

## **College Park Elementary Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 41690396044952

County: San Mateo

District (Local Educational Agency): San Mateo-Foster City

School: College Park Elementary

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 451 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Modified

Charter: No

### **Overview**

College Park Elementary School is a year-round, K–5 school, one of twenty schools in the San Mateo - Foster City School District. The school had a history of poor academic outcomes for its students, likely due to many factors including a high percentage of ELL students, a high percentage of SED students, and high staff turnover including multiple principals. With a poor reputation and declining enrollment, College Park was designated a Program Improvement school in 2002. Multiple initiatives were implemented to decrease racial isolation and to improve academic outcomes, including county intervention, outside consultants, and Magnet School status, but these efforts met with minimal successes until in 2007.

In 2007, because Mandarin language classes were attracting the greatest number of new, successful students to the school, the existing Talented and Gifted Magnet theme was blended with Mandarin Immersion. This change had the effect of gradually increasing the student population from 240 in 2006 to 451 in 2017, reducing the racial isolation of students and families, and increasing the percentage of socioeconomically advantaged students while continuing to attract many neighborhood students that are

socio-economically disadvantaged and Spanish speaking English Learners. This change brought many more parents to support and encourage all students and to breathe vitality into the parent community. College Park doubled the number of Mandarin teachers, a dramatic change in the faculty. The administration and faculty took on a “can-do” attitude with new training for acceleration and remediation, but with our changing populations, students, families and teachers, differentiation was clearly needed and became our first signature practice.

Our new Mandarin emphasis and changing populations also resulted in a collection of mini communities of languages, cultures, and backgrounds loosely related in the context of school. Connecting those separate communities into a single cohesive school identity has been a challenge and a joy. While we seek and celebrate diversity, the connections between groups are equally exciting. Particularly rewarding is watching a single student speak one language with his/her parent, in the next breath, use a different language with his/her teacher and then dash out the door, using a third language with his/her peer group. Finding common ground and common goals through multiple connections is our second signature practice.

College Park has risen to be among the top performing schools in our district. According to the CA School Dashboard, we have Highest Performance in all areas such as Chronic Absenteeism, Suspension Rate, English Learner Progress (96.9%), English Language Arts (86.2 points above level 3), and Mathematics (92.7 points above level 3). Our students are successful, and our achievement gap is shrinking in large part because we created a differentiated learning environment for our connected learning communities.

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: Differentiated Learning Environment

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Use of Technology

Target Population(s): Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, White, Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: Small Learning Communities, Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development

## **Description**

Differentiated Learning Environment - College Park School is part of the San Mateo-Foster City School District which includes sixteen elementary schools. Unlike most Mandarin programs which are just a portion of the school population and require fluency in either English or Mandarin, our parent choice Mandarin program is open to students

from every neighborhood, socioeconomic background, ethnic group, linguistic group, and cultural background. Every student in our school is in the Mandarin partial immersion program, regardless of home language. We have created an inclusive population with exciting diversity that we seek and celebrate.

Student population consists of 59% Asian, 17% two or more races, 11% White, 10% Hispanic, 2% Filipino, 1% Black, 1% American Indian, and 1% Pacific Islander. This data highlights our need to address a diverse population with a wide range of Mandarin and English learners who have tremendous differences in exposure and access to early literacy, technology, academic vocabulary, and background knowledge. These differences create the multicultural, multilingual learning environment that makes College Park unique. Teachers have challenges as they seek to provide stimulating and appropriate lessons for every child which results in reducing the achievement gap.

We identified the need for our signature practice through various ways. Every student was assessed by their English teacher with Fountas and Pinnell reading levels that identified their reading level relative to the national average. Teachers also looked at summative and formative data and took into account students' CELDT score. Based on the data collected, teachers created fluid student groups to better reach all levels.

Because of the wide spectrum of students in our school, the signature practice of differentiation aims to reach students at every level. We scaffold learning for students who need more support and extend learning for students who are ready for a bigger challenge. Our faculty and staff have developed a differentiated learning environment that is supported by differing practices including instructional style, size of peer groups, fluid groupings, time of day, method of instruction, length of intervention intervals, and a variety of instructional leaders or teachers. The students do not have to adjust to the standard programs provided; we provide the programs that meet the needs of the students at all points along the learning continuum in English Language Arts, Mandarin Language Arts and Mathematics.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

Class sizes throughout our district are smaller than many schools around us: twenty-four students to one teacher in kindergarten through third grade and thirty students to one teacher in fourth and fifth grades. Even so, smaller classes are needed to deliver content instruction with high academic vocabulary in English and Mandarin.

Our first major strategy in differentiation is to provide “flip-flops,” specific times throughout the day when carefully selected portions of the students in any given classroom are in the computer lab or at P.E. while the other portion stays with the teacher for targeted instruction. This schedule gives every teacher regular, structured time for small reading groups, enrichment activities, and intervention lessons. Students are placed into fluid groups of varying sizes according to formative assessment data and change regularly based on the discussion of teachers in professional learning communities. With increased small group time, students have more opportunity to use leveled academic language and have increased teacher attention. Small groups

increase participation rate and lower the affective filter for less confident students as well as facilitate using games to reinforce leveled content.

Our second major strategy is using technology to individualize learning. Portions of classes are sent to work with the technology instructor utilizing software that customizes lessons for each child in English subjects - Read, Write & Type, Fast Forward, Accelerated Reader; Math subjects - Khan Academy, Envision Math; Mandarin subjects - Rosetta Stone, Skritter.

Because all students learn in different ways, our third strategy in differentiation is varying the times and approaches of our intervention programs. Some students thrive in a technology driven environment and are available before school. Students selected by teachers/staff using CELDT and F&P data participate in Fast ForWord, using computers to boost early literacy skills and phonemic awareness for an hour before school each day. As students progress, they “graduate” to make room for others. Students that cannot come early or those that need a more personal approach are invited to stay after school two days per week. They work with classroom teachers in language arts with an emphasis on reading comprehension and building background knowledge in the content areas. This time of day and personal touch connects with many students and families.

Differentiation also happens for teachers. Through our district, all first-year teachers receive support through a BTSA provider and specific training in Guided Language Acquisition by Design (GLAD). GLAD gives teachers strategies to use in any language and in any content area. Teachers use cognitive content dictionaries, pictorial input charts, turn n’ talk, and many other strategies to support learning, with the same strategies in both English and Mandarin.

## **Results and Outcomes**

As a result of our three-pronged approach to differentiation for students and differentiated training for teachers, we have seen continuous improvement for all student groups including Hispanic, English Learner, and SED students. This is particularly remarkable given our 50:50 Mandarin immersion model with many students hearing and using English for only fifty percent of the instructional day.

The results of 2017 CAASPP/Smarter Balanced Assessment- Percent proficient or above: English Language Arts: 3rd grade- 78.33% 4th grade-83.33%, 5th grade-84.1%. Math: 3rd grade- 90% 4th grade-87.01%, 5th grade-92.04%

To continuously monitor progress, Grade K to 1 teachers begin with individual oral assessments and move to written assessments as writing and language skills improve. Grade 3 to 5 teachers administer Galileo Assessments, “practice” CASSP- style exams, three times a year for both language arts and math. That information combined computer generated data from programs such as Accelerated Reader, Fast Forward, Khan Academy, and Rosetta Stone as well as classroom observations and summative tests are used to track student progress and to adjust individual lessons and/or student groupings according to student proficiency.

The first and second strategies, flip-flops for PE and computer lab, involve all students at College Park, currently 451 students. These are Tier One, RtI2 interventions, enhancing instruction for all students. Students receive more direct instruction and focused attention from all teachers in their own area of need or enrichment, individualized by subject and student progress. The wide range of programs in the lab allows teachers to monitor progress and assign specific work to address the current needs while encouraging students to move at their proximal learning pace. Progress is monitored through the PLC and SST processes.

The third strategy, before and after school classes, address the needs of Tier Two students. Students are selected by their teachers and attend daily for the AM class in the tech lab or 120 minutes per week for the PM classes with their own teachers. The majority of these children are Hispanic, ELLs, or SED students with about 18% of selected students attending both AM and PM. Teachers re-evaluate monthly on an individual basis to ensure continual improvement and to maximize learning.

Because of the continued success in student achievement, we continued to differentiate for teachers in English and Mandarin strategies. Central to our differentiation plan, it is critical that all College Park teachers continue to have common training, strategies and language for teaching the acquisition of language, creating greater scaffolding for students and opportunities for great collaboration among teachers.

Our differentiated learning environment continues to enhance instruction and provide support all who learn and teach at College Park School, a critical component to our continued success.