A Message from the Superintendent: Fallbrook Union Elementary School District

The Fallbrook Union Elementary School District is located in northern San Diego County and recognized as the first “National Lighthouse School District” in the U.S. Every FUESD school has been named a “Leader in Me Lighthouse School,” serving as a model for developing student leadership.

The leader of the K-8 school district is Candace Singh, an educator in San Diego for more than 30 years. Singh is well-known and respected for her work as a turnaround principal and superintendent who has created schools and working environments that inspire greatness in students and adults.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, her message, “We’re Here for You,” stems from knowing the critical role schools play in the community.

“Our kids see school as the most positive part of their day,” said Singh, a finalist for the 2020 AASA Women in School Leadership Award. “Not having the opportunity to come to school and connect with teachers and peers has been difficult for my students. We want to continue sending those messages to our students that ‘we are here for you.’”

To exemplify this commitment, the district created a dedicated tech line to assist parents who need help utilizing the online learning tools on behalf of their students who are learning at home due to the outbreak.

“Our parents didn’t sign up to be their kids’ teachers,” said Singh. “We have worked very hard to strike a balance between creating the academic learning experience for children. We care about the emotional well-being of a child—the same way we care about their academic progress.”

Following the outset of the outbreak, FUESD faculty members were making weekly personal phone calls to every child and their parents. These check-ins from teacher to family “laid the foundation for each child,” said Singh. “The culture of our school district has been one in which we know every child and care deeply about them.”

These days, faculty and staff are serving 1,500 lunches per day. Meanwhile, they’re transporting work packets to children who have no transportation or no internet connection.

Singh is pleased that nearly 95 percent of the district’s students have online connectivity. To help escalate this effort, buses equipped with Wi-Fi and have been parked in various parts of the community, particularly low-income areas, so students living in these zones have broadband access.

“We are going to be relentless until we can bring the internet to every child,” said Singh. “One of the biggest concerns is the lack of equity. We will not rest until every child has access to their education through the internet.”

“I see this crisis as an opportunity to make visible our values and beliefs,” she added. “Crisis is an important time in a leader’s life. We want to be making sound decisions, decisions that are well-
thought-through, that are well-communicated and convey our deeply held values and beliefs. These are the same values we had in place long before we went down this distance-learning road. We have the opportunity to create conditions for people to be successful.”

Singh is currently a member of AASA’s Executive Committee, a position she had held since July 2017. She also serves as a lead superintendent in AASA’s Aspiring Superintendents Academy for Female Leaders.

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