

Bridge Point Elementary School principal settles in to new job

- Suzanne Majors Davis Contributing writer 10:22 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 18, 2017



Suzanne Majors Davis

New Bridge Point Elementary School Principal Heather Meek reads to kindergarteners Caroline Thompson, 6, Elizabeth Roth, 6, and Felix Petrini, 5 in the library on Jan. 5. (SUZANNE MAJORS DAVIS FOR WESTLAKE PICAYUNE)

Seasoned new Bridge Point Elementary Principal Heather Meek acknowledged that she has “big shoes to fill” after the school’s original principal of 19 years, Brad Wirht, left last May, but she feels settled and is enjoying her responsibility for 722 students.

“I truly love my job and am happy to be here,” said Meek, 42.

Meek came from the Frisco Independent School District near Dallas. She said she was nervous at first because of Wirht’s great reputation, but said he gave her confidence.

“He was so gracious and kind and wanted this school to be set up for success, so he was there with me every step of the way during the transition, and said he’d only give me advice when I asked for it,” Meek said.

Meek believes that “relationships are No. 1, because they are the basis for building trust. This is a great district and school, and I feel I was hired to push the campus forward ... I’m asking a lot of questions, to see where we need to improve.”

Bridge Point was the last school built by the school district in 1997 on the northernmost edge of the district near the Loop 360 Bridge. Meek said it has the highest enrollment and a higher special education population. She is proud it has “a huge special ed staff, more than any of the three districts” she has served.

“The special ed support ratio is fantastic,” Meek said. “I’m surprised by it, and feel very supported.”

Meek should know, because she has a master’s degree in special education from Texas Woman’s University and was a diagnostician of learning disabilities for four years.

“When I was a special ed case manager in another district, the ratio was 19 students for every teacher,” Meek said.

Bridge Point’s student to teacher ratio is 4 to 1 in the special education program.

After reviewing her school’s performance on standardized tests, one of her goals is to see their scores increase on the STAAR exam. She’d like to “see more growth from one year to the next.”

Bridge Point earned testing distinctions for Achievement in Reading/ELA, Closing Performance Gaps for economically disadvantaged students and Postsecondary Readiness. Like all other schools in Eanes, Bridge Point received the highest rating given by the Texas Education Agency.

The demographics of Eanes and Frisco are similar, but she is thankful they differ in growth.

“Both have high achieving students and very involved parents, but this district is a little slower paced compared to the one I came from with 55,000 students versus about 9,000 here,” Meek said. “It has been a nice change not to keep up with that pace, pressure and growth.”

Meek added that Frisco has an enormous challenge with that many students and has to build new schools every year.

“As a result, it got good at streamlining its policies and procedures,” Meek said. “They were rezoning every couple of years. Kids were moving a lot, so you try to keep everything equal. You could have a child in kindergarten who could possibly be rezoned two or three times before reaching fifth grade because of the growth.”

Frisco wanted all schools to share how they did things to create seamless transitions, she noted. That experience has led to her philosophy of collaboration. She said that has “taken teachers on ‘learning walks’ at other campuses to see how other schools do things. We like to share knowledge with each other. Everyone is very open. We do it on our own with the principals and teachers, and it is reciprocated.”

Meek recalled that Eanes Superintendent Tom Leonard said he “wants kids to have a similar and good experience.”

“I make student-centered decisions first and am always ready to have a conversation with parents,” Meek said, noting that her favorite part of the job is getting to know all the students and getting hugs from the kids.