

Fancher Creek Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 10621176108088

County: Fresno

District (Local Educational Agency): Clovis Unified

School: Fancher Creek Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 840 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Established in 1990, Fancher Creek Elementary School is nestled in a diverse neighborhood in southeast Fresno. A symbol of hope for our students, Fancher Creek is a place where children can forget their worries and learn skills to help them reach their goals. Every staff member serves as an educator who teaches and cares for our Falcons every school day. Over time, our campus has become a hub for community activities and serves as a place for families to play. This connection between our school and the community it serves has created a tight-knit, family atmosphere that supports Fancher Creek's mission and goals. Fancher Creek is known as a family and we strive to maintain that reputation in everything we do.

Fancher Creek is a Title I School with 76% of our 840 students classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. Our diverse student demographic consists of 51% Hispanic, 28% Asian, 12% White, and 7% African American. Our English Learner population has risen to 17% with nine languages, including English, spoken on campus.

As part of our Single Plan for School Achievement, we allocate funds to provide primary language support for students and parents in Spanish, Hmong, and Punjabi. We continually monitor changes in our demographics and adjust allocations to meet the current needs of our students to close the achievement gap and level the playing field.

In the past year, Fancher Creek has seen academic achievement rise 10% in English Language Arts and 9% mathematics as measured on the SBAC assessment. Our quest to build internal coherence where everyone believes that all students can and will learn provides the framework to meet our goal of increasing academic achievement for all students. Critical components within the framework are: collaborating within Professional Learning Communities (PLC), leadership teams, and vertical articulation meetings, establishing a goal setting and data analysis cycle, and providing all students with thoughtful, purposeful learning opportunities closely-aligned to state standards. Fancher Creek is in year five of this project and is seeing the benefit of building coherence to increase student success.

Fancher Creek believes in the Sparthenian model where students develop in mind, body, and spirit. In addition to an academic focus, students are encouraged to participate in a variety of sports, dance clubs, drama, oral interpretation, robotics, science fair, history day, and many other activities. Our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), known as SOAR, teaches students how to regulate their behavior throughout the school day by reinforcing desired behaviors with positive reinforcement. Additionally, students are taught the six pillars of character through Character Counts! in and out of the classroom. By developing well-rounded students who strive to be the best they can be in mind, body, and spirit, we encourage our Falcons to grow into productive citizens with servant hearts.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Building Coherence for Instructional Improvement (BCII)

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Professional Development

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

Strategies Used: Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development

Description

Five years ago, Fancher Creek embarked on a project called Building Coherence for Instructional Improvement (BCII). A team of teachers and administrators began the work to understand the power of a coherent system. We learned about the importance of

establishing trust, recognizing interaction between teacher, student, and grade level content, clarifying our school's vision, prioritizing tasks that support the vision and eliminating those that don't, and establishing an instructional focus.

The driving force of the BCII work is the instructional focus. We analyzed data and determined a need to improve student writing, specifically justification across curricular areas. Once the instructional focus was identified, shared learning began. Funds were allocated for consultant fees, teacher release time, and materials. Teachers learned easy-to-implement strategies to help students develop their thoughts, organize information, and stretch their writing. We used Instructional Rounds as a tool to evaluate progress. The framework for instructional improvement was in place by year three which allowed us to narrow our focus the last two years.

In 2016–2017, we identified specific strategies designed to improve students' ability to justify their thinking in writing. The data showed a need to address the way students answered constructed response questions. We researched strategies that could be adjusted to meet the grade level standards in grades K–6. The RACE strategy is standards-aligned, can be adapted for all grades, and gives structure to constructed responses. Students are taught to restate the question, answer the question, cite evidence, and explain or extend. This process helps students draft complete answers to constructed response questions by justifying their thinking. In Kindergarten, students use the R and A parts of RACE orally while first graders restate and answer in writing and cite evidence orally. Fourth through sixth graders use all four parts of RACE to answer all open-ended questions and are learning to expand their answers with examples. This vertically articulated strategy is designed to increase in depth and complexity as students advance grades.

In 2017–2018, the staff wanted to develop a RACE-like strategy for math. Following the BCII framework, the team began learning about math justification and researching strategies. Through collaboration, we discovered the need to develop a strategy for problem solving and justification. So, we created a problem-solving strategy called CARE and SPOT Check to justify. Students first comprehend the problem, answer the question, reflect on the answer, and explain the solution. Then, students state the solution, explain the process, identify operations used, and tie it together. These strategies are a result of the collaborative work of the BCII team to implement the BCII framework at Fancher Creek.

Implementation and Monitoring

With the desire to build coherence and implement specific justification strategies in reading and math, Fancher Creek has narrowed our district's LCAP goals of increasing student achievement for all and providing professional development to directly meet the needs of our students and staff. Implementation of the BCII framework, RACE, CARE, and SPOT Check continues at various stages. Monitoring systems look different with each component, but evaluating effectiveness continues to be a priority.

Implementing the BCII Framework into our everyday operation at Fancher Creek continues to evolve. We are at a place where all staff members know the framework components and believe in their ability to increase our effectiveness as a team. Our BCII team meets monthly to sustain the momentum we have built and assess our progress toward fully implementing our instructional focus. Through our work, we have come to understand that even one new staff member creates a new team dynamic. So, we revisit high-impact components regularly. Our monitoring system for our BCII work is rooted in Instructional Rounds and staff surveys. Both systems provide valuable feedback that we use to reflect and adjust our priorities regarding our instructional focus each semester.

The RACE Strategy for English Language Arts is in its second year of implementation, so refinement is currently the main goal. Teacher teams are consistently using RACE in class and are gathering data to be analyzed by the BCII team. At our monthly meetings, the status of RACE is discussed, and plans are made to adjust practice when needed. The staff continues to identify RACE as an instructional priority, so every effort is made to keep this strategy on the forefront of everyone's mind. Every classroom has a RACE poster hung as a visual reminder of our collective commitment and serves as a student resource. Our site and district assessments are monitoring tools for teacher teams and administration. Ultimately, 2018 SBAC claim data and met/exceeded percentages will be analyzed to determine effectiveness of RACE.

CARE and SPOT Check are still new to Fancher Creek since implementation began in October of 2017. While every classroom has a CARE poster, the BCII team is working with grade levels to customize the SPOT Check strategy to best meet each level's standards. Once initial adjustments are finalized, our staff will come together to ensure each grade level is articulated. Adjustments will again be made based on feedback and documents published for grade levels. Currently, all classes are learning the CARE strategy and practicing the steps of justification. We plan to have all documents published by April 2018 and will collect student work samples to monitor progress toward math justification. Like RACE, we will eventually track progress on site, district, and state assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of CARE and SPOT Check.

Results and Outcomes

The result of our BCII work has been articulated, K–6 strategies that align to the standards and skills required for students to be successful. Without the coherence framework, RACE, CARE, and SPOT Check would not be present in every classroom. The foundation needed to be set before school-wide strategy work would take hold. Our staff is mindful of the coherence components and are committed to maintaining the progress we have made after five years of this work. Students are benefitting from a coherent staff with a common focus.

In our second year of K–6 RACE strategy implementation, teachers report spending less time teaching the basics of RACE which allows them to get to the grade level expectation much faster than last year. Student confidence has soared with the realization that a familiar strategy and common vocabulary are being used across the

school. Title I students thrive in safe, familiar environments and Fancher Creek is becoming more adaptive to our students needs with greater coherence and articulation. Data is always a strong reinforcer for staff and students, so we were pleased to see positive changes in our SBAC scores. The number of students scoring above standard on the reading and writing claims increased from 2015–2016 to 2016–2017. The reading claim rose 5% and the writing claim climbed 6%. This is in addition to a 10% increase in students meeting and exceeding standard in English Language Arts. Our students, staff, and parents are looking forward to continued improvement.

Fancher Creek is experiencing a positive shift and is gaining momentum. Our staff is more open than ever to experimenting with new ideas and collaborating to design appropriate strategies. They have a renewed understanding of the need for articulated, K–6 strategies to increase student achievement. The work to create the CARE and SPOT Check strategies has been collective and collaborative. The Fancher Creek staff is invested in the success of these strategies and is reinforced by the success of RACE. Preliminary analysis of student work samples is showing improvement in the detail within justification statements, so we are encouraged. We look forward to continued improvement in our student work samples this year as well as our SBAC math scores this summer.

One unexpected side effect of our BCII and strategy work has been an eagerness to create more K–6 systems. Based on our last Instructional Rounds session in January 2018, our staff identified a need for an articulated math annotation system with common vocabulary. The BCII team worked on a basic structure, presented it at a staff workshop, and grade levels provided feedback to create a draft of the first Fancher Creek math annotation checklist. The energy surrounding this work is electric and we are encouraged by the high levels of engagement.