

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District

Lancey Bradley

909-797-0174 ext 5803

Lancey_Bradley@ycjUSD.us



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VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUILDS A SENSE OF BELONGING AMONG STUDENTS THROUGH PERSONAL CONNECTION

YUCAIPA, CALIFORNIA, SEPT 2021 — In the heart of Yucaipa, California lies a school full of energy, compassion, kindness, and learning. These are desirable traits at any elementary school but there is something different about Valley Elementary School that makes everyone feel like they are family.

Led by the enthusiastic Principal Kathleen Miller, Valley Elementary represents all that is good in our small community. It is a place where every adult rallies behind each student to build an unwavering emotional and intellectual foundation carrying children into successful adulthood. There is never a quiet day on campus as teachers and classified staff engage with children, and volunteers come and go continually planting the seeds that make school a second home.



On September 3rd, 2021, Principal Kathleen Miller, Teacher on Assignment Chris Rekstad, and Teacher David Domena took Valley Elementary School's unique inclusivity one step further by implementing a 19th century English practice made popular by the Harry Potter series of dividing students and staff into subunits called "houses." The purpose is to create a smaller learning community within a larger building, as a way to help students feel more connected and develop a sense of belonging.

Keeping in line with the Valley Elementary mascot theme, the Viking, the team created four nordic houses; Skepia, Linir, Frami, and Sisú. Each Viking house is easily identifiable and framed by a color and overarching theme to promote peer-to-peer interaction, learning, and foster healthy competition across grade levels in the kindergarten through 5th grade school. Creative Yellow for Skepia, Kindness Green for Linir, Courageous Black for Frami, and Grit Gray for Sisú.

Students were excited and anxious to discover their house assignment with each announcement full of immediate house pride, laughter, and cheering. Through the hollers and clapping, those there were lucky enough to observe something truly special happen.

Behind the idea of division grew connectedness and compassion. A child struggling to make friends now had a companion to lean on, someone experiencing trying times in their home grew a new family, and each Valley Viking walked away with something new and lasting.

In the world we live in, live like a Viking.

To learn more about Valley Elementary, visit their website at ves.yucaipaschools.com.