

Ladera Ranch Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 30664640100909

County: Orange

District (Local Educational Agency): Capistrano Unified

School: Ladera Ranch Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 780 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Ladera Ranch Elementary School (LRES) is a community of learners where teachers, students, and parents work as a team to create a positive and safe environment for all students to learn. The mission of LRES is simple: learning. Each student's individual needs are met by providing a rigorous, well-balanced, and standards-based curriculum. Students are provided with opportunities that promote growth so they can reach their greatest potential, both academically and socially. Teachers participate in Professional Learning Communities to collaboratively study and implement best practices, monitor student progress, and use student data to drive instruction. Together, the LRES community ensures that "students will learn more today than yesterday, and more tomorrow than today."

LRES is located in the suburban development of Ladera Ranch, California and is part of Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD). It opened on August 27, 2003 and currently serves nearly 800 TK–5th grade students from the surrounding community. The school shares a campus with a 6th–8th grade middle school, but maintains separate programs, faculty/staff, administration, and facilities. In a first for Orange County, LRES has

partnered with the Orange County Public Library to house the city's branch of the library on campus.

The LRES campus is a state-of-the-art facility with a hard-wired and wireless technology infrastructure to support the Learning with Laptops program. This program provides a Chromebook for instructional use to all 4th–5th grade students. With the support of the LRES PTA, this program has expanded to include all 3rd grade students, and two Chromebook carts were recently purchased for Kindergarten–2nd grade classes to share for regular technology instruction and special projects. This advanced use of technology enhances student engagement with the core curriculum, while significantly advancing their digital skills and literacy.

2016–2017 demographics report that LRES students are 66.3% white, 12.4% Hispanic/Latino, 6.8% Asian, 6.5% of two or more races, and the remaining 4.5% are Filipino, Black/African American, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Subgroups include socioeconomically disadvantaged students (8.6%), English Learners (4.2%), and students with disabilities (8.8%).

In 2016–2017, 75% of LRES students met or exceeded state standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and 73% met or exceeded state standards in Math. This far exceeds both the district and state averages. With an emphasis on high-quality instruction and using student data to implement strategic intervention, LRES consistently demonstrates high achievement and growth in both ELA and Math. While there are many contributing factors to this success, the most distinguishing model programs and practices in place are the implementation of Voyager Passport, Reading Counts, and Khan Academy.

Model Programs and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Voyager Passport, Reading Counts, Khan Academy

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Education Supports, Use of Technology

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, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Teachers at LRES implement the district curriculum in a rigorous, meaningful way that supports struggling students and challenges those capable of more advanced learning. In both ELA and Math, supplemental programs and practices are also used to effectively meet the needs of all students. Some of these programs, like Daily Five, Great First Instruction, Cognitively Guided Instruction, and Voyager Passport are led by teachers, while others, such as Khan Academy, Reading Counts, and Raz Kids, are individualized programs driven by the students. In analyzing the impact of each of these programs, Passport, Reading Counts, and Khan Academy emerge as the model programs and practices that really elevate student achievement and foster continued growth.

Voyager Passport and Reading Counts are used to support learning and motivate students to improve in ELA and Reading. Passport is a program for struggling readers who would benefit from explicit, systematic intervention to accelerate growth. With such strategic, targeted instruction, these students quickly make progress towards mastering critical reading skills. Passport has proven to be an effective intervention strategy across student groups, meeting the needs of EL students, students in special education, and general education students who are simply a little behind.

Reading Counts is an independent reading program that reinforces fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension through computer based quizzes on books students have chosen to read. It measures and monitors students' reading growth based on individual Lexile scores, and provides teachers with assessment data and progress monitoring tools. Reading Counts is also an excellent tool to motivate hesitant readers, as it suggests books aligned with their interests and reading level, and encourages progress with fun, quick quizzes.

To support students in Math, LRES uses Khan Academy, an online learning resource that makes learning and practicing math fun. It offers instructional videos, lessons, and practice from kindergarten concepts to Calculus. Adaptive technology identifies a student's individual strengths and learning gaps, and a personalized learning dashboard allows students to practice and learn at their own pace. Khan Academy is used inside and outside of the classroom, for practice with current units of study, for review of difficult concepts, and for enrichment to whatever level a student is able to progress.

Ongoing professional development and PLC collaboration also ensures that teachers strive for continuous improvement of their practice and maintain a collective focus on data-driven student achievement. Weekly late-start time and teacher release days allow for grade level meetings, staff meetings, professional development, and independent reflection. Recent topics of focus include meaningful data analysis, digital literacy, effective PLC practices, John Hattie's research on achievement influencers, and STEAM instruction.

Implementation and Monitoring

To ensure that supplementary programs and practices are successful and effective, all stakeholders must be committed to outcome goals and implement the program with fidelity. At LRES, the strong engagement with Passport, Reading Counts, and Khan Academy from teachers, students, and parents enables these programs to accomplish the goals of high student achievement and continuous growth.

Passport intervention is implemented during the instructional day in small groups comprised of students who score Well Below Benchmark on the DIBELS assessment. Students who score Below Benchmark are monitored for growth or regression. Finding the time (about 90 minutes per week) to implement this small group intervention is not easy, but teachers make this time a priority because they value the impact of the program. In some cases, the principal will even lead a group, further demonstrating the schoolwide commitment to this program. DIBELS assessments are given three times per year, giving some fluidity to the grouping to exit students who excel beyond a need for the program or to add students who fall a bit behind. The content and text selection of Passport is high interest to students, and the structure of the program allows them to build their skills with confidence and feel successful in their learning.

The implementation and monitoring of Reading Counts and Khan Academy is quite similar. Both programs are in their third year of implementation at LRES, and both are schoolwide, individualized programs using computer based learning, practice, and assessment. Teachers and administrators encourage participation by publicly celebrating student participation, success, and growth at the morning flag assembly. This increases the motivation for all students to engage with the programs, and since students can participate at home, parents also have an opportunity to be involved with their child's learning. Within each program, students are able to monitor their own progress and learning, and as long as they are demonstrating mastery there is no limit to their advancement. Teachers are able to access performance and progress data for individual students and groups, allowing them to use this data to inform their implementation of the standard curriculum and make sure they are meeting the needs of all of their students. Regular progress monitoring occurs at least monthly.

The high levels of teacher collaboration, parent involvement, community support, and student achievement at LRES all play a role in the success of these programs. Passport works so well because there is an unwavering commitment to student growth from all stakeholders. Reading Counts and Khan Academy are successful because they are more than just a fun way to practice reading and math, they are truly a part of the educational experience at LRES. Most significantly, all of these programs yield positive results and are evidence that the LRES mission of learning is accomplished.

Results and Outcomes

Annual schoolwide data analysis and regular data review in PLCs reinforce that Passport, Reading Counts, and Khan Academy are highly effective. There is high engagement, commitment, and satisfaction with these programs from all stakeholders.

Teachers report that students in Passport intervention groups and those who are most active with Reading Counts and Khan Academy show significant gains year over year.

Passport data is based on student growth on the DIBELS assessments. As students who score Above Benchmark are exempt from subsequent assessments, there is not complete data on total measured growth. However, the decrease in the number of students taking the test each test period indicates that an increased number of students score Above Benchmark as the year progresses. This validates that Passport is effective in promoting growth.

Reading Counts data measures participation and points earned from quizzes, which have both steadily increased since the program was implemented. Data from September to February of 2016–2017 to 2017–2018 shows student point totals have increased 8.5%, indicating growth in reading comprehension, and total words read has increased 10.8%, totaling over 111 million words! Research shows that such high reading engagement is a key factor in improving fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and overall literacy skills.

While Khan Academy does not yet provide schoolwide usage or progress reports, a review of class data and a sampling of student data illustrates a strong correlation between student participation and overall performance in math.

The California School Dashboard data from 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 shows remarkable achievement and growth across nearly all measures. In ELA, the all student group improved from 48.2 points to 50 points above Level 3, showing a gain of 1.8 points. The EL subgroup improved from 9.2 points to 6.1 points below Level 3, showing a gain of 3.1 points. In Math, the all student group improved from 40.2 points to 44.1 points above Level 3, showing a gain of 3.9 points. Despite the EL subgroup declining from 0.1 point to 4.8 points below Level 3, EL student data still exceeds district averages. In fact, when compared to all of CUSD, LRES students far exceed district averages in ELA and Math in both the all student group and the EL subgroup. In 2016–2017, the all student group at LRES performed 14.2 points above the district average in ELA, with the EL subgroup performing 36.7 points higher. In Math, the all student group at LRES performed 25.2 points higher than the district average, with the EL subgroup performing 53.6 points higher.

All of these metrics reinforce the distinguishing success of the model programs and practices in place at LRES. With this evidence of high achievement and growth it is clear that students, like the mission of LRES states, are learning more today than yesterday and more tomorrow than today.