

Update — November 2014

Superintendent's Message

Our Students in Foster Care

Each year, the Bonita Unified School District educates approximately 500 students who are placed in foster care. Some of these students live with families, but most come from one of the three group homes within the District's boundaries – the LeRoy Haynes Center, the David and Margaret Home, and the McKinley Children's Center. Only about one in every four students in foster care spends an entire school year in the District, and most have moved through four or more schools in a two-year period. As a result, many students are behind in credits, have gaps in education, and have not had the opportunity to feel connected to a campus or a community.

Consequently, supporting students in foster care can be as varied as arranging for basic supplies, advocating that they receive the right credits from a previous school, or being available in difficult situations to help guide the students and assist school staff. This support comes from a wide range of places. School counselors, teachers, classified staff, administrators, and coaches work every day with students to find places for them to be successful and feel invested in the school community. Bonita Unified School District's counselors and school psychologists work regularly with foster students to help them process their experiences in healthy and productive ways. A pair of highly dedicated professionals, Tiffany Merrill and Maureen Williams, serve as full-time Foster Student Liaisons for the District, finding new ways every day to smooth the transition into school, then provide a safe and supportive place for foster students as they navigate the daily demands of school and life. It is a massive undertaking that Merrill and Williams pursue with passion, expertise, and a deep caring for the success of these students.

This array of resources puts Bonita Unified School District in a unique position to advocate for foster students, which manifests both in daily support and in the creation of projects aimed at their needs. One such project, representing a partnership between Bonita Unified School District and a non-profit group called Forever Kids, is called A Case for Character. The goal of this fund raising project is to raise enough money to provide each foster student in residence in a group home with a suitcase to keep forever, so that if a student has to move again, which happens frequently, they will have a safe and personal place to put their belongings. So far, Forever Kids has raised enough money for 81 suitcases.

Although many students in foster care spend less than a full school year with us, it is the commitment of the Bonita Unified School District to do everything within our power to assist and support them while they are here and to lay a foundation for their future success.

Gary Rapkin, PhD
Superintendent

Bonita Center for the Arts, A Classroom for the Heart and Soul

At the Bonita Center for the Arts Grand Opening on October 18, 2014, Superintendent Dr. Gary Rapkin talked about the elements that make the education in a school district truly exemplary. “There are the academics, for the mind and the intellect, and that’s very important. There are athletics, for the body and the physical, and that’s very important. But the arts, that’s for the heart and the soul,” he said.

District and City dignitaries attended the Bonita Center for the Arts (BCA) Ribbon Cutting on October 15, 2014. Supporter for the arts and San Dimas philanthropist Alta Skinner has twice called the BCA the District’s crown jewel. Funded by Measure AB approved by voters in 2008, the BCA provides a 700-seat theater, a state-of-the-art performance space for all District schools as well as the communities of San Dimas and La Verne. The space is also a hands-on classroom for students to learn lighting, sound, and stage production.

The Grand Opening on October 18 was a spectacular display of student performances including the bands, choirs, drama groups, and dance teams from Lone Hill Middle School, San Dimas High School, Ramona Middle School, and Bonita High School. The San Dimas / La Verne Educational Foundation President and School Board Member Chuck Coyne greeted the crowd as the event was a fundraiser for the Foundation. Gladstone Principal James Ellis served as emcee.



Lone Hill Middle School’s Jazz Band performs under the direction of Kelly Leyva at the Bonita Center for the Arts Ribbon Cutting on October 15, 2014.



Superintendent Dr. Gary Rapkin and the Board of Education Welcome guests to the Bonita Center for the Arts Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.



Board of Education President Patti Latourelle cuts the ribbon in front of the Bonita Center for the Arts with student representatives from each District school.



San Dimas philanthropist Alta Skinner looks on as Board President Patti Latourelle welcomes the crowd to the Grand Opening of the Bonita Center for the Arts.



Joint San Dimas and La Verne middle school choirs perform at the Bonita Center for the Arts Grand Opening.

Supporting the Arts and Hands-on History: La Verne / San Dimas Educational Foundation Grants Funds to Bonita Unified Schools

The La Verne / San Dimas Educational Foundation gave grants to each of the thirteen schools in the Bonita Unified School District in order to support arts education. Eight elementary schools each received \$500, while five secondary schools each received \$1,000. This is the second set of grants supporting the arts the Foundation has donated this year.

“These grants are so appreciated by our principals, teachers and students,” Assistant Superintendent of Education Nanette Hall said. “There is always a need for additional resources to help sites fund special programs and resources to support the arts. The Ed Foundation does great work that always supports our students.”

Each school will use the grant to purchase supplies, fund field trips, and invite guest specialists to enhance art education. This is the fourth year that the Ed Foundation has supported the arts at Bonita Unified schools through grants. Funds are available because of the success of the Ed Jones Memorial Golf Tournament held in April each year.

The Ed Foundation also granted \$4,000 to the District’s Hands-On History program, specifically to provide transportation for three experiential learning sessions: “Indian Camp” to study the Tonva Indian way of life, “Gold Rush” to learn about the famed 1840s/1850s influx of prospectors, and “Rancho Days” to learn about the region’s celebrated Ranchos.

Hands-On History was founded in 1989 by La Verne Mayor Don Kendrick and retired Grace Miller Elementary School teachers Shaunna Gygli, Janice Willett, and Carolyn Gomm. The program is supported partially through the District, but due to budget cuts over the last several years, they have had to reduce funding and seek donations from parents to help maintain the program.

In addition to the school grants, the Ed Foundation also annually supports Teacher Mini-Grants, Perseverance Awards and Scholarships for students, and the Act of Kindness Awards. The La Verne / San Dimas Educational Foundation has been helping support students and teachers in the Bonita Unified School District since 1983.

Tomeika Carter Approved as Roynon Elementary School's New Assistant Principal

The Bonita Unified School District's Board of Education approved Tomeika Carter to be selected as the new Assistant Principal at Roynon Elementary School in La Verne. Carter spent ten years in the Monrovia Unified School District as a teacher and Instructional Coach. Prior experience includes teaching at Citrus College and in the San Diego Unified School District, as well as serving as a liaison between the San Diego Union-Tribune and area schools.

"What drew me to Bonita Unified is that the schools are high achieving," Carter said. "I was interested in what was happening in the District that was leading to such great results. The District has high expectations for teachers and I have found that this is a knowledgeable, well-trained, highly skilled staff."

Carter's vision for leadership at Roynon is to learn along side the teachers, providing support and presenting great instructional strategies. "Tomeika comes with an exceptionally strong instructional background as a teacher and instructional coach. She will be a great resource for our teachers and students," Principal Matthew Wien said. "We are really excited for her to be at Roynon."

Winter Holiday Music Performances

Music and drama groups from the elementary, middle and high schools of Bonita Unified School District are preparing performances for the season. Most performances will occur at the Bonita Center for the Arts (BCA) at 8221 Covina Boulevard, San Dimas. Mark your calendars now and call the District Office for more information.

December 2 & 4 6:30 PM	San Dimas High School and Lone Hill Choir, BCA
December 3 7:00 PM	Ramona Middle School Prep and Symphonic Band, BCA
December 8 & 9 7:00 PM	Bonita High School and Ramona Middle School Choir Concerts, Church of the Brethren, La Verne
December 10 7:00 PM	Elementary Choirs (Allen, Ekstrand, Gladstone, Roynon), BCA
December 11 7:00 PM	Elementary Choirs (La Verne Heights, Oak Mesa, Grace Miller, Shull), BCA
December 12 7:00 PM	Bonita High School and Ramona Middle School Jazz Bands, BCA
December 15 7:00 PM	Elementary Band (Allen, Roynon, Ekstrand, Gladstone), BCA
December 16 7:00 PM	Elementary Band (La Verne Heights, Oak Mesa, Grace Miller, Shull), BCA
December 17 & 18 7:00 PM	San Dimas High School and Lone Hill Middle School Jazz and Concert Band, BCA

Schools in the Spotlight

Roynon Elementary School

First LEGO League

Roynon students have officially registered as participants in the FIRST® LEGO® League Robotics (FLL) 2014 season. Two teams of eight students each are ready to compete. Michelle Bohn, Roynon's FLL parent coordinator, has been working tirelessly with the students on research and robotics.

FIRST® LEGO® League introduces younger students to real-world engineering challenges by building LEGO-based robots to complete tasks on a thematic playing surface. FLL teams, guided by their imaginations and adult coaches, discover exciting career possibilities and through the process learn to make positive contributions to society.

Other challenging components of the program include the application of math and science concepts. Students will employ critical thinking skills, foster team spirit through peer collaboration and cooperation, and ultimately compete in tournaments against other Los Angeles Region FLL teams.



Roynon Elementary students study engineering, programming, and electronics as they create robots to compete in the FIRST® LEGO® League Robotics 2014 season.

Students Shine with Accelerated Reader Program

Roynon's Accelerated Reader Program has set a goal as a student body to read 200 million words for the year. A number of students have already superseded their individual goals. Here are Roynon's top five readers through mid-October:

Cheryl Zhang:	3,323,363 words read
Ludmila Bondesani:	1,679,492 words read
James Jameel:	1,419,018 words read
Mia Kasilag:	1,367,511 words read
Wonders Eze:	1,168,121 words read

Congratulations to these students!

La Verne Heights Elementary School

New Staff Lounge Unveiled

In late spring, the staff of La Verne Heights applied for and won Foothill Credit Union's Break Room Makeover Contest. Over the summer, their Break Room was sealed off for construction, and the staff of Foothill Credit Union got to work, demolishing the current room and designing a new dream Break Room for the staff.

On August 13, the new Break Room was unveiled at a ceremony attended by local community leaders, District officials, and the La Verne Heights staff. The staff was overjoyed to step into a beautiful new lounge designed with a Starbucks vibe. Green walls with brown wainscoting now surrounds a room filled with all new furniture and appliances, including a new couch, refrigerator, dual microwaves and a smart TV. It has become a sanctuary of peace and harmony for the La Verne Heights staff to enjoy for years to come.



La Verne Heights Elementary School won the Foothill Credit Union's Break Room Makeover Contest.

LVH Visits the LA County Fair

On September 17, the students at La Verne Heights enjoyed La Verne Day at the LA County Fair, and what a day it was! Thanks to the joint efforts of the La Verne Police Department and La Verne Heights, eight buses filled with over 500 students and staff members received a full police escort to the fairgrounds, where the students spent a fun filled day enjoying all of the exhibits. Then, at 5:00 pm, Principal McKee was joined by ASB Advisor Lauren Konrad and the La Verne Heights Student Council representatives on their very own float as a part of the La Verne Day Parade at the Fair. It was a night everyone will remember!



Students, teachers, and administrators man the La Verne Heights Elementary School float at the LA County Fair on La Verne Day.

LVH Class of 1960 Tours

As a part of Bonita High School's 50th class reunion, the La Verne Heights Class of 1960 reunited for a tour of La Verne Heights Elementary. As the 85th graduating class of what was originally named La Verne Heights School, the LVH Alumni toured the original building structures, including the Mel Laven Auditorium. The highlight of their visit was the opportunity to step back in time and relive the LVH Bell Ringing Ceremony. Each alumnus rang the bell just like they did 54 years ago when they graduated from La Verne Heights School.



The 85th graduating class of La Verne Heights School tour the campus as part of the Bonita High School's 50th high school reunion festivities.

Lone Hill Middle School

Leadership Development Day

At the start of the school year, Lone Hill Associated Student Body (ASB) representatives and Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) student leaders hosted leadership training for elementary school student council members. Fourth and fifth grade students from Gladstone, Shull, Ekstrand, and Allen Avenue Elementary Schools learned about teamwork and building school spirit. Prior to the event, Lone Hill's ASB and WEB students received instruction from a state trainer from the California Association of Student Leaders (CASL) in mentoring elementary students.

“The overarching goal was to invest in our Bonita students to help them develop leadership skills and return to their sites empowered to initiate positive changes on their school campuses, while fostering a positive relationship between our schools,” Lone Hill ASB teacher Leslie Sandoval said.

Staff members from each of the elementary schools as well as Lone Hill attended the event. Superintendent Dr. Gary Rapkin and Senior Director of K-12 Curriculum and Instruction Kenny Ritchie also attended the event.

Advanced and Jazz Bands Visit Tommy Trojan

The Lone Hill Advanced and Jazz Bands made their annual trip to USC on September 26 with Band Director Kelly Leyva. The students witnessed the dedication and determination it takes to be a member of a high performing college band as they observed a band rehearsal and a pep rally. The students came back from their visit energized and inspired. Fight on!

Bonita Center for the Arts Grand Opening Features Lone Hill Students

Bonita Center for the Arts held its Grand Opening October 18 and featured performances by the Lone Hill Jazz Band, choral, and drama students. Band Director Kelly Leyva led the bands, while Choir Director Alyssa Cosset coordinated the choral performances. San Dimas High School teacher Kelly Koalas directed the drama students.

Artwork from Lone Hill students taught by Mitch Jacobs was also on display in the building. The students were very excited to be able to participate in the much-anticipated Bonita Center for the Arts. All performing arts students will be performing in the new facility throughout the school year.