

Monterey Ridge Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 37682960111187

County: San Diego

District (Local Educational Agency): Poway Unified

School: Monterey Ridge Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 1,004 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Monterey Ridge Elementary School (MRES) is tucked away in a beautiful, tree lined neighborhood in the 4S Ranch community of San Diego. Around the neighborhood, visitors often see families congregating for social or sports activities. Directly across from the school is a community garden, which the Home Owners Association allows our school to use at no charge. MRES first opened its' doors to students in 2006, and has grown to be the largest elementary school in Poway Unified School District with a student population of over 1,000 students. Families have moved into our neighborhood from throughout San Diego County and around the world. The main building houses the administrative offices, as well as a multi-purpose room/theater, student library and a makerspace. The school is designed so that classes are grouped into six small learning communities, or "villages". Each village contains six to seven classrooms that are centered around a community room. Within each village, you will find student and adult restrooms, an office space that is used by Impact teachers, OT, or ELL personnel. In the common room you will find students collaborating on class assignments, working on computers, receiving small group instruction, or interacting in academic and enrichment activities with volunteers from throughout the community. Attached to each village is an

outdoor patio that provides additional work space for students and staff. Each classroom is equipped with high speed internet access, wireless technology, LCD projectors, Apple TV and DocuCams. Students have access to Chromebooks, Macbooks and iPads which are housed in portable carts. The ratio of devices per student is 1:1 in grades 3–5, 2:1 in 2nd grade and 3:1 in TK–1st grade. Our campus houses transitional kindergarten through fifth grade classes, a full time preschool class, and three special day classes as well as Speech, Occupational Therapy, Adaptive PE, Resource Specialist and English Learner services. The preschool room was specially designed for preschool with a separate play area and restroom. We offer before and after school care for TK–5th grade students through our ESS program, and for preschoolers within the preschool day. Our student population is diverse: 44% of our students are Asian, 31% Caucasian, 10% Filipino, 6% Hispanic, 1% African American, and 8% of our students are listed as other, which at Monterey Ridge is often a reflection of students from multiracial families. According to the home language survey, there are 35 different languages other than English spoken by our families. 16% of our students are classified as English Language Learners, 10% have special needs, and 6% of our students receive free or reduced price lunch. We are thrilled to be a part of this wonderful community and continue to build and foster strong partnerships with our families, local businesses, and community partners.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Focusing on the Whole Child and Lifelong Skills

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Nutrition and Physical Activity/Education, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Use of Technology, Visual and Performing Ar

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, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

With the advent of Next Generation Science Standards 4 years ago, our staff and parent community collaboratively began increasing STEAM activities on our campus. As

we dove into this practice, our work evolved into a focus on connecting student learning to real world application including hands on, transformative experiences, collaboration, oral speaking and social/emotional education. We strongly believe that this focus on the whole child prepares students for success in school, and helps them develop skills that will make them successful, productive citizens.

The essential resources needed for this practice are STEAM curriculum, electronic devices such as iPads and Chromebooks, staff training and parent volunteers. Our Foundation supported us by supplementing funding for training, curriculum, support staff and devices. The district increased our counseling time from 1 day per week to 3 days per week and added a 15 hour per week counseling aide position. Existing staff including teachers, administrators, instructional aides, an art teacher, the garden coordinator and Counselor invested time and effort into research, curriculum development and implementation.

For staff, our goal was to increase familiarization and implementation of the California Standards. We also wanted staff to improve STEAM instruction, consistently use technology and utilize techniques for increasing student achievement both academically and socially. For students, the anticipated outcome was improved test scores, evidence of hands on and project based learning, and improved behavior. Students benefit from instruction and exposure to innovative experiences they had not previously had access to. We wanted to see more hands on science and engineering tasks, new art lessons and standards based activities in the garden. Students needed more real world connections to today's learning.

Social-emotional and behavioral needs are addressed through collaborative class activities, Character Counts lessons, 2nd Step lessons, weekly recess social skills groups, and Mega Minds lessons for students in our GATE program. An empathetic, restorative justice approach to discipline by teachers, the Counselor and administration reinforce the school rules and this social emotional education.

At Monterey Ridge, chronic absenteeism has been addressed on a case by case basis by the Principal and attendance clerk, with only one family referral to the district SARB board over the past 4 years. Decreasing the negative behaviors of students with chronic suspensions is a team effort. The School Counselor, Principal, Assistant Principal, Special Education Team, Student Success Strategies Team and sometimes the district Behavior Support Team collaborate to design individualized intervention plans and positive reinforcements with the goal of increasing coping skills and decreasing behavior referrals. We have not had any expulsions at Monterey Ridge.

Implementation and Monitoring

A whole child approach to instruction and learning begins with primary grades building strong foundational skills in reading, writing and math. Building on foundational skills, teachers provide high interest, community based, enrichment activities. Teachers blend innovative practices, project based learning, web based applications and flexible seating

with traditional structures and differentiated learning. Parent volunteers provide academic help in classrooms throughout our school.

Our Foundation provided financial support, enabling us to train all staff in Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and purchase 12 modules of PLTW. This gives our students opportunities to engage in STEAM collaboration and problem solving. PLTW activities teach our students how to communicate better in a team to solve tasks that have no “end”. They have learned to value perseverance as they continually redesign and improve upon their work.

We were the first school in our district to have a schoolwide garden program, first to use standards based garden curriculum, and the only school with a Garden to Plate Program. Master Gardeners Association and Solana Center provide training. Students learn about nutrition, science, math, social studies, and language through hands-on learning activities. Excess food from the garden is donated to local food banks. Garden to Plate serves organic food from the garden in our school cafeteria. Worms are the Way teaches students about the benefits of composting. Waste Diversion is practiced daily as students sort their trash into colored bins that are labeled for liquids, recycling, composting and landfill.

In our Art Program, students learn the value of planning, practice, perseverance and creativity. They use their hands to measure and pull down a straight line. When copying a drawing, students focus on the shapes that they recognize from the world around them. Students draw first with their eraser so they can easily brush it away and try again if they are dissatisfied with the initial mark. Cultural awareness and appreciation of differences is built into lessons. Teachers collaborate to connect art to science and social studies lessons. Connections are made to jobs such as Fashion Design, Architecture, Illustration, and Graphic Design. Art provides an opportunity for some who struggle elsewhere to shine.

Counseling services go beyond just individual and group counseling. Peace Patrol students in 4th and 5th grade are trained to help younger students on the playground. During recess school counseling staff provide social skills instruction through fun, play activities. Before school, our Counselor and GATE coordinator have Mega Minds groups to address social emotional needs unique to GATE students. After school, she tutors struggling learners. The counseling staff collaborates with administrators, parents and teachers to design lessons that specifically address the site needs.

Results and Outcomes

At Monterey Ridge Elementary, effective standards based instruction with a focus on the whole child, real world applications, social emotional health and STEAM has resulted in improved standardized test scores. In Mathematics, the total number of MRES students who met or exceeded standards on the Smarter Balanced Assessment increased from 77% in 2014–2015 to 83.57% in 2016–2017. Our Hispanic and Latino subgroup improved from 40% to 62.5%, students identified as Two or More Races improved from 71% to 84.85%, and Caucasian students increased from 68% to 75.32%.

On the English Language Arts portion of the Smarter Balanced Assessment, the total number of MRES students who met or exceeded standards increased from 74% in 2014–2015 to 80.12% in 2016–2017. Our Hispanic and Latino students increased from 46% to 62.5%, Caucasian students increased from 67% to 76.43%, Economically Disadvantaged increased from 35% to 46.43% and English Learners increased from 32% to 54.17%.

Data from the California Accountability Model and School Dashboard indicates Filipino students maintained or increased their mathematics scores on the Smarter Balanced Assessment by 1–4 points. English learners, Asian students and students from Two or More Races increased mathematics scores by 5–14 points, and white students increased by fifteen points or more. On English Language Arts, English learners, Asian, Filipino, Two or More Races and White students increased their scores by 7–19 points.

An increase in counseling staff, Peace Patrol and Counselor support on the playground, Mega Minds group for GATE students, site specific 2nd Step lessons, and staff training has resulted in improved school wide behavior. One student said, “The students show better character when Peace Patrol is walking around.” Students also comment that the lessons plus increased staff visibility on the playground have almost eliminated bullying at Monterey Ridge. Sixty students have participated in Mega Minds this year, and over fifty regularly participate in recess groups. School discipline data shows a dramatic decrease in the number of suspensions over the past several years. In 2015–2016 there were a total of twenty three student suspensions, in 2016–2017 that number was reduced to 8 and in September through February of the 2017–2018 school year there has only been 1 suspension.

Parent feedback has been positive. A parent recently shared that she had visited a school that was advertised as being very innovative and realized that she didn’t need to change schools because we already had those same innovative practices at Monterey Ridge.

Analyzing the data we’ve collected, we have shown that our focus on the whole student and real world connections to learning has been a success. But, as Einstein said and our students have learned, we must continue questioning because perseverance and change improve our ability to provide optimal conditions in which students can learn.