

Manuel F. Hernandez Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 54722560116517

County: Tulare

District (Local Educational Agency): Visalia Unified

School: Manuel F. Hernandez Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 768 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Manuel Hernandez Elementary is a school where all staff are dedicated to ensuring the academic success of every student and providing a safe and productive learning environment. Manuel Hernandez is a Title I school located in the northern section of Visalia. Demographically, we are a diverse population: 73% of our students are Hispanic/Latino, 14% are White, and the remaining 13% represent a variety of ethnicities. 66% of our students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 14% are English Learners, 5% are students with disabilities, and 2% are foster youth. We continue to perform at high levels because the school holds high expectations for the academic and social development of all students and provides the supports necessary for them to be successful.

In order to help remove barriers to learning, the staff gives attention to the whole child through additional services provided through several community partners. Some of these services provide for the physical, social, and emotional needs of students; such

as food, clothing, and counseling. Visalia Youth Services comes to the site to meet and counsel groups and individual students. Adult mentors come to the school weekly for an after-school Bible Club. These services help students' needs so that they can come to school ready to learn, and teachers can focus their efforts on their academics.

In addition, our staff creates a sense of connectedness and belonging by students becoming involved in extracurricular school activities. This begins on the first day of school when students enter kindergarten and are given a Husky T-shirt. While this may seem small, it reinforces that we are all part of the Husky family. Assemblies are held to recognize the Husky of the Month. The track team, Science Olympiad, Spelling Bee, and Poetry and Prose are ways students can get involved and connected to school. Social skills groups are also conducted during the school day in order for students to build social/emotional skills they need in order to be successful. In the spring, the students participate in an all school musical. We get their best efforts when it comes to academic achievement due to their connectedness to school. We know that connecting them to school, results in us getting their best efforts towards academic achievement.

Parent involvement and communication are essential to our school success. We continually strive to involve parents by sharing information that helps parents understand and support school programs by providing opportunities for parent participation in school. There are numerous opportunities for parent involvement including, attending school functions, participating in parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, and chaperoning field trips. Parents may also serve on advisory committees including PTA, ELAC, and SSC.

We are preparing our students for 21st century learning and we want our students to have limitless opportunities for the future.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Systematic approach to a guaranteed and viable curriculum

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Use of Technology

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

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

Description

Our central office has provided some universal training in writing genres, but teachers' writing instruction was inconsistent with varying rigor from grade level to grade level. This, along with an examination of out student writing samples, told us we needed to employ a more systematic approach to teaching writing. In addition, because it has not been required by the district to provide small group reading instruction for 3rd–6th grade students, many students' individual needs in reading weren't being met. At Manuel Hernandez, we created a systematic approach for teaching writing and reading to ensure students were consistently receiving a guaranteed and viable curriculum across all grade levels.

Writing:

Vertical articulation and goal setting between grade levels ensured consistent rigorous instruction building upon the previous grade level standard. Common assessments aligned with learning targets were created to monitor the student's progress throughout the writing process. Accountability was monitored through the use of common practices of documenting deconstructed standards, learning targets, and data collection. Consistent use of a common, agreed upon, pre-writing graphic organizers were employed across all grade levels as was a color coding system within the writing process for main idea and details.

Reading:

Students across all grade levels received small group reading instruction determined by the assessment data. At Manuel Hernandez, it was a requirement that all students received guided reading instruction or teacher support while conducting literature circles based on their assessed reading level. At Manuel Hernandez, our teachers received professional development and leveled readers to support them through this process.

Implementation and Monitoring

We began by looking at the writing standards by grade level answering two questions: 1) What do we want our students to learn? How will we know if our students are learning during the process? Each grade level deconstructed their writing standards, by genre, and created agreed upon measurable learning targets. Common formative assessments for learning targets were developed and administered. Grade levels worked vertically to ensure that the measurable objectives would build upon what the students had learned the previous year. We wanted to make sure the standards were rigorous, specific to each grade level, and built upon the previous years' standards in order to continue to increase the rigor. All grade levels used the same form and data recording sheet to monitor the students' progress.

To ensure consistency, all grade levels used the same type of graphic organizer and came to consensus on a color coding system to support the students in their writing. In grade level meetings, teachers collaborated over instructional strategies, and mini

lessons, to address the needs of their students. Data was collected after each assessment to decide how to best meet the needs of the students that had not mastered the learning target while still meeting the needs of students that were ready to move forward.

Regular classroom visits were held to monitor the implementation of a consistent writing program across the grade levels. Data forms were turned into the administration after each formative and summative assessment. Through this approach to implementation, a systematic approach to teaching writing has become a part of the culture.

Our focus on reading was around consistently implementing Guided Reading and Literature Circles in 3rd–6th grades. In the past, some teachers did small group reading instruction, but it was not school-wide and therefore did not ensure equity for all students. In the fall of 2016, all teachers began small group reading instruction based on the reading level of their students. Some grade levels deployed for reading while others serviced the students within their own classroom.

The staff worked as a PLC, meeting within their grade level teams to create questions for use within the literature circles that would require students to analyze what they were reading at appropriate depths of knowledge. The students were given questioning cards to orally respond to, which helped the students become critical thinkers of the literature they were reading.

Regular monitoring and assessing has been an important piece to our systematic approach to teaching reading. One assessment that was used with our 3rd–6th grade students was the STAR AR Assessment. The students were assessed every six weeks to show growth. Teachers also assess students individually and took anecdotal notes as they listened to their students read. These assessments were reviewed by the grade levels during their team meetings.

Results and Outcomes

In 2013, Manuel Hernandez agreed that although our students were doing well with 60% meeting or exceeding standards, we still had 40% of our students in grades 3rd–6th not proficient in English Language Arts. In 2014, we weren't provided with state results because of the transition with state testing. In 2015, with the new CAASPP, 45% of our students met or exceeded standards in English Language Arts. In 2016, we increased with 53% of our students met or exceeded standards. Compared to the district in 2016, which had 41.25% of the students met or exceed standards in ELA. In 2017, we increased again with 56.5% of our students met or exceeded standards. Compared to the district, which stayed the same at 41.25%.