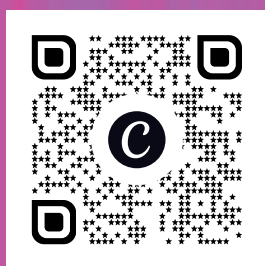


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WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL

**SPECIAL
SECTION
2026 part 2**

A New School Year That Offers So Much



By Kathleen (Kat) CROSS

If your house is anything like mine, it's a buzz with back-to-school commotion. In our home, it is a very anticipated event. The lure of summer is losing its shine and the draw of seeing friends and teachers is beginning to outweigh the thought of classwork or finals.

We miss school. We miss our schedule. We miss our second family.

Each year, our Glendale Unified schools welcome a new and distinct – yet familiar – energy: new back-

packs and freshly sharpened pencils, new teachers and classrooms, new friendships waiting to be made. There is an excitement that comes with the promise of a fresh start. For me, this year feels particularly poignant.

As thousands of GUSD students walk through our doors for their first day, my oldest daughter will walk through them for the beginning of her last year. This is our first last first day of school, her senior year.

I can still picture the little girl who began this journey in TK at Valley View. Somehow, the moments that felt long, the challenges and triumphs, assemblies and field trips, anticipation and plans have, in an instant, become memories. Together, those moments helped shape a child into a young woman now poised and prepared to tackle whatever her future dreams have in store. The schools where we send our children and the community they provide become part of the story of our families.

As a parent, I know how quickly these years pass. As president of the

Glendale Unified Board of Education, I am reminded that every student who walks onto one of our campuses represents a family entrusting us with a piece of their story. That is an extraordinary privilege.

Every new school year brings a fresh beginning. I hope our students walk onto campus knowing they belong, find friends who make them laugh, opportunities that challenge them, adults who believe in them and moments to discover a little more about who they are becoming.

To our new and returning families: Welcome! Soak in the moments, get involved, ask questions and know you belong.

Perhaps that is the gift of a school year. Just when it feels like one chapter is closing, another is beginning. Simply put, every last welcomes a new first.

GUSD is excited to share in the first firsts, the last firsts, the first lasts, and all the moments in between.

Happy Back to School!

**Bee
Amazing
This Year
Will Be
Poppin!
Spread
Your Wings
And Fly!
Make this
Year A Hit!**



WELCOME BACK MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT DR. DARNEIKA WATSON A NEW YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY

This week, our GUSD campuses came alive with excitement as hallways filled with laughter, classrooms buzzed with curiosity and students embraced new beginnings. Whether you experienced your very first day of school in TK or kindergarten or celebrated your final first day as a GUSD senior, I hope you shared my excitement for all of the possibilities ahead.

While every school year brings unexpected challenges alongside new opportunities, we will navigate whatever comes our way with an unwavering commitment to providing every student with a safe, inclusive and engaging environment where they can achieve their very best. Our dedicated Board of Education, teachers, staff, administrators and community partners know that students thrive when they feel they belong, and focusing on inclusivity, unity and shared purpose is one of our highest priorities.

The past year highlighted the talent, determination and commitment to excellence that define Glendale Unified. Our students and schools earned recognition for academic excellence, renowned language immersion programs, innovative career pathways, exceptional STEAM and visual and performing arts opportunities and championship athletics. We were proud to celebrate three District

schools being named "California Distinguished Schools," maintain our legacy of 10 National Blue Ribbon Schools, and have two schools recognized with the California Exemplary Arts Education Award. These accomplishments reflect the dedication of our students, employees, families and community, and inspire us to aim even higher in the year ahead.

We will build on this momentum by reaching even higher levels of student achievement, closing learning gaps and ensuring every student has access to rigorous instruction, meaningful opportunities and the support they need to succeed. We will continue making thoughtful decisions that keep students at the center of every investment by carefully prioritizing our resources to deliver the exceptional educational experience our community expects from Glendale Unified.

None of our success would be possible without the support of our families and community. Thank you for the trust you place in us each day. Together, we are preparing students not only for academic success but also to become thoughtful, compassionate and engaged members of their communities.

To our students, I want you to know this: *You belong here. We believe in you, we are proud of you and we cannot wait to see all you accomplish this year. Be curious. Be courageous. Be kind. Challenge yourself, encourage one another, and never lose sight of what you are capable of achieving. I look forward to celebrating your successes, cheering you on through challenges and watching you grow throughout the year.*

Together, let's make this one to remember.

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SEVEN FUN FACTS FOR STUDENTS

1. Octopuses have three hearts: Two pump blood to the gills, while the third pumps it to the rest of the body.
2. Caterpillars have about 4,000 muscles: Humans, by contrast, have an average of just over 600.
3. Bananas are classified as berries: According to the botanical definition, bananas qualify as berries!
4. Pineapples take two years to grow: Each pineapple plant only produces one pineapple every two years.
5. Sloths take two weeks to digest their food: Sloths have a very slow metabolism.
6. The smallest bone in your body is in your ear: The stapes bone in the human ear is the smallest bone.
7. Polar Bears Have Black Skin: Despite their white fur, a polar bear's skin is actually black which helps them better absorb and retain heat.

from Teaching Expertise



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- 3 **Arts:**
Performances, museums, college internships, and the Arts Education Collective
lacountyarts.org

- 4 **Mental Health:**
Counseling and educational resources
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- 5 **Fire Department:**
Flash cards and coloring books
fire.lacounty.gov
- 6 **Public Social Services:**
Toy Loan Program
dpss.lacounty.gov
- 7 **Youth @ Work:**
Jobs for youth ages 14 to 24
ajcc.lacounty.gov



**Kathryn
BARGER**
5th District Supervisor • County of Los Angeles



Welcome BACK TO SCHOOL

SPECIAL SECTION 2026 part 2

THE COUNTY HAS MUCH TO OFFER

Students across Los Angeles County are back in the classroom. For parents, teachers, school staff and administrators, and nonprofit organizations that means gathering all the resources you can to ensure youth succeed this school year. Below, you'll find some helpful services from our County departments for youth of all ages.

Whether you're looking for flash cards for an elementary schooler, after school activities for a middle schooler, a first job for a high schooler, or internships for a college student, there is something for everyone. Visit each department's website to get more information and get connected.

I'm wishing everyone a terrific school year of growth, learning and fun!

Parks: There is something for all ages to enjoy with our Dept. of Parks and Recreation! Check out after school recreation, sports, teen programs, and extra-curricular classes all year long. Visit parks.lacounty.gov for details.

Library: Our LA County Library has all the information students need to thrive this year in and out of the classroom. Head to lacountylibrary.org for homework help, tutoring, books, music, movies, story time, book clubs and special events.

Arts: The arts are a critical part of a well-rounded education. Explore performances, museums, college internships and the Arts Education Collective at lacountyarts.org today.

Mental Health: Make sure your student is caring for their mental health this school year. Access counseling and educational resources at dmh.lacounty.gov for all youth.

Fire Department: Even our fire department has resources as you head back to school! Check out fun and engaging flash cards and coloring books at fire.lacounty.gov that are sure to educate and entertain.

Public Social Services: Through our Dept. of Public Social Services, children can check out a toy as they would a library book, teaching them responsibility and sharing while also allowing them to explore exciting new offerings. Visit dpss.lacounty.gov to participate in the Toy Loan Program.

Youth @ Work: Do you have a teen or young adult looking for a hands-on job that will give them experience and boost their résumé? Explore jobs at ajcc.lacounty.gov for youth ages 14 to 24 that will set them up for success.

By Supervisor Kathryn BARGER.



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MORE FUN FACTS FOR STUDENTS

8. A Bolt of Lightning is Hotter than the Sun: A bolt can reach temperatures of 30,000 kelvins (53,540 degrees Fahrenheit). The sun, on the other hand, is only around 6000 kelvins (10,340 degrees Fahrenheit).

9. The Tongue of a Blue Whale Weighs as Much as an Elephant: Blue whales are so large that their tongues alone can weigh as much as an elephant.

10. Venus Rotates Backward: Venus is the only planet in our solar system that spins in the opposite direction relative to the sun.

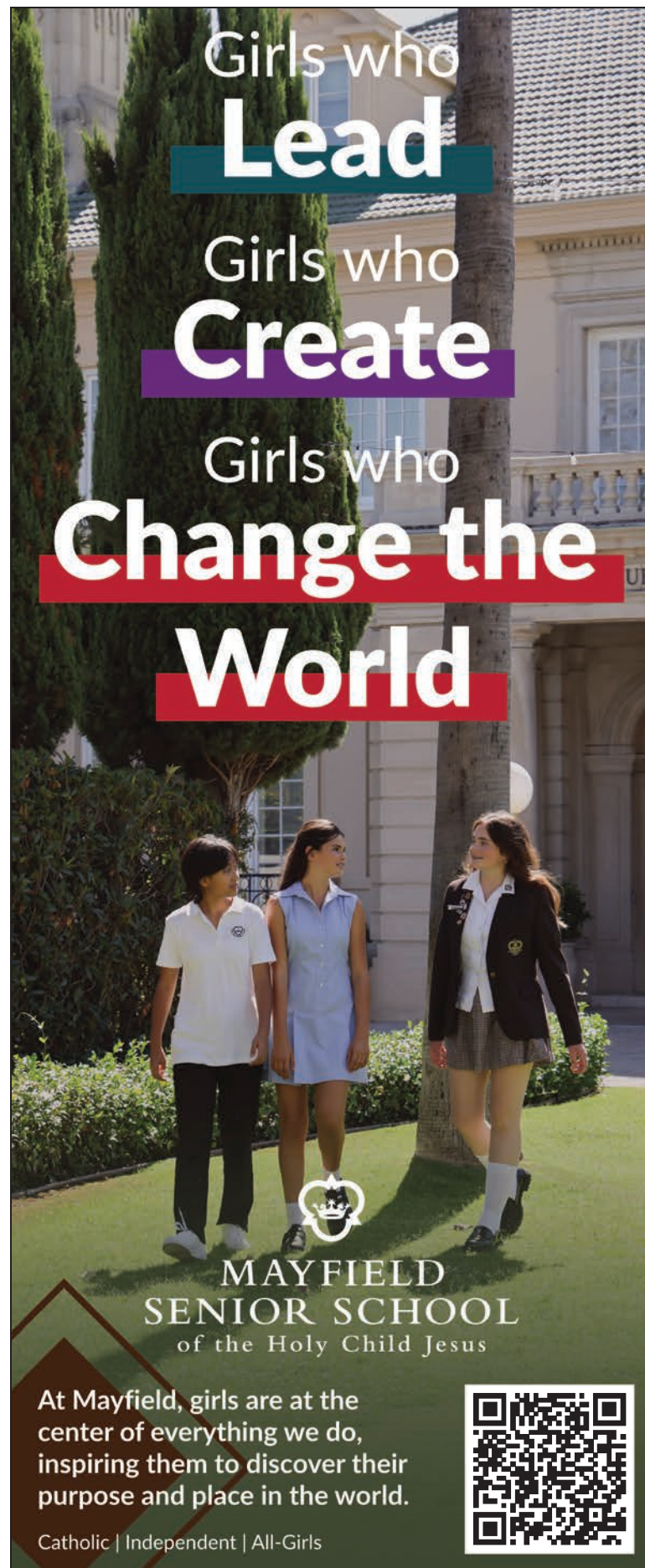
11. Sharks Have Been Around Longer Than Trees: Sharks appeared around 400 million years ago while the earliest tree appeared about 350 million years ago.

12. Hummingbirds Can't Walk: Despite their ability to fly forwards, backward, and hover up and down, hummingbirds can't actually walk on their tiny legs.

from Teaching Expertise



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