

Adams Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 42767866045819

County: Santa Barbara

District (Local Educational Agency): Santa Barbara Unified

School: Adams Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 562 students

Location Description: Rural

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Adams Elementary School is the hidden gem of public schools in Santa Barbara. With a student enrollment of 562, strong parent involvement, over 80 active volunteers, and 31 highly skilled and dedicated teachers, our success is truly a team effort. As a Title I School, the staff, parents, and students alike are proud to be a part of the Adams team.

The uniquely warm and inviting culture at Adams is the result of collaboration among all stakeholders, and sets the foundation for our remarkable results in student learning. This is achieved through collaboratively embodying and expecting the “ROAR” focus from all: Responsibility, Organization, Academics, and Respect. Our demographics reflect a diverse population. 60.2% of our student population is identified as SED, 40.4% are ELs, and 73% are Hispanic. Each of these unique learners, and their families, embrace our high expectations and continuously rise to the occasion. As a result, Adams has routinely produced increasing CAASPP scores since 2015. In 2017, all

student subgroups increased in the percentage of proficient students in both ELA and Math, which is truly outstanding.

The academic programs at Adams are enriched through a balanced literacy approach and the development of mathematical practices. Visitors at Adams can sense a strong community and commitment to offering programs that support the development of the whole child through design/technology, science, physical fitness, and visual/performing arts. Our teachers continuously refine their teaching practices, incorporating opportunities for students to develop and utilize 21st Century Thinking Skills through collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. Across all grade levels, a community of high-achievers (teachers and students alike) is evident through student work, flexible/inclusive classroom arrangements, student celebrations, common assessment results, and data-driven decision making. At Adams, instruction is differentiated to meet a wide variety of student needs. Our at-risk learners receive extra support within the regular classroom through strategic small group instruction as well as through pull-out, after-school programs, and software intervention licenses. During weekly PLC time, grade-level teams collaborate to analyze data, design lessons, and share resources. Through PD and a desire to provide the best instructional practices, our staff continually strives to find new ways to model and instill a commitment to lifelong learning.

A sense of belonging to the Adams community is fostered through Friday Flag Ceremonies, award assemblies, PTA and community-partner sponsored events, outdoor camps, Student Council-driven school pride days, and service projects. Community partners also support our school through generous financial and volunteer commitments. At Adams, every child is valued, every parent is included, and every decision made ensures a commitment to, "Every child, Every chance, Every day."

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Writer's Workshop

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

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

Target Population(s): Hispanic, White, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Writing Workshop, which will be referred to as WW, is in full implementation at Adams. WW is an approach that builds students' proficiency as writers through daily authentic

experiences with the writing process. This model includes an hour of daily instruction in writing, incorporating components of writing across the curriculum. In 2016, SBUSD began a three-year plan to roll out PD and instructional materials to support the implementation of WW. The forward-thinking staff at Adams learned of WW practices in 2014, launching the model in some classes / grades before SBUSD. Over the past 4 years, Adams has sent teachers to PD in NY to learn how to teach WW, contributing to Adams' students' academic success.

In order to implement WW, site funds were used to purchase WW curriculum and materials. Placing the Units of Study in the hands of every teacher was necessary to provide daily writing instruction. School site funds provisioned students with writing journals and tools, and teacher materials. High-quality professional literature was also purchased for teachers. Our staff attributes the three-year gains in student achievement on the CAASPP to consistent writing instruction through a WW model.

WW is inherently differentiated. Working with a diverse population, we value an approach that supports each individual child. While all students are taught the same strategy/skill through whole group mini-lessons, independent writing time allows teachers to confer with students individually to assess, extend, or re-teach essential skills. Teachers also differentiate within small groups sharing similar needs. The explicit teaching of writing has had a profound effect on all students, particularly benefitting our ELs. Research suggests that the WW model aligns with ELs instructional needs through practices like sufficient time to write, writing for authentic purposes, receiving feedback, collaboration with peers, and choice. The approach of providing student choice over topics—within a specific genre of focus – increases volume and engagement. Allowing students to express themselves through writing improves communication skills and thus supports the development of writing across content areas with clarity and purpose. Communication with parents about students' writing development through the use of a common rubric – calibrated across grade levels and throughout the school district – ensures equally high expectations for all.

Celebrating students and their writing occurs at a unit's end, cultivating a love of writing. Published writing is shared with classmates, parents, and administrators after going through the entire writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing). The staff's genuine findings include increased student achievement, interest, and desire to write. The staff has also noted the social-emotional growth of students as a result of the therapeutic nature of writing and the sense of community that a workshop model builds.

Implementation and Monitoring

With the launch of WW, it was essential that all stakeholders be aware and supportive of the new instructional practices surrounding the teaching of writing. Sharing information about WW has taken place in many formats. SSC members were part of the early decision-making team, which approved the purchase of essential instructional teaching and learning materials. The ELAC was educated about these new practices, and provided with the opportunity to share their first-hand experiences and their children's experiences as they have volunteered hours in many classrooms during WW.

Our PTA and community foundation donors learn about WW and balanced literacy at monthly meetings, and share great pride in the implementation. Their support of these practices is evident through their partial funding of a Balanced Literacy TOSA, as well as necessary instructional materials and resources. At annually required Title I Parent meetings, Adams' administrator speaks about the use of site funds to support student achievement. Principal's Coffee events provide the opportunity for discussion of instructional programs, and an open question session for all parents in the school community.

One of the strengths of Adams' WW model includes ongoing PD. In addition to the 7 staff that have attended Teachers College in NY, 10 more attended a week-long summer PD offering provided by the District. All teachers have also worked under the tutelage of Literacy Partners – an educational consultant provided by the District– for the past 2 years. In order to ensure the success of WW implementation, site funds were used to hire a Balanced Literacy TOSA. This full-time TOSA models and co-teaches lessons, provides resources and general PD, supports the analysis of student data, and helps teachers plan WW lessons. All staff and students benefit from this valuable resource and support.

There are many opportunities for assessment of WW as a program of practice. Not only are teachers assessing student progress through conferring and observation each day, but student writing pieces are formally graded using a common performance-based rubric. The District also calls for data input six times per year from both pre and post on-demand writing assessments for each of three writing genres. Students self-assess their writing using student-friendly rubrics which support them as they check for grade-level specific evidence of structure, development, and language conventions. Ensuring that parents are informed about the impact of WW requires that we provide feedback regarding student progress. This information is shared with parents through rubric scores, invitations to writing celebrations, progress reports, and report cards. Additionally, parents are asked for feedback regarding their opinion of their school's instructional programs through District LCAP survey, EL Needs Assessment surveys, and site-based parent surveys.

Results and Outcomes

Adams teachers are continuously monitoring the results of the WW model and creating new lessons based on identified student needs. All grades are provided 90 minutes of weekly PLC time to collaborate—planning new lessons, analyzing student work and data, and making decisions about next steps. As we continue to progress through stages in the implementation process, staff are more comfortable with the teaching routines and able to spend more time assessing students through one-on-one conferring and use of grade-level rubrics. Teachers utilize both qualitative and quantitative data when reflecting on their teaching and student outcomes.

A recent teacher survey, asking for feedback about the implementation of WW, resulted in enthusiastic comments about the impact on students. These comments highlight qualitative data reflecting the impact of the WW model. Anecdotal evidence of the

positive results of this model is reflected in teachers' comments that students love writing, teachers love teaching writing, the volume of student writing has increased, students see themselves as writers and authors, students are understanding that writing is a process and that good writers go back and add to their work. These comments capture both positive academic results and significant social-emotional outcomes.

Data from 2016 and 2017 CAASPP scores among 3rd graders at Adams reveals quantitative evidence of the impact of WW. This data captures writing proficiency from a group of 3rd grade students (2016) coming from no experience with writing workshop, and a group of 3rd grade students (2017) with one year in a classroom implementing WW by a teacher using this method for the first time. Nevertheless, results indicate that 15% of ELs scored above standard in 2017, compared to only 5% in 2016. Among all 3rd graders, 42% performed above standard in 2017 compared with 37% in 2016. This suggests that all 3rd grade students, including ELs, from classrooms in which WW was being implemented performed higher than students who were not in classrooms using WW. District-wide, data shows that there was a decrease in the percentage of all 3rd grade students performing above standard from 2016 to 2017, and only an increase of about 3% among ELs scoring above standard in writing. These data suggest that WW may have had a positive impact on the writing achievement of 3rd graders at Adams.

These findings demonstrate the success of this model among all student groups. We have much to be proud of at Adams, and expect continued growth – among teachers and students alike – in the area of writing, as we continue to implement and refine this model practice. Despite the success we are already experiencing, we are aware of the need for continued growth as we continue to develop supplemental strategies for supporting all students. While our ELs have demonstrated growth, we must continue to focus PD and PLC time to developing methods that are supportive of our diverse learners.