



# Fontana Unified School District

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Fontana Unified High School Secures Prestigious Golden Bell Award for Freshmen Summer Bridge Program

**FONTANA, CA** – Summit High School’s Summer Bridge Program prepares incoming freshmen for the rigors of high school by reducing the anxiety that comes with attending a new school, which led to it winning the prestigious California School Boards Association (CSBA) Golden Bell Award.

Five Fontana Unified School District (FUSD) programs have now won six CSBA Golden Bell Awards, which promote excellence in education and school board governance by recognizing outstanding school programs throughout California. District leaders received the award at CSBA’s 2024 Education Conference and Trade Show, which was held Dec. 5-7 at the Anaheim Convention Center.

Now in its seventh year, Summit High’s Summer Bridge Program is a technology-focused, project learning-based elective designed to help freshmen seamlessly transition into high school. The month-long program allows freshmen to meet new classmates, be mentored by Summit student leaders, and learn about the school’s career technical education (CTE) and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pathways while earning 10 credits toward their high school diploma.

“Summit’s Summer Bridge Program gives our incoming freshmen a head start in high school and connects them with student leaders who can guide them through those difficult first days,” Summit Summer Bridge Coordinator Jennifer Karpinski said. “Thanks to the Summer Bridge program, freshmen attendance is up, test scores are up, and new students have become more involved with school.”

Summer Bridge students take six classes – English, math, science, robotics, public speaking, and leadership – and work together using a learn-by-doing approach. The program helps students develop soft skills such as resume writing, team collaboration, and problem-solving to reinforce core academic skills and cultivate real-world capabilities essential for future success.

A key to Summer Bridge’s success is its emphasis on using campus leaders as mentors, with Summit Link Crew and STEM students supporting the freshmen through the program, Karpinski said. Link Crew members welcome students on the first day with fun activities and campus tours, lead a scavenger hunt, and lead presentations on how to get involved in Summit’s extracurricular activities. STEM mentors help students establish a love for science and tech through practical, real-world applications.

Summit High Class of 2021 graduate and current Caltech University student Evelyn Huerta is among Summer Bridge’s many success stories. The program’s emphasis on STEM was a life-changer for Evelyn, opening up a new world of possibilities and career goals.

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“Before attending Summer Bridge, I barely knew how to turn on a computer,” Huerta said. “That transformative summer was my first experience in coding, using CAD (computer-aided design) software, and building a robot. It sparked a deep interest in computer science and robotics. Summer Bridge ignited my passion and gave me the skills and confidence to pursue a rewarding career in STEM, and my enthusiasm has grown.”

Summit High data has shown Summer Bridge has had an impact. When surveyed, more than 90% of Summer Bridge participants stated the program boosted their confidence in succeeding at school and directly led them to join at least one extracurricular activity at school.

“My experience in Summer Bridge helped me get plugged into STEM classes and SkillsUSA, where I was able to compete at the state level,” Summit senior Melody Martinez said. “I was able to get to know the campus and teachers, which made me feel comfortable coming into high school.”

Over the last five years, students who attended Summer Bridge demonstrated a 98% attendance rate as freshmen, with little to no drop-off in the succeeding years. Similarly, Summer Bridge freshmen averaged a 43% higher pass rate in math, a 30% higher pass rate in science, and a 22% higher pass rate in English than their peers, a pattern which continued as students advanced into sophomore and junior years.

“Summit High’s Summer Bridge Program has had a transformative impact on our students,” Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. “This program exemplifies the power of innovation and mentorship in fostering academic success, confidence, and engagement among our incoming freshmen. The Golden Bell Award is a credit to the dedication of Summit’s educators and student leaders who ensure every new student begins high school on a strong foundation for success.”

#### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**FUSD\_GOLDENBELL1:** From left: Summit High Summer Bridge coordinators Jennifer Karpinski and Jesse Cerda celebrate the Summer Bridge Program earning the prestigious California School Boards Association’s (CSBA) prestigious Golden Bell Award. The one-month, technology-focused, and project learning-based elective is designed to help freshmen seamlessly transition to high school through peer mentorship.

**FUSD\_GOLDENBELL2:** Summit High School earned Fontana Unified’s sixth California School Boards Association’s (CSBA) Golden Bell Award for its Summer Bridge Program. The month-long program allows freshmen to meet new classmates, be mentored by Summit student leaders, and learn about the school’s career technical education (CTE) and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pathways while earning 10 credits toward their high school diploma.

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