



# Ryan Howatt

Principal

[Rio Rosales Elementary School](#)

4th Year as Rosales Principal

9th Year as Principal

11 Years as Teacher

Mr. Howatt has served as principal of Rio Rosales Elementary School since 2016. Before working in Rio he served as principal for Mesa Union School District where he was previously a teacher. Ryan also worked as a teacher in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District before returning to Ventura County where he spent most of his youth.

Mr. Howatt attended Rio Mesa High School and went on to earn a Bachelors degree from U.C. Santa Cruz. He earned his Masters degree and administrative credential from San Jose State University. Mr. Howatt is married with two children. Family is deeply important in his life as well as doing work that is meaningful for the community. Mr. Howatt is an avid and accomplished golfer and has many interests including playing music and exploring the outdoors.

Mr. Howatt is a strong advocate for children and for equitable practices that afford all children, regardless of background or abilities, the opportunity to develop to their full potential as people, learners, and citizens. As a teacher and principal he has developed many powerful professional practices. Among them are his ability to be reflective and help others to do the same. It is common in our school systems to be constantly focused on implementation and management while saving little time to reflect and think about the processes and outcomes of our work. Mr. Howatt brings deeply analytical and thoughtful leadership to Rio Rosales and the Rio School District as a whole. He combines this with an equally deep concern and humane nature for children, teachers, and families. Blending heart and mind is a great combination for leadership. Mr. Howatt embraces his work from a learner's perspective and is most at ease in a constant state of learning about and from the environments he leads and manages.

We asked Mr. Howatt the following three questions and his responses follow each;

**1. What do you think matters most to children when they attend school?**

Relationships....

I said this summer to our staff that we teach students, *and more importantly*, we teach children. Our children need to have safe, caring and collaborative relationships at school. These relationships must be founded in dignity, caring and high expectations. These relationships need to bridge the boundaries between home and school. These relationships are the foundation of our work and fuel our hearts and minds.

We developed a vision statement at Rio Rosales two years ago that states *The world needs happy, literate empathetic people who can solve problems together*. We strive for this every day with every child.

**2. How has your leadership changed over time and experience?**

My leadership has grown because of the people and situations that have taught me. I am ever grateful for those colleagues, administrators, families and children who have taught me when to lead and when to listen.

I feel that my leadership has grown more than ever in the Rio School District because of the shared expertise that exists here. I believe that true collaboration requires us all to have different strengths and areas for growth. It also requires us to be vulnerable and seek deeper understanding as well as

confidence in areas of strength and a willingness to share to help us all get better. This exists in the Rio School District, and it is one of the reasons we are all getting better.

**3. What has working in schools meant to you in terms of your own development as a person, husband, father, and citizen?**

Public education, as I have heard Dr. Puglisi say, is the foundation of our democracy. To be on any campus where children are present brings to my mind the incredible opportunity we have to celebrate our diversity and build our ability to be excellent human beings. When I am in schools, I am happy.

I will be ever thankful to my parents who, when I was in fourth grade in a town where most people looked like me, decided to move because they did not want me to grow up in isolation. That physical move started a whole chain of emotional moves I made towards understanding and appreciating all of the differences that make us stronger together.

I try as best as I can to pass these lessons I have learned onto my sons. My wife, who is a nurse for newborn babies, and I want our sons to grow up to be a part of this wonderful rich fabric we are all weaving together.