

Carolyn A. Clark Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 43694350102616

County: Santa Clara

District (Local Educational Agency): Evergreen Elementary

School: Carolyn A. Clark Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 633 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Carolyn A. Clark Elementary School, situated in the Evergreen hills in southeast San Jose, serves an economically and ethnically diverse population. With students in grades TK through six, Clark has a student enrollment of 633. Students' ethnic makeup is 82% Asian, 5% White, 7 % Hispanic, and 6% Other. The teaching staff is comprised of 24 regular education teachers and 1 special day class teacher. Teachers are supported by specialists including a RSP teacher, a speech therapist, a psychologist, a marriage and family therapist intern, an adaptive PE specialist, and an instructional coach.

Though a newer school, opened in August 2004, Clark has demonstrated its commitment to academic excellence. According to the School Accountability Report Card, 82% of our students met or exceeded the standards in ELA and Math in the 2016–17 school year. Furthermore, 92% of our 5th grade students demonstrated proficiency in Science. Additionally, Carolyn Clark was awarded the California Distinguished School Award in 2008 and 2012.

At Carolyn Clark, we believe in inspiring and empowering a community of lifelong learners who are engaged in rigorous and relevant learning experiences while being challenged to reach our full potential. First, we honor this belief by developing 21st century learners based on deeper learning outcomes. Our learners master rigorous content, think critically and solve problems, work collaboratively, communicate effectively, take initiative and ownership of their learning, develop a growth mindset, and develop character and global citizenship. Secondly, we honor this belief by providing rich learning experiences based on a balanced approach to all academic standards. Our learners engage in inquiry based instruction through Project Based Learning (PBL), STEAM units of study, and the integrated use of technology. Thirdly, we honor this belief by involving our community in the learning process. Our diverse community enhances the learning experience through PTA enrichment activities both during and after school, extracurricular activities, and service learning projects.

The partnership Clark has with the community is truly unique. Our generous, hardworking PTA provides resources and volunteers for numerous activities. Dance, science, and coding classes are funded through their donations. ABC parent readers and Arts Attack docents regularly lead classroom activities. Evening events such as Bhangra night, the Carnival, and Family Science Night bring the community together on a monthly basis. In addition, our dedicated, hard-working staff provide activities such as talent shows, grade level plays, and Student Council's Karaoke Night. Partnerships with community organizations add to the list with after school classes like Chess Club, Math Enrichment, Chinese School and Mad Science. With all it has to offer, Clark is a hub of activity for our community.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Deeper Learning

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

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

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

Strategies Used: Small Learning Communities, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Students at Carolyn A. Clark Elementary perform exceptionally on state testing. We recognize that this is only one aspect of the whole child. Thus we began to ask, "How are we preparing our students to be college and career ready in an ever changing

world?" In response, we focus on developing 21st Century Skills through deeper learning.

The implementation of inquiry based education, such as Project Based Learning (PBL), is a key instructional strategy with multifaceted outcomes. Projects are grounded in academic standards, engaging students in rigorous content that allows for continued excellence in academic testing. 21st Century Skills such as collaboration, critical thinking and creativity are developed as students work in small teams, solve authentic problems, and design presentations for their work. The larger community is involved as students utilize communication skills to share their work through public exhibitions.

Projects are launched through entry events. These creative, captivating events motivate students to engage in the work. Entry events take a variety of forms, such as field trips, physical education activities, or a request from PTA to solve a problem at our school. For example, as 3rd grade begins the Hunger Project, a guest from Second Harvest Food Bank speaks about hunger issues in San Jose. Our kindergarten begins the Shapes All Around Us project with a scavenger hunt for 2D shapes found at school.

Once a project is launched, a driving question (DQ) is posed. The DQ, which is teacher generated from content standards, focuses students' learning throughout the duration of the project. As 4th grade studies California missions, they are asked, "How can we choose a good site and design for a new mission, so that it will meet the Church's historic goals in California?" Students then generate a list of Need to Knows (NTK). These are a set of students' questions about the DQ that drive the instruction. Both the DQ and NTKs develop critical thinking skills as students seek the content knowledge required to solve the task at hand.

Teachers deliver lessons that guide students in answering the DQ. The methods of instruction vary and are student centered. As 5th grade works to design a museum that promotes empathy for the immigrant experience, they conduct individual interviews of family members, write biographies, and compose poetry about their heritage. They collaborate in teams to create museum artifacts and write curator presentations. During extensive work time, students give and receive feedback to improve their products; they reflect on both their work and collaboration skills.

For the project culmination, classes host an exhibition in which the 21st century skills of communication and creativity are refined. They create a three dimensional displays, present from Google Slides or hold a press conference. Parents, community members and schoolmates attend the exhibition and provide feedback for students.

Implementation and Monitoring

Successful program implementation and monitoring require a focus on both the student's work in the class and in the staff having dedicated time for planning, receiving ongoing professional development and accountability.

Projects are implemented at least once per trimester. The design phase involves extensive planning as all learning experiences are created by teachers to meet desired student outcomes. Teachers utilize the NTN tool kit and analyze projects ensuring that proper scaffolds and benchmarks are in place for student success. Teacher teams share project designs with one another and engage in protocols to give and receive peer feedback. One example is a gallery walk. Teachers walk the room writing “I likes,” “I wonders,” and “I haves” to provide each other with feedback. Dedicated time during staff meetings and site days is used to engage in these protocols.

In addition, teachers monitor student progress and adjust instruction as new NTKs arise and as they identify additional learning needs. One structure in place to allow for this is release time. On staff, we have two singleton teachers whose afternoons are dedicated to providing project planning time and collaboration for teacher teams. In the class, teachers utilize protocols to help students gather feedback and revise their benchmarks. Benchmarks are pieces of the project that are incorporated into the exhibition. For example, the 5th grade empathy museum has several benchmarks, one being a biography. Students receive peer feedback to revise and edit their piece. These biographies are one of many works on display at the museum.

Projects designed by our teachers develop agency and advocacy. Students are given opportunities to decide how to demonstrate their learning. For example, as a part of the Hunger Project, 3rd grade learns about PSAs and their different formats. Students choose the type of PSA to create. Teachers group students according to interest and provide specialized lessons. Working in small groups, students use 21st century skills and content knowledge to create the PSA. Students engage in Critical Friends to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement before presenting publicly.

Reflective protocols and rubrics are utilized by staff, students and administrators, such as fishbowl. After project implementation, teachers engage in this protocol to reflect upon processes and outcomes. The instructional coach guides the team through carefully crafted questions to enhance the reflective process. Other teacher teams observe around the fishbowl and provide thoughtful feedback for the team in the center. In the classroom, students use rubrics to reflect upon their participation and learning in the project. They identify their personal strengths and areas for improvement in 21st Century Skills such as collaboration. Our administrator participates in this process by providing feedback during exhibitions, as well as through the teacher observation/evaluation cycle.

Results and Outcomes

The success of our instructional practice implementation can be measured in many ways. Our SBAC scores remain strong, our English Learner progress is very high, and parent involvement is improved. More importantly, the PBL projects we implement have outcomes that last far beyond the scope of the classroom or even the school year.

While not the only measure of success, our SBAC scores are exceptional, and they show the significant progress of our English Learners. In 2016–2017, our ELs were 54%

proficient in ELA and 49% proficient in Math according to CAASPP data. This is an improvement of 10% in ELA and 8% in Math from 2015–2016. In addition, our socioeconomically disadvantaged students continue to make significant progress. In English Language Arts, they increased from 38.5 % in 2015–26 to 58.62% proficiency in 2016–17. In Math, they increased from 53.9% to 58.62% proficiency in 2016–17. The focus on the deeper learning skills of critical thinking and communicating effectively have contributed to this profound growth.

Parent involvement at Clark has significantly increased with the implementation of PBL. In the past, parents were invited to special events such as Open House or field trips. Now, classes are hosting exhibitions as the culmination of every project. Three projects per class a year means three additional times a year parents are seeing the amazing work their students produce. The PBL exhibition far surpasses the traditional Open House. Work is not simply hung on walls or laid on tables for parents to peruse. At exhibitions, students are the experts. They are the speakers, the presenters, and the facilitators. For example, in the We Need More Colors project, our TK students host an exhibition when their parents bring them to school. They guide their parents through centers and teach them how mixing primary colors creates secondary colors. Our 5th grade hosts a press conference when they return from their Journey to Mars, and parents take on the roll of the press, asking questions about the experience. Not only do parents participate with their children in exhibitions, they are also invited to provide feedback. Some fill out rubrics, others state “I likes” and “I wonders,” and others complete a feedback link using Google Forms.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the implementation of PBL has had long lasting outcomes. For example, after completing the Hunger Project in 3rd grade, students began the Anti-Hunger Club at our school. This year, those students raised over \$800 to serve meals to the homeless. The skills our students develop through PBL projects have empowered them to direct their own learning, communicate effectively, and creatively solve problems that are relevant in their lives. According to our Youth Truth Survey for 2017, 90% of our students are highly engaged at school. This in turn is creating students who are passionate advocates for the causes in which they believe.