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Baldwin Park Unified Wins Golden Bell for Healthy Eating Program

District fourth-graders tend community garden and prepare meals from their harvested crops

BALDWIN PARK – Baldwin Park Unified has received a 2017 Golden Bell Award from the California School Boards Association (CSBA) for hands-on lessons that teach students about horticulture and the importance of healthy eating.

District leaders learned of the award on Nov. 1, just days after a CSBA team inspected the Nutrition in the Garden program, a partnership among Baldwin Park Unified's Adult and Community Education program, Kaiser Permanente Baldwin Park Medical Center and the City of Baldwin Park.

"We cannot express how thrilled we are to receive this honor," Superintendent Dr. Froilan N. Mendoza said. "Our Nutrition in the Garden partnership is one in a series of outstanding programs that impart real-world experience and knowledge to our students."

Nutrition in the Garden is a food preparation and nutrition education program that gives students the opportunity to plant seeds and harvest produce at the Baldwin Park Community Garden, and then transform those ingredients into fruit- or vegetable-based recipes.

In the 2016-17 school year, 140 fourth-graders from Baldwin Park Unified elementary schools tended the garden throughout the year. In spring, they harvested greens, carrots and zucchini from the quarter acre property. Students also planted seeds in cups that they tended as home-garden projects, and studied physical science and life science topics in the context of the garden environment.

Gardening instructors taught students how to identify crops, the conditions they need to grow and when they are ready for picking. A food and nutrition teacher gave cooking demonstrations on healthy eating, portion size and the importance of using locally grown produce.

Program results show 99 percent of children made at least one recipe at home based on what they learned; 96 percent increased their intake of fruits and vegetables.

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"I've learned how everything works together – like how worms are important in different ways – and how we can use what we grow to make healthy snacks," Bursch Elementary School fourth-grader Anqi Guan said in spring 2016. "My favorite thing we've made so far is couscous with garden greens."

Baldwin Park Unified leaders will formally receive the award at a 5 p.m. Nov. 30 ceremony during CSBA's Annual Education Conference in San Diego.

PHOTOS

BPUSD_BELL_1: Baldwin Park Unified fourth-graders in the Nutrition in the Garden program display produce harvested at the Baldwin Park Community Garden on May 5. The yearlong healthy eating program is being honored with a Golden Bell from the California School Boards Association.

BPUSD_BELL_2: Fourth-graders from De Anza Elementary School listen to a talk about planting and tending fruits and vegetables on Oct. 27 as part of the District's Nutrition in the Garden program. The yearlong program teaches students about food preparation and healthy nutrition.

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