

# Del Mar district celebrates the newly updated Del Mar Hills Academy



DMUSD board members Bill Porter, Gee Wah Mok, Katherine Fitzpatrick, Superintendent Marisa Janicek, Del Mar Hills Principal Andrea Sleet, Assistant Superintendent Chris Delehanty and board member Alan Kholos. (Courtesy DMUSD)



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The Del Mar Union School District celebrated the rebuilt and re-energized Del Mar Hills Academy with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony on Sept. 5.

On the sunny September day, community members found relief under the new blue shade canopy over the outdoor amphitheater. Guests were serenaded by Hills students and teachers performing an original song called "Surfrider," set to the tune of "Popular" from the musical "Wicked" about the school mascot.

The ceremony stage was set just outside the renovated innovation center, library and STEAM + classrooms, all benefitting from increased natural light from new windows and indoor/outdoor connectivity.

"I had the privilege of attending our last two ribbon cuttings and I have to say that this really never gets old," said DMUSD Board President Gee Wah Mok of the district's third ribbon cutting in three years since with the opening of Pacific Sky and the new Del Mar Heights school last year. "I just love being able to celebrate the excellence of our community."

Mok detailed how the \$21.9 million renovation has made Del Mar Hills more modern, open and light-filled. He spoke about the power of design and how it can shape learning with the school's new collaboration areas in the learning commons and 15 classrooms reimaged as modern learning studios with whiteboard walls, comfortable ergonomic furniture and access to the outdoors.

"These aren't just features of a building, they are opportunities for our children to create the best version of ourselves," Mok said.

The remodel also saw the overhaul of the front entry and administration offices, new exterior surfaces, solar panels, and a new school sign out front. Buildings that dated back to the 1970s were made seismically sound.

The blacktop play space increased with the removal of old portable buildings and better access was created to connect to the playfields. The playground equipment will be updated over the course of the school year. The school garden, a beloved fixture at the school since the 1980s, was untouched and continues to be a special place where students can plant, tend and harvest fruits and vegetables.

Currently, the school has an enrollment of 230 Surfrider students.

DMUSD Superintendent Marisa Janicek, herself a new addition to the district in the last month, remarked that she's already seen how the rebuilt school is bringing people together.

"Students and staff are making it their very own, filling it with joy, curiosity and creativity," Janicek said. "This is what transforms a building into a school here in the heart of the community. Today is not just about ribbon cutting, it's about celebrating the future."

San Diego City Council President Joe LaCava and the school's builder Erickson-Hall Construction Company also participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

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