

Del Mar Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 40688096043210

County: San Luis Obispo

District (Local Educational Agency): San Luis Coastal Unified

School: Del Mar Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 365 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Del Mar Elementary School (DM) serves 365 TK–5th grade students in beautiful Morro Bay. We create a nurturing, educational environment in which staff, parents, and community form a partnership to promote academic excellence, self-esteem, social responsibility, solid literacy skills, and a lifelong love of learning. Our staff understands our students' diverse needs and is dedicated to ensuring that all students receive high-quality engaging instruction and compassion.

At DM, 54% of students qualify for Title I, 13% are English learners (EL), 58% are white, 29% Hispanic, and 13% other. We focus on the academic, social, and emotional success of every student. Our campus has both a Head Start Preschool and extended care for families. DM's core academic programs are aligned to the State Standards. Technology is infused throughout DM, with iPads (1:2) in our K–1 classes, Chromebooks (1:4) in 2nd grade, and every student with their own Chromebook in

grades 3–5. Students in grades 3–5 participate in weekly STEAM rotations, learning coding, robotics, chess, video making, nature studies, and more.

Social-emotional learning opportunities support students' availability for the rigorous work in the classrooms. This includes individual and small group counseling, mindfulness and growth mindset lessons, and high school mentors. Our entire staff is trained in the social-emotional curriculum, Second Step. Classroom teachers and support staff have co-taught this curriculum, creating a cohesive approach and common language in conflict resolution. Because we understand that happy, healthy children learn best, we also provide a plethora of engaging programs, including: art and music lessons taught by professionals, gardening, Student Council, Drama Club, Chess Club, Lego League, Spanish Club, Running Club, Variety Show, Noontime Sports, field trips, and assemblies.

Parents are important and welcomed members of the DM team and have many opportunities for involvement: PTA, School Site Council, English Learner Advisory Committee, fundraisers, field trips, and the important role of volunteering in the classroom. TK and K parents participate in "Raising a Reader" and "Partners in Print." Families enjoy interactive Math and Engineering Night and Literacy Night. We offer parent trainings such as Love and Logic, Non-Violent Communication, and Internet Safety.

DM is a source of pride in our community and was honored as a California Distinguished School in 2006 and with a Title I Academic Achievement Award in 2007. Change in education is a guarantee, and California's adoption of the Common Core provided the opportunity to learn together as we transitioned to new standards, curriculum, and instructional strategies. Through ongoing, continuous improvement, we have created a school community that is preparing college and career ready children, through quality delivery of instruction, complemented by a dedication to the safety and social-emotional wellbeing of all students.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: TK–2 Early Literacy Model

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 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, Professional Development,

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

Description

In alignment with district LCAP goals of Rigorous, Relevant, and Engaging Instruction and Curriculum, Multi-tiered Academic Support, and Data Culture, the DM TK–2 Early Literacy Model is highly developed. Research-based knowledge and student data allow us to meet each child at their current instructional level, supporting both intervention and acceleration. The foundation in our primary grades lays the groundwork for schoolwide achievement.

The core of our Early Literacy Model is first best classroom instruction that embraces the standards with laser focus. This is augmented by a highly developed and responsive intervention system, quality resources, and a focus on using data to drive instruction. The driving force is the needs of our population. Research shows the correlation between children from low-income households and low literacy rates. Our goal and responsibility is to “reach and teach” all children as we break down the barriers of poverty to develop competent readers and writers.

By understanding our student population and the goals we have for them, we design professional development (PD) that supports teachers in meeting the literacy needs of our students. Data and observation are embedded in this process. This focus enhances our ability to implement and recognize effective, individualized instruction.

We allocate site and district funds for 4 part-time intervention teachers. This responsive team targets the appropriate intervention for each child through an ongoing collaborative process. Consistent time is built into the school schedule that enables the team to look at evidence of student learning and modifications needed to the instruction and/or groupings to ensure that each child receives the needed support. This ranges from Read Naturally fluency intervention and after-school literacy extension to extended day kindergarten, Leveled Literacy Intervention, and individualized instruction.

Allocation decisions are focused on resources to support literacy. This includes Title I funding for 2 part-time instructional aides, leveled classroom libraries and book rooms, high interest-low readability books, nightly and summer take-home books, and access to digital books. Illuminate Education is an online data and assessment system that allows us to collect, analyze, and respond to the needs of our students.

Literacy role models are established by enlisting diverse parent and community support. Parent involvement exists throughout the day. Local firefighters read in classes, and the Coast Guard supports students in our after-school literacy extension. High school students work in classrooms and as mentors in an after-school program.

Learning-to-learn skills are embedded in our literacy model. A Friend-to-Friend social intervention and teaching the Second Step program within our nurturing classrooms

decreases behaviors and absenteeism while increasing the effectiveness of our program.

Implementation and Monitoring

Key to our Early Literacy Model is knowing the instructional need of every student and building upon what they know. Ongoing formative assessments enable responsiveness to students' identified needs. Literacy assessments (letter and sound identification/recognition, high-frequency word knowledge, hearing and recording sounds) identify strengths and growth areas. Using running records, writing samples, conferring notes, and student interviews, teachers are able to identify individual teaching points that are used in both the classroom and intervention. Individual student literacy goals can be found posted on classroom walls, taped to desks, made into bookmarks. Each student has a book box of just-right books.

Each trimester, the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) is administered to each K–2 student. This summative data is entered in Illuminate and analyzed to monitor school-wide progress towards proficiency. Grade level teachers spend time together looking at class and individual student progress toward goals and planning next steps. This data also guides Trimester Intervention Days where we look at what intervention is needed and which students are in need of support. Interventions are adjusted based on the identified needs. While formal days are scheduled each trimester, student progress is monitored and we respond to identified needs throughout the year.

Staff capacity is developed by analyzing formative and summative data, identifying student needs, engaging in PD that addresses those needs, taking the learning back into instruction, and then reflecting on student work. For example, looking at trends in the data, teachers identified instructional levels to target and dug into the characteristics of those text levels and the behaviors that students need to progress to the next level. Conferring Toolkits were developed to include strategies targeting student instructional levels.

Communication and collaboration are key and embedded in our school schedule. This provides the structure for our classroom and intervention teachers to meet with, learn from, problem solve, and celebrate with our Literacy Lead. It also develops a common language and focus that elevates the success of our model.

Parents are partners in our Early Literacy Model. Back to School night sets the tone for working together to do whatever it takes to meet the needs of their child. Parents are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom, enabling them to experience the learning. Literacy Night and Parent Information Nights engage parents in our Early Literacy Model. The BLOOMZ communication App is regularly used by teachers to share classroom literacy learning and provide ways parents can support literacy development at home. Parent engagement is monitored through the BLOOMZ App, parent comments on nightly reading logs, parent-teacher conferences, and our school survey. On our 2017 parent survey, 95% of parents reported knowing how their child is progressing in school.

Results and Outcomes

Del Mar is one of 10 elementary schools in our district. We have the 2nd highest Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (SED) population, 54%, yet consistently outscore our district in early literacy rate, as measured by the BAS. For the past 3 years, district K–2 year-end BAS reading proficiency ranged from 78% to 79% proficient while DM increased from 83% to 86% proficient. Our success shines not only schoolwide, but for our English Learner (EL) and SED populations. 16–17 year-end BAS resulted in 80% proficiency for EL students (19% over district) and 83% proficiency for SED students (15% over district). With 89% of non-SED students proficient, our model program has narrowed the achievement gap in early literacy to 6%.

Our Early Literacy Model is setting our intermediate students up for success, as indicated by 2017 SBAC ELA results. Overall, 3rd–5th grade students outscored the state by over 11%. Our SED students not only outperformed the state by 18%, but also our county (by 15%) and our district (by 8%). Our achievement gap between SED and Non-SED students is 16%, while the district gap is 37% and the state gap 34%.

The California School Dashboard offers additional evidence supporting the schoolwide impact of our model program. Spring 2017 results for ELA indicate that DM is at the High status for “All Students” with an increase of 8.9 points. DM SED student performance increased (+6.4), while the district SED performance maintained (-2.4). Most impressively, DM EL students’ performance increased significantly (+40.2), while districtwide EL performance maintained (+0.8).

Formal and informal monitoring and assessment results are used throughout the entire year. Before the first day of school, each classroom teacher has spent time looking at literacy data on returning students. Our intervention team has identified our most struggling students so that support is provided starting the first week of school. During the first few weeks of school, running records, teacher observations, prior year data on returning students, and initial data on new students are used to identify needed support and form intervention groups. These are formally reviewed each trimester, with modifications occurring over the course of the trimester as students’ needs change and new students enroll. At the end of the year, Student Success Team watch lists are created by all teachers, literacy portfolios for intervention students are updated, and classroom profile data sheets created to ensure that we are responsive to students’ needs from the very beginning of the next school year.

Each spring, data is used to analyze program effectiveness and program reports written. These, combined with student and parent surveys, as well as staff and Site Council discussions, guide decision making related to funding allocation and priorities for the upcoming school year. This leads to the revision of our Single Plan for Student Achievement, which guides our Early Literacy Model.