



Case Study of Burr Elementary School

PRINCIPAL: JASON BLUESTEIN

Fairfield began a partnership with TC by establishing a relationship between one elementary school—Burr—and TCRWP. The school is now heralded as a school performing above expectations. Burr’s population is 30.4% minority, of which 9% are Latinx/Hispanic, 9% of students identify as two or more races, and 60% are white.

This year, Burr Elementary received recognition as number 43 out of 560 schools. As readers, 82% of students scored 3’s and 4’s—at or above proficiency—as one of the top performing schools in the district, where 78% of students tested at or above the proficient level for reading.



Jason Bluestein, the principal, says the school’s focus is engagement and independence. He attributes the school’s success to the school’s partnership with TCRWP and to the strength of the teachers—individually and especially, collectively. He explains, “At this school, we all believe that collaboration leads to success. We work collaboratively to look at students as individuals. And when we focus on individuals, we do so knowing that for certain, every student at this school, without excuses, without exceptions, will be proficient or above proficient in reading, writing and math. We are totally and absolutely committed to the academic success of every student in our school.” Jason adds, “That’s our conviction, and the partnership with TCRWP has helped us make that vision into a reality.”

One of the secret’s to Burr’s success has been an energetic effort to bring the workshop approach across the content areas. Principal Bluestein states, “We help students be independent, self-directed thinkers, speakers, readers, writers, mathematicians, historians, and scientists. Students read in a variety of genres, they write across the curriculum. As twenty-first century learners, we expect them to critically think, communicate, and explore content from multiple perspectives.”

Teachers guide students to make their own goals and then channel the tools and resources that come with the Units of Study (and others that teachers invent) to support students in achieving those goals. Much of this involves small group instruction, and of course those small groups are informed by data. Because of the school’s focus on engagement and self-direction, the small groups are all about enabling students to do the work they care about. As you walk the halls of Burr, you see students everywhere, reading, discussing, illustrating and promoting books.



Reflecting on his school’s history, Principal Bluestein says, “The journey to today wasn’t easy, and we couldn’t have done this without our partnership with TCRWP.” He has become the schools #1 learner, attending professional development sessions himself right alongside his staff. He joins his staff in studying the workshop pedagogy and curriculum. A language arts supervisor explained, “He’s learning with his teachers and his parent community, and that fires up everyone’s learning. Teachers at Burr are enthusiastic to take risks and try new instructional methods because the school is a learning community.”

