



Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cypress Elementary Garden Nurtures Student Learning, Well-Being on Earth Day

FONTANA, CA - Cypress Elementary School students now have access to a calming sensory environment and expanded hands-on learning opportunities through the school's newly revitalized campus garden, unveiled during an Earth Day ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 22.

More than 200 students, staff, community members, and representatives from partner organizations attended the celebration, with Earth Day-themed signs and balloons lining the garden as attendees gathered for the unveiling. Cypress Garden Club students worked for weeks planting the new garden for their peers to enjoy.

"My favorite part is the lily pads because they make cool sounds, like bubbles," Cypress third-grader and gardening club member Charles Lee said. "The garden is really fun, and now everyone gets to enjoy it."

Beyond its instructional value, the garden serves as a space for student wellness, offering a quiet, sensory-friendly environment where students can reset and recharge away from technology and common classroom stressors. The space has been especially meaningful for students who benefit from hands-on experiences outside of the traditional classroom setting.

"My dad grew up working in the fields, and my grandfather was a bracero, so that agricultural background has always been a part of me," Cypress special education teacher Tatiana Villarreal said. "I want to pass that on to our students while encouraging healthy habits and showing them where their food comes from. The garden gives students a sense of calm, and for some of my students with higher sensory needs, it's a place where they can reset. I want that opportunity to be available to the entire school."

The garden will also support lessons in sustainability and nutrition, while giving students opportunities to engage with the full cycle of food production, from planting to harvest. The space will continue to be supported by student-led efforts, with the gardening club helping to maintain the garden throughout the year.

The restoration was made possible through a collaborative effort between Fontana Unified families and staff with support from SoCalGas, Kellogg, and Lowe's, which contributed time and resources to help transform the space. Originally established in 2019 through the Inland Empire Utilities Agency's Water-Wise "Garden in Every School" program, the garden spans approximately 150 feet and features raised planting beds, fruit trees, and seasonal crops, with plans for each grade level to help maintain its own section.

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“This garden represents the best of what happens when a community comes together to create meaningful opportunities for students,” Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. “This is a space where students can feel grounded and curious about the world around them. We are proud to provide environments that support the whole child beyond the classroom.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

CYPRESS_GARDEN1: Cypress Elementary School Garden Club students are recognized during the school’s Earth Day ribbon-cutting on April 22 for their role in revitalizing the school garden.

CYPRESS_GARDEN2: Cypress students explore the school’s revitalized campus garden following its Earth Day ribbon-cutting on April 22.

CYPRESS_GARDEN3: Students, staff, and community members gather at Cypress on April 22 to celebrate the ribbon-cutting of the school’s newly revitalized garden, unveiled in honor of Earth Day.

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