



Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

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

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 11, 2026

CONTACT: Nancy Yeang
(909) 204-6012

Fontana Unified Marching Band Program Seeks to Entertain, Build Character

FONTANA, CA – The Summit High School Fortepiano String Orchestra will make its way to the Big Apple this April for a return performance at Carnegie Hall's National Band and Orchestra Festival, continuing the momentum of achievement for the SkyHawks Marching Regiment thanks to instrumental music and band director James Sharp.

The Summit High band program – which includes concert band, wind ensemble, prep orchestra, Color Guard, drum line, and the Fortepiano Orchestra – encompasses more than 200 visual and performing arts (VAPA) students in addition to the Summit Majorette squad, which performs at football games and special events.

"Summit High has so many talented students, and it's a joy to provide them the opportunities to express themselves and bring them together to make beautiful music," Sharp said. "I want my students to be able to dream of playing music and have high expectations for their performances."

Summit High completed another impressive season in 2025: earning a top ten finish at the California State Band Championship (CSBC) SoCal Division 5A finals held at Cal High in November 2025. Their high percussion ensemble also took first place at the Centennial High School Field Tournament in October 2025.

Sharp, who has worked at Summit High since 2014, creates new themes for the band performances every year and incorporates social responsibility into their sets. This year's theme was Human Connections, and included a show centered around acceptance and building relationships. In 2018, Summit performed a show highlighting several works by author Edgar Allan Poe, which included a narrator reading excerpts from "The Raven" and "Tell-Tale Heart." A photo of the performance was included on the back cover of Band Today magazine.

Sharp said the skills students learn in band will help them beyond being a musician, preparing them to manage high stress and demanding situations whether they continue pursuing music or other fields.

"I feel it's important to convey a message," Sharp said. "There is so much negativity in our lives, and I want my students to feel like they are part of a bigger thing than what is presented to them on social media."

Sharp, who plays trumpet, attended Etiwanda High School and studied under the legendary Don Jaramillo, who was the first high school band director in California to have his students become finalists

– more –

at the prestigious Bands of America Marching Band championships. Sharp made two trips to the championships, in 1992 and 1995, memorable moments that he wanted his own students to experience. The camaraderie and collaborative spirit of the program is epitomized by Summit High senior and SkyHawks drum captain Gabriel Sanchez, who plays tympani and is a four-year member of the band. His sister, Isabel Sanchez, was the drum captain when the school first went to Carnegie Hall in 2019.

During Summit's annual visits to Cal High for the marching band championships, Sanchez and his section have faithfully returned to the same spot on campus for a group photo, a tradition that began in Sanchez's freshman year and has come full circle, underscoring what being in band means for its players.

"What I love about being in band is seeing all of the hard work pay off," Sanchez said. "Being a drum captain requires leadership and knowing the fundamentals, but it's also important to be socially active and in sync with your section. The championships are special, which is why we always take a picture in the same spot."

Sanchez is one of 75 students to represent Summit High at Carnegie Hall, requiring fundraising efforts to cover the entirety of their trip expenses. Thanks to \$15,000 from Proposition 28, a measure that provides funding to support art instruction throughout California, the Skyhawks gained a significant head start in receiving community support, so far raising more than \$90,000, about half of the amount to fully fund the trip.

To reach their goal, Summit High will host a benefit fundraiser at 7 p.m. on Thursday, March 12 in its multipurpose room, giving the community the opportunity to hear the band play before their Carnegie Hall performance. Tickets are \$20 and includes dinner. Email skyhawksperformance@gmail.com for more information on how to donate.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

SUMMITCARNEGIEHALL1: The Summit High School Fortepiano String Orchestra will travel to New York this April to return to Carnegie Hall's National Band and Orchestra Festival.

SUMMITCARNEGIEHALL2: Summit High band director James Sharp, who has led the program since 2014, creates annual performance themes that emphasize social responsibility while teaching students skills that extend beyond music.

SUMMITCARNEGIEHALL3: Summit High will host a 7 p.m. benefit fundraiser Thursday, March 12, in their multipurpose room, featuring a preview performance ahead of the band's Carnegie Hall appearance.

#