

Willow Grove Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 37682960116764

County: San Diego

District (Local Educational Agency): Poway Unified

School: Willow Grove Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 766 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Willow Grove Elementary, home of the Grizzlies, first opened doors in 2008. Today, Willow Grove serves 809 students, preschool through fifth grade. The adopted motto, Inspire and Ensure Learning for Each Student, reflects its mission and vision. The campus itself speaks to the excellence and collaborative atmosphere of Willow Grove: Character Counts! murals hang on walls, an outdoor amphitheater boasts space for the entire student body and parents to assemble, and state-of-the-art technology abounds in each of the thirty classrooms.

The student body is comprised of 47% Caucasian, 25% Asian, 12% Hispanic, 1% Filipino, 1% African American, and 14% "other" students. Twelve percent of students receive financial assistance, and 10% are classified as English Learners (with over 14 languages spoken). Cultural pride is demonstrated through community-building events such as Cultural Night, where students, staff, and families share about their personal heritage at the same time that they learn about others' cultural traditions.

Willow Grove was founded on five "roots." These include: operation as a professional learning community, the pursuit of rigor, relevance, and relationships, inclusion of state-of-the-art technology, fluency in cultural proficiency, and preparation for college and career readiness. Willow Grove is committed to:

- Working together to ensure the success of all students.
- Ensuring all students learn through rigorous instruction and the establishment of caring relationships.
- Technology integration to support and enhance student learning.
- Interacting with each other in a responsive and respectful way.
- Achieving the district's vision of College and Career Readiness for All.

Willow Grove is proud of its many accomplishments; most recently the selection as a 2016 California Gold Ribbon School. Of Willow Grove's 30 teachers, two are Nationally Board Certified, 24 have master's degrees, and all are engaged in site-based and district sponsored professional learning.

One of Willow Grove's greatest strengths is its firm belief that all students can learn. Teachers hold themselves accountable for the success of each child and are committed to closing achievement gaps. Staff collaborate to analyze data, set goals, and develop highly-detailed instructional plans based on Response to Intervention and Instruction. By meeting the needs of the whole child, students' optimal learning is made possible.

Another important strength of Willow Grove is the strong working relationship between staff and the parent community. Willow Grove's Foundation and PTA serve to expand and enrich students' educational experiences; parents volunteer on a regular basis. Last year, parent volunteers logged over 16,000 hours!

Each day Willow Grove's students, staff, and parents work together to ensure a safe and positive environment where all students can learn and reach their highest potential. Willow Grove Elementary is an outstanding place to learn.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships

Length of Model Program/Practice: 8+ years

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

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, Health Support,
Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development

Description

The district's initiative to implement high-quality curriculum and instruction for all students specifically highlights collaboration and training for teachers. Willow Grove plans for professional growth to take place through bi-monthly professional development meetings. Our staff is committed to a variety of collaboration constructs and professional learning. To support high-quality teaching, the PLC seeks guest speakers equipped to deliver targeted training to meet our demands and general shifts in education, such as Jim Fay, co-founder of the Love & Logic Institute, Inc. Teachers elect to participate in TLC courses relevant to the needs of the school community, and all staff work together to analyze student work and data to improve practices. This framework allows for reflection on the school's accomplishments, needs, and next steps. The results determine the following year's PLC focus, TLC offerings, and professional trainings to be given by resident experts and educational consultants.

The district's goal to provide multiple pathways of learning has been at the pinnacle of educating the whole child at Willow Grove. The LCAP supports the RtI2 process, a three-tiered, integrated system of intervention and instruction guided by student outcome data, which inform the creation of targeted goals for individual students. First tier practices reflect the high-quality instructional strategies all students receive. Tier two offers targeted interventions paired to the needs of struggling students. Tier three offers specific intensive interventions, which often include small group pull-out and one-to-one instruction. The implementation of this model has been critical in working to close the achievement gap. Willow Grove has become the district-wide model for implementation in all 37 schools in the district. After nine years of refining this process, Willow Grove is proud to be the model for the district's RtI2 implementation.

The district's desire to strengthen and maintain a safe, healthy, and positive learning environment is mirrored in Willow Grove's Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP). This plan promotes positive teaching and parenting techniques to build healthy relationships with children and inspire self-awareness, resilience, and maturity in students. These techniques are inspired by the principles of Love & Logic, a positive parenting and teaching method to build healthy relationships with kids. While all staff focus on cultivating a growth mindset in students, the school counselor and parent volunteers join in these concerted efforts through the implementation of activities and programs such as Character Counts, monthly classroom Character Core lessons, Grizzly Character Club meetings, and school-wide Pillar Pride events. Willow Grove staff promote a positive learning environment by embracing Love and Logic-- a practice that pays dividends as it trickles down from administration and staff to students, parents, and community.

Implementation and Monitoring

Willow Grove's PLC meetings serve the school in many ways. Consultants have presented on how to best serve English Learners (EL) and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) students; tech experts have presented on how to individualize learning. As a result, teachers embraced project-based learning and introduced technology programs that promoted personalized learning. A credentialed EL impact teacher was hired to provide additional, targeted instruction, and GATE students now meet in grade level groups with the school counselor to address their unique social and emotional needs.

Teachers are committed to facilitating and participating in TLCs to grow professionally. Last year, teachers participated in the site-based TLC Blending Love & Logic and Common Core. The powerful correlation between happy children and increased academic success led to the study of strategies that help to nurture self-confident, secure, and motivated children. Through the work of this TLC and teacher-led parent education nights, both teachers and parents implemented common language and strategies of Love and Logic while simultaneously hitting Common Core standards.

The aforementioned RtI2 process is run by a committee of nine teachers divided into three teams. Each team meets twice a month to create individualized plans to support and meet the social, academic, and developmental needs of struggling students. The teams then meet with parents and the classroom teacher every six weeks to implement and monitor progress towards the goals. The strong relationships and trust amongst staff and with parents is often responsible for the progress and ultimate success of these at-risk students.

Our Positive Behavior Support Plan empowers learners. Staff participate in book studies and conferences focused on cultivating empathy and a growth mindset. Last year, Dr. Charles Fay, Parenting with Love & Logic co-author, came to Willow Grove to speak with both staff and parents. This training highlighted the importance of student-guided activities and programs; as a result, the Grizzly Character Club and Pillar Pride were created to embellish existing practices. Students in the Grizzly Character Club worked to plan activities for the monthly Pillar Pride Day. On these days, parent volunteers deliver character lessons in every classroom and students participate in fun Character Counts exercises during recess-- activities designed and facilitated by the Grizzly Character Club!

The powerful reflection that takes place in Willow Grove's PLC allows staff to monitor and improve best practices through the ongoing analysis of data, parent/teacher/student survey results, observations, and through the collaborative conversations that take place daily. Willow Grove culture embraces growth; flexibility is honored as the only way to truly meet the changing needs of students. Consistent monitoring of student progress drives professional growth to stay anchored on rigor, relevance, and relationships.

Results and Outcomes

As a result of the RtI2 process, 100% of students referred for special education testing qualified. This success is due to the collective commitment and relationships built between the parents and our general and special education teachers. RtI2 facilitators meet with the special education team once per trimester to monitor the progress of students in the RtI2 process. Each student's progress is scrutinized to determine if testing for Special Education services is needed.

Analyzing assessment data, student needs are identified and targeted in PLC meetings and trainings. Overall, Willow Grove's Smarter Balanced Assessment results, shows high levels of student performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. Our EL students' scaled scores increased 15.3 points in ELA and 8.9 points in Math. On the California English Language Development Test, 82.3% of EL students' scores increased one level. The support of the EL Impact teacher and counsel of educational consultants improved student learning. Additionally, students with limited income increased their scaled scores on the Smarter Balanced Assessment by 3.9 points in ELA and 16.1 points in math. This increase is due to our effective RtI2 process and strong relationships built with our students and families. In prior years, our GATE students struggled in demonstrating their knowledge on formal assessments such as the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. The supports provided for the emotional well-being of GATE students led to marked improvements in their motivation, self-confidence, and perseverance. Spring MAP test scores for GATE students showed an increase of 4% in reading and 8% in math.

Willow Grove encourages students and families to provide feedback through surveys. Last year's California Healthy Kids Survey results revealed 97% of fifth grade students felt teachers cared about them. In this survey Willow Grove received satisfactory scores of 90% or higher in the areas of school safety, feeling cared for, and school connectedness. In the California School Parent Survey, 99% of parents stated, Willow Grove encourages them to be an active partner. After conducting the Blending Love & Logic and Common Core Parent Education Nights, 100% of parents surveyed stated they benefited from the parent nights and wanted more opportunities. These results reveal the Willow Grove community is committed to raising confident, motivated children who are more likely to find success in academic and personal pursuits.

Relationships are fundamental to students' happiness. Supporting the whole child has always been the foundational principle of Willow Grove, which prides itself on developing relationships with students, staff, and parents through the implementation of ongoing professional development, the RTI2 process, and a school-wide positive behavior support plan. Collectively, these measures serve to raise the bar of accountability for every child's academic and personal success.