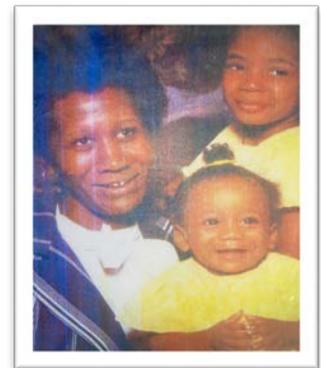




Good afternoon Banning Unified School District Staff and Community:

I hope you all enjoyed your week. I spent time reflecting on family and being inspired by long-standing friendships. While there were definite challenges in my childhood, my mother (*pictured far right*) smiled often and could be found encouraging others frequently. School was a safe space for me where teachers and coaches built my confidence to strive for goals that kids in my neighborhood typically struggled to achieve.



I learned teamwork, determination, and integrity from my basketball coach Brad Kear (*pictured below, far right*). Our team included girls of different races, ethnic groups and social classes. Mr. Kear taught us that—regardless of our parents' home language or our homelife experiences—a house divided could not stand. As a team, we laughed a lot, cried over losses, showed frustration with our performance, but ultimately motivated each other to strive for greatness. It was in team chants that I learned the word *stamina*.

My freshman year, we were the lowest performing girls basketball team in the whole league. Only our parents came to watch us play. The picture below is my junior year; one of my best friends Marissa (*pictured closest to Mr. Kear*) and I were 4-year varsity lettermen. By our junior year, our team went 17-2 (seventeen wins and only two losses)—the second loss was during CIF quarterfinals against a private school.



My point is that by the time we became good enough to fill the stands with little effort, our team had acquired what I now know psychologists call *learned optimism*. This term defines the intentional practice of shifting our thinking from negative to positive perspectives so that our thoughts, behaviors, beliefs, and dreams align in ways that universally materialize into our reality. Martin Seligman wrote a book called *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*.

On the following pages, I highlight a few of Banning Unified School District's Points of Pride. These are a few of our incredible accomplishments from the five months that we have been on this journey together. I encourage you to share these and your own points of pride in our district with our community. Doing so creates

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positive self-talk about who we are today and what we will achieve now – regardless of past practice or history. You may even be so inclined to share optimistic public comments during our upcoming board meeting Wednesday, October 28th by emailing your statement to Monica O'Brien by 4:30 p.m. that day at mobrien@banning.k12.ca.us. If you post anything online, pump up the district. Remember, we are in the fight of our lives with our territory transfer. We can steer the ship successfully, if we stick together. With the long fight ahead, who we are now, and what we stand for has to be demonstrated in our behavior internally and publicly.

If you are not sure what to say when posting or sharing a public comment at a board meeting, start by saying, "I am so proud to be a part of Banning Unified School District because [...]." Then share positive experiences and your optimism about our future. Please remember that there's no such thing as a small victory. A win by one point or thirty, is still a win! With that said, feel free to share your optimism with your colleagues, teachers, staff, students, and others both in the City of Banning and in the Banning Unified School District. When you encounter social media negativity about Banning and feel the need to respond, use positive reframing every time. Optimism always wins – even when faced with darkness. I believe it has something to do with universal law.

Click [HERE](#) to watch a video about the impact of *learned optimism* and how to practice it daily. Feel free to click [HERE](#) to sign-up for a book study with me. The first 25 adults who sign up receive a free book and course guide.

In closing, you should know about another text that our leadership team is reading; it is called "Influencer: The Power to Change Anything." What is great about this text is that the cultural changes that take place via influencers are not only monumental and sustainable but also contextualized by diverse international groups who collectively change their behaviors, routines, and habits to resolve systemic and catastrophic problems that have plagued their communities for decades. Readers will be familiar with the issues addressed; however, it is likely that very few people have ever heard of the influencers who led those seismic shifts. Hidden in these real-life situations is the power of anybody to change anything regardless of their title, income, color, race, home language, nationality, religion, gender identity, or sexuality.

In the following pages of the document you are reading now, I have listed opportunities to learn about Banning Unified School District's Points of Pride and next steps in key areas including—but not limited to—safely reopening schools, the territory transfer, and accelerating student achievement.

As we move forward, let us all remember the following in all that we think, say, and do: (1) assume positive intent in others, (2) be impeccable with our words, and (3) demonstrate learned optimism--as our challenges are not permanent, pervasive, or personal. Have an awesome and restful weekend!

Optimistically yours,
Dr. Natasha Baker
Superintendent
nbaker@banning.k12.ca.us
Cell: (951) 233-5036

MISSION STATEMENT *(Our purpose)*

Banning Unified School District is a diverse community that collaborates to develop responsible, respectful, prepared students to achieve their full potential.

GOALS

Goal 1	Accelerate student achievement
Goal 2	Create and sustain organizational management systems
Goal 3	Increase parent and community engagement
Goal 4	Implement a clearly defined, consistent human resource management system
Goal 5	Maintain fiscal responsibility and long-term financial viability
Goal 6	Sustain and streamline productive relationships with the Board of Trustees
Goal 7	Demonstrate values-based, equitable and ethical leadership

Points of Pride and Key Next Steps



Great Students! This week Banning High School student **JESSE GARCIA** (*pictured left*) was sworn in as our 2020-2021 student school board member. His poise and intellect make him a model student and an ambassador for our entire community and school district. In addition, BHS' ASB President **CINDY LOUNNIVONGSA** and Vice President **BRYN THORNTON** with Coomb's student extraordinaire **DEREK GALLARDO** introduced themselves and left the audience believing that Banning Unified School District's students will change the world!

- ***Banning High School's Performing Arts Center:*** Our 27,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art facility will have the capacity to seat over 500 with built-in, high-tech equipment to enhance opportunities for students to engage in advanced Career Technical Education (CTE) programs using the latest technologies. The anticipated opening is February 2021, and an opening ceremony for students, staff, and the community will be announced. Last Wednesday, September 30th, the **State Allocation Board approved a \$3M grant** for the Banning Unified School District. The grant will be used with matching funds from our Measure M bond to complete the Performance Arts Center at Banning High School.
- ***Technology:*** For the first time in Banning Unified School District's 143-year history, we are a one-to-one technology district. Every teacher and student has a laptop or Chromebook and opportunities to access the internet. Over \$240,000 was invested in providing T-Mobile hotspots to staff, students and their families. Over 1,000 Chromebooks were purchased for students and over 240 laptops for staff.

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Points of Pride and Key Next Steps

- **Finance:** The district has over 500 staff who serve nearly 4,500 students with an annual operating budget of nearly \$70M. Today, our district has a balanced budget with a planned growing fund balance for three-consecutive years, which includes fiscal years (FY) 2021-2023.
- **Territory Transfer to Banning:** At the beginning of last week, the Riverside County Office of Education notified us that a feasibility study would be voted on by the Riverside County Committee on School District Organization. The study is about transferring land in the city of Banning to our school district. If the committee votes "Yes," this means students who move into that part of Banning **will attend our school district**. If the committee votes against the petition, then students who move to that part of our city **will not attend our school district**. After presentations, the committee could not vote because they did not have enough committee members participating in the meeting. However, the battle is not over! To support our efforts for the territory transfer, please email a copy of the letter you submitted or write one and send it to Dr. Michael O'Neill (moneill@banning.k12.ca.us). He will compile them for our team.
- **Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan:** This plan or LCP is not to be mistaken with the LCAP or Local Control Accountability Plan. The LCP is a required plan for all school districts as a response from the government to COVID-19 and its impact on schools. Banning Unified School District's LCP was approved at the September 30th board meeting and a public hearing was held earlier in the month. It will be uploaded on our website for you to read it, but you can also read it now in our [board packet](#).
- **Safely Reopening Schools:** Each month updates will be shared with the community about possibly reopening schools after the winter break. General updates are based on COVID-19 positivity rates in our community and guidance from the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the California Department of Education, and the Riverside County Department of Public Health.
- **Athletics/Sports:** Everyone is anxious to return to strength conditioning, hiring coaches, and resuming extracurricular activities. Please know that the Banning Unified School district is following guidance from the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), and we are preparing now to resume activities in the new calendar. Stay tuned for more information.
- **Attendance:** On September 16, the county hosted a meeting with Aeries. During that meeting, Aeries announced that they were making new tools available for SB 98 attendance collection.

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Senate Bill 98 is a state law put in place in California to guide school districts during COVID-19. At the meeting between county staff and Aeries professionals (folks who lead one of the technology information systems we use called Aeries), the consortium we belong to decided that October 1 would be the target date for working all the bugs out and making it available to districts. The county collaborated with Aeries to make the new tools available, and Aeries had not officially announced these new tools because they were finalizing the design.

On September 25, Aeries published documentation on some of the new features and let us know that the new options for SB 98 attendance existed. Their guides set up next steps. This week, district staff spoke with colleagues in other districts. Right before midnight Friday, RCOE sent instructions on steps we needed to take to finalize the configuration at each site. Those communications encouraged us to take those steps right away so that the changes could go into effect on Monday, as configuration work needed to take place with these new codes. When RCOE added the new codes, they reversed two letters on one of the codes, and it was causing a fatal error. That was a quick fix. It took Banning five minutes to make corrections at the middle school and ten minutes at the high school. However, in doing so we discovered RCOE had activated all of the new attendance codes instead of making them available for use. That put teachers in limbo where they couldn't use the new codes and the old codes were no longer usable. We have been able to make the corrections, and staff can now use the new codes. The quick fix was completed the same day that the problem was identified, which demonstrates that problems are never permanent, pervasive, or personal. Thank you for your patience!!

Save These Dates!

Friday, October 16th – Sign up by this date to volunteer for a districtwide committee

1. Click [HERE](#) to volunteer for our *Social Committee* if you are creative or gifted at event planning virtually or in person for events like staff birthdays, holidays, recognitions, special occasions, etc.
2. Click [HERE](#) to volunteer for our *Recycling Committee* if global warming is important to you and you are interested in implementing a recycling program and practices that conserve energy districtwide.
3. Click [HERE](#) to volunteer for our *Health and Wellness Committee* if you are invested in implementing opportunities for staff to practice routines of self-care, work-life balance, learned optimism, and mental strength.

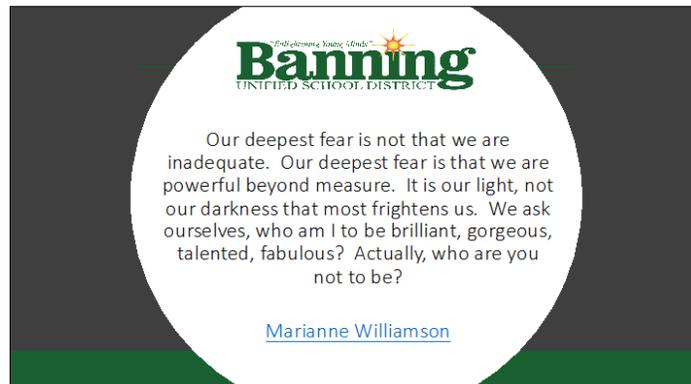
Wednesday, October 28th – Submit a Positive Public Comment about Banning Unified School District

Think about something that one of your colleagues or community members has done well, and share the good news. Simply submit a positive public comment or Point of Pride about Banning Unified School District by emailing your good news to Monica O'Brien before 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 28th. Monica's email address is mobrien@banning.k12.ca.us. Attend the Banning Unified School District's Board Meeting virtually by clicking [HERE](#).

Monday, November 7th – Learned Optimism Book Study with Superintendent Baker

Sign-up by clicking [HERE](#), and picking the dates and times that work best for your schedule. Any adult can voluntarily participate. Superintendent Baker will be facilitating a session that includes activities and discussion on key takeaways from Martin Seligman's *Learned Optimism*. The first 25 volunteers will receive a free book and materials!!

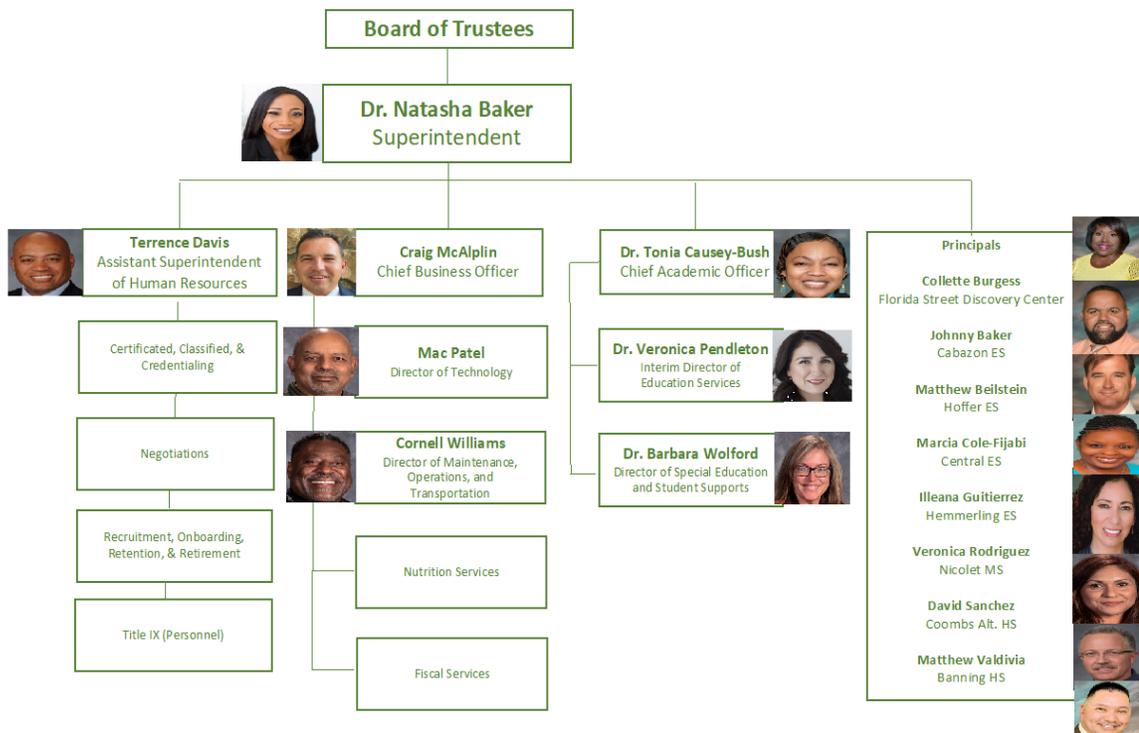
****Volunteerism isn't about having the time or the resources; it is about being the change you wish to see in the world!!**



Meet the Leadership Team

We are high-performing team members leading high-achieving staff in a phenomenal school district serving extraordinary students and dedicated community members. We assume positive intent in others and demonstrate learned optimism because our challenges are never permanent, pervasive, or personal. We are impeccable with our words because we know that people will never remember what we say but will always remember how we made them feel.

(Click this link to learn more about the Banning Unified School District's Leadership Team.)



Have an awesome weekend!