



# SAN YSIDRO SCHOOL DISTRICT

Quality education and opportunity for  
all students to succeed

## Press Release

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CONTACT: Valerie Martinez, Mary Roach

PHONE: 909-445-1001

## Actor Launches After-School Performing Arts Class at San Ysidro Schools

Hollywood actor Tony Plana visited the San Ysidro School District on Oct. 1 to share information about Language in Play – a creative after-school program that applies theater arts techniques to improve literacy and math skills and enhance self-confidence in children – ultimately leading to higher rates of graduation and success in school and beyond.

The program – noted for its effective integration of the performing arts into classroom activities that improve language and literacy skills of bilingual students – is scheduled to launch at La Mirada, Ocean View, Sunset and Willow elementary schools and San Ysidro Middle school on Oct. 12.

“Mr. Plana’s program encourages our students to think through a creative lens and solve problems in new ways,” SYSD Board President Antonio Martinez said. “I can’t wait to see the developmental growth and empowerment our students experience when engaged in this program.”

Plana, known for his role as Ignacio Suarez on the ABC series “Ugly Betty,” developed Language in Play in partnership with the East Los Angeles Classic Theatre. Since its inception in 1997, Language in Play has been integrated into multiple schools in California and New York.

Born in Havana, Cuba, Plana was eight years old when his family immigrated to the United States in 1960.

When he first came to America, Plana had to learn English as a second language. With tenacity and dedication, he persevered, graduating magna cum laude from Loyola-Marymount University with a bachelor’s degree in literature and theater arts.

He received his professional training as an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

Plana attributes his success and versatility as an actor to the support he received in the classroom.

“I wouldn’t be where I am today without a solid education,” he said. “I want to inspire students by providing them another vehicle for learning. We are working hand-in-hand with school educators to help children develop the critical skills that will follow them for the rest of their lives.”



Language in Play was first introduced to San Ysidro students in July 2015 as a course available during SYSD’s first-ever THINK Together summer camp, a week-long camp that included arts, physical education, team-building, and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning.

“Language in Play presents our students and teachers with a new pathway for learning,” SYSD Superintendent Dr. Julio Fonseca said. “As we continue to integrate rigorous new programs and activities to enhance the overall educational experience for our children here in San Ysidro, this performing arts opportunity can be especially effective for students who struggle with forms of traditional learning in the classroom.”

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**PHOTO CAPTION:**

**PLANA:** Hollywood actor Tony Plana visited the San Ysidro School District office and met with SYSD Superintendent Dr. Julio Fonseca to discuss “Language in Play,” a program that integrates performing arts into classroom activities to improve language and literacy skills.