



# EQUITY IN ACTION

*A Specialized Services Newsletter*

## BACK TO SCHOOL EDITION



### A Message From Your Senior Director of Specialized Services:

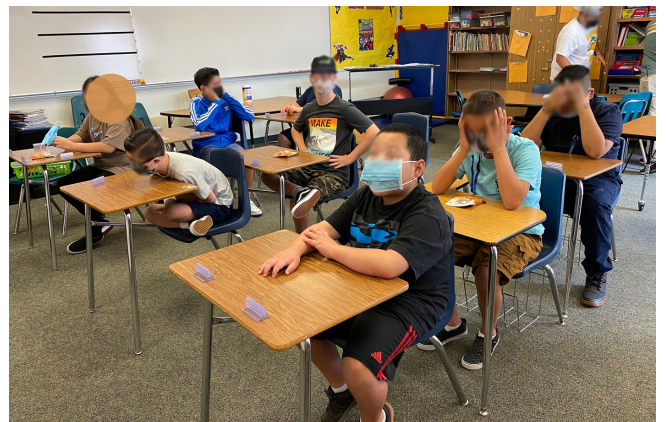
There is no easy way to say it – the opening of this school year has been a challenge. We have experienced a collective trauma and each of you are caretakers. You want to help. You were born to help, serve and to protect. You are the magical ones. It’s also exhausting being the magic makers. The ones people lean on to help and fix and frankly, although we will get there – there is too much. You are pushed and stretched and not necessarily given the grace that you so deserve. The current climate in our world is one of blame and finger pointing rather than comradery and teamwork. Regardless, I’ve gone from site to site and class to class and I see your focus. It’s on our students. It’s on their learning, growing and thriving. You have excelled in your ability to drown out the noise and be there for your students. I thank you for being the magical ones. The ones that are actively working to help our most vulnerable. It’s not the easy seat to be in, but I couldn’t be prouder of the work you are doing, despite it all. Again, thank you for being the magical ones.

## BONITA HIGH SCHOOL



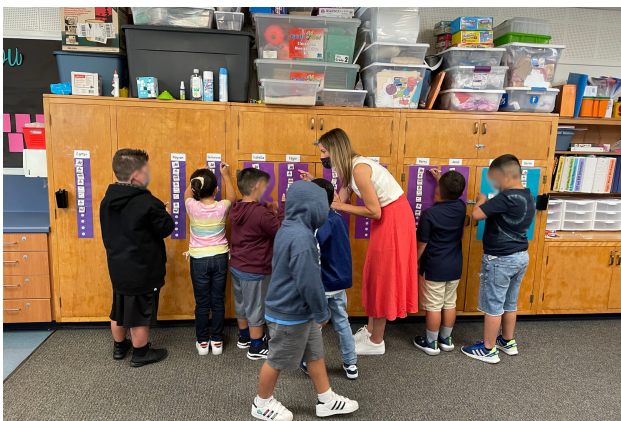
Laura Montenegro, SAI Math Teacher at BHS first day instruction.

## RAMONA



Tucker Ring's middle school students listen to first day instruction.

## GRACE MILLER



Jackie Rodriguez, Education Specialist at Grace Miller, explains her visual schedules.



Tony Garza's BLAST Preschool students enjoying recess on the first day of school.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT:

Meet Emilee Duenas,  
Preschool Education  
Specialist at Shull  
Elementary



### 1. Tell us a little about your program?

"I teach our Preschool BLAST Inclusion Program and our Preschool SDC at Shull. My BLAST Program class is a mixture of students with special needs and typically developing peers. Our typically developing peers are excellent models for our students with special needs. My Preschool SDC is a class of students with diverse learning needs who require more support."

### 2. What is your favorite aspect of teaching?

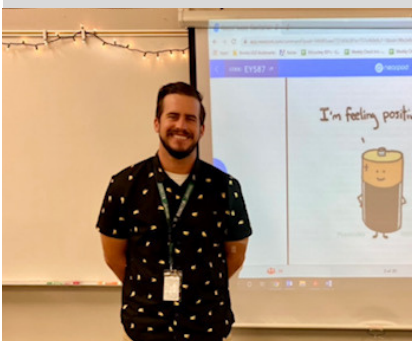
"My favorite aspect of teaching is making special connections with each of my students. I love fostering a love of learning and being a part of the "light blub" moments! I also really enjoy supporting parents and families as this is their child's first experience of their child attending school."

### 3. What are you looking forward to this year?

"I am looking forward to having my class participate in more hands on learning activities, since last year was limited due to Distance Learning. I plan on making this year as special as possible!"

### 4. What is something that has happened this year that you are proud of?

"I am proud of one of my new students, walking into the classroom independently without crying!! It was so touching for both the parent and myself that we almost cried happy tears! These special moments are the reason I love teaching!"



Meet J.T. McLuckey,  
Education Specialist  
at Bonita High School



### 1. Tell us a little about your program?

"I am the SAI Science teacher at Bonita High School. In our classes we incorporate the NGSS standards into our curriculum as best as we can. However, I gear my classes to focus on three main components: Writing, Critical Thinking, and Collaboration. After the first few years of teaching, I realized that a majority of my students struggle with these three skills. Science is important but learning skills that can be used not only in other classes but in life outside of school is so much more important than memorizing a few vocab words."

### 2. What is your favorite aspect of teaching?

"The connections you make with students. I always enjoyed making connections with people but I never realized how much connecting with a student can impact me."

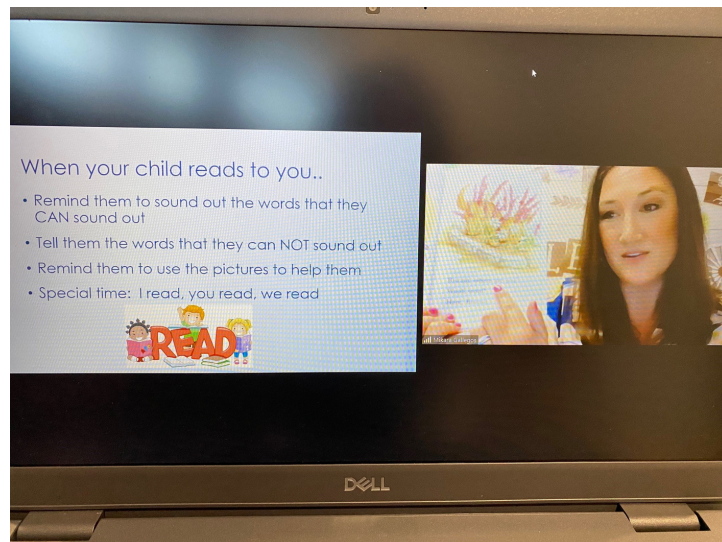
### 3. What are you looking forward to this year?

"I am looking forward to having those natural conversations in class that we did not have last year over zoom."

### 4. What is something that has happened this year that you are proud of?

"This past year I had my first graduated student come to say hi. He began to tell us how our class helped him out in his current job and how my aide and I made an impact on him. I was overcome with joy to hear that I actually helped out this former student because I thought he was not the biggest fan of my aide and myself. It made me realize that this is exactly why we do what we do as teachers!"

## PPA EVENT



On September 16, 2021 Specialized Services held our first PPA event for the 2021-2022 school year. The theme for this event was targeting how to support students' academics at home. Sessions included helping to support students with reading and Math. Our presenters did an excellent job providing meaningful content for our parents. Dr. Mikara Gallegos (pictured) had a session titled "Effective Strategies to Use at Home with Struggling Readers".

This presentation focused on giving parents strategies to use with their struggling readers at home and provided information on the five domains of reading. Deb Brownlee and Gabriella McGarry presented on "How to Best Support your Student with Math at Home." This presentation provided an overview of the online resource, Think Central, and how parents can access at home. A helpful step-by-step tutorial was provided through the presentation, as well as ideas to help make homework fun and interactive at home.

We wanted to give a HUGE thank you to our presenters, it was such a great night!

(To access the presentation, click the session titles above.)