

Don Pedro Elementary

2300 E. Don Pedro Road
Ceres, CA 95307
Principal: Cheri Gibson

Don Pedro Elementary is one of seven elementary schools in the Ceres Unified School District located in Stanislaus County, one of the largest agricultural areas in the world, approximately 90 minutes from San Francisco.

- ◆ Elementary (K-6)
- ◆ 61% Hispanic
- ◆ 53% Female Students
- ◆ 79% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Don Pedro Elementary has a diverse student enrollment made up of 61% Hispanic, 29% White, 2% African American, 3% Asian, 2% American Indian, 2% Pacific Islander, and 1% Filipino students. Thirty-one percent of the student population has been identified as English learners, with the majority of those having Spanish as a primary language. English learners at the school have been assigned to appropriate programs with qualified staff providing instructional services. The school facility includes a library and a computer laboratory with full Internet access. Don Pedro Elementary participates in the 21st Century Community Learning Center program that offers support to students and their families. Support for students occurs through on-site extended-day activities addressing academics, enrichment, and recreation.

Don Pedro Elementary has been recognized as a Title I high-achieving school. The school improved its Academic Performance Index (API) rank relative to similar schools: from 7 in 2002 to 10 in 2006. During this time period, early adolescent students in grades 4–6 made remarkable gains in math, with female students' gains exceeding those made by males. The percentages of female students reaching proficient level on the California Standards Tests (CST) increased from 18% in 2002 to 49% in 2007 (a 200% gain) while the percentages of proficient male students increased from 27% to 57% (a 100% gain) in math.

Math teachers' efforts to encourage students in math vary with teachers' training and emphasis on instructional practices. In this case study, the example of Ms. Anderson, a sixth grade teacher, is provided. Ms. Anderson brings to her class knowledge from training in Complex Instruction. Congruent with the philosophy of Complex Instruction, she works to establish a classroom environment that emphasizes process, debate, and cooperation, rather than performance, ability, and peer comparison. Students frequently show their work during class time to allow the teacher to make quick assessments of students' understanding and determine the need to revisit the material to help students deepen their understanding. Acknowledging the students have

different learning styles, Ms. Anderson demonstrates how the same problem can be solved in a number of different ways (for example, using math manipulatives, using a graph, or using abstract reasoning). In this supportive classroom, students learn to praise each other's effort and work and feel comfortable to make mistakes and to explore their understanding of math problems.