

Ridgewood Elementary, Frenship ISD
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OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

As a new campus in our second year, every part our story is rooted in intentionality--intentional decisions that clearly prioritize what matters most for students, intentional alignment of our work to a shared vision and mission, and intentional cultivation of a fun yet focused culture where academic and emotional growth for students is as important as professional and personal growth for educators.

Last year, as a brand-new campus, we dedicated five months to the deliberate creation of our vision and mission. This was not a checkbox or a compliance task—it was a collaborative process that involved deep conversations, honest reflection, and a shared commitment to defining *why* we exist and *how* we show up for our students and their families. Our campus leadership was clear and consistent in communicating the purpose behind this work, ensuring that every staff member had a voice in it and understood not just the words of the vision, but the beliefs that bring it to life. Now in year two, that clarity continues to guide us. Our leadership remains focused on empowering and inspiring every staff member by creating space for teachers to take ownership of their practice, take bold risks, and center every decision on what serves our students in a meaningful way that drives growth—for them and for us.

FOCUS AREAS

From the beginning, our campus work has been closely aligned with the vision outlined in *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas*, particularly Article II: The New Learning Standards, II.i, which calls for guidance given to teachers' daily work so they can make the content standards clear and compelling to their students for each unit of focus. This work serves as our instructional foundation that provides coherent, vertically aligned learning focused on essential standard knowledge and student mastery. Not only does our vision guide our instructional decisions but it has shaped who we are as a learning community.

In alignment with Article II.i, Ridgewood is deeply committed to transforming learning by prioritizing essential standards and ensuring coherence across grade levels. We work diligently on gaining clarity of our standards and what is required to help students master them. Teachers collaborate vertically and by team to identify essential standards, clarify expectations, and get crystal clear on what each grade level “owns” in their standards that they have in common. This focus reflects the spirit of the New Learning Standards—moving beyond coverage to depth, understanding, and relevance. By narrowing our focus to what matters most, teachers can design learning experiences that spark critical thinking, authentic application, and sustained student engagement. And yes—this involves taking risks. Trying new strategies and stepping outside comfort zones are all part of the process. It is work that is never truly finished, but with each iteration, we refine, learn and grow together.

WORK

One day each week, we dedicate 90 minutes for two grade levels at a time to collaborate while students dive into enrichment activities. During this time, our principal guides teachers in refining PLC processes and determining what evidence is needed for students to show mastery of essential standards. We continually hone these processes to ensure that teachers are clear and confident on their content, expectations, and most effective instructional practices. PLCs are not simply meetings; they are collaborative spaces where educators analyze student learning, reflect on practice, and make targeted adjustments to instruction. Teachers also participate in learning walks to observe and apply best practices from their peers. This work requires vulnerability, trust and a willingness to take risks—hallmarks of our campus culture.

At Ridgewood, our work is focused on transforming learning while keeping student engagement at the heart of everything we do. Transformation doesn't happen in isolation. At the core of who we are, we prioritize a positive campus culture that values relationships, collaboration, and connection. Our House System is a perfect example: it strengthens bonds among staff and students and creates a strong sense of belonging. We are six houses, but one family. The Ridgewood House System also reinforces student engagement by ensuring that every student is known, supported, and celebrated. It models the collaborative spirit we aim for—breaking down silos and fostering collective responsibility every learner's success. Students who might never otherwise interact are seen cheering each other on—sometimes with nothing more than a sign language hand signal in the hallway. The connection is real, and it drives learning forward.

RESULTS

Campus leadership plays a critical role in sustaining this work. One of the most impactful results of our Ridgewood brand is in building leadership capacity within the staff. Our goal was and is to empower teachers to lead through multiple avenues. We chose to forego traditional grade level team leaders for two distinct teams that focus on different goals: 1) Campus Council oversees managerial and task-related decisions and 2) Mission Drivers have the primary responsibility of leading their grade level team in the PLC process. This distributed leadership model reinforces a culture where learning is continuous. This results in improved outcomes for students and adults alike.

In an incredibly short time, we have witnessed a powerful transformation—students and staff who were once strangers have become a unified, purpose-driven community. What has taken shape at Ridgewood is not accidental; it is the result of our focused work, shared beliefs, and a collective commitment to something bigger than any one individual. While our campus story is still being written, the foundation is unmistakably strong. By aligning our work to Article II: The New Learning Standards, prioritizing vertical coherence and essential learning, we are transforming learning in ways that are meaningful, sustainable, and impactful. What truly sets Ridgewood apart is not simply what we do, but *how* we do it. This is the very heart of our work. This is our story--the Ridgewood story.