

Arma J. Shull Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19643296011795

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Bonita Unified

School: Arma J. Shull Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 646 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Shull Elementary is situated in San Dimas, a suburban city 35 miles east of Los Angeles. It is one of 14 schools in the Bonita Unified School District. “For the students in our care, and in partnership with the community, we will create a safe, challenging, and comprehensive learning environment that will shape character, nurture intellect and build skills for success in an ever changing world.” Not only is that Shull’s mission in word, but in deed. Shull lives this mission by providing excellent teachers, a curriculum designed for success, and high parental involvement.

Shull provides students with impactful teachers. Our teachers have experience in delivering effective lessons, assessing student progress, and intervening with students to ensure academic progress. Shull boasts a highly qualified faculty; over 50% of staff members hold advanced degrees and all are qualified to teach EL Learners.

While committed to creating academic success, it is accomplished while preserving a culture of kindness. The diverse student body is taught to be respectful of each other’s

perspectives. Shull serves 4% GATE students, 33% SED students, and about 7% EL learners.

Shull has been improving performance since 2001 when its API score was 791. In 2012, Shull's API reached 931, but staff was committed to achieving more. Data indicated that 18% of students were not proficient, and only 69% of students had reached grade level in reading. CCSS provided another impetus for change. Reading standards were going to be more rigorous; the school needed to help struggling readers reach grade level as well as explore Career and College readiness in a creative manner. Students were going to be required to do more critical thinking and provide written evidence. Staff wanted students to be able to justify answers verbally, and in writing. Through collaboration as a professional learning community, staff created the Every Student Succeeds program to address these needs.

Shull now has a rigorous curriculum based on the CCSS. Our school provides high expectations for student achievement, regular assessments, and strong interventions. The school's current focus includes a goal to have 90% of students at grade level in reading by the end of 3rd grade. In 2016–17, both 1st (93.55%) and 4th grades (95.2%) met this goal with the other grades close behind (85.3–87.5%). In addition, many opportunities for recognition are provided to students.

Beyond the exemplary school statistics, staff receives numerous positive comments from our parent community each day, "Shull is more than a school; it is a community working together to make a difference in the lives of children. The strong volunteerism at Shull make it stand out in our district. We are never short of willing volunteers who are eager to step up and help out. The teachers are amazing and really work as a team to nurture our children and help them to grow into fantastic human beings."

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Every Student Succeeds

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

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

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

Shull School has created a model program called Every Student Succeeds (ESS). Three components make up ESS: the 90% Reading Goal, Show What You Know, and Celebrate Success.

Staff read about a school district which set a goal for 90% of students to be at grade level by the end of 3rd grade (Annual Growth, Catch –Up Growth, Fielding et. al. 2007). With the rigorous levels required by CCSS, it was clear that Shull students would need to excel at even higher levels. In addition, nonfiction reading would have to increase to at least 50% by 3rd grade. The staff felt that intentionally planning for effective first instruction, then utilizing reading interventions through our Response to Intervention (Rtl) program, and finally promoting broader independent reading to include additional non-fiction content, would be critical actions necessary to meet the 90% reading goal.

To prepare for this program, teachers were provided professional development on grade level core, supplemental, and intervention reading programs, including Accelerated Reading Best Practices. The professional development involved visits to other schools to acquire ideas, time for collaboration and refinement of ideas, as well as time to share best practices and results as the program was implemented.

Staff designed the Show What You Know component to address the new CCSS Listening and Speaking requirements. This program required students to stand and speak to an audience to convey new learning. Students learned to answer questions using complete sentences integrating academic language. Built on the belief that students who speak thoughtfully will then write convincingly, staff members wrote tiered goals for all grade levels and implemented the program in their classrooms. Later, this program was expanded to allow students to show what they know in multiple mediums. Students were provided a multitude of opportunities to showcase their learning through performances, showcases, and contests. Not only have students demonstrated higher levels of engagement knowing they have an authentic audience, but it is another way to strengthen the partnership between school and home. Students can now more articulately express their learning verbally, in writing, and through performances.

Shull's Celebrate Success program encompasses a variety of celebratory practices. Whether it be for meeting individual or class reading goals, or for expanding reading choices, celebration permeates Shull's culture.

While pieces of the program were gleaned from district trainings, such as the training provided on Rtl best practices, the Every Student Succeeds program was designed by Shull teachers based on the needs they found, and with programs from which they experienced first hand success. This program is not a district program adapted by Shull, rather a site based program which has components duplicated by others throughout the district.

Implementation and Monitoring

To implement Every Student Succeeds, changes were made to school systems and training was provided. In addition, Shull ensured that the 3 aspects of the program were articulated to stakeholders. All were leveraged as resources to help students reach program goals. Monitoring is done through data reviews throughout the year.

Meeting the 90% Reading Goal required capacity building over the last 5 years as structural changes and a great deal of training was necessary. Shull increased data meetings from 3 to 12 per year. Meetings now include Tier 1 planning as well as Rtl meetings every six weeks. All teachers were trained on collecting data, as this component is critical. At Rtl meetings data is used for both screening and progress monitoring. The Rtl team learned to monitor intervention groups more frequently so students are exited from interventions when appropriate. Those not progressing are targeted for more frequent data collection, SST meetings, additional interventions, as well as parent meetings. Training was also provided on new interventions so that each teacher had an arsenal of interventions to meet unique student needs.

Data days focused on achievement of standards and weekly collaboration time allow teams to intentionally plan to provide research based instruction. On data days, teachers reflect on data, then collaborate around the following guiding questions: What do we need to keep doing that has proven effective, what do we need to stop doing as it's merely adding time demands without impact, and what do we need to start doing to target unmet needs. This has led to a culture of intentionally planned best practices school wide. Curriculum and methodology are selected for each tier, 1–3. This year, the district piloted a new language arts core curriculum. Rather than stop all practices and adopt the new, teachers met for a day to decide which to keep, which to abandon, and what from the new curriculum to add. They then planned how to integrate all during meetings throughout the year.

In order to implement Show What You Know, staff was trained on Listening and Speaking standards. This program required students to show what they know by speaking to an audience. Students answer questions using complete sentences integrating academic language. This oracy created a foundation to develop effective writers. Teachers wrote tiered goals for all grade levels and implemented the program in their classrooms.

Celebrations were integrated through multiple activities: weekly flag salute, awards assemblies, or in newsletters. College Degrees is one example. The words read by students contribute to the class earning college degrees. For example, a 3rd grade class must read 3 million words in order to receive an AA Degree. Students are encouraged to wear their college colors each Wednesday. All of this is celebrated at flag salute as classes chant a college cheer and receive certificates.

Results and Outcomes

In order to monitor the effectiveness of the Every Student Succeeds program, Shull has monitored DIBELs and STAR Reading rates, achievement on SBAC, and through observations and anecdotal data.

The percentage of students reading at grade level each trimester, as measured by DIBELs in grades K–1, and by STAR in grades 2–5, has increased steadily. Since the Every Student Succeeds program was put in place, 2nd–5th grade reading levels rose from 69.2% in 2012 to 83.5% in 2017. Our current data for the 2017–18 school year has 86.8% in grades 2–5 reading at grade level.

In terms of SBAC data, results are impressive as well. Shull students demonstrated growth in the number of students meeting or exceeding standards in ELA. In 2015–16, 77.8% of students met or exceeded standards. In 2016–17 that number grew to 81.4% of students. In fact, the average SBAC ELA score has grown steadily over time, from 43 points above level 3 in 2015, to 58.1 above in 2016 to 69.7 points above in 2017. Not only do we have high levels achieving, but we continue to show growth. A clear indicator that our programs are effective.

Analyzing sub-group data led to positive conclusions as well. Not only are English Learners performing at a high level (42.4 points above level 3), but they showed significant increases (19.3) which is greater growth than all groups (11.6 points). In fact, 6 out of the 8 significant subgroups are very high performing, with 2 other groups (English Learners and Students with Disabilities) scoring high.

The Show What You Know program has been monitored through regular site walk-throughs. Teams observed the increased use of complete sentences when speaking. In analyzing writing samples, the same has been noted. The ability to defend answers and explain thinking is now seen routinely in all of Shull's classrooms. In addition, Shull has been delivering quality performances in many settings.

Yearly, Shull grade level teams complete a data analysis of school data and create goals for the site plan portion of the LCAP. Through this process, and ongoing collaboration, staff members have modified the Every Student Succeeds program to improve results and close gaps each year.

Not only has there been impressive quantitative gains, but there have also been positive anecdotal results as well. Parents now are more engaged in reading with their children, help them with literature response sentences, and support daily reading. We encourage parents to have family discussions and to have their children respond to them in complete sentences. Parents are invited to see classes recognized for College Degrees at our weekly flag salute assemblies.

The results we see not only are scores on a test, but have extended to impact the school-home connection and have built a community of readers. We look forward to

future success and will continue to help students improve and be successful 21st century learners.