



# BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



PREPARING  
EVERY STUDENT  
TO LIVE THEIR PURPOSE

2022-23  
REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



# BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## PREPARING EVERY STUDENT TO LIVE THEIR PURPOSE



**Matt Wien**  
Superintendent

### Board of Education

**Glenn Creiman**, President  
**Greg Palatto**, Vice President  
**Chris Ann Horsley**, Clerk  
**Derek Bahmanou**, Member  
**Jim Elliot**, Member

### District Accolades

California Distinguished Schools  
 National Blue Ribbon School, 2022  
 Favorite School District,  
 2023 SGV Readers Choice Awards  
 Best School District,  
 2022 SGV Readers Choice Awards  
 2022 AP Computer Science  
 Female Diversity Award  
 #1 in reading comprehension, California  
 Reading Report Card, 2021 and 2022  
 5 schools in the top 13% of California elementary  
 schools, 2022 Best K-8 Schools Rankings  
 2 schools among the top 16% of California  
 middle schools, 2022 Best K-8 Schools Rankings  
 2 schools in the top 15% of high schools  
 nationwide, 2021 Best High Schools Rankings  
 Inland Empire Top Workplace, 2019-2021  
 Model Continuation High School, 2021



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## Superintendent's Message

Dear Bonita Unified Community,

Bonita Unified School District is proud to serve approximately 10,000 students in the communities of San Dimas and La Verne, providing every child with an exceptional education, support from dedicated employees, and a wealth of enrichment activities that inspire them to live their purpose.

There has been much to celebrate during the 2022-23 school year, which marked my first year as superintendent in Bonita Unified and my 13th year working in this amazing District.

This year's Report to the Community highlights just some of these successes – including our students' excellence in their academics, athletics, arts and activities; the programs and learning opportunities that support students' overall achievement; the accolades our District has earned for providing exceptional educational opportunities; and the teachers, staff and administrators who make all of this possible.

It has been an honor to bear witness to these accomplishments, and to work alongside our 1,100 exceptional Bonita Unified employees, the Board of Education, parents, volunteers, and our community partners.

I want to thank all of you for believing in Bonita Unified's vision and trusting me to lead this District into the future. With your support – and a continued emphasis on our core values of equity, mastery and a focus on results – we will continue to ensure that Bonita Unified is a top-performing school district where every student is afforded the opportunities, resources and support they need to thrive.

Matt Wien  
Superintendent



## Bonita Unified Students Continue to Excel in English and Math

Bonita Unified continues to make strides in student achievement, with students ranking in the top 10% and 12% of all California unified school districts in English language arts (ELA) and math, respectively, according to data provided by the California Department of Education in its 2022 California Assessment of Student Performance and

Progress (CAASPP) report.

Bonita Unified students met or exceeded grade-level standards in ELA at a rate of 68% and in math at a rate of 54%. Though these scores represent a slight decline since the last testing period in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they still significantly outpace the state averages of 47% for ELA and 33% for math.

The CAASPP scores compare favorably to scores from Bonita's neighboring districts, as well as the top school districts, percentage-wise, in the state. Additionally, when compared with 36 California school districts with a free and reduced lunch eligibility rate between 30% to 40%, Bonita ranks second in both ELA and math.



# FINDING THEIR PURPOSE:

## Bonita Unified Alumni Return to District in Record Numbers

Bonita Unified School District teachers, staff and administrators are united by a commitment to prepare every student to live their purpose. In many cases, BUSD alumni have found their purpose among the very halls of the schools they attended, working alongside educators who made a tremendous impact on their lives. Below are just a few of the many alumni who returned to Bonita Unified School District as employees.



**ADAM ARCHIBALD**  
English Teacher – Bonita High School

*Bonita High Class of 1997 • Years worked in BUSD: 19*

“I was first inspired to come back to Bonita High School as a soccer coach. I began coaching at 17 and loved it. I wanted to have an even bigger influence in the lives of students as I felt that spark when I began coaching, and I became a teacher. BHS is a large family that truly loves and takes care of our students.”



**ALYSON MATHEWSON**  
School Psychologist – Bonita High School

*Bonita High Class of 2006 • Years worked for BUSD: 9*

“During my time in BUSD as a student, I made meaningful connections with my teachers and I always felt supported and encouraged to achieve my best. When I started my career as a school psychologist, my ultimate goal was to work for BUSD because I knew this is a district that truly cares about students and values progress.”



**COLIN CAMPBELL**  
Math and Drama Teacher – Ramona Middle School

*Bonita High Class of 2010 • Years worked for BUSD: 8*

“As a student, I loved that BUSD had such an amazing visual and performing arts program. I now run the drama program at Ramona and it has been an incredible experience helping it grow!”



**EILEAN (DOMINGUEZ) PLUMLEY**  
Second Grade Teacher – Oak Mesa Elementary

*Bonita High Class of 1991 • Years worked for BUSD: 9*

“I knew that I wanted to be a teacher since kindergarten, and moving here to La Verne in 1980 sealed the deal! I’m so grateful to have had all these experiences and more as a BUSD student! I love that my kids are part of the district that gave so much to me and I can only hope to give my students everything and more that my teachers gave to me.”



**SUSAN HSIUNG-HERNANDEZ**  
Fourth Grade Teacher – Shull Elementary

*San Dimas High Class of 1992 • Years worked for BUSD: 25*

“I immigrated to the U.S. at 3.5 years old. My first formal schooling was at Gladstone Elementary and I remember being in an ESL pull-out program in kindergarten. After college, I wanted to give back to the district that taught me English and helped me achieve my academic goals. I’ve been a resident of San Dimas for 46 years and it warms my heart knowing I give back to the children of the community that helped raise me.”



**DANNY FEOLA**  
History Teacher/Water Polo and Swim Coach – San Dimas High School

*San Dimas High Class of 2007 • Years worked for BUSD: 14*

“I came back to BUSD because SDHS needed a water polo coach, and I decided to give it a shot. By working with high school aged athletes, I figured out that teaching was a career path I wanted to pursue. BUSD is a wonderful district to work for; it really does feel like a family and I couldn’t picture myself working for a different district.”



**LESLIE SANDOVAL**  
Principal – Grace Miller Elementary

*San Dimas High Class of 1995 • Years worked for BUSD: 21*

“I had a great experience in the district and was hired to start teaching at Lone Hill Middle School the same year my sister was hired to teach at Lone Hill. It is an honor and a privilege to serve the families and students of BUSD and to strive to give them the same positive experience I had. I love that I knew some of my colleagues when I was in school and that now our children are students together.”



**DEBBIE GRENIER**  
Principal – Allen Avenue Elementary

*San Dimas High Class of 1977 • Years worked for BUSD: 29*

“I came to work in BUSD because my children attended school here, and I wanted to be a teacher in the district. What I love most about working here is that we base our decisions on what is best for students!”

*[Years of service to the District may include part-time and substitute work.]*



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bonita Unified Mental Wellness Initiative Expands Social-Emotional Resources

Bonita Unified School District has significantly expanded the mental health and wellness services it provides for students, staff and families, addressing community feedback that requested additional social-emotional support throughout the District.

Since 2019, the District added 13 full-time licensed mental health specialists to its support services team and placed them at school sites, with two support specialists available at each middle and high school, plus four more specialists, each serving two elementary schools.

The support services team offers counseling and assistance regarding academics planning, personal and social issues at school, intervention for attendance issues, therapeutic support for individuals and groups, crisis intervention and response, wellness

resources and guidance for families.

Bonita Unified partners with community support systems such as Care Solace, which works to find available providers matched to a family’s need, and can be accessed by students, parents and staff. Vital social-emotional data is collected from Panorama Education, which helps improve student outcomes.

Supported by a generous donation from the La Verne/San Dimas Educational Foundation, San Dimas High School created an on-campus wellness center for its students to serve as a safe and inclusive hub for mental health and social-emotional development. Students have access to mental health screening, prevention, counseling and other resources designed to help destigmatize mental health on campus, while developing a strong sense of self so that they can reach their full potential.



The BUSD Support Services Team includes:

- 13 Mental Health Specialists
- 15 Guidance Counselors
- 3 Designated Instruction and Services (DIS) Counselors
- 13 School Psychologists
- 4 School Psychologist Interns
- 2 Social Workers
- 9 Social Worker Interns
- 24 School Administrators

PREPARING EVERY STUDENT TO LIVE THEIR PURPOSE

Bonita High Students Prepare for IT Careers in Cybersecurity Pathway

Bonita High School students can develop the skills to launch a career as a systems engineer, IT technician or ethical hacker through the school’s Cybersecurity and Networking career technical education (CTE) pathway, a three-year program that aligns with Cisco Networking Academy curriculum and prepares students to take the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) exam.

The pathway launched in the 2022-23 school year with its first-year course, Cybersecurity and Networking I, which introduces students to fundamental computer and career skills for entry-level IT jobs. Students learn to install, configure and troubleshoot computers and software, and are introduced to networking elements that connect users across numerous platforms.

“This pathway is an

excellent opportunity for young adults to acquire the essential IT skills required to earn industry-recognized certifications and gain practical experience that can lead to immediate employment upon graduation,” Bonita High CTE instructor Chris Waters said.

Cybersecurity and Networking I includes instruction on current and legacy hardware and networking technology, while preparing students to take the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) A+ exam, which certifies that the student is prepared for a professional role as an entry-level computer technician. Bonita High has an articulation agreement with Mt. San Antonio College that will award

any student who passes the A+ exam, and chooses to enroll at the college, with three semester credits.

Bonita High students who complete the three-year pathway will be eligible to take the CCNA certification exam and have access to an exclusive Cisco “Talent Bridge” job board, where they can search for entry-level jobs in their area.

“This year I have learned how to build PCs and also create networks and even get into the servers and work within them,” Bonita junior Franky Lopez-Ramirez said. “This class has opened my eyes to many opportunities that I can use for a career and I will never regret taking it.”



Cybersecurity and Networking I – first-year course debuted in 2022-23  
Cybersecurity and Networking II – second-year course to debut in 2023-24  
Cybersecurity and Networking III – third-year course to debut in 2024-25

Middle School Leadership Students Keep the Good Times Rolling

Activities play an essential part in creating a positive, close-knit campus culture. For Associated Student Body (ASB)/Leadership students at Lone Hill and Ramona middle schools, they also provide a vital opportunity to develop valuable life skills.

ASB/Leadership students have presided over a year full of activities, both new and traditional. Ramona held its first-ever semi-formal dance, with more than 300 students attending the “Hollywood Nights” themed party. Also debuting this year was Ramona’s Fall Festival, featuring a haunted house, DJ, music and home-cooked food.

“Our Leadership students have done a great job of organizing activities that resonate with their classmates and the community,” Ramona ASB/Leadership Director Stephen Duran said.

Lone Hill hosted its annual Leadership Development Day, inviting more than 150 BUSD elementary school students to learn how to become compassionate and productive student leaders. More than 450 students also turned out for Lone Hill’s Leadership Dance, making it one of the best attended events in years.

“Students like to feel they are part of the

school, and Leadership makes them feel as if they are part of something bigger,” Lone Hill ASB/Leadership Director Alicia Saldana said.





BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Building a Creative Haven: San Dimas High Teacher Empowers Students Through Art

The sounds of music – spanning genres and decades – mix with the chatter of students in Dominic Black’s classroom, a space where imaginations are encouraged to run wild as students commit their creative vision to paper or canvas.

In his 22 years at San Dimas High School, Black has built a dynamic visual arts program that has empowered thousands of students to believe in themselves and pursue their passions as they enter the next phase of their lives.

Black, who describes himself as a teacher first and an artist second, never expected to be either. In college, Black realized his interest in marine biology was more of a hobby and instead studied art and photography. He worked jobs ranging from darkroom printing to concert photography before someone suggested substitute teaching. Both of his passions combined when he landed the job as San Dimas High’s art teacher in 2001.

For Black, arts education goes beyond developing technical skill; it helps students become more compassionate, learn patience and focus, think creatively and develop a growth mindset.

“What’s wonderful about art is that it is truly individualized education,” Black said. “It’s typically taught in a different way than the other subjects, and that alone makes it a class worth taking. It’s hands-on, and students are learning to solve problems and look at life through a different lens. We all have the



potential to create art, to get better at it, and to appreciate it. So much can be learned through art.”

Black utilizes “aspirational grading,” in which students submit their work, receive a grade and feedback, and have the opportunity to redo or improve their work in order to enhance their score. Black said his goal is to encourage students to be invested in their own learning and growth.

Black’s instruction also includes visits to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, where Black serves on the teacher advisory council and is creating a book of original art curriculum. Since 2011, he has organized summer tours abroad – to places like Italy, Greece, Spain and Japan – in which students explore new cuisine, art and culture.

Black’s teaching style has proven to resonate with students. In 2022, Class of 2020 graduate Cruz Hernandez nominated him to be honored on “The Kelly Clarkson Show” alongside other inspiring teachers. There, Black and his wife won a cruise through Norwegian Cruise Line’s Giving Joy program – an experience that was documented and showcased on the show in late 2022.

“What I want people to know is that Mr. Black is not just a great teacher, he’s a great person,” Hernandez said. “He really believes in his students and encourages everyone to be their authentic selves. I am really grateful for the impact he’s made in my life.”



BLAST Preschool Program Recognized for Inclusive Practices

Bonita Unified School District has been recognized by the California Early Childhood Special Education (CalECSE) Network for its BLAST Preschool Program, which provides a comprehensive early education experience for children ages three to five.

The CalECSE Network, a project funded by the California Department of Education, supports school districts, special education local plan areas (SELPA), county offices of special education and other agency partners in addressing and eliminating barriers to successful transition, assessment and access to educational programming for California’s youngest children with disabilities throughout California.

BLAST, which stands for “Building Lifelong Academic Skills Together,” was identified by CalECSE for its exemplary practices in providing an innovative and inclusive preschool education. As an exemplary program, BLAST representatives give direct assistance to other agencies in order to improve capacity, knowledge, collaboration and implementation of evidence-based practices throughout California.

BLAST, offered at Grace Miller and Shull elementary schools, serves both children who are typical learners and children with special needs. The program provides a research-based curriculum taught by an early childhood special education teacher with the support of two instructional aides. Teachers work with each child individually to create a personalized learning plan that meets their specific needs and help them develop self-esteem, social skills, speech and intellectual growth in a welcoming and supportive environment.



“What we’ve witnessed here at Grace Miller is that by prioritizing early inclusion and early intervention, we can change the trajectory of our children’s education,” Grace Miller Elementary School Principal Leslie Sandoval said. “It’s wonderful to watch those students thrive in their educational environment, make great friendships and learn to their full potential.”

Adult Transition Program Students Welcomed at ULV

Bonita Unified Adult Transition Program students are entering a new phase in their lives, splitting time between San Dimas High School and the University of La Verne (ULV) through a partnership that allows students ages 18 to 22 with moderate to severe disabilities to connect with students their own age as they work toward transitioning into adult life with full functionality.

The program, which debuted in early 2023, places students at ULV for two days a week, then switches back to San Dimas High for the remainder of the school week. BUSD Adult Transition students receive full access to ULV facilities, including the library, gym, campus center and dining hall.

Eighteen-year-old Dillon Paniagua, who attended Lone Hill Middle School and San Dimas High, is enjoying his time on a college campus. Although not technically a ULV student, Paniagua’s experience attending classes at the university has filled him with the college spirit, according to Dillon’s mother, Trisha Paniagua.

“Dillon is so proud to say he is going to college. It is a big step in his life,” Trisha said. “Dillon loves the routine and loves learning. We love the program at Bonita Unified.”

The Adult Transition Program aims to help students with disabilities develop a number of life and work skills in order to lead fully functional, independent lives and be a part of the community. The program has helped students like Dillon, who works at a local bookstore, to find jobs in the community.



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PREPARING EVERY STUDENT TO LIVE THEIR PURPOSE

Oak Mesa Elementary Earns Fourth California Distinguished School Award

Oak Mesa Elementary School has been named a 2023 California Distinguished School by the California Department of Education, celebrating the school’s excellence in closing the achievement gap and achieving exceptional student performance.

Oak Mesa’s comprehensive approach to fostering academic achievement is supported by a highly collaborative team of teachers and staff, whose mission is to fully understand their students and identify their strengths and opportunities for growth.

Reading intervention begins as early

as kindergarten to ensure every Oak Mesa student has the tools to succeed, regardless of age. Small group instruction has also supported academic growth in math, particularly in grades two through five. Fourth- and fifth-grade students have been sorted into small groups, allowing teachers to provide instruction that is appropriate to each group’s needs. Those groups can change throughout the trimester, ensuring instruction remains equitable.

In 2022-23, the achievement gap in math between students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and those who are not – particularly in

grades two through four – has dropped from 25% at the beginning of the school year to approximately 10% at the end of the first trimester.

Using the District’s research-based reading program – which aims to ensure grade-level reading by third grade – Oak Mesa Elementary also provides robust English language arts” instruction that includes the use of the Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonetics and Sight Words (SIPPS), which bolsters phonetic skills for new and struggling students in grades K-2.



OAK MESA PERFORMANCE ON 2021-22 STATE ASSESSMENTS

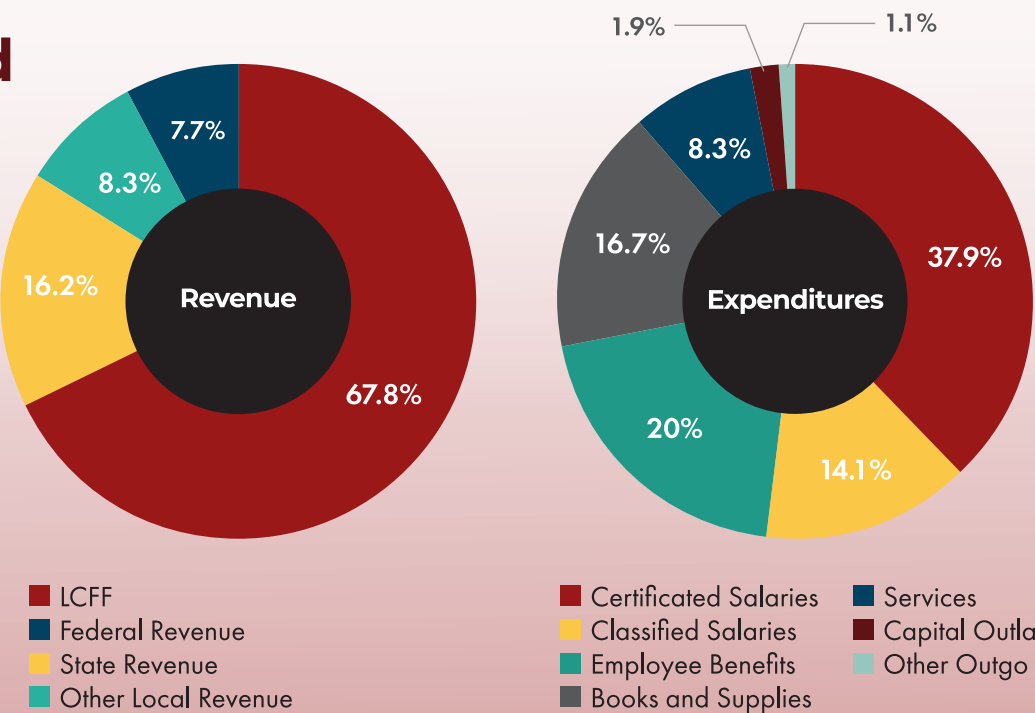


OAK MESA CALIFORNIA DISTINGUISHED SCHOOL RECOGNITIONS



2022-23 General Fund Budget

Bonita Unified School District approaches its budget with a student-first mindset, balanced with responsible financial stewardship. These practices have enabled the District to maintain a strong budget, even amid economic uncertainties, and continue to meet student needs. Bonita Unified’s primary source of revenue is the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), provided by the state.







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## BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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