



Fontana Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 22, 2025

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Fontana Unified Elementary Robotics Team Takes World Stage in International Competition

FONTANA, CA – Fontana Unified School District’s robotics team from Redwood Elementary School competed in the World Robot Olympiad (WRO), Asia Pacific Open Championships in Manila, Philippines in September, going up against student groups from Asia, Europe, and Africa while serving as United States ambassadors.

Redwood Elementary School sixth-grader Dalayza Ponce and fifth-graders Isabella Ruiz and Kylie Moorefield – collectively known as Two Bunny Robots – embarked on the international trip after their top five finish in the WRO National Tournament in July. With a 13th place finish in Manila, the international experience helped equip the Redwood Elementary students with the confidence to continue pursuing their passions.

“I couldn’t believe we got to go to the international tournament,” Ruiz said. “My advice for others is to never give up. You can do anything if you try hard enough.”

Beyond the international competition, Ponce, Ruiz, and Moorefield – accompanied by their families, Redwood Principal Jorge Arauz, coach Carlos Alcaraz, and United States Engineering League (USEL) CEO Derrick Kreimann – met their peers during Friendship Night, exchanging U.S. flags and stress balls in exchange for international candy.

“I am so proud of our students – this was a one-in-a-lifetime experience for them and they represented the District with heart, spirit, and competitive fire,” Arauz said. “They have come a long way in a short time thanks to the support our amazing coaches and USEL.”

The Redwood robotics program began in 2022 as an afterschool activity for its Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) students, with USEL providing instruction for nearly every Fontana Unified elementary and middle school. Led by coaches Dan Fitzgerald, Alcaraz, Alondra Casas, and Maggie Rodriguez, the program rapidly expanded with students practicing up to three times a week.

“The class is a challenge but it gives me a lot of confidence,” Ponce said. “I want to increase my skills so that I can help other students, so they don’t get frustrated.”

Redwood Elementary implemented rigorous program elements to ensure students are receiving a robust experience that provides foundational skills they can build on throughout each grade level. The program is divided into varsity and junior varsity (JV) squads, with Fitzgerald and Alcaraz coaching fifth- and sixth-graders, and Rodriguez coaching third- and fourth-graders.

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The JV team concentrates on learning code and building vehicles, allowing the varsity team to prepare for tournament challenges, which change annually.

“We see where the tech is going in the 21st century, how Artificial Intelligence is being incorporated, and we want to solidify these concepts in the minds of our students so they can push themselves to be better,” Alcaraz said. “It’s wonderful to see the progression of their coding and problem-solving skills, how they learn to collaborate to be successful, and the way they pursue robotics on their own time.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_ROBOTICSMANILA1: Fontana Unified’s Redwood Elementary robotics team competed internationally as the only U.S. representatives in the World Robot Olympiad (WRO), Asia Pacific Open Championships in Manila, Philippines in September.

FUSD_ROBOTICSMANILA2: From left to right: Redwood Elementary School sixth-grader Dalayza Ponce and fifth-graders Kylie Moorefield and Isabella Ruiz teamed up as Two Bunny Robots to compete against other student teams from Asia, Europe, and Africa during the WRO Asia Pacific Open Championships in Manila, Philippines.

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