



# Bonita Unified

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

115 W. Allen Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773 ★ (909) 971-8200 ★ [do.bonita.k12.ca.us/](http://do.bonita.k12.ca.us/)

### NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Sept. 19, 2023

**CONTACT:** Lauren Creiman

(909) 833-9853

## Bonita Unified's Grace Miller Elementary Named 2023 National Blue Ribbon School for Academic Excellence

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE** – Grace Miller Elementary has been honored as a 2023 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education, a coveted recognition that celebrates the school's remarkable efforts to close the achievement gap and help students achieve academic excellence.

Grace Miller Elementary is among just 33 schools in California to receive the award this year and is the second Bonita Unified school overall to earn the honor – joining Shull Elementary School, which was named a National Blue Ribbon School in 2012 and 2022.

"I am proud to be the principal of this incredible school and work alongside such dedicated teachers and staff," Principal Leslie Sandoval said. "Every person on campus is deeply invested in helping every student reach their potential, and that is reflected in this wonderful award we've received."

Grace Miller Elementary was celebrated for its collaborative learning environment, which Sandoval credits as the school's key to success in establishing a campuswide culture of inclusion, successful early intervention practices, and holistic support of student achievement. Teachers and staff – spanning across grade levels and specialties – collaborate regularly with each other, as well as specialists, administrators, and parents, to identify students' strengths, pinpoint opportunities for growth, analyze data, and refine instruction and implement interventions as needed.

Those efforts begin when students are just three years old in the school's inclusion-model preschool classes – which serve typical learners and those who have an Individualized Education Plan – and continue in transitional kindergarten with a co-teach class, designed to support students' specific learning needs and teach foundational academic and social skills.

Using the District's research-based reading program – which aims to ensure grade-level reading by third grade – Grace Miller Elementary provides robust English Language Arts (ELA) instruction that includes the use of the Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonetics and Sight Words (SIPPS), which bolsters phonetic skills for new and struggling students in grades K-2. Instruction is also supported by the Benchmark Advanced Reading Program, a core ELA program that covers all K-5 ELA and English language development standards, and programs such as IXL, which allows students to individualize their instruction for any learning gaps or acceleration as appropriate.

Instruction in math, science and social studies are bolstered by engaging classroom and extracurricular activities, including a Math Field Day competition, hands-on experiments, and field trips that allow students to make real-world connections to their lessons. Among these learning opportunities are visits to local aquariums, zoos and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Grace Miller Elementary's holistic approach to student success also includes a visual and performing arts program with introductory and advanced performance groups, a Peace Patrol that empowers students to mitigate peer conflict, and a garden club in which students volunteer to care for campus greenery.

**MORE**

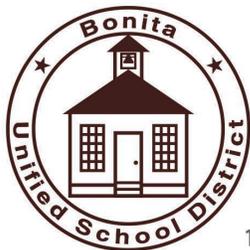


BOARD OF  
EDUCATION

Glenn Creiman, President  
Greg Palatto, Vice President

Chris Ann Horsley, Clerk  
Jim Elliot, Member

Derek Bahmanou, Member  
Matt Wien, Superintendent



# Bonita Unified

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

115 W. Allen Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773 ★ (909) 971-8200 ★ [do.bonita.k12.ca.us/](http://do.bonita.k12.ca.us/)

### NEWS RELEASE

Social emotional learning is integrated into instruction through lessons that teach students skills to thrive in and out of the classroom – including building positive relationships, managing emotions and setting goals. Support is also available from counseling and behavioral specialists in the form of whole class lessons, resources provided to teachers or families, or small group sessions for students experiencing difficulties with stress, making friends or challenging life changes at home.

Grace Miller Elementary teachers and staff have also made a concerted effort to develop a positive school culture where students of all backgrounds and experiences feel connected and supported. Twice a year, students participate in a Panorama School Survey of Academic and Social-Emotional Learning Competency. Results from the Fall 2022 survey, taken among students in grades three through five, demonstrate a significant increase in the number of students who feel a positive sense of belonging.

“We are thrilled to have two National Blue Ribbon Schools in our District and congratulate the students, teachers and staff at Grace Miller for this exceptional accomplishment,” Bonita Unified Superintendent Matt Wien said. “Grace Miller Elementary continues to exemplify what we as educators can help our students achieve when we stay true to our core values of equity, mastery and a focus on results.”

#### PHOTO:

**BUSD\_GRACEMILLER:** Grace Miller Elementary School has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a 2023 National Blue Ribbon School, one of just 33 California schools to receive the honor.

###



BOARD OF  
EDUCATION

Glenn Creiman, President  
Greg Palatto, Vice President

Chris Ann Horsley, Clerk  
Jim Elliot, Member

Derek Bahmanou, Member  
Matt Wien, Superintendent