

Rose Mary Haggar Elementary | Plano ISD | 17820 Campbell Road | Dallas, TX 75252 | 469-752-1400
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Overview and Background

Rose Mary Haggar (RMH) Elementary is a Pre-K-5th grade school, home to approximately 575 Mariners, located in Dallas, TX. We are a Title I school with a 17% mobility rate serving students who represent a wide variety of diverse backgrounds. We pride ourselves on providing kids with a miniature version of the real world they'll live and work in one day.

During the 2015-2016 school year, RMH had the highest elementary suspension rate in our school district, reporting nearly seventy removal days. A change in school leadership brought about an emphasis on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Restorative Practices (RP) in an effort to educate and equip teachers and to keep kids in class. Most importantly, the purpose of this work was to ensure that we're providing a school environment that meets the social and academic needs of all learners. Under new leadership, the priority became making our school a place where teachers want to teach, where parents want to send their kids, and, above all, a place where kids want to be every day.

Focus Area

The Statement of Principal for Article V: Organizational Transformation promotes creating "conditions and capacities most conducive for leaders, teachers, and students to perform at high levels," which blends beautifully with what we are *for* as educators. Our RMH mission states that we believe in "...teaching, inspiring, and growing the whole child," and Article V: Organizational Transformation has been foundational in bringing this mission to life.

Our Work

The transformation of our campus culture and learning environment, in alignment with the High Reliability Schools framework, has included intentional work by all staff members over the course of four school years. Our mission drives our work, and we are proud of our efforts that have led to a culture of collective accountability.

We started simply by looking at data and agreed that transformation was necessary, but it wasn't just about changing discipline. It was about changing everything that happens prior to the need for disciplinary action or intervention. If we could be proactive in our approach, it would have great potential impact on the reactive end. We identified three basic expectations for staff and students, "At Haggar, I can take care of myself, take care of others, and take care of this place." From there, we immersed ourselves in learning about SEL and RP. The staff was asked to *trust the process* as we dove headfirst into what we knew, based on research, would be a 3-5 year implementation process. We worked together to create SEL Targets, which are posted daily just like academic targets in each classroom. They are simple "I Can..." statements that align with the five SEL competencies. These statements send the message that social growth is just as critical as academic growth for the young learners at our school. We created calm down/safe spaces in every classroom, complete with tools and breathing strategies, and we implemented classroom circles as a daily practice.

All staff members have copies of the Restorative Question cards that we use when students have a conflict. The questions, which are now second nature, initially gave staff the language to use to approach a problem through a non-accusatory lens and to allow all parties the opportunity to speak and share their feelings. The teacher becomes the facilitator, the students become the problem-solvers, and the focus on relationship repair means everyone walks away with a solution and commitment. To this end, we were able to call upon an Eagle Scout to paint Peace Paths on our playgrounds, further providing students the language and power to problem-solve together.

This work couldn't be just about the students. An incredibly critical piece was strengthening staff relationships and trust in one another. Together we wrote Staff Relationship Agreements and Instructional Expectations, which are hung in every classroom and in staff work areas throughout the building. When things appear to be heading off course, we go back to these grounding documents. Staff have been given the opportunity on multiple occasions to respond to surveys that allow building leadership to stay in touch

with the pulse of the campus and any underlying concerns. At one point early on in our transformation, the surveys screamed for help and support, so we got together as a staff and combed through next steps with an emphasis on honest, transparent dialogue. It's the only way to get better, and our Staff Relationship Agreements allow such conversations to happen safely. Further, in an effort to help us continue to learn and grow, our PTA funded self-care and wellness training for staff. Brene Brown says, "...we can't practice compassion with other people if we can't treat ourselves kindly." We know that teachers who are in a good place can be their best for kids; our community's financial backing of training shows that they believe the same, and that they believe in our staff.

Throughout our implementation of SEL and RP, we have relied on focus groups for feedback, reflection, and planning. Focus groups have included staff, students, and parents, and oftentimes have been led by non-administrative campus leaders. The goal has been to create a safe place for honest dialogue and reflection. Further, student council officers participate in quarterly principal lunches to discuss the state of the school and to be a voice for the student body.

Our community is critical to our campus culture, and we have opened our doors to those who have the desire to volunteer in our school. We welcome parents, grandparents, other relatives, high schoolers, and community members as mentors and classroom volunteers for both academic and social purposes. In order to keep the community informed, and to bridge the work being done at school to home, we include an SEL Spotlight in our monthly eNews to parents. We use this space to share videos, tips, articles, and the like to give parents the tools to reinforce at home the work we're doing at school.

SEL is now just part of who we are and what we do. It informs our discussions about students, our hiring practices, and our daily planning. However, it's still critical to keep current research and a variety of resources available for staff. To this end, a significant portion of our staff website is dedicated to SEL and RP. We include pictures and videos, morning circle protocols, links to learning opportunities and on-campus resources, and positive behavior supports. We also maintain a Google Classroom for staff use that is updated regularly with relevant articles, videos, and classroom materials to continue to support our SEL efforts. We know that learning, whether social or academic, can't happen in isolation, so SEL practices are deeply embedded into all aspects of our day-to-day.

Results

Our intensive SEL implementation has truly transformed our relationships and our work. Where once the focus was largely on managing student behaviors, we've now created an environment where meaningful learning - in any capacity - is at the forefront. Now in our 4th year of implementation, teachers are seeing and celebrating the fruits of their labors. They continue to trust the process, knowing that the work is never complete. We strive to educate ourselves and our community about ways to equip students with the skills they'll need for a successful future, we agree to teach instead of punish, and we always put relationships first in order to create conditions conducive to high levels of learning for all. The removal number that was so large in 2015-2016 has changed significantly, as we reported six total removal days in 2018-2019, and we're on track for another low-number year. It's not because our population or our struggles have changed; it's because the way we do our work has changed. Our decisions and responses to various student and staff needs are grounded in our SEL practices.

Because of our ongoing commitment to this transformative work, we were recently awarded a sizeable grant through Baylor Scott & White Plano that will allow us to further our implementation of SEL. The grant confirms what we already knew about the importance of our work, and it allows the opportunity to continue doing the right work for our learners and our staff for years to come.