

Oak Hills Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 56738746107528

County: Ventura

District (Local Educational Agency): Oak Park Unified

School: Oak Hills Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 530 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Oak Hills Elementary School, a learning community of children, staff, parents, and community members, enhances children's lives by actively engaging them in meaningful learning experiences. These experiences empower our students to become creative, productive, and socially responsible, life-long learners and problem solvers who successfully contribute to a diverse and technologically evolving society.

Located in Oak Park, California, Oak Hills Elementary School provides a safe and enriching learning environment for its 530 students, 405 families, 20 teachers and 21 support staff. Oak Hills is one of three elementary schools in the Oak Park Unified School District and for 29 years, it has been providing a high quality education to all of its students. Amongst the green hills and beautiful vistas, is a learning community that is committed to achieving high standards both in and out of the classroom.

Realizing and embracing the diversity of our students' needs, Oak Hills has put policies and programs in place to ensure all students are able to grow academically, physically, socially and emotionally to develop the skills necessary to become independent

thinkers, creative problem solvers, and socially responsible citizens. Our standards-based, data-driven action plan provides a directed path towards implementing California State Standards and ultimately producing students who are college and career ready. Teachers use multiple measures to assess student learning, identify student strengths, and target achievement gaps. Our school offers multiple services including a Literacy Program, Math Club, Specialized Academic Instruction, English Language Development, GATE, and After School Enrichment. Teachers participate in ongoing professional development to improve their practice and continue their growth as educators.

Oak Hills receives tremendous support from our parents and the broader community. Our PTA and Site Council members work to provide additional support and programs for students. For example, the PTA funds an art specialist, technology specialist, music teacher, and supports intervention programs. It is a common sight to see parents and grandparents actively volunteering their services in the classroom, chaperoning field trips, and organizing special programs. There are a number of community partnerships in place that promote student learning and include opportunities such as field trips to the historic missions, local farms, and Channel Islands National Park. Oak Hills is a learning community in which teachers and staff come together with parents, families and the community to help children learn.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Improving Literacy for All Students

Length of Model Program/Practice: Less than 2 years

Target Area(s): 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, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

At Oak Hills we teach reading using the workshop model, using the research and curriculum developed by the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University. Reading workshop is both a set of beliefs and an instructional practice aimed at providing a balanced approach to literacy that includes reading, writing, and speaking. Reading workshop fosters a love of reading and creates reading habits for lifelong readers. Using reading workshop in our classroom creates a community of readers. Readers share books they loved reading and recommend books to one

another and have grand conversations with book clubs and partnerships about characters and topics that they read about.

Students come with a variety of reading skills, and develop skills at different rates. In workshop, students do not all read the same book. Students are regularly assessed by their teacher in a one-on-one setting, using the F & P running record. This allows students and teachers to identify books at the student's instructional reading level and determine what skills each student needs to develop. Within each reading level, students are able to choose material that is high interest. Teachers provide instruction in whole-group mini-lessons that last 10 mins, and by conferring with individuals or small groups. The mini-lessons provide explicit instruction and modeling of specific reading skills. When conferring with individuals or small groups, teachers help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and provide tools to support growth.

Students who are struggling to master these skills are able to develop the skills with text at their assessed reading level. In addition to the regular classroom assessments, students are given a screening assessment at the beginning of each trimester. This universal screening tool, combined with other data, helps us identify at-risk learners. These students participate in the Literacy Intervention program.

Students take a computer-based screening 3x year and K through 3rd grade are also individually administered a curriculum-based measurement of fluency. Following the screening, a grade-level data team meets to review data and create or adjust intervention groups based on skill need.

Students are clustered into groups of no more than 5 students to work on a maximum of 3 skills with a specially trained paraprofessional using the Florida Center for Reading Research Materials. Students in Tier 2 work in small groups 4 days per week for 20 mins, and progress is monitored on a biweekly basis using curriculum based measurement passages through the Fastbridge system.

Students whose needs are more intensive or who have not previously responded to Tier 2, are included in a Tier 3 group, which is made up of 1–2 students working on a discrete skill. These intensive groups meet 4 times per week for 20 mins and are progress monitored on a weekly basis using the curriculum based measurement passages through the Fastbridge system.

Implementation and Monitoring

Implementing an improved reading program required us to identify the changing needs of students, identify best curriculum and instruction to match these needs, build teacher capacity to deliver this new instruction, and foster parent and community support. Prior to reading workshop, the district used a basal reader and workbook based curriculum. Teachers found following the textbook limited the growth of high-achieving students and failed to effectively support struggling learners. We experience evolving demographics with students entering school with a variety of educational backgrounds and English language skills. Strategies that may have been sufficient to successfully teach a

relatively homogeneous student population were no longer appropriate to meet the goal of providing the best possible learning experience for each and every student.

During the 2016–17 school year, OPUSD identified core beliefs and priorities related to our literacy program: The top priority was for students to love reading and writing. Reading and Writing Workshop (RWW) was identified overwhelmingly as the best match for our priorities.

With the increased diversity of our students' learning needs, it also became clear that we needed to bolster our Literacy Intervention program. With the goal of building a true Rtl program with a multi-tiered system of support, our first step was to identify a universal screening tool. Using the research validated computer-adaptive assessment tool from Fastbridge, we were able to see that approximately 15% of our students were not responding to the core instruction alone. We determined a need for these at-risk students to receive evidence based, targeted intervention.

Exceptional professional development was required to successfully implement the new reading program. The district offered an institute led by staff developers from TCRWP. Nearly the entire Oak Hills faculty participated in this four-day summer training. Every teacher also received an additional five days of training on campus during the school year, allowing staff to work with TCRWP staff developers with our classrooms as learning labs. Two Oak Hills teachers were identified and trained as Coaches, provided with a budget for books and materials, along with a bank of sub days used for modeling, coaching and grade-level common planning time.

The site applied for and received SELPA funds to develop our Literacy Intervention program as a true Rtl program, allowing the school psychologist time to support the literacy specialists and grade level teachers. The literacy specialists received intensive training on evidence-based reading intervention strategies and programs.

Results and Outcomes

The school's Instructional Leadership Team meets monthly to take a critical look at our instructional program and student learning. The implementation of our reading program, including both reading workshop and literacy intervention, has been closely examined. The data about student learning are positive. Nevertheless, adjustments to how we teach reading, support struggling readers, build teacher capacity, and effectively engage parents are ongoing.

According to the CA School Dashboard, Oak Hills increased ELA achievement by 13.2 points, totaling 72.5 points above level 3. ELL students increased scores by 13.9 points, totaling 54.2 points above level 3. Students with disabilities increased scores by 13.3 points, totaling 5.9 points above level 3. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students reached 63.7 points above level 3.

Struggling students are provided evidence-based interventions based on best practice guidelines. At their regular data team meetings, grade-level teams note that progress-

monitoring data shows growth toward meeting grade-level standards for the majority of students receiving intervention. This indicates that their needs are met by receiving an intervention that targets their unique skill weaknesses. With effective assessment tools in place, we know if the number of students reaching standards after intervention increases over time. The number of initial assessments for suspected learning disabilities has decreased.

The impact of a successful reading program has benefits beyond the ELA curriculum. Students receive more significant and targeted instruction on working with nonfiction text, allowing them to access cross-curricular materials more effectively than in the past. As students are able to exhibit growth in their reading level, their ability to write about reading at a more analytical level also appears to improve.

Teaching reading using the workshop model allows students to work at their own level and pace, which promotes confidence and growth. Students who feel successful have better social-emotional health, which can decrease behavioral issues. There are many things we do at our school to assist with social-emotional health and behavioral needs, however feeling successful in all subjects and having a growth mindset greatly assists in this phenomenon. While it is difficult to make a direct connection between any single academic area and the overall social-emotional wellbeing of our students, we have observed that students enjoy reading, are more engaged with reading work, and frequently talk to each other with excitement about reading.

This program has been extremely well received by parents. Parents report that they not only understand the new reading curriculum, but also are able to help reinforce the program at home. The differentiation that is inherent in the program allows instruction to be tailored to each child's individual needs and abilities. This has really resonated with parents.