

## **Manchester GATE Elementary School Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 10621666103832

County: Fresno

District (Local Educational Agency): Fresno Unified

School: Manchester GATE Elementary School

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 717 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Manchester GATE Elementary School is part of the Fresno Unified School District located in the San Joaquin Valley, the agricultural heart of California. Manchester GATE School is a magnet school that attracts students in grades 2–6 from virtually every elementary school in the district. Some students live within several blocks of the school, while others take a forty-five minute bus ride each morning and again after school. The magnet program is designed to meet the special needs of students eligible for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE).

For over 30 years, Manchester GATE School has offered gifted learners the right to participate in an appropriate academic environment. Students thrive in a vast range of accelerated learning opportunities. Their critical and creative thinking skills are cultivated as teachers encourage them to discuss, debate and question. The standards-based curriculum is tied to a cycle of continuous improvement model, in which teachers use a variety of feedback to inform, plan, and assess instruction and learning. The

underlying goal is to provide opportunities for students to construct meaning and then apply what they are learning in meaningful, real life situations as they meet and exceed the Common Core State Standards. Learning at Manchester is hands-on and interactive, with students actively involved in developing divergent thinking skills. The administration, staff members, parents and students perceive school as a place to learn and hold high standards and expectations for achievement and behavior. As a result of the success of these strategies, Manchester has been named a California Distinguished School five times: 1987, 1995, 2000, 2010, and 2014. In 2001 it was named a National Blue Ribbon School for the first time. Manchester GATE had the distinction of being recognized for National Blue Ribbon in 2009 and 2014 as well.

A key to the overwhelming success of our magnet program has been the dynamic, energetic staff, which includes 25 classroom teachers, two additional teachers who teach science lab and technology lab classes to all students, and a part-time ISGI (SPED) teacher. Two part-time instrumental music teachers and a part-time vocal music instructor provide regular instruction for all interested students. An art specialist provides integrated art lessons for each grade level. Additional support staff includes seven Instructional Assistants in addition to a Library Technician.

Co-Curricular programs that are very inclusive also help create the type of environment that encourages school involvement. These programs connect students to the school, develop positive character traits and minimize conflict and other harmful behaviors. The Co-Curricular program increase student engagement and achievement. School-wide recognition of student achievement in curricular and co-curricular areas are an integral part of the school program.

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: Comprehensive Differentiated Curriculum

Length of Model Program/Practice: 8+ years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Use of Technology

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, Small Learning Communities, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

## **Description**

Manchester School serves approximately 750 identified gifted students. Educational research supports the belief that gifted students have special social, emotional and academic needs. These needs form the basis for the program at Manchester School as we attempt to meet the students in qualitatively different ways. The school's entire focus is on providing a specialized program to not only help students meet rigorous standards, but to meet the collective needs of ALL of the students in a qualitatively different way.

To provide a program with the rigorous academic content, to help eliminate achievement gaps, and to help students meet the Common Core State Standards, teachers use grade level content and performance standards as the foundation and then incorporate the components of a comprehensive differentiated curriculum--depth, complexity, novelty and acceleration. This best meets the students' developmental and intellectual needs. Higher expectations and faster pacing give students a chance to be exposed to higher-level thinking activities and in-depth lessons based on Webb's Depth of Knowledge chart. Curricular areas are instructed in more depth and with more complexity, to go beyond content standards and give students a chance to learn through a differentiated curriculum.

The curriculum in place at Manchester GATE School is comprehensive and allows students to meet and exceed performance and content standards. The Language Arts program has strong components in reading, writing, speaking and listening. An effective literature-based program is implemented to develop students' interpretive comprehension skills through the reading of novels and non-fiction selections, often with a focus on topics rooted in Social Studies and Science. The Social Science and Science curriculum support the students to provide a more stimulating and challenging curriculum; one where students can utilize accelerated resources to study, use research skills, writing reports and apply skills learned throughout the curriculum. Teachers teach the writing process and publish informational, narrative and opinion/argument genres called for in the anchor writing standards of the Common Core. The students are given a variety of opportunities to practice the conventions as they write across the curriculum in order to share their thinking and learning. Manchester has maintained a mathematics curriculum that is rigorous in all strands. State adopted instructional materials form the core of the mathematics program. The use of structured lesson design, math journals, projects, Cornell notes, and a hands-on approach to learning and mastering mathematical practices is deeply embedded in the course of study. The technology program is used daily to support and enhance teaching and learning. A blended learning approach is evident as students are taking control of their own learning through establishing goals and monitoring their progress.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

Expert teachers are perhaps the most important resource for improving student learning. Student achievement depends on excellent teaching. The need for experienced and inspirational educational leaders is particularly acute at schools serving low-income areas. Manchester GATE School is an excellent illustration of this.

Fresno Unified is among the most impoverished districts in the country. 64% of the students at Manchester GATE are considered Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, and yet our achievement levels are among the best in the state. The school's collaborative professional development model has enabled teachers and administrators to identify needs as they emerge, and has also allowed teachers to develop and refine skills necessary to meet our unique student needs. This professional development model has been the foundation for the success of the students and the school.

Manchester's teachers are avid, enthusiastic learners who bring a high degree of professionalism to our school each day. On average our teachers have over 20 years of classroom experience. Yet, as a previous Superintendent once said, "You're either moving forward or moving backward; you never stay the same." It is the goal to continue to improve daily and stay current with the latest educational research no matter how many years of experience one may have. It is important that teachers be trained in the use of data to develop appropriate instructional strategies and to share successful practices among their peers. This is one component of our professional development plan. Another component focuses on developing academic rigor and experiencing culturally relevant professional development. As we look for ways to improve student achievement and improve our effectiveness, these components have been consistent characteristics of our collaborative professional development for the past several years.

Our staff members are active participants in our Professional Learning Community and enjoy opportunities to meet in grade level accountable community meetings. On all of these occasions there is respect for ideas from all sources and a willingness to share successes and discuss areas for improvement. Time is allotted on a regular basis to facilitate teacher-led articulation among and across grade levels so that teachers have opportunities to collaborate with other colleagues at the site. Teacher collaboration is encouraged so that faculty members can share and develop their expertise.

Over the past two years, the professional development plan was centered around the implementation of teachers earning district GATE certification. The teaching staff has studied resources related to improving our differentiated curriculum, improving writing skills, using successful engagement strategies, as well as a focus on the specific Social Emotional Learning needs for the gifted student. All current teachers at Manchester GATE are now Fresno Unified Certified GATE Teachers.

## **Results and Outcomes**

The use of the regular Cycle of Continuous Improvement has enabled Manchester's teachers to focus on student learning. Action planning based on this analysis provides a road-map for teachers. Regular, timely professional reading adds to teachers' repertoires and allows them to better meet the needs of all of our students regardless of their backgrounds. As students benefit from teachers' professional development, student achievement continues to improve and test scores continue to be over 90% of the student population scoring met or exceeded on both ELA and math.

The ELA SBAC scores over the past three years have been relatively the same with 93–94% of the students meeting or exceeding the standards. The significant subgroups are all at or above 90% as well. In 2017, 92.4% of the students met or exceeded the standards and 61.8% of those students exceeded the standards. The math scores are similar but grew from 89.7% to 95.8% in one year. This past year our scores showed 92.4% of the students meeting or exceeding with 64.9% exceeding the standards. Again, the significant subgroups in math are all right around the 90% range or above. In 2015 and 2016, the 5th grade CST/SBAC Science scores were nearly 98% of the students meeting or exceeding standards with 61% exceeding.

The CORE report card utilizes Social-Emotion and Culture Climate surveys as a metric for school accountability. In the areas of Chronic Absenteeism and Suspension Rates, Manchester gate is in the above average index levels with 2% chronic absent and 0.9% suspended and/or expelled. In the area of Culture and Climate, student overall results were above average and staff and family were in the average range, but all percentages were at or near 90% favorable. In the students surveys, the Index Level for Social-Emotional Skills were all above average.

Grade level standards have allowed us to coordinate instruction, interventions and differentiation strategies for gifted learners to enable Manchester to be a highly successful magnet school program. While achievement levels are very high, it may be even more impressive that while we are part of a large, urban school system that has students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, we are ranked as one of the top 10 elementary schools in California over the past decade. Manchester GATE continues to base the program on the developmental traits of gifted youngsters and the identified needs of individual students—whether social, emotional, physical or academic—with continuing support that takes many forms and has become the heart of the culture of our school.