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Bonita Unified's Ramona Middle School Named 2024 California Distinguished School for Academic Excellence

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Ramona Middle School has been honored as a 2024 Distinguished School by the California Department of Education (CDE), celebrating its exceptional academic performance and efforts to foster a supportive and welcoming learning environment.

Ramona is among 293 middle schools and high schools honored by the CDE this year, marking its first California Distinguished School recognition since 1996. Schools were selected by analyzing data from the 2022-23 school year reported through the 2023 California School Dashboard, including state assessment results, chronic absenteeism, suspension rates, and socioeconomic data.

“This Distinguished School honor is a testament to the hard work of our students, staff, and families,” Ramona Middle School Principal James Ellis said. “While this award is a result of the outstanding academic scores of our students, I also want to express how proud I am of our students outside the classroom, where they excel in athletics, activities, and the arts. Ramona is truly a place for students to live their purpose in all aspects of their lives, and I am proud to work alongside an outstanding team of educators and families that come together in service to our students.”

According to the Dashboard, Ramona Middle School achieved remarkable academic growth on state assessments in 2023, earning a 10.5-point increase from its 2022 indicators in English language arts (ELA) and a 9.1-point increase in math. The number of English learners making progress toward English language proficiency also increased 12.2 percent.

Based on the 2023 state assessment results, Ramona Middle School placed in the top 10% in ELA scores of all middle/intermediate schools in the state; in mathematics, the school placed in the top 14%.

Ramona's academic growth is supported by a robust instructional program that includes high school level courses in mathematics while also providing intervention and special education classes in ELA, math, and science for students that need additional support. Ramona also offers tutoring before school, during lunch, and after school where students can drop in for help. The instructional staff regularly reviews student achievement data to celebrate excellence and to connect students with needs to the appropriate intervention that will lead to greater academic success.

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Ramona Middle School's schoolwide approach to creating a supportive campus culture is bolstered by its Viking PRIDE motto, which aims to instill in its students the values of personal responsibility, respect, integrity, drive, and empathy.

This practice is embodied in the school's co-curricular offerings, including the Where Everybody Belongs (WEB) program, which empowers eighth-grade students to serve as peer mentors to sixth-graders and ease the transition from elementary school to middle school.

WEB mentors are paired up at the beginning of the school year and are assigned a group of 10 to 12 sixth-grade students. The mentors remain with their students from orientation until the end of the year, dispensing advice and finding ways to engage them, whether it be through dances, movie nights or lunchtime activities.

Ramona's Associated Student Body (ASB) – the student government program on campus – provides a variety of activities to enrich campus life and to celebrate student success. ASB hosts rallies and dress-up days to foster school spirit, honoring teachers and staff on their birthdays and holidays, and planning dances and events to strengthen students' connection to campus.

ASB also regularly celebrates students for demonstrating their Viking PRIDE, hosting Student of the Month lunches as a reward for those who have been "caught" exemplifying these traits, as well as honoring students who demonstrate excellence in the academics, athletics, and arts.

Ramona Middle School students also benefit from a variety of co-curricular offerings, including choir, band, drama, yearbook and technology electives, more than 25 lunch social clubs, and basketball, cross country, flag football, volleyball, and track and field.

"At Bonita Unified School District, our mission to prepare every student to live their purpose is guided by our core values of equity, mastery and a focus on results," Bonita Unified Superintendent Matt Wien said. "Ramona Middle School's designation as a 2024 California Distinguished School exemplifies how our team of dedicated teachers, staff and administrators – guided by these core values – can make a positive impact on our students' futures. Congratulations to the entire Ramona Middle School community on this well-deserved recognition."

PHOTO:

BUSD_RAMONA_DISTINGUISHED: Ramona Middle School students reconnect with their peers on the first day of school. Ramona's high academic achievement and efforts to create a supportive campus culture have earned the school recognition as a 2024 California Distinguished School.

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