

Ben Lomond Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19644366012447

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Covina-Valley Unified

School: Ben Lomond Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 462 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Ben Lomond Elementary School, built in 1955, is located in the northeastern section of the city of Covina in the San Gabriel Valley. It currently has a population of 461 students in transitional kindergarten through fifth grade. The school is part of the Covina-Valley Unified School District which is composed of nine elementary schools serving TK–5, three middle schools serving grades 6–8, three comprehensive high schools and one alternative high school. The campus hosts Kids Korner Daycare, Think Together, Great Artists, Sign Language classes and the Young Rembrandts.

Currently, thirteen percent of our students are identified as English Language Learners. Ben Lomond is a school-wide Title I school with 80% of students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Students at Ben Lomond have a diverse ethnic heritage represented by 78% Hispanic, 10% White, 5% Asian and 5% African-American with 2% other ethnicities.

All professional development and curriculum development at Ben Lomond are aligned with Common Core State Standards and 21st Century Skills emphasizing Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creativity and Communication. Grade level and vertical teams use both internal and external data to identify student growth areas, inform instruction and to provide intervention or enrichment.

A library media center with computer lab, library and workroom is a vehicle for instructional support. The Title I Specialist, support staff and parent volunteers coordinate operations and services to support reading and inquiry learning. Universal Access (UA) time includes intervention and enrichment in both ELA and Math, and takes place daily to support classroom instruction. The goal of UA is to provide language and math support and differentiated instruction within flexible groupings.

Schoolwide wireless internet access and 1:1 student devices allows for technology integration and computer science/coding in every classroom. Ben Lomond has partnered with Code to the Future, Code.org and Google to implement computer science and coding in every classroom. Students read, write and analyze code to create projects that are shared with all stakeholders at our Epic Builds Showcases.

All twenty-four teachers are fully credentialed. Our faculty includes two special education teachers in our Specialized Academic Instruction Program and four Deaf & Hard of Hearing teachers in our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program. In addition, we have an 80% School Psychologist, a Speech & Language Pathologist, a part-time Title I Learning Specialist, three part-time music teachers, three part-time Physical Education Teachers and a part-time Adaptive PE teacher.

Ben Lomond has a very active PTA that works in conjunction with staff to enhance learning opportunities for students through field trips, activities and assemblies. We take pride in nurturing strong community partnerships.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Got Brag

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Career Technical Education, Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention, Civic Education Awareness, Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Nutrition and Physical Activity/Education, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Developm

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

The 2017–18 school year marks the 3rd year of Ben Lomond’s BRAG instructional focus. Ben Lomond Reads And Grows (BRAG) each day through data driven instructional practices designed for student mastery of literacy. This focus was adopted to move all students to grade level proficiency or beyond and to close the achievement gap for our EL and socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

Ben Lomond’s BRAG journey began three years ago with teachers looking at student reading proficiency. The team was not satisfied with current levels of achievement in reading, especially in light of the district’s LCAP goal of reading at grade level by 3rd grade. At the close of the 2014–15 school year, 36% of 3rd graders were proficient and advanced as measured by the SBAC. We are proud to say 41% of 3rd graders were at or above standard in 2016–17. Student engagement, as measured by attendance, has remained over 95% since BRAG’s implementation. With the deep embedding of BRAG, we expect these measures to continue to rise.

After research and consideration, teachers developed BRAG, an evidence-based model program that focuses on strategies to help students maximize their critical thinking and literacy skills while improving school and family linkages. BRAG is embedded in our school community and can be seen in every room, every day. Resources devoted to BRAG include: time to collaborate, assessment data to monitor student growth and professional development.

Close reading strategies, combined with critical thinking skills, are the foundation of BRAG and the two practices we have committed to implementing. Critical thinking begins with metacognition, which we teach using Thinking Maps. For over ten years, we have used Thinking Maps across the curriculum to help students enhance their reading and writing skills. BRAG renewed teacher use of the maps and deepened our practice to support reading comprehension. Coupled with close reading, the maps have given students a powerful vehicle to think critically. Discussions on close reading resulted in the staff selecting Nancy Boyles’ close reading strategies as a school-wide instructional tool. Teachers were trained by Nancy Boyles and follow-up training is provided at staff meetings. Teachers on Special Assignment provide professional development, coaching, and model lessons on both close reading and critical thinking strategies.

The goal of BRAG is for students to attain academic proficiency in ELA with the expectation of closing the achievement gap. Parents and community members partner with the school to provide consistency of expectations. BRAG is reinforced at home through knowledge and support of the instructional focus and school-wide expectations. A key to our success is a culture where stakeholders share a commitment to increase student achievement through evidence-based instructional practices. As a result, our

BRAG program has been thoughtfully implemented and improved upon over the last three years.

Implementation and Monitoring

At Ben Lomond, BRAG is implemented daily with evidence-based close reading strategies, Thinking Maps, Universal Access (UA), and Accelerated Reader (AR).

Parents partner with teachers formally through the Family & School Compact which pledges that all stakeholders are responsible for student learning. Additionally, parents review, develop and evaluate programs through the SSC, ELAC and PTA. Teachers and administrators communicate instructional goals and student progress with parents through family nights, showcases, conferences, parent newsletters and Class Dojo. Monitoring and assessment methods used to evaluate stakeholder engagement include: parent survey results, attendance at parent events, number of volunteers and participation in school committees and parent trainings.

Teachers monitor student reading progress through benchmark assessments and AR. This data is used to drive UA. UA provides intervention and enrichment with the purpose of ensuring all students reach their highest level. Teachers collaborate to design assessments and evaluate results in order to plan instruction utilizing our evidence-based practices. Grade levels incorporate Thinking Maps and close reading strategies in order to meet the needs of students. AR results are used to monitor individual growth and to differentiate instruction for intervention, acceleration, and enrichment. Students self monitor reading progress with AR word counts and reading levels at weekly one-on-one data tracker meetings with their teacher.

Professional learning for all staff is directly related to BRAG strategies. Ben Lomond's model involves building capacity of teacher leaders and support staff. Each grade level selects a lead teacher to serve on the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). The ILT is trained at the district level and shares leadership responsibilities with the site administrator. The ILT members lead weekly grade level meetings to monitor the implementation of BRAG, evaluate student learning and refine instructional practices based on data analysis. The ILT also plans biweekly professional development. This professional development includes Thinking Maps, Nancy Boyles' close reading strategies, and model lessons directly related to BRAG. Twice a year, non-instructional staff participate in district-wide professional development related to instruction. Three site meetings are focused on updating non-instructional staff on the instructional focus and next steps.

The effectiveness of our instructional learning activities are monitored by all teachers and the site administrator. One of the most effective monitoring strategies at Ben Lomond is teacher Learning Walks. These short classroom observations are used to monitor implementation of instructional strategies throughout the school.

Results and Outcomes

Ben Lomond's BRAG program has fostered a culture of student growth and achievement in reading comprehension. Teachers and students practice the growth mindset and are reflective in their use of data and implementation in daily curriculum. Using data from multiple sources including common formative assessments, AR/STAR Reading Comprehension scores, SBAC scores, and student work, teachers can reflect and adjust in order to meet the next developmental levels for students. Data drives teachers to use evidence-based strategies and differentiate instruction to meet individual needs.

As a result of BRAG, students have demonstrated continuous quantitative growth in reading comprehension. In 2016–17, students were reading and taking AR quizzes with an overall pass rate of 83.1%. Over the last three years, Ben Lomond showed exponential growth in the number of words read. Ben Lomond's overall word count has grown to over 84 million words per year. STAR assessment results indicate students' grade equivalency continues to steadily increase. From 2015–16 to 2017–18, students at Ben Lomond showed close to three years' growth in two years' time. The implementation of our instructional focus and evidence-based strategies has also led to quantitative growth on the SBAC assessment at the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade levels. These grade levels showed steady growth the last three years, with 5th grade students taking the lead, leaping from 42% proficient in 2014–15 to 61% proficient and advanced in 2016–17.

Qualitative data is gathered on Learning Walks through classrooms. Positive outcomes are demonstrated through teacher and student classroom engagement and teacher use of instructional strategies.

At the beginning of each school year, teachers create data walls representing individual, grade level, and subgroup assessment scores. An accompanying written analysis is disseminated to parents and the community in the form our Good News/Urgent Message Annual Update. This newsletter summarizes assessment data, areas of growth and specific areas of need related to our instructional focus.

Teachers use UA time to meet the needs of varying levels of students, including our EL population. Based on CELDT results, 57% of Ben Lomond's EL population progressed from intermediate to advanced levels from 2015–16 to 2016–17. In addition, 16.9% of English Language Learners were reclassified in 2016–17. Ben Lomond's data reveals that students have experienced academic success. Through analysis and reflection, Ben Lomond is committed to BRAG and ongoing improvement in student achievement through evidence-based practices.