

Porter Ranch Community School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19647330126607

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Los Angeles Unified

School: Porter Ranch Community School

Demographics

Enrollment: 1,152 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Porter Ranch Community School (herein, PRCS) located in the hills of Porter Ranch, opened in 2012. PRCS is a Los Angeles Unified K–8 School with an API score (2012–2013) of 924. We are a unique school that has a school-wide Korean Dual Language Program (KDLP) and a Leadership focus on the “7 Habits of Highly Effectively People”, aka Leader in Me school. The notable accomplishments of these programs are heightened cultural awareness, and empowerment of others to do to the same. As a K–8 span school we have the advantage to work with students over a long period of time. Our teachers collaborate to provide a seamless transition for our students from elementary to middle school which affords greater continuity in instruction.

PRCS strives to provide an engaging learning environment, where students: understand that education is an investment in their own identity, know how to apply learned skills, take pride in their academic and career. Our school’s vision is centered on a leadership model with the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. We also have a staff “lighthouse” team which is comprised of our principal and seven teachers representing K–8 classrooms to help oversee and train the staff on implementing Leader in Me model.

The "Leader in Me" model can be seen in all grade levels this year through student led conversations, school wide assemblies, student led academic tasks, and more. In short, it is slowly permeating our school culture and people's frame of minds.

Our mission is to lay the foundation for students' future growth and development. We instill a positive self-image and establish personal goals for behavior and academics. In addition, we want students to be critical thinkers and equip them to operate in a solutions-oriented environment where there is not always an obvious answer.

In our middle school, our mission is to prepare students for college and career readiness. Students in grades 6–8 will become problem solvers, critical thinkers, effective communicators, respectful and trustworthy leaders, and engaged citizens. All teachers facilitate student inquiry-based learning. Teachers educate their students to independently seek answers and resolutions to questions and issues that arise in life. As teachers connect student learning to real world experiences, students are empowered to use their knowledge and resources to sharpen their minds, communities, and the world they live in. Our parents, teachers, and students work collaboratively to support students' academic and personal success. We do this by providing extensive opportunities for students to collaborate, encourage reflective thinking, and recognize students who exemplify leadership qualities. Furthermore, we have overwhelming parental support. Our PTA, as well as general parent volunteers, work tirelessly to run fundraisers to fund our enrichment programs, lead schoolwide events to reinforce the 7 Habits, and volunteer in the classroom to support student activities.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: 7 Habits of Leadership

Length of Model Program/Practice: Less than 2 years

Target Area(s): Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention, Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development, Visual and Performing Arts

Target Population(s): Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners

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

Description

The 7 Habits is a synthesis of 21st century life skills students can use to address their personal and interpersonal effectiveness. These research-based habits not only address behavioral but also academic habits of success. It creates a culture of student empowerment that believes every child, not just a gifted few, is a leader.

- Be Proactive- Students self-initiate their own learning and problem solving both socially and academically.
- Begin with the End in Mind- Students are asked to reflect on and record personal and academic goals they want to achieve during the year.
- Put First Things First- Students learn to prioritize what is important for their academic success.
- Think Win Win-Students learn from a framework of collaboration versus competition.
- Seek first to Understand, then to be Understood- Students are asked to adopt an empathetic perspective when interacting with their peers and their community.
- Synergize- Cooperation is key. Students are encouraged to have an open mind and create creative solutions to problems.
- Sharpen the Saw- Students self-reflect on healthy habits that help them become more productive citizens and be more sensitive to needs of students from different cultural backgrounds.

The habits affect both behavioral and academic success whereas the district's model of restorative justice focuses more on behavioral. The district's model is specifically tailored to problem solving and the habits are based on timeless life skills. Furthermore, the district's model is a seven-year implementation plan focused on training and monitoring. Although these aspects are one component of our plan, the focus is more on living out the habits and allowing the students to eventually takeover. Hence, student empowerment, more so than a pro-social behaviors focus from the district, is a pivotal piece of implementation. Since we are a span school this better supports our unique school makeup. We have the benefit of middle school students acting as pioneers of modeling and teaching the habits to elementary students. We are able to expose them in TK and develop leaders who train other student leaders by the eighth grade. Therefore, instead of telling our students that empowerment is important, we show them that it is by giving them the opportunities to lead. The habits also reinforce the idea of addressing problems proactively instead of as conflicts arise. For example, the concept of "think win-win" encourages our students to develop solutions where all involved parties can mutually benefit from a situation rather than benefitting a select few. Students are more inclined to show attributes such as good sportsmanship because they know those qualities are celebrated and recognized. And in doing so, it prevents problems that normally arise from a culture of self-promotion or competition. Finally, the habits can be found everywhere- bulletin boards, student work samples, student conversations, school wide assemblies, and more.

Implementation and Monitoring

Our Leader in Me model is infused into each facet of our learning day, as opposed to tapping into it as a resource when a problem arises like the District's model. We have a

Lighthouse Team of teachers who visit Leader in Me Schools and attend professional leadership development in order to provide the staff with curricular ideas and online links to activities to support teachers in reinforcing the habits. Student understanding is monitored through their daily performance on tasks, culminating projects, and behavior. In each classroom, teachers and students create year end goals for the whole class and individual students that are aligned with the habits. Students have roles and responsibilities in the classroom which promote collaboration over competition. Students keep one another accountable by modeling and adopting the language of the habits. This language and these practices are presented by fourth and fifth grade student council leaders who design and perform elementary school presentations and student activities in small group settings. As leader archetypes, middle school students also plan and conduct monthly skits for all students which are student-led and center on principles highlighted in the habits. As an elective, Middle School students are able to provide academic support in a leadership role in elementary classrooms through one-on-one tutoring and small group support. There, they model the 7 Habits with an academic focus by infusing the language and practices into their academic coaching of the students. Interdisciplinary lessons in theater, dance and music make correlations to how the habits relate to student learning as seen through peer collaboration, problem solving, and the promotion of student self-expression in arts instruction.

Monthly, school wide awards assemblies recognize exemplary students in character and academics which are defined by the 7 Habits. Parents also create and launch a school wide "Think Week" where each classroom highlights a habit and showcases how to practically exhibit the habit in school or at home. The PTA sets up collaborative games and activities on the schoolyard based on the 7 Habits. They also orchestrate spirit rallies to inspire students to follow the 7 Habits. Middle school students have on-par celebrations every 10 weeks for students meeting academic and behavior expectations. They choose a preferred activity like lunchtime dancing or an organized student basketball game that the honorees can participate in if they meet their goals.

The 7 Habits can also be seen in our common spaces. They are written on the steps of our buildings to refer to as we climb up to reach our classrooms and our goals. Our Leader in Me tree is painted in the foie of our elementary building. The structure of the tree is symbolic to the meaning of the Habits. Posters of the Habits and bulletin board displays can be found hanging throughout our school as reminders and inspirations.

Results and Outcomes

The Leader in Me model practice has created observable growth in social and emotional learning which is evidenced in student behavior. Increases in leadership and community service participation have created decreases in discipline required which allows time for more rigorous academic practices.

Our focus at Porter Ranch Community School is to instill the Leader in Me's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People to equip our students with foundational academic work and study practices to provide them with college and career readiness and to guide them into becoming productive citizens. Our approach is proactive in that we foster effective

life practices to prevent offending behaviors and conflicts whereas the District's model is reactive to these incidences as they occur.

Porter Ranch Community School's School Experience Survey for the 2016–2017 school year reflects a more socially and emotionally developed school community compared to that of the District's elementary and middle school rates. Additionally, our school climate proves more advanced than the District's overall rate. A main contributing factor to these disparities is the model practice of the Leader in Me's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Our students' overall social awareness levels are higher in both our elementary and middle schools than that of the District's. 72 % of our elementary students feel overall, socially aware versus the District's elementary level of awareness at 69%. Our middle school's rate of social awareness is 60% compared to the District's rate of 56%. That is a 3% and 4% increase, respectively.

At Porter Ranch, students know and understand overall expectations of behavior at a rate of 77% in elementary and 59% in middle school. That is 5% higher than the District's elementary rate of 72% and 1% higher than their middle school rate. Furthermore, overall, students feel connected and safe at Porter Ranch at a rate of 80% versus the District's rate of 76%. They want to come to school because they have a sense of connection and purpose as well as feel safe on campus. 55% of our elementary school students see themselves as a leader which is up 3% from the District's 52%. Our middle school student rate of seeing themselves as a leader is up 4% from the District's rate of 45% at 49%. The result of this new thinking- middle school community service participation is up by 40%.

Generally speaking, Porter Ranch Community School has a significant 3–4% increase in school climate ratings as well as student social and emotional learning compared to that of the District. Moreover, discipline referrals are down by 15% in middle school. Furthermore, our school's suspension rate decreased by 50% giving us a rate of 0.1% compared to the District's 3% suspension rate.