

# UPDATE – JUNE 2016

## Superintendent's Message

### Amongst Greatness

The quality of the educational program, culture and environment provided to students is incumbent upon the quality of work provided by the adults working directly and indirectly with the students.

One of the great joys and tremendous privileges as Superintendent is the opportunity to visit classrooms and campuses at each of the schools throughout the Bonita Unified School District and to observe the exemplary work being performed. Each year, particular staff members are recognized as Classified and Certificated Employees of the Year. This year's selections are an outstanding group who were selected amongst greatness. Congratulations to each of the teachers and staff members honored.

Gary Rapkin, Ph.D.  
Interim Superintendent

### Site Employees of the Year

Each of the following employees were selected by their peers as either the Certificated or Classified Employee of the Year at their school site and were eligible to be selected as a District Employee of the Year.

#### **Certificated (Teachers)**

Elisabeth Reyes – Allen Avenue Elementary  
Ronalea Freeth – Ekstrand Elementary  
Jennifer McCool – Gladstone Elementary  
Belinda Rodriguez – La Verne Heights Elementary  
Maria Brock – Grace Miller Elementary  
Melissa Misawa – Roynon Elementary  
Nichole Hotaling – Shull Elementary  
Susan Garcia – Oak Mesa Elementary  
Peri Berkler – Ramona Middle School  
Alecia McGill – Lone Hill Middle School  
Deanna Bowman – Bonita High School  
Lisa Carson – San Dimas High School  
Julie McKissick – Chaparral/Vista High School

#### **Classified (Administrative & Support Staff)**

Krista Anderson – Allen Avenue Elementary  
Marcia Rodgers – Ekstrand Elementary  
Cristen Venzor – Gladstone Elementary  
Temo Escobar – La Verne Heights Elementary  
Youngran Park – Grace Miller Elementary  
Liliana Garcia – Roynon Elementary

Jackie Evans-Lampa – Shull Elementary  
Lisa Boyd – Oak Mesa Elementary  
Michelle Stepanian – Ramona Middle School  
Rieta Turner – Lone Hill Middle School  
Nancy Jensen – Bonita High School  
Michele McNeal – San Dimas High School  
Gina Torres – Chaparral/Vista High School  
Cathy Sigsworth – Central Kitchen  
Geoff Heiden – Maintenance & Operations  
Denise Martinez -- Transportation

## **Nominating committees cited the following achievements in their selection of the District Employees of the Year:**

### **District Certificated Employee of the Year: Lisa Carson**

As a math and ASB teacher at San Dimas High School, Carson is recognized for her effectiveness in the classroom and as an internal and external ambassador for the school. She regularly takes time to check for understanding and adjust her lesson in response to student needs. She has been instrumental in the application of technology in the classroom and selecting new curriculum. As ASB Director, Carson oversees a million-dollar budget and works to enhance school spirit, which is higher than ever. She also coordinates the Homecoming Parade with the City of San Dimas.

### **District Classified Employee of the Year: Gina Torres**

Chaparral and Vista High School's Campus Supervisor Gina Torres is responsible for safety on campus, which she achieves through developing trusting relationships with the students and staff. She welcomes students by name and shows genuine concern each day. She is able to calm students who are agitated and diffuse tense situations. One student wrote, "Gina is like a mother to us and that is something that a lot of us cherish because a lot of us don't have the mothers that we should, and she is just right to make us feel accepted and loved."

### **District Management Employee of the Year: Anne Neal**

Ramona Middle School Principal Anne Neal is known for her warm and positive relationships with students, faculty, and staff. Her leadership is focused on building capacity in others and empowering them to soar. She has trained five assistant principals for their promotion to principal—three are current BUSD principals. Other principals in the District consider her to be a good source for guidance and wisdom. An active member of the Fairplex La Verne Community, Neal is in her second year as the Chairperson of the committee. She has a solid reputation throughout the community and has networked to provide support for the school.

## **Retiring District Employees**

The District wishes to acknowledge the positive impact each of the following retiring individuals has had on students and staff during their service to Bonita Unified.

### **Certificated Retirees (Teachers)**

Irene Burton  
Terry Casey  
Lauren Clark  
Susan Johnson  
Jean Keys  
Raoul (Coby) Martinez  
Martha Peterson  
Sarah Story  
Marilyn Williams

### **Classified Retirees (Administrative & Support Staff)**

Gina Anderson  
Maria Carrera  
Patsy Chism  
Pam Cook  
Della Harrison  
Susan Nickens  
Carole Paul  
Linda Portis  
Ronda Schneider  
Ellen Serjeant  
Rae Jean Snyder  
Russell Stephens  
Karyn Tennyson  
Tracy Walsh

## **Bonita Unified Board Approves Jason Coss as New Lone Hill Middle School Principal**

On May 4, 2016, the Board of Education at Bonita Unified School District Approved Jason Coss as the new principal for Lone Hill Middle School in San Dimas, CA.

“We believe Jason will bring his many strengths to Lone Hill, just as he has been tremendous at Oak Mesa in support of our students, staff, and parents,” Interim Superintendent Dr. Gary Rapkin said.

Lone Hill Middle School has a long history with thriving music programs, digital media arts programs, talented teaching staff, and competitive math and science field day teams.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to be joining a school with such a rich tradition and that has produced so many outstanding students,” Coss said. “I look forward to fostering relationships and working with the students, staff and the community to continue to provide the students entrusted in our care with a world-class educational experience.”

Coss brings significant leadership experience to Lone Hill. In addition to two years as principal at Oak Mesa, he was an Assistant Principal in the Chino Valley Unified School District. Coss has served as a Special Education coordinator, GATE Coordinator, English Language Learner coordinator, and as a teacher in the Bonita Unified School District for six years. Prior to his career in education, Coss was a Deputy Sheriff with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

## **Student Art Competition Winners Announced**

### **Congressional Art Contest Winners**

At a District Board meeting in May, high school students were congratulated for participating in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District Art Competition. Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano sponsored the event, which included many entries from high schools throughout the 32<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District. Two BUSD students placed in the competition:

Top 3 Finalist: Emily Farag, “Illumination,” grade 12, San Dimas High School

Honorable Mention: Victor E. Soto, “Cat Got Your Tongue,” grade12, Bonita High School

### **Western Art Show Results**

Students from Bonita and San Dimas High Schools took part in the Western Art Competition sponsored by the San Dimas Festival of Arts. Interpreting their views of “California Images & History,” the students created original paintings and ceramic pieces. Board of Education President Diane Koach coordinated the student program for the competition.

### **Best of Show Artist**

Michelle Yamamori, Bonita High School

### **Most Promising Artist**

Tommy Anderson, Bonita High School

### **Division 1: Two Dimensional**

First: Sabrina Finn, Bonita High School

Second: Regina Whitfield, San Dimas High School

Third: Kristine Hall, Bonita High School

Honorable Mention: Danielle Johnson, Bonita High School

Honorable Mention: Liliana Rodriguez, Bonita High School

Honorable Mention: Margaret Bartlett, Bonita High School

Honorable Mention: Lexi Tang, Bonita High School  
Honorable Mention: Erin Armstrong, Bonita High School  
Honorable Mention: Alexis Moreno, Bonita High School

### **Division 2: Three Dimensional**

First: Manny Perez, Bonita High School  
Second: Kevin Nguyen, Bonita High School  
Third: Renee Hermoso, San Dimas High School  
Honorable Mention: Sydney Aguirre, Bonita High School  
Honorable Mention: Natalie Carter, Bonita High School

## **Schools in the Spotlight**

### ***La Verne Heights Elementary School***

#### **GATE at La Verne Heights**

The Gifted and Talented Education program at La Verne Heights Elementary School provided students with many engaging enrichment programs this year. In November, students toured the Raymond M. Alf Museum of Paleontology located on The Webb School's campus. During a guided tour, the students learned about Webb's school history along with the fossils in the museum. They watched a video that featured students on a paleontology dig discovering a fossil of a horse's skull. The students then roamed the museum to have hands-on experiences with fossils.

In December, GATE students participated in a Mad Science workshop called Radical Reactions where the students learned about chemical changes. This action-packed workshop explored the chemistry of everyday life. The students learned and applied the concepts, tools and techniques that real chemists use. They used these lab techniques and safety procedures throughout the workshop as they mixed crazy concoctions and chemical combinations.

In February, GATE students had a docent-guided tour of the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena where they learned about famous artists such as Picasso, Money, and Matisse. The museum has over 12,000 pieces of Asian, European and Modern-Contemporary art on display.

In April, students took a behind the scenes tour of Angel Stadium where the students were able to go onto the field, sit in the dugout, see the laundry facility where the jerseys are cleaned, get a tour of Gene Autry's private meeting room, see the indoor batting cages, and sit in a \$400,000 (per season) suite.

In May, a group called The Chameleons taught the students about silent theater or mime. The students learned how to move their body and tell a story without sounds. They acted out a scene where a mother caught her child sneaking into the kitchen in the middle of the night to get a scoop of ice cream. They learned how to mime a tug of war game, and they learned how to make sound effects to enhance a performance.



**Photo 1: GATE students get a behind the scenes tour of Angel Stadium.**

### **Golden Awards from the State and School Boards Association**

What a golden year it has been at La Verne Heights Elementary School. In December, the California School Boards Association announced La Verne Heights as a recipient of their 2015 Golden Bell Award. Then in April, the California Department of Education (CDE) named La Verne Heights as a 2016 California Gold Ribbon School. This is the highest honor a school can receive from the CDE.

In his press release, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson said Gold Ribbon Schools “shine as bright beacons for others, putting forth an exemplary effort to ensure that every student is ready for 21<sup>st</sup> century college and careers.”

The CDE’s selection process includes a validation of the school’s conditions of learning, pupil outcomes, and community engagement. School administration chose the Accelerated Reader: College Bound program as the focus area for their application. This program represents the staff’s priority to ensure all students, regardless of ethnicity or ability, are provided with equal access to CCSS aligned materials at their ability and interest levels, and that all students are actively progress monitored to ensure they are making at least one year’s growth each year.

Both awards are due to the outstanding effort and dedication of all of La Verne Heights' students, staff, and families. “Together, we have built a school where the preparation of our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is our top priority,” Principal Patrick McKee said. “We want our students to succeed for a lifetime, and we work diligently each day to ensure the proper foundation is set to ensure all children have access to their dreams.”

### ***Ramona Middle School***

In March, Ramona Middle School competed for the first time in the Bonita Unified Math Field Day. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade team won their division and advanced to the LA County Office of Education

competition in April. Competing against other schools, Ramona's team took gold in Conceptual Understanding and Problem Solving, silver in Procedural Skills, and placed in the Top 3 Schools for the County of Los Angeles.

Prior to Ramona's involvement, eight District elementary schools and Lone Hill Middle School competed annually. "For our first Math Field Day, we had a group of ambitious and dedicated kids with team spirit and passion for their school and the field of mathematics," Coach Dominique Betancourt said. "Their big thing was, we want to win for Ramona!"

Math teachers in all grades promoted Math Field Day, and team selection began with a recommendation from their current math teacher, complete with details on current grades, behavior, and enthusiasm towards mathematics. Based on the recommendation, students were invited to take part in two tests: a procedural/skill and a group/partner performance based activity.

Although mathematical understanding played an important role, the group dynamics and being part of a team were just as significant. Two of the competition's tasks are based on group efforts. In December, four competitors and one alternate were selected for each grade. Practices began in January with grade level skills as well as performance tasks in both group and partner settings.

The 2016 Ramona Math Field Day teams included:

6<sup>th</sup> grade: Akash Chauhan, Olivia Colasuonno, Mary Im, Jenna Moisio, and Fuad Safieh

7<sup>th</sup> grade: Anvinash Chauhan, Antonio Cosio, Aiden Leung, Jake Patterson, and Lois Um

8<sup>th</sup> grade: Camille Leung, Alex Patterson, Veronica Rodriguez, Nathan Wong, and Alexander Zhang.



**Photo 2: Congratulations to Ramona Middle School's first 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Field Day Team. Wins included gold and silver medals as well as being listed as a Top 3 School at the LA County Office of Education Math Field Day competition.**

## ***Oak Mesa Elementary School***

### **Noon League**

Oak Mesa's fourth and fifth graders enjoy participating in the school's Sports Noon League. The goal of the newly created noon league is to encourage students to play cooperatively, be active, make new friends, build strong bonds, learn responsibility, and have fun. Over 120 students recently participated in flag football. The season concluded with an exciting championship game between the Commandos and the Buccaneers. The Commandos narrowly defeated the Buccaneers 14-7 behind the outstanding play of season MVP, Justin Santiago.



**Photo 3: Justin Santiago took MVP in Oak Mesa's Sports Noon League.**

### **Academics**

Early reading intervention is a top priority at Oak Mesa Elementary. Two years ago Oak Mesa was fortunate to hire a part time intervention teacher. With the addition of an intervention teacher, the Oak Mesa staff deemed it essential to provide early reading intervention in kindergarten, first and second grade. Research has found that children who are reading below grade level in third grade rarely catch up in later grades. In fact, first grade reading skills have been shown to be a strong predictor of 11<sup>th</sup> grade reading levels. While children who are behind in third grade can catch up with intensive intervention, it takes significantly longer if remediation begins after second grade.

Because of these facts Oak Mesa is pleased to share our most recent STAR Reading assessment results:

- The average Grade Level Reading Equivalent for Kindergarten is 1.6 (first grade, sixth month)
- 97% of 1<sup>st</sup> graders are reading at or above grade level
- 95% of 2<sup>nd</sup> graders are reading at or above grade level

Oak Mesa's staff is committed to provide our students the right kind and quality of instruction delivered with the right level of intensity and duration to the right children at the right time.

### **Technology**

The second grade students have embraced technology through green screen video recording process. After researching information on an animal, each student wrote a report. They converted their written reports into persuasive commercials, recording in front of the iPad camera. After the recordings, they added backgrounds to their commercials via green screen technology. Some students chose an animal habitat while others chose a news studio. Students worked together to rehearse and record their commercials. Each student presented their commercials in a combined classroom video presented to parents and family.



**Photo 4: Second grader Camila Beltran reports in front of a green screen news desk on her favorite animal.**

### **Walk Through History Presentations**

This year fourth and fifth graders at Oak Mesa Elementary School participated in a Walk Through history presentation. This engaging and interactive educational presentation utilizes friendly competition and lively retelling of Common Core history curriculum. The presentations included “Walk Through California” for fourth grade, and “Walk through the American Revolution” for fifth grade.



**Photos 5 & 6: Fourth and fifth grade students at Oak Mesa walk through history of the American Revolution and the rich events that brought California to the Union.**