



Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2025

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Fontana Unified to Expand Student Services by Uniting Award-Winning Continuation Schools

FONTANA, CA – Fontana Unified School District (FUSD) will strengthen and broaden academic and support services for its continuation high school students as it merges its two Model Continuation High Schools, Citrus and Eric Birch, beginning in the 2025-26 school year.

Both continuation schools will consolidate under the name Eric Birch High School, relocating to the former Citrus High site at 10760 Cypress Ave., and adopting the Citrus Jaguars mascot. The FUSD Board of Education approved the merger and an estimated \$150,000 cost associated with renaming the Citrus campus to Eric Birch High School during its June 18 meeting.

Fontana Unified's continuation school instruction has been recognized by the California Department of Education (CDE) for its comprehensive excellence. Both Citrus and Eric Birch earned Model Continuation School designations from the CDE for their innovative approach to alternative education, with Citrus earning the three-year status in 2023 and Eric Birch securing recognition in 2024, which extends into the 2025-26 school year.

"This merger allows us to expand and enhance the exceptional student support and academic opportunities that earned our schools Model Continuation designations," Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "By bringing our continuation students together on one unified campus, we are ensuring they have increased access to career technical education (CTE) pathways, mental health supports, athletics, and enrichment programs that empower them to thrive."

Fontana Unified opted to relocate Eric Birch High to the Citrus campus because it is larger, with capacity for 700 to 800 students, and more modern, having opened in 2011. The previous site of the Eric Birch campus, which first opened in 1994, will be utilized by the Allegiance STEAM Academy Thrive Fontana, a public charter school that previously used a portion of Locust Elementary School, in the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years.

The rebranding decisions resulted from collaborative research and discussions between staff of both Eric Birch and Citrus high schools and District personnel, which included feedback from students and parents, according to Mike Bunten, who has served as principal at both Eric Birch and Citrus high schools over the past six years.

"There is some historical significance we didn't want to lose in this move," said Bunten, referring to the school's name Eric Birch, which honors Fontana Unified's superintendent from 1972 to 1981, and the

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school logo choice. “Eric Birch is a significant figure in Fontana Unified history, and a Citrus alum created the Jaguars logo.”

In May 2024, the District notified Eric Birch and Citrus staff about the upcoming merger, which allowed school leaders to spend the 2024-25 school year engaging students and families in the process, coordinating two field trips to the Citrus campus for Eric Birch students and hosting regular “principal chats” about the move during the school day.

Fontana Unified will offer transportation services for Eric Birch High students and families impacted by the school’s relocation about six miles to the southwest. Students with a valid FUSD identification card also qualify for free or discounted transportation through providers like OmniTrans and Metrolink, and have flexible scheduling options, including the ability to delay their school start time, if necessary, Bunten said.

“While things will look different moving forward, we are committed to continuing all of the programming that earned us Model Continuation School recognition and expanding our student support services,” Bunten said.

Fontana Unified’s continuation students will have access to yearlong CTE pathways in construction and cybersecurity, which were previously offered at their respective school sites. According to Bunten, Eric Birch students will have greater access to mental health and counseling services in 2025-26 and beyond, as the school is adding an additional intervention specialist, case manager, and counselor to its staff.

With all continuation students at one school, Eric Birch has the opportunity to expand its competitive offerings in esports and championship-winning athletics programs in the Inland Empire Alternative League. While work is currently underway on an esports lab, the school hopes to expand its athletic offerings from co-ed to separate boys and girls teams based on student interest.

“This really allows us to provide more for our students,” Bunten said. “We can expand, enhance, and increase our academic, student support services, and athletics offerings. We want to give every student the opportunity to get involved and build a sense of belonging here.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_CONTINUATION1: Citrus High School Class of 2025 graduate Malaysia McKnight gives a speech during the school’s commencement at the Ontario Convention Center on May 22. Fontana Unified’s two continuation high schools, Citrus and Eric Birch high, will merge in the 2025-26 school year.

FUSD_CONTINUATION2: Eric Birch High graduates celebrate during the school’s Class of 2025 commencement. Eric Birch will merge with Citrus High, Fontana Unified’s other continuation school, starting in 2025-26.

FUSD_CONTINUATION3: An Eric Birch High School graduate celebrates during the school’s Class of 2025 commencement at the Ontario Convention Center on May 22. Fontana Unified’s two continuation high schools, Citrus and Eric Birch high, will merge in the 2025-26 school year.

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