

Dear Parents,

Welcome back to the new school year. I trust that your summer break has been restful, joyful, and full of adventures with your children, extended families and friends. Along with this letter are the class lists. A great deal of thought and time devoted by the staff was dedicated to create a positive and appropriate placement for your child. Class lists will be posted until Wednesday, July 29th and then removed from the website for your child's safety.

You may be aware that the IUSD Board of Education raised each first, second and third grade class size by five students which significantly changed our staffing allocations. As a result, the District is requiring us to form a 1/2 combination class to meet staffing requirements. The staff spent considerable time to thoughtfully reassign students to create a positive learning environment. I have great confidence in all our first and second grade teachers. We are committed to providing a comprehensive program across first and second grade for all our students. Common curricular objectives, assessments, RTi, and activities are planned and will be consistently implemented throughout the entire year across all grade levels including the combination class. Annie Reynolds will become our 1/2 combination teacher. She has extensive experience in both first and second grade curriculum and welcomes the opportunity to work in this new configuration for Vista Verde. You will also notice that Doug Tuttle has moved to fourth grade and is very excited about this new opportunity. He brings significant energy and classroom expertise to the fourth grade team. Kelly Rafter has moved to sixth grade language arts and brings a wealth of instructional expertise and professionalism. She will also provide leadership to our middle school as our Assistant Principal.

In addition, we have some new staff members that I would like to introduce. In second grade, Michele Golji joins us from Meadow Park where she taught at the second grade level. She would like to share these comments with you:

"I am very excited to join the Vista Verde family this year! I have heard so many wonderful things about our school and truly look forward to being a part of this staff.

I'd like to share with you some information about my educational and professional history. I received my Bachelor of Arts degree from Cal State Long Beach. Shortly after that, I started researching teacher's credential programs and chose to attend Cal State Fullerton for their outstanding reputation in teacher education. I have been a part of IUSD for the past three years. While earning my credential, I was a student teacher at Oak Creek Elementary and also began substitute teaching for the district. The following year, I was given the opportunity to complete a long-term substitute assignment in a second grade classroom at Meadow Park Elementary. In January of that year, I accepted a position as a third grade teacher at Westwood Basics Plus. For the 2008-2009 school year, I returned to Meadow Park and taught second grade.

And now here I am...thrilled to be joining the Vista Verde family! I look forward to bringing with me my knowledge, experience, and passion for education. I absolutely love to teach and am looking forward to beginning this school year with all of you!"

We are also fortunate enough to have Kate Boyd join us from Canyon View. She wants to share these thoughts with you.

"This academic year 2009-2010, will be my eighth year of teaching. I have taught fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, and have had wonderfully rewarding experiences at both Greentree Elementary School and Canyon View Elementary School. I attended Irvine schools throughout elementary, middle, and high school, and went on to receive my bachelors degree, teaching credential, and masters degree from the University of California, Irvine, as well. My husband, Bret, and I were recently married. We live in Costa Mesa with our dog, Hank, and take every opportunity we can to travel internationally. I am so looking forward to an outstanding year, teaching fifth grade here at Vista Verde!

Also joining us is Janise Therrell, who will be supporting our Support Staff in the middle school. Mrs. Therrell graduated from Vanguard University with a degree in psychology. She received her Ed. Specialist credential from the Orange County Department of Education. Mrs. Therrell has worked for IUSD for almost 25 years. She has been the Resource Specialist at Westpark Elementary School for the last five years. Before that she was at Meadow Park and Northwood elementary. She has two daughters who attended Irvine schools. In her free time she enjoys reading, gardening, traveling, playing board games and spending time with family.

Many of you already know that Mr. Dave Celis retired late June. After over 35 years of teaching, mostly at Vista Verde, he is moving on to other adventures with his family. A celebration in his honor will be planned and parents will be invited to participate. Joining us to teach sixth grade social science and seventh grade social science is Jennifer Fritz. Ms. Fritz brings energy, enthusiasm, and a passion for world cultures and speaks French! She also has strength in technology and interactive instruction. She would like to share these comments with you:

"I am very excited to join the middle school team at Vista Verde. I grew up in Anaheim Hills, California. After graduating from Canyon High School, I studied Psychology and Education at UC Riverside, and completed my Teaching Credential from Cal State Long Beach. I have worked as a World History teacher in the San Fernando Valley and am very excited to make the move and join the Vista Verde faculty. I enjoy music, reading, swimming, and traveling to visit friends and family."

Also joining us is Kristin Pippin as our new psychologist. Ms. Pippin stepped in for Sharri Hogan while she was on a medical leave last year and did an outstanding job. The staff and I are very excited that she is able to return to us to fulfill the leadership role of school psychologist for our Support Team. She also wanted to introduce herself to you:

"My name is Kristin Pippin. I wanted to introduce myself and say how very excited I am to be a part of the Vista Verde staff for the 2009-2010 school year. As your new School Psychologist, I look forward to working and collaborating with all of you. To give you a brief background about myself, I grew up in Tustin, CA and earned my Educational Specialist degree in School Psychology locally at Chapman University. I have worked in the Irvine Unified School District for four years, at the Preschool through High School level. Previously during my time in Irvine, I was able to briefly work at Vista Verde. I am excited to be returning there on a permanent basis. I look forward to meeting all of the new people and reuniting with families that I have worked with before. I am happy to be a part of an outstanding team."

Please join me in welcoming our new staff members along with our stellar team of veteran teachers back to school on July 29th. I look forward to a wonderful year of success for your children and honored partnerships with you to continue our legacy of academic excellence along with a positive environment and sense of family.

Cordially,

Dr. Jean Mylen,
Principal