



**LEONARD EVANS Jr. MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**6998 W Eldorado Pkwy, McKinney, TX 75070**  
**Principal – Darla Jackson**

**Campus Profile**

Evans Middle School (EMS) is a family committed to transforming learning and providing our students an excellent education while giving them the skills necessary to be productive citizens in the community in which they live. Our uncompromising commitment to achieve specific, measurable goals and inspire a passion for learning will guide us this year. We continue to demonstrate that a school can have high academic success and expectations and be positive members of their community.

Evans Middle School has approximately 1,025 students in grades 6-8 with over 100 staff members here to serve our students. 31% of our students participate in our free or reduced lunch program and we have 13% special needs population, including 4 centralized units, two of which support our emotionally disturbed students. We also have a strong Gifted and Talented program that supports 12% of our population.

Evans Middle School leadership entrusts our educators to create engaging experiences for ALL students, whether being served through special education or in our Gifted and Talented program. ALL students receive instruction that challenges them and stretches their academic abilities.

This past year, EMS earned a combined campus-wide passing rate of 91% on STAAR with a report grade of an "A." We outperformed the state average in reading, writing, math, social studies, and science. The distinction we are most proud of is receiving our "A" in Closing the Gap. Another area we have been successful in is our AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) algebra class. Every student who took algebra in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade passed the algebra End of Course exam for the eighth year in a row. Evans is an AVID National Demonstration School and an AVID Site of Distinction. EMS also achieved HRS: Levels 1: Safe, Supportive, and Collaborative Culture & 2: Effective Teaching in Every Classroom.

**Transformation Target: Social Emotional Learning and Supports**

"The Vision" from the "Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas" document states, "We see schools that foster a sense of belonging and community and that inspires collaboration."

Our Evans' success is in large part because we are a family. And like any family, we know we have to take care of the whole person in order to be a happy, successful person. Therefore, we

initiated an advisory period three years ago. Every day, students attend a 30 minute class where we learn about the teenage brain, self-regulation, how to show strong character traits, how to stay organized, tools for college readiness, and so much more. We call this time our IMPACT period. IMPACT is an acronym for Integrity, Making a Difference, Perseverance, Accountability, Compassion, and Teamwork. The lessons taught during this time are considered just as important as any content subject. We also use this time for intervention and enrichment. Mondays are a special IMPACT day and reserved for our Panther Privilege Time (PPT), or genius hour for middle schoolers. Each teacher provides a brain break activity and students choose where they want to go. Here are some of the activities offered during this time on our campus: organic gardening, outdoor obstacle course, origami creations, board games, veterinarian skills, yoga, and so much more. We even have our own coffee shop called Panther Perks and our students are the baristas. Evans is the only middle school in McKinney to offer this weekly opportunity to ALL students, and it has been truly transformational for our campus.

Once our IMPACT period and PPT were in full swing, it became obvious how important these character lessons and brain breaks were for students and staff alike. The culture of our school was changing in a positive way and we wanted to capitalize on that change. Our leadership team began brainstorming some ways to keep the momentum rolling. We recognized that students need to feel safe and feel included before they can do their best learning. This realization sparked our leadership team to create and launch a campus action plan focused around social-emotional needs of our students. Last year, we incorporated a staff book study, Help for Billy, where we participated in collaborative study groups to discuss how this resource could help us support students with severe social emotional needs. This empowered educators with new tools and strategies. This year, we took social-emotional supports to a new level. From our guest speaker, Alan Saenz, to advisory lessons in emotional regulation and coping with stress, we are supporting the “whole child” and have a deeper understanding for how the brain works and what causes a dysregulated brain. Several of our teacher teams have even added breathing techniques into their lesson plans to help students stay regulated.

As part of this transformation, our counselors launched a Calming Room for students. Anyone can check-in and enter the calming room. Students pick up a 10-minute hourglass timer, choose a calming station of their choice, and begin the self-soothing process. At the end of the 10-minutes, students complete a reflection sheet that allows us to track how the student felt upon arrival versus how they felt after receiving time to decompress. On the reflection sheet, they can indicate if they still have a need to meet with a counselor for additional support. Our latest count was 378 visits to the calming room and over 80% were able to self-sooth and return to class without seeing a counselor. After visiting with several repeat students, they all shared a common feeling of empowerment because they were learning how to calm their own “demons,” as one student put it. When asked if the calming room impacts their academics, they all said their grades have improved and their ability to focus had increased. The Calming Room has proven to be a huge transformational success on our campus.

“Live Kind” is an initiative started by Dr. Rick McDaniel, MISD Superintendent. Evans has taken this initiative and run with it. We have a “Live Kind” Club where students collaborate to create new ways to keep the “Live Kind” philosophy going. Our most recent success was The Great Kindness Challenge. Each class participated in something unique to show kindness. One class put random messages of kindness on all the vehicles in our parking lot. Another class had a trash pickup day. My personal favorite was receiving notes from students thanking me and all our educators for being kind to them and teaching them each day. When students are treated with kindness, they feel safe and have a sense of belonging. Only then will they become the

academic scholars we know them to be.

On the horizon, our action plan includes another learning opportunity for teachers. At the beginning of next year, our staff will read Emotional Poverty by Ruby Payne. Team leaders will read the resource in advance and will create discussion topics for our staff. We want student voice to be heard in our pursuit to support the “whole child” too. Our leadership team is putting a student panel together and have questions prepared in an effort to obtain feedback that will be critical for next year’s action plan and lesson planning for IMPACT period.

It is our commitment that ALL our Evans family members have a safe environment and engaging experiences to help them reach their full potential. Social-emotional learning plays a vital role in supporting our students. We will continue to explore resources, seek best practices, and be dedicated to transforming the academic experiences and the social-emotional learning needs for ALL learners at Evans, including the adult learners.

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Nominator: Darla  
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*(Endorsement attached)*