

ALPHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BLANCA ALVARADO MIDDLE SCHOOL

PROMOTING A GROWTH MINDSET THROUGH STUDENT OWNERSHIP

“ We know we have to give students the core content they need. But we’re also firm believers that character development is just as important for their long-term success. ”

JOHN GLOVER, ALPHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

KEY FEATURES:

- ✓ New School
- ✓ Station Rotation Blended Model
- ✓ Social-Emotional Learning
- ✓ Next Generation Staffing Model
- ✓ Extended Learning Time

AT A GLANCE:

Start Date: Fall 2012
Grades Served: 6–8
Location: San Jose, CA
Operator: Alpha Public Schools
Operator Type: Charter
Setting: Urban
Students at Start: 170
Students at Capacity: 430

MODEL TOOLBOX:

Learning Management System:
Google Sites

Student Information System:
Illuminate

Gradebook: Illuminate

Assessment Tools and Approaches:
Illuminate DnA, NWEA MAP, Kickboard, Internally created benchmark exams, STAR (Renaissance Learning)

Digital Content Providers: Achieve 3000, ST Math, Khan Academy, Accelerated Reader, IXL, NoRedInk, Newsela

Hardware: Lenovo ThinkPads (students); MacBooks and iPads (teachers)

Alpha Public Schools believes that content mastery, while key, is not enough for today’s students.

For students to thrive in college and beyond, they must be intellectually curious, have strong character, and understand what it means to behave professionally. At Alpha: Blanca Alvarado Middle School, a blended school in San Jose, California, strong interpersonal relationships and character development are at the model’s core.

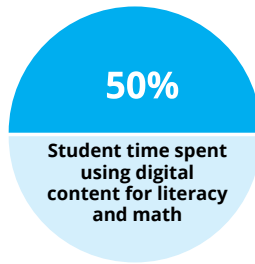
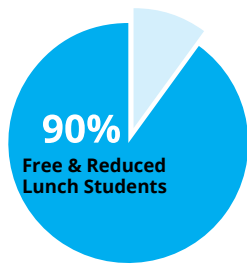
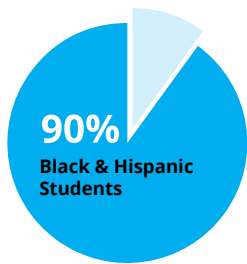
Alpha’s blended approach centers on self-contained classrooms where teachers deliver instruction in all core content areas. One teacher stays with a class of 34 students throughout the day and throughout the year. This approach lets teachers develop strong relationships with students at a time when students need that bond most. Within a single classroom, students rotate between computer-based activities and small group instruction. By integrating technology and delivering a significant portion of the core curriculum online, Alpha students will succeed by moving through content at their individual level of mastery and pace, and receive teacher-led instruction informed by

real-time data from their online content.

During each lesson, a master teacher works with 17 students, engaging them through small group instruction and activities in one section of the room while the rest of the class works through online content at individual computers. Master teachers design classroom time, refine student rotation groups, select content, and guide students to targeted activities and curriculum. Learning coaches—often noncredentialed teachers seeking to gain valuable experience—help provide one-to-one coaching, feedback, and support for students as they work through digital content. Typically, a learning coach will rotate between two classrooms. After spending time in this role, many learning coaches will go on to become Alpha teachers, creating an ongoing pipeline of new talent.

Individual learning plans (ILPs) are created by students and teachers in Goalbook to map each student’s learning trajectory. In a single, easy-to-digest snapshot, ILPs show performance data on the student’s homework, online activities, and assessments. Using that data, students

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BLENDED SUBJECTS:
Math, Literacy, Foreign Language

BY THE NUMBERS:

Year 1 public revenue per pupil: \$8,828
 Year 1 expenses per pupil: \$9,410
 Year 4 revenue per pupil: \$8,186
 Year 4 expenses per pupil: \$7,748
 Years to sustainability: 2

are encouraged, through teacher coaching, to set and revise new goals every six weeks.

Data dashboards also help teachers and learning coaches individualize instruction and identify which students might be ready for accelerated tasks and which might need peer coaching or direct instruction on a specific topic. ILPs also help determine how students spend a daily, 45-minute academic enrich-

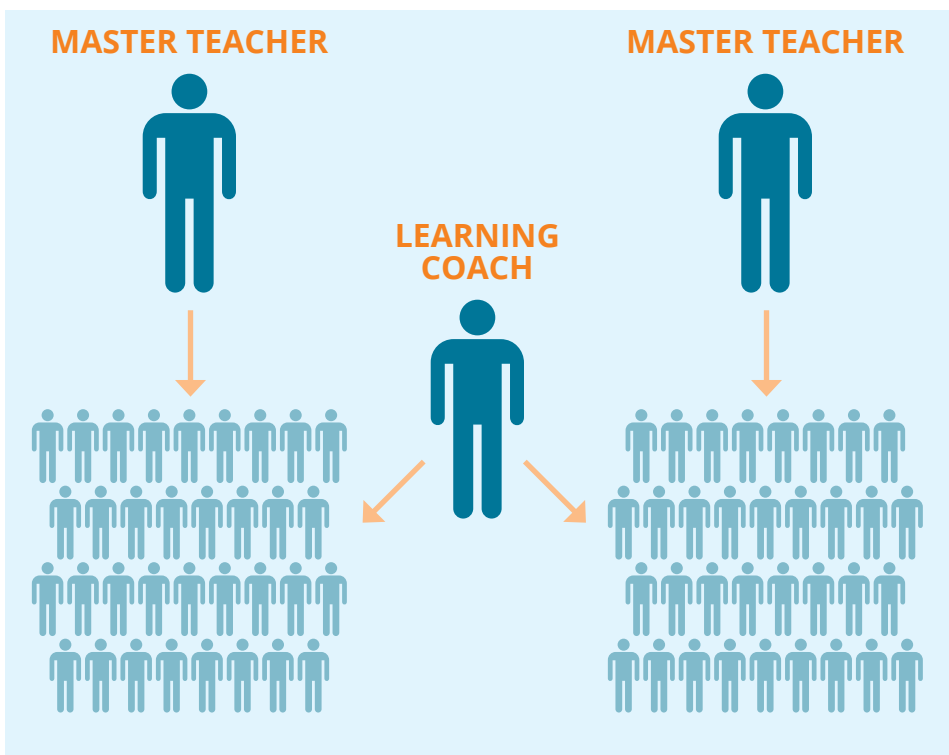
ment period; one student might spend this time working through word problems in a circle of peers, while another might access more challenging courses online. Over time, Alpha hopes to empower students to take greater control of their own goal setting and learning trajectories.

Alpha's blended model features a longer school year, a monthly Saturday academy for students who

are behind, and an after-school academy for struggling students. It also includes recurring "Data Days" in which teachers engage in professional development by diving deeper into student performance data, analyzing key trends, identifying more targeted interventions, and receiving formative feedback on their performance from peers.

Alpha's overall approach allows for personalized, mastery-based instruction that benefits students, as well as the efficiency and financial sustainability that lets schools thrive and scale in the current funding environment. Alpha serves as a receiving school for students who graduate both from Rocketship, an expanding blended elementary school in the same low-income neighborhood, and from other neighborhood schools. Alpha aims to enable students to continue the progress made at Rocketship and provide a model for blended learning in the secondary grades.

By creating an exceptional new school in a community where most schools fail, Alpha: Blanca Alvarado Middle School intends to serve as a model for replication in other communities with high-poverty, high-minority populations where academic performance levels and graduation rates fall short not only of the state average but also of student potential.



Individual teachers work with classrooms of 34 students. Learning coaches, non-credentialed instructors often searching for classroom experience, work with two classrooms and provide support to 68 students.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

School URL: <http://www.alphapublicschools.org/our-schools/alpha-middle-school>
 Operator URL: <http://www.alphapublicschools.org> | Contact: John Glover, john@alphapublicschools.org



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