



Bellflower Unified School District

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Jan. 22, 2015

CONTACT: Valerie Martinez, William Diepenbrock
909-445-1001

Bellflower Unified's Smaller Classes Help Intensify Instruction

LAKEWOOD – Linda Arndt gently draws her second-graders into the thrilling world of camping with questions that draw forth excited ideas for what they pack for an outing: food, blankets, a flashlight, a pillow.

Then, with the students firmly committed to the idea, together they read “Henry and Mudge and the Starry Night,” the 17th book in the popular beginning reader series.

After 30 years as a teacher, Arndt has a steady hand in managing her classroom at the Intensive Learning Center in Lakewood. But this year, she’s finding more time for her personal touch thanks to Bellflower Unified School District’s adoption of a new class-size reduction policy.

The policy dropped class sizes to 24 students in kindergarten through third grade this fall – a reduction of about eight students per class – thanks to funding provided by the state’s Local Control Funding Formula and the District’s focus on student needs through its Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

“It’s just excellent,” said Arndt, who has taught at Bellflower schools for her entire career. “It allows us to provide them with more challenging and interesting activities. You can get to know the children better, shape your teaching to their needs more precisely. And, there’s less stress in the classroom; the children are calmer.”

Arndt, for example, has the time to let an advanced reader take the lead in reading one part of the camping story, to encourage others to echo her reading aloud to strengthen their skills and even to gently guide a distracted child into regaining focus.

[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.



Bellflower Unified School District

In all, Bellflower Unified hired 38 new teachers to help reduce class sizes in its K-3 classrooms at a cost of about \$2.85 million. The 24:1 ratio brings with it a 10.4 percent bump in per student funding under the LCFF system.

Schools were given eight years to meet the target; instead, Bellflower acted swiftly to make the change in the first year of its inaugural LCAP.

"This is an important priority for the District and our parents, one we know will have a positive impact on instruction – especially now that we've rolled out instruction based on the California Common Core Standards," said Dr. Brian Jacobs, Bellflower Unified Superintendent.

California previously urged class-size reduction in the mid-1990s, offering extra money to schools that dropped to 20:1 ratios in K-3 classes. But most districts were forced to boost class sizes in recent years to cope with state funding shortfalls.

"With bigger classes, there is less one-on-one time with students," Arndt said. "Problems with social behaviors become more significant; in smaller groups, those are more easily handled."

The latest reduction effort helps leverage the benefits of other educational policy changes. Studies of class-size reduction efforts indicate they are most effective when coupled with strong teaching and educational approaches that take full advantage of the reduced numbers.

At Bellflower Unified, 99 percent of students are taught by highly qualified teachers. And, over the last several years, the District began implementing the California Common Core Standards – guidelines that emphasize critical thinking, collaboration and project-oriented instruction. Full implementation of new California Common Core math standards – which required an extensive retooling grade by grade – took place this fall.

"Smaller class sizes are an important element in our plan to continually improve the educational experience for all of our students," said Jerry Cleveland, president of the Bellflower Unified Board of Education. "By adopting the changes now, instead of waiting eight years, we'll see much greater benefits from our challenging instructional program implemented under the guidance of Dr. Jacobs."

Arndt said the smaller class sizes have helped her and her colleagues to intensify instruction in all programs, offer individual guidance in writing classes and engage in frequent hands-on activities for students in the restructured math classes.

"It's refreshing to be able give each child so much attention with these smaller class sizes," Arndt said.

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.



Bellflower Unified School District

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

BUSD Class_Size_Reduction1: Second-graders in Linda Arndt's class at the Bellflower Unified School District's Intensive Learning Center enjoy the advantages of a smaller class size in 2014-15, after a major investment by the district reduced K-3 classes to 24 students.

BUSD Class_Size_Reduction2: Linda Arndt, a 30-year teacher with Bellflower Unified, said the district's commitment to reducing K-3 class sizes allows her to give each student more one-on-one time.

BUSD Class_Size_Reduction3: Second-graders in Linda Arndt's class at the Bellflower Unified School District's Intensive Learning Center participate in a reading lesson in January 2015.

###

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.