

Berkshire Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 15633626119994

County: Kern

District (Local Educational Agency): Panama-Buena Vista Union

School: Berkshire Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 996 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Berkshire Elementary School, located in Southwest Bakersfield, is one of 18 elementary schools in the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District. Berkshire is a designated Title I school and serves a diverse community of learners. We currently serve 1,000 students in transitional kindergarten through grade six from a variety of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds including 65 percent Hispanic, 14 percent White, 13 percent Asian, and 6 percent African American. Nearly 79 percent of our students receive free and reduced meals, and 28 percent of our students are English Language Learners (ELL). Rigorous classroom instruction combined with our four intervention teachers, Sheltered English Immersion kindergarten class, two Intensive Intervention Centers, and two Special Day Classes meet the individual needs of our students.

Our unique school community drives Berkshire's success. Our students are motivated. Our staff is dedicated. Our parents are committed. Berkshire Eagles proudly demonstrate a spirit of teamwork, which contributes to the positive energy on campus.

Our philosophy at Berkshire is that regardless of the classroom assignment, each student's success is the responsibility of everyone on campus. Students, staff, families, and community partners collaborate in celebrating our diversity as we strive for academic excellence. High expectations are the key to achieving the school's goals and maintaining a positive school climate. Berkshire offers a all-inclusive program including academically challenging curriculum and enhanced technology. Consistent, deliberate emphasis on a comprehensive Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) has led to increased success. As one parent notes, "Experienced educators working with all types of students and all socio-economic levels sets Berkshire apart. They demonstrate a strong interest in bringing families into the school system and educating them about the learning process while providing support to overcome any barriers."

Our students value and participate in service learning, including writing letters to military personnel, raising money for Pennies for Patients and the local Ronald McDonald House, providing books for Jamison Center, a local emergency shelter for children, as well as socks and blankets for the homeless shelter. The student council models community service and citizenship at our monthly assemblies, our tribute to veterans assembly, and helping our student body raise funds to purchase needed school supplies and incentives. Staff members wear many hats and go beyond the school day writing grants, raising funds for materials, organizing family events and providing field trips to enhance our students' education.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Multi-Tiered System of Support

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, 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: School Climate, Small Learning Communities, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development

Description

Berkshire's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) begins with a solid foundation in Tier I instruction transitioning seamlessly to Tier II, a program layered with targeted interventions followed by additional intensive support when appropriate in Tier III. The MTSS resulted from an analysis of state, District, and school site data that revealed a need to strengthen core instruction and begin a targeted approach to interventions.

Redirection of essential resources focuses on improving student achievement, providing professional development, instructional materials, and additional staff to support the MTSS model.

Targeted professional development makes Berkshire's core Tier I instruction powerful. Many District schools send a few teachers per site with limited implementation. Berkshire develops mastery through professional development for all teachers, resulting in highly qualified teachers using evidence-based practices. At Tier I, teachers and administrators train in programs including Professional Learning Communities, Differentiated Instruction, Data-Driven Instruction, Thinking Maps, Write from the Beginning, Safe-School Ambassadors, and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports. Goals include improving Tier I instruction, providing targeted and intensive intervention in Tiers II and III, strengthening school culture, and increasing involvement of parents and community partners.

The Tier II approach begins with the examination of data to identify students in need of focused academic or behavioral intervention benefiting all students schoolwide. Targeted students receive ELA support in 30-minute blocks of instruction at their academic level in small homogeneous groups. An intervention team, including four school-funded credentialed teachers and District trained paraprofessionals, keep groups at no more than five students. The neediest students get the lowest student-to-teacher ratio. Notable social-emotional and behavioral supports include "check-ins" for at-risk youth with a child assigned to an adult mentor who works to assure personal and academic success.

To benefit our unique student populations, our Tier III MTSS provides intensive support. Specialists--medical professionals, a behavior intervention assistant, and a psychologist--accommodate students with specific needs, providing academic assistance, conducting social groups, and visual, speech and language services. Addressing the needs of students shows a statistical reduction in chronic absenteeism and our suspension/expulsion rates annually.

All aspects of the MTSS align to multiple goals in the District LCAP by providing a comprehensive, well-rounded educational experience for all students and maintaining a safe, positive school climate that engages all stakeholders. Berkshire's model dramatically improves student achievement, far exceeding district performance, resulting in a compelling environment that meets the needs of all students.

Implementation and Monitoring

Collaborative meetings of the School Site Council, Parent Club, Leadership Team, staff meetings, and annual review provide opportunities to engage stakeholders in developing Berkshire's MTSS model. These meetings as well as parent, student, and staff surveys establish the goals and anticipated outcomes of our MTSS. Working together, community support for the core and intervention programs ensures success for our MTSS model.

Enthusiasm for Berkshire's MTSS model builds as administrators and teachers communicate its goals during Back to School Night, Title I and English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) meetings, and family and community events. Teachers provide in-depth descriptions of how MTSS interventions are utilized within the classrooms and the school to ensure a clear home-school connection. Staff articulate the importance of intervening early and often in Title I meetings. ELAC meetings provide opportunities to communicate to our language learners' families.

School Site Council meetings are held to discuss all aspects of Berkshire's learning environment with our community to monitor and assess our MTSS effectiveness in engaging all stakeholders. To further support MTSS, Berkshire implements family events--literacy, math and science nights, AVID night, Title I night, and after-school student and parent tutoring--providing strategies to assist students at home. In addition, a yearly survey is issued to all parent and community members requesting input on our program's effectiveness. During our Title I annual review, surveys are analyzed by our leadership team and parents to address and modify the program. Parent and community input is critical to ensure that every student succeeds.

Analysis of the data, surveys, and our annual review determines Berkshire's professional development plan. Throughout the year, administrators and teachers attend targeted professional development focused on identified needs. Trained staff members then provide ongoing professional development during staff meetings to ensure collective teacher efficacy. Multiple trainings focus on research-based instructional and intervention strategies, including supporting students with specific needs. Additionally, non-instructional staff train to assist students with social and emotional needs through the use of Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports.

Teachers continually use, reflect, and revisit instructional practices by carefully monitoring and assessing student performance on formative and summative assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of our MTSS. Quarterly benchmark reading and mathematics assessment results determine progress and next instructional steps. DIBELS assessments monitor early literacy progress and guide appropriate interventions. Our consistent analysis of all data continually refines our MTSS resulting in a culture of excellence for the Berkshire Eagles.

Results and Outcomes

Berkshire's academic achievement exemplifies the staff's commitment to effective instructional practices which accelerates student success through MTSS. For example, in 2013–2014 an analysis of CAASPP data and student work demonstrated a need for stronger writing instruction in Tier I. Using the data, teachers received professional development, and financial resources were allocated to implement the research-based program Write From the Beginning and Beyond. The success of this implementation remains evident in continued improvement.

Teachers and administrators collaboratively disaggregate data to identify trends and plan next steps including interventions in Tiers II and III. Teachers meet weekly in

Professional Learning communities to analyze classroom data, share best practices, and create common formative assessments. Quarterly, teachers meet a full day to modify and adapt pacing guides, curriculum, and instructional practices based on District benchmarks and DIBELS. This process has resulted in a growth of 218 points in reading and 164 points in math on the scale score of the District benchmark. Districtwide, Berkshire leads as an open enrollment choice due to our dynamic culture.

Berkshire's achievement on the CAASPP demonstrates exceptional academic successes resulting from our MTSS. In 2016–2017, Berkshire students outperformed the District average in every subgroup. Our English Language Arts performance climbed 14.7 points, while the District grew 6.8 points. ELLs climbed 18.9 points, while the District grew 12.4 points. SED students climbed 13.7 points, while the District SED grew 7.1 points. Hispanic students climbed 15.1 points while the District grew 7.7 points. Homeless students climbed 33 points, while the District growth was 5.3 points.

Berkshire student scores also significantly improved when compared to the District math assessment scores with a schoolwide increase of 16.9 points, while the District grew 4.3 points. ELLs climbed 23.8 points while the District ELLs rose 7.9 points. Our SED students climbed 16.6 points, while the District SED students grew 3.5. Berkshire's Hispanic students climbed 17.3 points, while the District students grew 3.1. Our homeless students climbed 38.4 points, while the District students only maintained.

The Berkshire MTSS demonstrates how student achievement and outcomes flourish when a staff commits to utilizing and examining data to ensure that best practices are employed, targeted intervention occurs, progress monitored, and timely modifications take place continually. Monitoring and reflection of results ensure Berkshire's steady gains, far exceeding expectations along the way.