

Hermosa Valley School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19646006095434

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Hermosa Beach City Elementary

School: Hermosa Valley School

Demographics

Enrollment: 794 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

The Hermosa Beach City School District (HBCSD) was established in 1904. The district is located in the southwest portion of Los Angeles County and serves approximately 1,388 located on two sites. Hermosa Valley School houses 4th–8th grade students. Both schools are situated in the heart of Hermosa Beach, a 1.3 square mile community. On December 14, 2016, the HBCSD Board of Trustees, updated the district's vision and mission to reflect 21st century educational principles and to "Thrive K-Life". Our vision is to ensure that all students are empowered to learn and thrive. Our mission, in partnership with our community, is to prepare students to thrive by providing a relevant education, a safe and healthy environment, and an inclusive culture. We are committed to an environment that supports learning and includes these core values: Community Engagement, Culture of Excellence, Global Citizenship, Respect and Inclusion, Responsible Stewardship, Rigor and Relevance, and Safety and Well Being.

Hermosa Valley commits to ensuring that every student is connected to school and feels a connection to a caring adult on campus. The establishment of a school community that is physically and emotionally safe, well disciplined, and conducive to

learning is a high priority for all stakeholders. Upon arrival at school, students are greeted by a district employee who welcomes them on campus. This simple student-centered step makes a large impact on the connectedness and safety of our school community.

Hermosa Valley School provides a comprehensive 4th–8th grade program that is focused on both a personalized and blended learning experience for students. Small class sizes and the availability of technology allows students and teachers to build relationships around purposeful and targeted lessons. Hermosa Valley teachers employ a wide variety of highly engaging instructional strategies, curricular enrichment, and support services to promote student achievement through making connections. Through continued efforts around establishing and promoting a growth mindset, middle school teachers have established Connectivity time with their students.

As part of a small school district, we enjoy a high level of collaboration among the district, school administration, students, teachers, parents, and local stakeholders. Our community dedicates time and resources to support the vision of the school and to demonstrate the importance of education and service. Hermosa Valley centers on making connections academically, socially, and emotionally. The theme of making connections aligns with our student centered approach. Unique to Hermosa Valley is our commitment to provide research based mindfulness lessons to empower all students with a feeling of purposefulness and wellness. This program has provided students with a neuro-scientific understanding of how they learn and the ability to self-regulate behavior as well as mindfully engage which translates into academic success.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Mindfulness and Connectivity: MindUp 2.0

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

Target Area(s): Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention, Education Supports, Nutrition and Physical Activity/Education, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development

Target Population(s): White, Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: School Climate, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Health Support, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support

Description

Mindfulness and Connectivity is infused throughout every aspect of the day at Hermosa Valley School. With the demands of rigorous standards and future-ready instructional shifts, focusing on social-emotional needs and engagement are critical for academic success. We prioritize state goals in the areas of pupil outcomes and student

engagement as driving forces when creating a sustainable model program. These goals, or overarching themes, link our model practice of Mindfulness and Connectivity, or MindUp 2.0, to the LCAP.

Our model practice is based on research in developmental cognitive neuroscience, mindfulness, social-emotional learning, and positive psychology. As a school, we developed a culture around MindUP, a research based curriculum from the Hawn Foundation. Students are introduced to 15 mindfulness lessons each year at school. School-wide, students are recognized for taking perspective, choosing optimism, expressing gratitude, kindness, and taking meaningful action in the world. To successfully bridge into middle school, an elective course entitled Masterminds was developed in 2011. Instructed by a Mindful Schools Certified Teacher, Masterminds, equips students with skills to develop mindset and resilience. Students acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. Mindfulness and connectivity is embedded into the school culture at Valley through morning announcements, student recognition assemblies, homeroom advisory periods, grade level service projects, parent education events, and community partnerships. School based strategies like mindfulness yield the most successful outcomes when they are embedded into the day-to-day curriculum and linked to other school activities.

The expansion of social-emotional learning along with brain focused strategies accelerates students' abilities to employ stress reducing habits and increase academic success. In 2011–2012, School Site Council recommended a priority area to include social-emotional learning, connectedness, and wellness to single plans. Since then, SSC and LCAP Advisory Group continue to prioritize social emotional learning in our school.

Materials used for Mindfulness and Connectivity are minimal but our model practice requires the right mindset. Professional development is ongoing and staff communicate regularly on progress within grade levels and across grade spans. Our model practice is beneficial because it reaches all student populations and is deep-rooted into our learning culture. Seventy percent, 70%, of Hermosa Valley students report having a high level of school connectedness according to the CA Healthy Kids survey. Data results correlate to our low suspension rates, high attendance rates, and solid academic achievement from state assessments and dashboards.

Implementation and Monitoring

The implementation and expansion of our practice, Mindfulness and Connectivity, is successful due to high engagement levels of stakeholder groups. Staff, parents, and local community partners have been involved since the early stages of implementation. In 2013, the school introduced a parent education speaker series based on mindfulness. Since then, we have expanded and partnered with two neighboring unified districts, MBUSD and RBUSD, to collectively offer high profile speakers. Michelle Borba, an internationally recognized author and parent expert, is just one example. Dr.

Borba's powerful message centered around her book, *Unselfie*, reminds us how kids can succeed by using mindfulness and empathy in this all-about-me world. Eric Karros, a former Dodger, spoke about finding purpose and balance by shifting from outcomes to focusing on experience. These speaker series events draw large community crowds.

In 2017, HBCSD entered into a partnership with South Bay Families Connected, SBFC, as a communication tool. This curated website offers a variety of online educational materials such as articles, videos, and links to provide support for our parents, teachers, and community. The HBCSD Families Connected portal aligns with our district and site's mission of creating a culture of inclusivity and allows us to expand our reach outside of the school building. Parents opt to participate in monthly e-newsletters and can join a parent network. There are also opportunities for parents to stay connected and informed through social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter.

As a school site, professional development is offered during staff meetings and with in-service opportunities. In 2016, all certificated and classified staff participated in a full day of professional development focusing on the core values of the MindUP curriculum. Concurrently, the school took the MindUP curriculum to the next level and branded it MindUp 2.0. In the summer of 2017, two teacher representatives agreed to become certified MindUP train-the-trainers. Furthermore, middle school homerooms began to implement an advisory called Connectivity to teach supplementary growth mindset values to empower our students even more. Schoolwide, mindfulness, connectivity, and growth mindset have changed our climate so that students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

To measure effectiveness, the school looks at various types of data to monitor and continually improve measurable outcomes. Yearly, we work with grade level leadership to review best practices and update the curriculum as needed or as students' needs change. Program needs are fluid and are dependent on feedback from tools such as parent, student, and staff surveys, CA Healthy Kids Survey, and dashboard data. Hermosa Valley continues to be successful because of the physical and emotional investment into our students.

Results and Outcomes

Hermosa Valley believes evaluation and assessment is a critical piece to determine effectiveness. On-going data analysis is conducted by stakeholders and promotes sustainability of the Mindfulness and Connectivity practice. Annually, surveys are administered to staff and parents regarding signature practices as related to the LCAP. The data from these surveys give insight to program effectiveness.

On parent, student and staff surveys, data reflects students' needs are being addressed and are validated. In 2016–2017, 82.9% of staff report that they use MindUp strategies regularly. According to results, staff report the most preferred activity is mindful breathing with students. In 2016–2017, a parent survey revealed that 86.2% of parents feel that the school climate fosters a feeling of safety and connection. On the same survey, 83.6% of parents agreed that the school offers a variety of programs for parents

to be engaged in the school. Student feedback is also considered. 85% of 8th graders would recommend the MindUp seminar day, 80% learned something new about themselves, and 82% changed their thinking to be more positive. Metrics from both the CHKS and the HBCSD Parent Survey, demonstrate the success of efforts to personalize learning and develop strong connections with students. According to the 2014–2015 CHKS, 70% of students reported having a high level of school connectedness and only 5% reported that in the last 30 days they missed school due to feeling very sad, hopeless, anxious, stressed, or angry. This deep dive into the data enables the development of a strong, trusting relationship between students, staff, and parents.

The LCAP Advisory Committee and SSC examines a written analysis of the annual goals, services, and actions and uses the data to determine if targets indicated in the LCAP are met. This committee also examines expenditure reports to determine if the budget actuals are being utilized to meet our school goals. The LCAP Advisory Committee also uses qualitative data from parent feedback to fine tune goals and ensure the LCAP continues to support our school's mission to provide a relevant education, a safe and healthy environment, and inclusive culture.

Our district administrative team engages in a data day each April to examine the data from stakeholders, qualitative professional development feedback, benchmark assessment data, Dashboard data, and CAASPP data. This process enables the administrative staff to work collaboratively with the school leadership team to develop and refine our goals for social-emotional wellness and connectivity. The LEA school board also carefully examines the quantitative CAASPP and survey data to ensure the support and resources are aligned to the LCAP and are allocated for Hermosa Valley to develop the goals. As a result, Hermosa Valley has developed a multi-tiered approach to ensure student success, enhance our practice, and empower students to achieve and thrive.