



Val Verde Unified School District

Val Verde Unified School District is located in Perris, California, and serves a total of 19,303 students and 2,078 employees. This AASA Leadership 2025 Lighthouse System (consisting of four high schools, four middle schools, 12 elementary sites as well as one preschool, one virtual school, and one adult education site) consistently demonstrates high levels of student participation and achievement, including a 96.3% graduation rate in a system whose student population (78.4% Hispanic, 11.7% African American, 4.2% White, and 1.2% Filipino) is identified as having 84.7% of its total student population living in poverty. Another powerful statistic for this richly diverse system is that its expulsion rate is 0% and suspension rates is currently at 3.5%. This district is committed deeply to the key principles of equity and access, successful for all, and reinforcing hope for all members of its learning community.

Ensuring success for all learners includes the following: (1) A clear and consistent commitment to promote learner’s critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and flexibility; (2) A “Future Ready” approach to education that includes a range of innovative and engaging programs accessible to all students, including CTE Pathways, STEAM curriculum integration and alignment, one-to-one instructional technology; (3) Application-based learning to reinforce authenticity, purpose, and student efficacy; (4) Multiple post-secondary credit options, including Advanced Placement preparatory curricula, dual enrollment, college articulated courses, a Middle College Program; and (5) FAFSA Completion and Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement. Like all Lighthouse Systems, Val Verde Unified takes a Whole Learner approach, ensuring literacy by grade three, multilingual supports, AVID TK-12, Universal Design for Learning, data-driven interventions, and a comprehensive MTSS Response-to-Intervention process.

Additionally, this Lighthouse System reinforces a sustainable, positive, and engaging organizational climate and culture for all learners, including: (1) Restorative Practices, (2) PBIS: Positive Behavior Supports, (3) extensive mental health services and supports, (4) a systemic commitment to cultural responsiveness, (5) family community engagement, and attendance supports. Overall, the system is committed to organizational coherence, having the right drivers in action to promote and sustain positive change and transformation. These drivers include Focusing Direction, Cultivating Collaboration, Deepening Learning, and Internal Accountability. In addition, the system is committed to the Families as Equal Partners, the Celebration of Existing Cultural and Familial Strengths of Families and Students, Families and Students as Leaders and Change Agents, and responsiveness to requested parent/familial services: including Family Supports for Academics, Adult Education, Health and Social-Emotional Well Being, and Family Networks of Support.

The system reinforces integrated, cross-disciplinary approaches that are culturally responsive, engaging, and performance oriented. For example, the spirit of the Val Verde Unified Portrait of a Graduate has resulted in the creation of a STEAM Continuum, moving students from initial discovery and immersion toward experiential application as well as STEAM Career and Entrepreneurship pathways. Similarly, the district maximizes its involvement in cross-institutional partnerships to reinforce opportunities for field

experiences for students and teachers. Adult learner development also includes teachers on special assignments at the district level, site-based instructional coaching positions, personalized on-demand professional development, as well as many Teacher Leader roles that enhance adult learning opportunities. A major and highly successful component of this process involves the district's use of the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) model, building a culture dedicated to "all means all."

The district's *Portrait of a Graduate* serves as the "north star" for district transformation and reminds staff that they are responsible for providing the skills and knowledge required for Val Verde students to achieve success in the 21st century global workforce. Critical Thinking, Flexibility, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration are core values and dispositions reinforced by everyone in the system. These guiding principles—including the strong commitment to progress monitoring using a range of data—will extend this year (2021-22) to the creation of a *Portrait of a Val Verde Leader & Educator*. To achieve its ambitious goals, the system encourages new ideas that can lead to transformation, including Technology Integration Specialists, STEAM Labs with STEAM TOSAs, Explore Fairs, use of EduProtocols (lesson frames designed to engage students in critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity), and a true pre-K-12 commitment to ensuring students' post-secondary opportunities, including: (1) District Wide College Kick Off, (2) FAFSA Completion as a Graduation Requirement, and (3) an extensive variety of career-oriented and advanced academic programs (including a Riverside County Education Collaborative).