

## Campus leaders share tips for improving outcomes for Special Education and Limited English Proficient Students

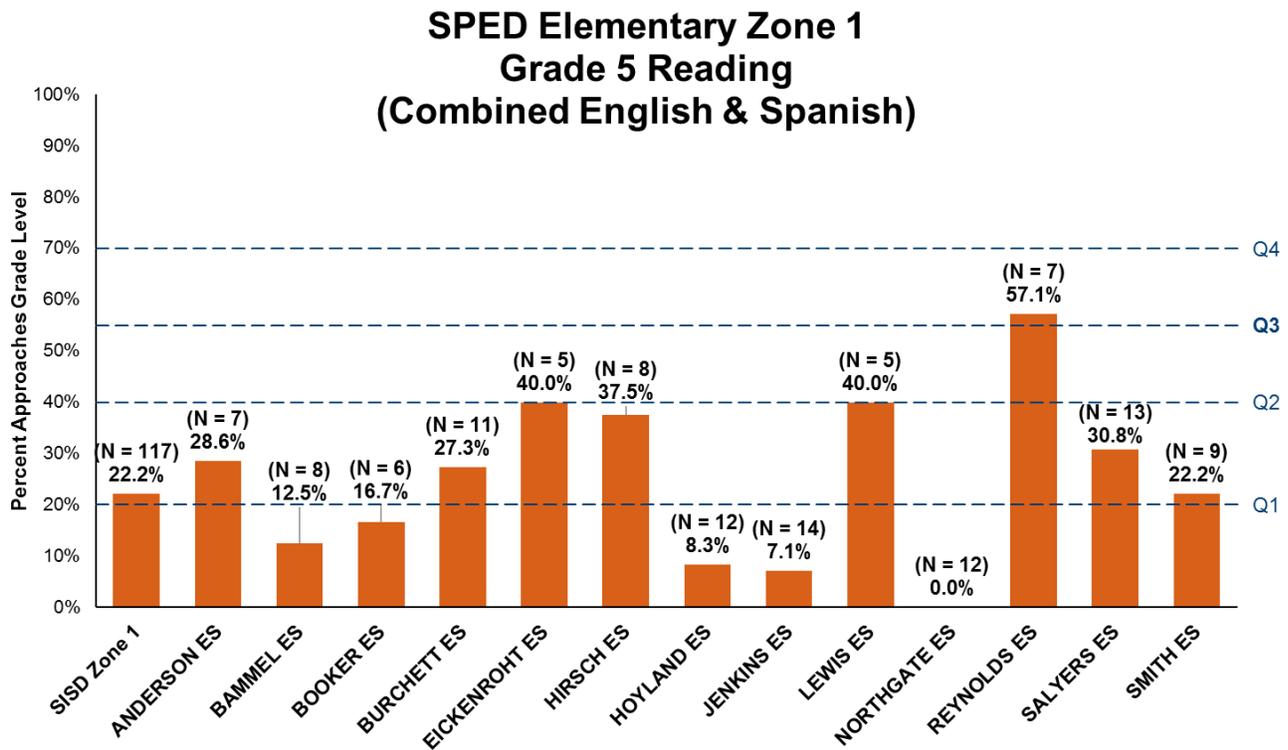
At a special meeting of the Advisory Committee on Education Monday, members heard from a panel of teachers and principals from four schools, who have successfully been able to improve academic outcomes for Special Education and English Language Learners (ELL).

“You told us you wanted to talk to the principals who are making some movement happen,” said Chief of Staff Julie Hill, who opened up the panel discussion. She reiterated that the goal for the district has been to stop having to write a Targeted Improvement Plan and to make the gains needed to improve student achievement.

“Our goal this year is annihilation,” she said. “We’ve been looking at every benchmark to see how close we’re getting to the target. Bailey and Twin Creeks have made the most progress so far. Reynolds has hit the target. Link not only met but exceeded the goal. Now you’re going to hear what they’re doing to make it happen.”

The following 90 minutes included short presentations from principals and teachers from those four campuses with an emphasis on sharing strategies and tips for success.

## Benchmark Results – Q3 Target: 55%



Source: Eduphoria, February 20, 2018.

Although each school had some unique approaches to working with Special Education and English Language Learners, there were common themes and highlights, including a focus on teamwork among the general education and inclusion teachers and a sense of priority for on-going and PLC sessions.

At Reynolds Elementary, for example, Principal Rodney Louis brings in substitutes for half a day each week to allow for teacher training and planning, especially on the TEKS requirements.

“We found that a lot of our teachers didn’t have a good understanding of the TEKS,” he said.

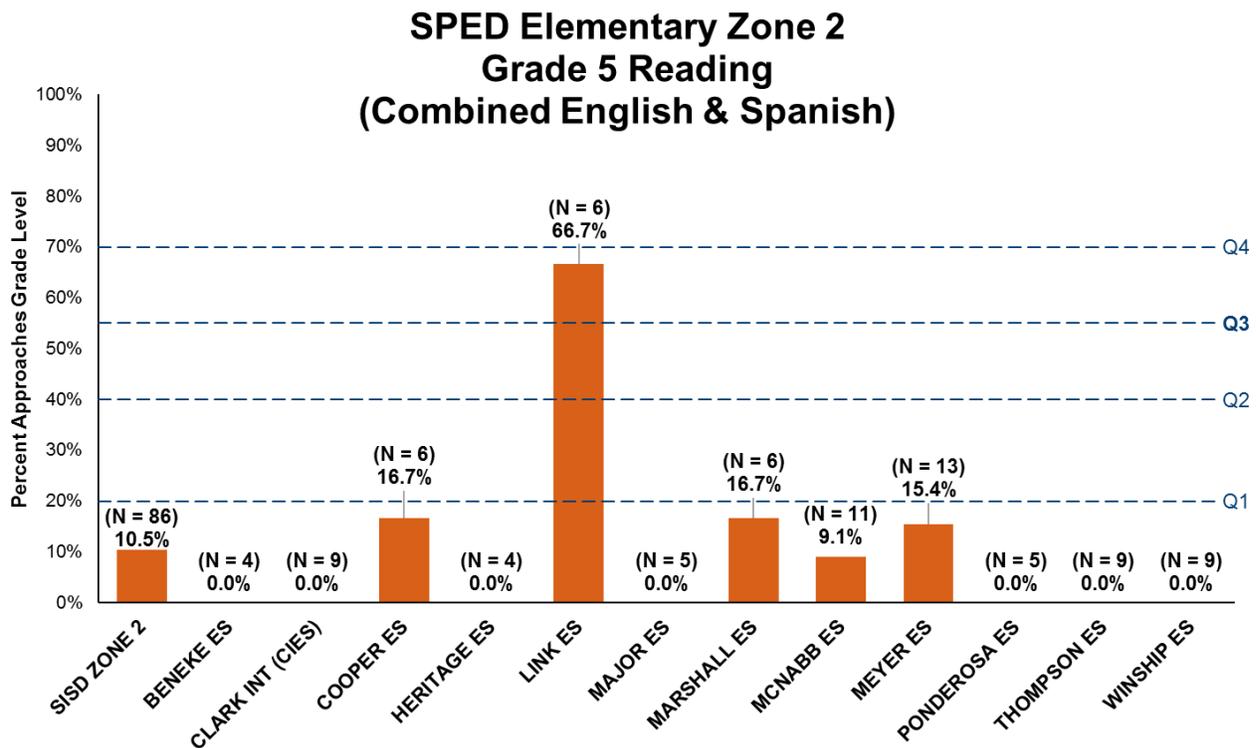
“We decided on Fridays to train the teachers how to teach the TEKS and included paras too.”

As part of that approach, the school’s math coach has worked extensively with teachers on how to use the prescribed manipulatives. The goal is to make both the teachers and students comfortable with them ahead of test day so that the students who are eligible to use them can do so with confidence.

In addition, she uses TEA supporting documents so that both students and teachers are familiar with the question stems and related content vocabulary.

On the literacy side, the coach also spends a lot of time working with the teachers and students on understanding the way questions are presented on the STAAR. She also works on building stamina among the reluctant readers so they stay focused and engaged during the test.

# Benchmark Results – Q3 Target: 55%



Source: Eduphoria, February 20, 2018.

She uses several different resources to help ensure understanding of the TEKS and Brainchild as an online resource. In particular, students can use the text-to-speech function to help build understanding.

Of all the strategies, Louis said the most important is teamwork. “Our culture is to stay the course. We’re not going to let anything get in the way. We win as a team,” he said.

At Link Elementary, Principal Justin Jones said his campus has put a lot of focus on learning, planning, implementation and monitoring. On the planning side, teachers are reviewing upcoming TEKS as much as two weeks in advance to give plenty of time for preparation. The campus also makes sure the inclusion and classroom teachers work collaboratively and seamlessly on behalf of all the students.

“I kind of think of us as co-peers,” said Sharon Parker-Jones, teacher. “We’re equal.”

At Bailey Middle School, Principal George Flores says he’s spent a lot of time creating a culture of high expectations for all students. “We really have to get out of our mind that our students can’t do something because of a label.”

In addition, he tries to focus in on the strengths of his teachers to leverage their skill sets and improve in areas where they need help. Like other campuses, they use PLC’s to address upcoming learning goals and expectations so everyone is working together.

His team also works to tailor the intensity of each intervention to the specific needs of the student to make the most of resources. There is also no obvious differentiation between the classroom and inclusion teachers so students don’t feel singled out in special education.

Some of the tools his campus uses are Achieve 3000, iReady and Edgenuity.

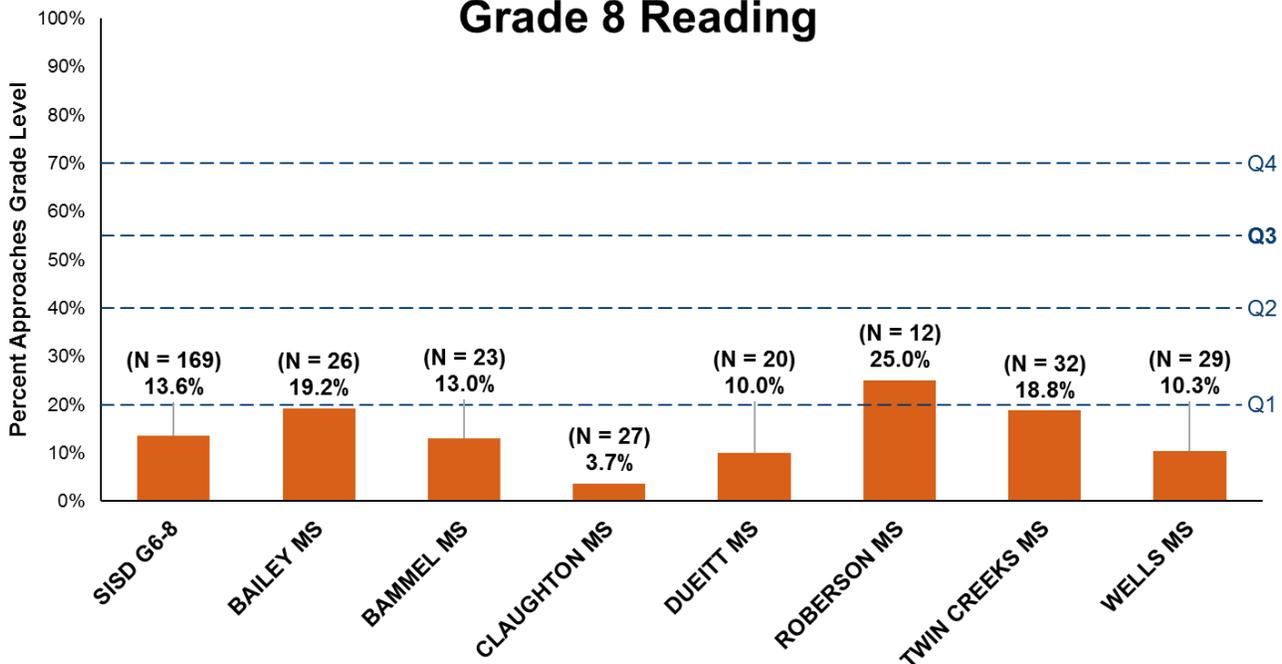
“It’s really having that passion for student learning and doing what it takes,” he said. “Don’t take anything less than their best.”

At Twin Creeks Middle School, Principal Kenisha Williams switched tutorials to Friday afternoons, rather than Saturday, to increase participation among students. Her team also spends a lot of time building a master schedule to keep co-teachers together based on their strengths.

Not only do they track data and have conferences, but they do group conferences. Teachers don’t ever just do pull-outs of special education students, but for all students so there is no stigma.

# Benchmark Results – Q3 Target: 55%

## SPED Middle Schools Grade 8 Reading



Source: Eduphoria, February 20, 2018

Note: Based on grade 8 reading only. Selected items from the full assessment were zero-weighted to reflect the curriculum covered up to the assessment date.

Reno Ford, a Twin Creeks teacher, said the goal is to build their students’ trust and confidence.

“The teachers are like coaches,” he said. “If we’re dealing with a student who doesn’t understand, we adapt and adjust.”

Among the questions raised by the ACE members were how the panelists deal with disruptive classroom behaviors.

Flores of Bailey Middle School said the key at his campus was setting the expectations at the start of the school year.

“We’re always trying to stay two steps ahead,” he said. “We’re always adjusting, but staying very consistent with our expectation.”

Superintendent Rodney Watson asked the panelists how they gauge the ability of their teachers and staff to cope with more demands.

Said Jones of Link Elementary: “The feedback and dialogue works in two ways. I’m very receptive to that feedback. My admin team can let me know. We’re not going to relent on high expectations. You do need to know when to infuse support.”

## **Creation of a Teacher Survey for Professional Development Planning**

The ACE members reviewed a proposed survey to help the district better plan upcoming professional development opportunities. That survey will be sent out later this month and close on April 17, which will allow the committee enough time to review teacher feedback and requests.

## **Up Next**

The next ACE Meeting will be held on April 24 to review a draft of the 2018-2019 District Improvement Plan.