



# Bellflower Unified School District

## Media Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## Ramona Elementary School Students Dig Outdoor Classroom

**BELLFLOWER** – An innovative gardening program at Ramona Elementary is planting the seeds for hands-on learning about environmental science and nutrition thanks to a new community partnership that school leaders are seeking to fund for a second year.

The program was launched in fall with the creation of a garden with redwood benches and a vegetable-washing sink funded by \$2,800 in donations. The school also obtained a \$6,900 start-up grant from Kaiser Permanente for a “Garden Ranger” supplied through Enrich LA, a community wellness nonprofit that builds edible gardens at area schools.

Every Tuesday, Garden Ranger Blanca Diaz visits Ramona, teaching students in different grades how to plant seeds and what they need to grow. Each classroom will visit the garden five times this year.

“The kids are thrilled,” Diaz said. “We just had a big harvest of green onions and carrots. The kids got to see how real carrots look, that they come in all colors and sometimes wrap around each other if they’re planted too close together. And, of course they got to taste them.”

Ramona Principal Bonnie Carter said the garden is part of a focus on nutrition and healthy eating that, this year, is aimed at teaching basic aspects of gardening. Starting next year, lessons will be connected to grade-level science standards.

“The greatest benefit for students is the opportunity to be outside experiencing what they’re learning about in the classroom,” Carter said. “That hands-on experience helps them connect what they’re learning here to their lives outside of school.”

**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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First-grader Eric Barker and second-grader Frida Leal say they enjoy exploring the garden.

“I learned that worms help the plants grow because they make compost,” Barker said.

“I like visiting the garden to see the different vegetables and because we get to try them,” added Leal. “I learned that some vegetables grow underground and some grow on a vine. I don’t have a garden at home so I enjoy the school garden.”

Faith Bletterman, who helped lead the fund-raising and volunteer effort that launched the garden, said it’s powerful to see the children learn from the garden.

“I think it’s awesome to see the students’ eyes light up when they understand that the healthy foods we eat actually grow in a garden – something they don’t get to experience in this area,” Bletterman said.

Now school officials are beginning to focus on raising funds to ensure they keep the garden ranger program for a second year. The target for the year is \$2,500 – with \$1,250 already collected through monthly “Buck a T” special dress days. A read-a-thon is planned for March. Donations can be made to the Ramona Garden Project via the school office, (562) 804-6532.

## PHOTO CAPTION:

**GARDEN 1:** Students at Ramona Elementary examine plants during a recent visit to the school's new garden with Garden Ranger Blanca Diaz.

**GARDEN 2:** Constructed through community donations, Ramona Elementary's new garden features edible plants as a tool for connecting science to real life.

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