



NO EXCUSES UNIVERSITY

2017 Annual Report

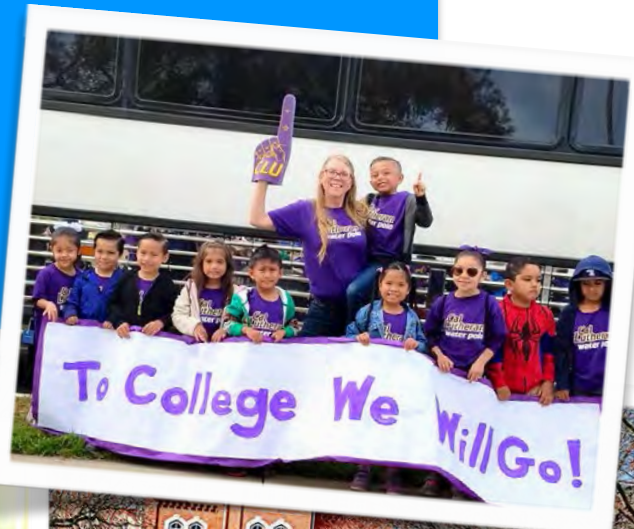


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No Excuses University Network of Schools
www.noexcusesu.com*

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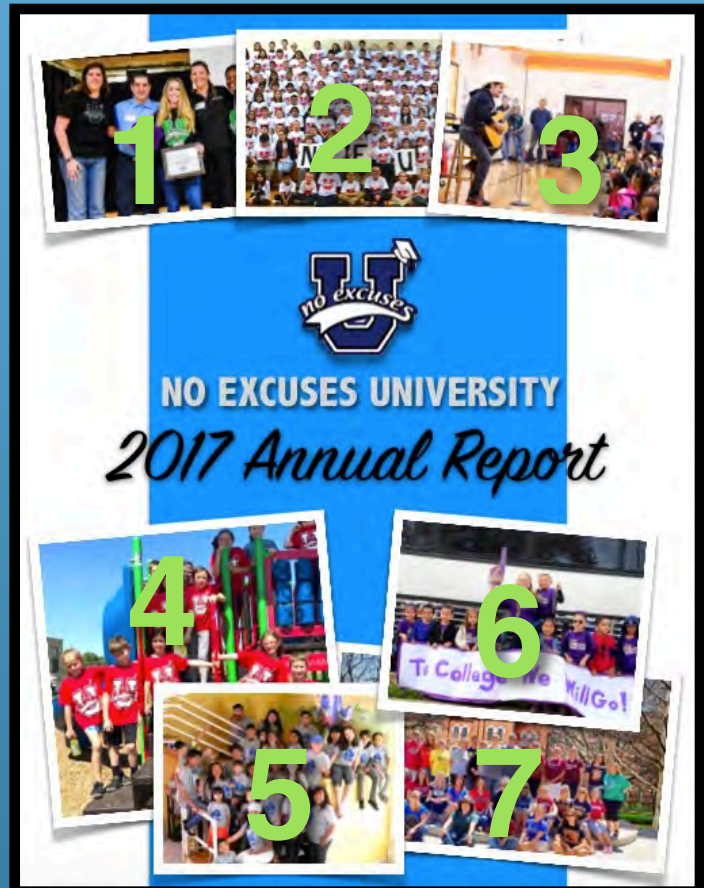
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No Excuses Universities Featured on
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1. Degan Elementary, Lewisville, TX
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7. Cottonwood Canyon Elementary, Lake Elsinore, CA

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

The No Excuses University Network of Schools is unique. Unlike other organizations that charge thousands of dollars for schools to use programs that they mandate, we do not. We are a network of schools with the sole purpose of connecting like-minded educators in an effort to promote college readiness for all. We encourage the development of Six Exceptional Systems under the umbrella of college and career readiness, which, in our opinion, begins as early as pre-school. When I worked to create this network in 2003, I believed in its potential; I knew the power it would have to change lives. Even so, the stories within this annual report share successes from students, families, and schools that exceed even my own expectations. Selected from among our 250 schools representing more than 155,000 students, these stories exemplify the heart of who we are as a group of people who quite simply just love kids. Like me, you'll be inspired by . . .

. . . the dozens of NEU schools across the country who have earned the highest awards and recognitions given in their states as well as the nation.

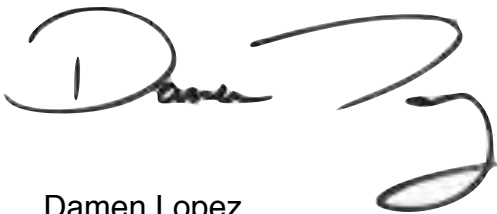
. . . country music sensation Brad Paisley visiting our school in Omaha Nebraska to kick off his "Country Nation Grade School Tour".

. . . the hundreds of partnerships classrooms have with colleges and universities across the country.

. . . a network that came together to raise more than \$55,000 to open a brand new chapter for Camp Kesem, a charity that supports children with parents battling with cancer.

This annual report is meant to go beyond the numbers and instead bring to life the real work that is occurring each day on our campuses throughout the United States and beyond. I hope that you'll be as inspired by our students, parents, and staff as I am. As we continue to revolutionize public education through bold choices that foster a future filled with hope and success for each student, it is our desire that you too will join us in our mission to change lives.

Many blessings,



Damen Lopez

Founder

No Excuses University Network of Schools





We believe that every child deserves the opportunity to be educated in a way that prepares them for college. When schools exhibit a culture of universal achievement by believing in students, they collaborate around that belief. During collaboration, they align their standards as a team. As teams align standards, they need to assess the standards and manage the data. Then, and only then, can they pursue meaningful interventions with their students.

INTERVENTIONS

Good schools are able to take interventions and analyze their effectiveness through the use of data. Great schools, however, are able to take data and translate it directly into the creation of appropriate interventions.

DATA MANAGEMENT

Data is given to us for one reason and one reason only, to use as a means of securing greater success for each individual student. In order for it to be used as a means for driving instruction, data must be easily accessible, openly shared, and deliberately arranged.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is not about you as a teacher; it is about your students. All of it! Our reason for assessing students has to be grounded in a commitment to use the information in a way that helps us to generate greater success for them.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

As professionals, we are called to participate in activities that improve our results while learning from our successes and failures. Aligning standards provides an objective framework that can guide our path.

COLLABORATION

Great schools have talented professionals who find the very best ways to work together in order to get results.

CULTURE OF UNIVERSAL ACHIEVEMENT

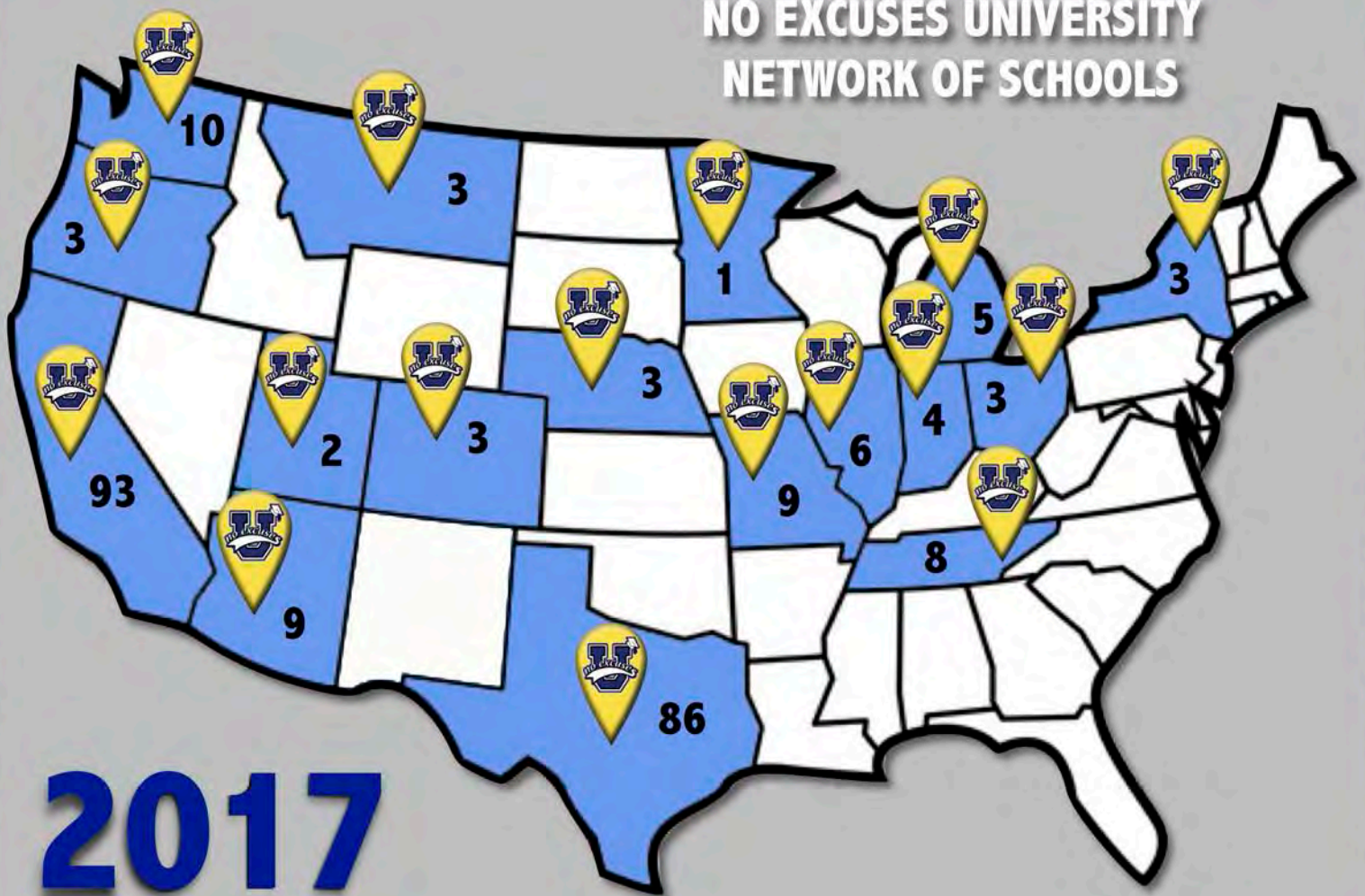
A Culture of Universal Achievement takes place when the critical mass of the staff believes that each student is capable of meeting academic standards in reading, writing, and math AND that the school has the power to make that opportunity a reality.

www.noexcusesu.com



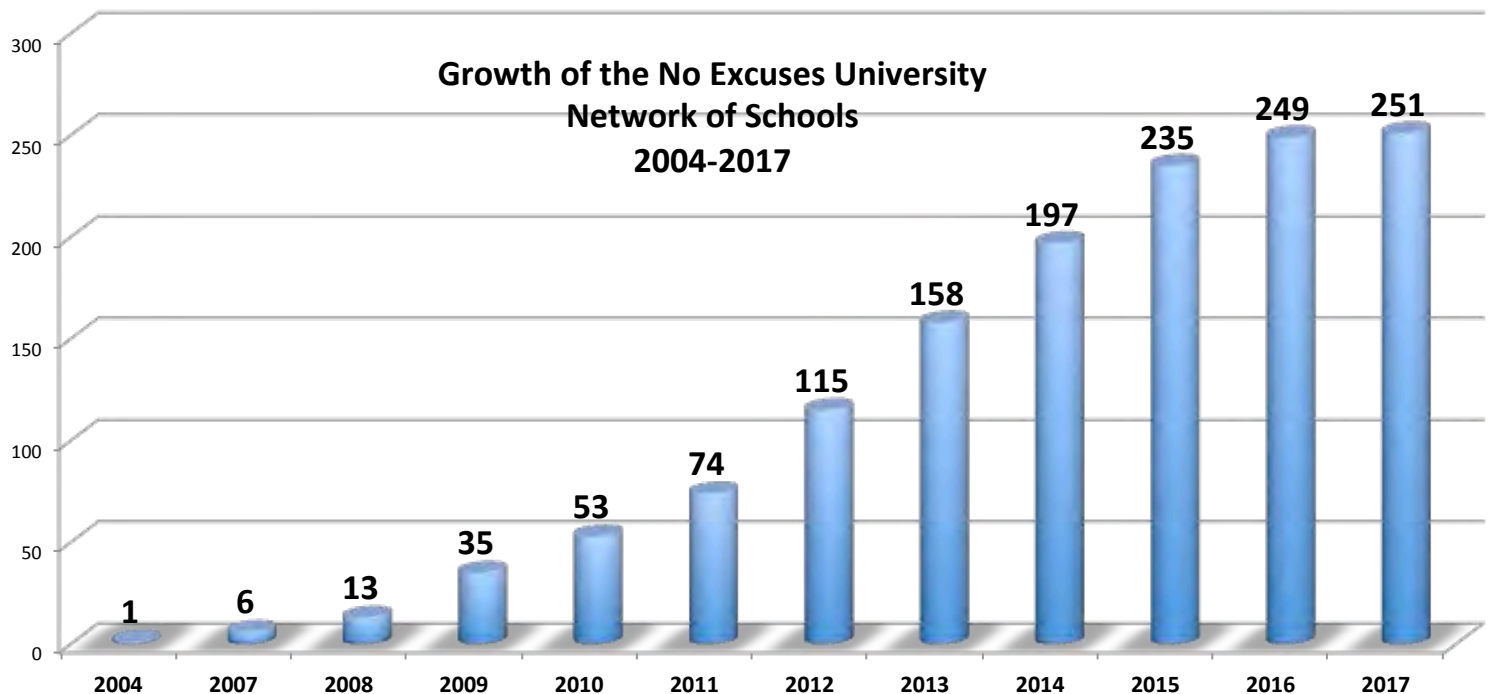
SIX EXCEPTIONAL SYSTEMS

NO EXCUSES UNIVERSITY NETWORK OF SCHOOLS



2017

Growth of the No Excuses University
Network of Schools
2004-2017



NEU NETWORK BY THE NUMBERS

250 - Current Number of Schools

4 - Preschools/Early Childhood Centers

200 - Elementary Schools

24 - Middle School/Junior High Schools

10 - K-8 Schools

9 - High Schools

1 - County Department of Education

1 - College

1 - Church **1** - Non-Profit Organization

1 - Orphanage

155,475 - Total number of students

73% - Average percentage of students
who qualify for free or reduced lunch

17 - Number of States with NEU Schools



**Online NEU Network Map
and Searchable Directory:**
noexcusesu.com/network

5 Cities with the Most NEU Schools:

- 1) **Amarillo, TX** - 25 Schools + 1 Church & College
- 2) **El Paso, TX** - 16 Schools
- T-3) **Carthage, MO** - 9 Schools
- T-3) **Riverside, CA** - 9 Schools
- T-4) **Tucson, AZ** - 6 Schools
- T-4) **Jacksonville, TX** - 6 Schools

The No Excuses University Network of Schools is a diverse and dynamic association of like-minded schools and education organizations from across the United States. Our Network is united by the belief that ALL children, even those who live in poverty or who are learning English, can be academically successful and attend college. No Excuses Universities know they have the power to make that dream a reality.

NO EXCUSES UNIVERSITY NETWORK OF SCHOOLS

Arizona

Amphitheater Middle School
Dodge Traditional Magnet Middle School
E.C. Nash Elementary
Helen Keeling Elementary
J.Q. Thomas Elementary
Leupp Public School
Mirage Elementary
Prince Elementary
Rio Vista Elementary

Highgrove Elementary
Highlands Elementary
Howard Cattle Elementary
Howard Pence Elementary
Jackson Heights Elementary
Julian Elementary
Juniper Elementary
Juniper Elementary
Katherine Smith Elementary
Kenmore Elementary
Killybrooke Elementary
Las Palmas Elementary

Thompson Elementary
Twinhill Elementary
Valley Elementary
Van Wig Elementary
Wakefield Elementary
Walnut Grove K-8 School
Wells Middle School
William Collier Elementary
Winchester Elementary
Yorbita Elementary
Sky Country Elementary

California

Agua Caliente Elementary
Alcott Elementary
Andrew Jackson Elementary
Anna Borba Elementary
Anna Kyle Elementary
Apricot Valley Elementary
Arroyo Verde Elementary
Cedar Grove Elementary
Ceres Elementary
Charles Bursch Elementary
Cielo Vista Charter
College Park Elementary
Corona Elementary
Cottonwood Canyon Elementary
Creskide Middle School
Crystal Middle School
David Weir Preparatory
Davidson Elementary
De Anza Elementary
Dehesa School
Del Dios Academy of Arts and Sciences
Don Julian Elementary
Donald Graham Elementary
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary
Durfee Elementary
Eagle Canyon Elementary
Earl Warren Elementary
Edgewood Academy
El Camino School
Eldridge Rice Elementary
Evergreen Elementary
Fremont Elementary
Gerber Elementary
Grayson Charter School

Lehigh Elementary
Levi Dickey Elementary
Liberty Elementary
Los Peñasquitos Elementary
Magnolia Elementary
Mango Elementary
Mentone Elementary
Merwin Elementary
Midland Elementary
Monte Vista Elementary
Monte Vista Elementary
Morning Creek Elementary
Mountain View Elementary
Telesis Academy of Science & Math
Northmead Elementary
Parsons Junior High School
Paularino Elementary
Pedley Elementary
Pleasant View Elementary
Pomerado Elementary
Puesta del Sol Elementary
Ramon Tafoya Elementary
Rolando Elementary
Rosemary Kennedy (RMK) Elementary
Sierra Vista Elementary
Sonora Elementary
Sorensen Science Academy
Stanton Elementary
Suisun Elementary
Suisun Valley K-8 School
Sunkist Elementary
Sunset Hills Elementary
Sycamore Elementary
Tehama County Department of Ed.
Terrace Elementary

Colorado

Eva R. Baca Elementary
Park View Elementary
South Park Elementary

Illinois

Booth Tarkington Elementary
Coleman Elementary
John R. Tibbott Elementary
Lincoln Elementary
Robert Frost Elementary
Virginia Lake Elementary

Indiana

Adams Elementary
Avilla Elementary
Fairview Elementary
Maconaquah Elementary

Michigan

Dove Academy
Summit Academy Flat Rock
Summit Academy North Elementary
Summit Academy North High School
Summit Academy North Middle School

Minnesota

Bruce Vento Elementary

Missouri

Carthage Junior High School
Carthage Middle School
Carthage R-9 Early Childhood Center
Carthage Senior High School
Columbian Elementary
Fairview Elementary

Mark Twain Elementary
Pleasant Valley Elementary
Steadley Elementary

Montana

Shepherd Elementary
Shepherd High School
Shepherd Middle School

Nebraska

Edison Elementary
Field Club Elementary
Partnership 4 Kids

New York

Au Sable Forks Elementary
Genesee Elementary
Keeseville Elementary

Ohio

Baker Middle School
Fairborn Intermediate School
Fairborn Primary School

Oregon

Lafayette Elementary
Phoenix Elementary
Reedville Elementary

Tennessee

Andrew Jackson Elementary Magnet
Crockett County High School
Crockett County Middle School
Friendship Elementary
Gadsden Elementary
Maury City Elementary
Rock Creek Elementary
Westwood Elementary

Texas

Abernathy Elementary
Akin Elementary
Alderson Elementary
Amarillo College
Austin Middle School
Avondale Elementary
Bayshore Elementary
Bear Creek Elementary
Ben E. Dowell Elementary

Bivins Elementary
Blaschke Sheldon Elementary
Bliss Elementary
Bluebonnet Elementary
Bluebonnet Elementary
Bright Beginnings Academic Center
Brownfield High School
Brownfield Middle School
Canyon Hills Middle School
Caprock High School
Carolee Booker Elementary
Cielo Vista Elementary
Colonial Heights Elementary
Crosby Elementary
Degan Elementary
Dr. Hornedo Middle School
East Side Elementary
Emerson Elementary
Evans Middle School
Fannin Middle School
Fidel and Andrea R. Villarreal Elementary
Forest Hill Elementary
Franklin High School
Fred Douglass Elementary
Gus Winston Cain Elementary
Hairgrove Elementary
Hawkins Elementary
Hazel Owens Elementary
Horace Mann Middle School
J.E. Rhodes Elementary
Jacksonville Middle School
Jennie Reid Elementary
Joan Y. Ervin Elementary
Joe Wright Elementary
John R. Good Elementary
Kohlberg Elementary
Lakeview Elementary
Lamar Elementary
Landergerin Elementary
Lincoln Middle School
M. Robinson Elementary
Margaret Wills Elementary
McFee Elementary School
Mesa Verde Elementary
Mitzi Bond Elementary
Morningside Elementary

Nichols Intermediate
North Heights Alternative School
Oak Dale Elementary
Oak Grove Elementary
Omar Bradley Elementary
Opportunity School
Paramount Terrace Elementary
Park Elementary
Pease Elementary
Peete Elementary
Polk Elementary
Robert E. Lee Elementary
Robert L. Crippen Elementary
Rockbrook Elementary
Sally B. Elliott Elementary
Sam Houston Middle School
San Jacinto Elementary
Sanborn Elementary
Schuster Elementary
Shallowater Middle School
South Lawn Elementary
Southridge Elementary
Sunrise Elementary
Tascosa High School
Travis Middle School
Van Intermediate School
Van Middle School
Vega Elementary
West Side Elementary
Willow Bend Elementary

Utah

Lapoint Elementary
Washington Elementary

Washington

Centennial Elementary
Chester H. Thompson Elementary
Evergreen Elementary
Frank Wagner Elementary
Karshner Elementary
Martin Luther King Elementary
Pope Elementary
Roy Elementary
Sarah J. Anderson Elementary
Shining Mountain Elementary



2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools:

Gus Winston Cain Elementary
Whitehouse, TX



2016 California Gold Ribbon NEU Schools:

High performing, high poverty, achievement gap closing schools

Arroyo Verde Elementary, Highland
Ceres Elementary, Whittier
Cielo Vista Charter, Palm Springs
Eagle Canyon Elementary, Chino Hills
Howard Cattle Elementary, Chino
Kenmore Elementary, Baldwin Park
Los Penasquitos Elementary, San Diego
Midland Elementary, Poway
Paularino Elementary, Costa Mesa
Pomerado Elementary, Poway
Rolando Elementary, La Mesa
Stanton Elementary, Glendora



Washington State's Center for Educational Effectiveness 2016 School of Distinction Award:

Centennial Elementary, Graham, WA *
Evergreen Elementary, Spanaway, WA **

**This is the 4th consecutive year that our NEU at Centennial Elementary has earned this distinction*

***This is the 5th time in 6 years that our NEU at Evergreen Elementary has earned this distinction*



Highest Graduation Rate Among Charter Schools in Michigan:

Summit Academy North High School, Romulus, MI
(98.58%)

AWARDS & DISTINCTIONS



FIELD CLUB ELEMENTARY

Omaha, NB

Principal: Barbara Wild

When you are a No Excuses University School you believe in Dreaming Big and Being Bold. It turns out it is kind of exciting making incredible things happen! Dreaming Big and Being Bold became more than just words at Field Club Elementary School in Omaha, Nebraska on October 15, 2016. At our **NEU at Field Club Elementary School**, we have developed the pervasive habit of telling our students to believe in the possibility of setting goals and working to make them happen. So, when a teacher started with what seemed like an impossible idea, we had to at least try. Here is how it happened: Second grade teacher Susie Leonardo came to Principal Barbara Wild with this idea, "You know we are all about getting our students to college. Brad Paisley believes in college. He is on his Country Nation College Tour and will be in Lincoln, just an hour away. We should see if he would swing by Field Club and encourage our students to continue on their way to college." The principal said, "Sure, we can make that happen." Putting the idea out to the whole staff resulted in third grade teacher, Nicole Darnold producing a video request for Brad Paisley to visit our school: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nu11mkNiCs&feature=youtu.be>

There were roadblocks, those who didn't believe in our dream, even those who actually worked against the dream happening, but we stayed true to the idea that we believe in our students. With the mission of our school in mind, we believed a visit from Brad Paisley would be an amazing encouragement to our students.

The Field Club staff began posting the video request out to friends, family, and any contacts we could think of. It was a slow start. We kept checking the number of views on our video request. The numbers were increasing, but slowly. We reached out again to media contacts and anyone we could think of. There was a time when our intentions were misinterpreted and everything got mixed up in a negative spin for a while, but like anyone who believes in making great things happen for students, we kept going. Then, the most amazing phone call came. "Hello, this is Brad Paisley's publicist, Brad watched your video and he was wondering if he could come by your school and sing a couple of songs for your students." So, it came true! We worked together, believed in a BIG idea, and with the help of a lot of people, including Brad Paisley's dad who saw the video and told his son about it, Brad Paisley came to Field Club Elementary School in Omaha, Nebraska. He encouraged our students on their way to college!

"Hey, glory, glory, hallelujah. Welcome to the future." Brad Paisley

Every dream starts with a believer. Keeping making things happen at your school for your amazing students. Be Bold! Dream Big!



CERES ELEMENTARY
Whittier, CA
Principal: Julie Gonzalez

Catherine Loomis is a Kindergarten teacher at our **NEU at Ceres Elementary** in Whittier CA. Ceres Elementary earned their membership in the No Excuses University Network of Schools in the summer of 2016. Mrs. Loomis has fostered an outstanding college partnership between her Kindergarten class and California Lutheran University (CLU). Thanks to her passion, dedication, and persistence Ceres Elementary is now more committed than ever to developing stellar college partnerships with several other well-known colleges and universities, like Biola, Whittier College, among others, who have discussed potential mentorship programs with the school.

Mrs. Loomis' journey with NEU actually began three years ago when she attended NEU's Institute in Indian Wells along with her principal, Julie Gonzalez, and several other staff members. Her early exposure to the NEU Institute had a huge impact on her, she was determined to put what she learned into tangible actions and goals. She was determined to do everything it took to ensure the success of her students. The touching presentations and the message resonated with her and touched her deeply. The "College begins in kindergarten" mindset immediately became Mrs. Loomis' mission for her kids and her passion has never wavered since.

After attending the institute, the principal at Ceres Elementary asked the staff to think about what could be done to begin implementing some of the Six Exceptional Systems. Mrs. Loomis chose to work on "Culture of Universal Achievement", in an effort to improve on ensuring powerful college symbolism at Ceres. She decided to reach out to their class' university partner, CLU. CLU's water polo coach, Craig Rond immediately responded and committed both the men and women water polo teams to become mentors for the students. Additionally, one of the team member's parents, Harry Walk, offered to donate shirts for her entire kindergarten class. Mrs. Loomis' class attended their first CLU water polo game, which happened to be taking place at Whittier College. Following the game, the mentors and their Kinder Buddies had their first meet and greet. Her class now attends both home and away water polo games to see their mentors every year. After home games the team shares lunch with their Kinder Buddies and mentors take the Kindergarten students and their families on a tour of the CLU campus. Each trip is powerful in its own way. Many of the parents that have attended some of these games mention that it was their first time being at a four year university and that if all goes as planned their child may be the first to attend college. These students don't just think they will go to college, they know they will! These college visits have even lead one of the kindergartener's sibling to apply and get accepted to CLU. She is currently finishing her freshman year there. There have also been many parents who have decided to return to college as a result of seeing their child's enthusiasm for CLU. One parent who was a volunteer, asked Mrs. Loomis to help her apply to college.



Coach Rond reached out to CLU's Administration and the Office of University Relations began sending letters of encouragement as well care packages each month to the kindergarten students. As a class, the kindergarteners now send cards to all of their CLU mentors each month and mentors respond. Several mentors have also made the drive out to Ceres to read and empower the kids. One CLU athlete completed his volunteer hours needed to graduate within his kinder-buddy's class. Mrs. Loomis has also assisted many of the CLU mentors with letters of recommendation for new careers, internships or summer jobs.

Mrs. Loomis' kindergarteners have so much pride in their CLU mentors – they wear their CLU t-shirts every College Tuesday. Parents often send pictures and stories their child makes sharing how they love their college. The kinder class sends updates and pictures on their activities and awards to their CLU mentors a few times a month. Communication is key in building relationships of this type! Mrs. Loomis also sends daily messages to parents about how her students are doing and upcoming events!

Recently, her Kindergarten class attended their first CLU basketball game, the athletes all signed a team ball for the class and wrote individual letters for each student, the letters were very encouraging and extremely touching. Just last summer a kindergartener from Mrs. Loomis class was driving nearby the CLU campus when they spotted a young man with a CLU t-shirt. It turned out that the young man was the captain of the CLU soccer team. He sat with the kindergartener and his mother and talked to him about the water polo mentors he knew and about the importance of going to college. The character of the athletes at CLU is exemplary and her students are inspired by all of them.

This year has also lead to the first visit of the CLU water polo team to Ceres Elementary! Mrs. Loomis' class is also looking forward to going on their first College Day field trip to CLU. Parents and teachers at Ceres organized and started a GoFundMe page, which allowed them to raise the funds needed for transportation. The CLU Admissions office has also been in contact with Mrs. Loomis class to offer their support for this and future projects that foster the children's passion for college and CLU.

This partnership has influenced many other teachers at Ceres as well as other surrounding schools in East Whittier School District – Mrs. Loomis has shared best practices for effective mentor-kinder programs. NEU at Ceres now has four college partnerships where college athletes have visited their little buddies.

This partnership has been a great blessing for the students at Ceres Elementary, although, Mrs. Loomis admits it takes extreme passion, patience and persistence to develop a successful and engaging college partnership. Mrs. Loomis amazement grows each day, she loves every opportunity to spend time with each one of her precious students as she seems them grow and flourish into future CLU / college students. After her experience with the CLU mentor program and the NEU Institute, Mrs. Loomis knew that it would no longer be enough to just teach the basics. She has taken it upon herself to go beyond the call of duty. Every day she looks to do more to ensure that her students reach their full potential and to ensure that their dreams include a collegiate education. This has all been possible thanks to this amazing partnership.

Mrs. Loomis' Kindergarten University Partnership With CLU THE UNIVERSITY'S PERSPECTIVE...

The relationship we have built with the students at Ceres Elementary has been such an amazing compliment to the values and mission of our program here at CLU. We have always said that we want more for our student-athletes than just practicing and competing in our sport. It is important for us as coaches to provide our athletes opportunities to be ambassadors within the community and understand importance of philanthropic behavior. We want the CLU student-athletes to be hard working in both water polo and in life. The partnership with Ceres has enabled us to learn so much more than what is taught in classrooms and in the pool. Our athletes have embraced each and every one of our Kinder Buddies and their quest to one day attend college. We consider ourselves very blessed to have been given such an important role to play in their lives.

- Coach Rond -

California Lutheran University Water Polo Coach

For the last three years, the University Relations Division at Cal Lutheran has had the privilege of being school pen pals with Mrs. Loomis' class. It has been rewarding to watch their excitement in giving and receiving greeting cards and special gifts as well as corresponding with them throughout the year via emails and photos. Each holiday, Mrs. Loomis' class sends us a large package. Tucked away inside are hand-made cards personally addressed to each of us and carefully signed by every student. The colorful, creative cards often include notes, and we proudly display them on our desks. The class also creates beautiful decorations for our office. Past decorations have included handmade paintings, banners, ornaments and wreaths signed by each student and designed to fit the themes of back-to-school, Thanksgiving, and Valentine's Day. In return, we have sent them small gifts such as stickers, colorful pencils and a reading log to encourage them to read over the summer and to continue to work hard in school. It is a wonderful partnership that enables University Relations to correspond with 21 wonderful Kindergarteners and their teacher and to watch young children learn about the benefits of a college education.

-University Relations Division at CLU -





**GUS WINSTON CAIN
ELEMENTARY**
Whitehouse, TX
Principal: Sandi Jones

"We believe that every student deserves the opportunity to be educated in a way that prepares them for a successful life. We also believe that we, the school, have the power to make this opportunity a reality. Our students only have one opportunity at school success and because of this our clocks are set to one time.....NOW!"

Our **NEU at Gus Winston Cain Elementary** is set in a small town adjacent to the Rose Capital of the United States, specifically in Whitehouse, TX. Whitehouse ISD is recognized for its commitment to students' high academic achievements, family atmosphere and small town traditions.

Cain Elementary lives its vision wholeheartedly and with the belief that failure is not an option. This mindset drives us daily in doing whatever it takes with the belief that each of our students will leave Cain Elementary on or above grade level in reading, writing and math and well on the road to college. Every student has the right to be educated in a way that prepares them for college and beyond.

At Cain, we have the privilege of shaping the lives of 630 students ranging from Early Childhood Education to the 5th grade level. As a Title 1 school, we have remained steadfast in student success. Ensuring that every student has the opportunity to be college ready requires a dedication and commitment, or a culture of universal achievement. One way Cain Elementary embraces this culture is evident by simply walking our hallways. You will find college symbolism at every turn immersing students in the reality that college is attainable for all students. We believe we have the power to influence every student to be academically successful.

Cain has a history of strong academic success, and we recently were named a 2016 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the United States Department of Education. This prestigious honor is earned by less than half of one percent of schools in the nation! The implementation of No Excuses University's Six Exceptional Systems has helped our campus to reach even greater heights. Our teachers and staff recognize even more the importance of having a culture of universal achievement and exactly what that means. One system we have focused on in an effort to improve is our interventions for ALL students. We utilize all available staff members to provide targeted, data driven instruction for high academic achievers and our struggling students alike. Each grade level has an allotted time scheduled into their day in which these interventions take place.

At Cain, we use the language of hope so that every stakeholder is valued and treated with respect at all times. "There's just something about this school." We hear this comment spoken on a regular basis by various stakeholders such as substitute teachers, present and past staff members, parents and community members. This speaks to the culture and climate of Cain Elementary, which we have worked hard to establish and maintain.



Our **NEU at Liberty Elementary School**, in Riverside, CA, was accepted into the No Excuses University Network of Schools during the 2007-2008 school year. Since then, Liberty has worked hard to implement the Six Exceptional Systems. Our Belief Systems are visited often to make sure that we continue to make progress in providing not only best practice for students, but also for parents and for our community. Our commitment includes helping parents attain a GED for better job opportunities in our community.

In June 2015, Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) helped us to meet our NEU goal of bringing the GED program to Liberty. Our district provided the GED Teacher and all materials needed, including the expense of a school bus to take parents to the adult school for registration and assessment. Liberty provided computers and the classroom. We provided Chromebook computers to give parents the opportunity of using technology during their school experience. Computer accessibility also helped with becoming familiar with online testing and prepared them for the online GED assessments.

It was inspiring to watch parents walk to school in the morning with their children, carrying their own school supplies. Knowing they did not have to drive, take a bus or walk a long distance to our district's adult school was a relief to the 25 parents enrolled in the GED program. Having this program at their child's school made it possible to be enrolled in this class.

In June 2016, five parents completed all course study requirements and passed the GED assessments. Their dream and goal of attaining their GED became a reality. All five participated in the GED graduation ceremony wearing a cap and gown. Their proudest moment was to turn their tassels in front of their children and family. In January of 2017, three more parents graduated and three more are expected to complete the program in June 2017.

Next stop for this group of parents...College!



LIBERTY ELEMENTARY
Riverside, CA
Principal: Esther Garcia



Jessica Villanueva is a valuable member of our team at our **NEU at Suisun Elementary School**. Suisun Elementary earned membership into the NEU Network of Schools four years ago and Jessica aided in the application process. She is an innovative and dedicated teacher, friend, and colleague who brings a variety of skills and strategies to help promote positive classroom culture, school community, and meeting the needs of the whole child. Jessica's excellent teaching qualities have been recognized by many and she recently has been awarded the 2016 California Milken Educators Award. This prestigious award is regarded as the Oscar of Teaching and she truly deserves the recognition. This award is a national recognition awarded to only 35 highly qualified educators and Suisun Elementary is proud to have her as one of their second grade teachers.

Jessica serves as the grade level lead teacher, is a member of the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) team, and participates on various district committees. Further, she has participated in English Language Development (ELD) implementation, planned and presented professional development highlighting her excellent classroom management skills, and has supported the school's transition to a Trauma-Informed School.

She approaches her students using a Trauma-Informed lens, by proactively meeting the needs of her diverse student population. She is focused on getting students to a place of being learning-ready. She institutes positive reinforcement for all students and utilizes her special education background in the general education setting. She plans lessons so they are accessible to all learners, and volunteers to take students with academic and behavioral challenges into her class.

As a district mentor teacher who advises new teachers both at her grade level and in special education, Jessica invites parents and community members into her classroom on a regular basis. Jessica helps students run the school's CIA (Character In Action) store every Friday to reward students who are demonstrating the character traits. She ensures her students are exposed to a culture of college readiness in her classroom by teaching them what it means to be college bound. Her college spirit shines bright at Suisun Elementary and her students wear their University of Hawaii shirts with pride. Overall, Jessica is an outstanding representation of the NEU Network of Schools.



SUISUN ELEMENTARY

Suisun City, CA

Principal: Ann Marie Neubert

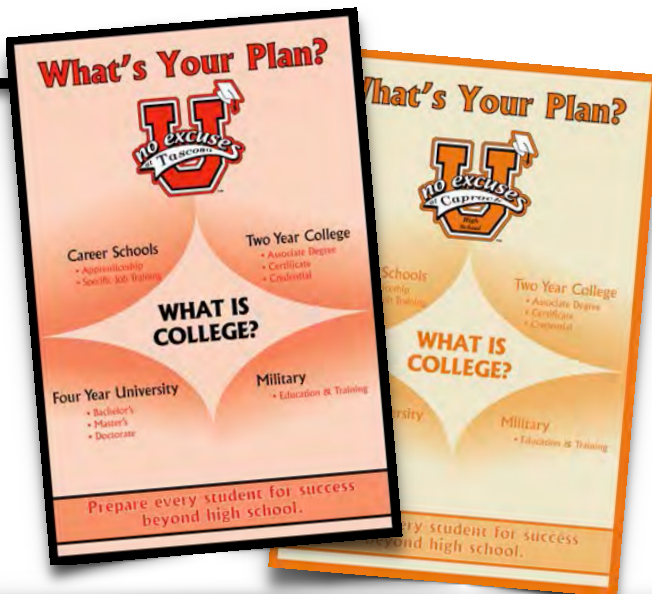


100%

What does No Excuses University look like in a high school? When Damen Lopez founded the No Excuses University, he did so in an elementary setting, wanting to show what college readiness could look like for young kids.

However, the success of an idea can be measured by how other like-minded individuals apply their own creative spin on the original thought. No Excuses University has moved into middle schools, high schools, preschools, and even churches. In each of these settings, teachers and administrators have put the exceptional systems to work in ways that benefit students.

In the 2014-2015 school year, the staff members of our **NEU at Caprock High School** shared a thought: What if we can get 100% of our senior class to apply for college before they leave our campus? Most certainly this was an ambitious and audacious goal. How do you get 100% of students to do anything? Also, surely not every student is going to attend college. Why should we spend time pushing students to do something they may not need?



CAPROCK HIGH SCHOOL

Amarillo, TX

Principal: Chad Huseman



TASCOSA HIGH SCHOOL

Amarillo, TX

Principal: David Bishop



Caprock High School - Senior Class of 2016

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A true NEU, full of maverick leaders and teachers, simply does not take no for an answer. They tend to share *crazy, unreasonable, impossible, irrational, unconventional, and absurd* beliefs about kids and all that they can become. The staff of Caprock shared the following beliefs about this 100% goal:

- If the students actually apply now for college, the chances are far better that they will attend college.
- Why not do it in an environment that is familiar and comfortable?
- Why not do it where there are dozens of supportive and encouraging adults?
- Why not do it in a setting where schedules can be adjusted and thus provide more opportunities?

Of course, when you are attempting an audacious goal, inevitably there will be resistance, although the Caprock staff received very little pushback. This lack of negative feedback was no doubt due to the incredible culture that this school has created and maintained. However, the question remained: What about the occasional student who did not see the value in applying for college?

- If a student does not see the need to attend college now, but does so in the future, the student will know how to begin the application process, thus increasing the chance for success.
- Sometimes people think that college is all about four-year universities that are far away and very expensive. However, in Amarillo, we are fortunate to have Amarillo College (the first NEU College) which offers a wide variety of career options. There are many different kinds of college opportunities that now exist for our students. Students, though, must take the beginning step of at least applying!

What was the result of this audacious plan? By the spring of 2015, 100% of Caprock seniors had applied for college. This feat was accomplished again in 2016, and it has already happened again for this current year.

Another high school in Amarillo, our **NEU at Tascosa High School**, has experienced for the first time this year the 100% application phenomenon. When a critical mass of the adults in a school significantly impacts the beliefs and attitudes of the staff of the school, miracles happen, and lives are changed.

What are the future plans? Amarillo College, the first college in the NEU Network of Schools, is working with our high schools to not only see our students apply, but to even *register for college* before they leave high school. Amarillo College is also working with Amarillo schools to ensure that every student in need will have at least one qualified and caring adult available to provide encouragement and support for the student *throughout the college years*.

High school students in Amarillo, Texas are building plans for a successful future and no excuse will get in their way!



Our NEU at Telesis Academy of Science and Math, located in West Covina, CA, is a TK-8th grade academy. It is also the first ever No Excuses Preparatory Academy in the nation. Telesis has earned a California Gold Ribbon Award for its integration of NEU with STEAM. Over the past two years, Telesis has been partnered with the California Science Center. This partnership has taught teachers how to incorporate the *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS) and embed engineering standards into instruction in grades TK through Eighth.

Telesis prides itself on teachers that make connections with students and truly embrace the idea of No Excuses. One such teacher, Mrs. Maryellen Whittingham is a prime example of that No Excuses mindset. Mrs. Whittingham joined the Telesis Team in the third year of Telesis's existence. She transferred in with years of experience as well as the golden philosophy that "ALL children can learn". Maryellen taught for 27 years at another school that was the polar opposite of Telesis in regards to student population. Ninety percent of the student population at Telesis comes in on a permit. There are children from within and from outside of the Rowland Unified School District that choose to enroll because Telesis is not an attendance-boundary school. As a result, the school's demographics include 80% socioeconomically disadvantaged students, which again, is the polar opposite of where Mrs. Whittingham spent the last 27 years of her teaching career. "I wanted to part of the No Excuses University Philosophy. I didn't know a lot about it, however, I was ready for a fresh focus on the belief that all children can learn. And the parents send us their very best every day", stated Whittingham.

Mrs. Whittingham's journey to Telesis included some obstacles that she had to overcome. As a veteran teacher, she had to endure the loathed interview or "conversation" with the principal. There was one question that rode hard on Mrs. Whittingham's mind, that being "What can you contribute to Telesis Academy?" WOW! So here is a 27 year veteran who was just asked what, if anything she can contribute. Maryellen not only assured the principal that she was an outstanding teacher, but also vowed that she would help organize a Math Night, which would bring families, students, and staff together in the name of Math. Just like that, Mrs. Whittingham was hired as a full-fledged Telesis Titan.

Mrs. Whittingham brought a vast arsenal of resources and teaching strategies to Telesis that she learned throughout her career. At the beginning of her first school year at Telesis, she quickly realized that the students sitting in front of her came with a very different set of skills. The students at Telesis had a wide array of abilities and skill levels that Mrs. Whittingham was not accustomed to. She had to use her entire bag of tricks and learn some new ones to help prepare her Kindergarten students for first grade. Her first year at Telesis went by fast and Mrs. Whittingham helped each and every one of her students to be the best they could be. She sent them to first grade willing and ready to graduate college in the year 2029!



**TELESIS ACADEMY OF
SCIENCE AND MATH**
West Covina, CA
Principal: Johan Schmitz



Before the Kindergarten students at Telesis started the 2015-2016 school year, the Kindergarten Team holds a Summer Screening. All Kindergarten students are screened to see what skills they are coming in with so there is no time wasted when the school year begins. One student, Giuliana, grabbed Mrs. Whittingham's attention as soon as her screening was completed. Mrs. Whittingham stated, "During the summer screening, Giuliana's parents were over the moon in love with their child. I saw a proud mom, proud dad, her baby brother in the stroller, and a little girl just beaming. Through the assessment process, it became evident that Giuliana struggled with her basic beginning Kindergarten skills. She struggled to recognize numbers one through ten, the shapes, colors. The only letter Giuliana knew was the letter X. Her verbal skills though were that of a first-grader. She could tell stories, she would greet adults with respect and was curious and excited for this experience called "school." She was truly bright-eyed and bushy-tailed ready to take on the world".

Due to the data she collected through the summer screening, Mrs. Whittingham knew exactly where to begin with her students. She designed lessons that were tailored to the needs of each and every one of the children in her classroom. Giuliana was no exception; Mrs. Whittingham knew she had to get to work right away. Knowing how to harness every resource at her disposal, Mrs. Whittingham quickly enlisted the help of Giuliana's parents. See, Giuliana's parents were hard working, committed, and obviously loved their children to the moon and beyond. Regardless of how busy Giuliana's parents were with completing the responsibilities of their day jobs, they found ways to attend Back to School Night, Math Night, Science Night, Field trips, Movie Night, etc...They made it priority to be there. Mrs. Whittingham viewed them as a powerful resource.

Mrs. Whittingham took full advantage of the eagerness of Giuliana's parents to help their little girl get caught up. She gave parents pre-school materials to work on at home. She trained the parents how to ask basic comprehension questions each time they read a book to Giuliana at home. She encouraged the parents to make things fun and meaningful. At one point, Giuliana's mom stated that they planned to practice letter sounds, writing letters, learning sight words, and counting instead of going out together as a family over the weekend. When mother shared this idea with Mrs. Whittingham, Mrs. Whittingham simply said, "No, of course not. Take her places but make a learning experience out of it. When you go to the Zoo for example, touch the letters, sound them out and Giuliana will remember." Mrs. Whittingham purchased magnetic letters for Giuliana to use at home, foam letters for her to use in the bathtub, and provided the family with a whiteboard and marker so Giuliana could practice while making things fun.

A breakthrough came in December, when Giuliana came home singing several new songs she had learned for the school's winter concert. Her mother noticed her ease in remembering the words. At Whittingham's suggestion, she came up with a song to help Giuliana memorize how to spell her name. The song was set to Bingo. B-I-N-G-O and Bingo was his Name-O. But instead it sounded like, G-IU-LI-ANA and Giuliana was her name-O. It worked beautifully.

Knowing the Giuliana knew the letter X, Mrs. Whittingham's Kindergarten class adopted the University of TeXas. Giuliana proud to be a Texas Longhorn! She came to school every day wearing her Texas Longhorn Sweatshirt and on Friday's proudly wearing her Longhorn T-shirt. She absolutely loved singing the college chant. Mrs. Whittingham used a College Wall to help Giuliana learn her letters, starting with the letter X, then L for Longhorns. She taught Giuliana from the College Wall until she knew all of the letters and words on that wall.

Mrs. Whittingham, Giuliana, and Giuliana's family continued through the year to work very hard with Giuliana to help her reach the standards of her grade level. By the end of the year, Giuliana had learned to read and write five-sentence essays, count to 100 and draw pictures of people with fully formed features. In fact, on her first day of summer school, she completed her 100 sight words and joined the 100 Club! Coming from a family where neither parent had graduated college, Giuliana's parents and Giuliana aspire for her to be the first to graduate college in the year 2032. Mrs. Whittingham said, "When everybody works together there are truly are NO EXCUSES as to why a child can not succeed."

In November of 2016, the *Los Angeles Times* published an article about the achievements of Giuliana and Mrs. Whittingham. To view this article, go to: <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-ln-kindergarten-expectations-adv-snap-20161109-story.html>.



All staff members at No Excuses University Schools who successfully apply and attend Ashford University receive:

- A 10% tuition grant
- A technology fee waiver
- Free required course materials for his/her 1st course

M.A. in EDUCATION SPECIALIZATION:

Ashford offers the four-course *Exceptional Systems for Revolutionizing Education* specialization in the Master of Arts in Education degree program focused on NEU's Six Exceptional Systems. For more information, CLICK [**HERE**](#) to visit the Ashford University website.

CLASSROOM PARTNERSHIPS:

Ashford University's College of Education sponsors one classroom in each NEU school! Each classroom that partners with Ashford

NEU PARENT SCHOLARSHIP: The College of Education at Ashford University offers one full scholarship to a parent of a No Excuses University student for any undergraduate degree offered by Ashford. The 2017 recipient of the NEU Parent Scholarship was **Cheli Vasquez** from our **NEU at East Side Elementary**, in Jacksonville, TX (top right photo).

NEU TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP: The College of Education at Ashford University offers one full scholarship to a teacher in the NEU Network of Schools for a M.A. in Education or M.A. in Teaching and Learning with Technology. The 2017 recipient of the NEU Teacher Scholarship was **Cara Nickels** from our **NEU at Degan Elementary**, in Lewisville, TX (middle right photo).



ASHFORD UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP



camp kesem.

A child's friend through and beyond a parent's cancer.

Every year, NEU Schools unite to take part in raising funds for a charity of the year. With a goal of 100% participation, we select charities that offer our students the experience of giving to other children in need. Because stewardship is a core value of our network, it is our desire to foster such a trait in all of our NEU students, no matter their personal challenges.

2016-2017

NEU Charity of the Year: *Camp Kesem*

Camp Kesem is a free, week-long summer camp for children growing up with parents who have cancer. There are more than 80 of these camps across the country that serve more than 5,000 kids. These camps are run by more than 3,000 student leaders from colleges and universities. Many NEU Schools created Camp Kesem caterpillars on their campus to celebrate the donations they collected. For more information about *Camp Kesem*, please go to: www.campkesem.org.

During the 2016-2017 school year, NEU Schools collected more than \$50,000 in donations for *Camp Kesem*, which will provide Camp Kesem with the funds that are needed to open a new chapter of their summer camp!



NEU CHARITY OF THE YEAR

Where the Heart Is Children's Ministry (WTHICM) was excited to become a part of the NEU family in 2015. WTHICM is a 501c3 nonprofit charitable organization that financially supports an orphanage called **Casa de Mi Familia** (CDMF), located in Tijuana, Mexico. The affiliation with NEU began when Dr. Emily Devor, NEU Leader and principal of our NEU at Terrace Elementary School, took BOLD action in the summer of 2015, by sponsoring WTHICM's annual "Fiesta de la Playa." The NEU at Terrace Elementary staff, in Riverside, CA, supplied beach bags and accessories to all the children of CDMF, making their day at the beach very special.

This year WTHICM continues to focus on providing educational opportunities and college readiness for the children of Casa de mi Familia. The junior high and high school students once again had the opportunity to attend two Career Days at the local university that were both encouraging and inspiring as they realized they, too, could attend the university in the future and enhance their opportunities in life! Two of Casa de mi Familia's young adults are currently attending college and successfully pursuing their careers. Neftali is finishing his first year as a communication major and Noemi is in her second year of nursing school.

WTHICM is proud to announce the start of the NEU scholarship fund thanks to a donation made by Damen and Lara Lopez. This new scholarship fund will be used solely to ensure that the children who want to attend college or vocational school can do so without concerns regarding funding their education. The scholarship will require accountability of each and every student by monitoring their progress and making sure they are studying and working hard to achieve their goals.

In addition, student council members of NEU at Rosemary Kennedy Elementary school within the Alvord Unified School District in Riverside, California under the tutelage of their school counselor, Erika Zamora, organized a coin drive for WTHICM and presented a check for \$1,105. as a donation to the NEU scholarship fund. Pope Elementary School in Puyallup, Washington added another \$439 to the scholarship fund through several events including "helados con amigos", (Ice cream with friends), under the "bold" NEU leadership of Karina Wheeler and Amy Gray. Many other NEU leaders have provided love and encouragement to the kids, sending gifts and letters. Together we are changing the cycle of poverty for these precious kids!



CASA de MI FAMILIA





The 2016 NEU National Convention, in Anaheim, was an outstanding event featuring 47 breakout sessions presented by NEU teachers and principals from across our network. Keynote presentations were provided by Damen Lopez, Derek Clark, and Tina Schuler. One of the highlights of the event included our first “Tweet and Greet,” featuring prize giveaways throughout Downtown Disney all leading up to a party at the ESPN Sportszone restaurant. We introduced the NEU Network of Schools to our 2016-2017 NEU Charity of the Year, Camp Kesem, and presented the 2016 Barbara Livermore After High School Comes College Award to Dr. Emily Devor. We honored the first recipients of our NEU Membership Distinctions: Los Penasquitos Elementary (Doctoral), San Jacinto Elementary (Master’s), and David Weir Preparatory (Bachelor’s). We had a great time at our 2016 NEU National Convention in Anaheim and we are already looking forward to our 2017 Convention at the Gaylord Texan, in Dallas, TX!



**2016 NEU
NATIONAL CONVENTION**
Anaheim Marriott
Anaheim, California
October 20, 21, and 22



NEU NATIONAL CONVENTION

NO EXCUSES LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

During our last NEU National Convention in Dallas, Texas, I released my new book, titled *No Excuses Leadership: Nine Bold Choices Exceptional Leaders Make*. With Bold Choices as the theme of our event, I witnessed first hand just how exceptional our network is because of the leaders who guide our schools. From classroom teachers who lead their teams, to guidance counselors providing direction to students, to site principals in charge of keeping the vision of the school, our network is filled with great leaders. Leadership is not a title. It's not a person or a role. Leadership is an action! A leader is any educator with the ability and responsibility to influence the lives of students. If you are able and you are responsible, you can be a leader. And, if you are a leader, you might as well make the choice to be a No Excuses Leader who makes BOLD choices!

In March of 2016, because of the tremendous response to the No Excuses Leadership concept, we scheduled our first-ever No Excuses Leadership Academy. For two days, 100 of our most dynamic and committed leaders came together to focus on the Nine Bold Choices that have the potential to make us all exceptional. We shared ideas, collaborated on common school issues, admitted our weaknesses, shared our strengths, and celebrated our successes as individuals and schools. Throughout our two days together, we developed a bond as leaders that came at just the right time in the school year. When we left, we did so with two deep commitments: First, to share the strategies and ideas that we learned with the rest of our colleagues upon returning to our schools. Second, to make the decision to be BOLD in our choices as leaders. As an organizer and participant of these two great days, I cannot wait for the upcoming No Excuses Leadership events we have planned in the future.

Upcoming Leadership Academies:

SAN DIEGO

September 2017

SEATTLE

October 2017

DALLAS

November 2017



CONTENT:

NEU Connect features more than 220 engaging videos on Career Readiness, Financial Literacy, Legal Basics, and Personal Wellness, organized by grade. The videos are supplemented with assessments and resources our teachers can use to enhance their instruction. When NEU teachers incorporate just one of these topics into their class each week, NEU students get the soft skills they need to succeed.

CONNECTIONS:

The power of the NEU Network of Schools lies in the networking that takes place within it. NEU Connect is an online platform where our network can share ideas with each other. On NEU Connect, we can link the more than 7,000 educators in the growing NEU Network of Schools together. With a click of a mouse you can search and find like-minded educators. Then, share resources you've created and experienced success with at your school. It's content by the network, for the network. More than 2,000 resources were shared between NEU Schools during the 2016-2017 school year.



NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

RENEWAL:

For the second consecutive school year, all NEU Schools were required to add at least one asset to each Resource Category on NEU Connect by May 1st.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:

NEU Schools pay an annual subscription fee that provides an NEU Connect Account to every member of the school's staff for the entire school year.

2016-2017 STATISTICS:

Assets added:

2,160

Total assets in
NEU CONNECT:

4,292

Assets downloaded:

1,658

Total active users:

9,821

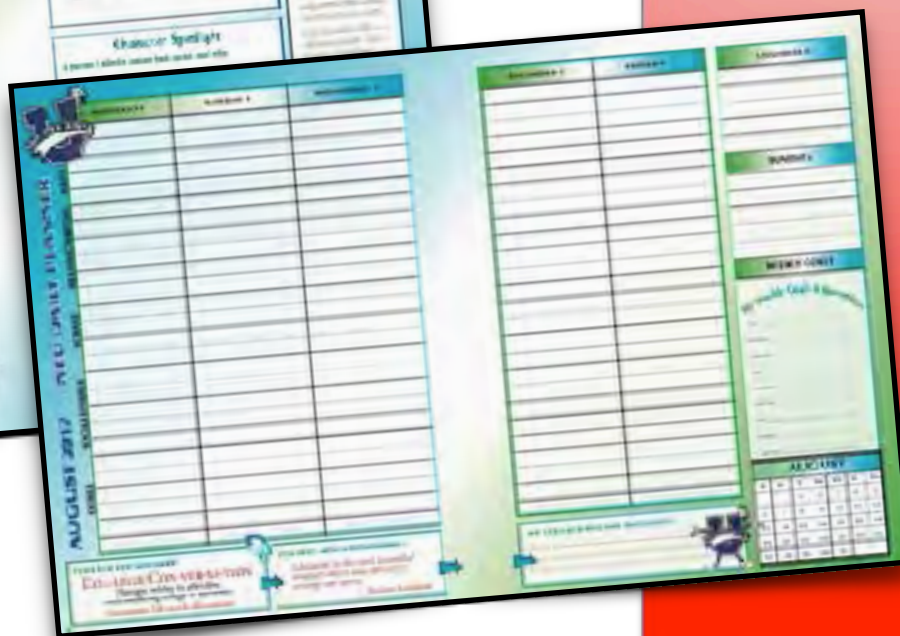
NEU CONNECT



COLLEGE CONVERSATIONS

The NEU Student Planner was designed for the K-8 No Excuses University Student. Central themes of College Readiness, Character Development, and Goal Management are carefully integrated throughout the book. The result is a planner that is uniquely NEU and a tool that will help guide students through a successful school year. The 2017-2018 NEU Student Planner features a monthly COLLEGE CONVERSATION. These conversations will support students through every month of the school year as they develop their character, build their leadership skills, and progress toward their goals. The COLLEGE CONVERSATIONS featured in the planner are:

CHARACTER
GOAL SETTING
CHOICE
ACADEMIC BEHAVIOR
SUCCESS EQUATION
CHALLENGES
INVESTING IN COLLEGE
COLLEGE CONCEPTS
COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE
COLLEGE COMMITMENT



2017-2018 NEU STUDENT PLANNER

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