

Liz Barnitz is the principal of El Camino Elementary School in the Goleta Union School District (GUSD). She has been a principal in GUSD for five years. Last year was her first year at El Camino School.

El Camino School is a Title I School with approximately 80% of the students coming from socio-economically disadvantaged families. 78 percent of the students are English Learners. Last year, El Camino School became identified as a Year One Program Improvement School as a result of failing to meet a small number of 19 required benchmarks for the Federal accountability system under No Child Left Behind for the 2011-12 school year.

During the 2012-13 school year, through the highly effective and energetic leadership Ms. Barnitz provided at El Camino, students met all federal and state accountability goals. As a result El Camino will not advance to the next level of Program Improvement. They are the only Program Improvement school in Santa Barbara County to achieve this significant accomplishment.

The primary strategies Ms. Barnitz is employing to address the needs of students at El Camino include faithful implementation of the Turnaround Schools model including designating the school as a "No Excuses University" . This research-based model emphasizes the importance of developing college-going culture from the first days of Kindergarten. In conjunction with this model, teachers work to deliver computer-based formative assessments (Measures of Academic Progress) to all students three times a year. Results of these assessments guide individual growth goals and inform frequent opportunities for teachers to work with students on setting realistic and rigorous goals in every subject. Teachers also use the results of these scores to individualize instruction within each grade level.

Another component of the school's remarkable success is emphasis on celebration of academic growth and extensive opportunities to bring parents and community members to the school. Parents participate in evening classes that reinforce positive parenting and provide support and encouragement for productive parent interface with the school system at all levels. Family nights with emphasis on science and college preparation occur through the year.

Ms. Barnitz has presented students and teachers as models for others in the education community. Last spring, along with four teachers and nine children, she presented information about the success of El Camino's academic interventions to the Board of Partners in Education in a way that was described as inspirational by

many of those in attendance. Dr. Lori Gaskin, president of Santa Barbara City College was so impressed by the presentation that she used a video of a 2nd grade El Camino student reading an essay about the importance of college as part of her inspirational introduction to college faculty at the opening convocation for the 2013-14 school year.

Earlier this fall, Ms. Barnitz presented information to the Santa Barbara Board of Education regarding El Camino's successful turnaround and their status as the county's only Program Improvement school to meet all federal benchmarks for 2012-2013.

I can think of no one in Goleta, or the County for that matter, who is more deserving of the designation of Goleta's Finest Educator of the Year! She has clearly contributed to the growth and achievement of the educational system in Goleta. Without questions she has gone above and beyond to contribute to educational advancement.