

Ceres Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19644856012975

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): East Whittier City Elementary

School: Ceres Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 476 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Ceres Elementary School is one of ten elementary schools in the East Whittier City School District, in Los Angeles County, serving approximately 476 students in preschool through fifth grade. Academic excellence and 21st Century Learning are the priorities at Ceres School. As stated in our mission statement, we strive to provide a positive, interactive, safe and caring environment for every child and for our students to have an opportunity to become proficient on State Standards and achieve high levels of academic proficiency. We expect our students to reach their greatest potential as they learn the tools and strategies to become good citizens and lifelong learners.

When you step foot onto Ceres, you will be immediately drawn to the child friendly murals and college flags throughout campus that highlight an environment of student play, imagination, and college symbolism. Serving students has been the cornerstone of pride for our community since its opening in October of 1957. Our school demographics

are the following; 73% of students receive free and reduced lunch; 20% are English Learners (EL); and 9% are students with a disability.

The Ceres Staff takes pride in understanding and knowing our students' needs as we search for strategies to close both the achievement and opportunity gap. We have embraced the 5 C's at Ceres; Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity, and Community. These 21st Century Skills are crucial components for challenging and inspiring our children in their learning. Everyday, and in every classroom, our students are being provided a powerful learning program equipping them with the communication skills and strategies to collaborate with peers, to effectively embed technology to bring learning to life while promoting critical thinking and creativity, and to raise academic expectations.

Our powerful community relationships have helped us become a positive learning environment with an academic focus. This environment is a product of strong relationships formed among office staff, students, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents around our school's mantra of No Excuses at Ceres!

Our Professional Learning Communities are not limited to the teaching staff. As a dynamic PLC, our staff collaborates with our parents informing them of shifts in education and the tools to support students at home. Our dedicated teachers strategically collaborate as they implement current research, best practices, and analyze student data to deliver cognitively demanding lessons.

Ceres is proud of the recognition we have received over the years for closing the achievement gap. In 2008, we received the California Business for Excellent Education Honor Award and the Title 1 Achievement Award. In 2009 and 2013, we received the California Distinguished School Award. With our committed Ceres community and relentless spirit to ensure success for all children, we are confident our students will continue to succeed!

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: The Six Exceptional Systems

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development

Target Population(s): Hispanic, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: School Climate, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Our District's model requires our thirteen schools to follow the curriculum pacing plan in ELA and math with fidelity. As stated in our Practice Reference, schools in East Whittier City are in the initiation stages of working in PLCs. Teachers are provided a set time to meet, but the actual work and conversations that are taking place are not necessarily focused on student achievement. The assessments required of teachers consist of state and local common assessments that help provide the District with a pulse on student academic progress. Our schools are required to analyze data via a reflection protocol provided to administrators to serve as a guide for teachers to follow as they analyze their assessments and use this information to refer and provide intervention for students. Principals collect this information and share with the District Office.

Ceres School's model program of the Six Exceptional Systems is the driver of success at Ceres Elementary. As a result of Ceres' Six Exceptional Systems, teachers and support staff have been empowered to go above and beyond District compliance. The needs of our children have inspired the creation of our model. These Six Exceptional Systems include: Culture of Universal Achievement, Collaboration, Standards Alignment, Assessment, Data Analysis, and Interventions. At Ceres, we have built a Culture of Universal Achievement within our school and greater community that states that every child who walks through our doors will receive the best educational program to prepare them for high school and beyond, no excuses. Collaboration is crucial here at Ceres, our teachers' weekly PLCs are a sacred time where best teaching practices and support are discussed to increase our students meeting or exceeding standards. Our PLCs also include an infusion of professional development from subject matter experts from within our District. This collaboration facilitates the work needed to close the achievement gap. Ensuring that our Standards are Aligned allows teachers to provide an engaging and rigorous curriculum that will prepare our students to become 21st Century Learners. The Assessments that teachers administer are instrumental and meaningful tools in guiding current and future instruction. Ceres teachers create both formative and summative assessments throughout their units of instruction to determine student mastery, needed intervention or enrichment, and future differentiation of instruction. Through Data Analysis, teachers disaggregate data looking for patterns and trends which enable them to provide effective feedback to students. The final exceptional system is Interventions. Ceres teachers utilize their data to target individual student needs and implement a strategic plan to meet these needs.

Implementation and Monitoring

Beginning in 2016, Ceres was looking for a way to improve student achievement, in particular SBAC and CELDT. The administration and staff attended a No Excuses Turn-Around Conference which inspired Ceres to adopt and implement a new structure that would refine the current practices that weren't meeting all of our students' needs. Ceres's Six Exceptional Systems creation would require an alignment of schedules, services, professional development, methodology, and a school-wide commitment for our children. Once the commitment was made, the implementation was launched.

Although there are Six Exceptional Systems, the first, Culture of Universal Achievement is the most important as it lays the foundation for all others. At Ceres, this Culture of Universal Achievement secures teacher accountability. Through collaboration, we are able to ensure the effective implementation of our model. Teachers rely on one another interdependently at PLCs. Collaboration is scheduled amongst grade level teams on a daily and weekly basis. Ceres is fortunate to have the District's Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Team supporting our students for bi-weekly sessions. This support allows each grade level team the opportunity to meet with the principal, intervention specialists, and other stakeholders to analyze school-wide benchmark data. Teachers evaluate student results, celebrate the standards that were mastered, review standards that were not met, and then share ideas, strategies, and resources to increase learning and support the teaching of those standards. This data-driven decision making provides teachers with the opportunity to provide strategic instruction to targeted student populations. Ceres' PLC distinguishes us from our District's PLC process, as our conversations are driven solely by student learning and achievement.

Our model is monitored by both the administration and teachers. There is a deep understanding at Ceres, that all stakeholders play an important role in providing the best educational program to our students. When teachers at Ceres collaborate, they are discussing their curriculum pacing guides, strategies, and assessments. Following assessments, reflection meetings take place in PLCs allowing for candid conversations amongst teachers regarding student progress, needs, and next steps to close the achievement gap. Using their data, teachers implement intervention plans for struggling students in the core areas, and progress monitor for a 6–8 week period. These actions are critical to Ceres' program. In order to secure accountability, teachers complete a PLC Tool that captures topics and actions discussed during their collaboration time. It also communicates to administration and District Office any support or professional learning required from the teachers to provide them with the necessary support. To ensure communication, the PLC tools are housed on the Google Drive to allow all stakeholders access to Ceres' data.

Results and Outcomes

Since its inception, Ceres' Six Exceptional Systems are monitored routinely. The reflection process begins early fall when we disaggregate SBAC and CELDT data. This relentless monitoring of student data occurs throughout the year. Ceres holds sacred its weekly, bi-weekly and monthly PLCs which provide intentional time for teachers to dive deep into their standards, assessments, data analysis and interventions. By focusing on the four essential PLC questions: 1) What do we want students to learn? 2) How will we know they have learned it? 3) What will we do for those who did not learn the concept? and 4) What will we do to extend their learning?, teachers are ensuring that the needs of our students are being met.

As a result of implementing the Six Exceptional Systems, the entire culture of the Ceres Learning Community has been transformed. Teachers have taken ownership of student learning and the impact they have as providers of best first instruction. Data is the language spoken at Ceres to address needs, celebrate successes, and refine the on-

going plan for student achievement. Through PLCs, Ceres has deepened their understanding of instructional practices by dissecting grade level claims and targets, vertically articulating across grades, and designing common and formative assessments. The learning process comes full circle as teachers analyze student data to determine the effectiveness of their instructional practice.

Our data clearly validates the hardwork and commitment to the Six Exceptional Systems. Our students have shown significant gains across grade levels and core areas as evident in our local and common assessments and state standardized tests. Our statewide data for SBAC over the last three years demonstrates consistent growth. In ELA, all students at Ceres who have met or exceeded the standard, grew from 51% (2015) to 57% (2017); showing 6% growth. English Learners (ELs) grew from 32% (2015) to 43.75% (2017); demonstrating nearly a 12% increase. Reclassified students soared in 2017, as 93.75% met or exceeded standards on the ELA SBAC test.

Ceres experienced the largest increase in student achievement in math with 37% of all students meeting or exceeding the standard on SBAC in 2015. In 2017, this grew to 58% of students who met or exceeded math standards. Over three years, Ceres has grown over 21% in math. ELs grew from 20% (2015) to 48.98% (2017); growing nearly 30%. Reclassified students continued to excel in 2017, 93.75% of students met or exceeded standards on SBAC in math.

ELs continued to demonstrate growth on the CELDT Test. From 2015 to 2017, Ceres Elementary had nearly 80% of ELs showing progress or maintaining proficiency on the CELDT. As a result, the number of students who are annually reclassified increased from 3 students (2015) to 21 students (2016) to 18 students (2017). Ceres is proud of the growth in student achievement that we have accomplished through the implementation of our Six Exceptional Systems.