

## **Holtville Unified School District Model Programs and Practices**

### **District Information**

CD (County District) Code: 1363149

County: Imperial

District (Local Educational Agency): Holtville Unified School District

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 1,554

Location Description: Rural

### **Overview**

Holtville Unified School District serves approximately 1,600 students in grades TK through twelfth grade. The district is comprised of one TK–5th grade elementary school, one K–8th grade school, one 6th–8th grade middle school, one 9th–12th grade high school, one continuation high school and their newest school, an independent student/home school/online school. The TK–5th grade elementary school is, in part, a dual immersion school that focuses on building students into biliterate citizens. The district's student ethnic population is 87.7% Hispanic, 10.7% White and 1.6% Other. Approximately 69% of the students are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. The district has approximately 44.5% English Learners. For the vast majority of their English Learners, Spanish is their first language.

In 2018, Finley Elementary School (TK–5th grade) is becoming a Distinguished School for closing the achievement gap for socioeconomically disadvantaged students in the area of Mathematics. In 2017, Holtville Middle School was awarded the title of Gold Ribbon School and the Title I Achievement Award.

In the Holtville Unified School District, parent involvement is not only encouraged, but expected. Each school site has a parent organization that provides parents with multiple opportunities to stay active in their child/children's schooling and enrichment activities. Parent meetings are held regularly to help parents understand new curriculum, programs, and educational resources. Annual activities/events such as the Finley Halloween Carnival, the Holtville High School Wrestling Tournament, the Christmas Program at Pine School, and the Holtville Middle School eighth grade promotion ceremony all are driven by parent participation. Even further, parent-led groups

organize special activities including “Explore America” educational trips to Washington, D.C. as well as field trips to The Living Desert, Sea World, LEGOLAND, Knott’s Berry Farm, the San Diego Missions, and the San Diego Zoo. Holtville parents can be seen at all of our schools, volunteering to enrich the lives of Holtville Unified students through band, athletics, 4-H, FFA, Migrant Program activities, the Dual Immersion Program, and artistic ventures such as the Missoula Children’s Theater. Clearly, Holtville parents are engaged, connecting Holtville Unified Schools to a unified community that takes pride in providing students with a high-quality, multi-faceted education.

The phrase, “Home is where the heart is!” must have been written with communities like Holtville in mind. Though small in size, Holtville exhibits a sense of unity, pride, and spirit through a powerful network of churches, volunteers, service organizations, City officials, and local business leaders – all of whom frequently find a common connection through Holtville schools. They believe that this connection has created a true sense of community that is second to none. Whether it be through their Parent Teacher Organizations, Holtville Athletic Club, or the local Fire and Law Enforcement Offices, the community relationships here in Holtville are what truly make Holtville schools flourish.

## **Model Program/Practice**

### **Name of Model Program/Practice**

Exceptional Strides in Student Achievement

### **Summary**

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

### **Description**

Holtville Unified School District’s model program includes:

- District-wide focus on integrated literacy
- Incorporation of real world, hands-on rigorous mathematical tasks
- College and career preparation through AVID and targeted counseling activities
- Celebration of biliteracy and incorporation of a Dual Language Program

One prominent area of focus is integrated literacy, specifically in the area of writing. HUSD has implemented key strategies to emphasize writing across all subject areas. For instance, in conjunction with the newly adopted ELA curriculum, teachers utilize the RACE strategy (Restate the question, Answer the question, Cite the Source, and Explain), interactive notebooks, and graphic organizers to incorporate writing in all disciplines. In addition, a Writing Wednesday program is in place at the middle school, where students complete weekly writings and receive concrete feedback from their teachers. Through high expectations and collaboration, these strategies ensure that all

students are actively engaged in writing and receive meaningful feedback. At HUSD, it is evident that “Writing is everyone’s business.”

A second facet of the Model Program is the implementation of a real-world mathematics program. HUSD utilizes Eureka Math, which stresses hands-on mathematics, and math in the context of the world. Students are engaged and excited about their math and are able to answer the age-old question, “When are we going to use this?” There are three levels of support – one for the teachers, one for the parents and lastly, a student support system. HUSD regularly sends teacher-leaders to extensive training in this curriculum in order to come back and work with the staff. Mathematics Nights for Parents have been incorporated. Lastly, data is used to help identify struggling mathematicians in order to provide extra support and intervention. This multi-prong approach has supported the entire community to embrace this new way of thinking about mathematics.

Another district component that works to increase both literacy and college readiness is the AVID program. There is integration of AVID Strategies within all classrooms, specifically the WICOR model (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, Reading). This approach provides coherence to students to work on the skills that will help them succeed in every course. Teachers support students in their journey to “learn how to learn”. It is the hope that all HUSD students gain the metacognitive awareness to be able to be effective learners for life. Additionally, targeted counseling activities support students in career exploration and college readiness activities.

Parents are encouraged to have their children participate in the 50/50 Dual Language program that provides students with the opportunity to learn English and Spanish simultaneously. Dual Language programs are an opportunity to accelerate progress on grade-level instruction that is not “watered down”, while maintaining their native language. Research has shown that Native English-speaking students in Dual programs exceed the achievement of their monolingual educated peers, closing the achievement gap while developing creativity and analytical thinking. All students in the Dual classrooms receive challenging, accelerated instruction. Data has proven the effectiveness and benefits of having a Dual Language program that has a direct correlation to the development of critical thinking skills.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

Holtville Unified School District’s model program includes a focus on integrated literacy, the incorporation of real world, hands-on rigorous mathematical tasks, college and career preparation through AVID and targeted counseling activities and the celebration of biliteracy and incorporation of a Dual Language Program

These model practices are implemented and monitored in the following ways:

Data Analysis – Each of the programs are consistently monitored using a variety of data to determine what is working and what needs to be revised. Each of these implementations has evolved based on both data and stakeholder input. Staff looks at summative data

as well as more real-time data and anecdotal data to determine effectiveness. Time is provided for staff to look at how our students are doing in order to determine if changes need to be made.

**All Hands on Deck Approach** – Part of the success of our initiatives comes from the fact that everyone is focused on the same things. Writing is a district-wide initiative. Additionally, ensuring students are thinking deeply around rigorous mathematical tasks and developing their mathematical habits of mind is also a focus. Lastly, embracing our students, their native language and coupling that with targeted activities to best prepare them for the world beyond their K–12 education are driving forces that help us make decisions about how to spend our time and resources. All of us are smarter than any one of us and this collaborative culture is what makes Holtville shine. Staff at HUSD believe that the success of their students is a direct result of the implementation of rigorous, standards-aligned curriculum along with the analyzing of data to inform instruction and teaching practice. It is not unusual for a teacher to explain that their students “think differently” and attribute that to the fact that the district as a whole is focusing on developing critical thinking and problem solving skills. This really is a team effort.

**Ongoing Job Embedded Professional Development** – The last five years have been of constant change. Change in standards, change in curriculum and change in instructional pedagogy. These changes must be supported through continuous professional development. HUSD has invested in developing teacher-leaders to help support the implementation of Eureka Math. Moreover, teachers are continually working together to examine student writing to help students develop their expressive skills. Time has been devoted for teachers to work together and talk about teaching and learning in meaningful and practical ways. HUSD prides itself on having high expectations and support structures to get all students to meet those expectations.

**Parental Involvement and Feedback** – HUSD values its community and the assets that it brings. We make sure we get both parent and student feedback on a variety of issues on a regular basis. We also partner with parents through academic evenings because we acknowledge the fact that parents are powerful teachers of their students. We also embrace students’ language and culture from an asset vantage point. We want our students to become productive members of society ready for wherever the world takes them. Our programs are better because of the strong connection with our families and the community at large. We realize that we are on a journey of continuous improvement and it is vital to involve our families and listen attentively to their feedback.

## **Results and Outcomes**

Holtville Unified School District has shown continuous improvement on the California Dashboard. On the English Language Arts Academic Indicator (grades 3–8), Holtville Unified School District was green on the fall dashboard and showed an increase of 8.8 points for all students. Each of the subgroups grew as well, ranging from a 6.6-point increase for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students to a 26.5-point increase for Students with Disabilities.

In terms of the Mathematics Academic Indicator (grades 3–8), Holtville Unified School District scored green as a district and showed a 10.9 point increase between the Spring and Fall Dashboard. All student groups increased, ranging from a 5.2 point increase for students with disabilities to an 11.1 point increase for Hispanic students. Finley Elementary School qualified as a Distinguished School this year due to the fact that their Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students scored green in mathematics, thus closing the achievement gap from the Spring Dashboard (moving from yellow to green).

The English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI) shows that 69.2 % of all English Learners are making progress in developing proficiency in English. This is a 3.7% increase from the previous Dashboard.

HUSD's Chronic Absenteeism Rates for the 2016–2017 School Year show that 8.9% of students are considered to be chronically absent. This compares to Imperial County and California rates of 10.2 % and 10.8%, respectively. This is an area where we continue to refine our system to identify students early and provide appropriate interventions.

In the Fall California Dashboard, HUSD's Graduation Rate Indicator was blue, touting a very high-status graduation rate (99.2%), which showed a 4.5 percent increase from the previous year. Not only does HUSD take graduation rates seriously, but wants to ensure that students do well beyond high school. In 2015–2016, Holtville Unified had 52.4% of their graduates complete the UC/CSU Course Requirements (A–G). That same year, Imperial County and California had A–G completion rates of 29.0% and 45.4%, respectively. Contributing to their success with college and career readiness is the district's decision to align their math requirement to that of the Cal State University and University of California requirement, which is a three-year minimum. Additionally, HUSD had 44.9% of the 2015–2016 graduation cohort score Prepared on the College and Career Indicator (CCI). It should be noted that 92.5% of those students who were considered prepared qualified by both completing the A–G criteria, and either completing a CTE pathway, receiving credits in dual enrollment and/or scoring at least a 3 or 2 on the 11th grade Smarter Balanced assessments. Coordinated efforts with counselors, staff and families help ensure that students get the information and resources they need to better prepare for their future. As of March 2018, over 65% of 2018 seniors completed their Free Application for Federal Aid (FAFSA) applications. Our students have historically led Imperial County in this race.

Although there is much to be excited about, Holtville Unified School District is committed to continually examine our systems in order to continuously improve and serve all students.