

## **Orchard Hills School Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 30736430121152

County: Orange

District (Local Educational Agency): Tustin Unified

School: Orchard Hills School

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 1,328 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Imagine a school where all students are expected to learn at high levels and achieve personal distinction. Imagine a school where students learn how to excel by utilizing their personal strengths and are encouraged to develop their innate talents. Imagine a school where collaboration among staff, students and parents is both commonplace and valued; a school that questions- and often exceeds- the limits of what constitutes a comprehensive education; a school that accepts the responsibility to help students become effective communicators, creative and collaborative thinkers, and productive citizens. Welcome to Orchard Hills, home of the Hawks!

Now serving 1,328 students in grades five through eight, Orchard Hills (OH) was originally built to house a K–8 campus, unique in TUSD. Our elementary population is currently composed of nine 5th grade classes, numbering 290 students. The Orchard Hills community has embraced the addition of Kindergarten through fourth grade and will officially open its doors as a K–8 campus in August 2018.

Orchard Hills is a picture of diversity. There are over 35 different languages spoken on campus. All OH teachers are either CLAD or SDAIE certified. Our 2017 Dashboard Report indicates that 90.5% of our English Learners are high performing which puts us in the Blue category. Dashboard results also indicate that Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Economically Disadvantaged students demonstrated an increase in both ELA and Math.

Every classroom embodies the 21st Century model. All rooms are equipped with state of the art furniture for flexible seating, with an advanced technological space incorporating Smartboards, doc cameras, Apple TV, wifi, and student iPads in 1:1 ratio. The use of technology to enhance teaching and learning is prevalent. Teachers use learning management platforms such as Google Classroom, Haiku, Actively Learn, and Pear Deck to provide interactive and timely feedback to students.

Orchard Hills recognizes the need to educate and nurture the whole child. Our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) school focus is on four attributes of SEL: (a) Growth Mindset and Grit, the belief that one's abilities can grow with effort and hard work (b) Building Relationships, the ability to communicate clearly, listen well and negotiate conflict (c) Mindfulness, the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts and behaviors, and (d) Cultural Awareness, the ability to empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Orchard Hills has built a school-wide PBIS system to ensure optimal learning outcomes. Our system emphasizes data for decision making, practices of scientifically based behavior interventions, systems that support implementation of these practices and the proactive teaching of expected behaviors. Our five school rules provide a coherent system for all stakeholders: Have Respect; Act Responsibly; Work Together; Know Your Strengths; Stay Safe (HAWKS).

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: Balanced Literacy

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Professional Development, 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: Small Learning Communities, Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

## **Description**

The Orchard Hills Balanced Literacy (BL) program is designed to provide all students, including SWD and EL students, with a thinking curriculum composed of Reader's and Writer's Workshop and a much stronger emphasis on higher-level comprehension skills. This rigor sets us apart. BL is comprised of shared reading and writing, interactive reading and writing, reading and writing workshop, and word work. The BL approach was adopted so that all students would receive rigorous ELA instruction aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The standard's guiding principles of creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration are essential components of our model program. In addition, the CCSS framework calls for students to "read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literacy and informational texts." The flexibility of BL allows OH teachers to differentiate instruction to meet each child's unique needs. Socially and emotionally our at-risk students feel more connected to their peers, while their academic needs are being addressed within the classroom and they, too, are identified as readers and writers. The BL approach to instruction provides students an opportunity to read for sustained periods of time, in both fiction and informational text. It is a program that addresses our need to differentiate instruction to meet our diverse range of learners.

The utilization of a mentor text program to deliver word work and grammar instruction is another aspect of our program that sets us apart. All nine 5th grade teachers work collaboratively and utilize this program to reinforce grammar skills. These skills are taught explicitly through the use of mentor texts, which are also used for interactive read aloud. Students apply this learning into their writing pieces during the Writing Workshop portion of their day.

At OH, we know that sometimes quality "first" instruction isn't enough, and some students require additional support to master essential standards. We provide intervention support utilizing the LLI program, four days a week for thirty minutes. Our MTSS instructor delivers the instruction focusing on the standards not yet mastered. This additional time with explicit instruction is the boost that students need for them to progress to the next reading level and meet grade level standards.

OH provides enrichment and intervention opportunities during NEST. Some students who need support in writing are identified through assessments using rubrics and placed into a writing class during NEST. These students are given direct instruction on writing skills that will support their writing work across the curriculum. EL students receive designated or integrated EL instruction, while other students read in their "just right" books, and are given opportunities to do more deep thinking work through "writing about reading", response to literature lessons, and book club discussions.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

The implementation of the Balanced Literacy (BL) program began formally four years ago with the District initiating commitment from all schools, K-5. The District set student achievement as its number one priority in the LCAP document, and as such, believed

that BL instruction would be the model that would lead all schools to meet or exceed their academic targets. Additionally, the California Department of Education set “meaningful learning” as a guiding principle in A Blueprint for Great Schools, Version 2. This would further validate our decision to move towards a model of BL for ELA instruction and target instruction to raise achievement for all students and focus attention towards at-risk and EL students to close the achievement gap.

OH prides itself on being a community of learners, which is why our teachers actively participate in both district and site based professional development. Money and resources are dedicated to teacher training. OH teachers show their commitment to BL by volunteering their time to attend conferences and trainings outside of their contractual day. 99% of OH teachers attended TUSD’s Summer Institute for the past three summers. Site funded, three teachers have attended Lucy Calkins training at Teacher’s College at Columbia University. OH teachers also receive training through Momentum, a team of consultants who do on-site professional development in a lab setting with the staff. The consultants work with the team in an area of inquiry that they have previously agreed upon. The consultants plan lessons with the teachers, demonstrate lessons in the classroom, and then provide teachers with an opportunity to try it out themselves. Afterwards there is time to debrief and plan for further sessions. This same format is utilized with our on-site instructional coaches. This coaching model allows for teachers to either watch the coach demonstrate lessons, or to teach themselves, with the coach giving feedback. These opportunities provide teachers with a platform to ask questions, take risks, and experience learning along the way.

Through strong Professional Learning Communities (PLC), data is continually evaluated using District Benchmark Assessments, Interim Assessments, Running Records, Performance Tasks and student work to determine individual student needs and monitor progress. These PLC sessions also provide teachers with opportunities to look at instructional strategies from the perspective of how students learn, which has shifted discussions to analyze how teacher’s teach.

This year, OH developed a collaborative program which is designed to get teachers observing other teachers both within and outside of our school. By visiting BL classrooms, teachers benefit from seeing the work in action! Visitation topics range from the use of technology software to observing teachers working in strategy groups and conferring with students. Teachers can then return to their classrooms and replicate the work seen on their visit.

## **Results and Outcomes**

Formative and summative results are used to improve teaching and learning. In order to evaluate the BL program and its effectiveness, we utilize a variety of assessments such as Running Records (RR), District Checkpoint Assessments, Performance Tasks, anecdotal records and classroom observations. Formal RR assessments are given three times a year, with informal RR taken more frequently with at-risk students. Daily anecdotal records are taken during reading and writing workshop. For writing, teachers give on-demand writing prompts at the beginning of each unit of study. Those results

are then compared to the published writing done at the end of the unit. Teachers utilize Lucy Calkins' Units of Study rubrics to ensure uniformity of scoring across the grade level.

Targeted improvement for EL students and "Fab 5" or the five students teachers have identified for additional academic or behavioral support is a schoolwide goal. Teachers meet with the principal twice a year to specifically discuss their three SMART goals addressing both instructional and social/emotional content. The SMART goals address writing, EL student achievement and Fab 5 student achievement. Teachers complete an online, mid-year survey to evaluate their progress toward meeting their SMART goals; keeping writing in the forefront, monitoring EL students, and closing the achievement gap that exists between their Fab 5 and their peers.

Rigorous goals and high expectations are set annually in our School Plan. Accountability is demonstrated as results are shared with the school community. Results from the CAASPP given in the spring of the 2017 revealed 95% of OH 5th graders scored at or exceeded standards in Claim 1- Reading, 97%, Claim 2-Listening, 97%, Claim 3-Writing, 96% and Claim 4-Research/Inquiry, 95%. With the exception of Claim 4 (which stayed the same), all Claims were higher than the 2016 CAASPP results. Thus, validating the Balanced Literacy approach to teaching while also targeting instruction to close any achievement gaps. Trends are continually monitored to validate strengths and prioritize needs which support teaching and learning to improve all students' success.

During parent/teacher conferences, teachers are reporting out students' current levels of reading and share the district-adopted continuum of Text Reading Levels and assessment Benchmarks. Parents, students and teachers are using the same academic vocabulary to understand current levels of achievement and next steps for student growth.

As we grow in our implementation of BL instruction, we continue to adjust according to our needs. Teachers will plan in their PLCs so that they can successfully meet the needs of the diverse students in their classes. As teachers further develop their skills, we will plan learning opportunities that are aligned with their professional goals. We know that as long as our commitment stays strong, we will succeed in building an engaged community of lifelong learners.