



SPRING 2024

A SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY EDITION

 **SUNNYVALE SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**CELEBRATING**  
**125 YEARS**  
EST. 1899

THE DISTRICT BRIDGE

Dear Friends,

This year marks the Sunnyvale School District's 125th anniversary. It's more than a milestone; it's an opportunity to honor the collaborative efforts of all the people who have shaped the District — those who have come before us and all who work, learn, and partner with us today.

For more than 12 decades, our district has been dedicated to serving our children and families. Our values have crystalized and deepened along with our understanding of how best to help students succeed.

In this edition of The District Bridge, we share a bit about our history — stories drawn from our files and from the wealth of information available at the [Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum](#), whose work is essential to documenting the heritage and history of our town. As the year progresses, we will continue to share, and we will also provide opportunities for current and former students and staff to share some of their favorite memories.

Our district started with nothing but an idea, a few visionaries, and a community's desire to serve children and families. I realize how fortunate we are today. We have inherited so much from our predecessors, and our community continues to help us prepare children for success. It's no wonder that our students make us so proud each year. We work to give them what they need to learn, gain skills, and deepen their understanding, compassion, and creativity as they progress to the next level of their education and get ready to make their way in the world.

Thank you for joining us as we reflect on our bright past and work together to shape a brilliant future.

Sincerely,



Michael Gallagher, Ed.D.  
Superintendent, Sunnyvale School District



## OUR SCHOOLS

Bishop Elementary  
Cherry Chase Elementary  
Cumberland Elementary  
Ellis Elementary  
Fairwood Explorer  
Lakewood Tech EQ  
San Miguel Elementary  
Vargas Elementary  
Columbia Middle  
Sunnyvale Middle

## SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Isabel Jubes-Flamerich  
Eileen Le  
Michelle Maginot  
Nancy Newkirk  
Bridget Watson



## A Sunny Start

The District started with Encina School and was called the Encina School District. Within three years of its opening in 1899, the school had its first principal, Mr. J.C. Frye, and three teachers. In 1904 the District was renamed the Sunnyvale School District, and by 1908, the District had enrolled 185 students and was growing rapidly.

Even in those early years, the Sunnyvale School District worked in partnership with its neighbors. The schoolhouse was the city's first civic building; it contained both Encina School and a second-floor gathering and entertainment space that was the social heart of the community.

In 125 years, the District has transformed from serving 20 children in its one-room schoolhouse to serving nearly 6,000 students across 10 campuses.



The school district started with its namesake school, Encina, a two-story schoolhouse that contained a one-room school on the first floor and a community hall on the second floor.





Encina School students having lunch in the school's cafeteria.

## History in the Making

From the start, the District provided students with opportunities to grow academically and socially. Students were taught sewing and gardening and participated in extracurricular activities like sports and debate.

Some students traveled to school in a Model T school bus leased by the District. We were later able to purchase one of our own for \$500.

As the community expanded and industry began to move in, students took field trips to local destinations. They visited nearby orchards, where farmers taught them about pollination and pruning, and local businesses like Joshua Hendy Iron Works, which had moved to the area from San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. Our district came through that earthquake nearly unscathed, though our belfry was irreparably damaged and could no longer house our school bell. We eventually sold our school bell to a neighboring church for \$5.

Today our students take field trips to the Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum for a look at life in Sunnyvale's early years, including a history of our city's founding family, hands-on experiences with tools from 100 years ago, and a tour of the museum's exhibit rooms — one of which includes our original school bell!





Sunnyvale Grammar School eighth-grade girls' tennis team, May 1909. From left to right are Irene Setzer, Bertha Jett, and Doris Atkinson, all lifelong Sunnyvale residents. (Images of America Sunnyvale by Ben Koning and Anneke Mets with the Sunnyvale Historical Society)

## Growing and Changing

By the late 1940s, Sunnyvale was a center of industry, drawing employers for fruit picking and packing, lumber milling, and technology development. From 1959 to 1960, the District opened 13 new schools to meet the growing need.

In 1948 the District began construction on Sunnyvale Avenue School (now Bishop School). Dr. Stanley Ellis, the District's superintendent, envisioned a school whose facilities would allow for greater community involvement and meet children's needs beyond academics. The school housed an infirmary and bathing area and included a full auditorium that is still in use today. The school was a model in community collaboration and reflected innovative design elements seldom seen in early schools, such as lots of natural light, a garden, and fireplaces.

In 1952, Lockheed Missiles and Space settled in Sunnyvale, triggering a technology boom in the area. The District continued to grow, adding Benner, Ellis, Adair, Cherry Chase, Madrone, Carson, Morse, Fairwood, San Miguel, and Lakewood schools, all before 1959.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the District opened De Anza, Hollenbeck, Cumberland, Pippin, Bayside, and Fair Oaks elementary schools, and Mango Jr. High (which later became Sunnyvale Middle School).

At its largest point, the District was comprised of 18 schools.



## Partnering with Purpose

Ellis Elementary School is named after Stanley Ellis, who was Superintendent from 1944-1953 and forged a strong relationship with City of Sunnyvale, launching one of our earliest and most sustaining partnerships.

Support for the District and its students has grown over the years, with nonprofit agencies, businesses, local colleges and universities, service clubs, and families volunteering, donating funds, and providing programs. Community resources have bolstered our ability to provide music, art, sports, counseling, and other enrichment and services to our children.

In turn, our District schools have continued to serve as hubs of community life. In 1996 the District deepened its partnership with the City of Sunnyvale and gained support from local employer AMD to build a hub of social, recreation, and education services: the Columbia Neighborhood Center. Now more than 25 years old, the center is still thriving, offering programming the whole community can enjoy, while delivering specialized services to students and families as needed.

During the pandemic, our schools expanded their roles in food distribution to families and — with funding from Google, Second Harvest Silicon Valley, and other partners — provided computers and hotspots for students without Internet access.





## A Brilliant Future

Sunnyvale School District continues to evolve based on the lessons we have learned over time. Perhaps the most significant is this: the vision we have for our students is not ours alone. Our community has steadfastly walked alongside us for generations, supporting our work and sharing our hope that our students will develop their minds and hearts to shape a brighter world. Our community of partners, neighbors, staff, and families rally to support that cause, and our students are stronger for it.

Our own learning comes from many resources: Our history. Education research. Our observations about which lessons inspire children and bolster learning. Our own assessments, which we conduct to determine where we can facilitate more equitable growth for students. And parents and caregivers who share their insights with us. Their voices are critical to helping us support their children today and build a brighter future for children in all the years to come.

*Thank you to the Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum for the wealth of historical information, photographs, and artifacts that were the core of our research. Other details in this piece came from the Sunnyvale Collage II book; Images of America: Sunnyvale; Sunnyvale: From the City of Destiny to the Heart of Silicon Valley; and the Schools and Sunnyvale booklet.*



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