

Lytle Elementary School - Principal Wendy Carroll-Conover

Transforming Education Through Rigor, Relationships, and Innovation

At our campus, transformation is the core of everything we do, driving our mission to provide rigorous, student-centered learning experiences. Over the past three and a half years, we have committed to implementing High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) with unwavering fidelity, positioning our school as a recognized leader in Texas education. This dedication aligns with Article V of the Visioning Document, which calls for organizational transformation, collaboration, and innovation to meet modern learning standards. Through the insights gained from the Principal Institutes within the N2Learning program, I have been able to guide our campus toward a mindset of continuous improvement, fostering growth and innovation at every level.

By applying these strategies, our team is embracing rigor, building stronger relationships with students, and implementing innovative practices that are advancing education across Texas. We are creating an environment where both students and educators thrive—fostering a culture of excellence that not only supports academic success but also cultivates a sense of belonging and purpose for all involved. As a result, we are transforming education into a dynamic force for positive change, one that reflects the needs and aspirations of today's learners.

As recipients of the prestigious HQIM Innovators Grant, we have welcomed educators from across Texas and the nation to our campus. During a visit, Texas Commissioner of Education Mike Morath remarked, 'The rigor is impressive.' Visitors observe not just teaching but a masterful integration of planning, internalization, and engagement, ensuring students are active participants in their education. This work reflects a transformation-focused approach that prioritizes meaningful student engagement, aligning with V.b and V.i of the Visioning Document.

A Culture of Risk-Taking and Collaboration

Excellence on our campus stems from the dedication of passionate educators who embrace risk-taking in a collaborative, student-centered environment built on trust and positive relationships. For seven consecutive years, we have proudly been recognized as a Capturing Kids' Hearts National Showcase School, a testament to our unwavering commitment to fostering a culture where respect, collaboration, and relationships thrive. This positive campus culture, where trust is foundational, empowers staff to bring innovative ideas forward, such as the successful implementation of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) and the collaborative move to a departmentalized structure for grades 2-5. Our teachers are secure enough to allow students to engage in productive struggle, even when the work is challenging, fostering resilience and deeper understanding. By valuing relationships and creating a safe space for open dialogue and professional growth, we have cultivated an environment where profound learning flourishes, aligning with Vision V.j and inspiring both students and staff to reach new levels of excellence.

Our work also exemplifies V.g by prioritizing leadership development. Through training in the Get Better Faster coaching feedback model, our leadership team has aligned on effective coaching strategies that empower teachers and drive campus improvement. At every level, we are united in our mission to prepare students for a future where they thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Driving Excellence Through Innovation

This past year marks a milestone in our transformation journey as we completed the data capture year for the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA). Our collective focus on student growth, improving T-TESS evaluations, and achieving higher performance underscores our shared commitment to fostering a student-centered, high-achievement environment. By leveraging HQIM, our educators design tasks that go beyond surface-level engagement, ensuring students deeply "own" their learning—a direct alignment with V.i and V.j.

After a year of implementing HQIM programs across ELAR and Math content areas, we began exploring the idea of departmentalizing. This concept quickly gained momentum, evolving into a campus-wide collaboration that led to the decision to departmentalize our second through fifth-grade campus. Our shared commitment to becoming content experts drives this approach, enabling educators to develop deep expertise and effectively meet the rigorous demands of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). This transformation has elevated teaching and learning, inspiring both students and staff to set higher goals and pursue greater aspirations.

National and Statewide Recognition

The intentionality of our work has brought widespread attention. From hosting the Texas Education Agency (TEA) curriculum developers, film crew, and members of the Texas Board of Education to welcoming representatives from the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and over 200 Texas educators, our campus has become a model for excellence. These visits reinforce that our approach—centered on rigorous instruction, student engagement, and HQIM—is transforming education.

Our Collective "Why"

At the heart of this transformation is a shared "why." We believe every student deserves a world-class education that challenges them to think critically, engage deeply, and prepare for a future beyond the classroom. Our HQIM work aligns with V.a, V.b, and V.g, showcasing our commitment to empowering educators, fostering student engagement, and maintaining a positive campus culture. Relationships, collaboration, and risk-taking remain the foundation of our success, enabling us to inspire students and educators alike.

Looking Ahead

As we continue to evolve, our focus remains steadfast: transforming learning, fostering engagement, and embracing innovation. Together, we are creating a legacy of excellence that not only prepares students for success but also inspires others to reimagine what is possible in education.