



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

August 14, 2025

Dear Parents,

Welcome back to the 2025-2026 school year. I hope that everyone was able to find some time to relax and enjoy a slower pace of life this summer. Once summer school was up and running, I was able to travel to Italy and Mexico with friends. I love the opportunity to explore new cuisine, cultures and experience life in another country. Since the beginning of August, I have been working with our district and department team, getting ready for the 2025-2026 School Year. Dr. Shelton, our Superintendent, continues to support the values of curiosity, belonging, and empowerment. While working on all of these throughout the year, I am asking our department to focus on belonging. How powerful would it be if all our students could feel like they belonged in their classrooms and community?

I am so excited to see your students on August 21st (August 25th for preschool students). Please read this lengthy update to provide you the information that you need for the start of the school year.

Staffing: We have worked hard on filling vacancies this summer. We still are not done with hiring but don't worry, it always works out. A huge thank you to our Human Resources Department for helping to get all these teachers processed to start the school year with us. Please help me welcome the following staff members to SMMUSD:

New Hires to SMMUSD:

Katie Kong - school psychologist Grant Elementary

Sara Weaver – SAI Social Skills Grant

Ariel Rudin – SAI Social Skills Grant

Karen Hannigan – SLP MES/Webster

Anthony Lucas- MES ESN Class

Kaitlin Theobold- SAI TK collab MES

Diana Marquez – Edison SAI teacher

Victoria Kovach – STEP SMASH

Evelyn Hupp– SAI Social Skills Franklin

Leilani Jackson – Rogers SAI

Max Howard -school psychologist Rogers (covering S. Brinkworth leave)

Kevin Dobbins – JAM SAI

Molly Liles -SAMOHI SAI

Francesca LaScala- SAMOHI SAI

Zoe Goldman- Malibu OT

SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

1717 Fourth Street • Santa Monica • California 90401-3319 • (310) 450-8338 • www.smmusd.org

Board of Education: Jon Kean • Maria Leon-Vazquez • Laurie Lieberman • Alicia Mignano

Stacy Rouse • Jennifer Smith • Dr. Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein

Superintendent: Dr. Antonio Shelton

Jasline Garcia- Mckinley SAI Intensive

Staff Who Are Returning to SMMUSD:

Jennifer Gardner – SMASH SAI K-4

Christian Chiappe – SAMOHI SAI

Todd Montgomery- MHS SAI

Staff Who Moved to New Positions within SMMUSD:

April Rosales – TK Collab Franklin

Zhanna Hazlett – School Psychologist MMS MHS

Alexis Lopez- School Psychologist JAMS

Jessica Alcantara – School Psychologist Mckinley

Maureen Reilly – Mckinley SAI

Crystal Jackson – SAMOHI Transition

Cara Posner – MMS SAI

Currently Vacancies:

SAI JAMS Math

SAI Rogers

SAI Franklin .5

Mod Severe Teachers at SAMOHI

Transportation: If you have not turned in your transportation form, your student will not have transportation for the first day of school. Please make sure you fill the online form in as soon as possible. If your teacher did not send you the link, please contact your coordinator asap. In addition, please review the transportation handbook.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1rI4TMlscCBvVHHeDHs6jSjzKwDO1WqD?usp=sharing>

Trainings:

This week we are heavily engaged in trainings. Our team presented at The New Teacher Academy, where we provide a four-day orientation for all new teachers to the district. We hosted our first Co Teaching Symposium on August 12th and 13th. In addition, we hosted an all-day paraeducator training on August 14th. Finally, on August 15th we will be holding our Sped Ahead Summit. During this time, our staff will choose to attend sessions on topics such as Working with Students with Anxiety to Legal Updates to Self-Care for Educators. Just like our students love choice, so do adults.

Unsigned IEPs: If you have haven't signed your child's IEP documents (whether that is an addendum/annual/triennial/initial) please reach out to your child's teacher/coordinator asap to sign the documents. Parents can sign in agreement with everything, some parts of the IEP, or none of it. We need to have all IEPs signed before school starts.

Admin Team Update: I am thrilled to announce that Dr. Michael Hoover has joined our Coordinator Team. Michael and I have worked together many years and I am very excited for him to bring his thoughtfulness, his knowledge of behavior and his calm demeanor to our team.

Coordinators:

Carmen Durand (cdurand@smmusd.org) (Elementary Schools in Santa Monica)

Dr. Michael Hoover (mhoover@smmusd.org) (Malibu Middle and High, SMASH, JAMS and LMS)

Hilda Salas (hsalas@smmusd.org) (SAMOHI, OCLC, PPBL and ISP)

Melodi Johnson (Malibu ES, Webster, Preschool, Private, RTC, and NPS students)

Looking forward to seeing everyone on campus in the next few weeks. I know that we will have a great start to the 2025-2026 school year.

Sincerely,

Victoria Hurst, Director of Special Education