

Downtown Magnets High School Model Programs & Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 19647331932888

County: Los Angeles

District (Local Educational Agency): LAUSD

School: Downtown Magnets High School

Demographics

Enrollment: 1034 students

Location Description: Urban

Title I Funded: Yes

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Downtown Magnets High School (DMHS) is located within the heart of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) - a plus for our magnet pathways focused on business, engineering, multimedia, computer science, and fashion. A component of LAUSD's voluntary integration program, DMHS adheres to mandates promoting racial integration, by providing access to any student living in LAUSD boundaries. We maintain an open enrollment policy wherein students are selected randomly without regard for merit. Hence, DMHS's demographic population mirrors that of the district's representing LA's diverse subgroups.

DMHS is a Title I school with 80% of our students living at or below the poverty line, yet DMHS maintains the highest test scores in the district (69% - 80% proficiency in mathematics and 85% – 98% ELA proficiency rates over the last four years). Our mission is to ensure every student graduates college and career ready regardless of background or status. Between 90% – 98% attend college annually, with 72% attending four-year colleges or universities. Many return as mentors serving on our career advisory boards. Students are creative and collaborative, working towards community improvement and becoming critical thinkers and much of our Professional Development focuses on thinking skills, Socratic seminars, cooperative learning models, student presentations, project-based learning, and inquiry.

Guests are struck by our STELLAR school climate exemplifying the acronym's components of our school experience and mission, namely creating students who are: Scholars, Tech-savvy, Effective Communicators, Life-Long Learners, Leaders, Aware culturally, and Responsible. ASB leadership students utilize a team approach ensuring a group work ethic is evident. Students from all our magnet pathways are represented in leadership and school-

wide, tolerance and anti-bullying are evident. At DMHS, Common Core-driven instruction meets career pathways with emphasis on collaboration and character in ways that teachers, students, and parents can be, and are, proud.

DMHS is a CA State Gold Ribbon school, noted for its math improvement program and multiple career pathways. We are also a four-time winner of the prestigious Magnet Schools of America School of Excellence Award (2015 - 2019), a distinction not achieved by any other school in LAUSD. However, challenges exist as we diligently work towards 100% proficiency for all students in all content areas (particularly in English and math). We also strive, per our LCAP goals to improve student attendance, combat chronic absenteeism, provide engaging learning opportunities, and ensure the needs of all our diverse students are being met. DMHS is certainly a jewel in LA and the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff are largely to be credited. Home of two teachers of the Year, NBC teachers, and University Honorees, DMHS always seeks to improve and our “Opportunities for All” program, a full inclusion model of interventions is leading the way.

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Opportunity for All (**OFA**)

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Chronic Absenteeism, Closing the Achievement Gap, Professional Development, & 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, Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support, Professional Development, Implementation of Academic Standards Basics (Teachers, Instructional Materials, Facilities)

Description

Downtown Magnets High School (DMHS) has implemented an initiative we proudly call “Opportunity for All” (OFA). OFA targets the achievement gap that has historically existed between African-American and Latino students and their Caucasian/Asian counterparts. It is comprehensive because it includes intervention measures within and outside of the school day, drawing upon the support and expertise of varied staff members to reduce and eventually eliminate the performance gap as well as provide structured support in numerous areas including chronic absenteeism. The program is highly structured, student-centered, teacher-driven, and was adopted to provide support for all our students to ensure we met our stated mission: 100% proficiency for all students. Hence, our program focuses interventions in math, English, academics, behavior, attendance, and social – emotional components using resources such as LCAP funding, SSC, local district resources, counselors, social workers, nurse, parents, administration, intervention and magnet coordinator towards providing strategic and ongoing academic, behavioral, and motivational supports.

A rationale for the program is The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) implemented an A-G Immediate Intervention Plan in response to the state and county local control

accountability plan goals targeting the percentage of students who meet graduation and CSU/UC entrance requirements and the number of who demonstrate college preparedness. DMHS' model program focuses on A-G readiness, improving English Language skills, improving proficiency in English and math, and targets closing the achievement/opportunity gap, a stated LCAP, district, and state CDE goal. Thus, through OFA we examine every students needs, identify those who are struggling, communicate these needs to student, parent, and teacher and roll out a strategic support program tailored to provide support.

Our stated school/mission provides for academic proficiency for all and a 100% graduation rate. Thus, DMHS strives to monitor the following LCAP components: Supporting high school matriculation; Increasing number of students successfully completing high school: college and career readiness; sustaining an academically challenging environment for all students. LCAP goals also seek to reduce dropout rates for all students and to improve attendance. All students benefit when we meet their diverse needs (SPED, ELL, Gifted) and, by using a multi-tiered system of supports, we aim to provide for all students' needs. OFA provides a structured and systematic approach to meet the needs of struggling students providing academic support during the day and after school, providing for peer-mentoring, and improving proficiency for all students, particularly with regard to English language development and mathematics. LCAP also mentions our International Baccalaureate (IB) Program, magnet pathways, college/career readiness components so we leverage Advanced Placement to ensure we benefit all students towards college readiness, including those designated Gifted. A diverse multi-pronged approach provides academic and socio-emotional supports. OFA weaves these strands and sub-strands together by providing targeted assistance to all our students in these areas:

- Math Intervention for struggling students
- English Learner and EL support for struggling students
- Behavior Intervention & Social-Emotional Support
- Advanced Placement & International Baccalaureate Program

Implementation and Monitoring

LAUSD's LCAP accountability plan includes a stated goal of 100% graduation for all students. To attain this, all students must have access to the curriculum, so we have developed an approach that opens doors to students accessing all opportunities at DMHS per the following system:

- a. Identifying and placing students in classes based on interests, not fixed system of testing
- b. Increasing the challenge for all students by providing for opportunity for rigorous coursework starting in the 9th grade via AP courses and access to our Pre-IB program
- c. Implementing a system of monitoring grades starting in the 9th grade to create supports and benchmarks to assist struggling students (Building blocks)
- d. Integrating student mentors into the curriculum through peer mentoring and using our upper grade students to provide for peer-to-peer learning
- e. Instilling an instructional habit across all content areas and classes that students are collaborating about learning and making learning accessible for all through collaborative groups and Socratic seminars in all classes

- f. Inviting students and parents to take advantage of the socio-emotional supports from the school such as Psychiatric Social Workers, counselor referral, and parent education classes (in mental health, academic supports, and information on tutoring)
- g. Involving all stakeholders in the progress of all students (STAR testing and results and grades checks in advisories) and offering guidance to school as to areas we should focus on
- h. Providing college going and post-secondary conversation at the beginning of high school to ensure all students see opportunities as viable and expected.

OFA ensures support at all grade levels and skill levels by using a three-pronged approach: 1) intervention for struggling students (Building Blocks), 2) challenging all students to take rigorous courses in AP & IB and 3) ensuring we personalize efforts using grade and assessment data to evaluate students and place in appropriate classes that support and “push” (or challenge) students to succeed at higher levels. To ensure all students have college-going exposure, we engage students in post–secondary conversation at the beginning of high school with counselors and teachers to ensure all students can see these opportunities as viable and expected. Our AP Blitz program exposes all our students to AP courses and we closely monitor participation. Students are encouraged to take Human Geography in the 9th grade and use their AP knowledge to engage in sequentially more advanced courses. Similarly, IB provides an opportunity for students to learn in an academically rigorous environment writing Extended Essays and engaging in deep, meaningful research. OFA asks our instructors to ensure scaffolds are in place and adequate training in varied approaches scaffold both the AP and IB experience so that we have a full inclusion model with adequate supports and differentiation. Teachers are trained in academic language frames, Socratic Seminars, reciprocal teaching, and conduct instructional rounds to ensure our teaching is meeting the needs of all students.

For struggling students, OFA provides a system of supports beginning with the first progress report. Students struggling with D’s and F’s are identified and enrolled in an advisory “Building Block” (BB) period. They are then paired with peer mentors who provide academic and socio-emotional support. Peer mentors (Juniors and Seniors) are trained by our Intervention Coordinator and plan for each meeting. Tutoring interventions are also used to provide additional support. Additionally, results from Interim Assessments, designed from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), group students into advisories that supplement their skills and improve students to proficiency. Groups are monitored monthly and as skills are mastered, students move to other support advisories or exit the program.

For students struggling with attendance, attendance data is reviewed and a system of positive supports provided through counselor, coordinator, teacher, and parent involvement. DMHS has come a long way – in 2015, we lost 150 students annually (as high as 15% of our enrollment). Through social-emotional components in BB and communicating clearer expectations, we have mitigated the problem and responded to students’ needs, informal exit surveys revealing our students needed social-emotional and academic supports to succeed.

EL learners and students struggling with EL skills are supported through the Renaissance STAR Reading Assessment. The computer adaptive assessment is given to every student in early fall to measure reading comprehension levels to determine which students meet district grade-level benchmarks. This assessment identifies students who could benefit from targeted intervention and allows for monitoring over time to measure growth. English

teachers use scores to tailor instruction to meet students' needs and, for students identified as "advanced," the test identifies resources to prepare students for college-level reading. Assessment results are sent home and resources to assist in developing and fostering literacy at home are provided. Parents of advanced students are offered suggestions to ensure skills remain at the highest levels while building a daily reading habit. Parents of struggling students are provided with at-home strategies and referrals to afterschool programs and tutoring opportunities towards becoming an effective 21st century reader.

All program data is monitored and programs evaluated for success and improvement. As this is part of an ongoing 4-year strategy, grown solely from a math intervention to many diverse areas, communication is key. Thus BB was created out of need and urgency. Here, support is provided across all grade levels for grade-specific intervention. For instance, incoming 9th graders in need of support are identified via middle school GPA, test scores, and attendance data. Interventions include counselor support, after school tutoring, peer-to-peer tutoring, peer-to-peer mentoring, and support from our BB Intervention Coordinator. 10th grade students are identified through deficient credit counts conducted by counselors as well as "D" and "F" counts. As BB grows, we have noted the importance of parent inclusion through informal surveys conducted and feedback received. Parents are a vital part of BB and our psychologists, counselors, and coordinators attempt to immerse students in an "ecosystem of positive relationships" providing strong social, emotional, and academic support, while teaching positive routines, self-advocacy, organization, and planning. The mentoring component is an added strength of BB as student mentors (upperclassmen) develop additional skills providing valuable services to their younger mentees while building a sense of community. 11th and 12th grade mentors meet with identified 9th and 10th grade mentees during advisory and the meetings are structured. Such monthly meetings help assess BB structure, review student success indicators, share information, and support mentor needs.

Additionally, we conduct math IAB (Interim Assessments) every 5 weeks for all students. Students who test below standard are recommended for BB and additional support. Math teachers may also recommend students for the intervention advisory based on performance in core math classes. If they eventually demonstrate work habits and academic performance that shows self-remediation skills, they may exit the intervention.

Results and Outcomes

Overall school CAASPP scores for previous two years in ELA were 98% & 90% respectively. Math scores were 80% and 69% respectively. Down trends in test scores were noted across LAUSD but our scores remain among the highest and we are positive our interventions will yield positive results

Students with D's and F's has shrunk from 500 to 424 (this year) a decrease of approximately 16%, crediting direct interventions provided by Building Blocks

100% of African American sub-group testers scored proficient in 2018 -2018

Schoolwide attendance rates have grown 1-2 % annually for the last two years

Over 90% of parents indicate they feel the school is emotionally and physically safe for their children per School Accountability Report Card (SARC)

AP classes have grown to over 19 offerings – depending upon teacher availability, we currently offer between 19 and 21 classes

Chronic Absenteeism rates dropped from 8.0% to less than 4% this year (3.92%). Similarly, school attrition has dropped from 15% in 2015 to .03% this year

Our IB cohort has graduated two years in-a-row with an unprecedented 95% pass rate (50% pass rates are the norm for such new programs)

The learning curve is always steep but OFA has provided opportunities for our school to work towards 100% proficiency in a meaningful way. Through this model we believe the trend is onward and upward with increased proficiencies in ELA and math, our struggling students achieving, and overall improvements in attendance and school engagement.