

## **Alta Vista Elementary Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 19753416022008

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): Redondo Beach Unified

School: Alta Vista Elementary

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 762 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Alta Vista Elementary, home of the Wildcats, is truly a neighborhood school, nestled in the arms of Alta Vista Park and the south Redondo Beach community. As one of thirteen schools in the Redondo Beach Unified School District, our staff is proud to provide our stakeholders with a nurturing learning environment wherein children can grow to discover their strengths, dreams, and passions while learning how to use those strengths for the greater community. We do this by developing personal relationships with every student, family member and each other; making efforts each day to form a positive connection. Our success, above all else, is about forming relationships as a vehicle to ensure the success of all students. No one is left behind. Out of these relationships has grown a culture of excellence and high expectations, collaboration, risk-taking and reflection, always keeping our mission at the forefront: to provide a safe and enriching environment where all children can grow academically, physically, socially, and emotionally.

Alta Vista Elementary is a diverse learning environment. Beginning in the preschool years, we are fortunate to serve almost seventy preschool children from 3–5 years of

age, with special needs ranging from significant speech delays to autism or Down Syndrome. Our elementary students represent another 634 students and are comprised of many ethnic subgroups: 49% white, 20% Hispanic, 12% Asian, 16% two or more races, and 3% African American. The class sizes in our primary grades average 23 students per class, and our fourth and fifth grade classes average 29 students per class. 22.1% of the population of Alta Vista is currently served by an IEP or 504 Plan. 8.1% of students are low SES and 7.9% English Language Learners. Within this diverse learning environment, Alta Vista's students have consistently performed exceptionally on external measures of academic achievement. Our 2018 CA Dashboard reflects the highest level of performance in ELA and Math, making Alta Vista the highest achieving school in RBUSD.

Alta Vista is fortunate to have the support of a dedicated Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). Our PTA provides our school with funding for learning materials, educational field trips, assemblies to connect learning, and acts of community service. Parents also contribute to the school by serving on our School Site Council, Wellness Council, WATCH D.O.G.S., Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Grades of Green, facilitating Hands-On-Art and Hands-On-Science and nutrition and gardening lessons, as well as dedicating countless hours in the classroom volunteering. Recently, Alta Vista was also recognized as a Blue Zone School for our commitment to student health and well-being. We, the staff of Alta Vista, are dedicated to working with families, community liaisons, service providers, and educational professionals to ensure that each and every child achieves success.

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: WATCH D.O.G.S. - Father Engagement Program

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

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

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

Strategies Used: School Climate, Parent Engagement, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support

## **Description**

Positive male role models make a difference in the lives of children. There's nothing new or controversial about these ideas. What's far less clear is how schools, especially elementary, that are traditionally female led, staffed, and supported, can provide greater access and increased exposure to daily positive male role models. After three years of working directly with the PTA to recruit fathers to meetings, school-wide events, leadership positions and classroom opportunities, less than 10% of the volunteer hours

logged were completed by males. Based on a recommendation from our school counselor, our team investigated a program through the National Center for Fathering entitled WATCH D.O.G.S.

The model of the Alta Vista WATCH D.O.G.S. program is built around the premise that fathers and father-figures require a more overt invitation in order to become involved with their child's school. An explicit understanding of what dads will be asked to do, directions that are able to be referenced as well as the impact of their presence on students and the school will increase the likelihood of fathers participating in the program. The program is also designed around the idea that parent involvement will increase if the volunteers are given a higher amount of freedom to choose when they participate, require less ongoing commitment, and allow ample planning for fathers to schedule time off from work.

The WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) is a program put forward by the National Center for Fathering (Fathers.com). Their goal is to reverse the cultural trend toward fatherlessness by helping every dad learn how to be a father. WATCH D.O.G.S. is the father involvement initiative of the center that organizes fathers and father figures in order to provide positive male role models for the students and to enhance school security. Fathers, grandfathers, step-fathers, uncles and other father figures volunteer to serve at least one day a year in a variety of school activities as assigned by the school principal. Activities include; volunteering in their child's classroom for a minimum of 1 hour, morning carpool greeting, encouraging morning exercises, facilitating recess play and spotting/rewarding positive behaviors, facilitating lunchtimes, working in classrooms, end of the day valet/carpool, campus cleanup, etc.

The program time line starts with recruitment in August/September (Back to School Night), and a beginning of the program training for all volunteers, the program runs October through June, with a mid- and end of the year celebration. WATCH D.O.G.S. is run by the school principal, school counselor, counseling intern and staff member as the Top Dog Coordinator (paid stipend).

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

### Implementation and Monitoring of the Model

The Alta Vista WATCH D.O.G.S. program began in September of 2014 as staff began advertising the program at Back to School Night and generating interest. In October, WATCH D.O.G.S. kicked off with a "Pizza with Pops" Night. Prior to the evening, 82 fathers confirmed their attendance with 124 children. The attendance at the event far exceeded expectations with 132 fathers and over 150 children. After dinner, followed by a bonding activity, students were taken for supervised childcare and fathers participated in a presentation on the need and importance of the program. The night ended with fathers being asked to "Stand Up, Sign Up and Show Up" with almost 70 percent of the instructional days being secured with volunteers. Sign-ups were converted to an on-line system and over the next few weeks and months, sign-ups increased to 95% of days filled.

Over the next few years, the program morphed into a school-wide support system as the WATCH D.O.G.S. leadership team received feedback and suggestions. The beginning of the year kick off night, "Pizza with Pops Game Night" has continued, followed by a mid-year re-engagement event and end of the year celebration "Donuts with Dad." Each event provides opportunities for dads to attend a school event and encourages participation as a WATCH DOG. Training is paired at each event as well as on-line videos that walk fathers through what to expect while on campus working. Fathers are provided with extensive, written daily schedules as well as hints for a successful WATCH DOGS day, prior to their service and the day of arrival. Within the schedule are multiple opportunities for dads to check-in with teachers and staff to thank them for their participation and to answer any questions that arise. When dads arrive at school, they are greeted by staff and provided a WATCH D.O.G.S. t-shirt to be visible throughout the day. Daily activities include: AM/PM carpool duty, being visible at all entrances and helping to secure gates, participating in morning exercises, working one-on-one in classes, supporting the library, leading small group interventions and playground/lunch engagement. AV goes beyond the district's model of solely inviting dads to school.

The district's model of WATCH D.O.G.S. is measured through the use of the annual California School Parent Survey that is conducted in the spring of every year. Parent volunteerism is measured through the monitoring of number and type of volunteer opportunities presented. Attendance is taken and monitored at all parent workshops and events.

At Alta Vista, the WATCH D.O.G.S. program is monitored in additional ways. End of the day surveys are completed by fathers and trimester surveys are administered to staff to gather feedback for program revisions. Volunteer hours are tracked and compared against the overall school volunteer data. Written schedules are analyzed to ensure that fathers are adhering to what is planned.

## **Results and Outcomes**

### Results of the Program/Pupil Outcomes

The success of the Alta Vista WATCH D.O.G.S. program has been so successful in encouraging and securing fathers and father-figures to participate on campus and in classrooms that our school is a model of implementation for the district as well as the National Center for Fathering. One of the two founders for the WATCH D.O.G.S. program, Eric Snow, visited the school from Arkansas to observe and speak to school stakeholders. The program implementation has been utilized as a model for the development of WATCH D.O.G.S. for the Los Angeles greater area.

### Direct Outcomes

During year one (2014–15), 183 fathers volunteered on campus, logging 1,235 volunteer hours. During the 16–17 school year and third year of implementation, volunteer data increased to over 1,600 hours with fathers from 225 families. With all

program volunteer hours combined, men represent 43% of the hours versus 57% for women, a substantial increase over the 10% men versus 90% women just three years prior. All fathers complete an end-of-day survey after each shift. 100% of dads report that they “strongly agree or agree” that their WATCH DOGS experience was a rewarding one. 100% of the dads state that they would recommend participating in the program to other fathers. Classroom teachers report the benefits of the program as well, with 100% of the teachers responding stating that the most positive result of the program is the engagement of dads with their children. Per the CA School Parent Survey (CSPS) administered in the spring of 2017, 97% of parents report that Alta Vista's learning environment is inviting. 98% of parents report that Alta Vista encourages them to be an active partner with the school in educating their child and 96% report that they have gone regularly to a scheduled parent-teacher conference.

#### Indirect/Unintended Outcomes

Since the inception of the WATCH DOGS program, student referrals for hands-on behavior during unsupervised time has declined dramatically. During the last three years of implementation, when a volunteer for WATCH D.O.G.S. was on site during recess/lunch time, office discipline referrals did not occur. as evidenced by suspension rates of 0.4%. On the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), students reported feeling safe at school with a 89% positive response rate.