BONITA UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT

JULY–SEPTEMBER 2026

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Superintendent's Message

Dear Bonita Unified Community,

With the 2026-27 school year well underway, I am proud to see our students exploring their interests and finding new ways to connect with their school communities. It is clearly evident that the effort and passion our students brought to summer learning has carried into our classrooms and campus activities this fall.

Throughout the summer our students continued to push the professional development and athletic envelope. Through Citrus College academies, students gained hands-on experience in automotive technology and architecture. Our ProStart culinary students continued to excel over the summer, winning awards for their creations at the Culinary Clash event, while our water polo athletes competed across three Junior Olympics age divisions.

September's Smudge Pot rivalry game brought Bonita and San Dimas high school communities together with an evening of remembrance for the 25th anniversary of 9/11. Students honored first responders and remembered those affected through a pregame ceremony featuring local first responders.

I am grateful to our teachers and staff for the care they bring to their work each day, and to our families and community partners for supporting our schools. Your efforts help students feel connected and ready to take on new challenges.

As the fall continues, it does so with the opportunity to build upon our progress, celebrate our students and strengthen the connections that make Bonita Unified such a special community. Together, we will continue to live our purpose in a way that proudly demonstrates "The Bonita Way."

Sincerely,

Matt Wien
Superintendent



DISTRICT NEWS



Bonita Unified Welcomes New Administrators for the 2026-27 School Year

The Bonita Unified Board of Education approved four administrative appointments for the 2026-27 school year, bringing new leadership to Bonita High School, Chaparral-Vista High School and Ekstrand Elementary School.

Lauren Choi and Kira Grund are the new assistant principals at Bonita High School. Choi brings nine years of administrative experience following a career teaching English, English language development and Advanced Placement psychology, while Grund brings 15 years of experience as a science teacher and administrator in Charter Oak Unified.

Kendra Lewis leads Chaparral-Vista as principal after serving as the school's dean of students, bringing 15 years of experience in education. Kara Duros is the new principal of Ekstrand, joining the District with 23 years of experience, including eight years in administration.

Bonita Unified Holds Ribbon-Cutting for Electric Bus Fleet, All-New EV Charging Stations

Against a backdrop of new, clean-burning electric vehicles (EV) and flanked by District school bus drivers and mechanics, Bonita Unified School District officially debuted its new all-electric school buses and brand-new Level 2 EV charging stations during a green ribbon-cutting held at the District Yard on Sept. 17.

BUSD's transportation fleet now includes seven electric school buses and six Level 2 charging stations, with plans to add six more electric buses and another charging station in the coming months. These additions are funded through grants from Southern California Edison and CalSTART/Zesbi.

Click here to read more.



EXCELLENCE in the FOUR As

At Bonita Unified, we emphasize the **four As**: **Academics, Athletics, Arts** and **Activities**. Below are some recent examples of how BUSD students, teachers and staff are demonstrating excellence in these areas.



ACADEMICS

Bonita Unified Welcomes Families, Students and Staff Back to Campus for the 2026-27 School Year

From young learners exploring classrooms for the first time, to seniors preparing for a strong finish to their high school journeys, Bonita Unified welcomed over 10,000 students, teachers and staff back to campus for the 2026-27 school year.

Transitional kindergarten and kindergarten orientations, along with back-to-school events across the District, gave students opportunities to meet their teachers, connect with classmates and build excitement for the year ahead. Students returned to expanded instructional time for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten, two new Career Technical Education pathways in dance and jewelry at Bonita High School and new administrators who will support students and staff across the District. **Click here to read more.**



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Bonita Unified Students Explore Career Pathways at Citrus College Summer Academies

Bonita Unified students looking to learn more about careers as auto and diesel technicians received an opportunity to explore the world of auto mechanics and vehicle inspection during Citrus College's Automotive and Medium/Heavy-Duty Truck Technology Summer Academy, one of several career technical education (CTE) programs attended by BUSD students this summer.

Eight students completed the two-day automotive academy, gaining hands-on experience inspecting cars and semi-trucks before earning certificates of completion. Bonita and San Dimas high school students attended Citrus College's weeklong Architecture Academy, where they created digital designs and built model homes. **Click here to read more.**

BHS Culinary Program Seeks New Levels of Achievement, Innovation

Bonita High School's ProStart culinary program got a jumpstart on a successful school year at the California Restaurant Foundation's annual Culinary Clash in Orange County, an event that pairs restaurant leaders with ProStart student sous chefs for a two-month mentorship experience, with the creations brought to life at a high-energy tasting event during the summer.

Bonita senior Abby Brandler, the daughter of Laurie Brandler and San Dimas High ProStart culinary teacher Nick Brandler, was paired with mentor chefs from Specialty Restaurants' Castaway in Burbank. Brandler and her team created the Bangin' Iberico Pibb Bao, a marinated pork belly sandwich placed on a soft bao bun, which won two awards: the Golden Plate and Fan Favorite.

The Culinary Clash gave the Bonita Unified participants, which included Brandler and San Dimas High ProStart students Alexa Aguilera and Gabriella Carranza, the opportunity to rub elbows with star chefs and restaurant owners from across the Southland. After the nerve-wracking competition was completed, the students were able to relax and mingle with guests while waiting for the awards presentation. **Click here to read the full story.**



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ATHLETICS

Bonita High Girls Water Polo Athletes Excel at Junior Olympics

Bonita High School's girls water polo athletes delivered strong performances at the Junior Olympics Classic Division over the summer, highlighted by the 18U team's first-place finish among 44 teams. Seniors Vivianna Velasquez and Kennedy O'Connell competed on the first-place team in the national end-of-summer tournament for programs that participated in Zone Qualifying competitions.

The 14U team placed 10th among 39 teams with freshman Karlee Heaton, while the 16U team finished 15th among 45 teams with juniors Isla Romeo-Garcia, Juliet Perez, Giselle Rappa and Mackenzie Allred. Bonita High athletes competed across all three age divisions at the national tournament.





Bonita and San Dimas High Schools Face off for Third Annual Smudge Crown Flag Football Game

Bonita High School and San Dimas High School renewed their cross-town rivalry in the annual Smudge Crown girls flag football game, showcasing the talent and competitive spirit of both programs. The Bearcats earned a hard-fought 13-6 victory over the Saints, adding another memorable chapter to the District rivalry. Both teams demonstrated determination and sportsmanship throughout the matchup, proudly representing their schools and Bonita Unified.

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54th Annual Smudge Pot Game Honors 25th Anniversary of 9/11

Bonita Unified students honored first responders and remembered those affected by the Sept. 11 attacks during the 54th annual Smudge Pot rivalry game on Sept. 11 at Mt. San Antonio College's Hilmer Lodge Stadium. The evening opened with a pregame ceremony and moment of silence marking the 25th anniversary.

The tribute held special meaning for San Dimas senior Mia Ayon, whose father is a police officer, and Bonita senior Ryder Grosenbach, whose father is a firefighter. Ayon emphasized the importance of remembering those affected by the attacks and honoring those who helped others, while Grosenbach shared how his father inspired him and his brother to pursue firefighting careers. Bonita earned a 28-16 victory, extending its Smudge Pot winning streak to eight games. **Click here to read more.**







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Arts





San Dimas High School Students Showcase Talents in Coffee House Concert

San Dimas High School's Choir Council hosted its fall Coffee House concert on Sept. 24 at the Bonita Center for the Arts, creating a cozy, open-mic style setting for students to share their talents through original compositions, covers, and poetry.

Guests enjoyed fresh coffee and treats from local businesses as they watched performances from 14 students, including a duet of Phoebe Bridgers' "Graceland Too," a soulful rendition of "She Used To Be Mine" from the Broadway musical "Waitress," and more.

Save the Date for These Arts Activities!

Ramona Drama Society Comedy Improv Night at the Bonita Center for the Arts
Friday, Oct. 16 | 7 p.m.
Click here for tickets.

Ramona Middle School Fall Choir Concert
Monday, Oct. 19 and Tuesday, Oct. 20 | 7 p.m.
Click here for tickets.

San Dimas High School Fall Play: The Edgar Allan Poe Afterlife Radio Show
Tuesday, Oct. 20 through Sunday, Oct. 25
Click here for times and tickets.

Activities



Gladstone Kindergarteners Saddle Up for Sixth Annual Tricycle Rodeo

Gladstone Elementary's kindergarteners hit the playground for the sixth annual Tricycle Rodeo in September, bringing their decorated tricycles, bicycles and scooters and showing off their best cowboy attire. Students raced around the course, weaving around hay bales while families cheered them on, enjoying snacks along the way.

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Bonita Unified Students Explore Interests, Build Connections at Club Rush

Club Rush brought plenty of opportunities for students at Lone Hill and Ramona middle schools and Bonita and San Dimas high schools to explore their interests and find their place on campus. From discovering new clubs to connecting with classmates who share their passions, students found new ways to get involved, build friendships, and make the most of their school experience.



Save the Date for These School Activities!

Ekstrand Elementary
Pumpkin Night
Friday, Oct. 16 | 5 to 7 p.m.

Grace Miller Elementary
Fall Festival
Friday, Oct. 16 | 5 to 9 p.m.

La Verne Heights
Elementary Festival
Friday, Oct. 16 | 5 to 6:30 p.m.

San Dimas High School
Homecoming Parade
Friday, Oct. 23 | 3:30 p.m .

Oak Mesa Elementary
PTA Trunk of Treat
Friday, Oct. 23 | 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Shull Elementary's
Trunk or Treat
Friday, Oct. 23 | 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Gladstone Elementary
Pumpkin Patch
Friday, Oct. 23 | 12:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Gladstone Elementary
PTA Movie Night
Friday, Nov. 13 | 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Roynon Elementary
PTA Movie Night
Friday, Nov. 13 | 5:30 to 7 p.m.