Alta Vista Elementary School
Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 43697086049290

County: Santa Clara

District (Local Educational Agency): Union Elementary

School: Alta Vista Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 665 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Welcome to Alta Vista Elementary School! We are a 2016 Gold Ribbon School and proud of our high academic achievement. Alta Vista School is a proactive community of staff, parents and students striving to create a nurturing and stimulating learning environment, while ensuring every child realizes his or her potential. Our mission is to emphasize academic excellence while recognizing the needs of every child in a safe, nurturing environment. Staff members constantly seek new ways to make school exciting and relevant for our students. They are highly dedicated to providing an enriched, rigorous curriculum that ensures our students are confident, competent, independent learners.

Students' needs and interests are the highest priority for us. We look for ways to improve instruction so students are prepared to meet rigorous State standards and have the skills necessary to compete in the 21st Century global economy. Teachers regularly collaborate within grade levels to plan instruction focused on sharing the responsibility for all students within their grade level. Our teachers actively participate in ongoing professional. Our teacher leaders have built a synergy around school and district goals,

strengthening teacher confidence and collaboration on new ways to enhance the classroom learning. We recognize that technology is reshaping the way we view the world, how we live and communicate, and the skills our students need in order to succeed in today's information age.

At the same time, we also take pride in our students' accomplishments in art, music and theater. Thanks to the support of our Home and School Club, students have the opportunity to experience visual and performing arts through our Art Vistas and Clay programs, and our Orff music program. Additionally, more than 100 students participate annually in our after-school Chorus and Drama Club productions, which are directed by our own talented staff members.

Our school strives to create a supportive climate in which every child's talents and interests are nurtured. We are proud of our school-wide Character Education program, emphasizing character traits through the Project Cornerstone ABC Reader Program. In addition, we recognize the need to incorporate digital citizenship into our curriculum. Student leadership is valued at Alta Vista and we offer students opportunities to support our school. Students may serve on Safety Patrol, Student Council, as Conflict Managers, or Recess Leaders. The programs provide a valuable contribution to ensure our school environment continues to be positive, safe, and supportive. Finally, parent support and involvement continue to be important aspects of the success of Alta Vista. Parent volunteers are plentiful, and their contributions include volunteering in the classrooms, serving as an Art Vista's, Clay, or Cornerstone parent volunteer, taking an active role in school committees and organizations, fundraising, and so much more.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Empowering Learners through Technology

Length of Model Program/Practice: 5–8 years

Target Area(s): Education Supports, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Use of Technology

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

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

Description

Empowering Learners through Technology is how Alta Vista Elementary approaches the education of students so that they are ready for the future. Specifically, this means

that technology is an integrated part of teaching and learning. Teachers don't teach technology as a subject, but use the technology to transform instruction. Technology has also empowered teachers in a way that they are now more equipped to individualize lessons for different student needs.

Over the years, Alta Vista has built infrastructure that allows for Empowering Learners through Technology. Our entire school has 1:1 student devices and all classrooms are equipped with televisions, Apple TVs, wifi, and sound amplification systems. Alta Vista teachers utilize a variety of online resources that cater to the support of learning goals across the grade levels.

Support for teachers in how to best use the resources available to them is crucial for maintaining our Empowering Learners through Technology philosophy. There are many ways in which teachers are supported. Alta Vista has teacher technology leaders who participate in district sponsored trainings, who then share the resources and their knowledge back at our school. Teachers also collaborate as a grade level weekly to discuss and develop innovative lessons incorporating technology. In addition, a Technology Committee was established with a representative from each grade level. The committee has many functions, including initiating the rollout of new online programs and helping grade level teams implement the programs in their own classrooms. Technology Committee members also find and research new online programs and typically are the first to pilot them.

Ultimately, one of the most important factors in being able to empower learners through technology is the spirit of the staff. Without this, all of the technology equipment, programs, and resources would be ineffective. Over the past few years, Alta Vista teachers have become risk takers, unafraid of trying new tools to engage learners through technology. Teachers have multiple levels of support to work through issues with new resources, from district support personnel to site personnel. Since teachers are happy to both coach and be learners, their excitement over new tools, resources, and lesson ideas spread easily through staff. Employing a growth mindset amongst staff is crucial in an environment that aims to empower students through technology.

Implementation and Monitoring

The 2nd grade team teaches informative writing and also studies life cycles/animal metamorphosis in science. They wanted a way to integrate technology with these subjects to enhance the content and increase engagement. As a team they approached the STEAM ToSA on site and collaboratively came up with a plan utilizing resources from the school's Makerspace. The STEAM ToSA introduced the 2nd grade team to the Lego WeDO kits and app, which has built in lessons and activities, including frog metamorphosis. At a grade level collaboration meeting the teachers and STEAM ToSA familiarized themselves with the kit before introducing it to students. Together, the 2nd grade team and STEAM ToSA came up with a plan to teach this content and integrate the technology of the Lego WeDO kit and app. First, the teachers introduced the concept of frog metamorphosis by showing students a video and having a class

discussion. Next, teachers formed small groups of students to work together with one iPad and WeDO kit in the Makerspace.

After the STEAM ToSA gave a brief introduction to students on how to use the Lego WeDO app/kit, the app guided students to build a model of each stage of the frog metamorphosis with legos. Within the app students have opportunities to discuss, plan, collaborate, and document their process. After students build each stage (tadpole, froglet, adult frog) they code their model to mimic the correct behavior of each stage of the frog metamorphosis. During this activity, students are not only learning the science content, but are also collaborating and engineering solutions for the build and are also utilizing coding skills. To culminate the activity, students then wrote informative paragraphs explaining frog metamorphosis back in their classrooms. The teachers found that students used more of the scientific vocabulary and were able to recall information in a step by step manner. Overall, this process reflects how teachers utilize the STEAM ToSA and school resources at our school. It also shows how our teachers are risk takers in employing the innovative resources available to them.

The above process of teacher collaboration, utilization of support staff and of the school's technology resources is indicative of the process used at Alta Vista to Empower Learners through Technology. While we don't have the space to elaborate on all of the projects that use a similar process, here are a few. Fourth graders participate in the 22nd Mission in Minecraft project, which is a culminating design thinking challenge for student groups to create a "new" California mission within Minecraft. Fifth graders create, write, film, and edit a weekly newscast using a variety of technology skills and tools, including green screen. The newscast is broadcast school wide which builds school community and spirit. Finally, primary and upper grade buddy classes get together for a multi-session unit on coding leading up to Computer Science Week.

Results and Outcomes

While technology abounds at our school, it is the results generated from it that really matter. These results are evident both through data and observations.

We highlight data from three sources: BrightBytes Surveys, CAASPP results, and KDS assessment results.

BrightBytes measures the impact of technology in four domains: Classroom, Access, Skills and Environment. Our score on this survey increased significantly in the last year, moving from "proficient" to "advanced". In addition, scores for each of the domains increased.

We are proud of our CAASPP results. 79% percent of our students met or exceeded standards in Math, and 77% percent of our students met or exceeded standards in English Language Arts.

We have given the KDS assessments twice this year, and we have seen great growth in Math and ELA. In the fall, 33% of students met or exceeded standard in math; 30% of

students met or exceeded standard in ELA. Just a few months later, 55% percent of students in Math and 48% of students in ELA met or exceeded standard.

Our scores keep increasing because of the implementation and integration of the technology. This technology has allowed our students more individualized opportunities, and deeper experiences, which result in higher data scores.

Our teachers are on the forefront of technology integration; they are not just willing, they are seeking to find better opportunities for differentiation for all students. Being in Silicon Valley, we see steady increase in English Language Learners each year. These students come with various home languages. On our spring 2017 CAASPP, 96% of our RFEP students performed at the proficient or above levels in ELA. We believe that due to the intervention programs we have in place (many of which are technology-based) we are supporting our students at the levels they need to succeed both academically and in language acquisition.

Our teachers are prepared to teach Future Ready skills due to the amount of professional development that they have received. On our last BrightBytes survey, 89% of teachers reported that technology integration is a regular talking point at grade level collaboration meetings. In addition, 60% of our teachers spend more than sixteen hours per year in professional development activities focused on technology.

Observations in our classrooms present an even more compelling story. Our students are actively engaged in their learning in ways that weren't possible ten years ago. The enthusiasm and drive to understand and go deeper are palpable in our classrooms. Classrooms have become active places focused on problem solving, growth, and collaboration.

We are proud of the reputation our school has (for integration of technology) within our county and surrounding areas. We are most proud of our teachers' and students' commitment and effort to go beyond what others think possible.