

Cipriani Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 41688666043442

County: San Mateo

District (Local Educational Agency): Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary

School: Cipriani Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 416 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Our school prides itself on encouraging excellence in everyone within a kind and caring learning environment. Staff members promote rigor and relevance in their instruction, and the curriculum is tied to the real world whenever possible. It is an absolute pleasure to engage with our Wildcats who remain curious about the unknown, inspired by their imaginations, and caring of their fellow learning community members. At Cipriani, we strive to ensure that every single day matters to the mind and heart of each child that walks through our door.

We currently educate 416 students in grades TK–5 in a residential, bucolic area of suburban Belmont. Our diverse population coexists with 23 different home languages and a strong sense of family. We embrace the concept that each student has two families: one at home and the other at school. 8.7% of our students are EL, 2.8% are served free/reduced lunch, and 12.9% receive special education services. As we celebrate our diversity, we also diligently work as a staff to employ a universal design for learning to provide equitable access to the curriculum.

Cipriani School embraces a growth mindset, an integral part of the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District's Strategic Plan. One of four goal areas of the district's plan is to instill a mindset for learning. Part of our work includes the Habits of Mind (Costa and Kallick), which are a daily focus at Cipriani during the Flag Salute message, lessons, peer interactions, and our thinking about the world around us. These sixteen habits help students to think deeply and critically, observe situations through multiple lenses, and persist through challenges to reach new heights. The habits complement our growth mindset work and have been instrumental in establishing a positive school climate and a mindset for learning.

At Cipriani, we provide a partnership model with our families that allows parents and extended family to support our instruction and school climate throughout the day. We invite families into our school to become part of the learning community working to encourage excellence in everyone. Throughout the year, there are several opportunities to engage with our school in meaningful ways to enrich the educational experience of all learners. Whether it is Art in Action lessons that promote artistic expression, hosting a special cultural celebration, classroom preparation, or helping students reach their potential, families work side by side with the school team to support student success.

We connect frequently with all stakeholders through our website, Google Classrooms, weekly newsletters, morning gatherings, and vibrant community events. Our well-attended committee meetings and parent education sessions serve to foster a close-knit family experience for our community. These connections also help spread the roots of our growth mindset movement and make it a pervasive part of the daily experience of our students.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Growth Mindset: Instilling a Mindset for Learning

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development

Target Population(s): English Learners, Students with Disabilities

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

Description

As Cipriani integrated the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) into our instruction per the district's 2016–17 LCAP Goal 1, our students responded to the enhanced rigor in a variety of ways, often with pronounced anxiety and an observable fear of making mistakes in the classroom. As math lessons demanded from students more complex mathematical reasoning skills and Reading/Writing Workshop asked them to support

their thinking with evidence, we saw the potential benefits of equipping students with a mindful approach to learning that would give them more tools to use when they did not know the answer.

Our California Healthy Kids Survey (2014) indicated that 78% of fifth grade felt happy at school and 55% of students felt that they had caring relationships with adults on campus. On the 2016 CAASPP, our school scored 6% and 3% below the district average in ELA and Math respectively. Our staff recognized a need to foster a growth mindset for learning and provide a positive school climate in which our students could thrive and improve academic proficiency based on these indicators.

Our work with mindset began as a way to support students and staff with the transition from the California State Standards to the CCSS as outlined in the LCAP's Goal 1, which focused on conditions of learning and pupil outcomes, especially for our students with disabilities and English Learners (EL). Our essential resources included two books we read as a staff, *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind* (Costa, Kallick, 2008) and *Mindset* (Dweck, 2006). We mobilized this research to directly impact the perceptions all students had about their abilities and their willingness to take responsible risks in the classroom. Our goal for implementing this model practice was to encourage students to persevere through challenges, learn from failure, and understand that abilities are malleable so that they could realize their full potential, increase academic achievement, and contribute to a positive school climate.

Our two years of growth mindset work heavily contributed to our efforts to create a positive school climate using Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS). PBIS is outlined in Goal 2 of the 2017–20 LCAP: facilitating a safe emotional environment and developing positive connections at school. PBIS Tier II interventions such as the Cat Club, where students meet with a caring adult twice a day to reflect on targeted areas of need, encourage student attendance and allow us to educate families about using a growth mindset feedback tool to promote mindful discussions. This practice has been used to reduce chronic absenteeism and suspensions with students, especially those experiencing school-related performance/social anxiety. Attendance data and PBIS referrals were analyzed by staff and patterns were shared in meetings with families wherein a mindset for learning was employed to encourage improvement in chronic absenteeism, suspensions, and behavior at school.

Implementation and Monitoring

As we began educating our community about growth mindset, we provided newsletter articles, videos, and online resources to staff and families. The district's PTA Council arranged for a parent education evening on the topic of Growth Mindset with Eduardo Briceño, CEO and co-founder of Mindset Works. Many families from our school attended, and we continued the conversation at Back to School Night, daily Flag Salute ceremonies, PTA meetings, School Site Council gatherings, and during staff meetings. The District provided copies of Dweck's book *Mindset* to all classified, certificated, and confidential staff members and supported professional development opportunities such as attending the February 2016 Learning and the Brain Conference, which focused on

growth mindset. Three staff members attended this conference and were inspired by the potential impact of infusing growth mindset into our school culture on student achievement, particularly our English Learner (EL) and Special Education (SPED) student groups.

Progress monitoring tools such as the California Healthy Kids Survey given yearly to fifth graders and their families, statewide assessments, reading/writing assessment tools, summative/formative math tests, and PBIS referral data were used to determine the impact of our model program on student achievement and school climate. We monitored the progress of student cohort groups over time and met at least three times per year to review academic and social-emotional data. When appropriate, we met with families to communicate ways in which they could support our mindset work at home and increase a child's achievement in targeted areas. School Site Council, comprised of a balance of community and staff members, reviewed data four times throughout the year to create and monitor goals related to mindset and school climate.

Teachers maintained a collaboration schedule, meeting at least twice per month to monitor student progress and design mindset learning activities in support of students meeting learning targets. Further, teachers were provided with an additional 12 hours to collaborate and work interdependently. Building capacity in our PBIS site team was integral to the impact our mindset work had on student discipline and suspensions. We carved time into staff meetings to extend and reflect on our learning related to mindset.

Staff members, including our non-instructional staff, applied lessons such as learning from others' success, persevering when challenged, growing from failure, and embracing a positive attitude toward student conflicts. Conversations were replacing consequences and change emerged in our school climate. Our model practice of growth mindset continues to influence every aspect of our school and inspires staff members to pilot new approaches to student engagement and instruction such as PBIS supports, environmental community service, and MakerSpace activities rooted in engineering practices.

Results and Outcomes

Our goal with implementing this model practice was to instill a mindset for learning that encouraged students to persevere through challenges so that they could realize their full potential, increase achievement, and contribute to a positive school climate.

From 2016 to 2017, our EL students increased their achievement by 6 points in ELA and 9 points in Math as measured by the statewide assessment tool, CAASPP. Our students with disabilities, inclusive of students with significant social-emotional and behavioral needs, increased their achievement in Math by 22.5 points and 13.7 points in ELA. Our combined student groups increased their achievement 10.4 points on the ELA test and 13.4 points in Math in one year.

Our model practice led to a complete transformation of our approach to educating all students and increased our overall CAASPP scores from 2015 to 2017: 10% in ELA and

13% in Math. The data indicate an achievement of our goal to instill a mindset for learning that increases the number of strategies a student has to access learning at high levels. This work directly resulted in a measurable increase in student performance, but it also enhanced the positive school climate of Cipriani.

We feel that this success is connected with our growth mindset work as it was revealed in our California Healthy Kids Survey that 94% of students in fifth grade during the 2016–17 school year felt happy at school all or most of the time and 78% responded that they had established caring adult relationships at school. That is an increase of 16% and 23% respectively over a three year period of work with this model program. We have concluded that students equipped with a mindset for learning perform at higher levels and that a positive school climate is an integral part of their school experience. We partnered growth mindset conversations with PBIS Tiers I, II, and III to reduce our suspension rate of students with disabilities by 1.5% in one year and maintain a low status of school-wide suspensions to below 1% of the student body for two years in a row.

Based upon PBIS office referrals data and feedback from teachers/parents interviewed, we determined that 100% of Cat Club participants (Tier II) were able to exit the program, increase student performance in the classroom, and connect with peers appropriately. 90% of students attended our Tier I intervention reteach of expectations (Rule School) only once, indicating that they understood the expectations and chose to be safe, respectful, and responsible at Cipriani. These data points indicate a measurable impact on our school's positive climate and are continuously monitored for progress throughout the year by the PBIS team of teachers and administration. Staff meetings provide us with the collaboration time to analyze the data, progress monitor, and support student success by failing gloriously and learning from every opportunity without fear.