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BUCKEYE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT #33
A community passionate about student success

EN ESPAÑOL

State of Arizona Labels Buckeye Elementary School District Schools with Two “A” Grades, and Five “B’s” in a Remarkable One Year Turnaround

Buckeye, Arizona - October 31, 2022 - As a result of an intensive and district-wide school turnaround effort by the Buckeye Elementary School District, the State has awarded school letter grades commensurate with the unprecedented academic growth demonstrated by students at each of its eligible school sites*. “We are incredibly proud of the effort of our students and staff, as well as the recognition by the State of the great work being done in BESD,” said Dr. Kristi Wilson, Superintendent. “We knew we were heading in the right direction, and the validation provided by these letter grades is further reinforcement that we are on a path towards sustained academic excellence.”

2022
**BESD
SCHOOL
LETTER GRADES**
ASSIGNED BY THE ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL	GRADE
BALES	B
BUCKEYE	B
INCA	B
JASINSKI	A
MARIONNEAUX	B
SUNDANCE	B
WESTPARK	A



*JOHN S. MCCAIN ELEMENTARY IS NOT YET ELIGIBLE FOR A LETTER GRADE. GRADED SCHOOLS MUST HAVE BEEN OPEN FOR TWO YEARS

Results from Arizona’s 2022 AASA state assessments showed BESD to have far exceeded the state’s growth rate in student achievement. The average growth for Mathematics in Arizona was 2%, however BESD reached 9%. In English Language Arts, BESD posted eight times the growth rate of the state, with Arizona having 1% growth and BESD achieving 8%. Further, every pre-existing school in the district that took the state assessment in 2021 demonstrated growth in both subject areas. Growth rates are determined by comparing the percentage of proficient students in the current year to the prior year. Letter grades consider additional factors, with a primary focus on proficiency and growth. The district attributes this improvement to effectively leveraging its Project Momentum Grant to

provide training and support for its staff, as well as an intensive focus on achievement data and collaborative structures. Although the growth rates proved to be well above the average, the results were not surprising to the staff members who led and participated in the improvement effort during the 2021-2022 school year.

“I am so impressed with what our school teams and principals managed to accomplish in this first year of the Project Momentum grant. We asked a lot from them and they truly delivered, in spite of the challenges posed by an ongoing COVID situation and the inherently difficult nature of school improvement work,” said Ana Gutierrez, the district’s Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.

As described by its originators, the work of Project Momentum Arizona embraces three powerful actions to drive school improvement:

- Focusing and aligning the work of schools with the high yield instructional practices that produce the largest gains in student learning.
- Providing the time, training and support needed for teachers to implement the targeted strategies
- Establishing well defined expectations for increasing student learning, monitoring progress continuously to improve instructional practice and acting to hold each other accountable for achieving shared goals.

Project Momentum was made possible through a unique public and private partnership. Funding was provided through grants from the Governor’s Office to cover the additional time and work of teachers. Training and oversight were initiated by philanthropic support from caring members of the Arizona community. Both partners recognized the value of a high quality education for all students and the essential role teachers serve in ensuring that outcome. (Project Momentum, 2021)

Project Momentum provided an opportunity for school leaders to frontload instructional planning and preparation during the summer months and repurpose the collaborative planning time that most districts and schools already have in place to build teacher expertise aligned with the most influential instructional strategies. (Project Momentum, 2021)

Over the subsequent months, teachers and leaders engaged in the challenging work of rethinking their approach to planning, teaching, and assessment. The district designed an intensive series of supports to promote the success of the work and closely monitored incoming data to evaluate the need for adjustments and to recognize what was working most effectively. District leadership established and articulated non-negotiable expectations around research-based literacy instruction and assessment practices. Further, leadership teams completed regular “Leadership Learning Walks” at every site, visiting classrooms, and collecting data on implementation with site principals. This data was used to make adjustments and offer additional supports in an environment that focused on evidence of outcomes. This helped to create high levels of buy-in as the staff consistently used real-time evidence of effective implementation.

BESD’s improvement effort is only just beginning, as Project Momentum is a multi-year opportunity and the staff has embraced the commitment necessary for success. More advanced steps of improvement have been initiated for the 2022-2023 school year and staff will continue to rapidly accelerate their level of expertise and practice. BESD is proud to say it fully expects continued dramatic growth in student achievement in the coming years.

“At the core of the improvement effort is a relentless focus on learning and a commitment to monitor evidence of what is and is not working. More importantly, it’s about being responsive to that information. Learning in BESD is not optional, and our staff did a wonderful job of pursuing excellence and helping us achieve this first step. It is only the first step, but our trajectory is more than encouraging,” said Dr. Kristi Wilson, BESD superintendent.

**As a new school, John S. McCain III Elementary will not be eligible to receive a letter grade until 2023*

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