

Louis G. Zeyen Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 30665226028583

County: Orange

District (Local Educational Agency): Garden Grove Unified

School: Louis G. Zeyen Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 268 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Louis G. Zeyen Elementary is one of 44 TK–6 schools in the Garden Grove Unified School District (GGUSD) in Orange County, California. We are a small learning community with 268 students representing many cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The Zeyen student body is 50% Hispanic, 37% Asian, and 13% other. Students with disabilities account for 23% of the population.

At Zeyen Elementary, we are committed to preparing all students to be successful and responsible citizens who contribute and thrive in a diverse society. We are dedicated to providing a quality education to all our students within secure and supportive environments. Our teachers maximize learning by utilizing research-based programs that ensure appropriate curriculum and instruction are provided as well as effective teaching strategies which require students to engage in and reflect on their own learning. Our standards-based program utilizes a variety of assessment types to provide accountability for staff, teachers, and students. Inquiry plays an important part in the

role of education. As we work to ensure that students have the knowledge and tools necessary to master the state standards, the work in our classrooms changes. Classrooms have flexible seating arrangements and students can be found working collaboratively in a variety of groupings to build knowledge. Technology use is integrated throughout core instruction.

Parent involvement is a unique strength of the Zeyen community. Kid Healthy, a community partner, provided a workshop of 6 classes to engage parents in supporting a healthy school environment. These 25 “Parents in Action” (PIA) lead students in structured physical activities at lunch recess 3 days a week. Our PTO is made up of 35 parents representing all subgroups. 10 parents run our monthly “Cobra Store”, stocking items students can purchase with their “Cobra Cash” earned for demonstrating outstanding character. The hours spent volunteering have created strong bonds between parents from diverse cultures and languages.

Our teachers work collaboratively to ensure the highest quality education for each child in our school. Wednesday collaboration sessions provide time for teachers to refine their instructional practices. Grade level teams meet regularly to identify areas of strength, opportunities for growth, and strategies for improved achievement. As lifelong learners, led by our instructional leadership team, we continuously refine our practices through careful study.

Character strengths are an important part of our personal growth. We focus our attention each month on a select character strength (self-control, integrity, curiosity, gratitude, zest, self-reflection, grit, social intelligence, optimism). In class, teachers define a strength, model it, and help students recognize it in themselves and others. Cobra Cash and monthly recognition awards are given to students who are great exemplars of the given strength.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Stakeholder Unification

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Nutrition and Physical Activity/Education, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development, Use of Technology

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

Strategies Used: School Climate, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

As stated in the GGUSD LCAP, “through a strong home-school-community partnership, parents/guardians are provided multiple opportunities for involvement at a welcoming school.” Research shows that students with involved parents experience improved academic, behavioral and social-emotional outcomes. Zeyen’s Model Practice is Stakeholder Unification to build a positive, supportive school climate in which students gain the academic and personal skills necessary to be college and career ready.

In 2014, Zeyen was located at a temporary site for modernization. Due to distance, contact between parents and the school was very limited. Community events were on hiatus. When we returned to our campus, Zeyen was a fractured community. Language and culture were additional barriers. Parents from different cultures did not interact. CA State Standards were newly revised, new curriculum had been adopted, and new assessments were being implemented. Teachers were not connecting with one another. Additionally, students with disabilities, many of whom were bussed from neighboring schools to access the special education program, were rarely mainstreamed in general education classes and their parents were not included in community events.

Annual surveys of Zeyen stakeholders revealed a major difference between how parents, students, and staff experienced Zeyen. In 2015, 58% of students, but 100% of teachers agreed that at least one adult at school really cared about them. 43% of parents agreed that students have to be smart to do well in school vs. 87% of teachers. Monthly meetings were held with various stakeholders to determine how to engage all members and create a welcoming school.

Zeyen’s Stakeholder Unification Model draws from Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement. Zeyen’s Model distinguishes itself from district practice because of the intentional manner in which we communicate with families, develop parent leaders and representatives, collaborate with the community, and foster an environment of inclusivity.

Stakeholder Unification involved all members of the Zeyen community. Character strengths were identified by the staff as a common focus to build students’ social-emotional well-being. Structured teacher collaboration focused on meeting the needs of English Learners was implemented. Additional opportunities to participate at school, including the Cobra Store, Parents in Action, Pastries with the Principal, and school celebrations were added for parents. 100% of students with disabilities were mainstreamed and their parents were personally invited to attend school events and parent meetings. Professional development focused on growth mindset, character strengths, motivation, and effective teacher collaboration. Parent education opportunities included health and wellness, nutrition, culture, advocacy, physical activity and literacy.

Implementation and Monitoring

The first step was building a united school community. A school-wide study of character strengths focused us on the good in all students. School celebrations focused on commonalities. For example, we began an annual evening celebration for Mother's Day which has become a highlight of the school year including performances by all students in various languages; Mexican, Vietnamese and American food; and PTO purchased flowers presented to each student's mother or chosen adult.

At Zeyen, 100% of students with disabilities are mainstreamed during designated ELD. This is the uninterrupted first block of the day school-wide. The RSP teacher uses a push-in model to support students in their general education classrooms and ensure access to core curriculum. Classroom locations were changed so that students with disabilities are near their grade level counterparts. Special Education teachers collaborate weekly with their general education grade level colleagues. Parents of students with disabilities were specifically recruited for participation and involvement. All teachers, including special ed., meet weekly in grade level spans to collaborate about instructional practices. Monthly professional development around effective collaboration practices includes teachers, teacher leaders and administration.

Next, we invited parents in. School community liaisons met with each family individually to set up their new online parent portal. Parents were personally invited to attend monthly meetings and parent education classes. PTO events are held in the evenings to accommodate parent schedules. Using newly acquired technology tools, teachers use embedded translation to message parents. In addition to the required ELAC, School Site Council and PTO monthly meetings, ongoing parent education opportunities include Nutrition classes, Latino Family Literacy, and Parents in Action. Extra interpreters were hired for conferences to ensure 100% access. Parents from each subgroup were personally invited to leadership roles and tasked with bringing additional members to join ELAC, PTO, and PIA. In 2014, 3 parents actively volunteered on a regular basis. In 2017, 45 parents volunteered regularly. Teachers' presence at PTO evening functions increased from >10% to 85%. As parents came together for these school activities, they realized more fully their role as partners in learning.

Building respect for our diversity came next. Zeyen is the only TK–6 school in the district to offer both Spanish and Vietnamese after school Heritage Language classes. 40 students per year have participated in these programs learning about their culture and gaining literacy skills in their primary languages. PIA trainings include teaching parents to work with students despite language differences. During ELAC meetings, parents have examined differences in cultural norms. Families from all cultures attend when we celebrate Lunar New Year and Mexican Independence Day.

Results and Outcomes

When students believe that teachers and parents care for them and believe in them, and that they can achieve more with hard work, they invest more time into their learning. Their achievement grows as a result of this resolve.

Stakeholder Unification benefits all students by allowing them to feel welcomed and safe at school, surrounding them with people vested in their growth, improving their confidence in their ability to learn, and increasing students' perception of their teachers' belief in their ability. On the annual Zeyen survey, student reports of their confidence in their ability to learn increased from 87% to 93%. In 2017 67% of students reported that at least 1 adult cares for them at school vs. 58% in 2015. Student interviews reveal that they love when their parents are present on campus. 90% of students now report that their teacher believes that they can learn.

Teachers report that as a result of Stakeholder Unification, students overall are willing to take risks and attempt to solve difficult problems, engage in discussions, read more, collaborate with their peers, and produce more in writing.

Prior to the implementation of the Stakeholder Unification, the Zeyen PTO consisted of 3 parents. PTO now has 6 board members and 47 members who support school events. In 2016, Zeyen began working with Kid Healthy to adopt the Parents in Action program. 18 parents were trained in the school wellness policy, physical activity, nutrition, playground management and advocacy. These volunteers provided 5,220 minutes of high intensity and skill-based physical activity during lunch recess from 1/2017 to 6/2017. Prior to the trainings, 23.5% of parents said they were not able to state the purpose of the school wellness policy. As a result of the training, 92.9% said they could. In addition to the support parents provide at recess, 130 people participated in Family Sports Night and 60 on Walk to School Day. Because of the time spent together volunteering, parents now socialize together and participate in each other's cultural celebrations.

Measures of academic performance including district benchmark assessments and the SBAC, show substantial growth in student proficiency. In 2015, 34% of students met or exceeded standards in ELA and 27% in Math as measured by the SBAC. By 2017, 54% of students met or exceeded standards in ELA and 42% did so in Math. 47% of students demonstrated proficiency in ELA on district benchmark assessments in 2017 up from 15% in 2015. In Math, 46% of students demonstrated proficiency vs 19% in 2015. Students with disabilities were, on average, 100 points from meeting standards in 2015. In 2017, they were only 27 points away.

English Learner proficiency has grown as a result of Stakeholder Unification. In 2015, 8% of EL Students demonstrated proficiency on district benchmark assessments in ELA and 13% did so in Math. By 2017, 20% were proficient in ELA and 43% in Math. 21 students were reclassified in 2017 vs. 5 in 2015.