



Bonita Unified

SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Lauren Creiman

(909) 833-9853

Bonita Unified's BLAST Preschool Program Recognized by CalECSE for Inclusive Practices

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – 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 (SELPAs), 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.

"Inclusive practices are important in education because all students learn differently," said Taylor Smith, who serves as Bonita Unified's program specialist for elementary and preschool programs and as a CalECSE exemplar co-lead for BLAST. "In BLAST, students are all receiving the same instruction and learning alongside each other and from each other – they just happen to do so with the use of accommodations, modifications or any specific strategies they need to learn successfully. I'm very proud of what our teachers and staff are accomplishing through BLAST and I hope that their work inspires other school districts to adopt inclusive learning models."

Launched in 2015, BLAST serves both children who are typical learners and children with special needs. The program, offered at Grace Miller and Shull elementary schools, 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 Principal Leslie Sandoval said. "We have had students transition from an inclusive program to general education classes with the supports that they need, and it's wonderful to watch those students thrive, make great friendships and learn to their full potential."

PHOTO:

BUSD_BLAST: Students in the BLAST preschool program at Grace Miller Elementary work on puzzles together. BLAST serves typical learners and students with special needs in an inclusive environment.



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