

Elkhorn School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 39685856042063

County: San Joaquin

District (Local Educational Agency): Lodi Unified

School: Elkhorn School

Demographics

Enrollment: 262 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Modified

Charter: No

Overview

Elkhorn School in Lodi Unified School District is a school of choice for identified gifted and talented education (GATE) students in grades 4–8. Our model is a self-contained school that students enter via a lottery process. Emphasis is placed on the acknowledgement of the unique, diverse contributions of each individual.

Elkhorn has a student population of approximately 280 students comprised of 42% Asian, 22% Hispanic, 21% White and other ethnicities. The school has 44% socioeconomically disadvantaged students with 48% on the free or reduced lunch program. Students travel to our site from across the district with some traveling up to 15 miles.

Elkhorn School staff members believe that intelligence is malleable and through effort, all students can succeed. The growth mindset focus of our school is on the learning process based on individual student needs. Staff provides stimulating curriculum that is compacted and accelerated with a focus on depth and complexity. Teachers are dedicated to fostering students' critical thinking skills. Elkhorn staff guides students to

become responsible for their academic and social growth. Elkhorn teachers keep current with the latest GATE strategies, trends and issues through professional development and reading.

Elkhorn students work with like-minded peers, which promotes positive self-image, cooperation and collaboration. The opportunity to work with other gifted students fosters an environment where they are comfortable with risk-taking and appreciating multiple perspectives. Students become self-regulated and gain an appreciation for learning as they develop their gifts and talents.

Teachers at Elkhorn address state standards by differentiating curriculum using GATE strategies. Students are encouraged to develop a scholarly attitude and to become lifelong learners. Curriculum is student-centered, which allows for greater choice and flexibility. This allows students to demonstrate their potential as independent decision-makers.

Our mission statement follows the distinguished school model. Our students have the opportunity to become mature, thoughtful, and conscientious citizens who are active participants in the learning process. The Elkhorn staff creates a learning community that fosters an intrinsic appreciation for lifelong learning and celebrates the achievements of all.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Gifted and Talented Education

Length of Model Program/Practice: 8+ years

Target Area(s): Professional Development, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Use of Technology

Target Population(s): Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners

Strategies Used: School Climate, Small Learning Communities, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development

Description

Elkhorn School is a choice school for students identified as gifted and talented. We provide a rigorous curriculum through various means and encourage risk-taking, failure as means to succeed, collaboration, and exploration.

Gifted students are often broad thinkers with questioning minds. We strive to create global citizens that look through multiples lenses at situations. Each staff member uses the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) iconic prompts to provide depth and complexity to all content areas. The iconic prompt of ethics guides students to think

about controversies, principles and differing viewpoints on a specific topic. When studying the mission period in 4th grade, students will talk about that time period through the eyes of the native Californians and debate on the ethical considerations on that population. The ethics iconic prompt is used as students participate in Socratic Seminar where 2 opposing teams debate an ethical issue such as the environmental impact of waste products. The use of GATE iconic prompts is one approach Elkhorn uses to connect real-life scenarios to the core content on a deep level.

Gifted students tend to think globally but do not have the tools necessary to handle such complex feelings. Teachers use this passion to empower students to learn and act on their beliefs. The 5th grade class raises salmon from the egg state and release them into the Mokelumne River as they learn about the impact humans have on nature. The STEM class received a grant to create programmable walking canes for the blind. The students wanted a cane that would vibrate as an obstacle was near to warn the blind. Sixth grade students work on a Passion project of their choice and present it to their peers. The topics are varied but one that comes from the heart, be it helping at an animal shelter, providing books after a disastrous fire, or creating fashion from used clothing.

Elkhorn has created a Makerspace where students explore and create to become innovators of tomorrow. Students use the engineering design process to invent or reinvent objects with a Next Generation Science Standard problem solving goal in mind. The teacher's role is one of facilitator asking guiding questions that creates an atmosphere of creativity and trust. One task was to create a prototype of an object that would make daily living easier.

Team building is a large component of Elkhorn School. Our philosophy is that we achieve more when working together, a necessary skill of the 21st century. Each classroom has students sitting in learning clubs and all members have a role. Collaboration and student conversation is the norm throughout the day. Whether it is working on a science lab, creating a STEM project, solving complex math problems, or a team building event, our students are versed in cooperative learning group strategies so all have a voice.

Implementation and Monitoring

Elkhorn's model develops grit and perseverance as students are exposed to high-quality educational experiences. They learn to have a growth mindset and develop an inner drive to learn. Risk taking and failure is viewed as data for students to learn and grow from their mistakes.

Elkhorn School offers a wide array of extra-curricular activities that engage parents in the educational process. Elkhorn parents are involved events such as: Science Olympiad, Math Olympiad, Math Counts, Geography Bee, Art Club, Schoolwide Enrichment Model Reading (SEM-R). Elkhorn's success at each of these competitive events is a testament to the effectiveness of our parent engagement. Parents are an

integral part of the multiple educational trips our students take each year. They support and provide transportation for the range of our study trips.

We have regular communication with our parents through the school's web page, ConnectEd messaging, e-mail and an online grading program. Teachers keep parents informed of student success via multiple means of communication.

An annual survey is sent to all parents and students whose anonymous replies assist us in reflecting on our practices. Parents and students stated that students feel safe, challenged, supported and respected at Elkhorn.

Elkhorn staff continually monitors the progress of the students. Aside from traditional formative assessments, benchmarks, and state testing, we also use informal assessments. Students demonstrate understanding of concepts through activities such as: skits, presentations based on menu choices, Breakout sessions, and debates.

Elkhorn has supports in place to assist students who are struggling academically. Peer tutoring and the After School Assistance Program offers support for students to work in quiet environments and receive help they need to be successful. Stress Busters, run by our counselor, helps students navigate anxiety and common issues that lead to stress.

All staff members have had various training in gifted education. Each staff meeting has an element of professional development centered on best practices in gifted education including; social/emotional needs, differentiation, STEM, compacting and accelerating curriculum, and twice exceptional. The strength of the staff is in their deep understanding of the unique needs of gifted learners.

Elkhorn uses data to monitor the effectiveness of the instructional learning that is both quantitative and qualitative. Scores from benchmark and state testing reflect the high quality academic rigor. We have a low mobility rate with no more than 5 students leaving in a year. Additionally, we regularly have former students return to volunteer in several capacities. They assist with science labs, in the STEM class, with the music program, and at family events. They still want to be part of the Elkhorn community.

Results and Outcomes

The staff at Elkhorn School continually monitors student learning and achievement to reflect on best practices. Results are monitored from the variety of classroom assessments, district benchmarks, and the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA). Teachers use this vital data to drive instruction and provide the richest content possible to the students.

Elkhorn has had impressive Smarter Balanced Assessment test results for the 2015–2017 school years. The overall scores in ELA in the 2015–16 school year had 93% in Standard met or Standard exceeded with 6th grade have 100% scoring in those 2 categories. Producing clear and purposeful writing was the greatest strength with 64% in the Above Standard category. Math had 84% in the standard met or exceeded

category. Sixty percent scored above average in the Problem Solving area of the math test.

In the 2016–17 school year, 93% of the student population scored at Standard Met or Standard Exceeded with two grade levels at 100% Met or Exceeded in the overall ELA test. The students' greatest strengths were in Writing with 79% Above Standard. The overall math showed strong growth in the 2016–17 year with 92% at Standard Met or Exceeded. Sixth grade had 77% at Standard Exceeded and 100% at Standard Met or Exceeded. Concepts & Procedures was the greatest strength with 70% in the advanced range.

The Economically Disadvantaged population was one of our focus subgroups. In the 2015–16 school year, 86% scored in the standard met or exceeded in ELA with 6th grade having 100% in both areas. Writing was their greatest strength with 59% above standard. Math results were similar with 85% in met or exceeded with Problem Solving as the highest subtest. Gains were made in the 2016–17 year with 93% scoring standard met or exceeded in ELA overall with writing as the greatest strength. Math results were 86% in standard met or exceeded with Concepts and Procedures being the strength.

Our English Language Fluency subgroup was another focus for Elkhorn School. A full 91% of our ELs made standard met or exceeded with writing as their strength- an amazing accomplishment. The math portion had 85% in standard met and exceeded with Problem Solving as the top category. Results for 2016–17 mirrored the previous year with 94% in ELA and 87% in math, both strong improvements.

Before the start of each school year, the staff spends a day disaggregating data to set lofty goals for academic success. Action steps are set, monitored, and reviewed at monthly staff meetings. These goals are shared with the assistant superintendent of elementary education. We also monitor attendance data and are purposeful about reaching out to students with low attendance rates. All staff members assist with these goals, including the secretary, aides, counselor, and even the custodian who is often seen playing basketball with the students.

It takes the whole team to ensure success for all students.