Grant Elementary School
Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19649806022560

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Santa Monica-Malibu Unified

School: Grant Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 601 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

The mission of Grant Elementary School is to ensure that the school community, which includes students, their families, staff, and community members, will work together to create a safe and caring learning environment in which students will become self-directed learners, collaborative workers, critical thinkers, and responsible citizens. Families will share in the responsibility for their child's success through their active support of the educational process.

Grant was built in 1906 and serves students in the northeast areas of Santa Monica. It boasts a rich heritage within its 113-year history serving generations of ethnically and socioeconomically diverse students and their families. The school was originally built to house just over 50 students within the small brick building and now serves 600 students in grade pre-kindergarten through 5.

The diverse ethnic and socioeconomic student population at Grant includes: 47.2% White, 30.7% Hispanic/Latino, 9.1% African American, 7.7% other ethnicities, 13.4% students with disabilities, 29.9% socioeconomically disadvantaged, and nearly 10%

identified as English Learners. We proudly serve our families within 27 general education classes including 1 fee-based preschool class. There are 4 specialized academic instruction classes serving students in TK–5th grade. Additionally, we offer 2 special education classes focused on meeting the needs of students with autism and social skills support.

Grant offers a strong core curriculum focused on implementation of the California New State Standards. Additionally, we have specialized offerings during the school day including a STEM Lab, district supported arts program and PE for all students, instrumental music and dance as well. Approximately 200 students participate in before and after-school academic and enrichment programs and 35 receive academic support in grades 2 through 5 during the school day from a reading support teacher.

The diverse student population is served through the alignment of resources to meet the needs of all students. Various funding sources allow our school to support students with instructional aides, STEM Lab teachers, Instructional Coaches, a Learning and Literacy Teacher, off campus learning opportunities and other school and district supported personnel. Facilities are continually being upgraded to meet the ever changing and growing needs of 21st Century learners, and our schedules reflect the value that our school has on professional development and professional learning communities to refine our work.

Santa Monica has seen many changes since Grant first opened its doors in 1906, but many of our community's goals have remained the same. Our focus to meet the needs of all learners has been the purpose of its 113 year history and will continue to be for years to come.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Data Driven Cycles of Inquiry Emphasizing Language Acquisition and Development

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): 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, Small Learning Communities, Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

What makes the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District unique is that school sites and teachers are given autonomy to select initiatives and goals towards meeting CA state standards. At Grant we identified a common focus and made a collective commitment to refine, strengthen, monitor, and adjust collaborative instructional practices to meet the needs of all learners. Our model of practice is to use a cycle of inquiry by identifying a problem of practice through analyzing data, designing and developing a plan, implementing the plan in response to that data, and honing the plan by synthesizing what was learned throughout the cycle.

Our practice includes the implementation of a system of continuous improvement that involves regularly examining standards, creating common assessments to measure student progress towards those standards, selecting instructional strategies to teach the standards, and engaging in structured conversations about whether or not our instruction is working. When we began our work as a Professional Learning Community (PLC), we analyzed our SBAC data and found that the majority of our students didn't perform well on Speaking and Listening. Further, we realized that our EL students were scoring significantly lower other subgroups. We began to focus on English Learners (ELs) and research-based instructional strategies for language development that improve outcomes for all. At each grade-level meeting, we discussed EL students and how we were addressing their learning needs through both designated and integrated English Language Development (ELD) instruction. In core instruction, we focused on Speaking and Listening and Academic Language implemented specific research-based instructional strategies as a team. In ongoing analysis of student work and other data, we continued to identify standards that most students need to work in common. This common focus informed our instruction, implement common strategies and regularly discussed their efficacy. Throughout this work, we noticed our practice as educators improved and that students demonstrated deeper levels of proficiency with the state standards.

Grant Elementary distinguishes itself even further from SMMUSD in that we continually examine what is not effective for certain subgroups of students in order to unlock best practices that are effective for all. The trend shows that nearly 75% of all students meet or exceed the standard in Language Arts and Mathematics. However, we hold high expectations for all learners and recognize that the remaining 25% of our student population needed support in order to close the achievement gap. The California School Accountability Dashboard reaffirms that our EL population needs ongoing and strategic support.

Grant Elementary School presents this application based on our commitment to the ongoing practice of utilizing the cycle of inquiry to support all students.

Implementation and Monitoring

The deep collaboration and instructional work within a cycle of inquiry at Grant School has evolved to become the practice it is today. Beginning in the 2015–2016 school year,

our staff engaged in data meetings that centered around a district focus of balanced literacy, analyzing a universal screener, and launched our initial work around the cycle of inquiry with an emphasis on language skills acquisition and development. To refine our work, we engaged in professional development focused on researched based instructional strategies to support academic vocabulary and language skills compulsory for our designated English Learners yet valuable for all students. Our leadership team aligns all resources to support and enhance student learning. These resources include involving all stakeholders, identifying funding sources, engaging in focused professional development, effectively utilizing facilities, and protecting allotted time.

This established practice continued into the 2016–2017 school year. We continued our engagement in a cycle of inquiry based on a selected school-wide focus and concentration within the content areas of writing and mathematics. In addition to local assessments we created school-wide common assessments and analyzed them along with student work to determine the needs of all students with an emphasis on English Learners. We identified strengths and needs using common, standards based rubrics and determined next steps for instruction at each grade level, PK–5th, which allowed us to identify school wide trends. This practice continues to drive our instruction to develop innovative ways to meet the needs of our students.

During the 2017–2018 school year an expanded School Leadership Team (SLT) was developed and determined a school-wide focus based on data provided within the California School Accountability Dashboard. CAASPP data revealed that all students needed additional support in Listening and Speaking with a particular need highlighted for our English Learner population. In response, the SLT researched, developed, and delivered professional development around instructional strategies to address the need for structured talk. This included strategies to give students adequate processing time along with more instructional minutes for structured talk. Grade level Professional Learning Communities meet on a regular basis to determine expectations for our students in regard to speaking and listening designed around the four essential PLC questions. This continuous work, around all core subject areas, provides teachers and students with models to amplify, assess, and develop students' language.

During the 2017–2018 school year we made a commitment to follow each of the four distinct steps of analyzing evidence, determining a focus, implementing and support the focus, and analyzing the impact to engage in an ongoing cycle of inquiry - moving away from program based to standards based instruction.

Results and Outcomes

The SLT as well as grade level-alike teams keep a pulse on specific student needs and progress with cycles of analyzing and planning instruction around site and district benchmark assessments as well as ongoing grade level and school-wide common formative assessments. The methods used to evaluate this practice include a variety of formal and informal assessments. Grant School uses Illuminate, Excel sheets/tables and other means to monitor student outcomes. These programs allow teachers, support staff and administration to view results from assessments including formal

assessments, state assessments (CAASPP and CELDT) and Fastbridge – our district-wide elementary academic screener for language arts and literacy.

Teachers meet regularly to discuss student progress and design and develop instructional practices to address student need. To support this work, Grant has ensured that there is uninterrupted time dedicated to data and grade level meetings. Administration supports this process through classroom observation and feedback, participation on the SLT, and attendance at data and grade level meetings. Literacy coaches regularly visit classrooms and provide teachers the opportunity to observe their own students' listening practices. The data gathered from these opportunities helped teachers develop instructional practices and assessments to help students build the metacognitive strategy needed for language acquisition.

This work and data analysis has been refined each year. We have found that our practice of engaging in meaningful, transparent, and data driven cycles of inquiry has a positive affect on all core curricular areas. Initially, during common formative assessments in writing, less than 60% of students met the standard on pre assessments on narrative and opinion writing assessments. Additionally, less than 40% met the standard for listening and speaking as evidenced by teacher made common assessments. The results of our work showed that all students began to show impressive growth on post assessments.

As part of the district goals, our school has recently had a technology upgrade to include 2 interactive boards in all classrooms, 1:1 Chromebooks for all students in grades 3–5, and new Macbooks for teachers. This enables us to support our students beyond traditional learning. We know that we need to have supports in place that allow our students to be immersed in the language. We use technology daily for individualized and targeted supports. We provide opportunities to see students engaged in activities using academic language skills.

This is the practice that accounts for our success as evidenced by our growth on the California Accountability Model & School Dashboard. As a collective staff, we are committed to continuously growing and learning in our own practices and knowledge. This has encouraged us to be flexible and responsive in our teaching while keeping students at the forefront.