learning that is occurring at Holder is watching the support students continually receive from their family and friends as they master each day of this school year. Daily I am honored to see all Holder Hawks learning today to lead tomorrow and their dedication to always being Honorable, Accountable, Welcoming, Kind and Scholarly!





# Twila Reid School

720 S. Western Ave., Anaheim, CA 92804 • 714/236-3840 • [www.savsd.org/school/reid](http://www.savsd.org/school/reid)



**Maria Garcia**  
Principal

## Teacher of the Year

On the morning of Friday, February 2, 2024 Reid Rams made their way to the Outdoor Learning Center for our monthly Flag Ceremony. This particular Flag Ceremony was extra special because Savanna School District's Board Members were in attendance.

After the flag salute, the Student Council led the REID Cheer, followed by Perfect Attendance and PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention System) recognitions/prizes. It was then when Dr. Johnson and our Board Members began to describe accomplishments of a specific teacher at Reid before naming Savanna School District's teacher of the year: Mr. Clinton.

That was the moment where students and staff erupted with cheers and applause! That was the moment where emotions of joy, happiness and pride were felt rushing through my body. That was the moment that flashbacks of a dedicated, passionate, and caring educator inundated my mind. Scenes of Mr. Clinton teaching math, reading and writing to students; scenes of his sandwich boards organizing teams and games for students to play at lunch recess; scenes of a selfless teacher that genuinely enjoys interacting with all students at all times flashed through my mind. Mr. Clinton is a teacher who excels and



**Mr. Clinton teaching a small group lesson**

takes pride in his work; a teacher that can gently correct students by using stories from his own life experiences. His sharing will often result in a smile from the student along with an acknowledgement that they will work toward following the rules more closely. Mr. Clinton is a teacher that can not only teach academics, but social skills and life skills; he's a teacher that reaches the hearts and minds of all students. Twila Reid is fortunate to have and be able to learn from Savanna School District's Teacher of the Year, Mr. Clinton!



**Mr. Clinton with the Organized Games**



**Fritzi Gragg**  
Preschool  
Supervisor

### Demonstrating Kindness Begins Young

Our BRIGHT Learners Academy preschool students have been exploring ways to be kind and what it means to be a good friend. At this early stage of life, children are eager to learn, imitating the behaviors they observe. Teaching kindness and friendship skills fosters positive relationships and future interactions. These lessons lay the foundation for our young learners to understand collaboration, working in small groups, and showing empathy for their peers when they enter elementary school.



preschool students created cards for the residents of an older adult home. The children put a lot of care and creativity into their cards knowing that some of the elderly recipients do not have family nearby.

BRIGHT Learners teachers used story time and literacy activities as tools to

As preschool students explored kindness, empathy and friendship, they demonstrated these characteristics in many ways. With the heavy rains, the grass areas on our playgrounds became saturated with water, causing many earthworms to surface. Preschool students were concerned for their well-being and protected them by gently returning them to the grass area. A two-year-old preschooler comforted his friend when they were crying. When a child tripped and fell, a friend came over and asked, "Are you okay?" and helped the child get up. During Kindness Week,

reinforce the concepts of friendship, kindness and empathy. Through stories such as *Stick and Stone* by Beth Ferry, preschoolers learned about making and helping friends, and how it can make you feel good to stick up for your friends when they need your support. Our culminating event was holding a Friendship Day celebration. Preschool students were thrilled to share home-made cards and notes with their friends. The excitement spread to their families as they took home their friendship boxes and read all of the kind words from their friends.





**Phoenix Pineda**  
*Coordinator*

## Winter Fun After School

With the cold and rainy weather, not to mention the earlier sunsets, the WINGS program had the opportunity to bring the learning and fun indoors. From science and art to robots and cooking, WINGS students kept the learning going well after the sun went down.

WINGS students had the opportunity to learn about some winter themed fun in January and February. They started with learning about the adaptations of polar bears by submerging their hand in icy cold water while wearing a glove made with a protective layer of fat. They also learned about the science concepts of snow skiing and put that knowledge to the test with their own winter Olympics STEM challenge creating “skis” and a foil lined “ski slope.” They also created robot winter challenges and participated in a culminating competition to see whose robot could reach the finish line the fastest. We didn’t forget the winter art! While students created several art projects over the last few months, one of the favorites was a winter birch tree scene created with painter’s tape and a watercolor wash effect.



**A student’s first taste of kumquat marmalade on a biscuit.  
She said it was awesome!**



**Students trying to create a “ski slope” for their STEM challenge.**

Savanna WINGS students have recently begun to bring their Harvest of the Month experience to a whole new level. January was their chance to taste kumquats. While students were surprised that kumquats were eaten whole (skin and all) they were even more surprised that they were delicious when turned into a marmalade. Students from Transitional Kindergarten to Sixth Grade carefully sliced and seeded the tiny, tart citrus fruits and then watched as they were boiled with orange juice to create a wonderful sticky, sweet marmalade. They enjoyed it spread on a freshly baked biscuit! In February, students were able to try bok choy in a couple of savory dishes. They sliced bok choy and minced garlic. Their hard work paid off in a delectable wonton soup and sautéed lemon-garlic bok choy. It’s always a joy to see students experience dishes they might never have experienced!

# Orange County Department of Education

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**Dr. Al Mijares**  
*Superintendent*



**Dr. Ramon Miramontes**  
*Deputy Superintendent of Instructional Programs*

Here's a common question we hear: Why are you called the Orange County Department of Education when other county offices of education across California are known as, well, county offices of education? The answer takes us back to a decision

made under the leadership of Dr. Robert Peterson, who served as county superintendent from 1966 through 1991. Early in his tenure, Dr. Peterson proposed changing the name of the then-Orange County Schools Office to the Orange County Department of Education, saying it was more in line with other county departments.

It was also reflective of the organization's expanding role. Our office had evolved into an agency that coordinated academic programs and provided technical and special services to all school districts, according to a resolution. The change was approved in March 1969.

This spirit of evolution and adaptation has been the hallmark of the Orange County Department of Education since its inception almost exactly 135 years ago.

On March 11, 1889, California Gov. Robert Waterman signed a bill that led to the formation of Orange County — and the office that would become OCDE. An annual report from 1890 documented a combined enrollment of 3,426 students, served by a total of 34 districts — though some operated less than six months out of the year. Total annual expenditures for the entire county were less than \$65,000.

Fast forward to today. Under the leadership of current County Superintendent Dr. Al Mijares, our department now supports nearly half a million students and approximately 600 schools as a cornerstone of Orange County's educational community.

Our role is multifaceted, yet it can be understood through two primary functions:

First, we provide direct instruction to our county's most vulnerable student populations through our Alternative Education and Special Education divisions, the latter of which includes our newly rebranded "Connections" schools.

Second, OCDE offers a comprehensive suite of services to local school districts. These range from meaningful training opportunities and high-speed internet access to legal and fiscal guidance, payroll systems, Local Control and Accountability Plan assistance and approval, student enrichment and much more.

When districts face hurdles in meeting specific performance goals on the California School Dashboard, OCDE and other county offices of education are also called upon to provide targeted support. This process, known as differentiated assistance, complements districts' own efforts to ensure that students' needs are met.

As we continue to grow and adapt, it's important to underscore that OCDE's core principles have remained unchanged. Driven by a commitment to empower all learners, we approach our roles not merely as administrators of the Orange County Department of Education but as stewards of a legacy of service and continuous improvement that dates back over a century.

Change is more than a chapter in our history. It is the very essence of our DNA. And it will be the engine that propels us forward, fueling our journey toward a brighter, more innovative and prosperous Orange County.