



Bellflower Unified School District

Media Release

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Bellflower Unified Suspensions Plummet after District Implements New Discipline System

BELLFLOWER – Bellflower Unified reduced suspension days by 85 percent in just one year – plunging from 3,245 to 483 – after fully implementing a new discipline system that emphasizes rewards for positive behavior and guides students toward correcting disruptive habits.

In addition to the drop in overall suspension days in 2015-16, schools also slashed in-school suspensions by 75 percent, going from 248 to 64, as educators tackled new approaches to correcting discipline.

School officials credit the drop to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a discipline system now in play at districts across the nation. The system is rolled out over three years to ensure educators at every level are comfortable with the changing philosophy. 2015-16 was the third year of the Bellflower Unified rollout and the first year of full implementation.

The result: Rising attendance, improved school climates and a stronger focus by students on academics, which in turn leads to stronger outcomes.

“This kind of a result is a real testament to how committed our teachers and school administrators are to following the precepts of PBIS,” Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs said. “This is a massive change in how we operate, and can only result from a lot of hard work and dedication.”

Bellflower leaders say the effort benefited from two aspects of the District’s approach. First, PBIS was not implemented from the top down. Teams of teachers representing every grade at each school mapped which behaviors would merit office referrals, in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions, and which ones could be handled with counseling or other approaches.

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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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The unified approach ensured the program was applied consistently and in keeping with the discipline that teachers require in their classrooms for all students to succeed.

The second factor was the innovative move to add elementary school counselors in 2015-16. Counselors have provided students with tools for dealing with anger, conflict and other social challenges that can lead to behavioral issues. Individual and group counseling give the students a chance to speak about those issues.

Elements of the PBIS system permeate Bellflower Unified schools. At each campus, slogans based on school mascots help remind children of their responsibility to themselves, to their classmates and to show pride in their campus.

"It's not just how you behave the classroom," said Tracy McSparren, assistant superintendent, special education and student support. "In fact, sharing expectations for behavior across the campus -- in the hallways, at recess, on the playground and in the cafeteria -- has been a major factor in reducing our suspension numbers."

For example, at the Intensive Learning Center, where the mascot is the Eagles, students are constantly reminded to SOAR -- Show kindness, Own your behavior, Act responsibly, Ready to learn. The slogan even adorns basketball backboards -- an idea put forward by the students. Students caught SOARING receive a GOTCHA, or entry into a drawing for prizes.

At Bellflower Middle and High School, where the mascot is the Buccaneers, students memorize the message behind their motto of BUC PRIDE during homeroom at the start of the year -- Positivity Respect Integrity Dedication Excellence.

McSparren said the District continues to monitor and refine its discipline strategies, relying on feedback from teachers and school staff about the effectiveness of different discipline interventions. The District is also exploring a new aspect of discipline called restorative justice, which asks students to take responsibility for behaviors, such as apologizing to classmates for disrupting a lesson.

PHOTOS

BUSD_PBIS_1, 2: Students at Bellflower Unified's Intensive Learning Center suggested the school emblazon basketball backboards with the school's SOAR motto, which reminds them to Show kindness, Own your behavior, Act responsibly and be Ready to learn.

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