



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SMMUSD Announces New McKinley Elementary School Principal

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education approved the appointment of Dr. Ashley Benjamin as the new principal of McKinley Elementary School at its June 27, 2017 special board meeting. Her appointment is effective July 1, 2017.

Dr. Benjamin served as assistant principal at Franklin Elementary School for the past three years, where she oversaw testing, special education, emergency preparedness, scheduling, the Olweus bullying prevention program, behavior and discipline. She worked closely with the principal on all aspects of school oversight, was the founder and coach of the Franklin Spirit Squad Cheerleading Team and created a monthly school newsletter.



Prior to joining SMMUSD, Dr. Benjamin worked for the Los Angeles Unified School District as a categorical programs advisor, K-5 intervention coordinator, and a second, fourth and sixth grade teacher at diverse Title I elementary and middle schools. While in the LAUSD, she gained experience with managing school budgets, working with English Learner students and forming school partnerships. McKinley is a Title I school.

Dr. Benjamin holds a Bachelor of Science in education general studies and a Bachelor of Arts in gender studies from University of Southern California (USC); a Master of Arts in social and multicultural foundations of education, from Cal State Long Beach, with an emphasis on race, ethnicity, class, culture and gender studies in education and a doctorate in education leadership from USC. Her doctoral dissertation was on closing the achievement gap for Latino English learners in elementary school. She brings an expertise in effective research-based instructional strategies for diverse learners to her new role at McKinley.

“I am very excited to be joining a school family where diversity is valued, teachers care about the whole child and collaboration and teamwork are a norm,” Dr. Benjamin said. “I’m looking forward to strengthening school traditions, while bringing families and staff together in a welcoming, safe and positive environment conducive to learning.”

Dr. Benjamin has received numerous collegiate and professional honors and awards including teacher of the year while in LAUSD, by Wilshire Rotary Club and an honorary service award from the Franklin Elementary School PTA. She previously served as an at-large director for the Association of California School Administrators and was a member of the SMMUSD Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) consultation and advisory committee during the current school year. She also was appointed by the Board in 2017 to be a member of the District Advisory Committee for Intercultural Equity and Excellence.

“Ashley will be a valuable addition to our district leadership team” Superintendent Dr. Ben Drati said. “Her strong commitment to providing access and opportunities to all students so they meet their full potential will serve McKinley families well. I would like to congratulate her on her new position.”

Dr. Benjamin replaces Susan Yakich, who is leaving SMMUSD for a principal position at a school in northern California.

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