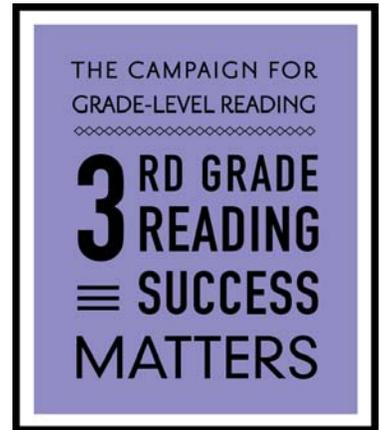


BRIGHT SPOTS

High Opportunity Schools



Lincoln Elementary, Oakland, CA

A walk around Lincoln Elementary reveals that the school's slogan — *Excellence, Creativity and Community* — is more than words. “The place is buzzing,” says Principal John Melvin. Teachers trained in student engagement build on the culture of the surrounding Chinese community, which places student learning front and center. Professional learning communities support collaboration among teachers, and parents stream in and out of Lincoln, a de facto community center.

“This school gives families a foundation on which to build their future,” said 1963 alumnus and Butler University president Dr. Bobby Fong at a recent class reunion.

Clearly, Lincoln's approach is working. California uses an [Academic Performance Index](#) (API) to compare school improvement from year to year, rating each school on a scale from 200 to 1000. With a **953 API**, Lincoln ranks alongside some of the wealthiest schools in Oakland. Among all California schools with Title 1 populations (eligible for free and reduced lunch) above 70 percent, Lincoln ranks highest in academic achievement.

Making all boats rise

Lincoln relies on Open Court Reading, with its strong emphasis on phonics and phonemic awareness, as its primary language arts/English curriculum; but Lincoln's seasoned teachers often make adjustments. “We wanted to build strength in critical thinking, so we added an icon-based program for our gifted and talented students,” says Melvin. Depth and complexity icons alert students to such concepts as big ideas and essential details, rules, patterns, trends, and multiple points of view.

The program worked so well that the school now uses the gifted curriculum with all students, and an additional 10 percent of third graders test as gifted and talented. Lincoln also uses [Thinking Maps](#), a set of visual teaching tools that

WHO THEY ARE

576 students, K–5th

92% Asian, 2% African American

74% FARM

\$9,317/district pupil

(\$9,093 state average)

90% home language Cantonese

30% of teachers have master's

degree or higher

16 years teaching on average

22 average class size

WHAT THEY ACHIEVE

CST (California Standards Tests)

English Language Arts:

3rd grade 78%

4th grade 88%

953 API (Academic Performance Index)

2010 Blue Ribbon School

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correspond to fundamental thinking processes such as classifying, comparing, and sequencing.

Melvin emphasizes the importance of the school's professional learning communities. Leadership teams at each grade level meet twice every six weeks, and teachers often work into the evening or on Saturdays to review and revise the curriculum and ensure they are reaching students. "We also incorporate cultural competency in all our training," he says. Half of Lincoln's 26 teachers are certified bilingual in Cantonese.

Fidelity with a Twist

While Lincoln is faithful to the Open Court Reading curriculum, teachers also draw on other supports such as the [Kagan Curriculum](#). Its dozens of structures, such as timed pair/share and quiz-quiz-trade, boost cooperative learning. All Lincoln's choices take direction from its three instructional goals:

- Standards Based Instruction.
- Critical Thinking.
- Student Engagement.

Student engagement is matched with extensive parental involvement. A bilingual staffer serves as a family liaison to organize dances and community events, and at the Parent Center, right in the school, parents can get help finding a job and filling out their taxes.

"It's very difficult for a child to fall between the cracks," says Melvin. "Our staff, our interventions and curricula are so much in synch with the needs of our students, we just don't let that happen."

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- **Gifted and talented instruction for all students**
- **Open Court reading curriculum**
- **Depth and complexity icons build critical thinking**
- **Kagan curriculum to boost cooperation**
- **Thinking Maps visual teaching tools**