

## **Van Meter Elementary School Model Programs and Practices**

### **School Information**

CDS (County District School) Code: 43695266047542

County: Santa Clara

District (Local Educational Agency): Los Gatos Union Elementary

School: Van Meter Elementary School

### **Demographics**

Enrollment: 585 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

### **Overview**

Louise Van Meter Elementary School is located in Los Gatos, California, an affluent community in Silicon Valley. Van Meter School is over 75 years old but the facilities have been modernized and improved on a regular basis. In 2004, the school was modernized and a new kindergarten wing was added. In 2012, a new two-story upper-grade building was added. It is important to note that while the school has been modernized, it was critical to the school community to retain the original façade as a piece of Los Gatos Town history.

Louise Van Meter School's mission is to provide an environment where students will achieve both academic growth and personal development in an atmosphere that is positive, caring and inclusive.

Our model practice, The Bulldog Way, further enhances our mission of cultivating well-rounded compassionate and productive life-long learners through collaboration with students, parents and community.

In collaboration with staff, students and the community, decisions are made to support each child's academic, social and emotional growth. Students are being served in a variety of ways to meet their individual needs. Our students apply skills and understand the relevance to real-life situations. An example of this is Van Meter's K-Kids program. Our K-Kids, which is over 100 students strong, teaches our students the value of helping others by taking part in community service projects. Collaboration is systemic, enthusiastic and expected and it is evidenced through the consistency in our programs and actions.

The entire school community demonstrates and models respect and compassion. Louise Van Meter School's climate is enhanced by the strong joint venture among staff, students, parents, and community. Parent and community support are an integral part of Van Meter's culture. Parent involvement is evident through the many parent-led activities we have on campus like our Clay Program, Art Docents, Fun Zone lunch program, Garden Club, Lego Engineering, Math Olympiad, Project Cornerstone reader program and the Parents On Campus lunch supervision program.

We believe that the Bulldog Way has been highly successful in combining the efforts of all stakeholders to build and maintain a safe learning environment where all students will succeed and thrive.

## **Model Program and Practices**

Name of Model Program/Practice: The Bulldog Way

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development, Use of Technology

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: School Climate, Small Learning Communities, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development

## **Description**

Our signature practice, The Bulldog Way, was developed and established to build and maintain continuity and commitment required to sustain the meaningful progressive change of the school culture. The set structures, policies and practices in place that are aligned to a clear and compelling purpose with consistent language spiraled through for all staff (instructional and non-instructional) at each grade level, Kindergarten through Fifth grade. A leadership team (Culture Club) was formed and dedicated to site-specific needs and school climate/culture in addition to already established district initiatives

with one representative from each grade level. This PBIS component has allowed for a more cohesive school-wide collaboration model and higher functioning grade level teams. Each grade level keeps grade specific notes from grade level meetings that are directly tied to the Bulldog Way and helps assist and streamline supports to all students. All notes are easily accessed and stored through a Van Meter shared folder on Google Drive.

Van Meter has the largest special education and EL population amongst the four elementary sites. The implementation of the Bulldog Way has proven effective in establishing a sense of inclusion for all students. Its school-wide approach can be seen and heard all over campus by students, staff and parents utilizing common language established by the Bulldog Way. A school song has been developed. Posters with positive behavior descriptors for varying areas of campus (lunch area, library, classrooms, blacktop, etc.) were developed in age-appropriate language and can be seen throughout our campus and classrooms. The Bulldog Ticket was created and implemented as a tool to promote positive behavior. All staff and community members on our campus can award a student a Bulldog Ticket for doing something "Safe, Respectful, or Responsible". Weekly drawings are held for all Bulldog Ticket recipients. Winners receive prizes such as a new book. Names of winners are shared in our weekly newsletter, The Bulldog Beat, to be read and celebrated by our parent community. A monthly school-wide assembly is held on the Van Meter blacktop and attended by all students, staff and open to Van Meter families and community to celebrate all of the success of our students for that month.

A behavior flow chart was established to assist teachers on the appropriate next steps in dealing with discipline and at-risk behaviors. A behavior incident report was established via Google Docs and is easily accessed by all staff members. Data from incident reports are saved to a Google Drive spreadsheet. This tool has been highly effective in identifying students in need of additional support.

The Bulldog Way has shown immediate results on student behavior as there has been an 80% drop in at-risk behavior incidents being reported. It is also evident in our extremely low suspension rate. The Bulldog Way's positive impact can be felt throughout our campus

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

Introduction to the Bulldog Way is a major part of all of our Kindergarten and New Parent Orientation meetings. The Bulldog Way and its rationale and approach is communicated to parents to heighten awareness of things they might see on campus and how they can help. All staff members (instructional and non-instructional) are active participants in Bulldog Way activities and trainings. All Van Meter staff members play an important role in maintaining our positive school climate/culture.

Culture Club meets monthly to discuss successes and areas for improvement. Dedicated time is given to identifying at-risk behaviors and students that are specific to each grade level. We have utilized behavioral data from behavior incident reports and

Culture Club and grade level collaboration meetings to streamline efforts for identifying, qualifying and placing students into our CAT (Child Assistance Team) process. This has assisted in notifying parents earlier of their student's social, emotional or academic needs of support. Parents are informed earlier and students are receiving support faster. Social/emotional needs are met through quicker access to counseling support. Academic needs identified result in quicker academic supports put in place through both scaffolding lessons in the classroom and pull-out supports.

Parent involvement on campus has increased as parent volunteer numbers climb despite declining enrollment. Readership of the Bulldog Beat, Van Meter's weekly newsletter has grown over the past two years. Weekly "Trivia Questions" are placed into the Bulldog Beat. Students are encouraged during Monday Morning Announcements, Bulldog Way assembly and classroom time to ask their parents to read the Bulldog Beat. Each parent that comes to the front office and answers the "Trivia Question" correctly earns their child a Bulldog Ticket for reading the newsletter. We have seen an increase in our "Parents on Campus" program, which is our lunchtime yard duty volunteer program. Parents are encouraged to pass out Bulldog Tickets to students seen doing something Safe, Respectful or Responsible.

Parents receive information regarding school events and Bulldog Way information through the Bulldog Beat, teacher newsletters and Principal Chats hosted by Van Meter Home and School Club. Two meetings a year are held explaining the rationale behind the Bulldog Way and ways parents can help reinforce the positive behaviors both on campus and at home.

Students are rewarded and praised for learning the Bulldog Way song but also for teaching it to their parents. Parents earn their students Bulldog Tickets for displaying their newfound talent to our Principal.

## **Results and Outcomes**

Van Meter staff access data from the school climate surveys, behavior incident report information, local assessments and CAASPP data when making decisions or changes to our site plan. Behavioral data shows decreased at-risk behaviors school wide across all subgroups. Special Education, Second Language Learners and students receiving supports on 504 plans. All grade levels have shown a steady decrease in at-risk behaviors by 80%. Also attributed to our model practice are zero suspensions to date for the 2017–2018 school year.

Data from CAASPP continues to show that Van Meter students are maintaining high levels of achievement in both ELA and Math. Van Meter continues to outperform both county and state averages of students performing at/or above grade level in both ELA (Van Meter -76% County- 62% State 49%) and Math (Van Meter 72% County- 55% State 38%).

Van Meter is also proud of the results from a district-wide school climate survey done this past fall. We feel that the Bulldog Way has made a direct impact on our students

and how they feel while they are on our campus. A few examples of statements that received positive responses of higher than 90% on each: "My teacher really does care about me." "My teachers make me feel really good about what I do at school." "I like other adults at school". " I look forward to going to school." Those are numbers that we are extremely proud of. This is an anonymous survey and the numbers reported back show that our students feel safe, respected and valued at school. Studies have proven that students perform better in environments where they feel safe and valued.

We are also proud of the impact that the Bulldog Way has had on the volume of parent participation on our campus. We have seen growth in all parent volunteer opportunities on our campus. FunZone, a lunchtime activity program for students, initially started as a once-a-week program but is now running 2–3 times a week. The volunteer rate for our Clay Program is up 50%. The number of parent readers on campus for the Project Cornerstone reader program has increased by 30%. Communication with our community has also improved with readership for our weekly newsletter, The Bulldog Beat, having risen by 60%. The Bulldog Way has only strengthened our connection with our community and its families.

In our ongoing quest for continual growth and improvement, Van Meter is applying for a Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS) Grant. This grant will assist us in improving the skillset of our teachers to differentiate instruction and build upon the success of the Bulldog Way. The MTSS grant and training will assist us in furthering an integrated, comprehensive framework that aligns academic, behavior and social-emotional learning in a fully integrated system of support that benefits all students.