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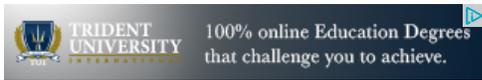
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## Bellflower Unified Elementary School Competes to Reduce Trash



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Esther Lindstrom Elementary students hear a presentation on the power of reducing, reusing and recycling from Grades of Green, an environmental education nonprofit that runs a contest for schools to reduce lunchtime trash. The November assembly helped excite students about Lindstrom's participation in a two-year contest for a \$1,000 grant.

### Staff Report

LAKEWOOD – Bellflower Unified's Esther Lindstrom Elementary is competing for a \$1,000 science grant that will go to the school that is most effective at reducing waste to landfills and boosts recycling, called the Trash Free Lunch Challenge.

The two-year contest is run by Grades of Green, an environmental education nonprofit that shows students how to recycle, reuse and reduce lunchtime waste. The contest has a high bar for success, with a middle school winner in 2016 reducing trash by 75 percent.

"Grades of Green showed the students how damaging some forms of waste can be and how these pollutants end up in our rivers and oceans," Principal Lisa Luna said. "The students are all very excited about the contest."

Before Esther Lindstrom began its effort in mid-November, the 868-student school was producing 18 to 20 bags of trash a day from its six lunch periods, including items that could be recycled or reused.

Now, led by student council members, students sort through the waste to glean such recyclables as milk cartons, water bottles and food packaging. The result: The school now produces just eight bags of trash each day and fills a recyclables Dumpster in just three days.

Mrs. Luna said the school is also looking at how to reduce waste by encouraging the use of reusable lunch bags and water bottles. It may also begin composting food waste in the second year of the program.

“Our students gain multiple benefits from contests like the Trash Free Lunch Challenge,” Bellflower Unified Superintendent Dr. Brian Jacobs said. “The effort helps teach an important civic lesson as well as provide an understanding of environmental issues, leadership and the importance of working collectively to achieve a goal.”

Grades of Green will name the winning school after determining actual trash reduction, sustainability, integration and student leadership.

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