

## **Springlake-Earth Elementary/Junior High Campus Becomes First Rural District to Pilot the A.C.E. Program**

Springlake-Earth Elementary/Jr. High campus has elected to become an Accelerating Campus Excellence (A.C.E) school beginning this academic year, 2020-2021. The A.C.E. program sets its focus on accelerating transformation in struggling schools by implementing strong leadership, quality and effective teaching and by setting high expectations for students and staff alike, with hiring and retaining effective teachers being the core focus. Monetary incentives, for all state certified teachers and administration, is offered in order to encourage highly qualified staff (as set forth by the Texas Education Agency (T.E.A.) to come to, and remain at, underperforming schools.

The SLE Elementary/Jr. High campus was deemed to be an underperforming campus for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, based on their State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) scores. Campuses that are repeatedly deemed to be underperforming by the T.E.A. are given several options as how to address and ratify the problems that are leading to repetitive underperformance. Due to SLE ISDs remote location and the difficulty posed in recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, the district decided that becoming the first rural, small district, to pilot the A.C.E. program would be the best way to improve the overall performance of the campus.

There are five pillars upon which A.C.E. schools focus their attention: as aforementioned, strategic staffing; instructional excellence; social and emotional support; extended learning; and, supportive partnerships. SLE Elementary/Jr. High campus has implemented the following programs, incentives and changes, in order to focus their attention on these five areas:

**1. Strategic Staffing** – Certified teachers and administration have been recruited or retained. Multi-year financial incentives are provided to certified faculty (teachers – \$10,000/yr. and administrators - \$15,000/yr.). They are also offered targeted and differentiated professional development.

**2. Instructional Excellence** - Teachers are evaluated regularly throughout the year by administrator walkthroughs and by using the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) process, to ensure effective teaching, student growth and to develop a culture of effective feedback and coaching. Teachers are provided specified planning periods with grade level and/or subject-like peers. We have also implemented Data Driven Instruction (DDI) meetings, with a focus on math and reading.

**3. Extended Learning** – We have incorporated a thirty minute tutorial into the school day for students, as well as a forty minute extended day program, again with the focus being on math and reading. Benchmark testing provides us with the needed data to determine which students need these extended learning opportunities.

**4. Social and Emotional Support** – We have implemented the House System, as developed by the Ron Clark Academy, in order to focus on building positive relationships between students and staff. We have also begun using a new disciplinary model, Responsibility Centered Discipline; our staff and students know this as Give ‘Em Five. This discipline model consists of a private conversation between the student and teacher during which five steps are followed: support, breakdown, expectation, benefit and closure. Also implemented were community circles within the classroom setting, once a week, during which students’ are given a “conversation starter” and encouraged to share their ideas/thoughts with the class. No pressure is put on students to share but they are encouraged so that we can get to know each other better and feel more comfortable sharing and expressing ideas when discussing educational content.

**5. Parent and Community Partnerships** – Artwork and other beautification projects have been completed in and around the campus to encourage student and community pride throughout the campus. Also developed, was a school creed and mission poster – every classroom has a poster-size copy hanging on the wall and we recite the creed together daily. Lastly, in November of last year, a Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) was created and will continue to meet monthly this year once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

