

## **Alexander Hamilton Elementary Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 19648816021612

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Pasadena Unified

School: Alexander Hamilton Elementary

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 580 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Child and family focused, Hamilton Elementary PK–5 School is nestled in a historical residential community of Pasadena. Established in 1927, Hamilton has a long and proud history of high standards and academic excellence and is honored to be a California Distinguished, Blue and Gold Ribbon Award winning school. Our school continues to grow with approximately 620 children in Pre-K through fifth grade. Hamilton’s partnership with the community stands as a key foundation for our success. Hamilton emphasizes creating leadership skills among all our students and promotes character education in all grades. Children are recognized for their good character and academic achievements. Our staff is organized in collaborative grade level teams and each team works to ensure all students find success in their learning. Teachers work together to create common projects for different essential learning outcomes in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. Our plan is to continue this important piece, while working on meeting the Common Core Standards at each grade level and attaching the standards to real life application. Hamilton School epitomizes an

effective school with dedication to continuous improvement through advanced instructional strategies, techniques and materials; a skilled and energetic staff; a clean and safe facility; and an involved, supportive community, with a positive attitude toward learning and life. We, the staff at Hamilton School commit ourselves to these basics: We believe that all children can and will succeed. Collaborative teams will communicate and cooperatively make decisions that reflect the best interests of home/school community. We will teach using differentiated strategies for successful development. We will demonstrate our dedication to continuous improvement. We will create a positive environment that will recognize and respect the various cultural, intellectual, and social differences among the members of the school community. We will provide an effective and innovative program that is sufficiently creative and flexible to maximize each child's capabilities. We will encourage development of the whole child including academic mastery, physical fitness, and self-esteem. We believe a safe, respectful and responsible campus is key in building a culture of learning.

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: Leader in Me

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Career Technical Education, Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention, Civic Education Awareness, Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Nutrition and Physical Activity/Education, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, 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, Small Learning Communities, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Health Support, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

## **Description**

Hamilton's Leadership Academy originated as the product of a motivated group of experienced educators and administrators who are dedicated to analyzing causes of low achievement and changing the way we do things to bridge the achievement gap for at-risk students. Here, teachers hold a shared belief that students deserve the highest quality education and dedicate themselves to empower our kids to be lifelong learners and responsible citizens. We are accountable to ensuring that Hamilton implements a strategic educational program to deliver on its mission to nurture, inspire, and challenge

our students to become confident, creative, and successful leaders of tomorrow. We maintain a commitment to stay continually abreast of new educational research that is published and then share this information with our students and their families. The Leader In Me, is research based literature by Sean Covey, used by our staff as a guiding and inspirational point to begin the leadership academy journey. After reading this book, we came to look at our student population differently. At Hamilton, all students can be leaders because leadership is doing the right thing even when no one is there to see it. Every student can be a leader in various ways because we are all unique and have skills and talents to share. Each year, as our student population grows and changes, the staff strives to continually fine tune our leadership practices and programs to ensure students reach their optimal potential. To further instill the message of leadership in all of us, the staff chose to adopt the 7 Habits of Happy Kids based on The Leader in Me, by Sean Covey as a leadership guide written in child friendly language. Through this book, our teachers teach the premise that all students can be leaders. Students learn the 7 Habits, which include: being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, putting first things first, thinking win-win, seek first to understand then to be understood, synergize, and sharpen the saw. Additionally, we instill the personal behavior habits that they will need to succeed at home and at school through reciting our core values and our school motto. We promote our core values of being safe, respectful, and responsible in all we do; at home and at school. Through our Leadership Academy Model, the culture at Hamilton has evolved so that there is a feeling of mutual accountability for all student success. The focus on leadership supports our students in their academic and personal growth.

### **Implementation and Monitoring**

To nurture the leadership habits within our students, our staff understands the importance of building self-esteem, offering opportunities to get involved, and modeling leadership qualities. In order to accomplish this, students participate in a variety of classes offered throughout the day such as reader theater, improvisation, instrumental music, and electives such as Mad Science, soccer, and art. Hamilton's music and theater classes play an important role in building focus, self-awareness, self-confidence, empathy, communication and problem-solving skills within our students. Offering Friday afternoon elective classes gives students a voice to choose a class that interests them, whether it is Odyssey of the Mind, running or robotics. Throughout the week, various students practice public speaking by making announcements, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and our school's motto, and reciting a leadership quote on the overhead speaker. Additionally, students are encouraged to speak at graduations, Friday assemblies, and within their own classrooms. Students build their own skills through critical thinking, goal setting, listening and speaking, self-directed learning, and working with others. All-school assemblies reinforce the 7 habits weekly and celebrate student accomplishments. With our shared vision and mission at the forefront of all we do, our team uses multiple sources and ways to continually monitor the effectiveness of our Leadership Academy and its outcome on academic achievement and social success. We monitor our effectiveness through many avenues including: vertical and same grade level collaboration, group and individual goal setting, on-going data analysis, classroom observations, and various parent leadership meetings. Bi-weekly, teachers collaborate

to analyze data, discuss their performance expectations and student progress, and to plan the next steps needed to take as a team to move the students to the next level of achievement. Our site Lighthouse Leadership Team (LLT) and School Site Council (SSC) meets twice a month to monitor and discuss in depth the goals set forth in our SPSA. Once a month our site English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) meets to discuss the progress of students who speak multiple languages and their progress toward fluency in English. Additionally, ongoing targeted intervention for struggling students is provided to ensure students are mastering their grade level standards. We promote positive behavior through weekly incentives and keep an open door policy with parents. All teachers participate in a student behavior rating scale where they rank their students on various scales on externalizing and internalizing behaviors. Using this data, teachers and our behavior interventionist can specifically target the work we do with students based on their area of behavioral need.

## **Results and Outcomes**

We know that our students have the best chance to become confident, creative, and successful leaders of tomorrow when the entire community takes an active role. Our emphasis on maintaining a safe and respectful environment through supportive relationships and clear behavioral expectations creates a well-structured school environment where staff can teach and students can learn. Teachers embed and model the seven leadership habits in all that they do. Student achievement (social and academic) is our priority and we see the results in a myriad of ways. Qualitatively: Kindness and honesty is consistently noticed by campus visitors; students holding the door for a teacher or peer, giving compliments, and apologizing and admitting when they are wrong. We have observed an increase in prosocial behavior on the playground - students are taking turns with less conflict and following the game rules. Teachers explicitly teach students that the rules make activities. Independence has increased; students are writing down their assignments, doing their homework, and taking care of their business without an adult asking. In class, students set goals and plan ahead. Teachers build them up so they know they are an important part of the classroom. We are experiencing easy transitions from individual work to teamwork in the classroom. Students learn to get along well with others. Students are taking care of themselves by eating right and exercising. They get involved in outside sports and other activities; they help others. Students desire to take on leadership roles in the classroom, in the school, and in their communities; specifically, our school leadership roles have quadrupled over the past three years. Quantitatively, student behavioral data is analyzed by teachers for specific predictors of internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Internalizing behaviors such as shyness, low self-esteem, and withdrawal are typically harder to recognize, where externalizing behaviors, such as disobeying rules, physical aggression, and threatening others are impossible to ignore. Using this data, our staff actively investigates the root causes of any at risk child. As we adjust our instructional practices to meet the new CCSS, we know that a strong emphasis is placed on students' ability to speak and present information. In order to meet this challenge, we prepare our students to participate effectively in a range of conversations building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. We build a foundation of knowledge in fields that will give our students the background to be better readers and

communicators in all content areas. Each trimester, academic data is discussed by teachers and instructional plans are put in place. Additionally, ongoing school site testing data is also discussed and home school communication on student performance is frequently communicated with parents.