



Schools Transforming Learning Application

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Southwood Valley's Campus Story

Overview and Background

Southwood Valley Elementary opened its doors in 1983, which means we are celebrating 40 years this year! Our school serves 634 students, ranging from Early Head Start to 4th grade. We are a Title I school and we have two specialized programs; dual language, and SPED CASL (Communications Academics & Social Learning). We are about 64% economically disadvantaged, and have a very diverse student population. In 2019 we began the work of transforming our school to a united school family with a focus on student learning and growing our staff. It was clear that we needed to strive toward students to achieve high levels of learning, and that we wanted to be a learning organization built on trust and authentic relationships amongst all stakeholders. This school year, we are proud to say we are a healthy and united school family. We are growing both student and teacher leaders, and we are partnering with parents in education.

Focus Areas (from Visioning Document)

Once we formed our guiding coalition, affectionately called Teacher Leadership Coalition (or TLC) we took the time to analyze the implementation matrix. Our team felt that, in order to achieve a shift to focus on student learning, we would need to start with Organizational Transformation. We would share the same mission and vision for students and staff to have the opportunity to grow and learn, and would form meaningful relationships with all stakeholders to have a united school family.

The Work

With our population being so diverse, the emotional needs being so varied, and the academics showing data all over the place, we set off on our Organizational Transformation. We realize, as a campus, that teachers will come to a hard job each day with joy if they are happy and connected. Students will only learn if they have their social emotional needs met. Parents will support our work and spread our positive story if they are engaged with our work. Campus culture has been a priority and we are so proud of the many strides we have made in this area.

Social Emotional Transformation:

One of our greatest accomplishments has been the implementation of House Teams, and we are the first Elementary in our district to tackle this monumental undertaking. We were awarded an Education Foundation grant to kick off this project. All students and staff (including custodial and cafeteria) are sorted into house teams in K-4, and will remain on that team for the entirety of their elementary career. Each member received shirts, and they were all sorted in the most magical machine you could ever imagine. Step on to our campus on sorting days, and you will feel the excitement and love that students of all ages share when a younger member is sorted to their teams. We have celebrations each nine weeks, where the top 10 house point earners are recognized and given a coveted hoodie. The winning house team is also recognized with a celebration at the end of the ceremony. This is a day FULL of energy and excitement!

In addition to House Teams, we started a Student Leadership Team for 3rd and 4th graders in order to instill leadership skills in our students and partner with the PTO, school, and community with service projects. The students have to apply for this process, as well as get recommendations from their teachers. They are included in PTO meetings, and the officers have many important roles with the

principal. The students on the team are incredibly proud to meet each month and make an impact on the school and community.

Our goal and focus this year has also been on partnering with parents to increase engagement. We offered at least 4 Parent Workshops per semester with topics that were identified through a survey. We also have Watch D.O.G.S. and Watch M.O.M.S. volunteer opportunities each day, as well as a parent focus group. We will even have our first family dance planned.

Academic Transformation:

The first area of academic focus was small group instruction, with a focus on differentiation for students at the teacher table. Once all teachers were on board with the importance of individualized instruction, our focus shifted to what ALL students need and how we could provide this to even our highest achievers.

As a campus, we decided to implement WIN time (What I Need Time) campuswide where students would get the chance to work on their level each day for 30 minutes. Teachers collaborate with each other, analyze data and share students. Our TLC was able to interview both a student panel and parent panel to get a better understanding of needs from different perspectives. Both panels agreed that WIN time was a “win”, but the students wanted more voice and choice each day. We apply this same practice each year to professional development where teachers have choice in their learning. We utilize campus experts to conduct choice-based PD to their colleagues. This is always one of the most favorite days amongst the staff.

This gave way to our next campus initiative, which would be student data binders. We began implementing student data binders so students would have ownership of their learning and goal setting. The student panel shared with us how much they enjoyed checking off the goal of running laps in PE, and wanted us to find a way for them to apply that same feeling of accomplishment in the classroom. Students get to track their progress toward their goals, and we will be celebrating students who reach their goals later this year.

We have a built-in collaborative time for PLC work, called Eagle Learning Teams, each day of the week. During this time, any PD for teachers is delivered and student learning is the focus. Our mindset as a united unit is now a focus on student learning and achievement. During this time of collaboration, teachers will focus on how best to utilize their strengths to flexibly group and meet the needs of all students, not just the ones who are assigned to their classrooms.

Results

It doesn't seem right to type in this section, because we have yet to achieve all of our desired results. We will actually never be “there.” What we can say is that we are a healthy and united campus with a shared mission and vision. ALL of our staff are all-in for students all of the time. One student summed it up best when she walked in from winter break, put her hands up in the air like she was flying and said “Ahhhh It's sooooo good to be back here.” Our transformation is also evidenced in the reduction of behavior calls, the Watch D.O.G.S/M.O.M.S. Volunteer spots are full each day, the excitement when kids reach their academic goals, and the tears when 4th grade graduation comes around. Our work has just begun, but we are so proud of the transformation that we have achieved in the past 5 years.