

Stevenson Elementary: 3rd-grade team profile

December 2020

Seventy-five 3rd-grade students at Stevenson Elementary School in Mesa, Arizona are served by an educator team that comprises three certified educators — one of whom serves as the lead teacher for the team — and three MLFTC residents. The team is also joined by several shared team members: a Title I specialist, two special educators and three specials teachers.

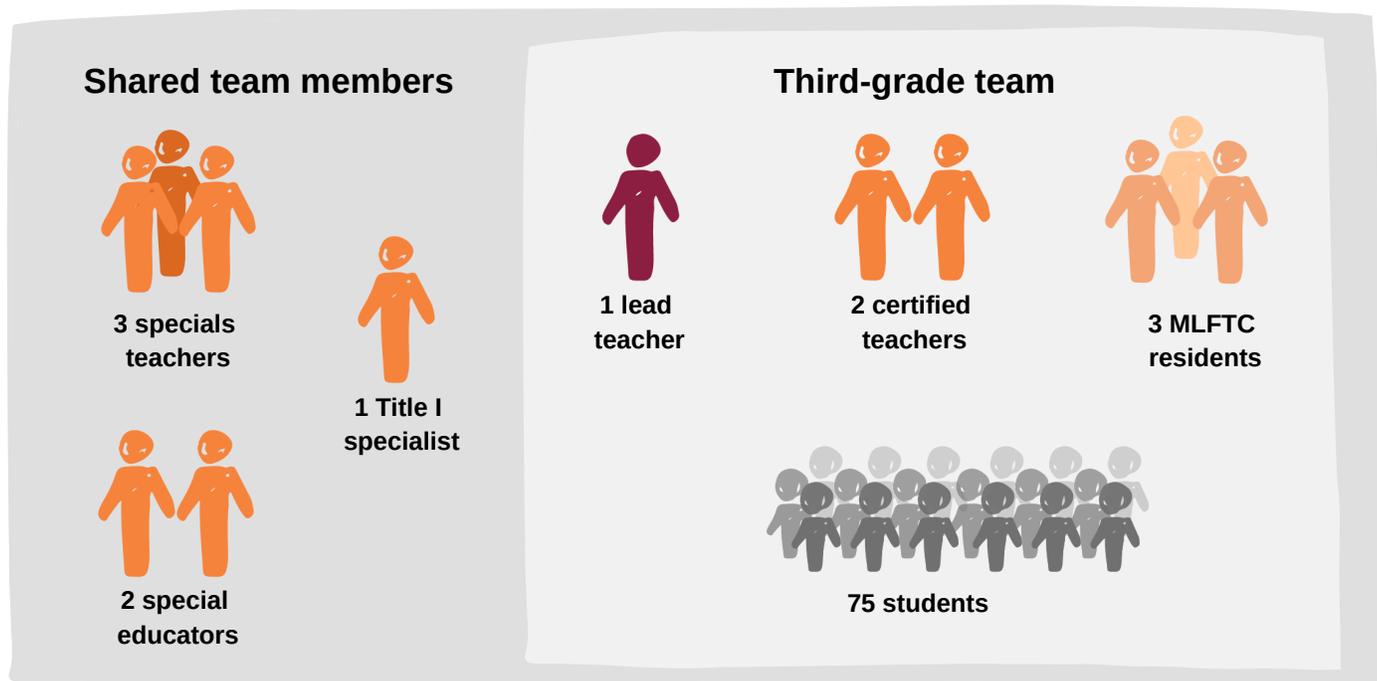
Introduction

Stevenson Elementary School is a Title I school serving approximately 570 pre-K through 6th-grade students. The 3rd-grade team is the school's first team to pilot Next Education Workforce approaches.

Teams of educators with distributed expertise

Stevenson's 3rd-grade team comprises three certified educators and three MLFTC residents, senior-year students fully immersed in rigorous, practice-embedded experience, teacher collaboration and family engagement. The team distributes expertise by co-planning in pairs (one certified teacher paired with one resident): two educators lead math planning, another two educators lead reading and writing workshop planning, and the last two educators lead planning for science, social studies, inquiry learning and social-emotional learning.

One of the certified educators also serves as the team's lead teacher. The responsibilities of the lead teacher include coordinating professional learning for the MLFTC residents, structuring communication with families and facilitating



team meetings. The team meets daily: four days a week, they meet for instructional co-planning during specials instruction; one day a week, they meet for a longer period of time to analyze student learning data.

Additionally, the team is supported by a number of team members who work across grade levels. The school's Title I specialist supports the team with planning for deeper and personalized learning and analysis of student learning data in all content areas. Two special educators join the team daily for reading intervention time, and specials teachers work with students to provide instruction in physical education, music and the media center.

Deeper and personalized learning

The 3rd-grade team prioritizes students' deeper and personalized learning in several ways, including:

- **Genius Hour:** Students build agency in their own learning by brainstorming topics that interest them, engaging in research and presenting their findings to their peers.
- **Inquiry learning:** The team takes an inquiry learning approach to teaching literacy, science and social studies.
- **Reading interventions:** Students work in small groups during daily reading intervention time, where they receive individualized support based on reading data collected throughout the week.
- **Social-emotional learning:** Social-emotional learning instruction is provided daily during homeroom and is embedded in content area classes.

Learn more about each of these below.

Genius Hour

During Genius Hour, students build agency in their own learning by brainstorming topics that interest them, engaging in research and presenting their findings to their peers. Students build their own timelines for the projects, sometimes brainstorming, researching and presenting over the course of a couple days and sometimes engaging with the same topic for weeks.

In addition to building students' agency, the educator team observed that Genius Hour seems to increase students' confidence in taking risks and sharing their ideas with others. As they become excited about what they are learning, their eagerness to share with peers increases, and that interest and willingness to learn and share seems to "spill over" to other content area classes.

“ Doing Genius Hour was a gamechanger for us. It opened our eyes to all the things the kids can do.

— School leader, Stevenson Elementary School

Inquiry learning

The team takes an inquiry approach to teaching literacy, science and social studies.

For literacy instruction, the team leverages materials from Lucy Calkins' Units of Study. During Reader's Workshop, educators are working to shift how students view reading instruction by focusing on learners becoming readers and framing learning around skills that "good readers" use. Students select their own books that match both their interests and their reading levels, which helps to ensure decoding and fluency skills aren't barriers to reading comprehension. Writer's Workshop units are framed around overarching, authentic themes like crafting true stories or writing a non-fiction book to teach others about a topic of interest. During this time, educators take the complex task of writing and break it down into smaller skills so that students are able to build incrementally toward completion of a larger-scale writing project.

Science and social studies is taught as an interdisciplinary class. Units are question-driven (e.g., "How do humans interact with the Earth?"). Students take ownership of their own learning by pursuing answers to the driving question and choose how they will present their findings to their peers.

Reading intervention

Students work in small groups during daily reading intervention time, where they receive individualized support based on reading data collected throughout the week. The educator team collectively diagnosed student reading levels at the beginning of the year and grouped students based on their needs. The team then matched these groups with educators based on educator strengths. Two special educators also join the team during this time to provide specialized support. Students move between groups as necessary.

Social-emotional learning

Social-emotional learning instruction is provided daily during homeroom. During this time, students engage in targeted lessons on interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (e.g., self-direction, self-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making), check in one-on-one with their homeroom teachers about their general well-being and academic progress, and engage in reflection and goal-setting relative to their Zones of Regulation.

Additionally, team members embed social-emotional learning in their content area lessons. For example, while reading *Because of Winn Dixie* (DiCamillo, 2000), educators provided guiding questions about the relationships between characters in the story (e.g., “How did the relationship between father and daughter change over time?”) and also prompted students to make social-emotional learning connections to their own lives (e.g., “How has a key relationship in your life changed over time?”).

Specializations and advancement pathways

The 3rd-grade team has been developed to include a continuum of educator roles, and the team plans to incorporate community educators in the near future.

- **Educational leaders:** One of the certified educators on the team serves as the team’s lead teacher. Additionally, the team is supported by a Title I specialist.
- **Professional educators:** The team includes three certified educators (one of whom is the team’s lead teacher) and three MLFTC residents. Additionally, two special educators join the team daily for reading intervention time, and specials teachers work with students to provide instruction in physical education, music and the media center.
- **Community educators:** The team is currently in the planning stages of identifying community educators who will work with students during Genius Hour.

The lead teacher ensures all team members have just-right responsibilities. For example, the certified math teacher focuses deeply on math instruction and support, including planning for and implementing math intervention groups. MLFTC residents’ strengths and areas for growth are considered in matching them with a certified teacher, and early in the year, residents do not teach large groups of students independently. They take on more teaching responsibilities over time and progress to teaching classes independently quickly; however, the team ensures they always have another educator to call on for support.