NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To: County Clerk, Peter Aldana
County of Riverside
4080 Lemon Street, 1st Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

Riverside County Planning Department
4080 Lemon Street, 12th Floor
Riverside, CA 92502-1409

From: Menifee Union School District
29775 Haun Road
Menifee, CA 92584

Project Title:
Menifee Elementary School Modernization Project

Project Location - Specific:
26301 Garbani Road, Menifee, CA 92584
Project Location – City: Menifee **Project Location – County:** Riverside

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:
The proposed project consists of: (1) the replacement 21 existing classrooms with 21 new classrooms; (2) the modernize 12 existing classrooms; (3) providing Transitional Kindergarten (TK) for four-five year olds; (4) continued operations of the bus maintenance facilities at the site; and (5) relocation of the Menifee Historical Museum and the Boys and Girls club that currently operate at the site to other locations. Construction/demolition is expected to begin in fourth quarter 2026, with the school reopening in August 2028.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project:
Menifee Union School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:
Menifee Union School District

Exempt Status:
- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268)
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))
- ☑ Categorical Exemption: State type and section number: CEQA Guidelines Section 15302 (Class 2) and 15314 (Class 14)
- ☐ Statutory Exemption: (PRC §21080.23, CEQA Guidelines Section 15284)

Reasons why project is exempt:
See the Attachment for a discussion on why the project meets the requirements for categorical exemptions under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15302 and 15314.

Lead Agency Contact Person:	**Telephone:**
Kyle Dee	951-672-1851

If filed by applicant:
1. Attached certified document of exemption findings
2. Has NOE been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☑ Yes ☐ No

Agency Representative Signature:_____ Date: 08/20/25 Title: Assistant Director of Facilities

☑ Signed by Lead Agency
☐ Signed by Applicant

Date Received for Filing at OPR___08/20/2025

CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION

MENIFEE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MODERNIZATION PROJECT

This document assesses the use of categorical exemptions in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the proposed Menifee Elementary School modernization project under California Public Resources Code Section 21084 and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15302, and 15314 (California Code of Regulations Title 14 Sections 15000 et seq.)

1.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Menifee Union School District (MUSD or District) is proposing improvements to Menifee Elementary School, located in Menifee, California (the proposed project). Menifee Elementary School opened in 1980, operated as a Kindergarden through 5 grade school, and the school was closed in 2008. The District has built new and modernized other elementary schools to handle the demands of population growth and the need for school facilities in the Menifee area. The District has determined that additional elementary school facilities are needed to handle the current and projected population growth, and the most cost-effective and efficient method would be to re-open and modernize Menifee Elementary School. The proposed project consists of the following improvements: replace 21 existing classrooms with 21 new classrooms; modernize 12 existing classrooms; and provide Transitional Kindergarten (TK) for four-five year olds, often referred to as preschool. The District also proposes to continue the operations of the bus maintenance facilities currently located at the site; and relocate the Menifee Historical Museum and the Boys and Girls club that currently operate at the site to other locations.

1.1 PROJECT LOCATION AND ZONING

The proposed project site is located at 26301 Garbani Road, Menifee, California, which is located east of Evans Road, south of Garbani Road, west of Murrieta Road, and north of Okuma Road. Regional access to the site is provided by Interstate 215 (I-215), approximately one mile east of the site, and Bundy Canyon Road, approximately one mile south of the adjacent middle school. The existing campus consists of approximately 13.56 acres.

Menifee Elementary is zoned as Public/Quasi Public Facilities (PF) by the City of Menifee. The PF designation entails civic uses such as City administrative buildings (City Hall, fire stations, police stations, community centers, government offices, corporation yards, cemeteries, libraries). This designation applies to existing public schools at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels, including institutions of higher learning in the City of Menifee. Surrounding land uses include rural residential one acre minimum (RR1) and du/ac residential (2.1-5 R) zoning designations (CMGP, 2021), which are residential land uses.

1.2 EXISTING FACILITIES

Menifee Elementary School is not currently operating as a school but contains multiple buildings and classroom pods, most of which are one-story, as well as asphalt courts and play areas, and an adjacent playing field. The District bus maintenance yard is located in the southern portion of the site, as well as solar panels that generate electricity for MVMS.

Parking is provided in a parking lot in front of the school on Garbani Road, as well as a lot located along the western portion of the site, near the parking lot in the front of the school.

The Menifee Elementary School site currently houses the Menifee History Museum in one room at the site, adjacent to Garbani Road, which contains historical artifacts and information on the history of the region, which was heavily based in agriculture. The site also contains tribal artifacts from tribes that lived in the region, including mortars and metates, ceremonial rocks, pottery, arrowheads, shells and pipes.

Finally, the school site is also the location of the Boys and Girls Club of the Valley. The club provides programs focused on academics, health, and leadership, as well as providing athletic programs, including flag football, wrestling, soccer, tumbling, dance, and summer camps to guide, coach and motivate kids to be successful.

1.3 SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND CAPACITY

Menifee Elementary School closed in 2008 and has not functioned as an elementary school since that time. It was reported that 871 students were historically enrolled at Menifee Elementary School, with an average class size of approximately 19 students (School Data.com, 2025).

The school has 34 existing classrooms. The breakdown of classrooms by grade and capacity are shown in Table 1 below. The capacity of Menifee Elementary School is estimate to be 847 students.

TABLE 1
Menifee Elementary School Project Enrollment by Grade

Grade Level	No. of Classrooms	Student Loading	Total Capacity
TK	3	24	72
Kindergarten	5	25	125
Grade 1	5	25	125
Grade 2	5	25	125
Grade 3	5	25	125
Grade 4	4	30	120
Grade 5	4	30	120
Special Ed (Moderate Severe)	1	9	9
Special Ed (Non-Severe)	2	13	26
Capacity	34	--	847

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project proposes the modernization of Menifee Elementary School. The proposed project would modernize the school and make the following improvements:

- Replace 21 existing classrooms with 21 new classrooms.
- Modernize 12 existing classrooms
- Provide Transitional Kindergarten (TK) for four-five year olds, often referred to as preschool.
- Continue the operations of the bus maintenance facilities at the site.

In addition, other facilities at the school will be rebuilt, including the library, multipurpose rooms, athletic fields/courts, restrooms, parking lots, and playgrounds. The site is flat, has been graded as part of the existing school site and is currently paved as part of the existing school campus and adjacent parking lot. In addition, the project will add landscaping and complete other miscellaneous activities to incorporate the TK-K activities into the existing school site.

The bus maintenance yard and the solar panel field will continue to operate in the southern portion of the school site with no change in their operations. In addition to the above modifications, the Menifee Historical Museum and the Boys and Girls club that currently operate at the site would be relocated. Construction/demolition activities are expected to begin in fourth quarter 2026 and be complete by second quarter 2028, with the school reopening in August 2028.

3.0 CEQA EVALUATION

3.1 CLASS 2 EXEMPTION – REPLACEMENT OR RECONSTRUCTION

A Class 2 Exemption (CEQA Section 15302 – Replacement or Reconstruction) applies to the "replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including but not limited to: (a) Replacement or reconstruction of existing schools and hospitals to provide earthquake resistant structures which do not increase capacity more than 50 percent."

The proposed project would replace 21 existing classrooms with 21 new classrooms and modernize 12 existing classrooms at Menifee Elementary School, in addition to rebuilding other school facilities (library, multipurpose rooms, athletic fields/courts, athletic fields/courts, parking lots, etc.). The overall purpose and capacity of the new classrooms would not change. The proposed project would result in no expansion of the existing use and there will be no increase or change in the number of classrooms or overall student capacity.

Therefore, the proposed modifications to Menifee Elementary School are considered to be exempt per CEQA Guidelines §15302 Class 2 exemption for the following reasons:

(1) The proposed project (reconstruction and modernization of classrooms and facilities) will be located on the same site as the existing school site.
(2) The new classrooms and facilities will not result in a change in purpose.
(3) There will be no increase in classrooms or student capacity; therefore, the capacity would not increase more than 50 percent.

3.2 CLASS 14 EXEMPTION – MINOR ADDITIONS TO SCHOOLS

CEQA guidelines include exemptions for certain types of projects, including school projects. A Class 14 Exemption (CEQA Section 15314 – Minor Additions to Schools) applies to "minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25% or 10 classrooms, whichever is less."

The proposed project aims to modernize the buildings at Menifee Elementary School. This includes the replacement and modernization of classrooms and other facilities. The number of classrooms at Menifee Elementary School would not increase after modernization activities are complete. The capacity of the new classrooms would not change and thus the student capacity is not expected to increase (i.e., would be less than 25 percent).

All of the proposed modifications to Menifee Elementary School are within the confines of the existing school site. The proposed project would not result in any increase in the number of classrooms on campus or result in an increase in student capacity. Therefore,

the proposed modifications to Menifee Elementary School are considered to be exempt per CEQA Guidelines §15314 Class 14 Exemption for the following reasons:

(1) The proposed project would result in no increase in the number of classrooms at the Menifee Elementary and the number of classrooms before and after the school modernization activities would remain at 34 following the completion of the project; and
(2) The proposed project would not result in an increase in classrooms (which is less than an increase of 10 classrooms); and
(3) There would be no increase in student capacity (which is less than 25 percent).

3.3 EXCEPTIONS TO CATEGORICAL EXEMPTIONS

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, Exceptions, identifies conditions under which categorical exemptions would not be applicable. The proposed project has been reviewed under Section 15300.2 for characteristics or circumstances that might invalidate findings that the proposed project is exempt.

A. Location

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(a) states that Class 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 exemptions are qualified by consideration of whether the project is located in a uniquely sensitive environment, such that it impacts an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern that has been designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies. This exception does not apply to the project as it is exempt under Class 2 and 14 exemptions and all modifications would occur within an existing school campus where there are no known sensitive environmental conditions.

B. Cumulative Impact

Exemptions are not applicable when there is a significant cumulative impact of "successive projects of the same type in the same place over time." Beyond the proposed project, the District has no other planned improvements at Menifee Elementary School. The District recently conducted school modernization activities at Menifee Valley Middle School, which is located at 26555 Garbani Road, adjacent to the western boundary of Menifee Elementary School.

The modernization project at Menifee Valley Middle School included the modernization of the existing library into two classrooms; removal of re-locatable classrooms and restroom buildings; installation of temporary re-locatable classrooms, a library, and restroom buildings during construction activities; demolition of existing classrooms buildings; construction of new permanent classrooms with attached restroom buildings and a new library; and installation of offsite sewer to replace an existing septic system. The number of classrooms at Menifee Valley decreased from 44 to 40 classrooms after the completion of modernization activities, so there was not increase in student capacity. The

modernization activities at Menifee Valley Middle School have been completed and will not overlap with the construction activities at Menifee Elementary School.

The District is currently not proposing similar school modernization improvements at other schools within the district located near Menifee Elementary School and Menifee Valley Middle School. If other projects were proposed in the future, environmental effects caused by the modernization improvements at other schools would be localized, limited to construction activities, and not within range of project effects at the other school sites, e.g., traffic, noise, etc. Each school's modernization project would comply with applicable local, state, and federal regulations and District best management practices. Therefore, any potential overlap of construction activities would not result in a significant adverse impact and would not be cumulatively considerable. Additionally, there are no related projects near Menifee Elementary School whose environmental effects could be combined with the proposed project's to create cumulatively significant construction and operational impacts. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

C. Significant Effects

A categorical exemption cannot be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(c)). The determination whether this exception applies involves two distinct questions: (1) whether the project presents unusual circumstances, and (2) whether there is a reasonable possibility that a significant environmental impact will result from those unusual circumstances. The lead agency considers the second prong of this test only if it first finds that some circumstance of the project is unusual. *Berkeley Hillside Preservation v. City of Berkeley (2015) 60 C4th 1086, 1104*.

The proposed facility improvements at Menifee Elementary School are not unusual. The proposed project, would be confined to the boundaries of the existing school campus. The height and architecture of the buildings would be consistent with the existing campus and surrounding development. The facility improvements and the anticipated construction methods would be common for school facility construction projects, which must adhere to strict standards established by California Code of Regulations Title 5, California Building Code, and California Education Code and are overseen by the California Department of Education and Division of the State Architect.

There are no known unusual circumstances related to the project site or the proposed project, and there is also no evidence that the project would cause significant direct or indirect environmental effects. The site is currently paved and all replaced and renovated classrooms would be within the area that has already been graded and paved. The District and its construction manager will comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and best management practices that would minimize potential environmental impacts caused by construction activities. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

D. Scenic Highways

A categorical exemption cannot be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(d)). The closest officially designated scenic highway is State Route 74 heading southwest from CA-111 in Palm Desert, CA, within the San Bernardino National Forest (Cal Trans, 2025). Scenic State Route 74 is located approximately 20 miles east of the proposed project site. Additionally, Interstate 15 (I-15), which is listed as an Eligible State Scenic Highway – Not Officially Designated, is located approximately five miles west of the school site. Due to the distance, topography, intervening hills/structures, and the fact that the school buildings are one-story in height, the school site would not be visible or result in a visual impact to a scenic resource, including State Route 74 and I-15. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

E. Hazardous Waste Sites

A categorical exemption cannot be used for a project on a site that is on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(e)). Section 65962.5 of the California Government Code specifies: (1) lists of hazardous materials sites and hazardous waste facilities; (2) hazardous waste discharges for which the State Water Quality Control Board has issued certain types of orders; (3) public drinking water wells containing detectable levels of organic contaminants; (4) underground storage tanks with reported unauthorized releases; and (5) solid waste disposal facilities from which hazardous waste has migrated. Three regulatory agency databases were searched including: (1) GeoTracker, maintained by the State Water Resources Control Board; (2) EnviroStor, maintained by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control; and (3) EnviroMapper, maintained by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Using these search databases, a leaking underground storage tank (LUST) site was reported at the Menifee Elementary School (26301 Garbani Road) in 1996, located adjacent to the Menifee Valley Middle School. The UST contained gasoline and was removed in January 1996. Environmental concerns about the UST were that it could potentially contaminant an aquifer used for drinking water. The cleanup status at the site is completed, the case was closed in 2003, and with no further remedial actions required. No significant potential impacts are expected as a result of this underground storage tank (RWQCB, 2025).

No other sites are located within one-quarter of a mile from the Menifee Elementary School site. A LUST was also found at the GTE-Murrieta Plan Yard in 1977, which is located approximately 1.33 miles from the school site at 32477 Haun Road. The UST contained gasoline and was removed in 1977 with contaminated soil transported off-site. Environmental concerns about the UST were that it could potentially contaminant an aquifer used for drinking water. The cleanup status at the site is completed, the case was

closed in 1999, with no further remedial actions required. Further, the site is over one mile from the Menifee Elementary School (RWQCB, 2025), so no significant impacts to the school site would be expected from this site.

F. Historic Resources

A categorical exemption cannot be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Historical resources are defined as buildings, structures, or objects that are more than 50 years old (CCR 4852(d)(2)). Menifee Elementary School was opened on July 1, 1980 and does not meet the minimum age requirement of 50 years to be considered for historical significance. Additionally, the project site is not listed on an official local register of historical resources, the California Register of Historical Resources, or the National Register of Historic Places (OHP, 2019). The school site does not have architecture that would be considered unique or embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a direct impact to a historical resources and this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, the proposed modifications to Menifee Elementary School are considered to be exempt per CEQA Guidelines §15302 Class 2 exemption and §15314 Class 14 exemption for the following reasons:

(1) The proposed project (reconstruction and modernization of classrooms and facilities) will be located on the same site as the existing classrooms and school-related facilities.
(2) The new classrooms and facilities will not change in purpose.
(3) There will be no increase in capacity; therefore, the capacity would not increase more than 25 percent.
(4) The proposed project would not result in an increase in classrooms, therefore, there would be no increase in classrooms (which is less than an increase of 10 classrooms); and
(5) None of the exceptions to the exemptions apply to the proposed project.

Therefore, the proposed modifications to Menifee Elementary School meet the requirements of CEQA Guidelines §15302 Class 2 exemption and §15314 Class 14 exemption, and the proposed project is exempt under CEQA.

5.0 REFERENCES

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), 2025. California Scenic Highway Mapping System. Accessed July 30, 2025. http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/index.htm

City of Menifee General Plan (CMGP), 2021. Land Use Map. Accessed 07/31/2025. https://www.cityofmenifee.us/DocumentCenter/View/14673/Exhibit_LU-2_Land-Use-Map_101221

Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), 2025. EnviroStor Database. Accessed 7/31/2025. https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?myaddress=26301+Garbani+road+Menifee

Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), 2025. GeoTracker Database. Accessed 7/31/2025. https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=T0606500451

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), 2025 EnviroMapper Database. Accessed 7/31/2025. https://geopub.epa.gov/myem/efmap/

Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), 2025. Listed California Historical Resources. Accessed 7/31/2025. https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/listedresources/

School Data.com, 2025. Menifee Elementary School Profile. Available at: Menifee Elementary (Menifee, CA) Detailed School Profile, Performance Statistics, Teacher and Student Info, Test Results. Accessed 7/30/2025.

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