

Vista Grande Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19648656021372

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified

School: Vista Grande Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 460 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Vista Grande Elementary School is one of ten elementary school within the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District. Approaching the school, one has a commanding view of the Channel Islands and the Los Angeles Basin. Vista Grande is known for its high performing students, active and involved parents and dedicated, professional staff.

We are a diverse school community. Our students represent a range of ethnicity and language groups. Some are first generation immigrants; some are the children of first generation immigrants. In contrast, there are also students whose parents attended Vista Grande.

The mission of Vista Grande is to develop students who are confident, creative thinkers who embrace a Growth Mindset. A Vista Grande Voyager is a positive role model and communicator who contributes to the community, demonstrating respect and the appreciation of differences through caring behavior toward all of its members.

Parents and community members are actively involved in Vista Grande and vitally interested in the education of its children. Vista Grande is unique in the fact that it also has a Japanese Parents Group, Korean Parents Group, as well as a Chinese Parents Group. All are generous in their personal and monetary support of the school.

In addition to PTA, interested parents actively participate on the School Site Council, English Language Learner Advisory Committee, and Peninsula Education Foundation. Parents and community members are engaged and welcomed to participate in a wide variety of on-campus activities that include volunteer work in the classroom, library-media center, and in support of special school events.

Vista Grande students are supported throughout their educational experience at Vista Grande with multi-tiered systems of support for academic and behavior concerns. All students in grades K–5 are screened for reading proficiency three times each year. Students recommended for support in Math are screened using iReady, resulting in recommendations for appropriate support. Social, emotional and behavioral concerns are being addressed through the school-wide adoption of a Growth Mindset. Students displaying significant emotional challenges have access to the Student Support Specialist to address individual needs.

Opportunities for leadership are available to all fourth and fifth grade students through participation in Team Kids. This community service organization is designed to promote compassion and citizenship as students organize philanthropic outreaches to benefit the local community. While all Vista Grande students contribute to the monthly service challenges, fourth and fifth grade students take on leadership roles of promoting, gathering, sorting, and preparing donations for the chosen organization.

Students, parents and educators are focused on excellence in all aspects of children's lives at Vista Grande: every child, every day, every way.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Every Child, Every Day, Every Way

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development

Target Population(s): Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic, White, Two or More Races, English Learners

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

Since 2015 Vista Grande has worked to develop a growth mindset among its learning community: teachers, students and parents. Believing that all children can demonstrate progress and that mistakes are opportunities for learning, systems have been developed to ensure the success of all students.

The Suspension Rate is reflection of school climate that includes student behavior, engagement, volunteerism, and attendance. Expectations for student behavior are communicated and upheld throughout the school year. Students learn appropriate means of reporting problems, the importance of honesty, and connections between choices and consequences. Communication with parents is integral to the development of students' character. Undergirding the student behavior plan are the Pillars of Character, mindfulness strategies and newly formed access to a Student Support Specialist.

Student engagement is witnessed from classroom to playground, from participation in PTA social events to participation in Team Kids. PTA events are widely attended by school families. Parent volunteers are responsible for a range of activities that include individual PTA events to ongoing programs that enrich the educational experience of all Voyagers.

English Language Learners at the emerging and bridging levels receive support from the ELL teacher. As students progress toward greater independence in English, support transitions to a push-in model in the classroom. ELL students may also receive support in the Rtl setting.

Broad success in English Language Arts could be a challenge when 20% of the student body is comprised of English Language Learners, yet success has grown each year. Teachers in PVPUSD developed a quality standards-based ELA curriculum in alignment with CCSS. Articulation between grade levels takes place at least once yearly, including between elementary and middle school. Universal screenings for literacy take place three times a year to track student progress. The Rtl program uses flexible groups to support struggling students in the Learning Center, while teachers address the needs of Tier 2 students through classroom groupings.

In 2016, PVPUSD adopted the Math in Focus curriculum, the focus of professional development. Strategies emphasizing number sense and modeling were challenging, but time is showing the benefits of the program. Teachers continue to emphasize the importance of fact fluency through all grade levels. Formal screening for math proficiency is not currently in place, but data from CAASPP and teacher input have led to a formal math intervention program this year.

Critical to widespread student success at Vista Grande is the Student Success Team (SST) process and the integration of technology standards TK–5. Through the SST process, all teachers can address the needs of all students, academically and behaviorally.

Technology has been the vehicle to fuel student learning in a manner that is consistent with statewide assessments.

Implementation and Monitoring

School climate impacts Suspension Rate, therefore professional development in 2015 centered on Mindsets in the Classroom. An important addition to the behavior plan is the Student Support Specialist. The SSS meets with groups of students or individuals, counseling them through difficulties. Opportunities for engagement occur during and beyond the school day calendared with the principal in advance. Vista Grande runs monthly attendance checks using SIS. Families exceeding pre-determined thresholds of tardies and unexcused absences are notified by mail.

Students with consistent attendance, who are actively engaged and empowered, as well as supported in the learning of appropriate behavior choices are not likely to be suspended.

Progress of emerging and bridging ELL students is tied to daily instruction in English. Bridging ELL students may be recommended for Rtl support in reading comprehension, or receive direct ELL support through a push-in model.

Instruction for primary students focuses on acquiring vocabulary, learning grammar, and conventions in the context of holidays and American traditions. ELL instruction in upper grades emphasizes writing by developing effective planning strategies.

Steps taken to support ELLs since 2016 include training in the GLAD program and the addition of an ELL teacher liaison at each site. In 16–17, one teacher participated in GLAD training, presenting newly-learned strategies at a staff meeting.

ELL parents are well-integrated in the school community. In 2018, ELL parents supported our international focus for Read Across America by reading stories in their native language.

Academic Indicators for ELA reflect rigorous, teacher-developed ELA curriculum from grades TK–5 that employs overarching themes and essential questions aligned to CCSS. The use of Ready Reading from first grade through fifth grade provides practice with comprehension and writing skills in connection to fiction and non-fiction articles. Beginning in Grade 3, students study novels.

Vista Grande conducts a literacy screening three times each year: fall, winter, spring. Using data from AimsWeb, teachers meet with the Rtl team after each testing session to recommend students for extra support. Rtl participants are progress-monitored with a goal of full time instruction in the GE setting.

Academic support through Rtl and support for ELL students works efficiently because a block schedule was developed in 2014: a successful and sustainable model.

Academic Indicators in Math are tied to the implementation of the Math in Focus curriculum in 2015, emphasizing Number Sense in base ten number. Students progress from concrete, to pictorial, to algorithmic understanding of concepts. Fact fluency is practiced using Reflex Math.

All Academic Indicators are tied to the integration of technology throughout the curriculum.

Results and Outcomes

Suspensions have been limited to 2–3 per year since 2015. Record keeping, counseling, communication with parents and school-based interventions are processes that prevent student suspension.

According to the Healthy Kids Survey, 73% of students feel safe at school and feel that they have an adult to turn to for help. This year, 209 students participate in Run Club compared to 174 students in 16–17. In 16–17, one parent led the Science Olympiad team of about 12 students while four parents actively led 16 students, earning our second Silver Medal in 17–18. Team Kids participation ranges from leadership roles in 4th and 5th grade to participation in philanthropic drives in grades TK–3. In 2016–17, Team Kids supported Rainbow Shelter, Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles, the SPCA and Halloween Candy collection for U.S. military stationed overseas.

The number of volunteer hours in 15–16 was 6,120, while in 16–17 it rose to 9,703. In 17–18, volunteer hours already exceed 7,000.

ELL students have been reclassified at an increasing rate. In 2014–15, 2 students were reclassified, 9 in 2015–16 and 11 in 16–17, demonstrating the effectiveness of combining ELL support with Rti strategies in a tiered support model.

CAASPP data for ELA shows that in 2016, 64.8% of ELL students met or exceeded standards, compared to 81.8% of all students. In 2017, 69% of ELL students met or exceeded standards compared to 83.8% of all students.

CAASPP data for Mathematics show that in 2017, 71.2% of ELL students met or exceeded standards compared to 78.4% of all students. In 2017, 75% of ELL students met or exceeded standards, compared to 81.4% of all students.

Vista Grande was impacted by move of Toyota families when they relocated their headquarters. In 2014–15, 7 of 12 students who moved were ELLs. In 2015–16, this number doubled to 14 of 33 students. Numbers peaked in 2016–17 when 21 of 43 students who moved were ELLs. The number of ELL students remains constant, while the composition and academic readiness of students fluctuates.

Schoolwide CAASPP results in ELA demonstrate growth over three years. In 2015, 81.9% of Vista Grande students met or exceeded grade level standards. By 2017, this rose to 83.8%.

Schoolwide CAASPP results in Math also demonstrate growth over three years. In 2015, 75.4% of Vista Grande students met or exceeded grade-level standards. By 2017, this rose to 81.4%.

The needs of 27 students have been addressed through the SST process since 2016–17. Approximately 3–4 students per year move from SST to an evaluation resulting in a 504 Plan or IEP. The goal is to ensure student success in the least restrictive environment.

Vista Grande focused on increasing student access to technology. Since 2013–14, , 95 Chromebooks, 75 iPads and 20 Apple TVs have been placed in classrooms.

Vista Grande's systematic approach to student support combined with a pervasive Growth Mindset allows every child to excel every day in every way.