

Phoebe A. Hearst Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 34674396034227

County: Sacramento

District (Local Educational Agency): Sacramento City Unified

School: Phoebe A. Hearst Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 672 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Phoebe Hearst Elementary School is located in the heart of East Sacramento and serves more than 670 students in kindergarten through sixth grade each year. While Phoebe Hearst is not a neighborhood school and each of its students is admitted through an application process, more than 75% of the total enrollment comes from the surrounding neighborhoods of East Sacramento, Midtown, Tahoe Park, and College Greens.

The school campus was established in 1956 and has had major renovations upgrades since then. In recent years, twelve additional portable classrooms were added to the layout, including four 'green' energy rooms as part of a district grant to improve awareness and environmental outcomes. There are three outdoor classrooms to which each class has access, as well as a community garden and two native plant gardens. The community garden is maintained and staffed entirely by parent volunteers and is used for weekly experiential learning opportunities – students plant, sow, and learn about indigenous wildlife.

Beginning in first grade, students are identified through a multi-step process for the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program. Because Phoebe Hearst is considered a GATE Center, students are awarded spots in a designated GATE class through a district lottery. In these classes (grades 2–6), students are offered highly challenging learning opportunities that are designed to meet the needs of advanced learners, with an emphasis on critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and logical reasoning. With over 56% of the eligible student body GATE-identified, Phoebe Hearst has the largest percentage of this student population in the district.

Phoebe Hearst Elementary offers families a progressive, structured, and highly rigorous education. With a positive academic climate, fostered by strong parent participation and several enrichment opportunities in and out of the classroom, students can develop academically, socially, and culturally. Each class at Phoebe Hearst operates under the BASIC Model, an educational program that emphasizes the development of strong skills in Language Arts and Mathematics, excellent study habits, exemplary citizenship and attendance. The staff of Phoebe Hearst focuses on reflective teaching practices to improve student outcomes. Teachers constantly evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction, the quality of their feedback to students, and the extent to which they use student outcomes to inform their pedagogical decisions.

Additionally, parental support at home contributes to our students' success in this rigorous program. There are a number of community events throughout the year that are designed and hosted by parent organizations, offering family-friendly experiences, such as festivals, dances, craft fairs, fundraisers, and service projects. One of the school's main goals is to cultivate each student's individual curiosities and passions by offering as many enrichment opportunities as possible.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Parent Participation Model

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention, Civic Education Awareness, Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development, Visual and Performing Arts

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: School Climate, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development

Description

The Parent Participation Model describes the volunteerism we utilize to achieve our desired academic and behavioral student outcomes, enrichment and experiential learning opportunities, connectedness of our community, the social and emotional development of students, and strong communication between home and school. Measures of parent participation include the quality and frequency of communication with teachers as well as participation in school functions and activities. Parent involvement has consistently been found to improve academic performance, social emotional learning, and student motivation. In order to maximize desired student outcomes, it is recommended that families volunteer forty hours of their time per school year.

The Parent Participation Model implemented at Phoebe Hearst distinguishes itself from the general district model in several ways: a) a Learning Contract between parent, student, and teacher formalizes an integrated approach to schooling and is proposed and agreed to each year by all families, b) open communication practices via email, the school website, parent newsletters, home visitations, social media, and parent/student/teacher conferences, c) parent-led enrichment activities and programs are integrated into the curriculum of every classroom on an ongoing basis. As a result, students at Phoebe Hearst are expected to attend school greater than 95% of the time and demonstrate exemplary behavior around campus.

Robust learning opportunities, classroom enrichment, after school enrichment, community and cultural events, as well as access to technology are all valued facets of the student experience at Phoebe Hearst and are only achievable through exemplary parent participation. In order to carry out a successful Parent Participation Model, the school employs the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and the School Site Council (SSC) as the springboard. These groups, in conjunction with the administration and teachers, work throughout the year to a) recruit and utilize parent volunteers in classroom settings and on field trips, b) propose, plan, organize, and execute school events and experiential learning opportunities during and after the school day, and c) fundraise to support the school's comprehensive enrichment program.

The results of our model benefit the school by providing every student field trips and experiential learning opportunities, daily afterschool enrichment opportunities for each grade level, and access to technology for all. Students develop social and emotional skills through character education and service opportunities with the Dragon Values. Furthermore, teachers and administrators seek out and share best practices regarding parent education and collaboration with the specific goal of maximizing teacher effectiveness in addressing the multiple needs of our families. To that end, the school puts an emphasis on strong communication and clarity of its mission with respect to parent participation.

Implementation and Monitoring

The Parent Participation Model accounts for the vast majority of the workforce, expertise, and resources required to provide the experiential learning, enrichment, and community events the school desires in order to maximize student outcomes. To that end, our model engages parents daily, weekly, and monthly in multiple ways – the PTO organizes, staffs, and carries out our community events, fundraisers, and educational nights. By way of email communication channels, teachers can request parent volunteerism in the form of classroom help, field trip chaperones, and fundraising efforts.

The enrichment opportunities and experiential learning that are made possible by parent participation are typical parts of each student's day. The school communicates this through regular email blasts, a monthly school newsletter, a PTO newsletter, a school website, Facebook announcements, as well as biweekly calls to each household from the principal.

The frequency and type of volunteerism are tracked and analyzed using Google Forms portal which is accessible to all parents. For those parents who want to report their volunteerism but do not have access to a computer, they complete a written form or use the computer dedicated to parent use in the front office. Additionally, there is an annual stakeholder survey seeking input regarding the effectiveness and quality of our afterschool enrichment opportunities, the PTO, and the experiential learning opportunities that take place during the school day.

Our Parent Participation Model requires a level of engagement and communication uncommon to most public schools. For that reason, the administration dedicates significant portions of the first staff meetings of the school year to discuss best practice with regards to engagement and utilization of parent volunteerism to maximize student outcomes. Furthermore, parent volunteers are selected as 'room parents' to act as hubs of communication between the school, PTO, and the parents for each class. It is through this system that the school regularly communicates its needs for volunteerism and participation, as well as the activities and student outcomes that come as a result. During the first month of school, the administration leads a workshop meeting for these parents on best practices related to communication amongst stakeholders at a school site and provides guidelines and policies for acceptable practices.

Results and Outcomes

The school administration, PTO, and School Site Council review qualitative and quantitative data in their respective capacities to evaluate the effectiveness of the Parent Participation Model; each body believes firmly that there is a strong correlation between parent connectedness, enrichment and experiential learning opportunities, and favorable academic and behavioral student outcomes. To that end, these bodies compare available data with our desired student outcomes and indicators to assess how our Parent Participation Model is serving our students.

With respect to academic data in 2017, 85% of students demonstrated achievement at or above standard level, and 79% of students demonstrated achievement at or above standard level – both are the highest rates in the district at the elementary level. Families at Phoebe Hearst also demonstrate solid attendance practices, as evidenced by the chronic absenteeism rate of 4.1% in 2017, compared to 15.1% of the district. Additionally, the suspension rate of Phoebe Hearst students in 2017 was 0.1%, as compared to the district rate of 6.3%.

Students participate in more than 80 field trips during the school year. These field trips include visits to museums, plays, concerts, educational centers, state and county fairs, historical reenactment centers, outdoor education programs, and industry-related science organizations. As part of the enrichment opportunities during the school day, each student in grades kindergarten through sixth participates in art, music, and schoolwide STEM challenges. Furthermore, students have access to six MacBook carts, one Chromebook cart, and one iPad cart each day. After school, there is at least one enrichment class offering per grade level each day of the week. The afterschool offerings include two running clubs, a speech and debate team, co-ed basketball, art, dance, theatre, Spanish, robotics, engineering, science explorations, and computer coding.

The PTO hosts several free community evening events for students and their families throughout the year including: Family Movie Night, the Harvest Festival, the Family Dance, the Talent Show, and Science Night. The proceeds of the PTO's two large fundraisers, the Jog-a-thon for the Arts and a dinner and live/silent auction for technology, coupled with several smaller fundraising efforts throughout the year, exceed by six times the administration's site allocation from the district. All funds are spent to make the student experience more robust and comprehensive by increasing access to technology, experiential learning, and enrichment opportunities. Specifically, each teacher is allocated a budget for classroom enrichment, field trips, and supplies. The fundraising efforts also fund our art and music teachers and their supplies, as well the additional computer and iPad carts. Finally, scholarships for all students are available for each enrichment opportunity.