

ABC Unified School District Model Programs and Practices

District Information

CD (County District) Code: 1964212

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): ABC Unified School District

Demographics

Enrollment: 30,433 (PK 429; TK–12th 20,740; Adult School 9,264)

Location Description: Urban

Overview

ABC Unified School District is located in the southeast corner of Los Angeles County, California. Established in 1965, the District serves the cities of Artesia, Cerritos, Hawaiian Gardens, portions of Lakewood, Long Beach, La Palma, Cypress, and Norwalk. The District serves over 30,433 students with ten preschools (429), nineteen elementary schools, five middle schools, five high schools (20, 740) and one adult school (9,264). Over 3,506 employees (1,733 certificated and 1,773 classified) serve the ABC Unified School District.

The ethnic breakdown of the District includes the following: Hispanic/Latino-46%; Asian/Pacific Islander – 35%; African American – 9%; Caucasian – 6%; Multiple – 5%.

Fifty two percent of the students are from low income families based on their participation in the free and reduced meal programs. Fourteen schools receive Title I funding to supplement their programs. Nineteen percent of the students are English learners with a reclassification rate of 10%. The District's suspension rate in 2017–18 is 1.7%. There have been zero expulsions in the District for the past six years.

The District's graduation rate in 2010 was 88%. In 2017, the graduation rate increased to 98%. In 2010, the dropout rate was 5%. Eight years later, in 2017, the dropout rate was 1.5%. The District's attendance rate in 2017–18 is 97%.

The mission of ABC Unified School District is to develop a community of lifelong learners, creative thinkers, and responsible individuals by providing innovative and high quality educational programs in a safe and supportive environment.

The District offers an array of educational options in which students and families can participate. This includes sixteen thematic magnet schools, a dual language immersion program, the STEM/STEAM Program, an IB World School, bi-literacy programs and international exchange programs. Technology has transformed our classrooms where 1:1 mobile devices are being implemented in all the schools as part of the Technology Integration Project.

The District is proud of the many awards and recognitions received including 7 National Blue Ribbon School Awards, 13 California Gold Ribbon School Awards, 18 California Distinguished School Awards, 16 Golden Bell Awards from CSBA, and all five middle schools selected as Schools to Watch/National Model Middle Schools. ABC Unified School District also earned a Magna Grand Prize Award for the Parent Leadership Conference and Academy from the National School Board Association in 2015 and Honorable Mention for the Youth Leadership Summit in 2016.

The District maintains a sharp focus on teaching and learning to ensure that “every student, in every classroom, every day” is provided a world class education.

Model Program/Practice

Name of Model Program/Practice

Category 1: Positive Culture and Climate – Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for Social Emotional and Behavior

Category 2: Exceptional Strides in Student Achievement – Closing the Achievement Gap Through Instructional Rounds

Summary

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

Description

Category 1: Positive Culture and Climate – Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for Social Emotional Behavior

The MTSS for students has been in place in ABC for the past 8 years. It consists of a continuum of evidence based, system wide practices which support an appropriate and timely response to students’ social, emotional and behavioral needs. Using the multi tiered system of support ensures that students receive the type and intensity of support that they need to be successful with the behavioral expectations of our schools.

Because students come to schools with varying needs, it is important that the support which the school provides is equitable, consistent and commensurate with the students (and the family’s) needs. ABC students receive the level of support they need, whether it be short or long term, intensive counseling or just a “check-in” once or twice a week.

The goals of the MTSS are to eliminate barriers to learning and to focus on prevention. The outcomes are to improve social and emotional wellness, decrease office discipline referrals and suspensions, improve behavior, increase student engagement and academic performance and improve attendance. Each of these outcomes is aligned with Local Control Accountability Plan Priority 5: Strengthen Student Engagement and Priority 6: School Climate.

Related to priority area 5, ABC students are provided with a multi-tiered support system that includes direct interventions in academic, social, emotional and mental health services. We have integrated the goals and outcomes of priority 5 with those of priority 6, School Climate. Our efforts in this priority area have focused on fidelity of implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Therefore, PBIS forms the structure of our MTSS system.

Category 2: Exceptional Strides in Student Achievement – Closing the Achievement Gap Through Instructional Rounds

Essential to closing the achievement gap for students is a commitment to create the conditions for ongoing and embedded professional learning for teachers. With the initial onset of the State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, the division of Academic Services capitalized on the opportunity to reframe the professional learning experience for teachers. The traditional professional development model requiring teachers to attend three-days of professional development, transitioned to a professional learning model in which district coaches and teacher leaders provided support for teachers through instructional rounds.

Professional learning grounded in standards based instruction and closely monitored by District benchmark assessments required a shift focused on building instructional leadership capacity with coaches and teacher leaders. Investing in teacher leaders at the District and school site level became the standard practice as exemplified in partnering with Loyola Marymount Center for Math and Science Teaching (CMAST) to formally train math coaches. Designated coaches were allocated release time to support colleagues at their schools using instructional rounds to provide site based professional learning opportunities.

Implementation and Monitoring

Category I: Positive Culture and Climate – Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for Social Emotional Behavior

There are three levels of MTSS in ABC. Tier 1 provides supports for all students and is designed to be preventative and proactive. In ABC our focus has been on implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at all ABC schools with fidelity. To date, 23 of the 29 schools are implementing the PBIS Framework at PBIS Tiers 1, 2 or 3. The PBIS framework provides the measurable outcomes, evidence based practices, implementation systems and data for decision making necessary to create positive, equitable, consistent and efficient behavioral interventions for students. Tier 1

schools focus on providing a positive approach to discipline, active and efficient adult supervision, explicit teaching and reinforcing behavioral expectations and social skills training.

Tier 2, the strategic level, is designed to provide support for students who are identified as being at risk. Within the PBIS framework, students are identified as needing support to meet the behavioral expectations. Students needing Tier 2 support receive more intensive social skills training and are assigned adult mentors who assist them with meeting goals in individual behavior contracts under the PBIS Check In/Check Out structure. Students may also receive support from Primary Intervention Program para-educators, who use the Skillstreaming curriculum to teach and reinforce positive social skills.

Students identified as needing Tier 3 support receive intensive individual skills training and/or counseling, based on a formal assessment of need administered by a mental health professional such as a school psychologist, school social worker or marriage family therapist on the school site. Students with more intense needs are referred to one of the many community based mental health agencies in the Community Resource Team (CRT) with which we are partnered.

Essential to the success of the MTSS are the PBIS teams at each school and the school social worker and school psychologist at each school. In support of LCAP priority 5, ABC has provided full time mental health professionals (school social workers or marriage family therapists) at all elementary and middle schools and two full time mental health professionals at all high schools. The PBIS teams at each school examine office discipline and referral data, oversee the implementation of the school wide and classroom behavior expectations, train the staff and refer students to Tier 2 and Tier 3 MTSS services.

Category 2: Exceptional Strides in Student Achievement – Closing the Achievement Gap Through Instructional Rounds

With the guidance of District Curriculum and Professional Development Supervisors, coaches and teacher leaders provide professional learning support through instructional rounds: standards aligned lesson design, co-teaching, formative assessments; debriefing and re-teaching based on lesson modifications. Instructional rounds require teachers to examine their practices based on student responses to instruction. With the focus on evidence to support student learning, teachers willingly explore differential instructional approaches to increase students' performance. To further deepen teachers' professional learning, demonstration lessons provide teachers access to observing district coaches teach in a classroom setting. Teachers value observing coaches implement new instructional strategies in classrooms with their own students. As a result, teachers' willingness to implement new instructional strategies increased. Classroom teachers receive ongoing support and feedback during the year from coaches and teacher leaders.

Results and Outcomes

Category I: Positive Culture and Climate – Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for Social Emotional Behavior

Multiple data points are used in ABC to measure and monitor the outcomes for MTSS goals. These include: suspension rates, attendance and chronic absentee rates, office discipline referral rates, California Healthy Kids Survey data and Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) scores for the PBIS schools. The District also gathers data on the number of students served, type of service provided and duration of service for all students receiving support from our school based mental health professionals through a database provided by a contract with Vital Research.

The District Capacity Assessment (DCA) is also used to monitor the progress of PBIS training and implementation at the 23 schools. The District Capacity Assessment provides yearly feedback for the District MTSS Leadership Team on the capacity in the areas of leadership, performance assessment, training, coaching and decision support data systems.

The DCA was first administered in 2015 with a total score of 55%, again in 2016 with an increase of 18% and again in 2017 with another increase of 8%. After each DCA, the District Leadership team creates an action plan to guide their work towards fidelity of implementation for the following year.

School PBIS teams use the TFI to develop individual action plans for implementation. The school teams also use the data on attendance and suspension from the California School Dashboard to guide their school plan goals along with the PBIS action plans. Data from the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), administered yearly at grades 5, 7, 9 and 11 also guides the implementation of MTSS services at both the District and school levels. CHKS data, along with that provided from the Vital Research database, was used at the District and school levels to increase the number of school based mental health professionals in the 2017–2018 school year.

Related to suspension/expulsion rates, following is a summary of outcomes for the 2016–2017 school year for schools implementing PBIS:

- 19 of 23 schools showed decreases in the school wide suspension rates.
- 3 schools maintained a 0% suspension rate
- the district wide suspension rate was 1.7%
- ABC's expulsion rate was 0% for the sixth consecutive year.

Related to attendance rates among the PBIS schools for the 2016–2017 year:

- The District attendance rate is 97%
- 16 of the 23 schools showed improvement in attendance rates
- 3 schools maintained their attendance rate from the previous year

Related to chronic absentee rates for the 2016–2017 year:

- Districtwide, chronic absentee rates decreased from 8.0 in 2014 to 4.9% in 2016–2017.
- Among the 23 PBIS schools, all but three decreased the chronic absentee rate

Category 2: Exceptional Strides in Student Achievement – Closing the Achievement Gap Through Instructional Rounds

This comprehensive approach to professional learning continues with each standards adoption (i.e. ELD Standards, NGSS, etc.) thereby fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Various metrics are used to monitor the achievement gap for designated student groups. The Fall 2017 CA Dashboard data indicates that ELA and math academic performance is at a high level with select student groups maintaining or demonstrating slight increases. In addition, ABC's impressive graduation rate indicates high student performance: 98% all students, 95.8% English Learners, 97.7% homeless youth, 97.4% socioeconomically disadvantaged, 98.5% African Americans and 97.7% Hispanics.