



News From the Office of Redesign
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LBJ High School Takes a Risk – and It Pays Off! *In First Year as a Separate School, LBJ Rated Academically Acceptable*

LBJ High School was rated Academically Acceptable on TAKS in spring 2008. Hitting that academic mark was considered a long shot for Principal Patrick Patterson because of two critical changes at his school. Not only was it decided that LBJ would divide into two separate schools for the 2007-2008 school year, but the campus was also in its first year of implementing the First Things First reform model.

The separation of schools meant that, for the first time, TAKS scores for LBJ High School would reflect only the scores of neighborhood students. With 82.5% students economically disadvantaged and 81.1% % designated “at-risk”, many observers believed it would take LBJ several years to build successful TAKS performance on its own. In past years, TAKS scores at LBJ included those of the magnet students who attended the Liberal Arts and Science Academy (LASA), among the highest performing students in the country. In addition, based on the experience of high schools across the country, state test scores often decline the first year a major reform is implemented as teachers and students struggle to implement new structures and systems.

But for Patterson, the potential for improvement was worth the risk. Patterson agreed to the separation in order to implement the First Things First reform model at his campus. “I spent two years looking at First Things First, traveling to different sites to see how it was working, and talking to educators across the country,” said Patterson. “ I believed that we needed to do something very different at LBJ to improve student performance, and I liked what I saw with First Things First.”

What helped LBJ hit the TAKS mark? Patterson credits three major changes that were part of his campus Redesign.

“First, every student now feels connected to an adult through Family Advocacy, an advantage that only athletes used to have,” he said. “Second, teacher collaboration is at an all-time high because they are able to meet together every week through their Small Learning Communities to share best practice, discuss student work, and improve their lesson plans. Third, we are doing classroom observations every week through Measuring What Matters, which allows us to target our professional development in areas that we need to strengthen based on data, not opinion. These things just weren’t happening before our Redesign was in place.”

Patterson’s observations are reinforced by the comments of an LBJ math teacher who stated, “The year before our Redesign, I was an island. Now, we’re working as a team. Having fresh eyes on our lesson planning has been really cool.”



"I can't say enough about the importance of Family Advocacy," Patterson adds. "We now have the opportunity and the structure in place to look out for every kid and make sure they're in school. This level of support can't happen in a traditional school."

A student in Patterson's own Advocacy sums it up, "Because of my Advocacy, I increased the expectation I have of myself, and now I'm ready to go on to college. I'm going way above what I needed to do to get by."

LBJ is making a difference for students in other areas as well, increasing the number of students taking AP classes from 1 student in 2004 to 245 students in 2008-09. In addition, LBJ will be recognized on December 9, 2008 by the Austin Chamber of Commerce at its annual State of Education event. In 2008, LBJ had the highest rate of college application completion of any of the thirty-six high schools in the Metro Austin area. Ninety-five percent of students in LBJ's Class of 2008 completed the common application to apply to a four-year state college or university.

"I'm committed to showing that we can have a viable educational institution on its own here at LBJ," said Patterson. "I want to create an environment where there is no excuse for kids not to be successful."