

Alpha: Cornerstone Academy Preparatory School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 43694500121483

County: Santa Clara

District (Local Educational Agency): Franklin-McKinley Elementary

School: Alpha: Cornerstone Academy Preparatory School

Demographics

Enrollment: 509 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: Yes

Overview

Alpha: Cornerstone Academy believes without exception that college preparation begins on the first day of kindergarten. As an outcome of these fundamental beliefs, we provide the highest quality instruction for our scholars, beginning the very first day of kindergarten. Students will receive close attention from strong instructors who actively use data to know exactly how their students are performing. By the end of eighth grade, Cornerstone Academy scholars will demonstrate high level academic and social skills, content knowledge in the core subjects, and exceptional character traits, all of which will be critical to fulfilling the important educational goal of creating self-motivated, competent, lifelong learners.

In the most successful schools serving urban children, school culture plays an important role in driving academic achievement. At Cornerstone Academy, we believe that strong character development is essential for preparing our students for future success. As stated on the California Department of Education website, "effective schools seek to

develop and reinforce character traits, such as caring, citizenship, fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness." Student culture reveres and celebrates academic achievement. Students are addressed individually as scholars and collectively as the year they will graduate from college. By exposing students to the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in college and simultaneously stressing that every Cornerstone Academy scholar can and will attend and graduate from college we are dramatically improving the educational outcomes for the students of East San Jose.

Core Values and Culture

At Cornerstone Academy, we believe that strong character development is essential for preparing our students for future success. As stated on the California Department of Education website, "effective schools seek to develop and reinforce character traits, such as caring, citizenship, fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness." In the most successful schools serving urban children, school culture plays an important role in driving academic achievement. All members of the school staff hold high expectations for students throughout the school day. Students and families find strong partners in Cornerstone Academy's experienced teaching staff. We create a joyful school culture in which students will thrive and are excited to attend school. Students are praised for academic achievements and positive behavioral choices. Through our morning meetings, we build a strong, achievement-oriented culture through songs, chants, cheers, and recognition of achievements. Students are taught that every scholar can be a leader in their community, and we recognize our older scholars who go above and beyond through a community leader certification process. In every classroom, student work is displayed and students who exemplify our school's pride values are celebrated.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Data Driven Instruction

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

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

Target Population(s): Filipino, Hispanic, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners

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

Description

Each teacher at Cornerstone is assigned an instructional coach amongst the 5 administrators. That coach's responsibility is to observe classroom instruction, review and give feedback the quality of frequent formative data assessments, prepare and facilitate data meetings, and give actionable feedback on instructional practices. With the

daily demands of providing quality instruction, the coach is key for facilitating effective preparation and use of data in every grade and content.

There are four components of effective data driven instruction:

1. Assessment,
2. Analysis,
3. Action and
4. Systems.

Data Assessment

Many curriculum guides provide assessments for teacher use. However, teachers and staff at Cornerstone observed that the curriculum is often underutilized to drive student achievement. For this reason, our teachers analyze the quality of common assessments and instructional coaches target their feedback for quality and standards alignment. As a result, 95% of Cornerstone staff agreed that: Teachers at my school track the performance of their students toward measurable goals. Teachers and staff at Cornerstone utilize common assessments to facilitate a sharing of best practices; analysis of one classroom's outstanding data can provide insight into effective instructional strategies.

Data Analysis

Cornerstone teachers and staff use a model for data meetings from the Relay Graduate School of Education called "See it, Name it, Do it." Team members breakdown the standard, analyze exemplars, and identify the gap or student errors. These meetings are efficient as they utilize technology to create data reports and spend the majority of the meeting on analyzing the data. Teachers respond positively to effectively run data meetings; 90% of instructional staff at Cornerstone agree on a school wide survey with the statement: The time I spend collaborating with my colleagues is productive.

Action

The final stage of the data meeting is to put the remediation plan into practice. Teachers reflect on their instruction, plan next steps for remediation, and finally have the opportunity to practice. The action plan varies based on the number of students who achieved mastery as well as the type of gaps in student learning. Even with novice teachers, the instructional coach is able to ensure that a high quality and targeted plan is put into place to address student gaps.

Systems

While in some contexts it may be difficult to target specific groups of students, Cornerstone has created structures in grades K–7 to have a daily opportunity to meet with students. Teachers in all grades have specific, scheduled times during the school day to meet with small groups. Additionally, Cornerstone staff, administrators and the board worked to have quarterly planning days based specifically on data. During three,

full length planning days, teachers review assessment data, analyze the gaps and plan to remediate both skills and standards to work towards student mastery.

Implementation and Monitoring

Traditional coaching and professional development is not differentiated from teacher performance and student achievement. At Cornerstone, student data drives teacher support through data meetings, real time feedback and instructional coaching meetings. In addition, Cornerstone Academy staff utilize targeted practice to ensure that implementation and planning from data meetings is effective.

Rather than waiting until the end of a typical grading period, teachers are required to review data at a minimum of a weekly basis. Using early data indicators contribute to the academic success that Cornerstone Academy has seen on the end of the year SBAC results. Additionally, sharing of data supports teacher collaboration and support of students. In a school wide survey, 95% of teachers agreed with the statement: All teachers at my school take responsibility for developing students' literacy skills.

In the classroom, the role of the instructional coach supports in the moment data review. The instructional coach observes student work to ensure that the teacher is addressing trends in student errors in the moment. Additionally, instructional coaches are trained to support teaching through participating in classroom instruction. The focus of instructional coaching on student performance ensures that teachers at every level continue to grow and adapt to student needs. In many instructional contexts, it can be difficult to select key instructional strategies to learn or professional development to attend. At Cornerstone, these choices are based on student progress.

In order for these practices to be effective, instructional coaches must excel in their use of student data. Instructional coaches also receive professional development aligned to 100% of school leaders were rated Proficient or Advanced Proficient on their performance rubric for the following qualities:

- The leader's tone is genuine, positive and natural
- Success is always tied to a previous goal or data and identifies the impact of a precise teacher action
- Leader adeptly and succinctly questions in a targeted way that differentiates for each teacher's development needs
- Effectively uses questioning to get teachers to identify the gap in a highly efficient manner, and often relates the gap to the next logical area of growth
- Leader always chooses the most effective content and time to present a model for the exemplar/execution gap analysis and the teacher is always able to identify the gap and how to address it

Teachers have responded positively to seeing the connection between their own professional growth and targeting student success. On a school wide survey, 90% of teachers agreed with the statement: The feedback I get from being observed helps me improve student outcomes.

Results and Outcomes

Cornerstone Academy's 509 students and 17 classroom teachers know that our school is one where scholars can succeed. Our student demographic is diverse: 52% of our students are Asian, 34% Hispanic or Latino, and the remaining percent of students from various backgrounds and ethnicities. The majority of our students are Socioeconomically disadvantaged, at 71.5%. Our student population is also linguistically diverse, with 36% students currently enrolled as English Learners. Students in all demographics outperform district and state averages. In the 2016–17 school year, 48.56% of students met or exceeded standards on the ELA SBAC, as compared to 84% of Asian students, 50% of Hispanic students, and 61% of socioeconomically disadvantaged students at Cornerstone. For Math, the state average was 37.56% of students who met or exceed standards. Cornerstone Academy students in all subgroups outperformed the state average with 80% of Asian students, 48% of Hispanic or Latino and 55% of socioeconomically disadvantaged students who met or exceeded standards in 2016–17 school year. In a school wide teacher survey, 95% of teachers responded that they agree with the following statement: My school has an inclusive culture, where staff from diverse backgrounds and perspectives can excel.