

Ada S. Nelson Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19647586020077

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Los Nietos

School: Ada S. Nelson Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 436 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Established in 1861, the Los Nietos School District is one of the oldest continuously run elementary school districts in the State of California. Ada S. Nelson Elementary School is one of the four schools in the Los Nietos School District located in the unincorporated area of Whittier in the County of Los Angeles. Ada S. Nelson School has 436 students in grades Transitional Kindergarten through 6th grade. The Profile of the pupil population is 98% Hispanic, and 2% other. Approximately 33% percent of the students are English learners. The students have a variety of life experiences. Some pupils have recently arrived from outside of the U.S. while others have lived in the Los Nietos neighborhood for their entire life. All Ada S. Nelson students qualify for Title I and are eligible for free breakfast and lunch. Nelson families have a high mobility rate.

The Ada S. Nelson staff has a singular focus of providing students with an optimal learning environment where students can meet or exceed academic expectations. The principal encourages all staff members to participate in a wide variety of shared

decision-making committees, a process that not only builds leadership capacity within her staff but also provides for the sustainability of the Ada S. Nelson instructional practices and priorities. The primary conduit for staff decision-making is the school's leadership team, which consists of one representative per grade level who work with the principal in the decision-making process for our school. New teachers are encouraged each year to serve on the leadership team in order to broaden the base of leadership at the school, develop and maintain professional learning communities and model leadership for others. Regardless of who is on the leadership team, the primary focus is always on student success and student achievement.

The Ada S. Nelson staff knows that in order to support student attainment of the rigorous state standards, our school's parents must be provided opportunities to partner with the school to support their children's education. To that end, parents are encouraged to participate in free parent education classes, serve on parent advisory committees, as well as attend meetings with the principal called, "Coffee with the Principal" to share their concerns or suggestions with the principal. The multiple parent outreach opportunities at Ada S. Nelson embodies the District's motto of "Building the Community through Education."

Ada S. Nelson School takes pride in being able to provide to every single student a state-of-the-art technology lab as well as laptops for all of our students. Teachers have embraced the use of technology and the infusion of technology can be seen in all of Ada S. Nelson's classrooms to help maximize powerful, engaging instruction.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: KLAS

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap

Target Population(s): Hispanic, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: School Climate, Small Learning Communities, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Four years ago, we recognized that students experienced a range of academic success on district common assessments. Our analysis prompted us to develop a more focused instructional approach to meet the diverse needs our of students while keeping alignment with the district instructional plan. We call this approach KLAS.

(K)NOWING Your Students. We believe, and research supports, the notion that understanding the experience students bring to school is key to creating the conditions for students to thrive. This includes structured group activities, 1:1 conferencing regarding how students like to learn, the types of reading they enjoy, what subjects they prefer, and who helps them with homework. Teachers also share aspects of their life so that genuine relationships are nurtured. (L)ESSON DESIGN refers to ensuring that every didactic lesson is structured, scaffolded and differentiated to reach each student. We use the classic Madeline Hunter 7-step lesson plan format . (A)SSESSMENT that augments the district assessment design with several rich, data-gathering strategies, including Do Now lesson openings to assess prior knowledge, 60-second Check-ins, and the Ticket Out the Door strategy to close lessons. We also use data to support student placement in daily School-wide Intervention (SWI) groups, and for whole and small group lesson delivery. Finally, (S)MALL GROUP INSTRUCTION enables us to meet individual needs of our diverse learners through differentiation.

The model requires implementation of our adopted materials for language arts and math. However, our approach to the use of those materials is specific in that they are used within the structure of our KLAS framework. In addition, our school has purchased supplemental materials for strategic use, particularly for intervention. The primary professional learning goals for teachers and the principal is that, rather than focusing professional learning on implementation of programs or materials, we are committed to: (a) improving our ability to deepen our understanding of our students and families, and , (b) growing in our ability to implement personalized instruction through KLAS. We want to fully develop a culture of academic excellence in a supportive climate.

Given that almost all our students are Hispanic and low socioeconomic, the overall significant school Change Score gains (math +24; ELA +10) represent that of those student groups as well. The model meets the social/emotional and academic needs of unique student groups: ELs, Students with Disabilities, and Homeless children, who "Increased Significantly," especially in math with 2016 to 2018 Change Scores ranging from +22 to +30 points.

Implementation and Monitoring

Each year, the Principal meets with all instructional staff to review the expectations for instruction at the start of the school year. This meeting consists of a presentation that outlines the expectations for instruction of ELA, math and writing, and our focus on personalization of teaching and learning through KLAS. Staff are introduced to our school-wide practice called, Every Child Belongs to Every Adult, the expectation that we share the obligation to ensure that every child at our school succeeds, and that every student has a respectful relationship with all adults on campus. As a follow-up, and unique to Nelson School, the principal takes several steps.

To insure that Small Group Instruction, a key element to our design, is consistently implemented, the principal emails a form to teachers asking them to respond to questions related to when they plan their groups, how they will use data to select students, what will be their learning objective, what strategies they will use, and what

formative assessments they will employ to provide feedback. The principal uses this information to plan classroom visits to monitor implementation and determine if any teacher needs additional support. Teachers also collaborate with the Principal to determine the focus for each targeted group of students during the intervention hour: what materials will be utilized, when the session will occur, what staff will be involved and where on campus each group will be served. Finally, the Principal uses the Weekly Bulletins and Staff Meetings to highlight specific strategies or teachers whose classrooms are models of KLAS, with reminders of the expectations.

After four years, our parents and community have fully embraced the Nelson KLAS approach to student success. Parent conference attendance is very high (98%) and results of common assessments and other student work is shared by classroom teachers along with a reminder about how KLAS supports their children. These sessions advance our school goal to KNOW our students and families better. Nelson parents are positive and involved in helping Nelson implement our model. We encourage their continued support by frequently communicating results of the Nelson Elementary program, by sending home common assessment results and sharing grade-level and school-wide formative assessment results with parents. A fully engaged community, informed by transparent results, develops a community-wide expectation and increases the likelihood that we have complete and consistent implementation of KLAS.

The focus of our model is to build the capacity of our entire staff to understand the significance of each KLAS element and to implement each at a deep level. Our school has a system of formal and informal classroom observations, team collaboration, and frequent structured data reviews that provide frequent feedback on areas of strength and those in need of additional support.

Results and Outcomes

The hallmark of KLAS at Nelson Elementary is the personalization of teaching and learning in order to maximize student achievement for every child. We formally measure student achievement formatively 4–5 times a year via Data Reflection Meetings (DRM), after each instructional unit. Students are placed in quadrants based on their performance on grade-level common assessments in ELA and math. Students are identified by their student group designation, providing the backdrop for the data discussion. At each DRM, system agreements are made, for what teachers, admin, instructional assistants, and others will do differently on the upcoming unit to affect a positive result on the next Common Assessment. Each DRM serves as a “grade” on how well those agreements impacted achievement. That data-based inquiry and response cycle repeats each unit and informs real-time adjustments in our KLAS instructional design.

CAASPP results indicate that our model is proving effective. From 2015 to 2017, Nelson grew 17% in ELA and 20% in math in percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations. In addition, the CDE Dashboard reports that our school, as well as every subgroup, either increased, or significantly increased in both ELA and math. Regarding

math, our school increased significantly, growing 24 points from 2016 to 2017. We are especially proud of our ELs (33% of the school) who increased significantly with impressive growth of 33 points. Our Homeless children increased significantly with growth of 20 points, and growth of 30 points for our students with disabilities! Regarding ELA, our school grew significantly, with a 10 points increase from 2016 to 2017. ELs increased 13 points, Homeless children increased 10 points, and again our students with disabilities increased significantly with a 24 point gain! Finally, Educational Results Partnership, a highly credible data and equity group, reports a Beating/Lagging Expectations analysis that maps the academic performance of a school. It also determines whether the performance is above or below expectation based on schools with comparable demographics. Nelson students perform almost 10 percentage points ABOVE expectation (linear regression) compared to similar schools, proving that we are truly closing the achievement gap.

We commit to continuous improvement. The KLAS model is adjusted after each assessment round to intensify targeted support where it is needed. This finely tuned system ensures that achievement improves across the school. It also ensures that parts of the system (classes, students, student groups, grade-levels, subject areas, and teachers) who need different kinds and amounts of support receive that help immediately. We are proud that this model has proven successful in maximizing the achievement results for each and every student.