

## **Pico Canyon Elementary School Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 19648320100636

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Newhall

School: Pico Canyon Elementary School

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 925 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Pico Canyon Elementary School is located in Stevenson Ranch, a suburban community, thirty miles north of Los Angeles. Pico Canyon opened its doors on August 21, 2003, and was designed to accommodate 950 students. Currently, 925 students are enrolled in grades transitional kindergarten through sixth. Three portable buildings have been added to accommodate the addition of special education students with moderate to severe disabilities. The school is located in an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County and is situated adjacent to a county park.

Pico Canyon School serves a diverse neighborhood with a current student population comprised of 35% Caucasian, 20% Asian, 26% Hispanic, 3% African American, and 15% multiple ethnicities. fifteen percent of our students are English Learners and 16% of our current student population is considered socio-economically disadvantaged. Surrounded by apartments, town homes, single family homes and a park , the school has developed a strong identity and culture. Pico Canyon School supports the "Character Counts" program and maintains a tradition of high expectations, academic excellence and strong community support. The families in the Pico Canyon community

take pride in the school's learning environment and the continual development of a positive school culture and "Husky" traditions. Last year, Pico Canyon volunteers dedicated over 15,700 hours of documented service in our classrooms and in our school.

Pico Canyon has 900 students in 34 regular education classrooms and 25 students in 3 special day classrooms. In addition to the thirty-seven classroom teachers, Pico Canyon has a resource specialist teacher, 1.8 speech and language teachers, a school psychologist five days per week, a school counselor 2.5 days a week, three orchestra teachers one day a week, visual arts, chorus and classroom music teachers four days per month, a part-time occupational therapist, and a part-time adaptive physical education teacher. Pico Canyon has class size averages of 24 or less in grades transitional kindergarten through third. Four kindergarten classroom and one transitional kindergarten have implemented an early/late start program in which the teacher to student ratio is approximately 1 to 12 during critical core reading and mathematics instruction. During the overlap period where each teacher has all students, instruction centers on social studies, science, art, music, physical education, and computer technology. Staff members' efforts, combined with the efforts of the parents and numerous volunteers, create and enhance a culture that is warm, caring, and focused on excellence for all students. In spring 2006, Pico Canyon was recognized as a California Distinguished School, highlighting a school where a community comes together to achieve the very best for children. Pico Canyon School has been recognized as a California Business for Education Excellence Honor Roll School nine times.

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: Shared Instructional Leadership: Closing the Achievement Gap

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap

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

Strategies Used: School Climate, Small Learning Communities, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development

## **Description**

At Pico Canyon Elementary School, we operate as a Community of Leaders and Learners. Our Principal and Assistant Principal are instructional leaders, working with grade level teams to create cycles of learning, facilitated by our partner, The University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership (CEL). Administrators utilize CEL's 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership Framework to identify strong leadership practices that support our goal (and CEL's Mission) of eliminating the achievement gap. Part of the development of leadership practice includes learning how to analyze

instruction using CEL's 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (5D) Instructional Framework and the 5D+ Rubric for Instructional Growth and Teacher Evaluation.

The Principal works along-side an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) at Pico. These lead teachers have been culled out to collaborate directly with the Principal and Assistant Principal in identifying teaching and learning challenges, specific to Pico Canyon, and to support teachers in solving these challenges. We are distinguished from the district model in that we have created and shared collective commitments in place at Pico Canyon, specific to the student population we serve. We simply believe in continuous improvement for ALL students. We don't work in isolation and we share our data as well as our best practices. We have data driven Response to Intervention/instruction (RTI) structures of our design. We find solutions for students who "get it" and for students who do not.

Grade level teams work as true Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), with a laser focus on data analysis, during collaborative team time on dedicated Friday afternoons throughout the school year. During the 2016–17 school year, our district experienced a convergence of a number of large-scale initiatives, including the implementation of a new math curriculum, extensive math professional development, and a focus on supporting English learners through a new inquiry process. During the current school year, we adopted a new English Language Arts program, Benchmark. Teachers have collaborated around the four essential questions of a PLC throughout: What do we expect student to learn? How will we know students learned it? How will we respond when students do not learn it? How will we respond when students already know it?

Finally, while designing supplemental interventions, the Pico Canyon school community realized immediately that we need a plan that addresses student motivation, attendance, and behavior school-wide. Pico Canyon is one of eight schools in our district that has begun a three-year Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) school-wide implementation plan. The primary goal of PBIS at Pico Canyon is to reinforce positive behaviors that support a culture of academic excellence.

### **Implementation and Monitoring**

Our administrators collaborate with district leader/coaches to gather and analyze evidence from our school to identify a student learning problem. The student learning problem guides both leaders and teachers to identify areas within their own practice to refine and develop further. With a focus on an identified problem of practice, our district coach engages with our administrators and classroom teachers in an inquiry cycle. During an inquiry cycle, our administrators examine both quantitative and qualitative data -- test scores, formative assessments, classroom observation data, student work - to determine a student learning need. The examination of data compels administrators to identify a specific group of students and their teachers to follow over the course of the inquiry cycle. At the end of the cycle, the administrators and coach look at freshly collected quantitative and qualitative data to analyze the impact on principal, teacher and student learning.

Our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) worked with a math consultant from Solution Tree this year to help clearly define Core (Tier 1) instruction and then how teams can create systems to provide Tier II support in the classroom. Our ILT created a Response to Intervention/Instruction (RTI) plan that has been put into place school-wide. The ILT then had a follow-up training to assess progress. Based on feedback, our ILT worked with grade level teams to identify 8–10 priority standards for each grade level in ELA. ILT members are working with their grade level teams to identify 8–10 priority standards for each grade level in ELA. ILT members are working with their grade level teams to create common formative assessments in ELA and in math; data is analyzed after each unit of instruction in math and in ELA to determine Tier II interventions. Next, the ILT will work along-side school administrators to engage in identifying a problem of practice and collaborating through a cycle of inquiry in order to achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating the achievement gap. We will monitor our school-wide inquiries through a collection of qualitative and quantitative data as described above.

In grade level teams, teachers and ILT members continue to collaborate around the four essential questions of Professional Learning Community. Grade level teams publish agendas before weekly Friday meetings and share outcomes in their minutes. Our ILT members at each grade level will attend a district-wide PLC Institute for two days in June in order to refine our practices around data and our work with CEL.

Pico Canyon is in year one of a three-year Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) school-wide implementation plan. Our PBIS Lead Team of teachers, an administrator, a yard supervisor, and a parent are beginning to develop the systems and processes for Tier I implementation. We are examining baseline data collected from office referrals, suspension, parent surveys, and student surveys.

## **Results and Outcomes**

District-wide, through ongoing professional development efforts and a focus on data analysis during collaborative team time every Friday afternoon, the Newhall School district saw a rise in CAASPP scores over the last two years. Seventy-two percent of all students are proficient or advanced in ELA and 63% of all students are proficient or advanced in math in our district. However, peeling away the layers yields a glaring gap within various student groups, specifically English learners, our Hispanic students, and our economically disadvantaged students.

Where the implementation of Shared Instructional Leadership Practice: Eliminating the Achievement Gap is distinguished from the district's model is in our student outcomes at Pico Canyon. After three years of CAASPP implementation, we are on the verge of 80% or more of all of our students, grades 3–6 meeting or exceeding standards in the area of math. The percentages of students at the exceeding level has grown at every grade level. We have surpassed the goal in our Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) of 80% or more of all students at Pico, grades 3–6 meeting or exceeding standards in the area of English language arts. Once again, the percentages of students exceeding has grown or has stayed very high.

When peeling back the layers of data at Pico Canyon specifically, we too see a gap in achievement for all students within various student groups. English learners, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged student groups at Pico are not achieving at the same level as other student groups (White and Asian groups specifically); however, the gaps at Pico for our Hispanic student group is no longer as glaring as the gap is district-wide for this student group.

In 2016–17, 68% of students in the Hispanic group (3rd grade) at Pico were proficient or advanced in ELA (compared to 48% proficient or advanced district-wide). Eighty percent of students in the Hispanic group (6th grade) at Pico were proficient or advanced in ELA (compared to 67% proficient or advanced district-wide).

Our implementation of the model program/practice is distinguished from the district's model in the unique design and delivery that has been developed by the collective leadership at Pico Canyon to meet the needs of the students we serve here. Data supports that we are successfully implementing Tier I instruction for our students as well as implementing Tier II and Tier III supports that have come out of our work with CEL, with RTI teams, with our ILT members, and through grade level team work as PLCs. We look forward to further supporting our efforts through a school-wide PBIS plan.