

Terra Vista Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 36677026112122

County: San Bernardino

District (Local Educational Agency): Etiwanda Elementary

School: Terra Vista Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 899 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Terra Vista (TV) is a single track public elementary school located in Rancho Cucamonga that opened in 1994. We currently serve students in Transitional Kindergarten through 5th Grade and have approximately 900 students under the leadership of Principal Jeannie Tavalazzi. Our community hosts a diverse population, the largest portion of which is Hispanic at 39.3%. We are honored to teach students from different backgrounds. Socioeconomically disadvantaged families comprise 33.5% of our population. English Learners (15% of our population) speak a variety of languages with the largest portion speaking Spanish, Mandarin and Arabic respectively. The percentage of students receiving special education services is 11.8% which includes two Special Day Classes. Because several apartment complexes are contained within TV's boundaries, our mid-year student turnover varies between one-hundred to one-hundred-fifty Timberwolves annually. The core foundation of all that we do is engagement. We believe that by engaging our students, parents and community in learning we can effectively meet the unique needs of all of our stakeholders.

Our staff is dedicated to providing equitable solutions to the challenges our students face by engaging them in the school's culture. A variety of programs such as the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math (STEAM) lab, a school-wide art program, and the Gifted And Talented Education (GATE) news team are available. Other offerings include chorus performances, a makerspace option at recess, and proctor-directed lunchtime games such as volleyball, soccer and scooter basketball. These activities promote a desire to come to school.

We host several school and community events to actively engage families. We know the importance of these partnerships and how it affects academic achievement. Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students), a school-based father-involvement program supports education by asking Watch D.O.G.S to travel to different classrooms to help our teachers and students in a variety of ways. Additional examples include Project Kindergarten and our 2nd and 4th grade parent education nights. These parent workshops focus on teaching parents the skills needed to help their children at home. Engaging families in this way aligns what parents do at home with the purposeful work that is being done in class. Other well attended events include Literacy Night, Fall Festival, Family STEAM Night, the 5th Grade Science Expo and theme-based Open Houses just to name a few.

We take personal responsibility for student learning and work diligently to develop improved strategies that meet the needs of our children. Our teachers have aligned all instructional objectives to the Common Core Standards and are aware of the cultural and social factors that affect learning. Our school community is one that is unified in purpose. We engage all of our learners and their families so they are connected and committed to success.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Engagement 3=Success!

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: School Climate, Small Learning Communities, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Our district LCAP goals compel rigorous instruction and a reduction in achievement disparities among subgroups so we analyzed Common Core State Standards, teaching practices, student samples, stakeholder surveys and achievement data. We concluded that focusing on how students engage with their teachers, peers, and text would benefit all students, thus “Engagement 3 =Success!” was born.

The goals of our engagement focus are that teachers will identify students’ unique reading needs and specifically target them so reading levels will increase. Secondly, students will engage in positive peer interactions for the shared purpose of learning which will decrease absenteeism and suspension rates. Finally, students will engage with text to improve reading comprehension and articulate their understanding. Our team came to consensus on three high yield instructional practices to achieve these goals: small group reading, cooperative learning (CL) and RACER.

In small homogeneous reading groups within each classroom students individually read to their teacher at their instructional level while the teacher responds to the learner’s growth goals in comprehension, accuracy, fluency and vocabulary. All teachers received training and have been provided assessment materials for leveling and sets of leveled texts. All students benefit because they engage directly with their teacher and their unique needs are met.

Kagan CL structures, a set of explicitly taught discussion routines that engineer student interaction to maximize cooperation, communication and engagement in content, are used daily. The structures engage students with their peers while developing interpersonal skills and encouraging personal responsibility for learning. Because social norms are cultivated and classroom cultures establish each student as a contributing member of the learning community, discipline issues decreased and an innate desire to attend school has developed. While teachers throughout our district are required to attend five days of CL training, TV teachers have extended their repertoire by attending additional Kagan workshops.

Evaluating written student comprehension responses revealed our Timberwolves didn’t understand text with the depth of knowledge required by the standards. We needed scaffolding for students and the parents who support them at home. RACER means Restate the prompt, Answer the question, Cite text evidence, Explain evidence, and Review. Attaching this acronym to text-based response tasks engages students with text, creates clear purpose and offers a formula for success. Visual displays are in every classroom and on homework resources to guide understanding and provide a framework for responses.

Ongoing training and coaching are provided to ensure all instructional practices continually evolve. Focusing on engagement through these three powerful practices has created positive outcomes for all goals set forth at the beginning of the implementation process.

Implementation and Monitoring

Engagement 3=Success evolves due to continuous feedback from our community through surveys, assignment reviews and collegial discussion. Our model's success is attributed to consistent and supported implementation making the components understandable and manageable.

Small group reading instruction yields results by engaging students in leveled text and cueing targeted on specific needs. Practices improve as we participate in coaching and instructional rounds that allow us to see Terra Vista (TV) educators in different classrooms facilitate small reading groups. Effectiveness is monitored through running records to ascertain student reading levels four times annually. Parents are informed of the use of small group reading as TV's form of universal access during parent education events and are made aware of children's reading levels during conferences and on every report card. Survey data indicates that 95% of parents know we have family education nights and 98% know that students receive universal access time during the school day.

The primary objective of Cooperative Learning (CL) is engagement in content dialogue. A by-product is an increased student desire to attend school. TV educators expand expertise through ongoing training and annual coaching. CL structures are regularly modeled by coaches at staff meetings and in classrooms. Site administrators are trained CL coaches and attend all workshops with teachers. Effectiveness is monitored through assignment grades for presentation of ideas and cooperation/collaboration which both show an upward trend. Parents engage in CL structures during family education events which have shown steady increases in attendance. Most students surveyed (99%) state they work with partners and 99% of parents surveyed indicate their child participates in cooperation/collaboration activities during class. TV attendance rates average above 97%.

RACER engages students in text by providing a format to create detailed, evidence-based responses to text based questions. Strategy implementation improves as new resources and references are continually created for student use. Resources are shared on team drives accessible to all educators and on websites for student and parent use. Effectiveness is monitored through student work samples and grades in reading comprehension which continually improve. Most surveyed students (99%) report they use evidence from books to explain their ideas.

Parents are informed of practices in newsletters, conferences and family education events. While the district requires universal access time and CL, TV's model is unique as the team came to consensus on specific strategies used in all classrooms allowing students to focus on content thereby sustaining growth throughout grade level progression. Additionally, all staff meetings have a professional development focus, so as a team, we practice, model and reflect which allows us to constantly refine our model, Engagement 3=Success!

Results and Outcomes

Terra Vista continually monitors various data sets so that any necessary instructional adjustments can be made as quickly as possible. Our data-driven culture allows us to use qualitative and quantitative information to reveal important patterns and answer focused questions about students and their needs.

2017–18 parent survey results indicate that 98% of families are satisfied with the quality of education their child receives at Terra Vista and 99% would recommend the school to others. Most surveyed students (98%) report their teacher gives them extra help when needed.

Our district's diagnostic assessments, iReady, are administered three times annually. Each administration is an opportunity to monitor student progress and evaluate the need for program adjustments. Most importantly, teachers analyze domain-specific data to determine deficits for individual students. The iReady data shows us how well students have developed skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, high-frequency words and comprehension. Teachers use this information to determine what to focus on during their small reading groups. Three-year trends in iReady reading growth data reveal that the average scale score gain for students is between 38 and 46 points, exceeding the target growth of 32 points. Teachers also administer running records four times annually. Because this is done 1:1, teachers hear how students synthesize the skills they have developed. These two tools create a complete picture of exactly what students need. Every student increases by at least one reading level each year and most grow by several levels.

Our adopted curriculum's weekly assessments are analyzed in grade level teams so that teachers can determine which areas of RACER students may be struggling with. Discussions in teams prompt the creation of new references for student use. The ongoing collegial dialogue helps educators refine instructional input. Weekly assessments reveal an upward trend in student performance in the area of reading comprehension.

The Engagement 3=Success model maintains a focus on the areas of English Language Arts and student engagement which is reflected in CAASPP results. Achievement rates in English Language Arts are very high as our students average distance from level three is +71.8 points. African American students' average distance from level three is +60.7 points while Hispanic students average +63 points. Our subgroup data shows smaller than average disparities in student performance revealing a narrowing achievement gap. A positive impact for all student groups is evident in a low suspension rate (.2%). Additionally, we have a high rate of progress (83.8%) for English Learners.

We strive for equal achievement levels among all student groups by reviewing both quantitative and qualitative data to identify areas for growth. The Engagement 3=Success model has yielded positive, measurable outcomes and we will continue our efforts for the benefit of all students.