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## Del Mar Union School District board welcomes new superintendent



Del Mar Union School District Superintendent Marisa Janicek (third from left) with board members Bill Porter, Doug Rafner, Gee Wah Mok, Alan Kholos and Katherine Fitzpatrick. (Nancy Ingersoll)



By **KAREN BILLING** | KarenB@rsfreview.com | The San Diego Union-Tribune

UPDATED: August 26, 2025 at 11:36 AM PDT

With optimism and excitement, the Del Mar Union School District board introduced new superintendent Marisa Janicek at its Aug. 20 meeting. Janicek officially became the district's next leader after the board approved a new three-year contract with an annual salary of \$260,000.

For the last seven years, Janicek has served as assistant superintendent of educational services in the El Segundo Unified School District. Her nearly 30-year educational career includes time spent as an executive director, elementary school principal and assistant principal, bringing valuable experience in special education and pioneering work in the use of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies to enhance teaching, learning and policy development.

"I feel very, very grateful to be here," Janicek said. "I came here because it's a destination district with a staff that cares deeply, students that are very loved and thriving, and a community that really wants the schools to succeed."

"I'm ready to jump in and help," she told the board. "I cannot wait to continue my career here and stay as long as you will have me."

Janicek is replacing the retiring Holly McClurg, who led the district for the last 12 years.

The search for the next superintendent began in May, led by a team from Educational Support Services. Several community outreach sessions and a survey helped shape the leadership profile of the desired candidate. Per the input collected, special education was one of the most important issues the superintendent will face. The community was also looking for someone with an understanding of the schools and district culture, improved communications and strong fiscal management skills.

As Janicek and Trustee Alan Kholos both said, the superintendent search process was "rigorous," very detailed and lengthy.

"We took it very, very seriously. It didn't go as fast as we'd like but I think we took the time that we needed...We found that leader," Kholos said. "It was the most collegial, collaborative but also pressure-test discussions we've ever had since I have sat on the board. It was great to see how we could come together and really test our approaches and theories on who would be the best candidate, and I think we came out with an amazing result."

Trustees Bill Porter and Kholos even traveled to El Segundo for a final nomination visit, a treat for Kholos who lived in El Segundo for several years while serving in the Air Force. Porter said every stakeholder group they met with had positive things to say about Janicek: "They all said we were hiring the most amazing individual who is very knowledgeable, capable, relational and child-centered."

DMUSD Board President Gee Wah Mok said what stood out for him the most in the search process was that Janicek is "incredibly collaborative" and empathetic.

"One of the things that was really important to me also is that she has a really deep appreciation for what this district is," Mok said. "She understands the values of this community and of this district and she knows there's something special here."

At the meeting, members of the Del Mar California Teachers Association gave a standing ovation to Janicek, and to the board for their selection. The board also expressed gratitude for Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Chris Delehanty, who served as the interim

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superintendent during the leadership transition, which included the successful start of a new school year.

Originally Published: August 25, 2025 at 12:28 PM PDT

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