

## **Ross School District Model Programs and Practices**

### **District Information**

CD (County District) Code: 2110215

County: Marin

District (Local Educational Agency): Ross School District

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 386

Location Description: Suburban

### **Overview**

Ross School is an award winning, dynamic school committed to academic excellence and innovation and is nationally recognized for academic performance, staff professional development, educational innovation, and community engagement. In 2016, Ross School was recognized as a "Gold Ribbon" School by the California Department of Education for its work in providing differentiated, targeted support services for general education students, special education students, and English language learners.

Over the past three years, Ross School has delivered on a new strategic plan designed to ensure students develop confidence, creative problem solving, compassion, collaboration, and content literacy (i.e. 5 C's). To meet these outcomes, the school has focused on three key areas: (1) Invest in Learners, (2) Invest in Teacher Excellence, (3) Invest in Community Relationships

In 2018, Ross School demonstrated high levels of proficiency on the CAASPP and showed more than one year's growth in one year's time for all learners in on benchmark assessments. Simultaneously, Ross School expanded elective options, invested in innovative programming (including a Cyber Cafe with augmented virtual reality, a music program K–8, STEM, Spanish K–8, Art, and a Fabrication Lab), ensured inclusionary acceleration (supporting all learners in making substantial progress without creating barriers for learners), and invested in developing student competency in tracking and measuring their own learning and giving and receiving feedback with others. Moreover, Ross School focused students on engaging in community service and partnering with

parents to take part in the teaching and learning within the school to develop a strong sense of connectedness between all stakeholders.

Over the past two years, Ross School has focused on the utilization of a new hiring, onboarding, professional growth, and evaluation process with certificated personnel. The goal for the school is to ensure that all teachers are showing substantial growth in their professional development and impact on student learning.

The School worked with the Ross School District Teachers Association, the Board of Trustees, and the community in ensuring that a quality process for effective educator employment and evaluation was established. Beyond hiring and evaluation, professional learning focuses on research-based practices to ensure students develop their core knowledge and skills in the 5 C's.

The District benefits from a long history of outstanding support from its parents and the broader community, evidenced by successful passage of multiple parcel taxes and bond measures. Highly engaged parents support and promote community building through volunteerism and partnership with the school. The collective belief is that it is the student that we are here for and so should serve them well. Ross School is a vibrant place to learn and grow with a strategic vision and momentum that is destined to continue.

## **Model Program/Practice**

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

The Ross School District (District) identified that all learners must have access to essential core content knowledge and skills, must show proficiency and substantial growth towards meeting academic achievement expectations, and have the knowledge and skills to measure and take action on their own academic and social-emotional progress and proficiency (LCAP Goal I, Priority 4). The District specified that staff must engage in professional learning to develop knowledge and skills in using assessment data in collaborative teams to improve teaching and substantially impact learning, develop formative assessment practices, and engage in developing student assessment capabilities, collaborative strategies, and means for students to take action over their own learning.

Ross School (RS) initiated a professional learning community approach to develop a guaranteed and viable curriculum for each grade level, established clear success criteria for each grade level standard, and initiated multiple assessments (including pre/post assessments) to gauge student learning and use that data to improve instruction. RS has now implemented Standards-Based Reporting (i.e. grading) as well as research-based assessment practices to ensure that students can accurately measure their own learning, talk about their learning with others, give and receive feedback, and devise strategies to move their own learning forward. Students use visual displays, adjustable grouping structures, differentiated tasks, and authentic means for

tracking their learning. The Ross School staff works in small collaborative teams to evaluate progress and proficiency of student data across levels of complexity (using the SOLO taxonomy) using effect size data, average gain, and referencing pre/post task performance to identify efficacy of teaching, identify appropriate interventions, develop new tasks and lesson plans, and to meet with students and parents to provide just in time assessment data to improve. Ross School has moved away from reporting grades and is now providing greater levels of authentic assessment data that students, staff, and parents can use to provide the best means for improving learning for all learners. This approach has shown to be incredibly impactful as identified through CAASPP data, benchmark assessment data via NWEA, student video vignettes, student-led conferences, and teacher reported engagement levels in the classroom.

## Summary

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

## Description

Over the course of the past three years, Ross School District (RSD) has achieved high levels of proficiency on state academic tests and culture/climate assessments. Simultaneously, RSD lacked a comprehensive strategy for ensuring all learners were showing more than one year's growth in academic and social-emotional learning across all grade levels and all target groups. Moreover, through a robust suite of assessment tools, RSD found that the majority of students were unable to articulate their progress towards key learning outcomes, the dispositions that enable students to learn at high levels, strategies to improve their learning, and means for engaging in collaborative forms of learning. Such data is critical for determining success in meeting California State Priority Areas 2,4,7, and 8.

Based on RSD's Strategic Plan and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), the District immediately focused on teacher, student, and community capacity building to ensure all students showed substantial progress in learning and meeting California State Priority Areas 2,4,7 and 8 (See Table I).

Table I: State Priority Areas, RSD Strategic Goals and LCAP Goals

[table]

To initiate this process, RSD established goals to ensure growth in academics, social-emotional learning, and assessment capabilities. Next, RSD reviewed the literature and examined best practices for identifying strategies that ensured all students gained, over the course of a year, more than one year in academic growth, social-emotional learning (SEL), and that all students develop ownership over their own learning. This aspiration became a critical goal for ensuring that teachers, students, parents, and administration continually knew student progress towards key outcomes and how to support students in taking action to enhance their learning.

Throughout this work, RSD engaged with the community to develop a model of developing student ownership in their academic and SEL learning. This was accomplished through numerous strategic planning sessions, site council meetings with student, faculty, and parent representatives, routine board meetings, and formal and informal meetings with groups such as the Financial Advisory Committee, Parent Teacher Organization, Foundation, Board of Trustees, and informal meetings with varying grade levels. RS continually sends weekly messages, updates on the websites, classroom teacher letters, and monthly open forums for parents.

Such engagements led to the development of the Confidence in Learning (CnL) program that ensures all students develop the beliefs and skills to persevere when facing challenging academic and social circumstances (i.e. Growth Mindset), use skills to measure and take action over their own learning (i.e. Assessment Capabilities), and strategies for giving and receiving feedback and engaging in problem solving with others (i.e. Collaboration). These outcomes have been accomplished by developing learning dispositions and tools for discussing learning with students, ensuring students are clear on the goals of lessons and units, comparing work to successful examples, using tools to track performance, and providing structured guidance for giving and receiving feedback. The development of the CnL model was a collective process involving community members and parents through multiple gatherings of information and input sessions as well as reviewing data with organized

To support these efforts in the classroom, RS has established common outcomes for each grade level, common means for measuring progress (e.g. calculating growth, showing student growth through various drafts of work, using standards-based assessment data), and using collaborative teaming with staff and students to discuss and take action on their learning (e.g. students using visual cues to measure their performance and discuss strategies to improve). Additional, RSD has invested in professional learning to enhance formative assessment and standards-based reporting practices, data analysis and interpretation, and professional learning communities work to advance teacher and administrator practice so that all students are showing substantial progress towards core academic and social-emotional objectives.

The results of the CnL model have been substantial. Having applied this work to all students groups and then analyzing the work across student groups local benchmarking, surveys, anecdotal evidence from parents, and classroom walkthroughs and focus groups show that this work is providing students with a greater confidence in who they are as people and learners, how to take a stronger command of their own learning, and how to work with others in the context of learning.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

The CnL model is continually monitored via annual state assessment data, tri-annual benchmark assessments (via the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Performance Assessment), teacher assessments (e.g. pre/post assessments, calculating effect size, average gain scores), California Healthy Kids Survey, and a host of tools that enable teams to gather qualitative and quantitative data

(via Visible Learning Plus assessment tools from the Evidence into Action, Visible Learning Action Teams, and Insider Series Assessment Capable Learning and Feedback tools which include video vignettes, surveys, and walkthroughs). The information gleaned from these measures have been routinely shared and discussed with the community in the various forums mentioned above.

For example, Site Council members have reviewed the annual state assessment data, which illustrated that student performance:

- "Increased Significantly" by 26.5% in mathematics (Five by Five Placement 2017 showed students were "Very High" (35 or more points above) and progressed by less than 3 points or increased by less than 3 points)
- "Increased" by 9.8% in ELA (Five by Five Placement 2017 illustrated students were "Very High" (45 or more points above), and progressed by 3 or less than 15 points)
- Showed 100% of students had access to common core curriculum as identified by district review of district courses of study, and
- Illustrated that 100% of teachers are highly qualified (exams and coursework), and
- Showed Access high levels of attendance and 100% of students had access to a broad course of study.

Based on performance data and feedback, teachers have engaged in numerous professional learning activities including formative assessment and standards-based grading work (Shirley Clarke and Robert Marzano), professional learning communities (John Hattie, Rick Dufour, Peter DeWitt), and assessment capable learners (using Visible Learning Plus). These activities have included:

- Year long action research project on formative assessment practices with Shirley Clarke,
- Developing a guaranteed and viable curriculum via grade level and department meetings to establish proficiency scales/success criteria,
- Establishing a standards-based reporting systems,
- Training on tools for assessing and taking action on assessing student learning in the classroom and within departments.

These activities have been monitored by teacher feedback, classroom observations of implementation, student achievement and perception data (pre/post), and collective staff feedback. Based on feedback from diverse stakeholders (e.g. Parents: 'Ross School Coffee', PTO meetings, and RSD Board Meetings, Students: grade level meetings, Site Council feedback, and focus groups) teachers have engaged in

standards-based reporting and adopting a new assessment system to provide accurate progress and proficiency data to students and parents. This new information aligned with NWEA's MAP program provides a robust data set for students to utilize in making decisions to enhance their learning.

## **Results and Outcomes**

The efficacy of the CnL model is primarily determined through the continually monitoring of benchmark assessments (e.g. Measures of Academic Performance Assessment (MAP)), teacher assessments (e.g. pre/post assessments, calculating effect size, average gain scores), California Healthy Kids Survey, and a host of tools that enable teams to gather qualitative and quantitative data (e.g. video vignettes, surveys, walkthroughs using the Visible Learning Plus tools)

As of the Spring 2017 implementation of Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) MAP program, the majority of students are demonstrating more than one year's growth in one year's time in reading, writing, and mathematics. More than 90% of students are performing above standard and almost all students are able to discuss their learning, give and receive feedback, and articulate strategies they need to take to enhance their own learning. This level of performance echoes the research of John Hattie who in 2009 showed that students who were able to articulate their level of performance against a standard and devise next steps essentially double their rate of learning.

RSD is finding students are achieving at higher levels than previous school years engaging in advanced tasks in mathematics and English Language Arts as evidenced by their performance levels on standards based reporting and the school offering advanced mathematics courses. These overall results are strikingly similar when broken into cohort data based on grade level performance and targeted group(s) performance. Finally, the Ross School District performance on all academic measures have maintained or increased in the past two years of CAASPP implementation.

RSD engages in bi-annual strategic discussions with the Board of Trustees and staff to inspect progress and determine next steps in professional learning. RSD has embedded professional learning and assessment tools into hiring practices, personnel evaluations, and staff meetings to ensure continuous improvement and sustainability of the CnL program for years to come.