



BONITA UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

# 2023-24 Report to the Community

*Fostering Excellence,  
The Bonita Way*



## District Accolades

### California Distinguished Schools

**Model Continuation High School**  
2024

**National Blue Ribbon School**  
2022 and 2023

**Favorite School District**  
2023 SGV Readers Choice Awards

**Favorite High School, SDHS**  
2023 Inland Valley Readers  
Choice Awards

**Best School District**  
2022 SGV Readers Choice Awards

**Female Diversity Award**  
2022 AP Computer Science

**#1 in Reading Comprehension**  
California Reading Report Card,  
2021 and 2022

**5 Schools among the Top 13%**  
of California elementary schools,  
2022 Best K-8 Schools Rankings

**Both middle schools among the  
Top 16%** of California middle schools,  
2022 Best K-8 Schools Rankings

**Both comprehensive high  
schools among the Top 15%**  
of high schools nationwide,  
2024 Best High Schools Rankings

## Board of Education

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Chris Ann Horsley, Vice President

Derek Bahmanou, Clerk

Glenn Creiman, Member

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## Superintendent's Message

Dear Bonita Unified Community,

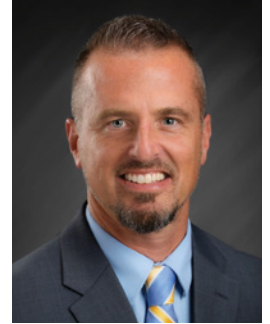
At Bonita Unified School District, we pride ourselves on the rich, deep-rooted tradition of academic and extracurricular success that has inspired thousands of students to develop a love of learning through athletics, arts, and activities.

Through our unparalleled commitment to fostering excellence and nurturing potential, known as "The Bonita Way," our District aims to prepare every student to live their purpose.

This year's Report to the Community highlights the impact of "The Bonita Way" – including the state accolades we have earned for our academic excellence; the innovative learning opportunities we provide for students; the talented students who exemplify the very best of Bonita Unified; and the team of dedicated employees who support them every step of the way.

I want to thank the Board of Education and our employees, families, volunteers, and community partners for believing in the mission of Bonita Unified School District and investing your time, trust, and efforts into the continued success of our students. By remaining committed to our core values of equity, mastery and a focus on results – and providing academic and co-curricular opportunities that instill deep knowledge, skill and confidence in our students – Bonita Unified will continue to empower today's learners to become the leaders and changemakers of tomorrow.

*Matt Wien*  
Superintendent



**Matt Wien**  
Superintendent



*Through our unparalleled commitment to fostering excellence and nurturing potential, known as "The Bonita Way," our District aims to prepare every student to live their purpose.*

– Matt Wien, Superintendent





## Bonita Unified Celebrates Record Gains in English and Math Scores

Bonita Unified School District students achieved record-setting scores on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), reflecting the District's success in overcoming the learning loss that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to spring 2023 CAASPP results – the most recent data available – 72% of Bonita Unified students met or exceeded standards in English language arts (ELA) – an all-time high for the District – and 58% met or exceeded standards in math, achieving the District's second-highest math scores of all time. The 2022–23 results also indicate a four-point growth in both ELA and math from the 2021–22 school year.

Bonita Unified's scores, which exceeded state averages by 25 percentage points in ELA and 23 percentage points in math, have maintained the District's place among the top 10 percent of unified school districts in California.

Anne Neal, Bonita Unified's Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, credits the District's continued focus

on student mastery of essential standards and its proven continuous improvement model – which were enhanced by differentiated intervention – for its success in getting students back on track following the pandemic.

The District supplemented its existing practices by:

- Hiring elementary-level reading and math teachers to provide extra instruction
- Increasing paraeducator support in classrooms to assist with academic intervention
- Enhancing summer school programs to provide comprehensive instruction at all academic levels
- Offering addition sections of intervention instruction at secondary schools

Prior to the pandemic, Bonita Unified's scores had improved 15 percentage points in both ELA and math over a five-year period – a trajectory of growth that the District will seek to continue in the coming years.

### Number of BUSD students who met or exceeded standards

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS



#### MATH



### BUSD Scores vs State Average

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS



#### MATH





# Chaparral-Vista High School: A 2024 Model Continuation School



Chaparral-Vista High School has once again been designated as a California Model Continuation High School by the California Department of Education, celebrating its efforts to support student success through exemplary instructional strategies, flexible scheduling, and guidance and counseling services.

Chaparral-Vista was first designated as a Model Continuation High School in 2021. The award is sponsored by the California Continuation Education Association

Plus (CCEA+), which advocates for the betterment of alternative education, promotes the development of quality schools, and supports professional development of instructors.

“This is a tremendous honor and reflects the hard work and dedication of our entire Chaparral-Vista team, which is focused on providing our students with a nurturing environment that will put them on the path toward graduation,” Chaparral-Vista principal Sean Casey said. “This wouldn’t be possible without passionate educators and students who realize the value of their education.”

CCEA+ representatives who visited Chaparral-Vista praised the school’s approach to socio-emotional learning through its Serenity spaces. Chaparral-Vista students who are feeling overwhelmed in class can request to go to a Serenity space, where they can speak with a mental health counselor or just take time to relax and regroup, before going back to class.

CCEA+ representatives also complimented the school’s culinary program, which served a pizza lunch, commending students on their organization and professionalism, as well as the program’s visual approach to teaching students to prepare a five-star meal.

## Senior Spotlight: San Dimas High School

San Dimas High School seniors Christina Jones and Ethan Fama are well-known by their peers, teachers, and staff throughout campus. In their four years as Saints, both Jones and Fama have deeply immersed themselves in all that the school has to offer, making friends, learning new skills, and carving out their own paths to success.

For Jones, her involvement in dance, track and field, choir, band, ProStart culinary classes, Science Olympiad, and volunteer-focused clubs helped her find community and purpose. At San Dimas, she discovered a passion for the arts, a knack for the sciences, and a future career path as a food critic – one aided by her experience at the National ProStart Invitational in 2023 and her scholarship to attend The Collins College of Hospitality Management at Cal Poly Pomona.

Fama found a passion for service, supported by four years in San Dimas High School’s Associated Student Body (ASB), and has represented SDHS as part of the California Association of Student Leaders. Fama’s experience in ASB also sparked an interest in photography, encouraging him to develop his skills and create a photography business while he works toward his goal of studying physics in college and pursuing a career in aerospace engineering.



To watch a video profile on Christina Jones and Ethan Fama, scan the QR code:





# BUSD Students Find Friendship Through Big Brothers Big Sisters Program

Bonita Unified elementary school students have discovered the joys of having a high school mentor and best buddy through a career technical education (CTE) partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters Los Angeles.

Launched during the 2023-24 school year, the partnership provides mentoring specialists to lead programs for Grace Miller Elementary and La Verne Heights Elementary students who desire afterschool companionship.

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) pairs older students, known as "Bigs," with younger students, known as "Littles." The Bigs consist of Bonita High School volunteer mentors who meet once a week at the elementary school campuses to spend time with their Littles.

"Big Brothers Big Sisters is an ideal program for students who might want a role model or who are the only child in their family," Grace Miller Elementary School counselor Ruby Olacio said. "The Littles are very grateful for this program, and enjoy making the connections with their Bigs. And the Bigs really love being here. It's important to have that one major connection in your life that will impact your confidence and social awareness."

One afternoon at Grace Miller, the one-hour afterschool session began with Bigs chatting with their Littles about school and home life, telling stories, and catching up. BBBS mentor specialist Maria Garcia then led them through an exercise about self-esteem and positivity.

After completing the exercise, Bigs and Littles went outside to toss flying discs, jump rope, play tag and engage in a spirited game of Red Light, Green Light. Other BBBS activities include playing board games, making slime, and working on homework.

Grace Miller fifth-grader Junia Wolford joined the program because she liked the idea of having an older sister. Wolford, whose favorite subject is English, said she gives the BBBS program two thumbs up.

"It's really fun to be in Big Brothers Big Sisters. There are so many fun activities, and having someone older than you to share in the fun makes it even better," Wolford said. "In my family, I'm the older sister. My big sister at school is teaching me things I can pass on to my younger sister."

Bonita High School sophomore Meredith Macasa joined the program because she is interested in working with younger students. Macasa is considering a career in the medical field.

"Big Brothers Big Sisters is a really fun and rewarding experience," Macasa said. "My Little is really shy, and it's a great feeling to be able to help her become more social with her peers. It can get very chaotic, but it's both educational and a really good time."





# Meet the Brandlers: Award-Winning ProStart Culinary Arts Teachers



When Bonita High School culinary arts students traveled to Baltimore to represent California at the 2024 National ProStart Invitational in April, it marked the second consecutive year that a Bonita Unified team competed in the prestigious event, following San Dimas High School's appearance in 2023, a stunning achievement for the District's Pro-Start culinary pathway program.

The unbelievable run by Bonita Unified culinary students is anchored by the extraordinary husband-

and-wife team of Nick and Laurie Brandler, who teach the ProStart program at San Dimas and Bonita high schools, respectively.

The Brandlers' success story is rooted in family. After meeting while working at a local restaurant, Nick and Laurie have found a way to combine their love for the restaurant and hospitality industries with their passion for teaching a new generation of chefs and administrators, providing them with a stable home life to raise their

family without enduring the long hours of working in a kitchen.

Laurie Brandler was a student at the University of La Verne, pursuing a degree in psychology and working various restaurant jobs to pay the bills. Eventually, the allure of working in a fast-paced, vibrant environment led Laurie to consider restaurant work full-time, especially after meeting Nick while working at the former Harvard Square in Claremont.

Nick was determined to have a career in the restaurant industry



and worked every possible job, from front-of-the-house to back-of-the-house. Nick was on the precipice of gaining his dream job as a general manager, when fate, in the form of family, intervened.

While Laurie loved working in restaurants, when it came time to raise a family, she said she realized that the long hours and inflexible scheduling of restaurant life would prove to be too hectic and began looking for alternatives.

Inspired by her father, a regional occupational program and adult education teacher, Laurie started at the District in 2006, splitting her time between Bonita and Chaparral-Vista high schools. Laurie taught Hospitality and ProStart curriculum at Bonita, going beyond traditional home economics-style lessons to offer instruction that could lead to careers in the restaurant and hospitality industries.

In 2015, Nick was hired to teach at San Dimas and Chaparral-Vista, while at the same time working as an assistant general manager at a local restaurant. When the year was over, Nick was offered a full-time position at San Dimas High and was faced with a choice: to continue working long hours into the early morning, or take a job that provided hours more amenable to raising a family. Nick committed to San Dimas High, and the rest is history.

The Brandlers' ProStart legacy began when they partnered with the California Restaurant Foundation (CRF), which provided resources for their classroom, connected them with industry professionals, and introduced them to the ProStart Cup. They immediately had an impact – first in local and regional competitions, then in the California ProStart Cup, where they built Bonita Unified into a powerhouse.

The key to the Brandlers' success is how much they complement each other.

"Nick is an amazing, creative person and I always tell the kids, ask Mr. Brandler," Laurie said. "He'll come up with the idea and then I'll figure out how we can implement it and make it work. Our end goal is to put these students where they need to be and help them in their path, whether it's

went to nationals last year with the management team, Laurie came out to help us prepare, taking time to train my kids in public speaking. We're both very student-focused. We care about changing our students' lives."

The Brandlers have four children, ranging in age from seven years old to nineteen. Their eldest son Ethan is a Bonita High Class of 2023 graduate and currently attends Mt. SAC, where he is studying culinary arts while working at a bakery in Upland. As a Bonita High freshman, Ethan told his parents he wasn't going to take any culinary classes. As the years progressed, however, Ethan eventually rose to the challenge and became a ProStart competitor.

"It started during school closures, when I was teaching at school and Ethan was home, cooking in our kitchen, which was strange," Laurie said. "The whole time he was downplaying the experience, not making it into a big thing. But he kept working more with the students, with chefs, with caterers. Finally he was picked for a spot on a ProStart team. We're so proud of him. He's a natural, with a lot of skills."

Over the years, the Brandlers have inspired several ProStart students to find their place in the industry, including Kris

Lara, who works as a pastry chef at a San Francisco Michelin-rated restaurant, and Kiara Jimenez, a program and events coordinator with the CRF, who also traveled to Washington D.C. for the 2024 ProStart Nationals. Still, the Brandlers feel as if this is only the beginning.

"I want to see how far we can take things," Nick said. "Laurie and I want to give our students the best possible experience they can get. It takes dedication and effort. We want to continue to invest our time into our students and keep on learning."



culinary or beyond."

The Bonita Unified ProStart program's strength lies in the ability of Nick and Laurie to bring traditional rivals together and work as a team. Though Bonita and San Dimas students technically compete against each other in these events, they are also cheering each other on and ready to support whichever team advances to the next level.

"We don't really have any rivalries here," Nick said. "We want success for our students. When San Dimas



## Ramona Middle School: A 2024 California Distinguished School

Ramona Middle School has been honored as a 2024 Distinguished School by the California Department of Education (CDE) for its exceptional academic performance and efforts to foster a supportive and welcoming learning environment.

California Distinguished Schools were selected by analyzing data from the 2022–23 school year reported through the 2023 California School Dashboard, including state assessment results, chronic absenteeism, suspension rates, and socioeconomic data.

“Ramona is truly a place for students to live their purpose in all aspects of their lives, and I am proud to work alongside an outstanding team of educators and families that come together in service to our students,” Ramona Middle School Principal James Ellis said.

Based on the 2023 state assessment results, Ramona Middle School placed in the top 10% in ELA scores of all middle/intermediate schools in the state; in mathematics, the school placed in the top 14%.

Ramona’s academic growth is supported by a robust instructional program that includes high school level courses in mathematics while also providing intervention and special education classes in English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science for students that need additional support.

Ramona also offers tutoring before school, during lunch, and

after school where students can drop in for help. The instructional staff regularly reviews student achievement data to celebrate excellence and to connect students with needs to the appropriate intervention that will lead to greater academic success.

Ramona Middle School’s approach to creating a supportive campus culture is bolstered by its Viking PRIDE motto, which aims to instill in its students the values of personal responsibility, respect, integrity, drive, and empathy.

This practice is embodied in the school’s co-curricular offerings, including the Where Everybody Belongs (WEB) program, which empowers eighth-grade students to serve as peer mentors to sixth-graders and ease the transition from elementary school to middle school.

Ramona’s Associated Student Body (ASB) provides a variety of activities to enrich campus life and to celebrate student success. ASB hosts rallies and dress-up days to foster school spirit, honoring teachers and staff on their birthdays and holidays, and planning dances and events to strengthen students’ connection to campus.

Ramona Middle School students also benefit from a variety of co-curricular offerings, including choir, band, drama, yearbook and technology electives, more than 25 lunch social clubs, and basketball, cross country, flag football, volleyball, and track and field.

### English Language Arts



Blue

- **Scores increased 10.5** points since 2022
- Students scored 51.8 points **above state standard**

### Mathematics



Green

- **Scores increased 9.1** points since 2022
- Students scored 13.8 points **above state standard**

### English Learner Progress



Blue

- Number of students making progress **increased by 12.2%** since 2022
- **73.3% of students** are making progress toward English language proficiency



# BUSD Students Kickstart Careers with Cosmetology and Barbering Certification

Bonita Unified students are getting a head start on their careers in barbering and cosmetology – and preparing to enter the workforce after graduation – through a partnership with the San Antonio Regional Occupational Program (ROP), which provides after-school courses in the two subjects at no cost to students.

Bonita High School seniors Selina Heng, Bianca Estrella and Alexis Miranda became the first Bonita Unified students to complete the cosmetology class at San Antonio ROP in more than 20 years, each putting in 1,000 hours to learn skills in hair cutting, styling, and coloring, manicuring/pedicuring, and skin care services.

“My mom is a hairstylist so I wanted to follow in her footsteps, and when I heard about this program, I figured it could benefit my future and went for it,” said Miranda, who was the first of the BUSD students to complete the program in fall 2023. “I learned so many skills and techniques. After I graduate I plan on working with my mom as a hairstylist, and I want to come back and do the barbering course once I have my cosmetology license.”

Upon completing their 1,000 hours – achieved by attending class for four hours each weekday over the course of nearly two years – each student received a certificate of mastery, indicating they have demonstrated

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*“It has been inspiring to see these three young women commit themselves to this program and inspiring others to pursue it as well. It's been a success on every level and we're thrilled to see what the future of this partnership holds for BUSD students.”*

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the skills to pass the State Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, which would enable them to become licensed cosmetologists.

After news spread of Miranda, Estrella and Heng completing the program, more Bonita Unified students requested to join. Currently, there are seven students from Chaparral-Vista High, Bonita High and San Dimas High enrolled and working toward their certification in barbering or cosmetology.

Bonita Unified School District has focused on expanding its career technical education program during the 2023–24 school year by building partnerships with more industry professionals and introducing additional work-based learning opportunities. These experiences, including the renewed partnership with San Antonio ROP, aim to both connect to the District's 14 CTE programs and extend beyond them, providing students with greater exposure to industry programs.

“While Bonita Unified has a high college attendance rate, we know that higher education is not the only option available to our students and want to ensure that every one of them sees a path to success,” CTE coordinator Vanessa Tilford said. “It has been inspiring to see these three young women commit themselves to this program and inspiring others to pursue it as well. It's been a success on every level and we're thrilled to see what the future of this partnership holds for BUSD students.”





# Gladstone Elementary: An Autism Spectrum Disorder CAPTAIN Demonstration Site

Students at Gladstone Elementary School's "Be You" Family Night could not get enough of the therapy dogs, with children and parents feeling the love from their furry friends, while others sparked new connections at the petting zoo. Now in its second year, "Be You" brings the entire school together to celebrate individuality.

Gladstone Elementary has long served students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and their families, offering a full range of support services that promote inclusion and communication, and provide a nurturing educational environment. For its efforts in providing these services to the community, Gladstone was designated as a California Autism Professional Training and Information Network (CAPTAIN) demonstration school.

"Gladstone serves students from all over the East San Gabriel SELPA area, including Claremont, Azusa, Baldwin Park, Charter Oak and beyond," Gladstone school psychologist Dr. Angela Davis said. "Being designated

as a CAPTAIN school is an honor, and reflects the schoolwide commitment to providing students with autism with a sense of belonging and a level playing field to become lifelong learners."

SELPA CAPTAIN school sites develop exemplary programs that can serve as demonstration sites for other programs across the area. Gladstone hosts four autism provider programs and classes and has a team of professionals to support its classroom teachers and paraprofessionals, including a psychologist, program specialist, occupational therapist, speech therapist and adaptive physical education specialist.

"Gladstone's partnership with its general education teachers, the PTA, and leadership teams has created a campus where all students and families are valued for their abilities, rather than being labeled for their deficits," ESGV SELPA Program Administrator Jennifer Wolfe said. "We are grateful for our partnership and thank the Gladstone team for all of their hard work and dedication."

Gladstone's four classes are equally divided between grades K-2 and grades 3-5 and ASD (mild to moderate) and ASDI (intermediate to severe) pupils, accommodating students whose emotional needs are handled with care and understanding, providing instruction and support to navigate social experiences with the goal of promoting inclusion and overall wellbeing of its students.

SELPA CAPTAIN sites advocate the development and use of evidence-based practices (EBP) such as social skills training, visual modeling, task analysis, sensory integration, and a focus on executive functioning skills. EBPs gauge the effectiveness of strategies which allow practitioners to make informed decisions on care and provide educators the opportunity to support autistic students.

Teachers at Gladstone use a variety of visual supports and defined expectations to help strengthen students' ability to understand and navigate the school environment with independence.

## Senior Spotlight: Bonita High School

During their four years at Bonita High School, seniors Isabelle Flores and Gage Dowdle have made the most of the academic and extracurricular offerings available to them, becoming standouts on the stage and in the classroom.

Both musically inclined, their budding talents were nurtured through Bonita Unified's visual and performing arts programs, ultimately leading to Flores' starring role as Sophie Sheridan in the spring production of "Mamma Mia!" and Dowdle's selection for the California Choral Directors Association 2024 All-State Honor Choir.

Though well-known for their musical skill, Flores and Dowdle are also active members of various service clubs on campus, balancing volunteer efforts with a full course load of Advanced Placement college-prep classes. Their involvement in campus activities has helped Flores and Dowdle develop their leadership skills and confidence, with both taking leadership roles in Class Council and Choir Council.

At Bonita High School, both Bearcats have also experienced a deepened passion for sciences – interests that will serve them well as Flores studies psychology at UC Berkeley and Dowdle majors in chemistry at Brigham Young University.

To watch a profile on  
Isabelle Flores and Gage  
Dowdle, scan the QR code:

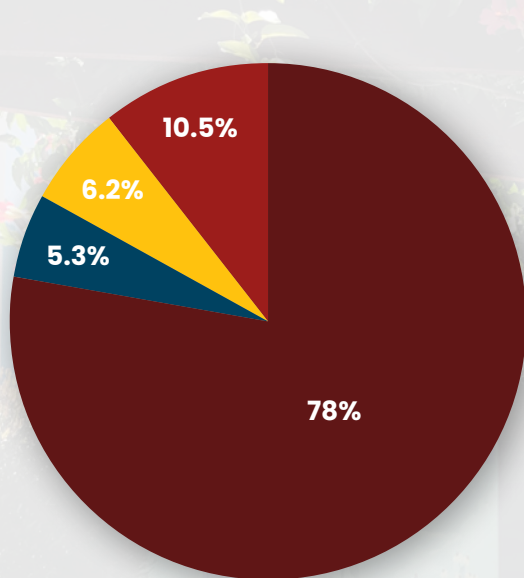






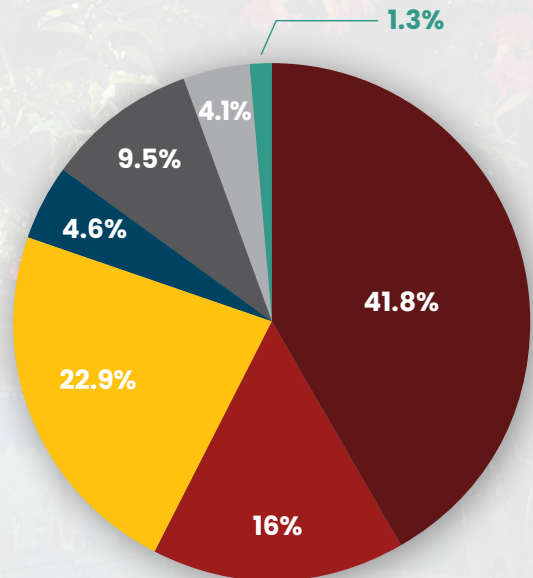
## 2023-24 General Fund Budget

Bonita Unified School District places the needs and success of students at the forefront of its decision-making, a practice that extends to the District's General Fund budget. This student-first mindset, paired with responsible financial stewardship, have enabled Bonita Unified to maintain a healthy budget, even amid rising costs and economic uncertainties, and to continue preparing every student to live their purpose. Bonita Unified's primary source of revenue is the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), provided by the state.



### Revenue

- LCFF
- State Revenue
- Federal Revenue
- Other Local Revenue



### Expenditures

- Certificated Salaries
- Classified Salaries
- Employee Benefits
- Books and Supplies
- Services
- Capital Outlay
- Other Outgo





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