



# Fontana Unified School District

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Fontana Unified's Sequoia Middle School Redesignated as a 2021 School to Watch

**FONTANA, CA** – Sequoia Middle School has been recognized in the 2021 California Schools to Watch program, celebrating its continued success in boosting student achievement, creating a positive campus culture, bridging the technology gap and reducing suspensions.

Sequoia Middle School is among 31 high-performing California middle schools to be honored this year. First designated as a School to Watch in 2018, Sequoia was re-evaluated to retain the designation – a process that occurs every three years.

“We believe that this distinction was important in 2018, but it’s something that our school community needed even more now, after a year of challenges, because it affirms all the amazing things we’re doing,” Sequoia Middle School Principal Antonio Viramontes said. “This designation is a testament to the efforts of our teachers and staff, in and out of the classroom, as well as the positive impact of our programs and resources on our school community.”

Sequoia takes a comprehensive approach to student success, offering a variety of programs and services that foster college and career readiness, provide intervention and social-emotional support, and strengthen digital literacy.

Sequoia’s Renaissance club, along with award-winning counseling team, the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) discipline system, and mentoring programs like Where Everybody Belongs (WEB), helped the school reduce its suspension rate from 11.9 percent in the 2011-12 school year to an average of 3.8% over the last four years.

The school also was recognized by the California PBIS Coalition as a gold medal school in 2019 for its work in team-building activities, reviewing classroom expectations and creating positive support structures.

Sequoia has worked to narrow the achievement gap and prepare students for the rigor of high school and college through its Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program. Its success in implementing AVID strategies schoolwide – including focus notes, interactive notebooks, collaborative study groups, and more – helped secure Sequoia’s status as an AVID National Demonstration School.

Increasing access to technology and bolstering digital literacy have also been key efforts at Sequoia, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a yearlong shift to distance learning. Sequoia educators made the most of the opportunity to master digital learning tools, learn to best connect with their students through Microsoft Teams, use OneNote to support AVID instruction and more.

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The efforts to develop robust technology-driven instructional practices, supported by Fontana Unified's fast-tracked 1:1 device initiative, also earned Sequoia Middle School a designation as a 2020-21 U.S. Showcase Incubator School by Microsoft.

The Schools to Watch program is sponsored by the California Department of Education, California League of Schools and the California Middle Grades Alliance, in association with the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform.

Fontana Unified boasts three Schools to Watch designations; Southridge Tech and Wayne Ruble middle schools were honored in 2019 for bridging the technology gap, boosting student achievement and improving campus culture.

"Congratulations to the entire Sequoia Middle School community on their well-deserved redesignation as a 2021 California School to Watch," Fontana Unified Superintendent Randal S. Bassett said. "This recognition highlights the commitment by our Fontana Unified teachers and staff to provide the best learning environment to our students."

**PHOTO CAPTION:**

**FUSD\_SCHOOLSTOWATCH:** Sequoia Middle School has been redesignated as a 2021 California Schools to Watch, recognizing its efforts to boost student achievement, create a positive campus culture, bridge the technology gap and reduce suspensions.

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