



Fontana Unified School District

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PRESS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Celebrates Nearly 3,000 Graduates in Class of 2019

FONTANA, CA – Fontana Unified celebrated nearly 3,000 graduates from five comprehensive high schools, two continuation schools and one adult school in commencement ceremonies held May 20 to 23 at Citizen's Business Bank Arena in Ontario.

The District's five comprehensive high schools honored 12 valedictorians and salutatorians, many of whom will pursue degrees in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) fields at prestigious colleges and universities across the country.

"The Class of 2019 has inspired us all with their tremendous resilience and commitment to learning, which will serve them well in any path they pursue," Fontana Unified Superintendent Randal S. Bassett said. "We wish our graduates the best of luck as they take on life's challenges and continue to seek new educational and professional opportunities."

This year, 381 Fontana Unified students graduated with the California Seal of Biliteracy, which recognizes proficiency in speaking, reading and writing in foreign languages. An additional 73 students received Fontana Unified's own Seal of Biliteracy.

Each comprehensive high school invited one highly improved student from each feeder elementary and middle school to take part in its graduation ceremony, hoping to inspire younger students to strive for excellence.

Citrus High School

Citrus High School kicked off the District's commencement activities with a ceremony on May 20. The continuation school celebrated 175 graduates, three of whom delivered passionate speeches thanking Citrus teachers, counselors and administrators for their unwavering support.

"We are finally on track for success," graduate Miriam Barocio said. "Just when everybody thought we were helpless, Citrus gave us an opportunity to be able to graduate."

Eric Birch High School

Eric Birch High School graduated 94 students during a May 20 ceremony that featured speeches from the top male and female students, known as the Baron Male and Female. Both continuation school graduates expressed gratitude to their families, friends, teachers and staff as they reflected on the significance of the moment.

"My story is just like many of the graduates in this room," Baron Male Nahshon Harrison said. "We came to Birch our junior year, not really knowing what to expect or if this opportunity was even going to work

out, but nonetheless an opportunity it was. With the support of our wonderful parents, peers, and counselors we are here today to celebrate this important milestone in our lives.”

A.B. Miller High School

A.B. Miller High School honored 503 graduates during a May 20 ceremony. Valedictorian Maritza Padilla reflected on the sacrifices it took to earn a diploma and encouraged her peers to continue embracing life’s challenges.

“To quote my idol, Sonic the Hedgehog: ‘adventure’s no fun if it’s too easy,’” Padilla said. “If you get things easy, would it be fun celebrating your accomplishments?”

Padilla will study computer science at UC Santa Cruz, aided by a \$20,000 Dell Scholarship. Salutatorian Journey Sepulveda will study political science and philosophy at UCLA.

Fontana Adult School

Fontana Adult School celebrated 129 graduates on May 21, honoring adult learners who earned their high school diplomas or equivalency diplomas. Five graduates shared personal stories of struggle and triumph during the emotional ceremony, each highlighting what motivated them to enroll at the adult school.

Marlet Vargas was inspired to earn her diploma when she learned she was pregnant. In her speech, Vargas described how her experience at Fontana Adult School has inspired her to pursue a bachelor’s degree and a career as a private investigator.

“In reality, going back to school was the best decision I could make,” Vargas said. “I was able to see my potential as an active learner. I was able to achieve my goal and completed what I thought would be impossible.”

Fontana High School

Fontana High School held lively commencement activities on May 21 to honor its 554 graduates.

San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Ted Alejandre praised FOHI students for their hard work and strong graduation rate – approximately 96.5 percent for the Class of 2019 – which surpassed the county graduation rate.

Valedictorian Itzhary Tamayo will major in aerospace engineering at UCLA; salutatorian Andres Larios will study political science and international relations at UC Berkeley.

“Take action in the future, whether it is after this ceremony, or tomorrow or even in a few years, but do something with what is being given to you today,” Larios said. “Don’t take this accomplishment for granted because it has been a moment we have all worked for over four years.

Kaiser High School

Kaiser High graduated 508 students on May 21 during a lively ceremony anchored by a joint speech from co-valedictorians Jashandeep Lobana and Samuel Marin.

Lobana – a Gates Scholar and Edison International Scholar – will study neuroscience as a pre-med student at Johns Hopkins University. Marin will pursue a degree in civil engineering at UCLA.

“What makes us special is that we all possess the ability to exceed what we considered our limits and attain success,” Lobana said to his peers. “Leaders aren’t born, leaders are made, and we each embody the definition of a true leader because of our grounded values and bonds. I feel confident about the fate of our future because I know each one of you is there on my side willing to make a difference.”

Summit High School

Summit High School celebrated 560 graduates – the District’s largest class this year – on May 22. Amid confetti cannons full of blue and silver streamers and chants of “Who fine? One-nine,” valedictorian Soomin Kim and salutatorian Kimberly Villanueva discussed the challenges they encountered in their pursuit of their diplomas.

Kim came to Fontana in sixth grade as an English learner and overcame language and learning challenges to graduate with top honors and admission to UC Berkeley, where she will study mathematics. Villanueva will pursue a degree in bioengineering at UC Riverside and hopes to become an engineer.

“When we first arrived at Summit four years ago, we were blank canvases, blank books, all ready to begin this new chapter called high school,” Villanueva said. “All of us took a different path despite starting in the same place, and that is what makes us unique people with our own story.”

Jurupa Hills High School

Jurupa Hills High School concluded the District’s commencement festivities with its May 22 ceremony, celebrating the end of a fiercely competitive academic year for its 448 graduates.

Valedictorian Ricardo Rios was joined on stage by three co-salutatorians: Gates Scholar Kaitlyn Dodgen, Krisilda Atieh and Josue Saldana. Each student delivered emotionally charged speeches that highlighted how the Class of 2019 thrived despite personal and academic struggles.

“Throughout my years at Jurupa, I have met incredible human beings that can prove numbers, grades, and rankings mean little to nothing when it comes to greatness,” Rios said. “Every single one of us is allowed to define our own version of success, and I encourage you to follow that dream no matter what others think of it or how impossible it may seem.”

Rios will attend UCLA, while Atieh and Saldana will pursue degrees at UC Riverside. Dodgen will enroll at the University of Chicago, thanks to the all-expense-paid 2019 Gates Scholarship.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_2019_GRAD1: Fontana High School graduate Itzhary Tamayo delivers her valedictorian address during the May 21 commencement ceremony.

FUSD_2019_GRAD2: Henry J. Kaiser High School scholar-athlete Christian Hunter graduates with 507 of his peers on May 21.

FUSD_2019_GRAD3: A Jurupa Hills High School student celebrates earning her diploma during commencement on May 22.

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