



Bellflower Unified School District

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Aug. 24, 2017

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Bellflower Unified Expands Dual-Language Immersion Program to 2nd Site, Adds 4th grade

BELLFLOWER – Bellflower Unified's dual-language immersion program is adding fourth-grade instruction at its home campus this fall as well as adding a new kindergarten class at a second school in the District.

Classes begin on Monday, Aug. 28.

The expansions are a recognition of surging parent interest in Spanish-English dual-immersion instruction. In March, Bellflower Unified families lined up around the Intensive Learning Center (ILC) up at 2 a.m. to register students. The school, which launched the program five years ago, filled all 72 kindergarten spaces in just a day and a half.

The second location, at Washington Elementary School, quickly filled its single kindergarten class and started a waiting list.

"It's really wonderful we expanded," ILC Principal Dr. Michael Remland said. "We had been offering two classes at each grade level, but parent interest has been so strong, we added a third kindergarten class in 2016-17 and a third first-grade class this year."

At ILC, the dual-language program now accounts for nearly half of all students. Equal numbers of dual-immersion and English instruction classrooms are offered in kindergarten through fourth grade. When fifth and sixth grades are added, it will be fully incorporated across the campus

Washington Elementary's program starts with 24 students in kindergarten.

"We are working closely with our colleagues at the ILC to ensure we maintain the same rigorous academic standards as we expand the program," Washington Principal Dr. Angelica Montelongo said.

MORE

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Bellflower Unified School District provides a pathway for all students to attain the expertise and develop skills of academic excellence that will empower them to become lifelong active learners, demonstrate respect for themselves and others in a dynamic, diverse and global society, become responsible, informed, productive, independent and contributing citizens, and perform successfully in their chosen field and in society.



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Both campuses also offer dual-language instruction for preschool students. Launched in 2016-17, the preschool program helped the District gauge parent interest before it offered elementary instruction at Washington.

"Our dual-language program's growth is a strong recognition of the value of bilingualism/biliteracy in our increasingly global community and marketplace," Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs said. "Not only does it better prepare students for the range of opportunities they will face later in life, but studies also show that dual-language instruction helps improve student performance during school."

In fact, reports cited by the California School Boards Association indicate that dual-immersion programs can help boost student performance over peers in single-language classes and counter the challenges faced by economically disadvantaged students. Such programs are on the rise across the state in the aftermath of passage of Prop. 58 in 2016. The proposition eliminated barriers to instruction in non-English languages in recognition of the value of a bilingual community.

Bellflower Unified's program splits instruction between English and Spanish, starting with 90 percent Spanish and 10 percent English, and adjusting each year until instruction is balanced between the languages. Classes include a mix of native English and Spanish speakers who help each other with mastery of their new languages. Bellflower Unified recognizes dual-immersion students' achievements with a special recognition ceremony and Path to Biliteracy Awards at the end of each school year.

Four teachers will join the dual-language program this fall:

- **Gabriela Calderon, ILC, second grade:** Calderon taught at a Los Angeles charter school and brings 10 years of experience in bilingual programs. She has also taught special education and several-grade levels.
- **Claudio Ribas, ILC, fourth grade:** Ribas, who worked at Lenox School District, brings 24 years of dual-language experience to the ILC.
- **Anya Bobadilla, ILC, fourth grade:** Bobadilla brings seven years of experience in dual-language instruction from Glendale Unified.
- **Ana Fletes, Washington, kindergarten:** Fletes has four years of experience as a teacher. This is her second year with Bellflower Unified and her first year as a dual-immersion teacher.

PHOTO

BUSD_IMMERSION_1: Bellflower Unified added four new teachers to its expanding dual-language immersion program this fall: (l-r) Claudio Ribas, Ana Fletes, Gabriela Calderon and Anya Bobadilla.

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