



Bellflower Unified School District

Media Release

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Bellflower Unified Elementary P.E. Teaches Life Skills, Frees Teachers for Collaboration

BELLFLOWER – As Physical Education teacher Maria Dolliver wends her way through flocks of fourth-graders, it's hard to say who is having more fun. Laughter bubbles from the groups as students develop dribbling and passing skills or test their knowledge in small games.

Everywhere they are, Dolliver is – dribbling a basketball up the lane to demonstrate technique, partnering on passes and calling out encouragement against the backdrop of a bouncy beat blasting from her portable P.A. system.

Welcome to elementary Physical Education in Bellflower Unified School District – 21st century style.

All 10 Bellflower elementary schools are in their second year of an expanded program in which students receive 210 minutes of P.E. instruction every 10 days – exceeding state requirements. The program serves two goals: It provides students with a balance of exercise, nutrition knowledge and life skills while creating time for classroom teacher collaboration.

Dolliver is one of five elementary P.E. instructors and 10 teacher assistants hired to coordinate the program through Bellflower's Local Control and Accountability Plan.

"I'm just kid at heart. It's just my character," Dolliver says. "Life should be fun, especially at their age. I work through the mindset of teaching by example. And I believe that if kids see their teachers having a good time, they are more apt to find learning to be fun, too."

Dolliver's approach blends with Bellflower Unified's application of the nationally recognized SPARK instructional technique, which focuses on ensuring students gain skills in open, non-competitive environments. The shift has been made possible through the state's new funding system, which gives districts more authority over what and how they teach.

MORE

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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"One of our community's priorities is to ensure our elementary students receive top-notch instruction in P.E., which is where many of us learn to be good sportsmen, to share, to resolve conflicts and to respect each other's differences, as well as to stay healthy and fit," Bellflower Unified Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs said.

Dolliver and her two assistants split students into three groups, following a SPARK guideline that emphasizes small-group instruction and ensuring students make the most of their playground time. The program includes traditional sports, such as the recent basketball drill, and non-traditional activities.

Dolliver brings first-hand knowledge of many of the activities to the table: a former gymnast, her sporting resume ranges from dancing to diving, boxing to triathlon, kayaking to yoga.

"The bottom line is I want them to feel good about moving their bodies," said Dolliver, who holds a Bachelor of Science in kinesiology from Biola University.

In comparison, many school districts require classroom teachers to squeeze in P.E. instruction around classroom lessons.

That's where Bellflower's program achieves its second major benefit.

Not only are teachers free from P.E. instruction duties, but the program creates twice-weekly, mid-day planning opportunities when instructors from each grade can collaborate on lesson plans and review student data together, strengthening and coordinating their approaches.

Dr. Jacobs said the switch has been especially helpful as teachers integrate the new California Standards and new digital tools into their instruction models.

"The result," said Jacobs, "is energized students and teachers ready to tackle new challenges together."

Captions:

BUSD_PE_1: P.E. teacher Maria Dolliver reviews skills with Woodruff Elementary School fourth-graders. Dolliver is one of five new P.E. teachers and 10 teacher assistants hired to run the District's expanded elementary P.E. program.

BUSD_PE_2: Woodruff Elementary fourth-graders work on their basketball handling skills during a recent dribbling exercise. Bellflower Unified School District has launched an expanded elementary P.E. program using a nationally recognized curriculum that emphasizes skill development over competition.

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