

Kate Sessions Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 37683386040141

County: San Diego

District (Local Educational Agency): San Diego Unified

School: Kate Sessions Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 525 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

At Kate Sessions we are devoted to supporting and caring for each and every learner who enters our campus.

As an International Baccalaureate school (IB), our curriculum focuses on the development of the whole child as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the world outside. It is defined by six trans-disciplinary themes of global significance, explored using knowledge and skills derived from six subject areas, with a powerful emphasis on inquiry-based learning. We strive for our IB learners to be: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective. Our community of learners is made up of outstanding students, an expert and dedicated staff of caring professionals, active and involved parents, and a supportive community. We are committed to working together toward the success of each and every student at Kate Sessions Elementary School. Above all else, we want students to be able to critically explore and question the world around them in a safe, challenging and inclusive environment.

We are proud to be a part of San Diego Unified School District. The district's mission: "All San Diego students will graduate with the skills, motivation, curiosity and resilience to succeed in their choice of college and career in order to lead and participate in the society of tomorrow," is being achieved through our work to provide exemplary instruction in the classroom. Sessions Seahawks are preparing for college and career readiness today, in order to become the world's leaders of tomorrow.

We encourage you to come visit our campus and see for yourself the dynamic learning community that flourishes at Sessions! The quality of instruction and leadership at Sessions Elementary School is outstanding due to the cooperative efforts of the entire staff and community.

Growth is on-going and learning never stops!

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: International Mindedness and Writing Across the Curriculum

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports

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: Small Learning Communities, Parent Engagement, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Writing and international mindedness (IM) are more than a curriculum component at Sessions; effective writing and international mindedness are onramps into the larger social world. At Sessions International Baccalaureate practices and writing are embedded in everything we do. Students write to discover, communicate, create, explore their thinking, and cultivate intellectual independence and international mindedness. Our best writing practices at each grade level have evolved over the years, resulting in a comprehensive approach to developing students' writing and cultural proficiency from the time they enter kindergarten through the fifth grade.

"A distinguishing feature of the PYP is the six trans-disciplinary themes of global significance. The students engage in meaningful, relevant inquiries that focus on making significant connections to the world, and developing enduring understandings.

Each Unit of Inquiry is organized under one of the trans-disciplinary themes, and every school year the themes are revisited with increasingly complex information, key concepts and skills from the core subject areas of Math, Language, Social Studies, Science, The Arts, and Physical, Social & Personal Education."

Source: <https://www.guelphtoday.com/spotlight/spotlight-why-choose-the-international-baccalaureate-primary-years-programme-824818>

The quality of student writing has been a perennial concern in education (A Nation at Risk, 1983). Research tells us that effective writing skills are an integral part of success in most stages of life. Students with proficient writing skills are able to convey ideas, deliver instructions, analyze information, and motivate others. Students at our school write across all content areas every day. Writing instruction includes a range of writing tasks and opportunities to explore and impact the world more deeply.

Throughout years of using research and district test data to identify areas of student need, Sessions has focused, over the past few years, on embedding writing and IM across the curriculum to close the achievement gap and more importantly prepare students for the world. The over-arching goal of this signature practice is building intellectual independence in the area of writing and international mindedness for our students.

Implementation and Monitoring

Our students learn about culture and how to write through rich interaction with printed text, song, music, and spoken word. Through children's literature from around the world, teachers provide significant oral language stimulation and the teaching of specific phonetic, syntactical, and semantic skills. As students develop letter/sound knowledge, scaffolded differentiated instruction is provided through the use of shared writing, allowing students to build on what they know and helping them to move to the written word. Students are provided a strong writing foundation by utilizing instructional methods such as morning message, interactive writing, pattern writing, word work on white boards, and literacy centers.

Building on the skills learned in kindergarten, students are immersed in in-depth author studies and literature from around the world. First graders carefully examine picture books and learn about the relationship between readers and writers. They proudly share stories with their class, parents, and the community during classroom activities. First grade teachers use work samples, rubrics, and formalized assessments to plan focused writing lessons.

The instructional foundation of writing at Sessions in primary grades provides a smooth transition to the challenges of second and third grade common core writing standards. Students make use of graphic organizers, create drafts, revise and edit their pieces, which allows them to develop an understanding of the entire writing process. Our International Baccalaureate Programs of Inquiry and the Common Core Standards help us to emphasize cross curricular writing as students write opinion and expository pieces

in the areas of language arts, science, global and international studies and social studies. Formalized instruction continues to be supported and organized around the International Baccalaureate themes and Common Core Standards.

Fourth and fifth grade students continue the spiral learning begun in second and third grade in preparation for the IB Exhibition. Instruction continues to support the three basic text types: narrative, opinion, and expository while encompassing personal, differentiated, transnational, and age appropriate parameters. Common language supports this spiraling method of teaching as well as builds a community of learners. Instructional strategies found in all grade levels are writing conferences, shared writing, project based writing, peer revision, and the five essential elements from the PYP international baccalaureate curriculum. Because students are using the same terminology, cross-age writing buddies provide mentoring opportunities that teachers find very successful.

Teachers work together in teams to evaluate not only their own students' writing but also work as a team to double-score in order to calibrate their scoring in relation to the rubric.

Results and Outcomes

As a result of the writing practices embedded at Sessions our students produce terrific projects, presentations, research reports and much more that truly display growth and learning. Enter any of our classrooms or attend a student led conference and you will be amazed at the depth of learning that occurs from grades TK–5.

CAASSP scores in ELA have gone up each year as a result of this practice. In the 2015–2016 school year 71% of our students exceeded or met standard and in 2016–2017 school year 76% of our students exceeded or met standard. We anticipate the percentage of students who are exceeding or meeting standard to continue growing as a direct reflection of our writing and IB practices.

This year we completed our IB evaluation visit and we received the following feedback in regards to our writing program. In our recent evaluation, for C2 - Written Curriculum - Practice 1a, 5, and 7, we received commendations for our program of inquiry (POI) in that they provided opportunities for student action at all grade levels across the curriculum. Additionally, our writing and IB programs together promote awareness of individual, local, national, and world issues through explicit practice and instruction.

The written curriculum allows for meaningful student action in response to students' own needs and the needs of others.

The submitted PYP unit planners include learning experiences that allow for meaningful student action.

Teachers can demonstrate how the school's expectations for service involvement are rooted in the curriculum.

PYP unit planners include opportunities for student action.

The written curriculum promotes students' awareness of individual, local, national and world issues.

Submitted PYP unit planners include learning experiences that promote students' awareness of individual, local, national and world issues.

Unit planners indicate resources that have been used to promote students' awareness of individual, local, national and world issues.

Teachers can explain how unit planners include learning experiences that promote students' awareness of individual, local, national and world issues.

The school promotes students' awareness of individual, local, national and world issues through explicit links with central ideas and lines of inquiry in the school's programme of inquiry.

Writing encourages students to develop their intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence through standards-based curriculum-related activities. The data is used to determine measurable growth of successful practices, but student attitudes toward writing is the true measure of building intellectual independence.