



Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

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NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Schools Earn Platinum, Gold Status for School Spirit, Climate

FONTANA, CA – At Palmetto Elementary School, student scholars cannot wait for Cardio Wednesday celebrations and the opportunity to do the cha-cha slide with their classmates and teachers. At Chaparral Academy of Technology (CHAT), neon LED lights and air hockey games fill the school's new CHAT-cade game room.

The dance parties and game room not only provide a break during the school day, they are also bringing students, faculty, and staff together, transforming the academic experience into a day of learning, connection, and fun.

For their innovative and engaging approaches that have positively impacted their schools' climate and culture, Palmetto and CHAT have been designated as Jostens Renaissance Platinum Schools of Distinction, building on the Jostens "6 R's" formula: respect, recognize, reward, reinforce, relationship, and result. Fontana High School (FOHI) was also recognized as a Gold-level School of Distinction.

"The Jostens program has changed how we approach the school day," Palmetto Principal Derek Cohen said. "The staff is not only connecting with the students, but helping the students connect with each other."

The Jostens Renaissance program encourages outside-the-box thinking, such as referring to students as "scholars," faculty and staff as "staffulty," and creating activities that educate and engage.

Among Palmetto's most popular initiatives are:

- Cardio Wednesdays, held on the first Wednesday of the month;
- The Success Carnival, which rewards scholars who have made progress on their reading and vocabulary; and
- The Tiger Trolley Cart, a beverage service for staffulty which features a mini-"Pong" game played for prizes.

"This is our second year as a Renaissance school, and the difference is night and day," Cohen said. "The program works because our staffulty believes in it, and it's really brought the community together."

In 2025, CHAT was the recipient of a Jostens Epic Makeover, which included a \$150,000 rebranding reveal. CHAT also highlighted the four characteristics for their roadrunner mascot – Protector, Adaptor, Thriver, Hunter (P.A.T.H.). The traits serve as the names of the four CHAT staffulty and scholar "houses" that regularly compete at school rallies.

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“When you step onto a Renaissance campus, you feel a difference,” CHAT Principal Tim McCaffrey said. “We have a team at CHAT called the vibe team, who really reinforce what we’re doing, making sure that recognition, respect, and fun stay front and center.”

Each month, CHAT scholars compete to win the “Leave Your Mark” award, earning points by making a positive impact during the school day. The CHAT vibe team then creates a report ranking the scholars, with the top 90% earning platinum status and rewards and prizes awarded for scholars at gold- and silver-level status. The reward for a platinum level designation is a visit to the CHAT-cade.

“I work extensively with parents, and one of the most prevalent benefits of Jostens is that the community is built around it,” CHAT bilingual community aide Vanessa Guevara said. “Renaissance acts as the glue because it helps the faculty members and families be united for the same purpose.”

FOHI recently completed its fourth year as a Jostens Renaissance school. Led by Renaissance co-advisors Amanda Elias and Justin Marchan, the program is known as “Ren Crew” on campus.

“Ren Crew enhances the school culture, cultivates kindness, and creates magic around every corner on a daily basis,” Elias said. “Supporting teachers to celebrate their peers and give back to their community is an absolute privilege.”

While FOHI looks to become a Platinum School of Distinction, a designation given to just 2% of schools participating in the Jostens program, Palmetto and CHAT hope to eventually reach the Diamond level of distinction, which can only be achieved by attaining Platinum status for five consecutive years.

“Congratulations to Palmetto, Chaparral Academy of Technology, and Fontana High for their well-deserved recognitions,” Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. “These honors reflect the commitment of our staff and students to fostering engaging, supportive school communities where scholars feel connected, dedicated to their education, and empowered to thrive as lifelong learners.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_RENAISSANCE_1: Palmetto Elementary School has been designated as Jostens Renaissance Platinum Schools of Distinction for making positive impacts in school climate and culture. As part of the Renaissance program, students are referred to as “scholars” and faculty and staff are “staffulty.”

FUSD_RENAISSANCE_2: Chaparral Academy of Technology has also been designated as a Jostens Renaissance Platinum School of Distinction. Each month, CHAT scholars compete to win the “Leave Your Mark” award, earning points by making a positive impact during the school day.

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