

Marshall Elementary School

1575 15th Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Principal: Peter Avila

Marshall Elementary School, a dual-language Spanish-English immersion school in San Francisco's Mission District, serves approximately 250 K–5 students, over half of whom are English language learners (ELLs). The convenience of its on-site after-school program—coupled with very intentional communication among regular school teachers, program staff, and parents—provides Marshall students with a smooth transition from daytime classes to the after-school program.

- ◆ Elementary (K–5)
- ◆ 78% Hispanic
- ◆ 7% White
- ◆ 3% Black
- ◆ 2% Asian
- ◆ 90% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Marshall Elementary partners with a community-based organization called Mission Graduates to design and implement the after-school program. Mission Graduates runs after-school, in-school, and summer programs aimed at preparing students living in the Mission District for college. Mission Graduates has an office on Marshall's campus, which facilitates communication between the school day and the after-school program. Marshall Elementary's after-school program includes academic support; enrichment programs (dance, art, theater) reinforcing academic components; recreation; community service; and the College Connect initiative, which aims to increase the number of children ready for college. Students who attend the program participate for about three hours per day immediately following the regular school day. The program has become an integral part of the Marshall community, and students who participate show increased engagement and a stronger connection to their school community.

The after-school program at Marshall is partially supported by the San Francisco Unified School District Expanded Collaboratives for Excellence in Learning (ExCEL). ExCEL provides technical assistance and resources to the program, which also receives support in the form of districtwide sharing of best practices through institutes, workshops, and other professional development and training.

Critical Success Factors

According to the executive director of Mission Graduates, Jeff Feinman, the after-school program at Marshall Elementary has achieved success through multiple efforts. These efforts include a program evaluation conducted by the instructional reform facilitator—a full-time classroom teacher who serves as a liaison to the after-school instructors—in conjunction with the program director. Through the evaluation, they identified areas of need and designed professional development sessions centered on related instructional strategies. Another key to the program's success is Mission Graduates' active fundraising staff. They have been able to supplement state and federal monies and achieve a diversified funding structure. Finally, encouraging parent engagement and involvement ensures students continue their learning at home.

To maximize participation, the Mission Graduates parent coordinator and the after-school instructors communicate regularly with families. This communication takes place in person at regular meetings, family nights, and adult education classes as well as through announcements, newsletters, and weekly folders students take home. Mission Graduates listens to and addresses parents' needs and concerns through services such as financial education, health and wellness, computer literacy, and legal aid. Program instructors form strong relationships with students and families, and the program works to promote a whole-family approach to supporting the student. As a result, the school has become a resource center serving both students and their families. Students and their families are proud to be a part of the after-school program at Marshall.

Tailoring Instruction to Students' Needs

Marshall's after-school program provides a curriculum tailored to the needs of the student population. The program individualizes instruction and engages students by offering them choices in their own education. Students have the most freedom regarding enrichment, where they can choose from classes such as dance, poetry, theater, and hip-hop lyricism. The program also includes a community service component, in which students have the opportunity to take on leadership roles in community-based projects.

Marshall's student body is largely composed of English language learners, so program leaders design curriculum to meet the needs of this population. The regular classroom teachers at Marshall play an integral role by informing program staff about these specific needs.

The program includes cross-age reading buddies, where younger students are partnered with older students who can help them. The younger students often do not have the English language skills to describe important elements of a story, so the older students help them learn to frame their descriptions, such as "At the beginning of the story..." or "The problem was resolved when..." The reading buddies program bolsters reading fluency for the younger students, as well as improving the older students' self-confidence and motivation to keep reading.

Marshall's focus on developing the fluency and reading comprehension of its ELL population is also visible in the program's science-based literacy curriculum. Because Marshall Elementary has a strong science focus during the regular school day, the program chose to implement a literacy curriculum that uses science content and is designed to improve vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Ongoing Collaboration and Communication

The after-school program at Marshall is successful because of close collaboration and communication between school-day and program instructors to ensure curricular alignment. The program staff and classroom teachers meet regularly to collaborate and discuss curriculum and instruction so they can create a seamless transition for the students. They discuss what each needs from the other to be successful and come to an agreement that sufficiently supports both groups of staff.

The instructional reform facilitator provides monthly workshops and ongoing coaching to after-school instructors, using resources available to the regular day teachers. These

workshops allow the instructors to discuss instructional strategies and align the after-school classes with the school day.

Visible Improvement

Peter Avila, principal of Marshall Elementary, notes students who attend the program experience increased academic success and are visibly more connected to the school community, evidenced by higher homework completion rates and increased attendance at extracurricular activities. According to Marshall's after-school program director, ELLs who scored at a proficient level in standardized tests administered in Spanish but below proficient in tests administered in English especially benefit from the program. These students have significantly outperformed students in the district who have a similar profile but did not receive program services.

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