

Schools Transforming Learning Application

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River Bend Elementary, College Station ISD

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Overview and Background:

River Bend Elementary, the 10th elementary school in College Station ISD, opened its doors in August 2019. Since then, it has been dedicated to fostering an environment of learning and growth for approximately 525 students, ranging from early childhood through fourth grade. As a Title One campus, River Bend is committed to providing educational opportunities that ensure all students, regardless of their background, can succeed.

The school is deeply rooted in a strong, supportive, and involved community of families. River Bend's culture centers around the idea that "all bears belong," a mindset that emphasizes inclusivity and belonging as the foundation of a positive learning environment. This transformational mindset is integral to how the school approaches education, as it believes that a sense of belonging is where true learning begins for every student.

This school year, River Bend has adopted the theme, "Be All In - Whatever It Takes." This theme reflects the school's shared commitment to ensuring the success of all learners. It encourages both students and adults to fully engage in the learning process, fostering a culture where the growth of both student and adult learners is equally valued. The school's mission of "Ensuring excellence and unique success for every learner, every day" guides this commitment, highlighting the belief that adults are learners alongside students, contributing to the collaborative effort to achieve excellence in education.

Focus Area: Organizational Change, Assessment and New Learning Standards:

In alignment Article V in the Visioning Document, "We believe that a learning organization can create the conditions and capacities most conducive for leaders, teachers, and students to perform at high levels and meet the expectations of new learning standards," River Bend Elementary has embraced a shift in mindset that has been pivotal to our success. Last school year, we challenged our educators to reflect on how we would speak, act, and behave if we truly believed all students could achieve high levels of success. We asked ourselves what changes we would need to make to adopt this mindset. We recognized a shift from seeing students as "mine" to recognizing them as "ours" would be instrumental in driving the organizational change needed to ensure all students reach their full potential.

Transforming a campus culture built on collaboration and shared responsibility is our priority. This environment has strengthened our growth as a professional learning community, supporting our collective commitment to student success. Through this culture of collaboration, our educators regularly examine data both within grade-level teams and vertically across the entire campus during collaborative team meetings (Article III: Assessments for Learning). This data-driven approach ensures that we are meeting the diverse needs of our students. In turn, we design skill-based, standards-centered instruction that is both engaging and purposeful, ensuring that all students receive the appropriate level of intervention or enrichment based on their individual needs (Article II: The New Learning Standards).

The Work:

When we first began this journey of transformation, we knew that to achieve our goal of ensuring all students performed at the highest level, we had to operate as a true professional learning community. This meant removing the barriers that had previously stood in the way of collaboration and building a culture where trust and openness flourished. Educators needed to feel comfortable sharing data not only within grade-level teams but across the entire campus. We had to trust one another to ensure that quality instruction was

taking place during flexible group time, a time when students move between classrooms to receive instruction from educators outside their core content area.

This was no small feat as it required significant risk-taking and a tremendous amount of commitment from our educators. But through shared dedication to student success and a relentless determination, we have transformed the way we work together. Today, our commitment to student success is woven into the daily routines of our grade-level teams. Every day at 2:15 p.m., as students transition to enrichment clubs, educators gather in the Bear Den for collaborative team meetings. These meetings serve as the heart of our transformation, where educators engage in thoughtful discussions about student data, design common formative assessments, and identify essential standards for upcoming units. During these collaborative huddles, it's not just about planning instruction, it's about fostering an ongoing, dynamic conversation focused on the growth of both students and educators.

These meetings have become a space where educators actively contribute to each other's work, demonstrating the success of our collaborative efforts. If you were to join one of these meetings, you might have difficulty determining who the "classroom teacher" is because the conversation is so deeply collaborative. Educators across content areas are speaking with a shared understanding of student progress, which is exactly the goal we set out to achieve.

A central aspect of these discussions is the design of various assessments, which provide valuable feedback to both students and educators. These assessments gauge student understanding and inform the creation of targeted learning experiences. The data from these assessments directly drives our flexible grouping model, where students are strategically placed in skill-based, standards-centered lessons during two 30-minute blocks of protective instructional time embedded into our master schedule. By sorting students based on the specific skills they need, they receive engaging, personalized instruction from different educators, often experiencing varied teaching styles or methods that best address their individual needs. This adaptive approach ensures that learning remains responsive to each student's growth.

Results:

At River Bend, our shift to a collaborative, student-centered approach has transformed both teaching and learning. By viewing students as a collective responsibility, we've fostered a growth-oriented culture where educators collaborate, share strategies, and design assessments together. As a result, we've built a strong professional learning community committed to student success.

Collectively designing assessments has provided valuable feedback to both students and educators while driving the success of our flexible grouping model. This personalized instruction based on individual student needs, has been key in closing learning gaps specifically in historically underperforming student groups. Many students who once needed intervention are now thriving without additional support.

Positive feedback from students further highlights the success of these changes as they express excitement about learning from different educators and focusing on essential skills they need to progress in their learning. This success is a direct result of our educators' willingness to embrace new roles, take risks, and trust one another. We are proud that River Bend continues to create an environment where the entire school community is dedicated to student success, ensuring ongoing growth and achievement for both student and adult learners.