



# BONITA UNIFIED

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Preparing Every Student to Live Their Purpose*

Allen Avenue • Ekstrand • Gladstone • Grace Miller • La Verne Heights • Oak Mesa  
Roynon • Shull • Lone Hill • Ramona • Bonita • Chaparral & Vista • San Dimas



# 2021

## Report to the Community

NO ONE REALLY MISSES YOU!

WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER



# PREPARING EVERY STUDENT TO LIVE THEIR PURPOSE



**Carl J. Coles**  
Superintendent

## Board of Education

- Chuck Coyne**, President
- Derek Bahmanou**, Vice President
- Krista Chakmak**, Clerk
- Greg Palatto**, Member
- Glenn Creiman**, Member

## Our Purpose

Prepare every student to live their purpose

## Our Core Values

- Equity
- Mastery
- Focus on Results

## Our Vision

Lead all comprehensive school districts in the region in academics, activities, arts and athletics.



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## Superintendent's Message

Dear Bonita Unified Community,

The past year has undoubtedly been one of the most challenging times in the history of our District. A global pandemic led us to close our campuses and quickly adapt to a new way of teaching and learning.

Bonita Unified is optimistic about the future, and as we reopen our campuses, we continue to put the health and safety of our school community at the forefront of our decision-making.

The phased reopening of our campuses is an exciting first step on the road back to normalcy, and BUSD remains focused on sustainable and meaningful solutions. As we welcome our students back to campus, we must also offer more support than before to ensure we continue to close the achievement gap and minimize learning loss.

There is no doubt that we continue to find ourselves in challenging times, but it is not challenging times that define us, rather it is how we handle them that people will remember. As we continue toward the light at the end of the tunnel, I know we will come out stronger and more united than ever before.

There is still much more to accomplish. However, the best predictor for future success is past success. We will continue to meet future challenges in the manner in which we always have, and that is together.

On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for your continued trust and support. Together, we will fulfill our purpose to prepare all our students to live their purpose.

Carl J. Coles, Superintendent



## Bonita Unified Students Return to Campus

Bonita Unified School District students in transitional kindergarten through fifth-grade are returning to campus for in-person instruction, offered in a hybrid format, designed to meet state and county health and safety protocols.

The District's middle and secondary school sites – grades six to 12 – are using a similar hybrid model. Bonita Unified students have the option to remain in distance learning for the remainder of the year.

The District provided staff access to the COVID-19 vaccine through a series of clinics, held at Lone Hill Middle School, in partnership with Mercy Pharmacy Group. The partnership helped simplify the documentation process and streamline access for BUSD employees, encouraging strong turnout and high vaccination rates.

While Bonita Unified remains hopeful about its reopening, the safety of staff and students continues to be the District's number one priority.



# PREPARING EVERY STUDENT TO LIVE THEIR PURPOSE

## Ensuring Student Success with Enhanced Academic Opportunities

When campuses closed in March 2020, the District adapted quickly to develop a robust and rigorous method of remote instruction.

Now, Bonita Unified is shifting focus to refine intervention methods that aim to mitigate learning loss and ensure the long-term success of all students as campuses reopen.

The District's plans will likely be segmented into multiple phases, extending through Summer 2022.

"Bonita Unified will work tirelessly to make sure that the long-term academic effects of the pandemic are negligible," said Matt Wien, Assistant Superintendent of

Educational Services. "It will be a significant task, but a critical one for us to support our students."

Plans to offer more instructional time, practice essential standards and tutoring time are being refined for implementation.

"The overarching philosophy to mitigating learning loss is not different than our usual programs for intervention, which are designed to ensure mastery of our essential standards," Wien said. "When students master the most important grade-level skills and content, they will be in a position to show success at the next stage."



BUSD teachers engage students remotely via distance learning.

## Gladstone Elementary Student Inspires Teacher and Classmates with Passion for Education

In a year fraught with uncertainty, it is always possible to find a silver lining. For Gladstone Elementary School fifth-grade student, Shane Sweis, the 2020-21 school year will be memorable for the positive impact his teacher, Kristina Vitale, and his classmates made during distance learning.

In August 2020, Shane was diagnosed with cancer and began receiving treatment at a children's hospital in Long Beach. Shane's mother, Roula Sweis, felt it was important for Shane to be in school and stay connected with his friends. Vitale agreed, and made arrangements for Shane to participate in distance learning.

Shane responded enthusiastically, joining the class online as often as his health permitted. As Shane shared more of his experiences,

his classmates and Vitale learned about the challenges of childhood cancer and marveled at his indomitable spirit.

"Shane brings out a joy to teaching, his smile brightens up the room," Vitale said. "Distance learning helped Shane stay connected to his learning and to his classmates and we are excited to be together again through Zoom."

Inspired by Shane's determination and resilience, the Gladstone student leadership team sponsored a Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in September.

In early March, Vitale and her class rejoiced at the news that Shane had received his final treatment and would be returning home.

## BUSD Equity Committee: Upholding Core Values

Alongside efforts to mitigate learning loss for all students, Bonita Unified's Equity Committee continues to find new ways to ensure that the District's core value of equity is exercised to its fullest extent.

Chaparral-Vista High School Principal Christine Black serves as the equity committee chair, participating with a 12-member team in developing productive conversations surrounding equity.

"Bonita Unified needs to do its part and look inward at our practices and policies, to make sure that the District is inclusive and to create an environment free from bias, where everyone feels valued, celebrated and supported," Black said.

The committee aims to develop a recommendation for Districtwide professional development activities in 2021-22 and is researching training that is focused around equity and implicit bias.

The Equity Committee is made up of three students, three parents, two California School Employee Association (CSEA) members, two Bonita Unified Teachers Association (BUTA) members and two District administrators:

### STUDENTS

- Erykah Bishop**  
Chaparral-Vista High School
- Anjalene Frank**  
Bonita High School
- Chloe Jones**  
San Dimas High School

### PARENTS

- Jennifer Cole-Gutierrez**  
Ramona Middle School
- Margarita Luna**  
Ekstrand Elementary School
- Dennis Sullivan**  
San Dimas High School

### CSEA

- Quicha Dotson**  
Instructional Aide at Chaparral-Vista High School
- Rhonda Kutin**  
Finance Clerk at Ramona Middle School

### BUTA

- Steve Alba**  
Teacher at Grace Miller Elementary School
- Norman Coulter**  
English teacher at San Dimas High School

### DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS

- Tomeika Carter**  
Principal of Grace Miller Elementary School
- Sonia Eckley**  
BUSD Senior Director

"Shane's class and school were extremely supportive. They sent him personal notes, cards and books to keep him occupied and feeling loved. We are so grateful and blessed to be a part of such a wonderful family at Gladstone Elementary."

### ROULA SWEIS

Mother to Shane Sweis  
Gladstone Elementary



Gladstone Elementary student Shane Sweis holds a basket of goodies sent from his classmates.

# PREPARING EVERY STUDENT TO LIVE THEIR PURPOSE

## BUSD Teachers Embrace Innovative Instruction to Engage Students

Bonita Unified teachers continue to go above and beyond for students, implementing innovative techniques, technology and expertise into distance learning that they can use to bolster hybrid and in-person instruction.

San Dimas High School Advanced Placement Human Geography and World Culture teacher Dr. Bryan Wierzchucki uses multi-media to keep his students engaged during instruction.

“Teaching Geography allows me to utilize maps, interactive websites, video clips and many other resources that visually help put the students into the spaces around the world that we are studying,” Wierzchucki said.

Wierzchucki said that the skills he and his fellow educators have learned during distance learning, coupled with the District’s commitment to provide all students with Chromebooks or tablets, will make their efforts in the classroom more effective as students return to campus.

Blythe Hudspeth, an English teacher and Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) at Ramona Middle School, uses platforms such as Nearpod, Edpuzzle, Activelylearn, Flipgrid and Adobespark to mirror experiences of in-person learning.

“I started setting up breakout rooms in Zoom to simply allow students to work with someone, even if it was an independent assignment,” Hudspeth said. “I wanted to try and offer students opportunities to be amongst their peers in a safe, academic setting.”

Hudspeth has used Zoom-friendly games, music, icebreaker activities and personal announcements from classmates to bring students closer together during distance learning.

“With each development or redevelopment in my teaching approach, I tried to maintain grace and understanding and keep students, their hearts and their mental space at the forefront of every decision I made,” Hudspeth said. “To my core, I believe that, when given clear boundaries and grace, students will move mountains.”

Ekstrand Elementary teacher Kelsey Bermudez wanted to make sure that her first-grade students received a high quality and engaging education. Bermudez adapted Read Across America and the 100th Day of School into virtual events that featured fun activities and at-home arts and crafts.

“Our school adapted traditions so that students could still celebrate from home. With the help of the student council and PTA, we held Red Ribbon week events, monthly spirit days, a 5k run, virtual family nights, and more,” Bermudez said.



San Dimas High School Advanced Placement Human Geography and World Culture teacher Dr. Bryan Wierzchucki



Ramona Middle School English teacher and Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) Blythe Hudspeth



Ekstrand Elementary School teacher Kelsey Bermudez

## Employees Receive COVID-19 Vaccine, Ensure Health & Safety Before Reopening

Bonita Unified ensured the health and safety of employees by providing access to the COVID-19 vaccine through a partnership with Mercy Pharmacy Group, a county clinic with a local office in the city of San Dimas.

Senior Director of Student Services Mark Rodgers collaborated with Mercy Pharmacy CEO Jean Ly about the logistics of offering a safe and effective series of clinics.

Mercy Pharmacy used their safety protocols to ensure a smooth distribution of the vaccine, featuring an online appointment system. The advantages of the partnership included simplifying the documentation process and streamlined access for BUSD employees.



“Bonita Unified waited patiently for Los Angeles County to open up phase 1B of vaccine distribution to educators, and as soon as we got that approval, we were ready to go,” Rodgers said. “We wanted

to make sure that all of our employees were given the opportunity to get vaccinated and we met that goal, making sure the process was as easy and stress free as possible.”

## Lone Hill, San Dimas High Home Economics Classrooms to Receive Upgrade

Bonita Unified plans to remodel the current home economics classrooms at San Dimas High School and Lone Hill Middle School, transforming them into a professional culinary setting where students can explore careers in restaurant and banquet service, hospitality, management and more.

Classroom upgrades will include professional grade appliances and kitchenware, moveable stainless-steel worktables, open storage, and demonstration and student cooking areas. The worktables will feature a flexible design, allowing the rooms to be configured in various ways for teaching cooking, serving and hosting, as well as preparing students for culinary competitions and events.

These upgraded classrooms will support the District’s award-winning culinary arts program, which focuses on training students to obtain jobs in a professional kitchen setting.



# PREPARING EVERY STUDENT TO LIVE THEIR PURPOSE

## EMPLOYEES LAUD DISTRICT

### GRACE MILLER ELEMENTARY

"I love my job because of the people I work with and the students and families we get to support. Our district supports us in every way possible and allows us freedom and creativity to do our best work for students."

### RAMONA MIDDLE SCHOOL

"Bonita is an amazing place to work. I feel well equipped, a part of the team and thankful I get to be a part of such an amazing school!"

### SHULL ELEMENTARY

"I love the connection I build with fellow teachers and students, and the support I receive from my principal and colleagues. Everyone is willing to lend a helping hand and my questions are always answered. It truly is a family!"

### SAN DIMAS HIGH SCHOOL

"I am in a phenomenal district getting to do what I love every single day!"

### EKSTRAND ELEMENTARY

"I have the most important job ever, being a teacher! I lead by example, Love the students, love my campus, love my job, love my coworkers because we all are in this together!"

## Bonita Unified Recognized for Second Time as Inland Empire Top Workplace

For the second year in a row, the Inland Valley News Group has named Bonita Unified one of 2020's Top Workplaces in the Inland Empire.

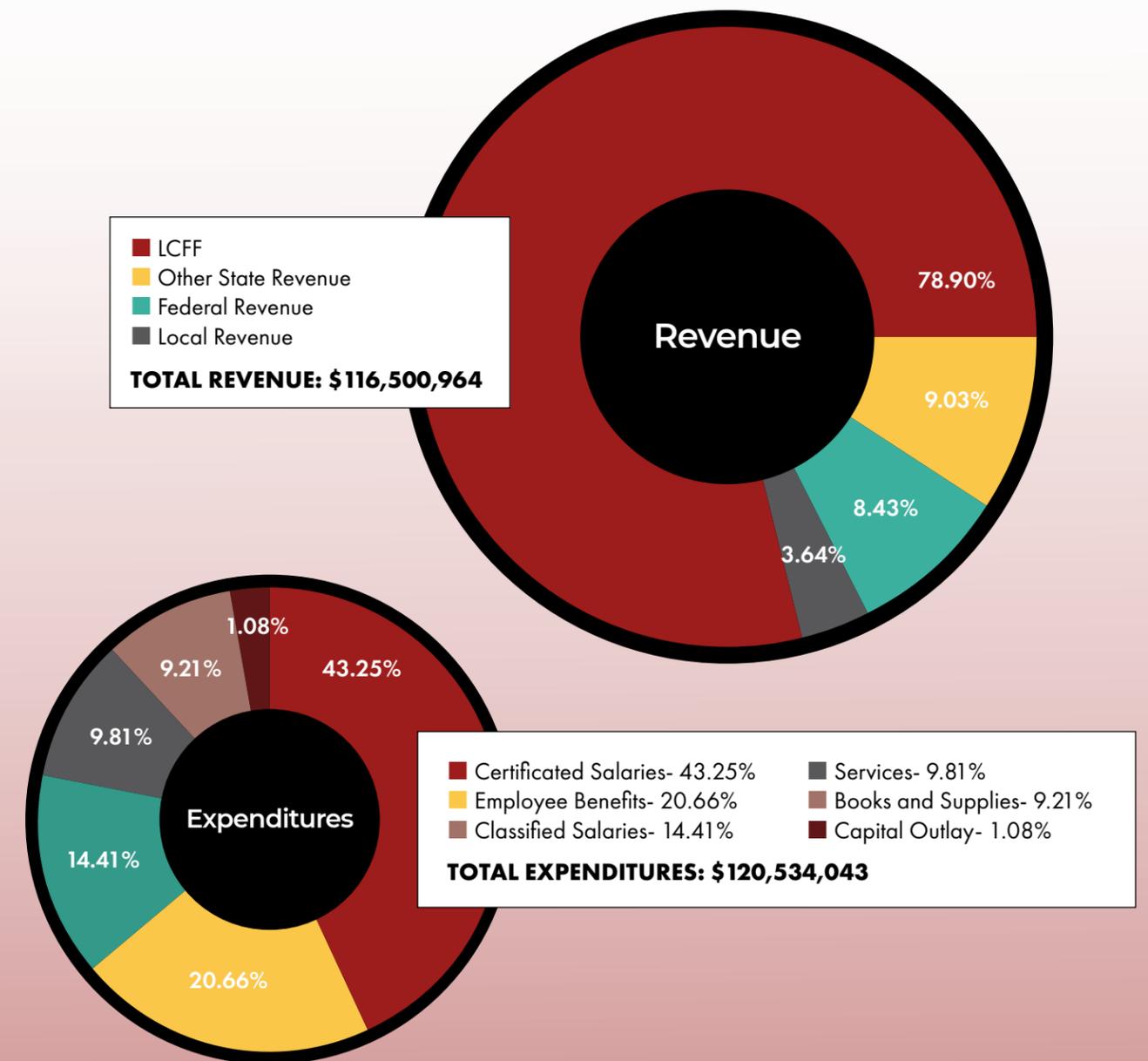
The Inland Empire News Group's list is based on employee feedback gathered through a third-party survey administered by employee engagement technology partner Energage. The surveys were distributed to all 13 Bonita Unified schools and the District office, asking employees about workplace culture, if their jobs exceeded expectations, why they love their jobs and how their employer could improve the workplace environment.

District employees responded, generating thousands of comments that speak to the positive culture at Bonita Unified. Some of the recurring themes in the survey appeared in the form of words many used to describe the District – "family," "supportive," "collaborative" and "community."



## Bonita Unified Maintains Strong Budget in 2020-21

Bonita's budget is approached with a student-first mindset and is aligned to our purpose and core values. Through responsible financial stewardship, Bonita Unified's current 2020-21 general fund has a positive balance, strengthening its reserves while meeting student needs. The District's primary source of revenue is the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), provided by the state.



# PREPARING EVERY STUDENT TO LIVE THEIR PURPOSE

## On-Campus Offerings

### School Age Care

Bonita Unified School District's School Age Care program continued to serve students from transitional kindergarten through eighth grade in 2020-21, giving parents and families a safe daycare option that has supported distance learning.

"The regular model of school age care has traditionally supported before- and after-school learning, so we have shifted our hours to accommodate the needs of our community amid the COVID-19 pandemic," said Nancy Sifter, Coordinator of School Age Care. "We have been able to adapt our program to the needs of our families, so whether our schools remain closed, re-open or begin using a hybrid model—whatever the future holds, we are ready."

Following all county and state guidelines, the Bonita Unified School Age Care program is offered at all elementary school sites as well as the two middle school sites. Staff and students are required to wear masks and maintain social distancing.



## Student Support Services

### Meal Distribution

Bonita Unified's Food Services team has provided the community with over 700,000 free meals via curbside pick-up since the closure of schools in March 2020. On average, the District serves more than 1,700 breakfast and lunch meals daily.

Kim Castellano, a member of the BUSD Food Services team for over 11 years, said that the decision to provide meals to the community has taken great effort and adaptability.

"The District has been extremely workable and supportive of us since day one," Castellano said. "The outpouring of positivity from the community, the parents and the kids, has simply been amazing – it has brought us all closer together."

The Food Services team provides curbside pick-up, Monday-Thursday, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at five District locations: Central Kitchen, behind the District office, Lone Hill Middle School, and La Verne Heights, Roynon and Ekstrand elementary schools.

"No matter what the future holds, our team is ready to make sure that our kids are taken care of, well-nourished and fed, whether they are in school or learning at home," Castellano said.



### Athletic Conditioning/Competition

Student-athletes at Bonita and San Dimas high schools have returned to campus for athletic conditioning, practice and competition.

Student athletes participate in daily health screenings and before each practice, get their temperatures taken and respond to a series of questions which monitor any COVID-19 symptoms they may be experiencing.

Coaches and athletes wear face coverings throughout the duration of conditioning and during competitions while they maintain a safe distance from one another whenever possible.

"For many athletes, they find community and belonging by competing on a sports team," said Taylor Anderson, Bonita High School's girls basketball coach. "It has been great for our athletes to be emerged back into their community to which they find belonging and purpose."



Bonita High School Junior Varsity Cheer pose on campus.

### Tech Support

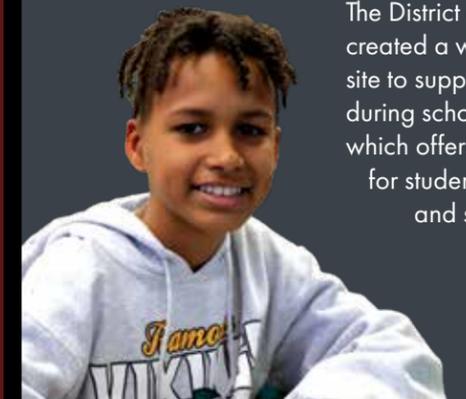
Bonita Unified's Computer Information Services (CIS) and Ed Tech departments continue to provide students and families with the support they need during distance learning. Since March 2020, the District has distributed Chromebooks to all students and 300 Wi-Fi hotspots to households in need. Through a partnership with Paper.co, an online tutoring service available 24 hours a day and seven days a week, BUSD provides students in grades three through 12 with access to live help in subjects like language arts, mathematics, history and more. Tutors are available in English and Spanish.



Bonita Unified School District Computer Information Services (CIS) Department support families and students.

### Social-Emotional Support

Bonita Unified continues to offer students mental health and social-emotional resources in the form of therapists at all school sites who provide individual therapy, group therapy, facilitate mental health clubs, collaborate with parents, offer parenting workshops, and provide trainings for teachers and staff.



The District also created a wellness site to support families during school closures, which offers resources for students, families and self-care.



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
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## BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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