

## **Ross School Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 21654336024673

County: Marin

District (Local Educational Agency): Ross Elementary

School: Ross School

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 386 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: Targeted Assistance

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Ross School (RS) is an award winning, dynamic school committed to academic excellence and innovation and is nationally recognized for academic performance, staff professional development, educational innovation, and community engagement. In 2016, Ross School was recognized as a "Gold Ribbon" School by the California Department of Education for its work in providing differentiated, targeted support services for general education students, special education students, and English language learners.

Over the past three years, Ross School has delivered on a new strategic plan designed to ensure students develop confidence, creative problem solving, compassion, collaboration, and content literacy (i.e. 5 C's). To meet these outcomes, the school has focused on three key areas: (1) Invest in Learners, (2) Invest in Teacher Excellence, (3) Invest in Community Relationships

In 2018, Ross School demonstrated high levels of proficiency on the CAASPP and showed more than one year's growth in one year's time for all learners in on benchmark assessments. Simultaneously, Ross School expanded elective options, invested in innovative programming (including a Cyber Cafe with augmented virtual reality, a music program K–8, STEM, Spanish K–8, Art, and a Fabrication Lab), ensured inclusionary acceleration (supporting all learners in making substantial progress without creating barriers for learners), and invested in developing student competency in tracking and measuring their own learning and giving and receiving feedback with others. Moreover, Ross School focused students on engaging in community service and partnering with parents to take part in the teaching and learning within the school to develop a strong sense of connectedness between all stakeholders.

Over the past two years, Ross School has focused on the utilization of a new hiring, onboarding, professional growth, and evaluation process with certificated personnel. The goal for the school is to ensure that all teachers are showing substantial growth in their professional development and impact on student learning.

RS has worked with the Ross School District Teachers Association, the Board of Trustees, and the community in ensuring that a quality process for effective educator employment and evaluation was established. Beyond hiring and evaluation, professional learning focuses on research-based practices to ensure students develop their core knowledge and skills in the 5 C's.

RS benefits from a long history of outstanding support from its parents and the broader community, evidenced by successful passage of multiple parcel taxes and bond measures. Highly engaged parents support and promote community building through volunteerism and partnership with the school. The collective belief is that it is the student that we are here for and so should serve them well. Ross School is a vibrant place to learn and grow with a strategic vision and momentum that is destined to continue.

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: Confidence in Learning Model

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

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

Target Population(s): Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: Small Learning Communities, Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development

## **Description**

In the past three years, Ross School (RS) has achieved at high levels on state academic tests and culture/climate assessments. Simultaneously, RS lacked a comprehensive strategy for ensuring all students were showing more than one year's growth in academic and social-emotional learning (SEL) across all grade levels and all target groups. Moreover, through a robust suite of assessment tools, RS found that the majority of students were unable to articulate their progress towards key learning outcomes, the dispositions that enable students to learn at high levels, strategies to improve their learning, and means for engaging in collaborative forms of learning.

As a means of addressing these school and district needs, RS developed a unique Confidence in Learning (CnL) program to ensure all students develop the beliefs and skills to persevere when facing challenging academic and social circumstances (i.e. Growth Mindset), use skills to measure and take action over their own learning (i.e. Assessment Capabilities), and strategies for giving and receiving feedback and engaging in problem solving with others (i.e. Collaboration). These outcomes have been accomplished by developing learning dispositions and tools for discussing learning with students, ensuring students are clear on the goals of lessons and units, using tools to track performance, and providing structured guidance for engaging with feedback.

Furthermore, RS has established common outcomes for each grade level, common means for measuring progress (e.g. calculating growth, showing student growth through various drafts of work, using standards-based assessment data), and using collaborative teaming with staff and students to discuss and take action on their learning (e.g. students using visual cues to measure their performance and discuss strategies to improve). Additionally, RS has invested in professional learning to enhance formative assessment and standards-based reporting practices, data analysis and interpretation, and professional learning communities work to advance teacher and administrator practice so that all students are showing substantial progress towards core academic and SEL objectives.

The results of the CnL model have been substantial. Having applied this work to all students groups and then analyzing the work across student groups, local benchmarking, surveys, anecdotal evidence from parents, and classroom walkthroughs and focus groups show that this work is providing students with a greater confidence in who they are as people and learners, how to take a stronger command of their own learning, and how to work with others in the context of learning. This model has been a key focus for RS as other local and state indicators have been met (including the indicator related to chronic absenteeism and/or suspension/expulsion). Moreover, the District office is keen to use this model as an exemplar for others to meet the demands of academic and SEL growth.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

The CnL model is continually monitored via annual state assessment data, tri-annual benchmark assessments (via the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of

Academic Performance Assessment), teacher assessments (e.g. pre/post assessments, calculating effect size, average gain scores), California Healthy Kids Survey, and a host of tools that enable teams to gather qualitative and quantitative data (via Visible Learning Plus assessment tools from the Evidence into Action, Visible Learning Action Teams, and Insider Series Assessment Capable Learning and Feedback tools which include video vignettes, surveys, and walkthroughs). The information gleaned from these measures have been routinely shared and discussed with the community.

For example, Site Council members have reviewed the annual state assessment data, which illustrated that student performance:

- "Increased Significantly" by 26.5% in mathematics (Five by Five Placement 2017 showed students were "Very High" (35 or more points above) and progressed by less than 3 points or increased by less than 3 points)
- "Increased" by 9.8% in ELA (Five by Five Placement 2017 illustrated students were "Very High" (45 or more points above), and progressed by 3 or less than 15 points)
- Showed 100% of students had access to common core curriculum as identified by district review of district courses of study, and
- Illustrated that 100% of teachers are highly qualified (exams and coursework), and
- Showed Access high levels of attendance and 100% of students had access to a broad course of study.

Based on performance data and feedback, teachers have engaged in numerous professional learning activities including formative assessment and standards-based grading work, professional learning communities, and assessment capable learners. These activities have included:

- Year long action research project on formative assessment practices with Shirley Clarke,
- Developing a guaranteed and viable curriculum via grade level and department meetings to establish proficiency scales/success criteria,
- Establishing a standards-based reporting systems,
- Training on tools for assessing and taking action on assessing student learning in the classroom and within departments.

These activities have been monitored by teacher feedback, classroom observations of implementation, student achievement and perception data (pre/post), and collective staff feedback. Based on feedback from diverse stakeholders (e.g. Parents: 'Ross

School Coffee', PTO meetings, and RSD Board Meetings, Students: grade level meetings, Site Council feedback, and focus groups) teachers have engaged in standards-based reporting and adopting a new assessment system to provide accurate progress and proficiency data to students and parents. This new information aligned with NWEA's MAP program provides a robust data set for students to utilize in making decisions to enhance their learning.

## **Results and Outcomes**

The efficacy of the CnL model is primarily determined through the continually monitoring of benchmark assessments (e.g. Measures of Academic Performance Assessment (MAP)), teacher assessments (e.g. pre/post assessments, calculating effect size, average gain scores), California Healthy Kids Survey, and a host of tools that enable teams to gather qualitative and quantitative data (e.g. video vignettes, surveys, walkthroughs using the Visible Learning Plus tools)

As of the Spring 2017 implementation of Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) MAP program, the majority of students are demonstrating more than one year's growth in one year's time in reading, writing, and mathematics. More than 90% of students are performing above standard and almost all students are able to discuss their learning, give and receive feedback, and articulate strategies they need to take to enhance their own learning. This level of performance echoes the research of John Hattie who in 2009 showed that students who were able to articulate their level of performance against a standard and devise next steps essentially double their rate of learning.

RSD is finding students are achieving at higher levels than previous school years engaging in advanced tasks in mathematics and English Language Arts as evidenced by their performance levels on standards based reporting and the school offering advanced mathematics courses. These overall results are strikingly similar when broken into cohort data based on grade level performance and targeted group(s) performance.

Finally, the Ross School District performance on all academic measures have maintained or increased in the past two years of CAASPP implementation.

RSD engages in bi-annual strategic discussions with the Board of Trustees and staff to inspect progress and determine next steps in professional learning. RSD has embedded professional learning and assessment tools into hiring practices, personnel evaluations, and staff meetings to ensure continuous improvement and sustainability of the CnL program for years to come.