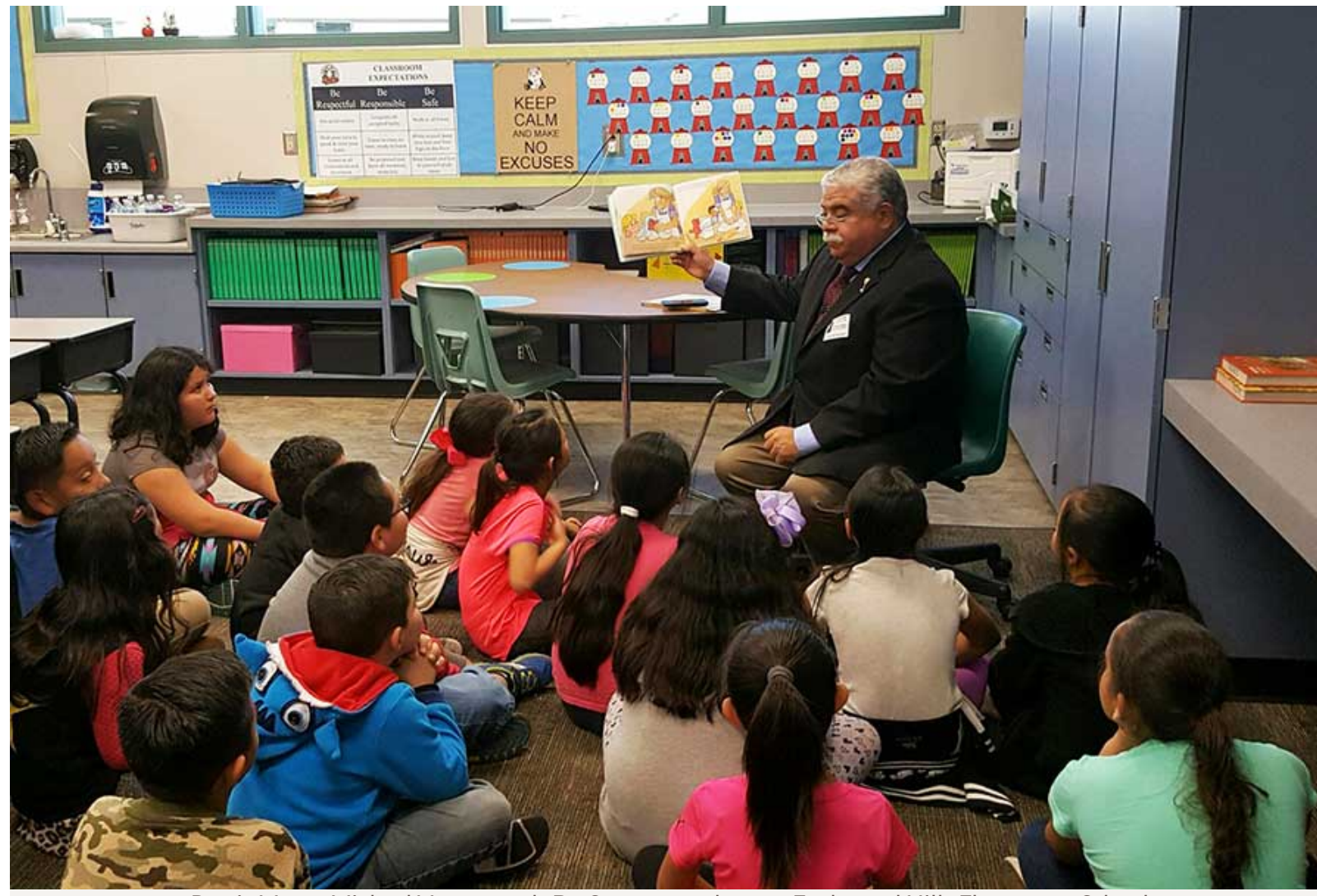




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## Principal for a Day



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas reads Dr. Seuss to students at Enchanted Hills Elementary School.

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Perris Mayor Michael Vargas and City Councilwoman Tonya Burke recently set aside their usual responsibilities as elected officials and went back to school.

The Mayor visited several Perris elementary school campuses to take part in the annual "Read across America" tribute to Dr. Seuss. Vargas read the classic "Green Eggs and Ham" to students at Avalon Elementary School, Enchanted Hills Elementary School and Good Hope Elementary School.

He also visited Val Verde Elementary School to take part in the "Principal for a Day" program.

Burke spent a morning as principal at Orange Vista High School, where her daughter, Jaylyn, is a freshman. She chatted with students and teachers, got an update on the latest campus expansion plans and learned about plans to build a "tiny house" that may be donated to a Perris family facing homelessness.



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas autographs business cards for students at Good Hope Elementary School, who requested his signature when he read the Dr. Seuss classic "Green Eggs and Ham" to them.

### Role model

"It is very important that, as an elected official, kids see us coming into their classroom to read," Vargas said. "It shows them that we place a high priority on reading and education. It's a fun thing to do as mayor."

Vargas said his visit to Good Hope turned into an impromptu press conference when he finished the Seuss book.

"How did you become mayor?" one student asked.

"Winning an election," he replied.

"Do you have a private office?" another inquired.

"Yes," Vargas said, "my home."

"What's the best thing about your job?" a third student wanted to know.

"Being right here with you kids," Vargas responded.

Vargas' appearance proved so successful that students asked him for autographs. He signed post-it notes, backpacks and even his City of Perris business cards. He said he was humbled by the requests.

"That totally caught me by surprise," said Vargas, who signed more business cards at City Hall following his appearance and pledged to send them to Good Hope kids. "As Dr. Seuss said, 'the more you read, the more you know.' Reading is the vehicle that will take us anywhere we can dream to go. I loved reading to our well-behaved Perris children. I'm looking forward to next year."

During his stint as principal at Val Verde, Vargas visited several classrooms, spoke to teachers and got an up-close look at an innovative learning tool. Traditional desks were nixed, replaced by couches, bean chairs and desks that could be raised or lowered so students and teachers could work at eye level on problems and projects.

Later, he walked the school campus, observing water savings in the form of drought-resistant landscaping and checking out the school's remodeled kitchen and cafeteria. His escort for the day was Val Verde Unified School District Superintendent Michael McCormick.

"It's important for us as civic leaders to see what goes on in our schools on a daily basis," Vargas said. "I was happy to take part in this important event."



Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke speaks to the geometry class of Michael Towne during her "Principal for a Day" visit to Orange Vista High School.

### "I'm a Coyote"

Burke often appears at Principal for a Day events in the City to interact with students and staff and talk about life as an elected official. In some ways, visiting schools is a part of her work as a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the State of California Department of Rehabilitation.

But the Orange Vista visit was special.

Her daughter, Jaylyn, 15, is a freshman there, where she participates in the school's Color Guard, Drill Team and Associated Student Government.

"I'm a Coyote," Burke said of the Orange Vista school mascot. "My baby goes here. It's close to my heart. I'm very pleased with the academics and extra-curricular activities Orange Vista provides."

Burke and Orange Vista principal Josh Workman spent a good chunk of time in the geometry class of award-winning instructor Michael Towne. Towne said he appreciated the visit.

"When someone in your position pays attention to us, it shows the students that we matter," Towne told Burke. "Because you're here, we matter."

Burke explained her philosophy to the students.

"I have a dedication to education," she said. "I want to see you do well. When you do well, the City of Perris does well. This is your City. I work for you."

Towne later showed Burke the foundation of a "tiny house" his students are constructing on the campus. The 108-square-foot would include sustainable technology like solar panels.

Towne said that upon completion, the tiny house could be donated to the City as a habitat for families facing possible homelessness.

Orange Vista principal Josh Workman served as Burke's tour guide for her visit, explaining that students will learn the skills that make them "instantly employable." Those include digital photography, robotics, web design, coding and computer engineering.

"We want our community to feel like and believe that are preparing our students for what is coming in the future," Workman said.

Burke left campus pleased and proud.

"You guys are doing great things," she said. "You're building our leadership for the future."



Perris City Councilwoman Tonya Burke stands in front of the foundation of a "tiny house" that one day may be donated to the City to house families needing shelter. With her are Orange Vista High School Principal Josh Workman, award-winning teacher Michael Towne and teacher Joe Russo.



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