

# Bonita Unified

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

115 W. Allen Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773 ★ (909) 971-8200 ★ [do.bonita.k12.ca.us/](http://do.bonita.k12.ca.us/)

### NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## Bonita Unified Elementary Students Explore Learning Differences, Inclusion During Ability Fair

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE** - Grace Miller Elementary School students donned safari hats and embarked on an exploration of inclusivity during the school's Ability Fair on April 28, which immersed students in fun-filled demonstrations of the resources and accommodations that can help their peers with special needs or different learning abilities succeed in the classroom.

Students from transitional kindergarten to fifth grade rotated through a variety of stations and engaged in hands-on activities and games – from creating a visual schedule of their school day to practicing augmentative and alternative communication and requesting a treat using only a communication board – that demonstrated what it means to provide an equitable and accessible education.

“People know what equity is in theory, but may not know what it actually looks like, so we set out to provide a demonstration of how equity can be put into practice in any classroom,” Grace Miller school psychologist Keri Hadjis said. “There are many general education students on this campus who learn differently and can benefit from some of these practices as well, and it was exciting to see them understand and embrace what they learned.”

Special education teachers and staff taught students how to write their name in braille, make visually stimulating sensory bottles, communicate in sign language, identify and discuss their feelings using cards and more. Students also tested different forms of flexible seating and learned about the benefits of each.

“The most interesting thing I learned is that equal does not always mean fair, and that it's okay if some people might need more help or different kinds of help,” Grace Miller Elementary third-grader Sophia Bednarczyk said. “I really liked making the communication board and I really want to learn sign language now.”

Inclusive learning is embraced at Grace Miller Elementary School, which is one of two campuses to house the District's BLAST preschool program. BLAST, which stands for "Building Lifelong Academic Skills Together," serves both children who are typical learners and children with special needs within the same classroom. Many of the accommodations demonstrated at the Ability Fair are utilized in the BLAST classrooms, as well as throughout campus for students with special needs.

The goal, Grace Miller principal Leslie Sandoval said, is for students and staff across the campus to embrace inclusive practices and ensure that any student who has specific learning needs receives the support they need to succeed.

**MORE**

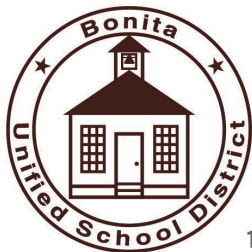


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“Here at Grace Miller, we have seen that students thrive when we listen to their needs and provide them with intervention and support – especially when we begin addressing those needs at an early age,” Sandoval said. “The other benefit to embracing inclusion on this campus is that it teaches students to be kind, accepting and encouraging to one another, regardless of their differences.”

#### PHOTOS:

**BUSD\_ABILITYFAIR1:** (From left to right) Grace Miller Elementary students Jude Robles, Liam Sov and Benjamin Gatti-Orosco eagerly try to match cards during a feelings-themed memory card game during the school’s Ability Fair on April 28. Once students matched two of the same cards, they were asked to describe the feeling listed on the card and provide examples of the feeling.

**BUSD\_ABILITYFAIR2:** Grace Miller Elementary Occupational Therapist Pauline David demonstrates the purposes and benefits of flexible seating to first-grader Levi Garay during the Ability Fair.

**BUSD\_ABILITYFAIR3:** Grace Miller Elementary first-grader Penelope Briones displays the communication board she created to nonverbally communicate with staff during the school’s Ability Fair on April 28.

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