



# Bellflower Unified School District

## Media Release

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## **Bellflower Unified Teddy Bear Picnics Draw Nearly 50 Children as District Launches Interactive Early Childhood Education Program**

**BELLFLOWER** – Nearly 50 children and their parents enjoyed Teddy Bear Picnics at two Bellflower Unified elementary schools on Thursday and Friday to launch an interactive learning program with language, literacy and school readiness classes designed to help children ages 0 to 5 prepare for school.

Bellflower Early Learning Link (BELL) will feature classes in music and motion, a story hour and hands-on crafts on Mondays and Wednesdays at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, 10027 Rose St., and on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Washington Elementary School, 9725 Jefferson St.

The District staged a Teddy Bear Picnic at each school to launch the program, drawing dozens of youngsters who engaged in crafts and played games as caregivers learned about the new offerings.

“Our goal is to support the families in our community with a resource that will enable their children to arrive at school ready to learn, whether they are entering our preschool, transitional kindergarten or kindergarten programs,” Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs said. “We recognize that parents are a child’s first and primary teachers, and we want to do everything we can to help them on their journeys.”

The BELL program runs from 8:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. and includes drop-in programs featuring dramatic play, dress-up centers, puzzles and one-on-one reading time. Parents or caregivers can attend an entire day’s program, or pick just the classes that appeal to them. Most sessions have a capacity of about 25 families.

“We are hoping to serve several hundred families in our community in this first year,” said Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Stacey Larson-Everson, who developed the program based on previous experiences with successful, research-based family engagement programs.

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## Standard of Excellence - Nothing Less

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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A side benefit of the program is that families will become acquainted with Bellflower Unified staff and schools, and learn about the District's many resources for helping students succeed, Everson said.

Bellflower Unified operates a highly successful preschool program for preparing children ages 3 and 4 for school. This year, the District shifted from the federal Head Start Program to a State Preschool Program, boosting enrollment capacity, adding afternoon sessions, expanding family eligibility and customizing curriculum to align more cohesively with TK/K-12 instruction.

As of September, enrollment has topped 260 students at six schools, including about 40 attending a new dual-language immersion preschool program. Available spaces are limited.

"It is critical for our children to form a strong foundation as they begin school," said Board of Education President Dr. Paul Helzer. "These days, we ask so much of our students from the very first day. Outreach programs like this one, along with our preschool and transitional kindergarten program, can help parents in their efforts to minimize challenges and ensure their children begin school on an even playing field."

For more information on the program, contact the Bellflower Unified Early Childhood Education Office at 9301 Flower St., or call 562-461-2227. Parents may also register at the two schools.

## PHOTOS

**091916\_BUSD\_PICNIC1:** A child creates a teddy craft as her caregiver watches during a Teddy Bear Picnic at Bellflower Unified's Thomas Jefferson Elementary School on Sept. 15. The event helped launch Bellflower Unified's new interactive learning initiative for children ages 0 to 5, to be held two days a week each at Jefferson and Washington elementary schools.

**091916\_BUSD\_PICNIC2:** A child and Bellflower Unified preschool teacher Rebecca Sanchez examine a teddy bear craft during a Teddy Bear Picnic at Washington Elementary School on Sept. 16. The event helped launch Bellflower Unified's new interactive learning initiative for children ages 0 to 5, to be held two days a week each at Washington and Jefferson elementary schools.

See more photos at [caschoolnews.net](http://caschoolnews.net).

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