

Rossmoor Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 30739246029086

County: Orange

District (Local Educational Agency): Los Alamitos Unified

School: Rossmoor Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 643 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Rossmoor Elementary is proud to be a three-time National Blue Ribbon, six-time California Distinguished, and was honored as a 2016 Gold Ribbon School. We take pride in providing a rigorous curriculum and tradition of excellence for our students. The Rossmoor staff is committed to every student succeeding and believes in our district motto of “Igniting Unlimited Possibilities for Students.” Our students are continuously exposed to classroom practices and opportunities around critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity to create a strong foundation for students during their educational journey.

Rossmoor opened its doors in 1958 and currently serves 643 TK–5 students. Our broad attendance boundary brings diversity to the student population. We serve students from Los Alamitos, Seal Beach, and the community of Rossmoor, in addition to serving students from neighboring cities. Our school community of learners is also diverse with students on IEPs, 504 plans and students identified as gifted and talented learners. In addition, our school is in our first year of implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions

and Supports (PBIS) to promote positive school-wide expectations built around Knight P.R.I.D.E.

The staff is dedicated to passionately pursuing academic excellence for all students. Rossmoor's vision is for 100% of our students to meet or exceed standards in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. The staff prides themselves in being lifelong learners as they grow and develop their practice through on-going professional development in district signature practices (Cognitively Guided Instruction, Depth and Complexity Prompts, Guided Reading, Reading Foundations in the Common Core, Thinking Maps, and Reading and Writing Workshop). Grade level teams work collaboratively in analyzing student work and data from reading assessments, district benchmarks, and standardized testing to make informed decisions that guide instruction.

The Rossmoor staff utilizes student data regularly to develop targeted intervention and small group instruction to continuously close the achievement gap. Rossmoor's 2017 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) data shows that 79% of students are meeting or exceeding standards in Mathematics and 84% in ELA. Based on CAASPP data, Rossmoor Elementary is ranked eighth in ELA in Orange County.

Rossmoor's staff, parents, and community work harmoniously to nurture the growth of our students. Our partnerships with our dedicated PTA and forward funding group, Friends of Rossmoor, allows us to fund a STEM Lab Teacher and a variety of programs to ensure access to technology and the arts. Together we provide a strong foundation to support the academic and the social - emotional health of our students, allowing them to grow and develop the necessary skills needed to be successful in a 21st century global society.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Reading Workshop

Length of Model Program/Practice: 8+ years

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

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

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

Description

Within RW there is time for one-on-one conferencing, guided reading, and small group instruction. Each unit is built around a literacy genre, where learning starts at the fundamental level and builds in complexity. Mini lessons teach strategies on how to tackle the specific genre using a mentor text. Students then apply the strategy to their own leveled text. Rossmoor staff believes that the key to success in RW is maintaining a high level of student engagement. Through choice of text, students are not only engaged in their selection, but they are also guided to transfer knowledge acquired from the mini lesson to any text within that genre.

Our RW format begins with a mini lesson, which starts with a quick demonstration around a reading strategy, skill, or reading behavior. Our teachers utilize units of study as a framework for instructional strategies during a lesson. During RW our teachers circulate the classroom to observe, listen, and assess their students' progress and deficits. During independent reading, teachers individually conference with students and/or pull small groups to reinforce strategies and concepts. Both conferences and small groups are essential in a workshop model, because they allow teachers to tailor instruction to the needs and goals of each learner (Calkins, 2015). Based on the informal assessment, teachers may engage in a mid-workshop teach, that is quick and short. The purpose is to reinforce a common misconception gathered during conferencing. At the end of the mini lesson, teachers take the time to share and wrap up the lesson. This may include celebrating the work of a few readers, modeling a strategy used or sharing the behaviors of a good reader.

Our staff believes that students need plenty of time for independent reading in order to build stamina and to experience success. As students matriculate into the upper grades, the focus of learning to read shifts gradually to reading to learn.

At Rossmoor, the workshop model has created a classroom environment for students to feel safe to take risks. Our staff has also adopted a growth mindset modeling risk taking which has benefitted our students greatly. This philosophy that we have adopted at Rossmoor stems from Carol Dweck's notion that knowledge can be acquired by all versus a "fixed" mindset which limits knowledge to those who possess the ability (Dweck, 2006). Our staff discusses the difference between a fixed mindset and growth mindset with students. This is powerful, because we notice that students are more likely to take risks and accept challenges because they feel they can develop intelligence through effort. For example, students may share a mistake that they made with the class and will confidently explain what they have learned from this experience. As a result, we see our students willing to take risks in their learning, challenging themselves to read complex texts, and having the stamina to progress as a reader.

Implementation and Monitoring

The Rossmoor school community embraced the implementation of RW. Our parent groups, were eager to nurture teachers' passion for workshop as they were seeing the benefit from their student's increased stamina in writing and wanted to support this work

in reading as well. In 2009, Renee Houser, a professional consultant from the Writing Project who worked directly with Lucy Calkins, was hired to support next steps in workshop. In 2010, five passionate teachers attended their first training for RW with Growing Educators. They learned the workshop model, built a conferring tool kit, and planned the first common unit. They were eager to come back to share their knowledge with the rest of our school. Through on-site weekly collaboration, teachers started the hard work of aligning their reading and writing units of study.

With the combined support of parent groups and applications for Cotsen Grants, we had the opportunity to release teachers to collaborate, co-teach, provide coaching, and to hire professional consultants. During the 2017–2018 school year teachers have been working alongside Courtney Kinney, a RW/WW consultant. Mrs. Kinney has become a respected resource on our campus and provides support in moving Rossmoor deeper into the workshop model. She coaches teachers during mini lessons and has put an emphasis on supporting questioning during conferencing and with small groups.

Another way that Rossmoor teachers meet the needs of our diverse learners is by incorporating Dr. Sandra Kaplan’s Depth and Complexity (D&C) Prompts into questioning during workshop. D&C was designed to stimulate thinking about curricular content by the use of thinking prompts that help stretch learning experiences for all students (Kaplan, 2009). For example, students look at character motive and how it impacts other characters while supporting this with evidence, or they may make judgements about nonfiction topics and support them using details from the text. Our teachers have learned to conference responsively utilizing the strategy of “stop and jot” and through class discussion.

Rossmoor teachers utilize conferences and small groups to ensure they are differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all their students. Our K–2 teachers use assessment information to provide strategic small group instruction for students not reading at grade level. In grades 3–5 teachers utilize RW to organize data and groupings to inform instruction and transfers this work into guided reading and strategy groups where appropriate reinforcement is provided to students who not only need intervention, but also need to be challenged and offered opportunities to extend their learning.

An important part of the workshop model involves taking the time to celebrate students’ hard work. Rossmoor teachers invite parents to Author’s Celebrations after each unit of study so that they can enjoy and celebrate their student's writing and reading.

Results and Outcomes

RW has proven to be a powerful addition to the school’s balanced literacy practices. The steady and consistent growth of ELA achievement over the past three years, as measured by the CAASPP, is directly linked to RW. For example, in 3rd grade we have 85% of students that are currently meeting or exceeding standards with a 16% gain. Our 4th grade is at 87% with an 11 % growth since 2015. Lastly, our 5th grade is performing at 82% with an 11 % gain. We also see a significant increase of ELA

performance based on the California Schools Dashboard report for 2017 with an overall student achievement with 69.9 points above level three. For example, our students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged increased by 15.3 points which closes the achievement by 10 points compared to the overall student performance. While our students with disabilities increased by 26.3 points closing the gap by 21 points, our English Learners also grew by 27.6 points, performing 5.6 points above the overall student achievement. Our staff is proud of our continued progress and development not only in RW, but also in WW, as it has proven to be successful for all students.

Starting the school year teachers analyze standardized state assessments to look for trends and patterns that are linked to our teaching practices. Our TK–2nd grade classrooms administer beginning of the year assessments including spelling inventories, running records, high frequency word lists, and letter-sound identification inventories to identify student progress and needs. Early in the school year, teachers develop targeted intervention plans for students who are not at grade level. Multiple forms of assessments are utilized throughout the year in order to monitor progress, guide instruction, and provide appropriate interventions. This year LAUSD has created district benchmarks in both ELA and Mathematics that we give throughout the year to help teachers analyze student need and inform instruction. Teachers use Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessments to help identify the instructional and independent reading levels of students. This allows teachers to document student progress through one-on-one formative and summative assessments which is also used to inform daily instruction. Each classroom at Rossmoor follows the RW model, which is visible when you enter the classrooms. For example, anchor charts with sentence frames to model conversation starters and modeled work using mentor texts are evident on classroom walls to support student learning.

The workshop model is truly a distinguished part of the culture and philosophy at Rossmoor Elementary. The 2017 state results demonstrate that Rossmoor scored above the county average in ELA. The county average of 3rd–5th grade students meeting or exceeding standards was 53%, whereas, the average at Rossmoor is 84%. Clearly, RW is a key signature practice that we are proud of and we know it leads to greater academic success here at Rossmoor!