

San Luis Coastal Unified School District Model Programs and Practices

District Information

CD (County District) Code: 4068809

County: San Luis Obispo

District (Local Educational Agency): San Luis Coastal Unified School District

Demographics

Enrollment: 7,597

Location Description: Rural

Overview

San Luis Coastal Unified School District (SLCUSD) represents the communities of Avila, Baywood, Los Osos, Morro Bay, and San Luis Obispo. With a student enrollment of 7,589, nearly 11% (845) are English learners, and 38% (2,925) come from socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED) households. Through the three “Rs” of rigor, relevance, and relationship, students are provided valuable opportunities to become the very best they can be. “Success for All” requires many hands, multiple networks of thoughtful people, and an expectation that every child can achieve to his or her fullest potential. This is our conscious journey as a school district.

Our schools include ten elementary, two middle, two comprehensive high schools, one continuation high school, and a robust adult school. Maintaining small schools reflects our educational philosophy of knowing students on a very personal level. Our schools are dynamic, student-centered learning communities where all children are expected to take risks, explore new opportunities, and discover their unique potential. Students thrive in SLCUSD because we have dedicated parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, and a Board of Education that is focused on student success and a culture of care.

SLCUSD shares the broader community with the post-secondary learning institutions of Cuesta Community College and California Polytechnic University. We have established strong partnerships with both schools and enjoy a supportive and articulated relationship that supports our students. We have also partnered with several non-profit agencies to open two Family Resource Centers designed to assist our families who struggle with the challenges of poverty, employment, and navigating the school system.

San Luis Coastal has some of the best educators and leaders serving our students and their families. These amazing educators symbolize who we are as a learning community. Our district leaders, principals, and teachers create innovative programs and inspire high-level professional learning communities. We have an engaged and involved parent community that supports the success of our schools through PTA, Booster organizations, DELAC, DTAC, and other parent organizations.

Another significant partner for SLCUSD is Pacific Gas and Electric Company, as our district boundaries are home to the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant. Annual tax revenue from this facility has provided support for our educational programs for many years. The impending closure of the plant in 2024–2025 will result in an \$8 million decrease in our annual budget. We began the process of developing a multi-year reduction plan in the 2017–18 school year. This challenge will not deter our commitment to serve the needs of all our students, with a targeted focus on our LCAP-identified student groups.

We are proud of our school district and look forward to a future of continued excellence in education.

Model Program/Practice

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Description

Our journey to implement the state standards in mathematics began with a problem. District assessment data indicated students were under-performing in higher-level mathematics classes. The results were especially concerning for specific student groups. A team was formed, made up of teachers, administrators, parents, math professors, and outside consultants. We knew our solution would need to be a radical change in how students learn math K–12 if we were going to see the desired results. We developed a vision for a world-class mathematics program and a multi-year plan laying out how to get there.

Our school board was instrumental in influencing the needed changes by adopting a set of District Initiatives that evolved to our LCAP goals. Developing a world-class mathematics program became our top priority, with resources aligned to the work ahead of us. Two teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) were hired to facilitate the shift. Memberships with the Silicon Valley Math Initiative and California Math Council supported our TOSAs as they researched best practices. Math consultants were retained and a partnership with math education professors was developed to provide our multi-year professional growth plan. The initial focus was on having teachers “do the math” with hands-on materials, and develop a deep understanding of the concepts they were teaching.

During the second year of training, communities of grade level teachers observed and critiqued model lessons in their classrooms. Teacher PLCs from across the district studied guided math as an instructional model for the classroom. Secondary teachers participated in an ongoing professional development series requiring a major shift in classroom structure, teaching and learning. Active student participation and discourse were both essential components.

The math standards were introduced, beginning with the Math Practices. As teachers began embracing the critical shifts required by the math practices, they attended sessions focused on understanding grade level standards. We hosted a summer institute to cement our learning and celebrate the shifts happening in our classrooms. Teacher teams began researching and developing standards-aligned lessons and resources. Student-centered math classrooms were growing. Site math leaders emerged who became instrumental in offering support and guidance. As state-adopted textbooks became available, we were ready to select materials that matched the way math was being taught in our classrooms to fully implement the state standards in a manner that was rigorous, coherent, engaging, and accessible to all learners.

Now in our third year of full implementation of the standards, we have systems in place to continue to sustain our ongoing growth and improvement. Our current LCAP calls out the ongoing professional development and support so that all students will achieve substantial academic gains through rigorous, relevant and engaging math instruction and curriculum.

Implementation and Monitoring

The implementation of state standards is not simply about updating what we teach at each grade level. Our vision is to support all teachers in shifting their hearts and minds around mathematics learning in their classrooms. To make this authentic shift a reality, professional growth and ongoing collaboration were and continue to be key. We needed many opportunities to learn, practice, fail, and keep learning in a collaborative, safe environment. The key to our successful implementation and monitoring was a multi-year plan that included expanding teachers' understanding and strategies, engaging families, and developing expertise of site leaders.

Systematic support for teachers was provided with differentiated professional learning based on best practices. All teachers participated in multiple years of training, model lessons, and site coaching facilitated by outside consultants. Some teachers became math leads by developing additional competencies. Instructional coaches attended a weeklong institute to better support teachers at site. New teachers attended training on our instructional model and standards-aligned curriculum as part of the New Teacher Academy. We relied on teacher leaders to support this continuous improvement model. Our standards-aligned curriculum provides teachers with embedded professional development that matches our instructional shifts.

Engaging families critical part to our implementation plan. We began with workshops on instructional shifts in focus, coherence, and rigor by having parents “do the math” with

our consultants. We followed up with site presentations on the standards and how to help children think like mathematicians. This was extremely important as parents were struggling with changing class and homework expectations. It took time, patience, and results to prove to parents that asking students to explain answers in multiple ways helps them more fully understand new concepts. Each elementary site now hosts popular math nights where families play math games and work on open-ended math challenges.

Monitoring our math program is multi-faceted. Achievement results from standardized and common assessments are analyzed to develop next steps for instruction, intervention, acceleration and program development. Comparison data is analyzed for all significant student groups at the board, district, site, grade, and teacher level to inform classroom, site and district allocation of resources. In addition, common assessments have been revised to more closely align with our adopted curriculum.

Ongoing monitoring of math teaching and learning is also a critical part of our success. Site administrators participated in the professional workshops with their teachers. As part of our membership with SVMIL, principals studied strategies for observing and coaching instruction. In addition, all administrators are re-calibrated on a yearly basis on lesson observation and feedback using the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Results and Outcomes

Student achievement outcomes in mathematics, as a result of our standards implementation plan, have shown continuous improvement. Initial results from the Spring 2015 Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) indicated that 50% of our students had met or exceeded standards. Spring 2017 results indicate that 61% of our students met or exceeded standards. This 11 percentage point increase over three years is promising. Overall, students scored 23 percentage points above the state average and 11 percentage points above any district in our county. The California School Dashboard indicates that we are at a green, or high status, with an increase of five points.

SLCUSD has focused on continuous growth for all students with accelerated growth for LCAP student groups. Three-year trends in mathematics achievement, as measured by the SBAC, indicate significant growth for each of our student groups. There has been a 13 percentage point growth for the socio-economically disadvantaged (SED) student group (27% to 40%), a 10 percentage point increase for the non-SED student group (64% to 74%), a 12 percentage point increase for the English learner student group (10% to 22%), an 18 percentage point increase for the RFEP student group (35% to 53%) and a 5 percentage point increase for students with disabilities group (12% to 17%). This growth over time is the result of teachers' shift in instructional practices and increased efficacy in implementing a standards-aligned curriculum.

District common assessment results are showing similar positive outcomes. Most recent results indicate a one-year growth of 14 percentage points for our K–5 students (55% to

69%). Baseline secondary mathematics common assessment results indicate that 68% of our middle school students and 58% of our high school students have met or exceeded standards. Using a data cycle process, these mid-year outcomes are analyzed by teachers and principals to develop next steps for instruction, acceleration and intervention.

Achievement gaps between student groups are consistently analyzed to determine placement of site and district resources. In addition to targeted interventions, addressing learning barriers of our SED students is a top priority. Most recently, 650 Chromebooks with mobile hotspots were provided for students living in low-income households to ensure access at home to interventions and resources. Online math interventions are now accessible for all students as we intentionality focus on closing the achievement gap.

Systems are in place to improve and sustain progress over time. Elementary lead teachers provide ongoing training to math support teachers, who share resources with their site. Monthly math updates and family nights keep our parents engaged in what is happening in our classes and strategies for supporting their child at home. In secondary, ongoing math collaboration, assessment development and professional trainings are supporting teacher learning and growth.