

Mary Covillaud Elementary School Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 58727366056733

County: Yuba

District (Local Educational Agency): Marysville Joint Unified

School: Mary Covillaud Elementary School

Demographics

Enrollment: 533 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

Type of Program: School-wide

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Mary Covillaud Elementary (Covillaud) is a school with many barriers and obstacles. One unfortunate aspect is homelessness. This year we have between eighteen to thirty homeless children attending at any given time. Over 78.9% of the students are eligible for free/reduced meal rates. The transient rate is 29% and 18% of the student population are English Language learners. Within walking distance of the school are two homeless shelters, six motels that lodge Section 8 applicants, and a river front area where homeless families dwell. Many of the dwellings in West Marysville were constructed one hundred years ago and are now in need of repair. Our buildings are old, our bathrooms were built in 1961 and it is not uncommon for transients to sleep on the premises after hours. We have an exceptionally high rate of grandparents raising their grandchildren who attend our school, and with all of this said, there is a waiting list to attend Covillaud School.

Despite these factors, Mary Covillaud has grown in attendance from 347 in 1997 to 533 presently. Currently, we have over thirty-five families of Marysville Joint Unified School District (MJUSD) employees who have their children attending our school, all of which inter-district transfers. Another positive aspect is the amount of community involvement and support at the school. Over 250 businesses, service organizations, social agencies, schools, and churches are committed to helping our children. These community partners have built and maintained our clothes closet, which includes new underwear, socks, coats, and school supplies.

We celebrate our school with the Back to School Bash, Thanksgiving Feast, Parent Orientations, Daddy Daughter Dance, Mother Son Fun Night, Coffee and Tea with Mr. E, Principal's Luncheons, Mary Covillaud Loves America Day, and Veterans' Memorial on 7th Street, Parent/Grandparents Day, Covillaud Christmas Stroll, Skate Nights, La Posada, parent conferences, awards assemblies, and the Covillaud Walk of Fame. Our Covillaud Spirit Team participates in community events like our local Bok Kai and Marysville Christmas parades. Character Coaches who have been with us for the past twenty years have assisted in training learners to be upstanding and responsible citizens. Our principal meets with every child before and after testing, honors students with special luncheons, hot chocolate, and endless hugs.

We have faced many obstacles serving our underprivileged student population; however, we have accepted and challenged those obstacles. In 2006, we were designated as a California Distinguished School. From 1999–2013 the Academic Performance Index (API) had risen 343 points. From 2008–2013, we retained an API over 800. We continue to seek the best teachers, evaluate and examine our resources and employ wisely. We continue to be a beacon of hope. Mary Covillaud School, with its crumbled façade, is a haven of love and nurture for learners and every staff member who enters our doors.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Professional Learning Community

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout Prevention, Closing the Achievement Gap, Education Supports, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement, Professional Development, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Use of Technology

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, Parent Engagement, Data-Driven Decision Making, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Tailoring the work to align with students' individual learning needs became critical. In order to systematically embrace this component, we have developed professional learning communities. The community consists of administration, teachers, and support staff that analyze student data in order to individualize learning. This analysis on a personal level drives the planning of instruction and interventions which guarantees student success.

At the onset we jumped in with both feet. We rebuilt the mission statement, developed a school wide schedule to accommodate groups, and teachers were paid after school hours for training through LCAP funds. The desired goals were that we finally defined "quality instruction". Quality instruction was born, when we learned to assess, and assess frequently! Rather than having a class of 24 students, it is more like having 24 classes of one. This regular monitoring of grade-level progress during weekly collaborations keeps instruction and interventions current. Students know they are cared for and disciplinary referrals and absenteeism have declined. We have no expulsions to date, and have five students who are monitored through the County Student Attendance Review Board.

Every teacher has become vested in defining the concerns and implementing practices aligned to Common Core standards and the needs of their students. We use supplemental materials when adopted materials fall short, and individualized student data allows teachers to have more purposeful conversations with stakeholders.

Technology resources are better developed and aligned with students' needs as they become targeted and tutorial. Software and student data aid us in ensuring all students are moving toward mastery. This systematic analyzing of every student in regular intervals is how we will reach this goal.

At the District, our PLC leaders are supported with professional development opportunities both off and on-site. The district's delivery of the PLC model ensures the plan is manageable and practical at the site level because it worked to address student needs.

At Covillaud, we know the faces, the shortcomings, and the expertise within each child. This is not merely a program; this is a delivery system that will change the lives of every learner. PLC is an intentional school improvement strategy that has reduced professional isolation, fostered faculty collaboration, and spread the expertise and insight of the marvelous teachers at every grade level. The fire that was lit by this program two years ago has made us a community that now blesses each child that attends Covillaud.

Implementation and Monitoring

Covillaud first initiated PLC in February 2016. A team of administrators and district personnel were sent to Richard DuFour's PLC training and that began the use of his Learning by Doing 2016. It started with a change in philosophy; it wasn't about the teaching, it was about what the students were learning or needed to learn. Parents as stakeholders also became a large part of the equation. PLC was introduced, discussed, and results presented at parent conferences, and published in teacher generated weekly newsletters. Results were agenzized in Title1, Site Council, and Parent Teacher Community Organization (PTCO) meetings. There were weekly staff meetings using an additional 100 minutes of grade level collaboration which had been in place at Covillaud since 2000. Previous test scores in English Language Arts (ELA) became the focus, and centered on implementing lessons, noting successes and challenges, and collecting agreed upon evidence of student learning.

Instruction was adjusted and groups were formed based on grade levels. Teachers brought samples of student learning to PLC meetings and became very deliberate in identifying instructional practices that support student learning. The most pressing instructional challenges were dissected, examined, and reconfigured. Teachers were monitoring other teachers' data as well as their learners. Student work was used to determine mastery for a specific standard, and daily "Cougar Time" was established to support instruction. Common formative assessments (CFA) were written and used to determine where and when interventions were needed. After one year of emphasis in ELA scores rose 16% on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). In the fall 2016 school year, an emphasis was also placed on mathematics and scores increased 21%. What remained constant is the use of student data to identify those who are not responding to Tier 1 "core" instruction, and using targeted interventions.

PLC support from the district level consisted of ninety minutes of collaboration time for staff, built into the school day after hours, for thirty weeks. This additional time enabled increased trainings, extra time for student analysis, and a deeper study into how to unpack the California Common Core standards. This led to the production of a weekly grade-level schedule that is monitored by administration and includes common core standards taught, interventions, and CFA assessments.

Because a culture of trust and collaboration has been fostered for the past fifteen years, teachers have readily made the transition to highly productive, vulnerable conversations that are focused on student learning goals and reflection on effectiveness of their own teaching. Our principal guides us on determining what the students need to learn, how we assess, who is in the groups and what do we do after they have reached mastery. The differences of implementation and monitoring at the site level are notable.

Results and Outcomes

At Covillaud, we judge effectiveness on results. Our philosophy is centered on the belief that all students will benefit from instruction guided by assessment results, (formative

and summative) and continuous programmatic evaluation. At Covillaud PLC is our mantra, at the District their monies help to facilitate the adoption of this program at all school sites, on a voluntary basis. Our hope is that our increased progress will energize other school sites to adopt the program schoolwide until we then become a mandatory PLC District.

The results-oriented PLC turns data into useful and relevant information. When teachers develop CFAs' they can identify how their students performed on each skill compared with other grade level students. Teams of colleagues help each other reflect on areas of concern. Each teacher has access to the ideas, strategies, and talents of the entire team. The focus is on results.

Student results include a lower rate of absenteeism (decrease of .5% in 2016–17) and an average student attendance rate of 96.6%. Disciplinary suspensions decreased (50% in suspension days 2017 to date) even with four intra-district students being placed at Covillaud to solve disciplinary issues.

At the conclusion of the 2016–17 school year, we saw significant improvement in student achievement. 2017 CAASPP results increased in all sub groups and categories, according to the California Dashboard. The student performance with EL students demonstrated that 82.9% improved their test scores. Students with disabilities scored higher in ELA 35 points (PTS) and in math 48.1 PTS, than the previous school year. Socio-economically disadvantaged students increased in ELA 30.4 PTS and in math 16.7 PTS. All students increased significantly, in ELA 31.4 PTS and in math 19 PTS, in one year. We were the school with the highest performance rate in ELA and mathematics in Yuba, Sutter, and Butte Counties. In ELA, students scored 30% higher, and in math 26% higher than the District, according to our 2017 School Accountability Report Card. Results mirror increased learning, larger academic gains in math and ELA than surrounding schools, and smaller achievement gaps between students with dissimilar backgrounds.

The PLC model is a grand design, but sustaining the concept requires grit. It requires the school staff to focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold itself accountable for the results that fuel continual improvement. High-quality student learning is achieved in classrooms through instruction and assessment. Students of all backgrounds benefit equally regardless of race, gender, or family income. Teachers assist one another and take collective, not individual, responsibility for student learning, and work continuously to improve their teaching practices. Our community is nurtured by ongoing structured activities that require us all to engage in cycles of reflection through which we all learn.