

## **Model Program/Practice Name:** COR: Communication, Ownership, Relevancy

The administration and faculty of Lexington Junior High School have developed and implemented a practice that has affected all areas of the school's educational program. This practice, developed to meet identified student needs, is called COR, which stands for three essential capacities desired as outcomes of students' time at Lexington: Communication, Ownership, and Relevancy.

COR is in its fifth year of implementation. In early 2015, Lexington's administration, faculty, and staff updated the school's vision and mission to reflect their commitment to developing students' capacities in 21st century skills. This process involved all faculty and staff members in identifying desired student capacities and learning behaviors, developing the school vision, and planning implementation of this vision. Collectively, the administration, faculty, and staff determined that Lexington's vision could be distilled into the three focus components of communication, ownership, and relevancy – COR.

Identifying COR gave the faculty and staff a common direction and shared purpose. Everything done at Lexington, from first best instruction in teachers' classrooms to extracurricular activities, supports the development of communication skills, ownership, and relevancy in students.

The following narrative will explain the goals of COR; describe implementation of the COR practice among the stakeholders – teachers, parents, and students; and discuss monitoring of the practice, including assessment methods and results of the data.

### **Program Goals**

The COR practice aims to develop the capacities of communication, ownership, and relevancy in all students during their time at Lexington. Each capacity includes learning behaviors that the faculty has deemed important outcomes for students at the middle school level:

- Communication: Students read, write, speak, and perform across the curriculum.
- Ownership: Students are responsible and self-aware; they monitor their own progress and levels of motivation.
- Relevancy: Students' learning connects to real world application.

### **Implementation: Engaging Our Stakeholders**

COR seeks to empower the members of the Lexington school community: Teachers are empowered to innovate and collaborate both within their subject area and across the curriculum, parents are empowered to take an active role in supporting their students' education, and students are empowered to be active participants in their learning.

Lexington is a learning community that holds as a value the belief that all stakeholders in the educational program are critical to the school's success and to students' achievement outcomes. Engaging stakeholders also reinforces the COR values, particularly the concept of Communication. With this in mind, Lexington's administration, faculty, and staff have

established several practices that both engage stakeholders – teachers, parents, and students – and communicate COR.

### **Engaging Teachers**

Teachers have been integral to COR from its development to its current implementation, as it is recognized that it is just as important for teachers to develop COR capacities as it is for students. Thus, several practices have been implemented to facilitate this professional development.

**Professional Learning Communities.** All schools in the Anaheim Union High School District have one Late Start professional development morning each week. Lexington is distinguished in how that time is used. Each week during Late Start, teachers meet in professional learning communities (PLCs) to review data and students' needs, then plan future lessons, assessments, activities, and appropriate interventions.

Every teacher is in at least two PLCs; many are in more than two. Sometimes, PLCs will meet by department, while other times, they may meet by grade level. Once a month, teachers meet in Focus Team PLCs, which focus on special topics such as college and career access, civic engagement, safety, PBIS/school culture, students with disabilities, and universal lesson design/support for English learners.

Teachers have also formed their own informal PLCs that have resulted in numerous cross-curricular and interdisciplinary collaborations. One example of this is Lexington's Achieving Creative Excellence (ACE) program, in which students design and complete a creative honors project, individually or as part of a team, under the guidance of a faculty mentor. Teachers participating in ACE collaborate to implement the program throughout the year, meeting before or after school. The program has grown over the past four years and currently includes 12 teachers who serve as collaborators and mentors. Other informal PLCs have resulted in a Dia de los Muertos celebration that integrates the curricular areas of drama, English, Spanish, home economics, and journalism, as well as Lexington's Tolerance Summit and Civic Learning Week.

**Trainings and conferences.** Lexington supports lifelong learning as part of the COR values, and the school administration is committed to facilitating extended learning for its faculty. As such, teachers are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities outside of Late Start days and trainings offered by the school district.

All teachers at Lexington have had the opportunity to attend the Beck Institute's training in project-based learning. Ninety percent of teachers have been trained.

Five teachers have participated in the AUHSD's Civic Learning professional development program, and five teachers and the principal received training in action civics learning at the Mikva Challenge Summer Institute in Chicago.

Our English/Language Arts teachers have participated in the Cross-curricular Project Based Learning Pathways at UC Irvine. Many teachers have attended additional educational conferences such as the California History-Social Science project, the California Science Teachers Association Conference, and NASA's Space Exploration Science Educators conference.

In the spirit of Communication and Relevancy, several Lexington teachers have presented their best practices at regional, national, and international conferences, including the California Science Teachers Association conference, California and National Writing Projects, the California Educational Research Association, and the American Educational Research Association.

**Reflective Learning Walks.** Several times a year, teachers participate in reflective learning walks with the Lesson Design Coach, who is a teacher on special assignment. On these walks, teachers visit classrooms during instructional time and then reflect on their own instructional and professional practices based on what they have seen during the experience.

Walks have taken place on the Lexington campus as well as at other junior high school sites, at our feeder elementary school, and at our feeder high school, allowing for vertical articulation. The English department has toured every grade from Kindergarten to grade 12 English in order to have a snapshot of student learning and better inform their teaching.

### **Engaging Parents**

While Lexington has historically had a very active PTSA, characterized by volunteerism and 100% faculty membership, the administration and faculty have made concerted efforts to increase parental engagement through improved communication during the past four years of implementing COR.

**Communication.** At monthly Coffee with the Principal meetings, parents are kept abreast of what is happening at Lexington as well as developments in education at the state and national level. There are also Coffee with the Counselors meetings several times a year at which the counselors discuss academic planning and support. Additionally, each Monday the principal publishes a Monday Memo, which is distributed to all students, parents, and teachers and features schoolwide events and opportunities for engagement.

Lexington shares a full-time FACES coordinator with its feeder high school. The FACES coordinator ensures that Lexington is reaching all stakeholders and connecting them with school and community resources. The coordinator streamlines communication between Lexington and the feeder high school, translates school communication into Spanish and serves as translator at parent/teacher conferences, holds weekly workshops for parents, updates the school's social media and website, and organizes parent nights.

**Ownership.** Parents are encouraged to participate in Parent Learning Walks, which are similar to the reflective learning walks that Lexington's teachers do. On these walks, the parents visit classrooms, guided by the Lesson Design Coach, and reflect upon the instructional practices and student engagement that they see. The Parent Learning Walks help parents understand their students' academic program and how they can best support their students at home.

**Relevancy.** There are several Parent Education Nights held throughout the year, each with a different focus such as college and career preparedness, prescription drug abuse, Internet safety and cyberbullying prevention, charter school information night, and how to support children's achievement in junior high.

### **Engaging Students**

Implementing COR as a practice has had a tremendous impact on Lexington's educational program for students, because it has required school personnel to examine their approaches to instruction, intervention, and student recognition. This analysis has led to many positive changes to existing programs and the establishment of new ones.

### **Enrichment Opportunities.**

***Lexexpectations.*** To raise awareness about college and career opportunities and to help its students gain exposure to the a-g college entrance requirements, the college and career access focus team implemented Lexexpectations, a series of research, creative, and volunteer activities in which students learn about post-high school options and establish practices for academic and personal achievement as they prepare for high school. Students who complete all of the Lexexpectations are eligible for a special field trip; 7<sup>th</sup> grade students visit UC Irvine or CSU Fullerton, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students visit the University of Southern California. Last year, 90 7<sup>th</sup> grade students and 126 8<sup>th</sup> grade students earned field trip privileges by completing Lexexpectations. This year, with the completion deadline still a month away, 80 7<sup>th</sup> graders and 110 8<sup>th</sup> graders have completed their Lexexpectations and qualify for the field trips.

***Saturday Academy.*** Saturday Academy is Lexington's weekend enrichment program which fosters development in the areas of Communication and Relevancy. Each Saturday Academy offers unique education programs that allow students to engage with and extend their learning in deep, meaningful ways that are grounded in real world application. This year, Saturday Academies have featured a Family Science Day, including a science fair and petting zoo; multicultural appreciation activities; activities designed to support EL students; dance workshops with a guest choreographer; and competitions for students on the school's STEM, Robotics, and CyberPatriot teams.

***Individualized interventions.*** Students are supported by multiple individual interventions at Lexington. These interventions address both academic achievement and socioemotional development.

***Check and Connect.*** The counselors, counseling intern, and a teacher meet weekly with each student identified as needing support. Check and Connect provides academic and socioemotional support to students who are identified as at-risk using data provided by the school district. Each participating student meets with an administrator or counselor to receive mentoring. The Check and Connect meetings support the COR concept of Ownership.

***Lion Time.*** Students who, based on EL designation or GPA data, might benefit from individualized intervention called to "Lion Time" each day during sustained silent reading. During Lion Time, these students set achievement goals for the quarter and then receive academic support from supervising administrators, counselors, and peer tutors. Last year, Lion Time served 292 students; this year, Lion Time has served 164 to date. Data show that this intervention has been successful: 70% of all participants and 50% of EL participants last year raised their grades after receiving this support. Lion Time supports the COR concept of Ownership.

***College and Career Readiness.*** Students who need more intensive academic and study skill support are enrolled in the quarterly College and Career Readiness class. Counselors use data from the school district's MTSS tiers, attendance, grades, and discipline

records, as well as teacher recommendations to identify students who might benefit from this class.

In the CCR class, students receive one-on-one academic support. They also learn soft skills which they will use throughout their academic life, such as organization and note-taking, and they also learn how to advocate for themselves with teachers and administrators.

**Positive approaches to absenteeism and discipline.** Lexington's PBIS model is strongly influenced by COR. As such, the school administrative team and faculty have developed the following positive approaches to behavior intervention.

Lexington has established alternatives to suspension and expulsion by implementing restorative justice circles and community service hours. Students with drug- and alcohol-related offenses participate in intensive educational workshops as an alternative to being suspended or expelled. These alternative programs enforce the concept of Ownership.

**Student of the Day.** Lexington's Student of the Day recognition program is a way for individual faculty and staff members to recognize students for demonstrating COR capacities. While these recognitions can be related to academic performance, civic mindedness and good character are honored as highly and as frequently as scholastic achievement. In addition to supporting COR, the Student of the Day program supports students' socioemotional development.

## **Resources**

COR drove the development of Lexington's Local Control and Accountability Plan. COR is cited throughout our school plan, and funding was prioritized based on whether the LCAP objectives supported development of the COR capacities.

## **Results**

The outcomes of the COR program are assessed and monitored on an ongoing basis through multiple measures. Administration and faculty regularly review generated data to inform and improve our practice, as well as determine future needs and directions.

### **Assessing Teacher Outcomes**

The faculty is accountable to one another through the posting of the respective PLC agendas after each Late Start. This transparency creates an atmosphere of purpose and trust.

The effectiveness of the project-based learning trainings has been evident in the increase of departmental and interdisciplinary projects done in Lexington's classes. Two examples of PBL are the history department's election project, the English department's *Christmas Carol* civic engagement project, the and the English department's Tolerance Summit.

### **Assessing Parent Outcomes**

Lexington's administrative team monitors parent engagement at our PTSA meetings, Coffee with the Principal and Coffee with the Counselors meetings, and Parent Education nights through attendance data generated from event roll sheets. They also use data from Aeries (gradebook) analytics and the number of website visits to monitor parent engagement.

Lexington's principal has conducted parent surveys regarding homework and overall satisfaction with the school's programming. The questions on the survey pertain directly to COR and how the school's efforts are being received by stakeholders.

**Assessing Student Outcomes**

Lexington's administrative team uses academic and attendance data regularly to monitor the effectiveness of our individual interventions of Check and Connect, Lion Time, and the College and Career Readiness class. These programs are proactive ways of establishing relationships among students and staff. A data analysis of intervention students' GPAs shows that 70% raised their grades after participating in Check and Connect, Lion Time, or the CCR class. The same data shows that 50% of EL students participating in these interventions raised their grades as well.