Sycamore Canyon
Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 56737596118582

County: Ventura

District (Local Educational Agency): Conejo Valley Unified

School: Sycamore Canyon

Demographics

Enrollment: 1,214 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Sycamore Canyon School, K–8 serves 1,214 students in southeast Ventura County in the lush, green Santa Monica Mountains and valleys of Dos Vientos, Newbury Park. Our beautiful campus contains elementary and middle school facilities incorporating state of the art classrooms, libraries, labs, play areas, a multipurpose room, and gymnasium. Our culture parallels a smaller school with meaningful relationships, a strong sense of community, and exemplary teaching with high student achievement where we focus on balancing the whole child.

Our vision for Sycamore Canyon School is to continue as a premier provider of a quality inclusive education that meets the needs of all students, K–8. In partnership with families and the community, Sycamore Canyon School provides a safe and engaging environment that cultivates the fundamental skills of thinking, learning, problem solving, and communication. We provide a comprehensive, rigorous, yet balanced and fun educational program that enables all students to grow academically and socially in a positive setting of mutual respect and good citizenship to develop lifelong learners with unlimited potential.

Sycamore Canyon School works to create a comprehensive and rigorous, yet balanced educational program with an on-going support system that enables all students to grow academically, socially and emotionally in a setting that fosters mutual respect, good citizenship while becoming 21st Century learners focusing on collaboration, critical thinking, communicating, and creativity.

We strive to ensure that every student will:

- Be confident in themselves as people and as learners.

- Read, write, listen, and speak effectively.

- Be taught grade-level work successfully every day.

- Participate in data driven curriculum.

- Demonstrate daily commitment to learning. Students who achieve this will: think critically, value the process and products of learning, be willing to listen and question, explore, and recognize the importance of risk-taking and learning from mistakes.

- Achieve their personal best through school-wide support and empowerment.

- Develop strong computational and problem-solving skills.

- Encourage creative and critical thinking in all academic areas.

- Receive differentiated instruction in all academic areas, as appropriate.

- Build a foundation for a lifetime of physical fitness, as well as positive health and safety awareness.

- Use technology as a tool for learning new concepts, accessing and analyzing information, and presenting findings in varied formats.

- Be open to others and appreciate their differences.

- Demonstrate high moral standards in gaining and showing respect and caring for oneself and others, civic responsibility, and patriotism throughout the year.

- Develop personal responsibility for their behavior aligning with the CHAMPs Program and the implementation of Notice, Choose, Act.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Optimized Learning through Professional Learning Communities

Length of Model Program/Practice: 8+ years

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

Target Population(s): American Indian, 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, Data-Driven Decision Making

Description

SCS prioritizes CPT to ensure fidelity in our PLC's. CPT is protected to allow teachers and staff uninterrupted weekly blocks of time to address student needs. Even staff meetings occur after CPT, as they do not replace the unique focus of the grade level PLC's. Participation is interwoven in the culture of the school and is effective because the staff is 100% committed to this practice. Special Education teachers, ELL and GATE facilitators, and administrators participate regularly and assist PLC's in targeting, planning, and implementing strategies that will narrow the achievement gap and improve overall student achievement.

PLC's allow teachers to regularly and successfully examine data as well as qualitative analysis of student work and assessments to drive instruction and provide intervention or extension based on these results. For instance, grade level teams use their district math benchmarks and other common assessments to create leveled math groups in their classrooms. Students benefit from this systematic instruction by receiving instruction that is designed and delivered at their ability levels. For elementary students that are struggling to master standards a pull out math intervention program is in place to strengthen skills and remediate concepts to help access grade level content. Additional supports include homework help, Coyote Peer tutors, software programs such as MobyMax and Think Central. Middle school students are provided with math opportunity classes and individual teacher support during A-period, lunch, and after school. Math enrichment is embedded into daily instruction through the Board adopted Go Math curriculum. Other examples of enrichment include the Noetic Math competition, Pi Day, Math Counts, and parent lead accelerated math groups.

The use of CPT is a key component to the success, continuity of instruction and curricula within each grade level. Weekly planning time is used to collaborate ensuring curriculum units and projects are aligned and where students have access to engaging, higher level activities. This time is designed for modifications or extensions of these activities for the smaller student groups previously mentioned, such as SED, SPED, ELL, and GATE. In the fourth grade, the team collaborates on projects such as a "Living Museum" which highlights the emphasis on California History integrating research, writing, and communication skills. CPT allows teachers time to review and modify common directions, products, and rubrics in real time and in a dynamic manner. For

instance, students now use Green Screen technology to present information on a California landmark. By utilizing this technology, students create their own presentations based on their ability levels, thus, creating equitable access to grade level standards.

Implementation and Monitoring

The CVUSD focused LCAP goals lay the foundation for our PLC's. Based on this, PLC's begin the groundwork for discussing, creating, and implementing enrichment and interventions that meet the needs of all students. Teachers engage in District level professional development (PD), conferences, and other trainings then disseminate information during staff meetings and CPT. For example, with the District's focus on GATE and technology, teachers have developed programs to support their? Who's? specific needs. Students have been introduced to coding and robotics into their classroom as way to further engage students through STEM activities. A middle school teacher used this idea in her After Class Enrichment Series (ACES) as a way to offer extension opportunities to GATE and other interested students. Through CPT vertical articulation, she was introduced to the idea of coding and robotics and brought it to ACES, providing an opportunity for middle school students to explore STEM based learning.

CPT allows teachers to further refine and implement appropriate, best practices to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers meet in designated departments and/or grade levels, including vertical teams, to discuss instructional strategies and plan lessons. For example, students in social studies were involved in an inquiry-based lesson, delving them into the overarching standards for ancient Sumer. Students had to synthesize information they learned via a multitude of interactive activities. One activity required students to critically think about how to divert water from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for irrigation purposes. This simulation challenged students to create an irrigation system using a water fountain, Hot Wheels tracks, and a bucket to provide their society with the needed water to grow their crops. This lesson was used as authentic assessment tool that allowed teachers to glean information on student progress towards meeting learning objectives.

SCS teachers collaborate within grade levels and further perfect their instructional practices. This results in clear expectations apparent in every classroom and provides an energetic learning environment where students understand the instructional process, can work independently, anticipate change, and focus on learning. The Sycamore Canyon PLC model will continue to drive and be the fulcrum of the site's focus on best practices.

Results and Outcomes

SCS teachers continuously modify their instructional methodologies to meet the academic needs of all students. Through PLC dialogue, discussions occur about observed lessons, grade-level student achievement, and individual assessment data. With this information, teachers make the curriculum accessible to all students with a hands-on, minds-on approach to learning. Teachers use a selection of assessments

such as CAASPP data, District/curriculum benchmarks, Reading RESULTS, Reading Counts/SRI, and report card analysis to evaluate student performance. Our three year CAASPP results model demonstrates continued improvement for all grade level cohorts in both ELA and Math. ELA cohorts increased by an average of 68.5 points and math cohorts increased by 73.33 points each over this three year period. Sycamore Canyon also achieved in the highest performance bands since the inception of the new California School Dashboard. This objective data reflects meaningful & relevant instruction and SCS' immediate and sustained response to any achievement gap(s), no matter how small the number of affected students.

Sycamore Canyon contributes the high academic achievement of our students to the proven impact of our professional learning community.