

# Pontiac Elementary School



School Address: 500 Spears Creek Church Road, Elgin, SC 29045

School Principal: Dr. Katie Barber

Principal's Phone Number: (cell) 803.984.8909 (office) 803.699.2700

Principal's Email Address: [kbarber@richland2.org](mailto:kbarber@richland2.org)

SIC Chair: Pamela Ball

SIC Chair's Phone Number: 803-360-6643

SIC Chair's Home Address: 35 Glen Knoll Place, Columbia, SC 29229

SIC Chair's Email Address: [pamela.l.s.ball@gmail.com](mailto:pamela.l.s.ball@gmail.com)

School district: Richland School District Two

Award Year: Application for 2019-2020 *Riley Award*

## Case Statement (25 points)

### **School Demographic information:**

The student demographic data shows that we serve a very diverse student population at Pontiac Elementary. 56% of our student population consists of African American students. We have 19% of our students made up of white students and just 2% of our students are Asian. We are proud that we have one of the highest percentages of Hispanic students in the district, as 15% of our student body is identified as Hispanic heritage. The diverse demographics include 8% of our students identifying as two or more races.

Additionally, 57% of our students are identified as receiving Free/Reduced lunch. We have approximately 14% of our students receiving ESOL services. We are excited that Pontiac Elementary is home to the district's only Montessori magnet program. The Montessori method is a child centered approach that values the development of the whole child. Our Montessori students provide civic engagement to our community. This year, Montessori students are spearheading the food collection that provides weekend food bags to students in our school. We have already collected more than 1,000 food items. We have approximately 50 students that are military connected. Our military partnership invites members of the 120th Battalion to engage with our Stars and Stripes club that is comprised of military connected students. As a proud AVID school, we are preparing our students to become college and career ready by using instructional best practices.

### **Issue:**

After SC Ready scores were released in 2017, Pontiac recognized that we had an opportunity for growth in the area of literacy. As a result, we created a schoolwide wildly important goal (WIG), that our students would increase the number of students scoring Met or Exceeded on SC Ready ELA during the 2018 testing period. When considering a triangulation of data, MAP scores also showed that we had a low percentage of students meeting their target growth goals in ELA. The School Improvement Council at Pontiac, then, became committed to supporting this school goal, and, as a result, worked towards *increasing community partnerships focused on literacy*. During our September 26, 2017 meeting, our SIC formally identified this as a goal and began creating action steps towards achieving such. Pontiac's school data action team identified literacy as a continued instructional priority for the 2018-2019 school year based on the 2018 SC Ready ELA scores. As a result, it was determined at the September 20, 2018 School Improvement Council meeting that while we had made strides in this area the previous school year, we recognized the continued need for the SIC to focus on literacy efforts to contribute to the overall schoolwide goal.

**Actions:**

The first action of the SIC team in 2018 after making the decision to continue focusing on community partnerships to support literacy was to plan a digital literacy night for our students and their families. The idea of such a night was to promote all the ways in which students can access digital literacy books and subscriptions at home with their parents. Oftentimes families forget the multitude of resources that are available to them on a digital platform. This digital literacy night, *Plugged In*, was held on November 29, 2018. Families were exposed to a digital scavenger hunt to discover the resources on the media center's website, Big Universe, Flocabulary, and Discovery Education.

At the School Improvement Council meeting in January 2019, our media specialist reported to the members of the SIC the media center's collection. Interesting information was shared, noting the dated collection of our media center books that students are able to checkout. The SIC became grossly committed to securing more community partnerships to help fund the addition of books to our media center's collection. A community partnership letter was drafted and SIC members sent these letters out to more than (50) local businesses in our school zone.

For the third year in a row, our SIC planned a spring literacy event that was held on March 24, 2019 in partnership with our county library. The library staff assisted the SIC with providing highly engaging activities to students during this evening while the parents received information on the resources the county library offers to students including tutoring, Homework Hotline, book clubs, and their summer reading program at no cost to the community.

Our continued partnership as a Professional Development School has strengthened our teachers' implementation of literacy strategies in their classroom. Dr. Compton-Lilly, our PDS liaison from the University of South Carolina, worked with our SIC teacher representative to identify students who would benefit from specialized reading support. She met with those teachers and students to model best literacy practices with the students while teachers watched from afar and she later followed up by coaching the teacher based on the individual students' needs. Additionally, we were delighted that Dr. Compton-Lilly, U of SC faculty member, selected Pontiac Elementary as her research site to conduct a research study focusing on informational text and students' ability to comprehend such texts over a three year period of time.

Our SIC is proud of the literacy partnership our school continued with the Columbia Fireflies baseball team. The SIC helped shape the reading incentive of the Fireflies reading program last year, as this program gave individual schools the autonomy to create and implement a reading incentive to earn a ticket to a ball game. As a result, we developed a reading incentive centered around students reading informational text books to earn their ticket to a game. SIC members assisted in the library with verifying student submissions for this event.

Our end of the year, *Book Bonanza*, was a tremendous hit during field day last year. We know that research shows that children who are exposed to books at an early age are more likely to be successful during their educational careers. In an effort to ensure our students had books to read during the summer, the SIC partnered with our media center and collected gently used books from families' home libraries. After the collection period, SIC members sorted the hundreds of books collected by reading levels and genres. During field day, students had the pleasure of selecting two books from this collection to take home and enjoy for summer reading! Additionally, our SIC members volunteered in book fair events held at our school. These events included Books and Bagels and Reading is Grand.

Our SIC does believe that each of these actions that focused heavily on literacy, particularly our community partnerships, helped increase student achievement in the area of literacy.

**Results:**

**❑ 2018 ELA MAP Data 3 year trend of students meeting their target growth goal:**

It's important to show evidence of a three year trend after our SIC has focused so heavily on literacy. In 2016-2017, as 3rd graders, 48% of students met their target growth goal in ELA. When those same students were in 4th grade in 2017-2018, 52.3% of those students met their target growth goal in ELA. Last year, 2018-2019, these students were 5th graders. 66.3% of those students met their target growth goal in ELA. Over a three year trend, we saw an 18% increase of students meeting their target growth goal in ELA.

**❑ Percentage of students who MET or EXCEEDED on SC Ready over a 3-year trend:**

2016-2017 38.7% of students met or exceeded on SC Ready ELA

2017-2018 40.6% of students met or exceeded on SC Ready ELA

2018-2019 42.5% of students met or exceeded on SC Ready ELA

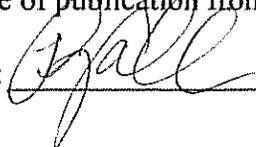
While we recognize that this doesn't show extraordinary growth, it does show a steady growth in our students' overall SC Ready ELA scores.

Since the onset in 2017 when the School Improvement Council began focusing their efforts on literacy, our school has continued to see literacy scores increase on both state mandated tests as well as MAP scores. As a result, the SIC has confirmed that they will continue to cultivate community partnerships to support literacy during the 2019-2020 school year.

- ❑ As a result of the letters we mailed to community partnerships, we collected \$350 to purchase new books for our media center collection.** We also allocated general funds to support new books for our collection. We are proud to say that these efforts helped us to increase our media library collection's average age of publication from 2003 to 2005.

SIC Chair: Pamela Ball

SIC Chair's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



## Pontiac Elementary SIC's progress on goals from 2018-2019 to current school year:

The School Improvement Council at Pontiac has remained committed to the goal of increasing community partnerships focused on literacy. This goal was established in 2017 and then continued to be an instructional priority for the 2018-2019 school year as well as the current school year.

As the Level One case statement describes, we have held parent nights for our school families with a focus on literacy. In 2018, we had great success with *Plugged In*, a digital literacy night. This current school year our School Improvement Council hosted *The S'more You Read, the S'more You Know* in partnership with our school literacy team. During this camping themed event we invited families with PK-2<sup>nd</sup> grade students to enjoy s'mores and a good book inside a cozy tent with one another! The families received a book centered around the camping theme to add to their home libraries. Spring plans are underway to host another digital literacy night, *Hang Up and Hang Out*. Our School Improvement Council has partnered with our district technology leaders and the Richland Library to lead a session for parents about digital citizenship. After the presentation families will be invited to "hang up and hang out" with their child and enjoy a good book.

Last year during the January SIC meeting, our Media Specialist shared data from a recent audit of our media center collection. The data showed that the average copyright age of our collection is 2004, and SIC members agreed that we need to take steps to update the collection to an average copyright date of 2009 in order to meet the exemplary level according to the SC Library Collections Standards. Our assistant principal, who also serves on SIC, recently met with a representative from Follett to support this update. We are so appreciative of our school board for recently allocating \$25 per student to fund this initiative. Gathering students' suggestions and teachers' recommendations is an important next step before purchasing these new books for our media center.

Initiatives that we have continued since the identification of this literacy goal include Reading with the Gamecocks, Reading with the Fireflies, Reading is Grand, Books and Bagels, Verizon reading volunteers, and the partnership with UofSC.

New initiatives have given us the opportunity to invite additional community members to support our literacy efforts. A book vending machine was purchased for the school, and SIC members contacted more than 100 businesses in the community inviting them to fund a row of books. During our new *Books and Biscuits* event students will select a book from the book vending machine, celebrating their passion for literacy. This event will bring together parents, community partners and students. Our first event is scheduled for February 11, 2020.

It was with great excitement that we celebrated one of our very own students as a budding author this year. Author Kate Hancock requested our Pontiac student's insight into her experience as a child with albinism for her book *Spotless*. SIC hosted an author's signing event at which the author and student talked about their collaboration on this writing project, while inspiring future writers.

Using MAP data, two teacher leaders along with an SIC member, identified students to participate in a reading partnership with residents of The Blake, a nearby assisted senior living center. More than 20 students visit these residents weekly and read alongside them and forge unique relationships with one another. The goal of this partnership is to increase students' reading fluency in an authentic setting, ultimately increasing their student achievement on MAP.

During the 2019-2020 school year, Pontiac Elementary will host an African American Read In during the month of February. Community members who have signed up to read to students at this event include our superintendent, school board members, members of law enforcement, local broadcast journalists, and members of our very own School Improvement Council.

Our future plans to support this goal include a visit from a Gullah storyteller and an emphasis on Kids in Print, which will help students find their voice as authors. Additionally, students are excited about the plans to develop an Outstanding Graphic Novel Award, facilitated by our media specialist and voted on by our students. We will continue to seek out ways to naturally blend student leadership and literacy engagement.

In preparation for our Level Two application, School Improvement Council members had the opportunity to reflect on the numerous literacy events that have been put in place as a result of this goal that was established more than three years ago. Our laser focus and steadfast commitment have proved effective as evidenced by our students' growth on MAP and SC Ready. Summative results show an increase in the percentage of students who met or exceeded in ELA on SC Ready over a three year span. Additionally, over the past three years we have seen an 18% increase of students meeting their target growth on MAP in ELA. Perhaps most importantly, students' and families' participation in our SIC sponsored literacy events suggest that we are accomplishing our mission of creating joyful leaders and learners through a relentless pursuit of establishing a love of literacy at Pontiac Elementary.