

A.J. Cook Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 30665226028211

County: Orange

District (Local Educational Agency): Garden Grove Unified

School: A.J. Cook Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 369 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Cook Elementary is a small, diverse school with a big heart where students are warmly welcomed by name and are encouraged to grow to their greatest potential. Cook staff ensures that every student knows they belong and are respected. This sense of belonging allows our students to feel safe taking intellectual risks and discovering their unique strengths. Diverse parent involvement is embraced and has been a key element to our warm accepting climate. Cook students have many opportunities to experience academic success and build significant relationships with a caring school community. Cook staff creates an environment where students understand that if they work hard and don't give up, they will succeed.

Cook currently has 369 students, with 36% of the student body coming to us as transfers from within and outside of our district. Cook's top demographic populations include 68% Asian and 21% Latino. Our diverse school includes 10 language groups, with the dominant languages being Vietnamese and Spanish. The Cook community is

designated as 76% socio-economically disadvantaged. Cook is comprised of 40% English language learners and 27% Fluent English proficient learners. We are located in the “Little Saigon” community, which has the largest Vietnamese population outside of the country of Vietnam.

The voice of all stakeholders is critical to the Cook culture. Leadership is nurtured at all levels, which is demonstrated through the Cook small learning communities or ILT-Instructional Leadership Teams. Our strong PTO is the heartbeat of our school. Over 60 parents are actively involved through volunteerism, raising funds, and leading special school events. Cook is adjacent to 3 other schools and this has created unsafe traffic. The PTO, with the Police Department’s guidance, formed the Cook Safety Patrol group. Each morning and afternoon a group of parents offer valet service to arriving students and add supervision to the parking lot and crosswalk. Additionally, student leaders are involved in leading the school through Student Council, Graphic Design Group, Tech Squad, Boys and Girls Club Junior Leaders, Junior Safety Patrol and Peace Ambassadors.

Through the work of ILT, Growth Mindset is embedded in every aspect of our school climate. It has fostered an academic environment where students love learning and accomplish their goals through hard work. The roll-out of the Growth Mindset with staff, students, and parents supported the full embrace of the new California State Standards and the more prominent role of technology in learning and assessment. Growth Mindset is trained with intentionality in all facets of our community. The motto, "I can and I will," is celebrated and rewarded. Scholarly habits are clearly defined and are embedded into the academic life of our campus. Growth mindset is foundational to our students' ever-increasing success. Cook is a community of learners where the growth of the whole child is expected and celebrated by all!

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Instructional Leadership Team Guiding a Culture of Growth

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement

Target Population(s): Asian, Hispanic, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners

Strategies Used: School Climate, Small Learning Communities, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development

Description

Cook's Model Practice, "Instructional Leadership Team Guiding a Culture of Growth", is a small learning community process of collaboration and shared leadership which drives critical decisions that impact the full staff in implementing effective instruction, thus increasing student achievement by meeting the needs of all learners.

Prior to the inception of Cook ILT, the leadership team analyzed many collaborative practices and decided that the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) would offer the model process necessary to create school-wide change and growth. This research-based practice launched a comprehensive study of Cook school's quantitative and qualitative data which lead to a closer look at the needs of its students, staff and parent community. ILT is comprised of a teacher per grade level, the TOSA, and the principal. The ILT analyzes and seeks solutions to site-based needs. Since its implementation in 2013, the ILT has worked toward the common goal of developing scholarly habits among students, creating a culture of Growth Mindset, and supporting the academic needs of all our learners in the new era of California Common Core Standards.

Cook's ILT process is supported by our district and LCAP goals through Administrative research-based trainings and our ILT Team distinguishes itself from the district model by moving beyond studying and applying best instructional practices in the area of Academics. Our ILT additionally seeks to support the whole child by seeking ways to further support the scholarly habits and social-emotional needs of our learners.

Site funding for release time is allocated for ILT meetings at each trimester. Additional release time funding is allocated for grade levels to conduct at least two lesson study cycles, in order to refine instructional practice. The ILT leaders are selected by their peers. The year begins with a comprehensive data analysis, which includes quantitative data and qualitative data. An ILT decision is made on areas of need and key California Standards which will be focused on throughout the year. The focus includes plans for professional development, lesson studies, school-wide student assemblies, and parent education.

The ILT lesson study cycle follows the traditional format with an added school-wide informative step. The cycle begins with deciding on standard/s to be studied, then a schedule is developed where individual grade levels along with the District Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) collaboratively design a lesson. The grade level teams co-teach the lesson, debrief the lesson just taught, refine the lesson and reteach the lesson with improvements. They conclude with agreed upon goals for improvement. The final step is a staff reflection on school-wide commonalities discovered in the debrief that informs aligned growth in our professional practice to support further student growth. Grade levels continue the work on refining their practice through weekly collaboration meetings.

Implementation and Monitoring

Our ILT school-wide initiatives are intended to have a triangulated impact on teachers, students, and parents. These initiatives fall into two categories: Academics and Scholarly Habits. Teachers refine instructional practice in collaboration with colleagues at grade level and through the lesson study process. The Principal and TOSA monitor the process through monthly district-wide meetings led by researchers from Talking Teachers Network, who designed the ILT Model Process. The ILT and staff monitor student growth through weekly grade level collaboration time, monthly staff meetings and trimester ILT meetings.

The ILT decided, in order to broadly align impact, students are introduced to school-wide initiatives through Principal led instructional assemblies. Trimester Awards, Scholar Recess, and Spirit Assembly awards offer student opportunities to demonstrate their scholarly habit and academic growth. Students are validated for academic growth through monthly announcements, marquee spotlights, cafeteria bulletin boards and principal incentives.

As an example, ILT's first academic school-wide initiative was "Scholars Use Evidence". The principal, along with ILT input, developed Kinder, 1st–3rd, 4th–6th instructional assemblies on how to cite evidence. The teacher's instruction support initiatives throughout the year. Students who were proficient in the ability to cite evidence at report card time, received a wristband that stated "Scholars Use Evidence." Monthly classroom examples of scholars citing evidence were displayed in the MPR. The school-wide language for the initiative of "Scholars Use Evidence" was present from Kinder to 6th grade by the end of the year.

Twice monthly parent education or Coffee with the Principal, is offered on all school-wide initiatives, this way parents can continue to support student growth at home. Parents are offered the incentive of earning a "Parent Scholar" medal at the end of the school year if they attend most of the parent training meetings. Additional forums for parent communication include social media or trainings at the opening of award assemblies.

The growth Cook has experienced since the inception of the California standards can be attributed to the ILT selected dual school-wide initiatives. Our academic initiatives began with a focus on the ELA standard: Key Ideas and Details with an emphasis on citing evidence. This has evolved to our current initiative of effectively responding to a prompt with an additional focus on the academic language necessary to deconstruct a prompt.

The equally strong growth we have experienced in Scholarly Habits is the result of school-wide training targeting one Scholarly Habit at a time. Five years ago, we began by focusing in on the Scholarly Habits of Perseverance, Preparedness, Intellectual Risk-Taking, and Using Multiple Perspectives. This year's Habit focus is GRIT and the executive function skill of organization.

Results and Outcomes

With our program “Instructional Leadership Team Guiding a Culture of Growth”, Cook scholars are excelling in academics and scholarly habits. The work of Cook's ILT places emphasis on supporting the growth of the whole child. Cook’s model program has attained positive results. The team collects and analyzes quantitative and qualitative data. Positive achievement results are proven through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), district assessments, teacher collected data, and surveys taken by all stakeholders.

Much of the success with our model program is attributed to the lesson study cycles. Here, teachers implement the targeted area of need and collect data regarding its effectiveness. The ILT reflections based on student data are then debriefed and modifications to lessons are made. This ongoing process keeps continual growth and student success. This success is reflected in the SBAC data. In both ELA and Math, Cook scholars outperformed the district’s proficiency rate on SBAC. In 2017, 74% of Cook students in grades 3–6 demonstrated ELA proficiency on SBAC compared to GGUSD’s 58%. Also in 2017, Cook scholars outperformed the district’s proficiency on SBAC Math results by 30%. Since 2013, Cook’s ILT determined a need to support the under-performing Hispanic and EL demographic populations. As such, we have seen a strong increase in the EL redesignation rate. In the 2016–17 school year, Cook’s redesignation rate of English Learners surpassed the district rate by 14%. Our Hispanic demographic group outperformed the district SBAC proficiency rates in both ELA and Math by 15% and 17% respectively. This quantitative data provides evidence that the work of Cook’s ILT generates positive results on student academic outcomes.

In addition to SBAC results, Cook analyzes qualitative data from the GGUSD Strategic Plan Survey. Data is used to determine if students’ socio-emotional needs and scholarly habit skills are being met. Students in grades 3–12, and all parents, are invited to participate in the district Strategic Plan Survey. The 2016–17 Strategic Plan Student survey data shows Cook outperforming the district in 12 out of 14 categories under “Scholarly Habits” and further, we outperformed the district in 4 of 6 categories under “Growth Mindset.” Last year, Cook Parents ranked 20 of 26 Strategic Plan survey questions on Scholarly Habits and Climate in the superior range.

It is evident our students are valued and respected, as our at-risk indicators remain very low. The average suspension rate over the past three years is .3%, far lower than our district 3-year average of 2.96%. Chronic absenteeism is not a concern, as our average percentage of paid days is 97.06%, which surpasses the district average of 96.72%.

Our vision underscores our culture, “At Cook School students feel safe to take intellectual risks, are engaged in learning, and are inspired to achieve to their fullest potential by focusing on growth and perseverance.”