

## **Los Cerritos Elementary School Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 19647256015465

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Long Beach Unified

School: Los Cerritos Elementary School

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 538 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Nestled in a tree-lined, residential community and within walking distance from the California Historical Landmark from which its name is derived, Los Cerritos Elementary School is a prestigious elementary school with a history of academic excellence dating back to 1913. Our school has an enrollment of approximately 540 students in grades Transitional Kindergarten through Fifth Grade, and represents the rich, cultural diversity of Long Beach.

Our mission statement is "We all contribute to an interdependent, green community that promotes creativity, rigor, and a growth mindset in preparing students for success." Los Cerritos prides itself on maintaining an exemplary core academic program that provides a rigorous and challenging curriculum for all students.

The Los Cerritos Organic Garden contains an ever-changing array of vegetables, fruits and flowers. Students spend time designing, planting, maintaining and harvesting their garden beds and enjoy eating the produce, as well. The garden integrates all areas of the curriculum including language arts, math, science, social studies, nutrition and

character education. Los Cerritos received the National Green Ribbon school status during the 2014–15 school year for its outdoor education and environmental "Green Team" programs.

Los Cerritos also has an active visual and performing arts program. We offer choral music, instrumental music, and the Art Masters program to students. Science and technology play a vital role at Los Cerritos. Each classroom has at least two computers and a set of chromebooks for student use on platforms such as Google Suite and ST Math. Students also visit two computer labs to engage in web based learning weekly. Families stay in touch with the school staff via email, our website, programs like "Class Dojo," and the PTA Facebook page.

We are very fortunate at Los Cerritos to have a very dedicated group of parents and community members supporting the school. Through our PTA, VIPS and business partnerships, Los Cerritos students are supported academically and socially to be successful by the greater school community. Los Cerritos is a caring and rigorous learning community that values and recognizes each student's individual strengths, efforts, and contributions.

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: Promoting Student Ownership of Learning through Collaboration and Purpose

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Professional Development, Use of Technology

Target Population(s): Black or African American

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

## **Description**

With the adoption of Common Core Standards, Los Cerritos implemented key instructional shifts to provide the rigor and relevance necessary for students to be successful. We want our learners to gain a deeper understanding of CCSS, see connections between the curriculum and the real-world, and explain their own thinking. In recent years, professional development for teachers has focused on research-based methods to promote success through collaborative conversations, teacher clarity of standards, effective questioning strategies, academic use of technology, and use of formative assessment to adjust instructional moves.

At heart of every lesson teachers build ownership and a collaborative classroom culture by asking and answering three basic questions; what, why, and how. The “What” articulates for students the Common Core Standard they will be learning, and emphasizes a broad-based understanding of the topic that can be accessed across contexts. The “Why” offers students a purpose for their learning that is either rooted in a real-world context or explains why the standard is a key part of the learning progression for that subject. The “How” describes the student success criteria that must be met in order to show successful understanding in a way that is aligned with CCSS, not just a specific task or context. This new format for communicating the learning intentions is meant to engage students with a purpose and provide clear goals for student success and teacher formative assessment.

Building upon strong Learning Targets, teachers are currently working to provide students with more effective, process-level, actionable feedback and opportunities for self-reflection. These strategies look very different across grade levels, and teachers are working together to find a continuum of expectations for student attainment of these skills as they progress through the elementary years. Walking into a Kindergarten classroom you might witness students facing partners to explain how they subitize to find a number, then raise a thumb up or down to self-assess their participation in a discussion. Visiting a grade 3–5 classroom you would hear students discussing strategies used to solve a complex math task using precise math vocabulary, adding on to each others’ thinking, then reflecting on their participation, their thinking, and how they might approach tasks in the future.

Los Cerritos has a moral imperative to support all learners and close the achievement gap. With a wide range of learner abilities, it’s important that all students feel a sense of ownership, purpose, and growth.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

The Professional Development PDSA Cycle at Los Cerritos is designed to move all teachers towards professional growth and implementation of effective teaching strategies to support all students to meet goals. During the last three years we’ve focused professional development on student collaboration and learning targets with student success criteria. Engaging students in academic discourse effectively shifted more of the cognitive load onto students and was a necessary addition to the classic “I do, we do, you do” lesson delivery sequence that teachers were used to. The transition was also a step away from the idea that a quiet classroom is a productive one. This year our professional learning has been focused on Formative Assessment, providing students with Effective Feedback, and promoting student ownership of learning (self-efficacy & self-regulation). Once the practice of adding a collaborative element to each lesson was implemented, we found the need to focus academic discourse by providing teacher clarity through the use of “What? Why? How?” Learning Targets and Student Success Criteria. Students that know the purpose and goal are much more likely to have successful academic discussions and debates that remain on topic and focused on the standards.

Our Professional Development PDSA Cycle lasts approximately one month. First, the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) presents professional development at a whole-staff meeting. The following week, grade-levels meet to implement professional development and plan collaboratively. Grade-levels meet again a second time during the month to analyze common assessment data and compare student work to monitor progress. Throughout the month the principal conducts informal classroom visits and provides teachers with actionable feedback about their individual implementation of the professional development and teaching strategies. At the end of the month, the ILT evaluates progress, shares with staff, and fine-tunes next steps for professional development.

The ILT also engages in a triannual PDSA cycle by engaging in “Collaborative Inquiry Visits” with other schools in Long Beach sharing similar focus areas. During three or four school visits per year, we observe classrooms and receive systematic feedback from district teachers and administrators about our progress toward goals and input about possible next steps.

Teachers continue to analyze student data and monitor progress throughout the year at monthly grade level meetings by selecting common assessments and looking together at student work. In grades 3–5 unit assessments for both Math and ELA are SBAC aligned, giving teachers the ability to monitor student progress, provide additional support, and predict success on SBAC. Mid-year culture/climate surveys to monitor social/emotional learning and academic data analysis also takes place in January to measure progress towards annual goals and make mid-year adjustments.

## **Results and Outcomes**

The effects of our efforts to promote student ownership of learning through collaboration and purpose have been very positive to our school culture and student achievement. In 2017 our overall achievement of students meeting and exceeding standards in English Language Arts grew by 8% in comparison to the year prior, and our lowest performing subgroup (African American) increased its number of students that met/exceeded by an impressive 21%. On the SBAC Math Assessment we saw a 2% increase of overall students meeting and exceeding standards, and a 10% increase for our lowest subgroup (African American). We attribute this success to our improved teacher clarity, efforts to promote student ownership of learning through student collaboration, and a connections of CCSS to meaningful, real-world purpose. This year we hope to see even greater growth as a result of our further focus on self-efficacy and our refinement of Formative Assessment instructional practices to improve teacher feedback and more student involvement in monitoring progress toward success criteria.

With SBAC alignment on Unit Assessments in ELA and Math for grades 3–5, we can look to student outcomes on those exams when making predictions about our upcoming success on SBAC in 2018. At the mid-point of the 2017–18 school year, achievement on the ELA Unit Assessments mirror our 2017 SBAC ELA scores almost exactly, with roughly 67% of students scoring in the met/exceeded range. Our African American subgroup shows about 6% growth in ELA on the Unit Assessments in comparison to

SBAC, with roughly 60% of students meeting and exceeding standards. The Math Unit Assessment show overall growth with an average of 81% of overall students in grades 3–5 scoring in the met/exceeded range, and African American students closing the achievement gap at an average of 80% met and exceeded.

Our progress moving professional development forward shows gradual, yet steady professional growth in the areas of Formative Assessment and release of responsibility to students. Observational data from classroom visits this year and last shows that the implementation of “What? Why? How?” questions to focus the learning has enabled students overall to better articulate what they’re learning and explain their thinking and work toward goals in a clear and focused manner. Collaborative Inquiry Visit (CIV) data indicates that teachers are making key shifts to their instructional practices, and students are holding articulate, academic conversations. Our CORE Student Survey and other culture/climate data still show self-efficacy as a growth area for students, so this will remain a focus for continuous improvement efforts at Los Cerritos.