

## **Alta Murrieta Elementary Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 33752006107841

County: Riverside

District (Local Educational Agency): Murrieta Valley Unified

School: Alta Murrieta Elementary

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 885 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: Targeted Assistance

School Calendar: Modified

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Alta Murrieta Elementary, a Title I school, opened in 1989 as the third elementary school in the Murrieta Valley Unified School District and serves students in Pre-K through Grade Five. With a student population of nearly 900, the educational community at Alta Murrieta believes all children can learn and learn at high levels. Our mission is to establish a learning environment where all children can succeed, and to do that, we believe staff, parents, and community members must work as a team to provide the necessary support. Together, we strive to instill in each student the skills necessary to meet life's challenges with honesty, integrity, courage, and the desire for intellectual and personal excellence.

At Alta Murrieta, children participate in programs that foster individual growth, academic progress, cultural literacy, and good citizenship. Striving for and maintaining excellence is an on-going process at Alta Murrieta, articulated through our school theme "Pursuing Excellence." We believe excellence is a journey, not a destination—there is always

room for growth. We recognize that even with our strong academic achievement, we must continue striving for improvement each and every day. Growth Mindset is woven into the culture of Alta Murrieta, and the concept of perseverance is introduced and reinforced daily, even in the classrooms of our youngest students. That “never give up” attitude is one of the contributing factors to our students’ success.

We embrace the Learning Center Model at Alta Murrieta, incorporating three levels of additional help for struggling students, and the support students receive is not determined by a piece of paper such as an IEP or 504 Plan. Student needs drive services at Alta. In order to provide students with opportunities for prevention, intervention, and acceleration, Universal Access time is built into the school day to provide students opportunities to receive instruction at their current level. Teachers and support staff analyze formative assessment data individually and during weekly data-based collaboration meetings so that instruction is targeted to meet student needs. Alta Murrieta students make strong yearly academic progress and score at or above the levels of our district’s non-Title I schools.

In addition to core academics, Alta Murrieta students have the opportunity to participate in various visual and performing arts programs. First grade students have received music lessons from a trained singer, a professional dancer has taught second grade students ballroom dancing, third graders have received lessons in cartooning, fourth grade students have learned to play the recorders, and fifth grade students have the opportunity to play instruments like the flute, clarinet, or saxophone in the elementary band program.

Alta Murrieta was selected by the Campaign for Business and Education Excellence as a 2015, 2016, and 2017 Honor Roll School for raising student achievement and closing achievement gaps.

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: Data-Based Collaboration Meetings and Intervention (UA)

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap

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: Data-Driven Decision Making

## Description

Two strategically aligned practices, both aligned to our district's LCAP Goals 1 and 2, have been woven into our daily schedule: weekly data-based collaboration meetings (referred to as Collaboration) and Universal Access (referred to as UA). Once a week, each grade level team meets for Collaboration where teachers, administration, and Learning Center support staff come together to analyze and discuss ongoing assessment data to help plan differentiated instruction for all learners. This differentiated instruction is then carried out during UA which is time carved out during the school day where no new content is delivered but when students receive targeted instruction at their current performance level. UA occurs a minimum of three days a week and targets reading in transitional kindergarten through second grade, while mathematics is targeted in grades three through five.

UA was adopted to ensure each and every student has learning gaps filled and students working above grade level are provided with extended learning opportunities. We understand not all students "get it the first time," so UA provides additional time during the school day for intervention to solidify foundational skills. We also understand that simply carving out time to reteach or extend learning is not enough, but that data must drive instruction. The ongoing data analysis during weekly Collaboration meetings ensures that student needs are addressed and that no student falls through the cracks.

Various computerized and online resources are essential for these practices as they provide rich formative data to highlight the academic needs of students and form our instruction. These online resources also provide students the opportunity to work independently at their level while teachers work with students one on one or in small groups. Teachers and support staff have received extensive professional development on these resources and how they can be used to drive student learning.

The goal of Collaboration and its sister practice UA is to meet each and every student where they are, to deliver instruction that isn't "one size fits all." By consistently analyzing student performance data, teachers are able to provide parents with ongoing communication regarding their children's progress. UA instruction driven by weekly Collaboration meetings benefits all students. Social-emotional needs are fostered, as a focus on the individual child demonstrates to students they are cared for and not simply a piece of a larger whole. Increased academic success, PBIS implementation, student attendance incentive programs, and ongoing attendance calls, letters, and SART/SARB meetings are addressing chronic absenteeism.

Collaboration and UA have led to school-wide academic growth as well as growth in specific student populations. For example, over the past year English Learners have increased by 8 points in Mathematics and 14 points in English Language Arts on the California School Dashboard.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

Universal Access (UA), driven by the work in Collaboration meetings, engages students in learning activities designed to meet individual student needs, be it intervention or acceleration. This begins with scheduling. Forty-minute Collaboration blocks for each grade level are built into the weekly schedule. UA time is sacred, occurring at specific times for each grade level at least three days per week. Details of the program are communicated to parents via classroom communication, newsletters, and Coffee with the Principal meetings. By having their finger on the pulse of student progress, teachers are able to provide parents with ongoing data on student growth. While other schools in our district are beginning to implement data talks with teachers, most do not have the structured consistency present at Alta Murrieta. The weekly nature of our Collaboration meetings and highly structured UA time help distinguish us from other MVUSD schools.

Collaboration meetings are structured in such a way that administration guides teachers through an analysis of student performance data that varies week to week. This form of professional development builds capacity by having teachers pull their own data or reference grade level data spreadsheets. For example, kindergarten through second grade often examine the data from student participation in iRead, a digital foundational reading program utilized in our district. Third grade teachers and support staff often review data in i-Ready, an online diagnostic and instructional tool to help differentiate math instruction, and fifth grade teachers often review the data of common formative assessments they have created. Regardless of the data source, we are deliberate in looking for students not making progress or in need of additional challenges, and then working together to decide the next step in learning.

During UA instruction, students are assigned learning activities based on need, with support staff assigned to assist during this instruction. For example, in third grade, i-Ready diagnostic data is used to group students who are then divided amongst classroom and Learning Center teachers. Our highest-need students work in very small groupings with our intervention specialists. Other students participate in high-interest online instruction while classroom teachers pull students for small group instruction. In fifth grade, three groups of students participate in Math 180. Pacing is based on student performance using daily data analysis. Two fifth grade teachers provide enrichment instruction to high-achieving students in need of a challenge.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the instruction occurs during individual teacher prep time, weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, weekly Collaboration times, and administrative walkthroughs. The level of accountability created by the consistent analysis of data is what leads to students receiving the instruction they need and the learning gains achieved.

## **Results and Outcomes**

The key to the success of Collaboration/UA at Alta Murrieta has been the high level of accountability and consistent focus on student achievement data, and then subsequent UA instruction based on what the data tells us. Student groupings are fluid, changing

when necessary. If analysis of the data shows a student is plateauing or regressing, that student is afforded more support. Students get what they need, and the practice has yielded very positive results.

While CAASPP data provides us with yearly student achievement levels, it is our constant attention to ongoing formative assessment that drives our instruction. In kindergarten, we have already seen 43% of our students complete Level A of iRead (end-of-year grade level standard), with 96% on track to complete the level by the end of the year. In first grade, 32% of students have completed the end-of-year standard of Level B, with 61% on track to complete the level by the end of the year. In second grade, 68% have completed their end-of-year standard of Level C, with 94% on track to complete the level by the end of the year. In addition to students meeting grade level standards, we have a high percentage of students performing above grade level. For example, 35% of our first grade students are already working above grade level in Level C. Students showing progress are consistently recognized by getting to sign our school's Golden Book for student excellence as well as being given the opportunity to wear an "I'm an iRead Superstar" lanyard for the day. The proud smiles seen daily on students' faces demonstrate the academic progress we're seeing is having positive social-emotional effects as well.

Another outstanding example of the benefits of Collaboration and UA can be seen in the growth of our third grade students. Upon taking the i-Ready diagnostic assessment in September, only 14% of third grade students were performing at or above grade level. After intensive study of the data, strategic grouping of students in UA, and targeted, differentiated instruction, both online and in small groups, the percentage of students working at or above grade level has risen to 45%.

Students in fourth and fifth grade have also shown considerable gains this year due to intervention and acceleration opportunities driven by Collaboration and UA. Our most recent math diagnostic assessments reveal an increase in proficiency rates from 13% to 47% in fourth grade students, and an increase from 19% to 60% in fifth grade students.

In addition to school-wide growth, there are increases in targeted student groups. For example, 40% of our kindergarten English Learners have already completed Level A of iRead, with 89% on track to finish by the end of the year. Nine percent of our first grade English Learners have completed Level B, with 45% on track to finish by the end of the year. In second grade, 61% of English Learners have completed Level C, with 74% on track to finish by the end of the year.