



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Lauren Creiman, (909) 833-9853

Bonita Unified Students Learn Volunteer Skills, Teach Dance Through Project Think Summer Program

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Bonita High School senior Aaron Edwards loves to dance. As a member of the school's award-winning D Street Dance Team since he was a sophomore, dance has transformed Edwards' life. Presented a chance to share his enthusiasm and talent with young children, this summer Edwards served as a dance instructor and volunteer for the Project Think Academic Enrichment Program, held at Pitzer College in Claremont.

Working primarily with children ages four to six, Edwards introduced them to basic dance moves and choreographed a short routine that culminated in a Project Think student dance performance. At the end of the summer session, Edwards was joined by his D Street classmates for an exclusive performance for Project Think students and staff.

"Dancing means everything to me. I can't imagine high school without having the opportunity to dance," Edwards said. "This is my third year as a Project Think mentor, and I wanted to do something more, to share some of my gifts with the kids. Dancing is so good for the mind and the body; it's helped me out so much, and I wanted to bring that to Project Think."

Edwards is one of more than two dozen Bonita and San Dimas high school students who participated in Project Think, a summer program designed to prepare TK-8 students for the upcoming school year and instill a love of learning. Bonita Unified students assist Project Think master educators and college interns in teaching a variety of science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) courses, including drama, creative writing, music, and dance, as well as foreign languages and sports.

"Project Think gives high school students an opportunity to sharpen their communication skills and take on greater responsibilities," Bonita Unified Career Technical Education Coordinator Vanessa Tilford said.

Project Think, now in its 42nd year, was co-founded by Dr. Susan Warren, who continues to serve as its director. The nonprofit has grown from serving 15 children in 1980 to now providing support and enrichment to nearly 600 students over two summer sessions – each lasting three weeks – and assisted by more than 80 high school volunteers from local school districts.

MORE



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“Project Think is led by credentialed master teachers who engage our college interns, who then inspire our high school volunteers,” Warren said. “The volunteers are excited, they have lots of energy and quite a lot of skills. If a student speaks Spanish or is a good swimmer, we plug them into those classes. Once you’re in Project Think, you are part of the family. Many volunteers stay in touch, asking for letters of recommendation or advice.”

Project Think is broken up into morning and afternoon sessions, with some Bonita and San Dimas volunteers working both sessions. The volunteers also help during snack time, occasionally staging a special snack time assembly, as well as presenting Project Think’s weekly Mystery Animal of the Week assembly, where children try to identify an animal based on yes-no questions.

During the 2024 summer session, Edwards performed a dance with a D Street classmate, but when the 2025 session began, he pitched the idea of having an afternoon dance class. This idea resonated with Project Think’s morning art instructor, who has a background in dance herself. Edwards assisted in teaching the class and even served as a substitute when the regular instructor was out.

“I loved teaching the class, but it was a challenge. The kids are very young and can get distracted very easily,” Edwards said. “Plus, it was hot, so I had to scale back the project. Instead of doing a big production, we concentrated on making a video for our Family Night. It was so much fun teaching the kids, and even more fun getting to perform for them with D Street.”

Project Think has made an extraordinary impact on Edwards, who said he would like to continue working with children and staging dance clinics in the future, possibly starting his own business. If the opportunity presented itself, Edwards said he would even consider a return to Project Think.

“I would love to continue Dr. Warren’s legacy and lead a nonprofit,” Edwards said. “It’s such a great reward to work with young children.”

PHOTOS:

BUSD_PROJECTTHINK1: Bonita High School senior Aaron Edwards is one of more than two dozen BUSD students who served as volunteers for Project Think, a summer program designed to prepare TK-8 students for the upcoming school year.

BUSD_PROJECTTHINK2: Bonita High School senior Aaron Edwards (back right) teaches a group of students dance moves as part of the Project Think summer program at Pitzer College.