

Report: Local schools excel despite disadvantages

by Fred Cantú

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Most Central Texas children are wrapping up the school year this week, but today their schools got their report card from a child advocacy group called [CHILDREN AT RISK](#).

Graham Elementary in Northeast Austin has a new plaque to hang in the school office. Today they were ranked number one in a list of "Top Gold Ribbon Neighborhood Elementary Schools" in Austin. The people behind the list hope other schools will look at what schools like Graham are doing right and try to duplicate their success."

Bob Sanborn, PhD is CEO of CHILDREN AT RISK. He says, "We have schools from Eanes and from Round Rock. Austin ISD did particularly well this year. So the idea is to honor the schools who are really serving our students well."

Some schools like Blackshear Elementary in East Austin excel even though conventional wisdom says poorer schools can't succeed. Principal Betty Jenkins says, "A winning school has wonderful staff members and students and parents that work together with excellent systems."

Guerrero Thompson Elementary is only three years old and has already earned the support of parents. Principal Lakesa Drinks explains, "I think when parents know that you have their child's best interest at heart, they are most likely to support you. And so in our work every day we try to show it in our actions and our attitudes and our interactions with our students."

Graham Elementary is also a former National Blue Ribbon School winner. Principal Blaine Helwig says success takes work and working together. "It just takes a tremendous amount of effort," he says. "And the parents are collaborating with us and the teachers, a collective effort all around to make sure that these children have better economic futures."

Gold Ribbon Neighborhood Elementary Schools

Elementary schools that are neither a charter nor magnet, have a high concentration of economically disadvantaged students, and rank highest on the overall rankings.

1. Graham Elementary School (Austin ISD)
2. Guerrero Thompson Elementary School (Austin ISD)
3. Blackshear Elementary School (Austin ISD)
4. Blazier Elementary School (Austin ISD)
5. Ortega Elementary School (Austin ISD)

Source: [CHILDREN AT RISK](#)