

## **Escalona Elementary Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 19648406020929

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Norwalk-La Mirada Unified

School: Escalona Elementary

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 580 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Commitment, compassion, energy, enthusiasm! This is the essence of Escalona Elementary School! An exciting, stimulating educational environment, paired with the commitment displayed by our entire school community makes Escalona a quality school. Our school is one in which all students can reach great educational heights and where staff takes responsibility to create a learning environment that allows all students to soar.

Built in a suburban neighborhood in La Mirada in 1956, Escalona, with its population of 580 K–5 students, is one of 17 elementary, 6 middle and 4 high schools that comprise the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District. Over the years, Escalona has been recognized as a school with exceptional teachers, high student achievement, and involved parents. We are united in our purpose to make every student future ready.

Dedicated to the goal of developing responsible, inspired learners, teachers are not only facilitators for learning, but believers in all learners. Staff provides a rigorous, standards-based, assessment driven instructional program which includes Visual and Performing

Arts, Physical Education, Integrated Technology, Character Education, and Social-Emotional Competencies. Escalona teachers maximize each instructional day by expecting 100% engagement, 100% of the time. Step onto Escalona's campus, enter the classrooms, and you will hear a buzz of excitement as students and teachers engage in the day's learning activities. You'll notice that each classroom has clear, student-centered learning targets and student work is showcased. By talking with teachers, you will realize that they are knowledgeable about each child's skills relative to grade level standards. This intimate knowledge comes from many hours of analyzing student data and work samples within grade level Professional Learning Communities. This data drives and informs the instruction in individual classrooms, in grade levels, and school wide.

Students' culture and prior experiences are valued. We serve a community rich with diversity, with families from Asia, Central/South America, and the Middle East. Within this diversity, you will encounter G.A.T.E. students, English Learners and students with special needs. Escalona hosts a specialized program for children with autism, with two classes serving 12 students.

Escalona has a long standing reputation as a high quality school providing excellent academic opportunities for every child. A comprehensive balanced literacy program, powerful mathematical experiences, and hands-on activities stimulate and solidify high levels of learning. Commitment by the staff, extensive communication, positive behavior support, and actively involved parents create an educational community of the highest caliber. We invite you to experience our school where children come first and where parents, staff and community work together to fulfill our motto: "Soaring on the Wings of Knowledge."

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: Blended Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention, Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Professional Development

Target Population(s): American Indian, Asian, Black or African American, Filipino, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, White, Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

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

## Description

Escalona's Blended MTSS is a framework by which we ensure services match the needs of all students. The foundation of our Blended MTSS is strong first instruction focused on Common Core Standards and pro-social competencies. The focus of our Tier 1 practice is to optimize learning to maximize success for each student, in all areas.

In PLC, Escalona teachers discuss the "big ideas" within the curriculum. Essential agreements between grade levels (by the end of \_\_\_grade, all students will be able to\_\_\_), lead PLC teams to identify essential standards in the core subjects (ELA/Math). These essential standards drive initial instruction. Likewise, the big ideas of our PBIS matrix (Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe) provide a framework by which instruction of social competencies are based. Academic and behavioral learning targets provide clarity for students regarding each day's learning goals.

Within PLC, teachers analyze data and discuss "what" and "how" to teach. Differentiated instructional strategies within Tier 1 support every student, including gifted and high achievers, English Learners, visual/kinesthetic/auditory learners, and students with disabilities. Differentiated strategies give students the skills to understand and utilize a variety of input rather than simply memorizing facts. They also provide students the opportunity to show understanding of concepts through differentiated products. Behaviorally, explicit social skills lessons provide a rationale, the context in which a skill is used, and clear examples on how to use the skill. Practice and performance feedback is given both for academic skills and behavioral skills.

Tier 2 supports are a supplement (not a replacement) to Tier 1 when a student displays academic or behavioral gaps. Escalona teachers analyze common assessments and student work within PLC. When problems are identified, the PLC team develops interventions in which all team members can assist. Common Tier 2 practices may be "informal" such as small group or individualized re-teaching or they may be more "formal" during which students receive support with an Intervention Specialist. Tier 2 behavioral intervention also may be "informal" (i.e. providing the student a way to ask for assistance that is not disruptive or explicitly re-teaching wanted behavior) or it may be more "formalized" in which a student meets with our Elementary Student Support Specialist to hone specific pro-social skills.

Periodic monitoring of all students provides data on the effectiveness of our blended program. Fidelity to the team based approach to problem solving (PLC), high quality instruction, and evidence based Tier 2 supports meet the needs of most of our students. However, if our prevention and problem solving efforts fall short, we continue to use a team based approach to place students in Tier 3 interventions. Functional assessments are used to intervene with behavior and mental health needs.

## Implementation and Monitoring

Escalona's implementation of its Blended Multi-Tiered System of Support relies heavily on research based practices of effective academic and behavior instruction. We keep in

mind that approximately 80% of our students' academic and behavioral needs will be met within Tier 1 if we attend to the quality of first instruction. Therefore, an emphasis is placed on Tier 1 guiding principles for effective instruction.

Escalona teachers focus on big ideas...the core concepts that are needed for academic and social competency. Collective agreements on these core concepts, what we call essential standards/essential understandings, are a critical function of PLC and guide what and how we teach.

Clear expectations in the form of learning targets, explicit teaching actions, and effective classroom management practices give students transferable skills that help them manage their own learning. In math, an example of this is our emphasis on using multiple representations or strategies to solve problems instead of teaching a single algorithm. Similarly, in ELA, teachers use a balanced approach that combines phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency and comprehension instruction to teach reading. Behaviorally, students are taught social skills through explicit lessons and teachers provide feedback for students which strengthen the link of skills and natural reinforcements (i.e. You showed respect by waiting your turn. You showed responsibility by turning your work in on time.) Teachers define, teach, model, and acknowledge expected classroom behaviors. This allows them to provide quality instruction and students are able to engage in learning within a supportive and positive social environment.

Tier 2 supports are added based on students' needs. Most often, Tier 2 supports are done within the general classroom setting through individual or small group differentiated instruction. When students display a need for Tier 2 support in both academics and behavior, teachers first address the primary area of academic concern and infuse behavior support strategies into that instruction. Progress monitoring and flexible groupings allow students to move in and out of Tier 2 supports when deficiencies are eliminated or when gaps can be addressed within Tier 1.

Students who have not yet met the targets within Tiers 1 and 2 require the most powerful interventions, those provided by our most skilled interventionists. Escalona's Tier 3 team of interventionists includes an Intervention Specialist for academics, an Elementary Student Support Specialist for social/emotional competencies, and a multi-disciplinary assessment team which includes a Resource Specialist, School Psychologist, and a Speech/Language Pathologist. Our interventionists use the team approach to diagnose needs and prescribe a unique and comprehensive plan (perhaps an IEP) tailored specifically to each student's needs.

## **Results and Outcomes**

Escalona's Blended Multi-Tiered System of Support is a work in progress, yet results of our efforts have been positive. NLMUSD has been instrumental in providing the vision for implementation of RTI, PLC, and PBIS. NLMUSD provided training in each of the three areas. District support includes providing personnel, in the form of an Intervention Specialist and an Elementary Student Support Specialist, for each school site. These

supports have been invaluable and directly contribute to the success of Escalona's Blended MTSS.

However, successful implementation of any program or model truly rests with a select group of individuals who have knowledge, skills, experiences, and a desire to improve practices and outcomes for student success. Escalona School has the right people on board! Its personnel hold the common view that a Blended Multi-Tiered System of Support is simply our "typical practice." Therefore, the sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness of our practice is guaranteed.

PLCs are the heart of what we do. PLCs review data and work samples, create instructional plans to address essential agreements/standards, and make commitments to supports which address individual students' needs.

Evidence of Effectiveness: Teachers progress-monitor throughout the year. A few of these assessments, with results, are noted below:

iReady: Students in 1st–5th grade take iReady assessments three times a year. Reading scores in September 2017 indicated 38% of the 1st–5th grade students scored at grade level. Reading scores in January 2018 indicated 54% of those same students scored at grade level. Similarly, Math scores in September indicated 25% of our 1st–5th grade students were on grade level, whereas by January 2018 49% of the students were on grade level.

DRA: Students receiving Tiers 2 and 3 interventions with the academic interventionist are assessed frequently using the Developmental Reading Assessment. Each of these students showed improvement on the DRA between September and November.

Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC): Spring 2016 ELA results show that 49% of third graders met/exceeded standards. Results of the same cohort in Spring 2017 indicate 58% met/exceeded standards. Spring 2016 ELA results for fourth graders show 60% met/exceeded standards. Spring 2017 ELA results for the same cohort of students show 66% met/exceeded standards. Similar results play out in mathematics.

The gains on SBAC are noted on the California Data Dashboard, as are the merits of our commitment to explicit teaching and intervention of social emotional competencies. Office referrals for behavior are decreasing as are suspensions. Adults on campus support students with positive interactions and a genuine interest in their well-being. Escalona students are excited to come to school daily and they are eager to succeed! Escalona students...Respectful, Responsible, Safe, and Soaring on the Wings of Knowledge!