

O.N. Hirsch Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 01611766000764

County: Alameda

District (Local Educational Agency): Fremont Unified

School: O.N. Hirsch Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 571 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Hirsch Elementary School prides itself in being "A Caring Community", working together to promote the development of the social, emotional, physical and academic excellence of all students. Our school goals are to provide a rigorous and challenging curriculum, based on the California State Standards, ensuring high levels of learning for all students. To provide a safe, positive learning environment for all, and to help students become independent, self motivated enthusiastic learners. The core of our mission is the student as an individual. By working together to provide a program of full inclusion, ensures that all students have access to the core curriculum, academic support programs, and enrichment programs, we will accomplish our goals. Our Character Education Program helps students learn the important role they play in their own education, how to make good choices based on values and the importance of positive peer relationships.

Part of making Hirsch a wonderful and caring school is our diversity. We have students of many different ethnic backgrounds, who speak different languages. To ensure clear communication with parents we utilize the services of our district translators and our

staff members who speak a variety of languages. Students come to us from diverse social and economic backgrounds, with performance ranging from our communicative students in our moderate to severe Special Day Class to the gifted mainstreamed child. Together we strive for excellence as measured against standards and the students' own individual potential. The final components of our integrated network are our support services. Every student is given the support necessary to achieve excellence. We are especially pleased with our Academic Learning Center, our Resource and Speech program, our before/after school intervention classes and Homework Club. Extra-curricular activities include Student Council, Boys /Girls Basketball Teams, Chess Club, Band, Kids' Club, Math League and Lego Robotics.

We are proud of all the hard work teachers and students put in to preparing for CAASPP assessment in the spring of 2018. It is by continually analyzing available data; examining and re-evaluating our best practices that Hirsch will continue to be a high performing school meeting the needs of all our students.

Hirsch School thrives due to the outstanding volunteers that assist our staff, and students. There are so many ways to be an active participant in a student's education. We feel volunteering is an important and necessary one. There are numerous ways parents can participate at our school. The School Site Council, PTA and ELAC meet regularly with teacher representatives and administration to give input and direction on how to best serve the changing needs of our students. The PTA sponsors many fun activities/events, also our students are fortunate to receive enrichment programs like Music for Minors & Fame provided by volunteers.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Full Inclusion Program

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

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

Target Population(s): Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: School Climate, Small Learning Communities, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development

Description

The K– 1 Inclusion co teaching model has approximately 12 students. In Kindergarten, a focused effort is made to capture the learning profile of each student, establish a baseline, understand their strengths and areas of needs and design a learning environment to meet their unique needs. In first grade, the students are included to the

maximum extent appropriate with all supports, and related technological assists provided in the classroom. This model includes a highly trained education specialist. Data explicitly showed that intensive support was needed in the lower grade levels to ensure optimal learning and social outcomes for all students. The specialist can focus on the interventions and supports needed for students with disabilities and for other students requiring early intervention. A deliberate effort to “catch students before they fail” is a priority.

The Learning Center model currently spans grades 2nd to 5th, is organized to allow up to 4 students with disabilities per grade level to be fully included. Highly trained Para educators provide support in each of the full inclusion classrooms. An education specialist co teaches in each of the classrooms at a mutually designated time every day. The delivery of content and instruction is achieved through a collaborative teaching model that utilizes the strengths of the general education teachers and the education specialists. Utilizing the principles of Universal Design for Learning we rationalize that learner ability is at the intersection of the individual and his/ her environment or context. All teachers (general education and special education) were trained in the framework of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

The IEP Team determines students placement in the K–1 or Learning Center. The Individualized Education Plan for each student in either program is a living document that involves numerous interactions between parents, teachers and support staff throughout the school year. We have four major goals for all stakeholders:

1. To ensure that goals for students are meaningful.
2. That the procedures utilized to implement the various programs and interventions are appropriate.
3. That the outcomes are appropriate to the goals.
4. That we address the needs of the whole child, (academics, social, attendance, and behavior). Decisions are always a team effort.

At the end of year one of the implementation of the Learning Center model, and on several occasions since then we invited all the stakeholders (parents, teachers, para educators and administrators) to come together and engage in a semi structured group discussions. The goal was two fold; to evaluate the program and to build a community of practice in which all stakeholders felt invested, engaged in collaborative problem solving and to create a common vision for the implementation of the program in the future. The entire discussion was transcribed and we looked for themes that emerged from the analysis.

Implementation and Monitoring

Effective implementation rests on all stakeholders, parents, students, teachers, administrators and para educators working as a collaborative team. It is a collaborative teaching model that allows for students to be divided into fluid and flexible groups for all the core instruction. This fluidity was made possible through careful planning by the

teachers and the creation of a schedule that delineated how the groups would be divided and who would teach the various subjects. This allows us to differentiate instruction, provide intervention in addition to core instruction and strategically monitor progress for those that need it. For children performing above grade level standards, numerous opportunities are available to extend the curriculum and increase rigor, depth and complexity.

Teachers meet in collaborative teams on a weekly basis to engage in collective inquiry. Lessons are planned with the underlying philosophy that all learners are varied and come to the classrooms with differing background knowledge, and different ways in which they access and process information. The Individualized education plan goals of children with special needs are incorporated into the routines and daily lessons that are implemented making them meaningful and natural. Data is collected at regular intervals for all students with a baseline being established at the beginning of the year. Progress monitoring utilizing formative assessments, helps teachers keep track of the trajectory the students are on.

In addition to measuring student progress, measures examining the social validity of the program are utilized to track its efficacy. After the initial resistance to the program, parents report great satisfaction in how it has been implemented and the results. Parents of children with special needs report academic and social progress that their children have made.

Kanakavalli Kannan and Anand Parthasarathy have had their daughter fully included at Hirsch since Kindergarten. They reflect on their journey so far and say, "I believe inclusion is a thoughtful process and requires planning to make it meaningful. We are fortunate to have teachers, both general education and special education who have intrinsic beliefs in our daughter's ability to participate and do well. In the past three years, we have seen her teachers include her in the most natural ways, supporting her academic needs, building those bonds in the classroom and helping students see past their differences."

Angie Sheldon, a parent of a typically developing child had the following to say as she reflected on her family's experience. She says, "When my daughter started in the inclusion program, we were quite apprehensive, but it actually turned out to be a very good situation. I think it teaches compassion and understanding and how to work with people with special needs or other learning capacities. It taught her patience and how to help others more than anything else. It was a great experience."

Results and Outcomes

Over the last nine years, we have moved 30% of students to general education settings with resource or other such supports, another 30% move on to a lesser restrictive environment such as a special day class for students with milder impairments. Parents report great satisfaction with the progress students make in the program along with intangibles like friendships and growth in self-esteem. The typical caseload every year varied from 12 to 14 students. Every year 5 to 7 students exited the program after first

grade. There were some years when kindergartners exited after one year to a general education program.

After establishing the Learning Center, (LC), model at Hirsch, the students from the K–1 program come into the LC model as determined by the IEP team. We measure outcomes for students in the program with the mindset that each of these students has a right to be included. So, our perspective on outcomes is related to social validity. We measure social validity on three levels: goals, procedures and outcomes. Are the goals meaningful to all the stakeholders, (parents, students, teachers and administrators)? Are the procedures utilized to implement the various programs and interventions appropriate in the eyes of the stakeholders? Are the outcomes meaningful for everyone involved? The response to these questions involves an ongoing process of collaboration with stakeholders. The qualitative data comes from the positive feedback we receive from both parents of typically developing students and parents of students with disabilities and teachers. The quantitative data is shown in the number of students who have either exited the program or progressed to a less restrictive environment.

At Hirsch students with special needs will receive their specialized academic instruction as members of the general education classrooms. We anticipate that these inclusive practices will lead to the development of positive peer relationships between children with special needs and students in the general population. The implementation of the practices of Universal Design for Learning will lead to the curriculum being accessible for different types of learners. This will potentially benefit students who are considered at risk for academic failure. By virtue of implementing the multi tiered systems of intervention; we will have the potential to allow for intervention to be provided for any student in the general education classroom as soon as they need it. Periodic progress monitoring will help in the identification of students who need targeted intervention. This will lead to timely intervention being provided to students at risk for academic failure, which we hope will reduce the number of referrals to special education services in these classrooms. By allowing every student to receive the instruction that is targeted to meet their individual needs, there will be differentiation of instruction and the opportunity for depth and complexity where needed.