

**Effie Morris Early Learning Academy, Lake Worth Independent School District**

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**Schools Transforming Learning Application**

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**Overview & Background**

In Summer of 2020, Lake Worth ISD realigned their campuses and created an Early Learning Academy. For the 2020-2021 school year, all PK and Kindergarten teachers in the district relocated to Effie from the three elementary campuses. The campus began a partnership with Fueling Brains, pioneers in the early childhood development domain, in an effort to create a solid foundation for early learning by changing the way we think about our earliest learners. We wanted to shift the paradigm about early childhood to focus on brain development, specifically Executive Function, which includes Inhibitory Control, Cognitive Flexibility, and Working Memory, because we believed (and still believe) that we shouldn't immerse children in rigorous content if their brains aren't fully developed. We wanted to focus on teaching our students how to learn before we taught them what to learn.

**Focus Area**

At Effie, we are committed to Organizational Transformation. We believe specifically in the following items from the Visioning Document, and we work daily to ensure that our practices are representative of our beliefs.

“Excellence emanates from a shared commitment to values and standards, high levels of engagement, and strong leadership.”

“The teacher’s most important role is to be a designer of engaging experiences for students.”

“The overall quality of the present teaching force is excellent, and most teachers are capable and willing to take on their new designer roles if their sense of moral purpose for entering teaching is honored, and if they are provided relevant developmental opportunities and a climate and conditions that support them.”

“Profound learning as opposed to superficial learning comes from engagement and commitment.”

“The use of too tightly monitored curriculum and a scripted approach to teaching to ensure coverage of the material for the test instead of broad understanding of connected content is a detriment to profound learning.”

“Operating and social systems exist in all organizations including schools. Transforming these systems is the only way to transform schools into the type of organization needed.”

**Work**

In year one, all staff received professional development on Executive Function. Campus leadership evaluated a redesign of kindergarten instruction, all campus teachers utilized the Fueling Brains Brain Metric Assessment to collect data on Executive Function throughout the year, and teachers began to learn how to address specific deficits in Executive Function. The campus teachers and leaders also completed a strategic planning process through which our mission and vision was defined. In year two, campus leadership focused on data analysis of the collected Executive Function data, teachers and administration participated in online and on campus coaching for implementing brain development activities in the classroom, Effie staff visited Goose Creek ISD to observe Left Brain and Right Brain classrooms, and two of our kindergarten teachers and two of our PK teachers piloted thematic Left Brain and Right Brain instruction. In year three, Effie staff participated in two days of summer professional development to build capacity on Left Brain and Right Brain pedagogy and classroom set-up. All PK and kindergarten classrooms were designated as either Left Brain or Right

Brain classrooms, and students who attended PK at Effie were kept together as a cohort so that we could track growth and progress compared to new to school students. All teachers analyze Executive Function data along with academic data to make instructional decisions using a flexible scope and sequence based on the needs of each classroom and student. The campus transitioned from Executive Function activities in isolation to full integration. Brain Development has become the lens through which we do all things.

## **Results**

### **Year 1**

At the Beginning of Year Assessment, 39% of students were in Tier 3, the developing stage of the brain development of executive functions, 43% were in Tier 2, the progressing stage, and 18% were in Tier 1, the mastering stage. At the End of Year Assessment, 16% of students were in Tier 3, 39% were in Tier 2, and 45% were in Tier 1.

### **Year 2**

At the Beginning of Year Assessment, 36% of students were in Tier 3, the developing stage of the brain development of executive functions, 36% were in Tier 2, the progressing stage, and 18% were in Tier 1, the mastering stage. At the End of Year Assessment, 9% of students were in Tier 3, 24% were in Tier 2, and 67% were in Tier 1.

### **Year 3**

At the Beginning of Year Assessment, 35% of students were in Tier 3, the developing stage of the brain development of executive functions, 36% were in Tier 2, the progressing stage, and 29% were in Tier 1, the mastering stage. At the PA4 Assessment (February 2023), 12% were in Tier 3, 27% were in Tier 2, and 61% were in Tier 1.

The gains we have made in the student mastery of Executive Function in February of Year 3 is only 6% less than our End of Year student mastery in Year 2. As teachers get more proficient at Left Brain and Right Brain pedagogy, analyzing data, and making meaningful instructional decisions based on data, students are making huge strides in both brain development and academic growth. Our MOY assessments for both mCLASS and MAP show that the majority of our students have already achieved a year of growth from the BOY assessments. Because we serve a high percentage of students from severe poverty, many of them come to us well below benchmark. Without accelerated growth during their time at Effie, they will also leave us well below benchmark. We are committed to helping students develop their brains so that we can accelerate their learning and set them up for future success when they leave us and continue their education at the elementary level and beyond. Our culture and climate is one of teacher leadership and teacher empowerment where teachers are encouraged to make instructional decisions based on what is best for their students rather than a strictly guarded scope and sequence.

## **Video Link**

Please use the link below to access our application video submission.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Br6zB5p5xKJHkgHrhOu9-eDXCO8pAHI/view?usp=drivesdk>