



CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS TO WATCH

California Schools to Watch™ is a statewide program implemented by the California League of Schools, California Department of Education, California Middle Grades Alliance, National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, and the California Schools to Watch model schools. For more information, visit www.leagueofschools.org.



LA PAZ INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Designated in 2011; Re-Designated 2014, 2017, 2020

Saddleback Valley Unified School District

Orange County

Jean Walker, Principal

25151 Pradera Drive, Mission Viejo, CA 92691

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saddlespace.org/lapazhome

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Community: Mid-Sized City; Enrollment 923; Grade Levels: 7-8; School Schedule: Six period day with 30-minute tutorial period after lunch four days per week. Early release on Monday for staff collaboration.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

26% Hispanic; 1% African American; 7% Asian; 3% Filipino; 5% Two or more; 58% White. 20% Free/Reduced lunch. 10% English Learners.

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS AND REPLICABLE PRACTICES

- La Paz is committed schoolwide to teaching literacy in all courses and to the following practices: use of sentence starters for academic conversations and Socratic seminars, common writing rubric across disciplines, Close reading, Thinking Maps, AVID strategies, Kagen cooperative structures, and a multifaceted Tier II academic vocabulary program.
- Interventions for students in need of additional support are offered within the school day during the Tutorial Class following lunch, the Math and English block classes and Read 180 Block as well as during times students are re-grouped for additional support on essential learnings. After the school day students may access the Homework Club, and/or the STEM program. Tutorial class also provides Honors Program students time to work together on projects.
- The school supports an Intervention Specialist who teaches an elective, “Steps for Success”, and coordinates with core teachers and parents to assure that students are mastering essential standards. Through this process, students often have extended time in key subjects as well as individualized and small group assistance.
- All students have the opportunity to participate in the Honors Program at La Paz. Seventh grade honors is an integrated program where students in heterogeneous core classes tackle in-depth assignments and projects related to the subject. Students successful in seventh grade honors have the option of selecting traditional honors courses for eighth grade. Students may enroll in a summer “Bridge to Algebra” course to prepare for the eighth-grade program.
- The master schedule provides for interdisciplinary teams in the seventh grade as well as common subject-area preps for English, math, history, and science teachers at both grade levels contributing to a consistent and cohesive curricular and instructional program for students.
- School culture and climate is enhanced by a fully developed PBIS program implemented school wide as well as a year-round WEB program which connects with students during lunch activities, night time social events and classroom lessons.