

Ulloa Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 38684786041685

County: San Francisco

District (Local Educational Agency): San Francisco Unified

School: Ulloa Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 520 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Nestled in the fog of San Francisco, Ulloa Elementary School is the shining gem of the Outer Sunset. Located next to the San Francisco Zoo and alongside the scenic Great Highway overlooking Ocean Beach, we are a community of diverse families, students, and teachers. At Ulloa, our mission is to create a unique learning environment committed to educating the whole child. In addition to a strong standards-based academic program, our dedicated and experienced staff creates a safe and nurturing environment in which every child can confidently build the intellectual, emotional, and physical skills necessary to become a life-long learner.

There are 500 children attending our single story, two-city block facility encompassing 48,200 square feet. Each student adds to the richness of our school community. 72.4% of our students are Asian and many live in our neighborhood. The rest of our student body include 4.0% White, 4.6% Latino, .6% African American, 4.0% Multi-Racial, and 12% Declined to State. 43% of our students are English Language Learners. 7.8% are

Special Education students and 60% of our students qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch. There are 24 English Language Development Classes, six of which are Chinese Bilingual classes. Our Special Education Program includes the Inclusion Program, Resource Specialist Services, and Designated Instructional Services.

In addition to our extensive academic curriculum, Ulloa offers a multitude of opportunities for our students to shine. We have enrichment programs such as Performing Arts Workshops (PAW) residencies, physical education; SPEAK Visual Arts program, and gardening. Our Learning Support Coordinator is a key link to connecting school, community, and families. Our partnership with the Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center provides a free comprehensive after-school program. Students are given support and extracurricular opportunities to extend classroom learning. Along with our Academic Plan, these programs create a stimulating environment for all our students.

Parents play an essential role in our community. The Ulloa Parent Teacher Association (PTA) supports our computer and physical education programs. Our parents' high standards and expectations are aligned with those of the school to create a successful partnership.

Emphasizing social justice, equity, and respect, Ulloa teachers are dedicated to student learning and provide differentiated instruction to ensure that each student shines as an individual while being able to work in collaborative groups. In Equity-Centered Professional Learning Communities (ECPLC), we work together to discuss and share these practices in addition to analyzing disaggregated assessment trends.

Ulloa is a National Blue Ribbon School, a two-time recipient of the California Distinguished School Award, as well as a Title 1 National Distinguished School. We are very proud of all that we have accomplished at Ulloa!

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Closing the Math Achievement Gap for Our English Learners at Ulloa Elementary School!

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Professional Development

Target Population(s): Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners

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

The CCMS dictated a shift in how we teach math. We knew our large population of EL students would face challenges with their articulation of mathematical thinking using academic language. In order to best address the level of depth required within CCMS, we researched and identified a practice called Math Talk, which focuses on the strategic facilitation of math conversations daily for a period of 15 minutes. Math Talk aligns student learning with The Eight Standards for Mathematical Practices as outlined in CCMS. The mathematical practices that are directly addressed in Math Talk include: “make sense of problems,” “persevere in solving them,” “reason abstractly and quantitatively,” “construct viable arguments,” and “critique the reasoning of others.”

As opposed to teacher- directed instruction, the format of Math Talk is student-centered with teacher- facilitated math discourse. Math Talk does not require additional funding, staffing, or materials; but it does require training and implementation with fidelity. On a regular basis, students are gathered in a community group, presented with a problem, and given think time to solve the problem independently, without the use of paper and pencil. The intent of Math Talk is to promote discussion and mathematical reasoning, rather than focus on finding a math solution. The teacher then prompts students to share their answers aloud. Individual students are given the opportunity to explain and provide evidence of their thinking. During Math Talk, students are given intentional opportunities to make sense of a variety of mathematical problems, mentally calculate how to defend their reasoning, see different approaches of how a problem can be solved by peers, and manage their social interactions while learning in a large group setting. Although one session of Math Talk lasts for about 10–15 minutes, the intent and focus of this strategy are what makes this an optimal learning environment for students to hear and articulate a variety of mathematical strategies.

We anticipate that through Math Talk, our students will be able to deepen their mathematical reasoning, articulate their thinking with clarity and confidence, and construct arguments that support their conclusions. We expect all students to apply these skills to their daily lives as they engage in active reasoning and problem-solving with their families, and in their communities.

Math Talk also addresses the social emotional needs of our students. For students who may be reluctant to share their thoughts and answers or are unsure of what to say, this practice creates a positive classroom culture where differences are accepted and mistakes are learning opportunities. At the beginning of the practice, norms of respect and sharing ideas with a growth mindset are established. The structure of Math Talk also promotes equitable turn- taking and respectful articulation of agreements or disagreements with peers.

Implementation and Monitoring

As a school, teachers analyzed the 2014–15 SBAC Test scores, specifically in the area of math. We identified components--critical thinking and “explanation of mathematical reasoning” – that were scored the lowest across grade levels. In order to address this

data trend, professional development was provided at the beginning of the 2016–17 school year where the Math Lead Team (MLT) presented the philosophy of Math Talk and identified the key components. They demonstrated the methodology of Math Talk and equipped teachers with a reference guide to implement Math Talk successfully in the classroom. As part of professional development, teachers gathered in grade level teams to discuss how to best implement the practice in classrooms and practiced facilitating Math Talk with their peers.

To continue to support teachers with this practice, grade-level teams observed a member of the MLT facilitating a Math Talk. This scheduled observation took place after teachers began implementation of the practice in their own class-rooms. This support was necessary to align and standardize the practice and implementation of Math Talk school-wide. Each grade level observed a 15-minute Math Talk demonstrated by a Math Leader and made note of the key components, leading questions, and the teacher's role throughout the practice. Math Talk was implemented twice a week and emphasized in weekly lesson plans, which were shared with the Principal. All faculty recognized the need to practice with commitment and continuity in the implementation of Math Talk school-wide.

“Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others” is a key Mathematical Practice of the CCMS that was explicitly communicated with students in order to foster and promote a positive learning community. This shift in thinking supports the rationale that mistakes are opportunities for learning, everyone's ideas are valid, and individuals have different viewpoints and ways to approach a problem. Math Talk supported lower performing students by allowing them to actively participate and listen to peer responses. Higher performing students provided a variety of viewpoints and multiple approaches to address a common problem. The classroom climate during Math Talk fostered community learning where students were not focused on the correct answer but instead building upon one another's responses. Lower performing students were supported by higher performing students in their explanations of mathematical reasoning through peer discourse and academic language. Teachers observed and tracked student progress closely to target the needs of the class. They added clarity to student responses in the form of rephrasing and questioning. By providing ample opportunities for students to articulate their mathematical thinking, students were better equipped to meet the needs of the new math standards.

Results and Outcomes

Implementation of Math Talk is an effective instructional practice that promotes success for all students. Math Talk provides students an opportunity to cultivate their critical thinking skills through equitable conversations about math concepts and strategies. It creates an environment in which students can share their own thinking and build upon the reasoning of others. Math Talk has helped our students improve their mathematical reasoning, articulation, and depth of understanding.

Using the 2016–17 Math Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), we compared our students' proficiency to that of the district and the state. Ulloa students

are meeting or exceeding the standards for math at much greater percentages. Overall, 86% of students at Ulloa met or exceeded the standards for math in the 2016–17 school year. In comparison, throughout SFUSD, 52% of students met or exceeded the standards for math. At the state level, 37% of students met or exceeded the standards for math.

Our English Learners have also benefitted greatly from Math Talk. They have met the challenge of the new standards for math. In 2016–17, 74% of our EL students met or exceeded the standards. This is 40% higher than SFUSD's overall performance of 34% and 71% higher than the state's overall performance of 12%. We saw similar gaps between our students' performance and that of the district and the state with our other subgroups: 80% of our Economically Disadvantaged students met or exceeded the standard and 67% of our Special Education students did as well compared to 30% and 14%, respectively, for SFUSD. These results demonstrate that our professional development and teacher collaboration with a focus on Math Talk were successful strategies for all students at Ulloa.

Beyond our test results, teachers have noticed broader gains in overall student abilities. We have seen growth in academic vocabulary and improvement in equitable discourse. Teachers have observed that a focus on the Standards for Mathematical Practice during Math Talk has benefited all students both in their math as well as in other academic areas. This has been confirmed through recent SBAC results: 73% of our students met or exceeded the standards for English Language Arts, compared to 51% throughout SFUSD and 49% for the state. Further, teachers have made Math Talk an opportune time to conduct formative assessments and they have modified their instruction based on their students' needs. Math Talk reinforces the concept of a positive community in the classroom where students know that they are there to learn from each other.

We continue to focus on deepening our use of Math Talk at Ulloa through teacher collaboration, administrative expectations, and peer coaching. In doing so, we are working to foster mathematical excellence for our students and to close the achievement gap for our EL students.