



# Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

9680 Citrus Avenue | Fontana, CA 92335 | Phone: (909) 357-5000 | [www.fusd.net](http://www.fusd.net)

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Dec. 4, 2024

**CONTACT:** Andrew Shortall

(909) 204-6013

## Fontana Unified Middle Schoolers Explore Lucrative Careers in Aviation through Partnership with NextUp

**FONTANA, CA** – Alder Middle School sixth-grader Xavi Hernandez felt like he was soaring through the air as he sat in a state-of-the-art cockpit simulator inside a mobile 36-foot flight simulator lab located in the middle of his campus.

“It was awesome, really cool and fun to experience,” said Hernandez, who added that he is considering pursuing a career as a pilot. “I liked just flying over the city, I was just taking it all in.”

It was part of Fontana Unified School District’s (FUSD) Career Technical Education (CTE) partnership with NextUp Aviation, which brought the world of aviation directly to Alder Middle School students on Nov. 21. The event was designed to help students explore and foster an early interest in diverse career pathways within the aviation and aerospace industry.

Students engaged with flight simulators, interactive booths, and industry leaders from UPS, FedEx, and American Airlines, highlighting career pathways in piloting, drone operation, air traffic control, mechanics, and more throughout the event. NextUp Aviation works to prepare students from all backgrounds for careers in aviation by offering accessible education and training across a variety of fields.

“We want to ignite our students’ motivation early and give them a head start in shaping their professional lives,” Fontana Unified CTE Lead Liaison Jeannifer Heredia said. “By introducing them to various career opportunities and equipping them with the right tools, we’re empowering them to aim high and make those dreams a reality.”

Fontana Unified’s partnership with NextUp Aviation will continue with a similar event at Wayne Ruble Middle School this academic year. Students interested in pursuing aviation further have a next step waiting for them in high school, as Alder, Almeria, and Wayne Ruble middle schools feed into A.B. Miller High School, which offers a two-year aviation career technical education pathway that serves as a flight training school and includes a pilot training class, an airline mechanic class, and a flight simulator lab.

“This is a great opportunity for our students to explore the opportunities of the CTE track in aviation and what it could lead to in their future endeavors,” Alder Middle School Principal Elena Zerbel said. “This event allowed them to see how aviation can allow for different opportunities and careers; there are many opportunities to explore.”

– more –

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics project steady growth in aviation careers, including [aerospace engineering and operations technologists](#), [aircraft mechanics/technicians](#), [air traffic controllers](#), and [airline and commercial pilots](#), through 2033. Annual median salaries for all four career pathways ranged from more than \$75,000 to \$170,000 in 2023 without requiring a traditional bachelor's degree.

Fontana Unified Board of Education President Mars Serna emphasized the importance of the NextUp partnership to reach FUSD middle schoolers as part of the District's commitment to not just college but career readiness for all students.

"This is about planting the seed early before they get to high school and open up their eyes to different careers," said Serna, highlighting Fontana's strategic location to several aviation hubs in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, including the Ontario and San Bernardino international airports and March Air Reserve Base. "I have always believed this; we want to prepare kids to go to college but the reality is not all of them are going to go to college. Our goal is to make sure our students who are not college bound have access to careers that offer a livable wage."

#### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**FUSD\_NEXTUP1:** Alder Middle School sixth-grader Xavi Hernandez pilots a state-of-the-art cockpit simulator during his lunch break thanks to a Fontana Unified partnership with NextUp Aviation on Nov. 21. The event was designed to foster an early interest in aviation within students as they explored diverse career pathways offered within the aviation and aerospace industry.

**FUSD\_NEXTUP2:** Alder Middle School students had the chance to connect with industry leaders, including UPS, to discuss different career opportunities within aviation during an on-campus event hosted by NextUp Aviation on Nov. 21. NextUp Aviation will host a similar event at Wayne Ruble Middle School later this school year.

**FUSD\_NEXTUP3:** Alder Middle School students explore potential aviation careers during an event hosted by NextUp Aviation on its campus on Nov. 21. The event connected students with industry experts while highlighting career pathways in piloting, drone operation, air traffic control, mechanics, and more.

###