



SCHOOLS TO WATCH – TAKING CENTER STAGE

MODEL SCHOOL – VISITOR’S GUIDE



Alta Sierra Intermediate School



Designated in 2008; Re-Designated 2011

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2010 School Statistics

(Sources: 2010 API Growth Report; 2010 AYP Report)

Community: Urban fringe of a large city
Enrollment: 1,290
Grade Levels: 7-8
School Schedule: Modified block schedule

Student Demographics

- 59% White
- 22% Hispanic/Latino
- 10% Asian
- 4% African American
- 2% Filipino
- 2% Two or more races
- 1% American Indian/Alaska Native
- 0% Pacific Islander

- 28% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 3% English Learners

2009 Base: 857

2010 Growth: 883 (up 165 points since 1999-00)

2010 AYP: Met 19 of 21 criteria

(Visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ar/index.asp> to view this school's data for prior years.)

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Modified block schedule provides teachers and students with extended time to explore concepts, master skills, exercise critical thinking, and organize curriculum by themes and concepts.
- Cornell notes are used schoolwide.
- To engage students, teachers use virtual labs, multimedia presentations, skits, interactive models, simulations, and hands-on science lab.
- Laptops are used in classes and the computer lab; loaner laptops are available to all students.
- Basic, Below Basic, and Far Below Basic students attend small group intervention classes.
- Support for students includes intervention classes during the day, homework center after school, and lunch-time tutoring.

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Developmental Responsiveness

- The school is organized into learning communities (clusters) that operate as small schools within a school; students loop with the cluster’s learning director.
- The Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) program connects students with peers and adults.
- The Talking-Listening-Caring (TLC) program assists students in dealing with difficult emotional issues.
- Program Reach has trained counselors that support victims of bullying or racially-motivated behavior.
- Students Targeted with Opportunities for Prevention (STOP) is an after-school program in conjunction with Fresno County to provide services to students and families which include tutoring, recreational activities, mentoring, and life skills. This program is one of only two in Central California and is a model for other districts attempting to implement similar preventative measures on secondary campuses.
- Peer counselors help new students with transition, conduct peer group sessions, assist with academic tutoring, train elementary students with refusal skills, and organize community service work.
- AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) classes are offered to students in the lower quintiles of the CST (California Standards Test).
- The Academic Transition Class (ATC) supports students with significant adjustment or behavior issues.
- Academic tutors from the local high school leadership program support students in all core subjects.
- Preventative discipline lessons are given every six weeks.

Social Equity

- There is no tracking because students in need of additional support and time to achieve proficiency are offered intervention classes.
- In conjunction with the school district, there are free and low-cost health clinics, family relationship wellness workshops, and drug and alcohol abuse programs.
- Co-curricular activities include athletic leagues, pep/cheer squads, robotics team, Destination Imagination program, Portfolio Day, Heritage Assembly, and a host of other clubs—American Sign Language, Fellowship of Christian Athletes Club, Chess, Fashion Careers, Guitar, Book Club, Jr. Kiwanis, Humane Habitat Club, ethnic group clubs, Travel, Sportsman, GATE (Gifted and Talented Education), and Star Wars/Star Trek.
- There are childcare and translation services for parents.
- Rewards include Bruin of the Month Luncheon/Awards for outstanding character, Principal’s Pride Award for improvement in academics, Bruin Pride luncheons for school spirit, Principal’s High Honor for academic excellence, English Language Learners awards for achieving RFEP (Reclassified to Fluent English Proficient), and Athletes of Character award for individual and team accomplishments.

Organizational Support

- Teachers are given release time for coaching and observation.
- Teacher-on-Special-Assignment coordinates schoolwide writing initiative and co-teaches/coaches with teachers in all subjects on integrating writing into the curriculum.
- Teachers identify two areas needing improvement (key Processes) and create an action plan for the following year.
- An annual needs survey with key processes drives staff development from one to three years.
- The administration partners with nearby universities and provides resources and support for educator training programs and administrator credentialing.
- Partnerships with parents are provided by various committee seats: School Site Council, ELAC (English Learner Advisory Committee), Student Achievement and Review Team, Principal’s Advisory Committee, Intercultural and Diversity Advisory Committee, Drug Abuse Prevention Council, and Parent Teacher Club.