

Mission Valley Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 01611766000749

County: Alameda

District (Local Educational Agency): Fremont Unified

School: Mission Valley Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 708 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

The students at Mission Valley, because of the involvement and commitment of the adults surrounding them, attend a school that embraces their uniqueness, yet expects the very best from them academically and socially. Mission Valley's standing as one of the top performing schools in the district is no accident. While staff members bear most of the responsibility for conveying grade level standards and ensuring students learn and master grade level concepts, parents constantly are becoming more familiar with California State Standards and are supportive of the school's efforts to have all students master grade level content. After seven years at Mission Valley, students will have developed academic, social and behavioral skills that enable them to work collaboratively, and have an appreciative of music, dance, art forms, and athletic endeavors. Mission Valley School has an enrollment of 708 K–6 students. Our students demographics consists of approximately 86% Asian, 7% White, 4% Hispanic, 1% African American, and 2% are multiple or undeclared. 7% identify as socioeconomically disadvantaged and 0.1% are foster youth. English Learners make up 13.7% of the student population, and 17% are identified as Gifted and Talented. Currently, the certificated staff consists of 26 regular education classroom teachers, two physical

education specialists and two science specialists. There are four SDC mild/moderate teachers, a part time RSP teacher, a .4 psychologist, a full time speech/language pathologist, a .2 nurse, and a principal. Teachers meet in Professional Learning Community Teams to review focus standards, student data and plan curriculum based on best practices and student needs. The Student Study Team (SST) meets at least once monthly with parents to provide intervention strategies and at times, referrals for special education testing. The staff uses FUSD adopted curriculum while providing students with enrichment and remediation opportunities as needed and character development through our Head, Hearts and Hands curriculum. The staff is actively involved in grade level curricular activities which include the science, social studies, literature, math, technology, fine arts, GATE differentiation, testing/assessment, and writing strategies. The staff continues to develop policies, procedures, and programs in order for all students to have the opportunity to learn in a supportive environment which values the individuality of each child. Members of the community provide the Fine Arts Mini Experience (FAME) program. Letter Reward events, Science and Math Olympiad and multicultural assemblies have been funded by Mission Valley School Association (MVSA) and others. Some other activities available after school by outside organizations at the school include: chess club, basketball, beginning and intermediate band, science enrichment, robotics, debate, Hindi, sports and art clubs.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Letter Reward

Length of Model Program/Practice: 8+ years

Target Area(s): Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention, Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement

Target Population(s): American Indian, Asian, Black or African American, Filipino, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, White, Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: School Climate, Parent Engagement, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development

Description

The Letter Reward school-wide system for student conduct was designed over twenty years ago to foster a safe and supportive school climate and promote engagement in learning for all students. Students in kindergarten can earn a “Good Worker Badge” daily for demonstrating appropriate executive functioning skills throughout the day while first through sixth grade students earn their “Letter” each week by completing school/homework and for demonstrating appropriate behavior during the week.

Teachers in grades one through six send home either congratulatory notices (Letters), a notification of a non-Letter or a Discipline each week in the students' Friday Folders, informing parents of their child's weekly progress. The goal is to communicate regularly and timely with parents. Students earning their Letter each week then have the ability to participate in thirty minutes of reward (free choice) activities each Friday afternoon. Students not earning their Letter attend study hall during the reward time. As new teachers join our teams, others in the grade level work together to inform the new member of the reward system and support them in their understanding of the program.

The MVSA (PTO) supports Letter Reward via the funding of trimester and semester Letter Reward field trips and assemblies. Fourth through sixth graders have the opportunity to earn two rewards during the year by earning at least 80% of their congratulatory letters within each semester: a bowling trip at the end of semester one and a picnic field trip to Central Park at the end of semester two. First through third graders participate in trimester rewards such as movies and popcorn, field day activities and assemblies such as BMX riders, all supported financially by the PTO. The criteria for earning a trimester reward for students in grades one through three adjust during the year to match their developmental needs.

There are several facets of the Letter Reward Program which have evolved over the past few years to ensure students have the opportunity to participate in reward activities as data indicated higher numbers of students with disabilities and English Learners being suspended over the past three years than other students. One example is the work done during the 2017–2018 school year and the use of Restorative Practices (Circles); aligning with the shifts taking place throughout Fremont Unified and part of the district's LCAP.

Another facet and support to Letter Reward is our intermediate (grades 4–6) Friendship Club which supports our special day class students' social emotional development. The Friendship Club provides students with disabilities the opportunity to engage with same aged general education peers during recess, helping them develop their interpersonal skills.

Implementation and Monitoring

The Letter Reward System is defined for students and families in the Mission Valley Parent Handbook and teachers discuss the program with families during Back to School Night each September. Kindergarten parents are informed daily of their child's performance through the earning of Good Worker Badges and weekly via Friday Folders for students in first through sixth grades. This regular and timely communication helps parents stay engaged in their child's progress and provides for early interventions for students not earning their weekly Letter. A big part of the success of this program depends on parental follow-up each week, as it is our hope parents will emphasize the importance of earning a letter every Friday. If a student does not earn a congratulatory letter, parents sign and return a notice sent home by the classroom teacher explaining why. Teachers maintain annotated logs of disciplines throughout the school year, helping us monitor the effectiveness of the program and helping us determine with other

interventions or supports are needed. Utilizing Letter Reward and other restorative practices, we are proud to say we no reportable suspensions in the 2017–2018 school year compared to five this time last year.

With the parent club's financial support, we are able to provide the end of trimester/semester rewards and continue the Letter Reward System throughout our school for well over twenty years.

While the Letter Reward schoolwide system establishes the protocol for student conduct, our teachers, through the advice of our Leadership Team, are reading *The Growth Mindset Coach* and evaluating the possibility of incorporating those strategies into a more growth-oriented environment at Mission Valley in the 2018–2019 school year. The school's Leadership team has decided that because our students have a great amount of pressure placed upon them from both home and school and many have a fixed mindset, this would support all students' growth in both our general education and special day classes. People with a growth mindset, who are rewarded on the process of working hard, are more confident, willing to take on unfamiliar challenges and therefore have the ability to be more creative and successful. Studies have shown that growth mindset result in higher test scores, improved grades and more in-class involvement for all students.

We presented the Growth Mindset to approximately 40 parents this past October during a parent education night. They response was so positive we are preparing for another parent night March 13, 2018 focusing on stress and the importance of play.

Results and Outcomes

Approximately 98 percent of general education primary students (1–3) attended the first trimester Letter Reward movie with 70 percent of our primary special day (SDC) students earning the reward. Review of behavior goals and/or behavior intervention plans have been reviewed and updated to allow more participation by our SDC students in trimester two. The results are similar for our intermediate students, with some 95 percent of general education students (4–6) and 81 percent of our secondary SDC students earning the semester one bowling field trip.

Last year 4.9% of our students with disabilities were suspended compared to just 0.6% of our overall student population. Over the past three years schoolwide suspensions have gone from 1.2% to 0.6%. The suspension rates for our socioeconomically disadvantaged students declined significantly by 1.5% in the 2016–2017 school year and students with disabilities declined significantly by 3.6%. We believe adding restorative practices and the Friendship Club to Letter Reward have allowed students to be exposed to more appropriate behaviors by their same aged peers and begin to understand the impact their actions have on others.

In the 2017–2018 Healthy Kids survey 82% of fifth graders completing the survey indicated our school teaches students to care about each other and treat each other respect most or all of the time and 92% state they know what the school rules are most

or all of the time. 68% reported the school rules are fair and 69% feel they are treated fairly when they break the rules. 95% of the students indicated they follow the playground rules at recess and during lunch most or all of the time and 60% report students are well behaved at our school.

When asked questions regarding supports for social and emotional learning, only 57% of respondents claimed the school helps them resolve conflicts with one another either most or all of the time, speaking the the need for continued work with restorative practices.

In a 2016–2017 parent survey 87% reported their child reports their typical school day as mostly positive and 78% state the school effectively addresses issues related to attendance and discipline. Ninety-one percent of respondents indicate the school offers opportunities for parents to be involved at times they are available and 78% believe their children are learning skills that will prepare them for life after graduation.

A kindergarten teacher reports, “I have a student who was exhibiting very disruptive behaviors since the beginning of school. The Good Worker Badge program gives me a way to give daily feedback to the parents, who then follow through with rewards or consequences at home. This regular feedback and cooperation between parents and teacher allowed us to get her disruptive behaviors under control,” which indicates the importance of communicating regularly and partnering with parents.