J.C Forkner Elementary
Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 10621666101109

County: Fresno

District (Local Educational Agency): Fresno Unified

School: J.C Forkner Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 553 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

The mission of J.C Forkner Elementary is to create an environment that maximizes every student's academic potential, while developing skills required to become future leaders.

"The Home of The Future Leaders" is the motto that captures the belief and commitment of all stakeholders at Forkner Elementary -- students, parents, staff, and community members. Several generations of families have sent their children to Forkner to receive a high quality educational foundation. Forkner's alumni have become leaders in the community and have developed successful careers.

Forkner's community can best be described as a suburban, middle class, and culturally diverse neighborhood. With an attendance rate of 97% - one of the best in the District - Forkner's 553 students represent various ethnicities and come from diverse backgrounds: 1% Filipino, 1% Native American, 1% Pacific Islander, 4% Asian, 8% Multiracial, 10% African American, 33% White, and 42% Hispanic.

Forkner provides all students with a positive school climate. The learning environment maximizes every student's academic potential while developing the skills required to become future leaders. Students leave Forkner equipped with high academic, strong character and leadership skills that will prepare them to meet the rigors of middle and high school.

At Forkner 100% of the Student body is immersed in a wide variety of rigorous co-curricular and/or extra-curricular educational experiences. These programs include but are not limited to: music, visual arts, performing arts, science, technology, and athletics.

Forkner has distinguished itself as one of the top performing schools in Fresno Unified School District. It is the highest performing non-magnet school in the District. 2016–17 SBAC ELA 68.1% of students scored at meeting or exceeding standards. On SBAC math 57.2% of students met or exceeded standards.

School-wide recognition of student achievement in curricular and co-curricular areas is an integral part of the school program. Awards assemblies are held to recognize students for outstanding academics, positive character traits, participation in activities and various other accomplishments. The Block F Award recognizes a combination of excellence in academics, citizenship, attendance, participation in co-curricular activities, and service to the school and community.

Forkner is proud of our partnership with parents and the community. Parents and community members are actively recruited and frequently support student learning through volunteering in the classroom, PTA, Art Docent, and various events that connects families to the school. Forkner parents provide over 600 hours a year of volunteering on our campus. The Forkner community and especially parental support has played a strong role in the success of the school.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Professional Learning Communities

Length of Model Program/Practice: 8+ years

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

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: Small Learning Communities, Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development

Description

In recent years Forkner PLC teams have become more student focused and less teacher focused. Forkner's teachers are motivated and enthusiastic to try new techniques and methods for improving student learning. All staff continuously engages in professional learning and book studies to continue to strengthen the capacity of Forkner's PLC's. The use of Learning By Doing, by DuFour has been a catalyst in refining the focus or our PLC's. Dr. DuFour emphasizes that "time spent building up shared knowledge results in faster, more effective and committed action later in the improvement process." This action research built shared knowledge through collaboration which has strengthened Forkner's foundation of efficiency and efficacy.

DuFour's four corollary PLC questions which serve as the basis for collaborative discussions and decisions regarding student learning. These four questions are:

1. What do we want our students to learn?
2. How do we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when learning has not occurred?
4. How will we respond when they already learned it?

Forkner PLCs consistently use these four guiding questions to sharpen their focus on students to close the achievement gap and also provide acceleration for advanced students. Based on the research of Dr. Douglas Reeves, Forkner's PLC teams and administration spent time identifying essential standards that met the following criteria: endurance, leverage, and readiness for the next level of learning. This work is very critical to the process of planning teaching at a rigor that will allow students to master grade level standards. All PLC's go through an in-depth process of planning units of study by completing the following steps: 1) Identify essential grade level standards 2) deconstruct the standards and determining the rigor of the standard 3) Identify how the standards will be assessed at the end of a unit 4) Develop Common Formative Assessments (CFA's) to monitor students progress throughout the unit 5) Identify resources in the curriculum that will support teaching and learning standards. Next, PLC teams create quarterly Teaching Cycle Calendars. Teaching Cycle Calendars identify: Unit/chapter focus standards, length of unit of study, CFA dates, PLC data analysis meetings, and Response To Intervention (RTI) days.

To increase student achievement levels PLC teams have become more diagnostic and prescriptive when analyzing students assessed learning needs. District ELA and Math formative assessments are administered to students two times a year to benchmark their proficiency of the essential standards. More frequent progress monitoring occurs through the administration of grade level PLC team developed CFA's, facilitating immediate response to intervention. After analyzing CFA's, PLC teams identify which students need reteaching and/or acceleration. A timely response to students who have not mastered the learning has ensured continuous improvement for all students.

Implementation and Monitoring

The progress and success of Forkner's PLCs is monitored by the use of frequent CFA's and Specific Measurable, Achievable, Results-Focused, Time bound (SMART) goals. SMART goals are established by PLC teams based on focus standards. After teaching and a CFA is given, data is analyzed to determine if the SMART goal was attained and identify students who mastered or did not master the standard. Teams also complete item analysis on the CFA and look for common mistakes or misconceptions. Teams then determine the most effective instructional strategies that were used.

PLC's meet 120 minutes weekly to use CFA data to diagnose and prescribe for each student. To address each students individual diagnosed needs a daily thirty-minute systematic RTI block is utilized school wide. This thirty-minute block occurs four days a week and during this time no new standards are taught. Additional staff supports the RTI blocks for each grade level. The additional supports allows for creating smaller group instruction and the ability to provide a more prescriptive re-teach, re-engagement, and/or acceleration.

Lessons during RTI are differentiated and scaffold to meet the needs of each group of students. Students are grouped based on their mastery of the weekly standard and receive re-teaching and remediation. Proficient and advanced students enhance their learning by accelerated extended learning projects. Teachers also observe, model, and coach colleagues who may struggle with the instruction of specific standards.

The response for students who need additional support is embedded in a multi-tiered prescriptive approach to intervention based on the data which includes:

Tier 3 – Intensive - focused small group instruction on a specific skill and/or remedial need provided by the Resource Specialist Team. Tier 2 – Strategic – Students who have not yet mastered the current essential reading standard(s) receive small group instruction from grade level teacher. Tier 1 – Acceleration – students that have mastered the current reading standard(s) receive accelerated extended lessons. Student groups are determined based off each CFA results.

Forkner's PLC teams work collaboratively to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of high learning for all students. This systematic process has ensured that the response to students who are not yet proficient is timely and appropriate to the individual student's needs. Highly structured practices, research-based strategies, small group instruction, and additional time has supported teachers in moving more students to grade level or above.

The effectiveness of Forkner's PLC and RTI process is consistently monitored through PLC's evidence and artifacts. PLC's completed Teaching Cycle Calendars, agenda's and data collection protocol tools are collected and reviewed by administration and lead teachers. Also, Lead Teachers from each PLC and administration meet as an Instructional Leadership Team monthly to review data.

Results and Outcomes

Forkner has distinguished itself as one of the top performing schools in Fresno Unified School District and the highest performing non-magnet school. The success of our improved PLC implementation can be seen when looking at a variety of data sets. 2016–17 SBAC ELA 68.1% of students scored at meeting or exceeding standards. From 2014–15 to 2016–17 we had a 6% increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards in ELA. During that time, our African American student population increased proficiency by 21% going from 32% meeting or exceeding standards, to 53.3% meeting or exceeding. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students increased by 13%, moving from 50% meeting or exceeding to 63%. Between the 2016 and 2017 SBAC we also had positive growth in moving students out of the (DNM) does not meet bands. In ELA 34.3% of students who were in (SNM) Standards Not Met in 2016 moved up a level in 2017.

California State Dashboard Fall 2017 English Language Arts Assessment Report indicates that all of Forkner's students and subgroups had an increase in performance.

# of students

status

change

All students

293

High 33.6 points above level 3

Increase

+14.3 points

Socioeconomically

Disadvantaged

155

High 16.9 points above level 3

Increased significantly

+19.3 points.

African American

29

Low 6.1 points below level 3

Increased significantly

+34.1 points

Hispanic

129

high 20.6 points above level 3

increase of

+10.9 points.

White

99

very high 61.1 points above level 3

Increase of

+12.4

Parents are clearly in support of the educational program that is in place, as noted in Forkner's 2017–18 parent survey. 99% of parents rated the school as "providing high quality instruction to their child". 99% of the parent population rated the overall Climate of Support for Academic Learning as "good to excellent." On the student and staff survey, 99% of students and teachers favorably responded "They feel there is a climate conducive to learning, and that teachers use supportive practices, such as encouragement and constructive feedback"; "varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills"; "support for risk-taking and independent thinking"; "atmosphere conducive to dialog and questioning"; "academic challenge"; and "individual attention to support differentiated learning".

The relentless dedication and focus of Forkner's collective teaching staff in continuing to evolve as a PLC over the years is directly responsible for our increased students' success. We have, and will continue to diligently work on continuing to close the achievement gap.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stated, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education! At Forkner, all the stakeholders strive to have all students reach their maximum potential both in intelligence and character while developing skills required to become future leaders.