

KIPP Comienza Community Prep Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19647330121707

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Los Angeles Unified

School: KIPP Comienza Community Prep

Demographics

Enrollment: 811 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: Yes

Overview

KIPP Comienza Community Prep is a high performing, tuition free, public charter school in Huntington Park. Our vision is that all students will become rising leaders who take pride in their community and have access to choice and opportunity in order to ignite transformative change. We realize our vision through our mission: we provide students with rigorous academics, character building, learning experiences, and we forge community relationships needed for our students to thrive in college and life.

Our instructional program is based on high expectations and consistent collaboration between teachers. Instruction is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and teachers are coached weekly and developed in meetings with their manager. Daily, teachers analyze progress on standards and create plans for re-teach. Additionally, a blended learning program allows us to differentiate for our students. We believe that authentic and rigorous instruction is the basis of a college-preparatory curriculum, and consistently use data to analyze how to excel in those areas.

Students also need to build character in order to make it to and through college. Our four values; courage, ganas (persisting with grit), honor, and reflection drive our character building. We teach these values at the beginning of kindergarten, and reinforce them each year. Values and character lessons are taught on Mondays and are integrated into regular instruction. This ensures that we develop the whole child and our students become independent problem solvers who are confident and ambitious.

Our students have access to rich learning experiences in order to learn from the world. In electives and in core content, students engage with hands-on learning experiences and go on a number of field trips. Every year, they visit a college campus, and in fourth grade they go on an overnight field trip to Catalina Island. Students also participate in service-learning experiences like community clean-ups and tree planting events.

As a community school, we do everything that we can to engage families and the community. In the city of Huntington Park , 5.8% of adults are college graduates and the median income is \$19,000 a year. Despite these statistics, we prove what is possible when schools and families work together. Our families are very involved, from volunteering to organizing family events and fundraising, to reading to students in Spanish for our Los Dichos program. All staff conduct home visits and we have an open door policy, so parents have many touch-points with teachers. Families help students in the morning with reading, sight words, and math facts and we have monthly Family Nights about literacy, math, and how to prepare for college.

There are many practices that lead to our success, but we believe that the model practices that distinguish us the most are data driven instruction and family engagement. It is these two practices that have supported us most in achieving our results.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Data driven instruction and family engagement

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

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

Target Population(s): Hispanic, Two or More Races

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

Description

The first practice that leads to our success is data driven instruction. We have always had systems and structures that allow us to measure student progress in an aligned and

systematic way. These are replicated in KIPP schools across the country due to their effectiveness. Teachers are trained on how to collect data daily, through checks for understanding, exit tickets, conferring, gradual release, and small group work. Grade levels meet weekly to analyze assessments and exit tickets, and create re-teach plans. The leadership team meets every two weeks for an academic progress-monitoring meeting, where we analyze data to determine progress towards goals. At the end of each quarter, teams do a data step-back to plan ahead so that standards that were not mastered will be re-taught. These practices have ensured that even novice teachers are successful in meeting school wide goals.

In order to be successful with data analysis, we have made decisions over the years that distinguish us from the typical district model. Scheduling is strategic to ensure that teachers have aligned prep times for data analysis. We align instructional schedules so that teachers in a grade level teach the same subject at the same time, which allows for them to collaborate during their preps. There is also alignment with planning so that student materials, including assessments, are the same across a grade level allowing teams to collaborate on analyzing the data. Every grade level has a “re-teach” block, to facilitate re-teach that was determined based off of the weekly data meeting. Finally, teachers are trained in blended learning and small group instruction so that they can teach in differentiated groups.

Another practice that distinguishes us is the intentional involvement of our families. We engage families in their students’ success through home visits, Family Literacy, monthly Family Nights, conferences, and consistent communication. Home visits help teachers and families form strong relationships and offer insight around how to support each student. During Family Literacy each morning, families run literacy centers, conduct read alouds and support with class projects. We hold monthly Family Nights on topics ranging from college preparation, health and wellness, to learning ways to support students academically. Families stay informed through a weekly newsletter, progress reports, parent conferences, and access to teachers by phone, email, and in person each day.

Our Family Leadership Council (FLC) gives families an opportunity to plan, lead and participate in various school events and initiatives. FLC makes decisions around school-wide celebrations, fundraising projects, and community issues. They work with our SSC to collaborate with community partners to provide education and services ranging from voter education, to legal advice, dental hygiene, community cleanups, English language courses, and technological literacy.

Implementation and Monitoring

Data driven instruction and family engagement have been implemented since founding. Teachers were expected to meet for weekly data analysis, engage in school-wide data analysis, and analyze data individually. Managers worked with teachers during meetings to help their students meet goals and held them accountable through weekly observations.

Aspects of family engagement were implemented at founding. Family Literacy was something that the founding team set a vision for and implemented. All teachers were expected to lead a daily morning meeting and involve families. Los Dichos was also written into the School Design Plan as a way to involve families.

Other programs we implemented right away were Family Nights, FLC, home visits, and parent conferences. Like many of the foundational programs, our founding team worked together to set a vision for what the Family Nights would look like, sound like, and feel like. For FLC, families wrote the bylaws and the purpose of the group. Home visits were an integral facet of our founding years and staff visited the homes of every new kindergartener. We have always had 100% family participation at our parent conferences.

As we continued to grow and stabilize, we monitored our progress and made adjustments to each of our model practices. With data driven instruction, we monitor both the efficiency and quality. While we started with weekly assessments, we now give formal assessments twice a quarter, supplemented by exit slips and other measures. This ensures that teachers spend time teaching over assessing, and can collect data in more authentic ways. We also created a “data roll up” template since it was more efficient to have the data in one place.

Last year, we shifted how we identify student misconceptions and our re-teach approach. In prior years, we noticed that teachers identified procedural misconceptions as opposed to conceptual. This limited quality reteach, as we didn’t get at the root of the misconception. Managers worked with teams to ensure that they base the misconception in the standard and we normed on best practices for re-teach when we noticed that approaches varied.

We progress monitor our family engagement by soliciting feedback. Many of our family engagement practices are cornerstones of our school vision, and have not changed much since founding, which is a testament to our strong foundation. We have found ways to strengthen these practices, such as doing Professional Development on the components of morning meeting, basing our morning meetings in the Social Justice standards for identity, and purchasing more books for Los Dichos.

Family Nights have changed over time. During our annual LCAP meeting, families shared that they felt that the content of the workshops seemed similar year after year, so we adjusted the content based on what they shared. FLC is more focused on community building events as opposed to fundraisers or in school events.

Results and Outcomes

Data driven instruction and family engagement have garnered many positive results for us when it comes to student achievement and overall success. In 2013, our school received an API score of 978, making us the highest performing school serving English Language Learners in the state of California, and the top performing elementary school in Los Angeles Unified School District. Our strong data analysis helped set our students

up for success. This practice set us apart from the district, when neighboring schools had an average API of 795. Without family involvement in parent conferences, constant communication with teachers, participation in Family Nights and Family Leadership Council, the results would not have been as strong.

In the transition to the Common Core and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), we continued to excel. We used these more rigorous and comprehensive standards to drive our instruction and data analysis. We did research on the standards as well as how students would be expected to show mastery. We unpacked the priority standards, supporting standards, and learned how they aligned across grade levels. As a result, the first year we took the SBAC in 2015, 82% of students met or exceeded standards in Math, and 81% of students met or exceeded standards in ELA, as compared to 25% in Math and 33% in ELA in the district.

Our families supported tremendously as they learned alongside us. They attended special Common Core workshops, learned about the new standards in parent conferences, brought their students early for extra tutoring, and supported each other with learning a new way of helping their students.

For the last two years our student achievement data has stayed strong. In 2016, 85% of students met or exceeded in Math, and 83% met or exceeded in ELA, compared with 28% in Math and 39% in ELA in the district. In 2017, we added 5th grade, and were able to maintain our strong results. In Math, 70% of students met or exceeded, and 80% met or exceeded in ELA, compared with 29% in Math and 40% in ELA in the district.

In September of 2017, we received a National Blue Ribbon Award with the distinction of Exemplary High Performing School. We were thrilled to receive this recognition and are honored to be the only National Blue Ribbon school in the community of Huntington Park, symbolizing that we are delivering on our promise to students.

What distinguishes us is our systems and structures for data driven instruction that have become ingrained in everything that we do, and the way that we intentionally engage our families as equal partners in the work towards a better future for their children. We believe that closing the opportunity gap for low-income students of color in Huntington Park, California is hard work, but rewarding work, and it can only be done by staying focused on bold goals, consistently analyzing progress towards those goals, and working together as one team and one family to achieve them.