



Case Study:

Harmony Hills Elementary

San Antonio, TX

Overview

PROFILE

Alicia Wortham is an Instructional Math Coach at Harmony Hills Elementary in San Antonio, TX. Harmony Hills is a Title I campus that serves 470 students in grades pre-K-5. It is part of the North East Independent School District.

CHALLENGE

Harmony Hills Elementary was considered a struggling campus before Covid-19. District leaders sought a resource that would close learning gaps and improve students' problem-solving abilities. In her role as a Math Instructional Coach, Wortham worked with teachers to implement Exemplars at her school.

SOLUTION

After using the Exemplars math program for just one year, Harmony Hills Elementary has recovered significant learning loss and has moved from a "failing school" to one that has a "B" rating based on their STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) data.

Exemplars Math: A Key to School Improvement



Project Lead:
Alicia Wortham
Math Instructional Coach

Harmony
Hills
Elementary



School Profile

- Population Density: Dense Suburban*
- Size: 470 Enrollment*
- Math Proficiency: 29%*
- Free & Reduced Lunch: 79%*

*Source: Niche.com

Read the full study



The Challenge

Harmony Hills Elementary was considered a struggling campus before Covid-19. Students' learning gaps only continued to grow after a year and a half of Covid disruptions.

Choosing Exemplars

District leaders at North East ISD sought to bring Exemplars to its schools to help improve students' problem-solving abilities and to recover learning loss attributed to Covid and beyond. In her role as a Math Instructional Coach at Harmony Hills Elementary, Alicia Wortham worked with teachers at her school to implement the program. Wortham believes that the versatile and flexible nature of the Exemplars math program along with its open-ended tasks helps teachers analyze their students' understanding and determine where they are on the learning continuum. Wortham also appreciates that the program spans grades kindergarten through five, making it an easy resource to administer and differentiate in any classroom.

The Outcome

After using the Exemplars program for just one year, the elementary school is starting to see significant results and receive great feedback from its teachers. Wortham attributes the use of the Exemplars Math Library as one of the primary reasons they were able to close learning gaps and improve 3 letter grades — moving from a “failing” school to one that has a “B” rating. The Exemplars program was also instrumental to the learning recovery at Harmony Hills that was needed due to Covid disruptions.

For the first time, Harmony Hills used Exemplars as a way to help its students get ready for the STAAR (**State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness**) test this spring. Instead of practicing the usual multiple choice questions, this year students practiced solving Exemplars open-ended, problem-solving tasks. As a result, students became more flexible in their ability to demonstrate knowledge of math concepts — allowing them to perform at a higher level. Wortham believes Exemplars goes hand-in-hand with the goals of the STAAR redesign, which will put more emphasis on students' abilities to demonstrate more of their mathematical knowledge.

Positive feedback is also being received from students about the program. 5th grade extension students at Harmony Hills love working on the Exemplars math tasks and particularly enjoy that there are multiple solution pathways to solving each problem. These students often ask for several copies of the same problem so they may solve it and show their thinking in a variety of ways.

“ I believe it [Exemplars] is one of the reasons why we grew three letter grades, based off of our STAAR data. We went from a failing campus to a campus that's a B now... ”

Alicia Wortham
Math Instructional Coach