

Miller Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 37683386093256

County: San Diego

District (Local Educational Agency): San Diego Unified

School: Miller Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 782 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Miller Elementary is situated in the largest military housing complex in the world, where 97% of our 782 students come from military families. The remaining 3% come from our district's choice program. 62% of our students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program, 21% have special needs, and this year 7% are on the autism spectrum (compare to 1% nationally). Our subgroups change each year. English learners are few but often undesignated, with one parent fluent in English and often deployed. Due to our dynamic school population, we continually reassess our system.

Our students and their families face many challenges. We have the third highest mobility rate within our large urban district. All year long, students arrive from different school systems, necessitating academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports to help them quickly settle into our community and meet California's rigorous standards. Our families experience multiple lengthy deployments, so we pursue community partnerships that benefit students and families. Grants from the Department of Defense

and partnerships with other military organizations provide additional services. Military students often face articulation challenges due to mobility, so we work with our Serra Cluster schools to improve articulation and are seeking AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) Elementary certification, to help students acquire strong habits for academic achievement.

Students, parents, and community members choose from a variety of opportunities to volunteer across our school. Student community service opportunities include Safety Patrol, Games Managers, Recess Buddies, Blessings in a Backpack, and Clean Campus Campaign. Our PTA is an active and essential contributor to our school community. Parent volunteers fill our weekly food bags, participate in Family Fridays, volunteer in classrooms, and organize fundraisers. Our Family and Parent Involvement Committee builds connections through instructional and celebratory events during and after school hours.

Because of continual adjustment and integration of our system of supports over the years, we are now a Multi-Tiered System of Supports Knowledge Development Site (KDS). Teachers and support staff collaborate to ensure a continuum of services by considering each child and mobilizing supports and resources for equitable access to the best learning environment throughout the day. Our motto is, "Everyone a Learner. Everyone Succeeds. No Excuses."

Miller's namesake was a sailor who took action beyond his assigned duties, bravely saving lives at Pearl Harbor. Our school continues his legacy through a mindset that all our students benefit when we take action to apply resources and supports to meet their unique needs. We model and practice the Miller Way (Respectful, Responsible, and Safe), and we take action to enhance student agency and achievement. Miller Elementary is proud to serve the students and parents who protect our country.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Building, changing, and sustaining an integrated Multi-tiered System of Supports to ensure equitable access and enhance the agency of all participants

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

Target Area(s): Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention, Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development, Use of Technology

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, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Building, changing, and sustaining an integrated Multi-tiered System of Supports to ensure equitable access and enhance agency in all participants

Our district has begun transitioning to MTSS. Miller was invited to be a Knowledge Development Site because we have already integrated strategic, comprehensive, and flexible supports that enhance our system of equitable access for all students. We manage flexible and fluid placements across levels of support to ensure equitable access to rigorous curriculum for all students.

Military families are in transition. Military children are more likely to have disruptions in their education, with academic gaps, acute anxiety, and depression. Students wrote, "When my dad goes on deployment I get anxiety because I think something bad is going to happen," and, "Second Step...teaches everyone to feel empathy and stay strong." Behavior and emotional supports, along with good universal instruction, improve attendance and keep students engaged. The Miller Way of Respectful, Responsible, and Safe is more than an expectation for student behavior. It emphasizes that we expect our system to be respectful of all, responsive to all, and to keep all children safe. We build our system through teamwork among staff, families, students, and community to respond to student needs on multiple levels, so all can achieve and be agents in our learning.

Students arrive with varying degrees of agency. Some have successfully navigated many schools through multiple duty station changes; others have struggled. As we continue developing a single integrated system instead of parallel systems, we go beyond district resources to find and implement supports. We choose to participate in new programs if they benefit our students (PBIS, No Place for Hate, Bucket Fillers, literacy curriculum, Project Lead the Way, AVID certification), infusing them throughout our system (e.g. morning announcements, matrices, classrooms).

Miller began adjustments in the behavioral domain ten years ago, that led to improved academic supports. Students with IEPs were missing core instruction, so teachers agreed to common schedules. Stronger universal instruction helped refine our supplemental supports. Data from ongoing challenges led to stronger social-emotional supports. Now we integrate social-emotional learning through classroom lessons, small groups, and school-wide programs. Considering student needs across all three domains prompted us to build a master instructional schedule, with flexible support for students to move to settings that best suit their learning. We provide multiple opportunities for grade level collaboration between general education and special education. The diverse settings and services are now interconnected. People are in motion across the day to

support students at identified points of need. We commit to ensuring equitable access to a quality education. All means all. Our motto is, "Everyone a Learner. Everyone Succeeds. No Excuses."

Implementation and Monitoring

When a new family arrives and registers at Miller, they are given an Educational Information Intake Sheet by which we identify their previous programs and supports. That information is disseminated to appropriate teachers and support staff, and used to determine levels of support for our new student.

Site placements include designated cluster classrooms so we can coordinate supports for students with IEPs, English Learners, GATE, and health needs. We consider classroom environment as a factor in student placement. Across all classrooms, the implementation of various academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports is reinforced by supplemental lessons, visual reminders, adult modeling, and student services on site. Our goal is to help students internalize behaviors that reflect our mantra of Respectful, Responsible, Safe instead of needing external correction. We incorporate AVID techniques so students will internalize academic behaviors that promote success. Our supports begin in the classrooms and continue throughout all school environments.

We know that students who move here can be either above or below California standards, requiring differentiation in instruction. As students work in classrooms, we assess and monitor for appropriate support needs and possible placement needs. A student who struggles gets connected into the multiple supports, such as academic, nursing, counseling, attendance, behavior, and social adjustment. Those supports, and data on outcomes, are discussed at monthly monitoring meetings with the principal. Although we look at data about subgroups in order to monitor our system, our practice is based on individual students' needs. The reason our subgroups have made significant growth is due to individual monitoring and adjustments across our levels of support. Labels are for data. Supports are for students.

Along with academic and behavioral monitoring, we provide social-emotional support that helps new students become an integrated part of our Miller community. We allocate funds for extra school counselor days. Our school counselor invites each transitioning student to a Welcome and Farewell Group. The student ambassadors introduce new students to our school campus and routines. A weekly review of one of our behavior matrices ensures awareness for all students. Caught Being Good cards provide a tangible reinforcement of that program.

Entering students are given AVID supplies, and introduced to the AVID supports that each grade level has adopted. We calibrate AVID universal supports through the grade levels the way we adjust other types of supports--by asking, "Do all students have equal access? How can we best support all our students in their learning, across academic, behavioral, and social-emotional domains? How can we, and they, gain agency as

learners within our system? How can we adjust our system to be better integrated, and meet the needs of all community members, across all levels of support?”

Results and Outcomes

Miller creates a community that promotes agency amongst all stakeholders. Due to our transient student population, teachers have a sense of urgency to create an environment where students persist in rigorous learning challenges. Our system of supports is closing the achievement gap. The California Dashboard scores show that our 2017 subgroups of African Americans, Hispanics, and Students with Special Needs made significant gains over the previous year: 28%, 25%, and 15%, respectively (greater than all others). These district scores subgroups either maintained or decreased.

PBIS has significantly decreased behavior referrals. Even with a small hike from new teachers in the last three years, the number of referrals is less than half the number in 2007–2008, reducing classroom disruptions. Students are then present for instructional time. Attendance data shows continuous improvement over the last three years, from ranking 90–100 out of 116 schools, to the 30–40 range. This increases engagement and achievement. A teacher said, “We have a common language and techniques to calm down and solve problems. Conflicts still exist, but they get solved more effectively.”

Social-emotional supports resulted in similar gains. According to the California Healthy Kids survey, 100% of participating 5th grade students believe Miller’s staff helps students solve conflicts, teaches students to understand how others think and feel, and teaches students to care about and treat each other with respect. Miller has also taken on a school climate improvement framework known as No Place For Hate. 92% of families signed a Resolution of Respect. The Great Kindness Challenge, a program in which students perform kind acts for their school family, doubled our family participants from the previous year.

Social-emotional outcomes show that MTSS has enhanced agency and growth mindset. On California Healthy Kids Survey, 100% of participating 5th grade students feel they have the ability to keep working on their schoolwork until they get it right even when assignments are difficult. 82% stated that adults ask them about their ideas. Teachers have developed their own agency after perceiving positive results from flexible individualized supports. They seek out professional learning and design small group professional learnings, such as advisory groups and professional learning grants. Data shows fewer referrals from longer-term staff, and improved student achievement.

Family and student involvement in Military Family Counseling, Parent Cafes, Operation Bigs, Family Forces therapy, and Military Kids, Operation Hero, is high, and families rated them as useful, informative and applicable on a FACES grant survey. They also reported feeling more connected to the school, and more likely to seek services and support for their family’s needs. “My child benefited...Moving to a new school in the the

middle of the year was very difficult.” Our multi-tiered system supports positive outcomes.