

San Juan Unified General Counsel Fhanysha Gaddis Urges Schools to Resolve Conflict Before It Escalates

Fhanysha Gaddis, General Counsel of San Juan Unified, makes the case for resolving school conflicts early, at the lowest possible level, before they escalate.

CARMICHAEL, CA, UNITED STATES, June 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As public school systems

“

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face mounting legal, operational, and community pressures, Fhanysha Clark Gaddis, Esq., MPP, ADR (cert.), General Counsel for San Juan Unified School District, is calling on educational institutions to treat [conflict resolution](#) as a preventative discipline rather than a reactive one.

Gaddis, who has served as General Counsel for one of California's largest school districts since July 2023, argues

that the most consequential legal work in education happens long before a dispute reaches a courtroom — in governance decisions, policy development, and the everyday systems that determine how concerns are raised and addressed. Her position comes as districts nationwide navigate increasingly complex disputes spanning labor, civil rights, and student services.

In large public school systems, conflict rarely stays contained. A disagreement between administrators can affect educators; an operational dispute can disrupt student services; a governance challenge can quickly become a community concern. In districts serving tens of thousands of students, even minor breakdowns in communication can create ripple effects far beyond the original issue.

That dynamic, Gaddis contends, is why legal departments can no longer afford to operate as purely reactive bodies that engage only once litigation emerges or compliance failures surface. The preventative approach she advocates emphasizes early intervention — resolving legal matters, in her words, at the lowest possible level.

In her role at San Juan Unified — which serves roughly 38,000 students across the greater Sacramento area — that philosophy spans governance, labor relations, Title IX compliance,

investigations, civil rights matters, special education, and policy advisory work. Gaddis also serves as the district's Equity Compliance Officer. As General Counsel, she has reported to the Board of Education on the status of Williams-type complaints, a quarterly public accounting required under California Education Code section 35186 covering instructional materials, teacher assignments, and facility conditions — an example of resolving issues through established processes before they escalate.

A California-licensed attorney specializing in municipal and education law, Gaddis points to a broader shift across public institutions: a growing recognition that effective legal leadership is measured not only by litigation outcomes, but by the disputes that never escalate — the issues resolved early, the relationships preserved, and the institutional stability maintained through thoughtful guidance.

The stakes, she notes, are particularly high in public education. Schools operate within visible, emotionally invested communities. Families expect transparency; educators need consistency; boards and administrators must navigate legal, operational, and social pressures at once. Under those conditions, unresolved conflict can quietly erode morale, productivity, and institutional trust.

Gaddis maintains that organizational systems supporting open, early dialogue allow concerns to surface sooner, when they remain manageable — and that over time, those systems strengthen institutional culture itself. The approach, she argues, requires more than legal knowledge alone, drawing on strategic communication and the ability to navigate difficult conversations without inflaming them further.

That perspective is informed by work beyond the district. Gaddis has served as an adjunct professor of law at University of the Pacific since 2020 and previously worked as a Deputy City Attorney for the City of Sacramento. She holds a Juris Doctor from Pepperdine University School of Law along with a Master of Public Policy, and is a certified practitioner in alternative dispute resolution.



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Her central premise is a straightforward one: that the strongest public institutions are not those that avoid conflict, but those that learn to navigate it wisely.

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