

Distinguished School Application Part I: School Overview

Don Callejon School

Don Callejon K-8 School opened on August 28, 2006, as the first new school in Santa Clara Unified School District in 40 years. The 74,500 square-foot school provides students and faculty with a modernized, beautiful campus for learning and recreation. In addition to brand-new classrooms, students enjoy access to a state-of-the-art Media Center/Library and Computer Lab with both wireless and hardwired Internet access. A Multi-Purpose Building with a stage, wall tables, and basketball court serves as a place for PE facilities, assemblies, dining, music instruction, performances and after school sports activities.

Classrooms are designed around a central courtyard which features an outdoor theater and beautiful grassy knolls. The courtyard also includes a geography court with a map of the world surrounded by a school garden area and an outdoor covered lunch space. Outdoor playgrounds are divided into three areas for kindergarten, elementary, and middle school students and are located adjacent to a city park.

The surrounding Rivermark community was actively involved in the planning and design of the school. They formed the school's parent teacher organization, The Don Callejon School Community Organization (DCSCO), before the school opened its doors, and before many of the parents had school-aged children. The group raised over \$60,000 before the school opened in support of its first year of operation. The large majority of the money went directly to teachers in the form of grants to support new equipment and classroom materials. Parent volunteers remain a cornerstone of the school. It is very common to find parents helping in the classrooms of their own children and throughout the school.

Don Callejon School (DCS) strives to create a safe and nurturing student-centered learning environment with a family and community atmosphere. DCS is committed to educating the whole child while focusing on academic excellence. DCS values and appreciates the diversity of our students and community. Using these goals as a framework, DCS has developed a common vision for all students in order to create a dynamic and united community of learners.

Don Callejon School's Vision is to:

- Value and strive for academic rigor, high standards, and achievement
- Instill independence and self-confidence in our students
- Support collaboration and unity
- Incorporate technology throughout campus
- Open the doors toward tolerance and compassion
- Nurture a safe and respectful learning environment

In order to achieve its operational vision, DCS focuses on the following subgoals:

- 1) Involve all members of the Don Callejon community to the best of our abilities, in order to
receive input, make decisions, and play upon the combined strengths of all
- 2) Provide strong and coherent staff development that supports our vision
- 3) Expect the best from our school community members
- 4) Use data and assessments to carefully track how each student is doing and how we can
best meet every student's needs
- 5) Create strong support systems to ensure that no student falls through the cracks
- 6) Use research and best practices to maximize instructional time
- 7) Hire and retain an outstanding staff committed and dedicated to the K-8 vision
- 8) Focus on activities and practices that unite the school community while realizing the
power of differentiation to address the specific needs of each grade level
- 9) Maintain a safe school campus for all community members

Don Callejon is the only K-8 school in the Santa Clara Unified School District. The school serves children in Kindergarten through 8th grade who live in the aforementioned Rivermark area of Santa Clara. The school also serves students in grades 6-8 who live in North San Jose and Alviso. Melding these two diverse communities (see Table 4, p. 14) has proven to be the school's primary challenge throughout these four years in operation. Despite many challenges, the staff, students, and families have worked hard to create a positive and supportive learning environment. The two signature practices outlined in this application contribute significantly to improving overall student achievement and narrowing the social and academic achievement gaps among the school's diverse communities. The signature practice descriptions will detail the resources and programs that have been implemented to support this focus. The school also highly values the collaboration with and professional development opportunities offered by the Santa Clara Unified School District, and the Santa Clara County Office of Education.

Signature Practice I details the support systems and interventions the school has implemented to "Create a Culture of Literacy" on the DCS campus and addresses subgoals 2, 4, 5, and 6 of the school's operational vision listed above. Also discussed in the narrative are the unique contributions of the school library, which includes a full-time teacher librarian and state-of-the-art computer lab. This space not only houses a comprehensive collection of materials to support the school's kindergarten through eighth grade readers, but it also serves as the community library.

As discussed in Signature Practice II, "Creating Responsible Community Members," DCS uses the K-8 model itself as a resource to create a bond among these diverse cultures and communities. DCS has created programs centered on bridging the age-gap, where middle school students have the opportunity to mentor elementary students in the classroom, at school events, and work in classrooms as Teachers Assistants. These opportunities address subgoals 1, 3, 7, 8, and 9 of the school's operational vision

listed above. Ultimately, there is a much greater probability that students will develop a deep connection to the school and establish a significant relationship with an adult during their time at Don Callejon.

Focus on these practices has paid off. Over the past four years, Don Callejon School's API score has risen from 714 in 2007, to 806 in 2009, while student enrollment has increased from 544 to 845 over the same period. The school also met every AYP criteria this year, and experienced significant growth in the proficiency rates of all statistically significant subgroups. The affirmative reputation of Don Callejon School's programs, resources, students, and staff, as well as the significant increase in academic achievement at DCS, has created an unprecedented demand for enrollment at the school.

California Department of Education
California School Recognition Program
2010 Distinguished Elementary School Application
Part II

Signature Practice 1: Creating a Culture of Literacy

1. Rationale/Basis of the Practice

Don Callejon School (DCS) recognizes the importance of reading and writing at all levels of instruction. DCS places an emphasis on ensuring all at-risk first and second grade readers are receiving intervention. To support "...a coordinated system in which standards, assessment, accountability, and curriculum are aligned and focused..." (Elementary Makes the Grade!), the staff at DCS uses the Reading and Writing Workshop structure. To support the use of this structure, teachers receive First Reader and Writer (FRW) professional development (training for first and second grade teachers led by district Reading Intervention Specialist Instructors) and have the opportunity to participate in the SCUSD K-8 Reading and Writing Summer Institutes. In addition, the Reading Intervention Specialist (RIS) works on-site with first and second grade teachers to support readers below grade level, and works with the teachers at those levels to develop curriculum and support their development as reading instructors.

To support the work of these three programs, the DCS community recognizes the school library and the teacher librarian as integral pieces of the school community. The library is a conduit not only for student research skills but for developing students into lifelong readers and learners. Community involvement supports the library through volunteer hours, funding from DCSCO, and parent use of library resources. In many ways, the DCS library serves as the community's public library. All students in grades K-8 have a weekly opportunity to use the library with their classes. Many students also visit the library before and after school, both with and without parents.

All students who are not proficient on either the English Language Arts or the Mathematics Content Standards Tests for the prior year qualify for an Academic Assistance Plan (AAP). The percentage of students who qualified for an AAP dropped at all levels between 2007 and 2009 (Table

Percent of Students on AAPs

	'07-'08	'08-'09	'09-'10
Elementary	74%	30%	14%
Middle School	75%	69%	47%
School Wide	74%	56%	34%

Table 1

1). Previous to the 2009-10 school year, students have been assessed using the Literacy Observation Survey (K-3) and Literacy Connection (4-5) Programs. Beginning this school year, all K-5 students are assessed with the Fountas and Pinnell (F&P) Benchmark Assessment System. In first and second grade, all students who score below grade level for reading are recommended to the RIS Program for individual and small group instruction.

2. Description of the Practice

Students gain exposure to what authentic reading and writing looks like through use of the Reading and Writing Workshop structure. The workshop structure gradually releases responsibility from guided practice to independent work; all students' needs are supported. With guided practice in homogenous groupings, teachers are afforded the opportunity to instruct students at their individual instructional level.

Reading and writing are closely linked, and the work done within one area is used to supplement and support the work in the other. Within the configuration of the workshop, students learn to "read like writers" by collecting a variety of diverse reading experiences and noticings that they can then draw upon when using their skill as writers. Teachers at DCS sequence units of study so that the current reading unit introduces students to the next writing genre.

The RIS Program provides a team approach to reading intervention by supporting students who are not proficient on the school district's reading assessment. The RIS Program has six key components: 1) a RIS instructor; 2) collaboration among classroom teachers, RIS instructor, special education department members, and site administrators; 3) small group direct instruction for at-risk readers in the classroom during the literacy block; 4) on-going assessment of students' reading levels; 5) professional development in reading instruction for teachers; and 6) collaboration and professional development among district RIS instructors.

At DCS, the RIS instructor pulls and works with students from eleven different first and second grade classrooms. To facilitate guided reading, these small groups meet twice weekly. The RIS instructor and the classroom teacher develop lessons to target reading skills and strategies so these students can access print using meaning, structure, and visual cues. Students assigned to a RIS group meet and work daily with their classroom teacher for the purpose of reading leveled texts. Additionally, the RIS instructor and the classroom teacher collaborate to provide interventions and support for any student who struggles with reading.

The collaborative team analyzes F&P assessment results to plan lessons. Using F&P, teachers are able to keep running records that include data on words per minute, percent of comprehension, fluency, self correction ratio, and an optional written response to literature. Multiple sets of teaching eyes form the safety net that supports success for all students.

The sustainability of the RIS Program is becoming increasingly challenging in the current budget climate. Teachers and staff at DCS are working to make the RIS Program self-sufficient and sustainable for years to come.

Nine of eleven first and second grade teachers at DCS, along with other teachers in the district, are provided with First Reading and Writing (FRW) training three times a year.

Two RIS instructors plan and deliver this professional development. At each training session, teachers watch two modeled small group reading lessons with live students taught by the RIS instructor. As a group of colleagues, they debrief the lesson, noting student's reading behaviors, to better understand how the struggling readers might untangle their thinking and move forward in the reading process. Concepts learned during the professional development sessions are then reinforced on a daily basis when the RIS instructor is in the classroom working side by side with the teacher. An additional result of this collaborative professional development is teachers gaining the tools to successfully address a multitude of student needs through guided reading groups. "For guided reading...students are encouraged to share their thinking, try out what they've been learning, and, with teacher support, approximate, regulate, and expand their reading competency" (Routman, R., Reading Essentials, 2003, p. 152).

Through district wide staff development, all teachers in grades K-5 participate in ongoing trainings around the analysis and taking of running records, student data, flexible grouping, word work, and writing strategies. Teachers take back practical applications to their classrooms to further support students in literacy.

Essential to the success of creating a culture of literacy at DCS is the emphasis on "Professional development that deepens teacher's content and improved instructional strategies to engage all students in learning" (Elementary Makes the Grade!). Fourteen of thirty-three Language Arts teachers and two of two administrators also have taken part in Reading Workshop and Writing Workshop trainings during the summer, with additional follow-up trainings throughout the school year. Following the Reading Workshop structure, the whole class is instructed in a reading skill, strategy, or study lesson via a mini lesson format. They experience the lesson through teacher modeling and shared inquiry. Students are released to their homogeneous groups to begin independent reading while one group begins a guided reading session with their teacher. The teacher will lead the guided reading group through a mini lesson, either readdressing a skill or addressing a specific intervention need. Within the guided reading group, students are able to self select books and take some time to do a familiar read with a book at their level, enter new sight words into their word books, and then begin to read together from their group book. The session is closed with a sight word song or reflection on the day's work.

As students progress in grade levels, the Reading Workshop structure stays consistent. Students are homogeneously grouped by independent reading level, and work in guided reading and discussion groups with their teacher. While many skill specific mini lessons are taught, there is a focus on giving students the tools to analyze, synthesize, and make inferences about their reading. Students respond to literature in written form using a variety of formats; letters, articles, and reports.

Juxtaposed with Reading Workshop is Writing Workshop where students form partnerships for the purpose of sharing their writing with an audience, thus creating an authentic environment. Students work to support and grow from each other as writers, using mentor texts to look at the variety of craft and structure used by published

authors. Study of mentor texts help students learn to read like writers and understand the importance of grammar, language, and conventions. Using this structure, students learn to notice and appreciate their reading in a more complex way by exploring and questioning the author's intent.

Students and teachers have access to a wide variety of mentor texts through use of the school library. The library collection exceeds 20 books per student and is continually evaluated and improved to meet community and curricular needs with the emphasis on new curriculum-supporting nonfiction and highly recommended fiction. Don Callejon School's culture of literacy is supported by the comprehensive collection, which currently contains 16,753 items including books, magazines, audio books, playaways, audiocassettes, visual and audio DVDs, and teacher reference materials. More than half the collection of 15,880 books for community use is nonfiction. Research shows nonfiction builds vocabulary, interest in reading, and student achievement. The DCS library serves nine grade levels. To facilitate K-2 research needs, the nonfiction books at those reading levels have been clearly identified for students and community members. The fiction books are also marked for grade level content appropriateness, ensuring that high reading level elementary students are not selecting books that are content inappropriate. The site librarian collaborates with teachers and has the opportunity to see all students weekly for read-alouds and library lessons.

Through the school's library website, students and teachers have access to online tools at school and at home. Resources include Gale Junior research databases, Grolier online (English and Spanish), citation guides, booklists, homework helpers, grade level specific links, and access to the San Jose and Santa Clara Public Libraries. The attached computer lab is fully scheduled by classroom teachers every day and the seven library computers are available for middle school students to use before and after school and throughout the school day.

To enhance the culture of literacy at DCS, several special programs are in place including author visits, book fairs, literacy nights, book swaps, special family evening events, and availability of the library on a limited basis during the summer.

3. Results of the Practice

Staff, students and parents at DCS have embraced the mantra “Every child a reader by grade three” (Elementary Makes the Grade!). Data from the SCUSD assessment Literacy Observation Survey (Table 2) shows significant decreases in students who scored below grade level in the fall and spring of each school year. These decreases are attributed to the culture of literacy at DCS. The RIS program, specifically targeted to at-risk first and second grade readers has proved immensely beneficial for students, and the school has seen decreases in excess of 60%. The gains DCS students made in the first and second grade are reflected in both the CST ELA scores (Table 3) and the number of elementary students qualifying for an AAP (see Table 1, p.10). DCS has had enormous growth of 24% school-wide over the past three years.

Percentage of Students Scoring Below Grade Level:

Literacy Observation Survey

	First Grade			Second Grade		
	# St. Below Grade Level	# St. Enrolled	% St. Below Grade Level	# St. Below Grade Level	# St. Enrolled	% St. Below Grade Level
Fall '06-07	12	57	21%	4	31	13%
Spr '06-07	9	63	14%	5	34	15%
Fall '07-08	8	82	10%	16	64	25%
Spr '07-08	3	75	4%	6	69	9%
Fall '08-09	25	94	27%	11	79	14%
Spr '08-09	13	94	14%	6	80	7%

Table 2

Percent Proficient: ELA CST

	'06-07	'07-08	'08-09	Growth
All Students	42%	50%	66%	24%
Asian	75%	75%	85%	10%
Hispanic	21%	29%	44%	23%
White	56%	61%	81%	25%
SED	23%	29%	52%	29%
EL	34%	37%	58%	24%

Table 3

EL students at DCS continue to keep step with students school-wide, mirroring the 24% gain in percent proficient on CST ELA scores. This accomplishment is further reflected in the diminishing number of students on AAPs. Even with increasing enrollment each year, the number of elementary students qualifying for an AAP decreased 81% from 74% in

2006 to 14% in 2009. These cumulative gains would not be possible without a systemic culture of literacy at DCS.

California Department of Education
California School Recognition Program
2010 Distinguished Elementary School Application
Part II

Signature Practice 2: Creating Responsible Community Members

1. Rationale/Basis of the Practice

When Don Callejon School (DCS) opened its doors in August of 2006—the first new campus in Santa Clara Unified in forty years—expectations for a successful year were high among students, parents, community members, and the district; however, during the year, the degrees of socio-economic disparity and cultural diversity between the elementary and the middle school (Table 4) presented a significant challenge. The

Don Callejon Demographic Data

	'06-'07		'07-'08		'08-'09	
	K-5	6-8	K-5	6-8	K-5	6-8
Total Number of Students	257	287	357	298	461	302
Asian	39%	12%	53%	11%	53%	16%
Pacific Islander	0%	2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Filipino	8%	9%	5%	7%	5%	10%
Hispanic	14%	46%	5%	49%	9%	41%
African American	7%	15%	4%	15%	3%	15%
White	14%	17%	9%	18%	12%	17%
Mult/No Response	17%	0%	24%	0%	17%	0%
EL	44%	31%	50%	28%	53%	18%
SPED	5%	12%	5%	13%	5%	12%
Economically Disadvantaged	27%	59%	24%	64%	21%	58%

Table 4

majority of the elementary students came from the middle- and upper-income residences within walking distance of the school (approximately 25% of elementary students were on free/reduced lunch for the 2006-07 school

year). Most of these students were from the Asian subgroup. The middle school students were primarily bussed in or walked from nearby middle- and lower-income, predominately Hispanic and African American communities (approximately 60% of middle school students were on free/reduced lunch for the 2006-07 school year). These demographics created a cultural and achievement gap that needed an active plan to bridge. The school began formulating plans to address this challenge and unify the groups as one community immediately. The school continues to introduce new students into the sixth grade from two other Title I elementary campuses each year, making this an annual challenge for students and staff.

DCS staff, families, community members, and students have worked diligently since 2006 to overcome the stratifications caused by the cultural and socioeconomic differences among students. Programs designed to boost academic skills, improve school climate, and create consistencies at all levels were introduced into the curriculum in order to create responsible community members. These programs included:

- Leadership elective class
- Spirit Days, Giving Campaigns, Callejon Cup, and rallies
- Middle to elementary, upper to lower grade buddy classes
- Middle school teacher assistants in elementary classrooms
- 5th grade Science Camp and pen-pals
- Camp Callejon
- Elementary character education programs and middle school rewards programs
- Before and after school academic interventions
- School and DCSCO sponsored community events

2. Description of the Practice

Creating responsible community members has been an essential component of the school's success, involving a focus on both academic achievement and personal growth. As a K-8 school, the DCS staff has the unique opportunity to affect change over a nine year period and to establish long-lasting relationships with many of its students. The staff emphasizes that being a member of the community requires demonstrating respect and responsibility for all members, property, and personal belongings. Increased self-esteem and pride of membership in a welcoming community has resulted in students taking more responsibility for their own behavior and academic success.

Staff at DCS employs a variety of programs to actively prepare students to be responsible community members. Beginning in 2007, a Leadership elective has been offered to the school's seventh and eighth grade students. The students volunteer in the elementary classrooms, organize and run whole school rallies and events, and assist at DCSCO events. Staff chose students to be in the 2007 class. However, during that first year, some students struggled with the inherent responsibilities of being in a leadership class. In subsequent years, the class has become increasingly popular as the reputation of the class has been established. This has allowed the teacher to choose from a high number of students requesting the class (95 in 2008 and 112 in 2009), and the school has had to implement an application process. Due to the limited size of the class, it has evolved into a competitive program, and students strive to maintain appropriate behavior and earn their places as leaders.

Each Friday at DCS is a Spirit Day in which all students and staff are encouraged to dress according to a theme. Leadership students stop by classrooms to count the number of participants and calculate spirit points earned by each class. Several times a year, students contribute to giving campaigns including Pennies for Patients, Second Harvest Food Bank, and Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF. At the scheduled school-wide rallies, the Giving Award is presented to the elementary class and middle school class making the largest contribution. Additionally a Callejon Cup is awarded on a monthly basis to the elementary class and to the middle school class with the most spirit points.

To bridge the gap between elementary and middle school students, each middle school homeroom class is matched to an elementary buddy class for a variety of activities. These activities include the annual Walk-A-Thon, reading and writing projects, and math problems of the month. Pairing students gives all participants an academic focus of excellence. Older students are seen as role models, allowing them to realize the significance of their behavior choices. Younger students have the opportunity to meet teachers they will have in the future. Middle school students also have the opportunity to work in elementary classrooms as teacher assistants. In this role, students have the opportunity to assist the teacher and students with their work during class or play during recess.

The DCS buddy concept extends beyond the school to include one of its feeder elementary schools: George Mayne in Alviso. Fifth grade classes at DCS form partnerships with the fifth grade classes at Mayne. Students are paired for pen-pal projects and attend science camp together.

These bridges culminate during Camp Callejon: a one-day welcome and orientation for all incoming sixth graders. Camp Callejon is a free program partially sponsored by a local business that provides the students with transportation, lunch, school supplies, and a Camp Callejon tee shirt that can be worn in lieu of a purchased P.E. shirt. Current seventh and eighth grade students serve as leaders during Camp Callejon. Incoming students tour the school, meet various faculty members, receive advice, and engage in teambuilding events such as a finger lift, a paired walk, and a spider web crawl. Attendance at Camp Callejon has steadily increased over the years from 70% to 87%.

Don Callejon School knows: “Effective schools seek to develop and reinforce character traits, such as caring, citizenship, fairness, respect, and trustworthiness, through a systemic approach” (Elementary Makes the Grade!). Another way the school builds responsible community members is through character education programs at the elementary level. These programs include ABC/Project Cornerstone (Anti-Bullying Campaign), Healthy Play, and MegaSkills®. The ABC/Project Cornerstone is a volunteer led program bringing community members into the classroom to read to students and conduct structured activities around anti-bullying concepts. K-5 teachers participate in training for the Healthy Play program, which teaches students to play appropriately and work out their problems with one another through games. K-3 students receive monthly instruction with a Healthy Play facilitator through an Early Mental Health Initiative grant. MegaSkills® are the attitudes, behaviors, and habits that aide achievement in school and work. These skills are actively taught though targeted reading, role-playing, and exploratory activities. Once a month, students are honored for their achievements at an assembly involving parents, faculty and community members.

Middle school success is also honored in meaningful ways using two targeted rewards programs. DCS students who achieve a 3.0 or higher on quarterly report cards are invited to a special Honor Roll Breakfast sponsored by DCSCO. Families and school staff join together to celebrate student achievement. The number of students on the Honor Roll had remained steady since the school’s first academic quarter ending in October, 2006. However, the school experienced a 13% increase in the percent of students on the Honor Roll during the first quarter of 2009 (Table 5). Additionally, a lunch is hosted to recognize middle school Student of the Month recipients aligned to the elementary MegaSkills® program. This affords an opportunity to acknowledge students who have made positive contributions to the school community.

Percent of Students on Honor Roll

	'06-'07	'07-'08	'08-'09	'09-'10*
Quarter 1	48%	40%	47%	60%
Quarter 2	42%	39%	46%	
Quarter 3	42%	41%	42%	

*In Progress

Table 5

Having creating an environment where students feel both respected as individuals and physically safe, staff can focus on academics. The school's before- and after-school academic interventions include SOAR to Success, Catch a STAR, and Middle School Homework Club. SOAR to Success (2-5) and Catch a STAR (7-8) are targeted academic intervention programs in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Middle School Homework Club (6-8) is a voluntary after-school intervention in which teachers—not necessarily from the middle school staff—organize classroom space and tools so that students can complete their homework and work on long-term projects. Students can also receive tutoring in core subjects from teachers and/or parent volunteers during Homework Club. Over the past three years, Homework Club participation has grown from an average of 10 students during the first year to 30 students per session currently.

DCS takes preemptive steps to avoid needing interventions, build cultural proficiency, and strengthen community ties. The school promotes a home school connection through hosting Family Literacy Night and Family Math Night. These fun evenings are organized as fairs with activities and games. Families receive items to take home and ideas for parents to use that encourage fluency in both language and numeracy. These events are planned around the two DCS book fairs. In addition, students and families are encouraged to share their culture with the community at the DCSCO sponsored multicultural night.

3. Results of the Practice

“Learning occurs within the context of the values, beliefs, and rituals of the school community and the larger society. This is a necessary and potentially beneficial factor in creating strong schools—provided the school culture and climate reflect and are responsive to the diverse racial, cultural backgrounds, and needs of its student populations” (P16 Executive Summary).

Four years with this focus has paid off. DCS has a cultural and academic achievement gap that needs an active plan to bridge. A major part of this bridge is creating responsible community members. After four years of this work, DCS has seen many significant gains including an increase in API scores (714 in 2007, 769 in 2008, and 806 in 2009), an increase in the percentage of students performing at proficient or above on the ELA CST (see Table 3, p.13), and a unified culture of respect among all students. This data is supported by the decrease in number of students who qualify for an AAP (see Table 1, p.10). Additionally, in grades 6-8, the percent of student suspensions has decreased (Table 6), while the percent of students receiving honor roll awards has stayed consistent and, most recently, saw a 13% increase during the first quarter of the current school year (see Table 5, p. 16). This data shows the powerful results of the many ways Don Callejon School has worked to create responsible community members.

Don Callejon Middle School Suspension Rate

	'06-'07	'07-'08	'08-'09	'09-'10*
Enrollment	287	298	302	310
# St Suspended	70	74	47	15
% St Suspended	24%	25%	16%	10%**

* In Progress

**Current Rate for this School Year

Table 6