

Signal Hill Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19647256015614

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Long Beach Unified

School: Signal Hill Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 745 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Signal Hill Elementary School is a diverse, Title 1, TK–5th grade school located on a hilltop overlooking downtown Long Beach. More than half of the student population is Hispanic/Latino, 22% are Asian, 17% African American, 2% Filipino, 2% White, 1% Pacific Islander, and 5% other. More than 30% of these students speak a language other than English, with Spanish and Khmer being the most common.

Signal Hill Elementary serves 745 students in a mixed-use residential area, with many low-income apartment complexes and oil rigs. Approximately 88% of the students are economically disadvantaged and qualify for free and/or reduced lunch.

The Signal Hill vision is that all students will be responsible, productive citizens in a diverse and competitive world, and the school's mission is to ensure that they "reach their greatest potential every day" by using their Tools for Success. These tools include: being safe, kind, respectful, a learner and acting responsibly. The instructional team that makes this happen every day consists of 30 classroom teachers, including 3

mild/moderate special day classrooms (MM SDC), 1 technology integration/intervention teacher, 1 Reading Recovery teacher, 1 resource specialist (RSP) and 2 speech and language teachers. Other staff include a full-time principal, counselor, 50% librarian, 50% nurse and a 40% district psychologist. 10% of all students receive special education services via MM SDC, speech and/or RSP.

Parents are actively involved at the school by volunteering in the classroom, vigorously participating in decision making at both the site and district levels, and taking an active part in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Last year, parents contributed more than 3,000 volunteer hours at the school.

Signal Hill has shown consistent growth over the last three years on the SBAC, in both English Language Arts (ELA) and math. The number of Signal Hill scholars proficient in ELA has steadily increased from 40% in 2015 to 56% last year. Significant improvements were also made in math, as those scores increased from 33% in 2015 to 54% last year.

These successes at Signal Hill are attributed to the implementation of the school's model practice: using formative assessment (based on the work of Dylan Williams) to design differentiated learning opportunities in order for all students to become self-regulated learners.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Using formative assessment (based on the work of Dylan William) to design differentiated learning opportunities in order for all students to become self-regulated learners

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, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: School Climate, Small Learning Communities, Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

In an effort to ensure every Signal Hill student reaches their greatest potential every day, using formative assessment to design differentiated learning opportunities that result in self regulated learners is the model practice that has been identified as having the greatest impact on student achievement.

Grade level expectations for differentiation and formative assessment have been clearly identified by teachers in a document titled Signal Hill Signature Instructional Practices. For example, the fourth grade team has identified many practices including: small group instruction during math and ELA; Depth of Knowledge for questioning and inquiry vs direct instruction as most effective. Examples of formative assessment include: clear Learning Targets and Success Criteria for student and teacher clarity; using journals and Thinking Maps to elicit evidence of student learning and providing feedback that is focused on the process of learning. This shared document, found in Signal Hill Elementary's 2017–1018 Google classroom, contains observable strategies for differentiation and formative assessment that have had a quantifiably positive impact on the proficiency of the most at-risk students.

Tomlinson's research on differentiation, D. William's 5 strategies for Embedded Formative Assessment, and Hattie's work of identifying the effect size of instructional practices, inspired Signal Hill teachers and served as a catalyst to begin defining the most effective instructional practices during the 2015–2016 school year.

In addition, the achievement gap between African American, English Language Learners, students receiving RSP and/or speech and "All" students made it evident to the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) that there was a need to differentiate the content, process and product in order for all students to access the curriculum and meet the rigorous requirements of the Common Core Standards. Two years into this work, the site realized that differentiation without real-time data to inform practice was not the most effective methodology. As a result, D. William's strategies for formative assessment became an area of focus. The staff has spent the last two years focused on teacher and student clarity via Learning Targets and Success Criteria; eliciting evidence of student learning through high engagement; providing actionable feedback that is non ego-involving; and teaching students to become self-regulated learners as well as to use one another as instructional resources.

We have discovered that differentiation leads to self-regulated learners who take a more active role in their learning. For example, a 4th grade class working on coding, asked their teacher if they could purchase another robot so more students could practice their coding skills. This student request led to a lesson on how to write a proposal to present to SSC for the purchase of more robots.

Implementation and Monitoring

Signal Hill's model program practice is implemented and monitored in a consistent and strategic manner. Beginning in August, teachers analyze and present data to the staff and alignment with the district's initiatives begins. This year, the initiative continues to be having the moral imperative to close the achievement gap for all students. On this same day, school wide and grade level goal setting begins. Teachers leave this meeting with a deep knowledge of the annual initiative and the names of strategic students whose academic achievement is prioritized for the first semester.

During the month of September, specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely (S.M.A.R.T.) school wide and grade level goals are finalized and shared with all school stakeholders. These goals are then used by individual teachers to create semester-long action plans. The action plan includes: the names of strategic students, a S.M.A.R.T. goal to determine the strategic students' semester progress towards grade level proficiency; assessments used for progress monitoring the goal; the content of the lessons (2) to be observed; commitments to model practices (these narratives include how teachers will differentiate their support for strategic students); actions teachers will take to ensure their strategic students have a Growth Mindset versus a fixed one and any additional support needed to ensure that the semester action plan is fully implemented. The content focus, of the action plan, is differentiated based on last year's summative data; TK–2nd is ELA with a focus on guided reading and 3rd–5th is Math with a focus on problem solving.

Action plans are then driven by a 7–8 week cycle for professional development.

The cycle includes:

- Direct research based professional development delivered by the principal and ILT members.
- Grade level collaboration, to formatively and summatively assess the progress of strategic students; to identify high-leverage model practices and to up-brief and debrief peer observations.
- 2 rounds of peer observations using a data collection tool to provide feedback on the effectiveness of lesson design and the implementation of model practices.
- Monitoring and adjusting instruction prior to the second round of peer observations.
- Analyzing strategic student data to determine the effectiveness of instructional practices and to prioritize next steps for teaching and learning.
- Articulation and commitments to model practices known as Signal Hill's Signature Practices.

This process, that includes consistent opportunities to learn from expert researchers, collaborate with peers and analyze the process of student learning has resulted in Signal Hill's model practice of using formative assessment to design differentiated learning opportunities in order for all students to become self-regulated learners.

Results and Outcomes

As this work with differentiation and formative assessment has progressed and grade levels have gathered to study and implement the research, Signal Hill Signature Instructional Practices has evolved into a shared Google Form. This year, teachers are

working towards clearly defining each practice by quantifying the impact of those identified as high leverage in order to continually assess and adjust the lesson content and expected learning. Teachers recognize that everything that is done in the classroom has a direct impact on student achievement; therefore, to maximize the influence of their teaching, differentiation and formative assessment must be a part of daily instruction.

Observational data from peer visits, collaborative inquiry walkthroughs and informal classroom visits show increased levels of model practice implementation during the last three years. Qualitative data is gathered using a tool designed by the instructional leadership team and adopted by staff. This data is used to determine the most high leverage practices.

As a result of Signal Hill's model program practice for using formative assessment to differentiate for the needs of all students driven by the consistent implementation of PD cycles and action plans, SBAC summative data for two consistent years has increased for "All" students and the achievement gap between "All" students and African American students has completely closed in ELA and has nearly closed in math. SBAC data analysis reveals a 16% increase in ELA for "All" students, a 9% increase for ELLs and a 25% increase for African American students. In math, 21% of "All" students, 19% of all ELLs and an extraordinary 31% of all African American students increased.

In culture and climate student survey data, student's favorable responses have increased from 80% to 84% overall.

In recent years, Signal Hill has had increased success in English Learner redesignation rates. English learners are redesignated to Fluent English Proficient using multiple criteria, standards, and procedures adopted by LBUSD. From 2016 to 2017, Signal Hill has seen an increase of 4% to a 2017 rate of 18%.

On the SBAC aligned unit assessments in both ELA and math, students have consistently achieved above last year's averages, suggesting even greater SBAC success this year for all subgroups.