



Fontana Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Elementary School to Provide Students with Plush Therapy Tools, Bolster Personal Connection

FONTANA, CA – Almond Elementary School will show its appreciation to students by presenting them with plush therapy tools, designed to provide comfort and bolster much-needed personal connections, prior to the return of in-person instruction in April.

Almond students will receive a Mibleball, a plush five-inch-round, cuddly therapy toy with button eyes and long kinetic hair that helps relieve stress and anxiety and can be enjoyed by all age groups. The Mibleballs will be presented during Almond's weekly meal distribution on March 31.

"We understand that students have gone through a very tough year and we wanted them to receive a special gift from the school to let them know that they are always close to our hearts," Almond Counselor Debbie Hornaday said. "A Mibleball's therapeutic powers are evident the moment you hold one in your hand. We feel this will be a huge help as students return to school."

Hornaday, known to her students and colleagues as Ms. Dee, met Mibleball Inc. President Julia Chambers at an education conference in 2019. The doll, created in 2017 by Chambers' 10-year-old son Theo, became a much sought-after therapeutic tool for both children and adults. The Mibleball soon evolved into a collectible, with six distinctive designs.

When Almond families arrive at school to receive their Mibleball they will be greeted by the Easter Bunny, who will help distribute gift bags that will also include a social-emotional resource booklet provided by Fontana Unified's Multi-Tiered System of Supports department.

Almond teachers, who will also receive a Mibleball, will support student mental health and well-being by leading them in a variety of Mibleball-themed social-emotional activities on campus and during home learning.

"We are very excited to see the reactions of the families when they receive their doll," Almond Principal Tim McCaffrey said. "Mibleballs have shown to have positive effects for seniors suffering through Alzheimer's or dementia and as a calming agent for children. When you pick one up, you can't put it down. We think this is a perfect fit for our community."

District and City representatives will be present for the distribution, as well as members of the Almond Parent Teacher Organization and a District employee dressed as Elsa from the musical "Frozen."

“Our teachers and staff have remained dedicated to ensuring students feel connected and supported during distance learning – an effort that will continue as we prepare to resume in-person instruction,” Fontana Unified Superintendent Randal S. Bassett said. “Thank you to Tim McCaffrey, Debbie Hornaday and our Almond employees for your continued compassion and support of our students.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_MIMBLEBALL1: Almond Elementary School will show its appreciation to students by presenting them with Mibleballs, plush therapy toys designed to provide comfort and bolster much-needed personal connections, during a drive-through distribution on March 31.

FUSD_MIMBLEBALL2: Almond Elementary School counselor Debbie “Ms. Dee” Hornaday and principal Tim McCaffrey, dressed as a life-size Mibleball, prepare for a distribution event on March 31, during which every Almond student will receive their own therapy doll and wellness resource booklet.

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