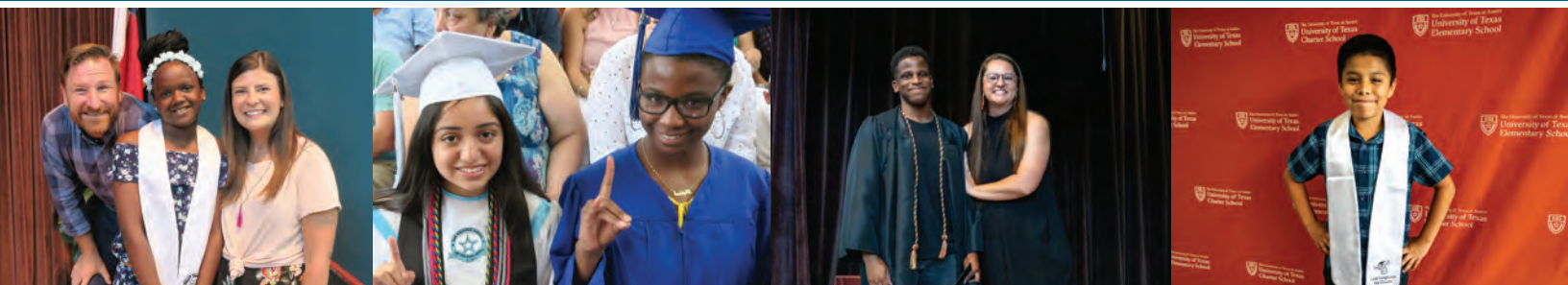




THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**CELEBRATING 20 YEARS
OF TEACHING, TRAINING
AND RESEARCH**

**2023-2024
ANNUAL
REPORT**



UT ELEMENTARY LEADERSHIP



DR. CHARLES MARTINEZ **DEAN, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT** **AUSTIN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

The College of Education and UT Elementary have been mutually beneficial partners since the school was chartered in 2003. UT Austin students from a variety of academic areas have gained valuable experience by training at UT Elementary, including hundreds of interns and student teachers from the College of Education. Some of our most important research around special education and response to intervention has taken place at UT Elementary working with their students and families. I am so pleased that UT Elementary is now part of the College of Education. I truly feel like UT Elementary has come home.



DR. MELISSA M. CHAVEZ **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE UNIVERSITY** **OF TEXAS CHARTER SCHOOL SYSTEM**

With twenty years of experience, our school is realizing the longitudinal outcomes of our work. UT Elementary graduates are entering college at higher rates than other Texas high school graduates, and they are attending universities across the US, creating a Little Longhorn nation.



DR. NICOLE WHETSTONE **SUPERINTENDENT, THE UNIVERSITY OF** **TEXAS CHARTER SCHOOL SYSTEM**

UT Elementary is proud to work with multiple colleges and programs at The University of Texas at Austin. Whether we are supporting student teachers with the College of Education, training counselors from the School of Social Work, or empowering the young men of the Texas Cowboys, our classrooms help prepare Longhorns for career and community leadership through working with the most deserving children and families in Austin. We are proud of these connections and excited for what we will accomplish together over the next 20 years.

GEEKING OUT ON NUMBERS: PRINCIPAL WILDER PROPELS DATA-DRIVEN IMPROVEMENTS

In July 2023, UT Elementary School welcomed Lara Wilder as its new principal. As a lifelong learner, Principal Wilder holds certifications in School Management, School Change, and Datawise, from Harvard Business School in addition to her bachelor's and master's degrees from Texas State University. She is also certified in Results Coaching, a proven method of coaching that doesn't rely on a deficit model but allows teachers to guide their own development. Wilder is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Administration, with her dissertation focusing on trauma-informed instructional practices.

Wilder brings 20 years of practical experience as a classroom teacher and administrator to UT Elementary. Although she had been an Academic Dean at Austin Independent School District, she relished the idea of becoming part of the large learning community at The University of Texas at Austin.



Not only was Wilder interested in the research that goes on at UT Elementary in partnership with the College of Education, but she said, “There are so many amazing aspects to the school, like the number of student teachers and the interaction that we have with them. We’re shaping education moving forward.”

“ We’re shaping education moving forward. ”

One of Wilder’s main goals has been to strengthen the professional learning communities at UT Elementary School and focus the collaborative work of teachers on aligning data with instruction—the key to continuous school improvement. She explained that during the pandemic, many UT Elementary students, like countless others in the state, fell behind, especially in math fluency.

“The more that we understand the depth and complexity that we need to be teaching to align with standards, the more it’s going to help us improve instruction. But it also helps the students when it comes to making real-world connections, which is an area of improvement for us,” said Wilder.

She said that teachers are also understanding vertical alignment so they can scaffold those skills to support students in ways that better match how students are assessed by STAAR standardized tests. “They really like looking at the data and the numbers behind it. I think we all kind of geek out,” said Wilder. “We have some great teachers!”

RESEARCH AND DEMONSTRATION AT UT ELEMENTARY: 20 YEARS OF OUTCOMES

As part of The University of Texas at Austin, UT Elementary School plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Founded in 2003 under the University of Texas System's *Every Child, Every Advantage initiative*, UT Elementary is dedicated to supporting P-16 education, serving both the community and the 40 Acres.

UT Elementary functions as a research and demonstration school, partnering with an ever-growing number of UT colleges and schools to facilitate faculty and postgraduate research and pilot innovative initiatives. More than 100 studies have been conducted at UT Elementary, involving our students, teachers and families, making it a hub for educational research and development.

Each year, 20-50 students from The University of Texas at Austin gain practical experience at UT Elementary. Students from the College of Education complete internships, observations, and student teaching with our students. This real-world experience is essential for their growth as future educators.

Moreover, students from the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, College of Fine Arts/Butler School of Music, Moody College of Communication, College of Natural Sciences, and more engage with UT Elementary, applying their skills in a supportive and dynamic environment. This synergy between the elementary school and the university fosters a collaborative atmosphere where research, innovation, and practical experience thrive, benefiting the entire educational community.

3% Teacher Preparation

5% Early Childhood

5% STEM Education

5% Social Studies

5% Music Education

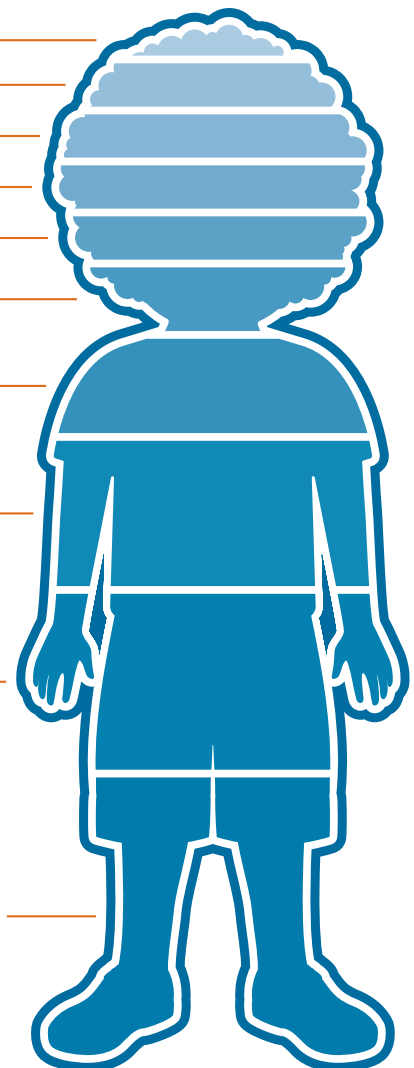
7% Reading

10% Mathematics

15% Mental Health and Social & Emotional Learning

17% Kinesiology and Physical Health

28% Special Education and Response to Intervention



Areas of research that have been conducted at UT Elementary since 2003.

RESEARCH AT UT ELEMENTARY LEADS TO IMPROVED READING



Dr. Jessica Toste

Dr. Jessica Toste, associate professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Texas at Austin, is one of many faculty members whose research at UT Elementary has created impact far beyond the school.

Some of her studies have focused on intensifying intervention for students with persistent reading challenges and disabilities using the Response to Intervention (RTI) model—a multi-tiered approach responding to individual students’ specific needs.

“RTI is a school service delivery model that ensures students get additional support without having to experience failure,” Dr. Toste explained. “All students receive high-quality instruction, with interventions enhancing classroom learning to make the most intensive services available to those who need them.”

As part of the school’s established Multi-Tiered System of Support, all UT Elementary students benefit from regular observation with rapid responses tailored to their individual needs.

Having led research projects across larger districts, Dr. Toste noted significant differences at UT Elementary. “The administration really makes it easier. They understand our work and are more receptive to a wide range of projects.”

UT Elementary faculty also facilitate the process. “As a former classroom teacher, I truly understand teachers’ workloads,” Dr. Toste said. “Bringing in UT students and new programs disrupts routines and adds responsibilities, but UT Elementary teachers understand and value our work—both for their students and children everywhere.” She added that in UT Elementary’s culture, “There’s greater emphasis on using data to make informed decisions about each student’s needs.”

In 2017, Dr. Toste conducted a multi-syllabic word reading intervention at the school that led to ‘*Word Connections*,’ a supplemental reading intervention program published in October 2022. The program includes lessons that are available for free on Dr. Toste’s website. As of October 2023, *Word Connections* has been downloaded over 20,000 times worldwide.

One UT Elementary student who participated in the program enthusiastically shared his success, exclaiming, “It helped me read big words!” The research made possible through UT Elementary and The University of Texas at Austin is truly changing the world.



HUNDREDS OF SUPPORTERS CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF IMPACT

FROM PRE-K TO PH.D. AWARDS DINNER

Hundreds of attendees—including university leaders such as President Jay Hartzell and Master of Ceremonies Dr. Bob Duke, along with community supporters and UT Elementary founding families—came together to celebrate and support the school.

The evening showcased captivating performances by the Little Longhorn Conjunto Band, led by Grammy-winning musician Joel Guzman, and the Little Longhorn Orchestra, featuring current students and alumni now excelling in middle and high school. Talented students and esteemed professors from the UT Butler School of Music joined both performances, highlighting the incredible potential of our students and the transformative impact of our Margin of Excellence Programs. Thanks to the generosity of donors and other supporters, we can continue nurturing student talents and ensuring a bright future for all.

DAN BURCK VISIONARY AWARD WINNERS

Kathy Armenta, LCSW, ACSW

Steve Hicks School of Social Work

The University of Texas at Austin

Laurie Scott, Ph.D.

Butler School of Music

The University of Texas at Austin

Courtney Byrd, Ph.D.

Moody College of Communication

The University of Texas at Austin

Sharon Vaughn, Ph.D.

College of Education

The University of Texas at Austin



Learn more about our awardees and how their support has helped shape our school by watching their nomination videos here:

<https://utelementary.org/prektophd>



The University of Texas at Austin President Jay Hartzell welcomes the crowd



Master of Ceremonies Bob Duke



(L-R) Penny Burck, Courtney Byrd, Melissa Chavez and Bill Lasher



(L-R) Penny Burck, Kathy Armenta, Bill Lasher and Melissa Chavez



(L-R) Melissa Chavez and Laurie Scott



(L-R) President Jay Hartzell, Melissa Chavez, Dean Charles Martinez, Ramona Trevino and Mickey Klein



Texas Cowboy Alumni Association Executive Director Eddie Lopez



(L-R) Richard Reddick, Marcos de Leon, Ed Sharpe and Gavino Fernandez



Little Longhorn Orchestra



(L-R) Becky Chiarodit, Melissa Chavez, Penny Burck, Jasmine Barker and Jeff Barker



(L-R) Pat Oles, Penny Burck and Julie Oles



Little Longhorn Conjunto Band led by Joel Guzman

UT ELEMENTARY 2024

TEACHER AND STAFF OF THE YEAR AWARDS

UT Elementary faculty and staff nominate colleagues to be recognized as the Teacher of the Year, Rookie of the Year and Staff Member of the Year. This annual opportunity recognizes our amazing teachers and staff for their ability to inspire children while also leading and supporting our entire school.



Emelinda Baillo

TEACHER OF THE YEAR EMELINDA BAILLO

Reading Interventionist and Dyslexia Specialist

"It is such a blessing to be part of a nurturing environment that changes lives everyday: the students with their cheerful smiles and hugs, my colleagues who ooze with dedication, and our administration who express a shared vision!"



ROOKIE OF THE YEAR SUZANNE MURPHY

Special Education Teacher

"I love being able to witness the progress students have made and see their huge smiles and self-confidence shine through."



Dr. Melissa Chavez, Suzanne Murphy and Dr. Nicole Whetstone



Dr. Melissa Chavez, Stephanie Allen and Dr. Nicole Whetstone

STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR STEPHANIE ALLEN

Front Office

"I really love the small community we have here. We are tiny but mighty."



MAKAILYNN GARCIA: FROM UT ELEMENTARY TO A DREAM CAREER IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Makailynn Garcia (UT Elementary Class of 2007) credits a field lesson she took while a UT Elementary student for helping to find her dream career.

“My most memorable moment at UT Elementary was visiting the Holocaust Museum Houston in 5th grade. The trip opened my eyes to the importance of recognizing traumatic history and using it to foster a more open, empathetic, and diverse humanity for the sake of future generations,” says Makailynn.

After attending UT Elementary, Makailynn received a scholarship to St. Stephen’s Episcopal School for her middle and high school studies. During her senior year at St. Stephen’s, Makailynn was able to draw on her Holocaust Museum experience to pursue a special seminar on history, story-telling, and collective memory. In fall 2024, she took her passion for truth and justice to Texas State University, where she is currently studying Criminal Justice on the pre-law track.



Makailynn celebrating her high school graduation and acceptance into Texas State University.



(L-R) Mickey Klein, Makailynn Garcia, Jeanne Klein, Penny Burck and Melissa Chavez taken in 2018

“We know that early educational experiences have a profound impact on the academic and life trajectories of students. That’s why UT Elementary invests in *Margin of Excellence* programs that broaden scholars’ horizons. We are proud to have Makailynn as part of the Little Longhorn family and can’t wait to see what she accomplishes next,” says Dr. Nicole Whetstone, UT Charter School System superintendent and Makailynn’s former UT Elementary principal.

If you are interested in supporting *Margin of Excellence* programs and inspiring future generations of Little Longhorns, like Makailynn, please visit: utelementary.org/support-us

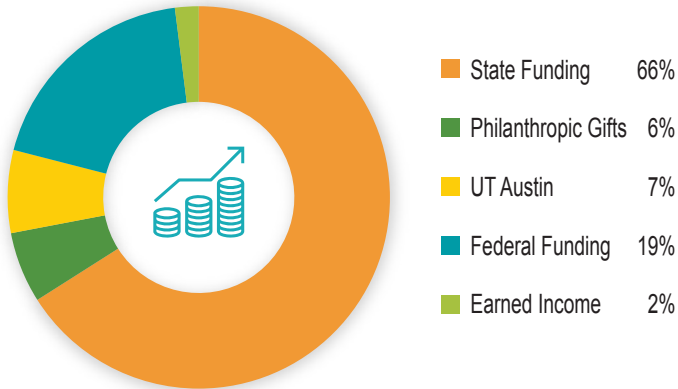
LITTLE LONGHORN NATION

In the tradition of “What starts here changes the world,” UT Elementary students are spreading across the country. attending colleges and universities like: California State University, Pennsylvania State University, Morehouse College, and Emory University, in addition to leading Texas institutions, such as The University of Texas at Austin and Texas State University. A few alumni have continued onto post-graduate studies, in fields such as law, education and business.

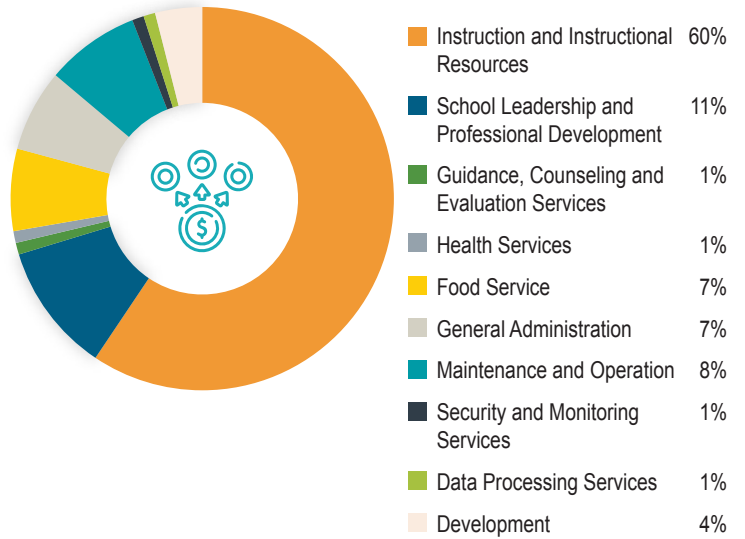


FINANCIALS AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

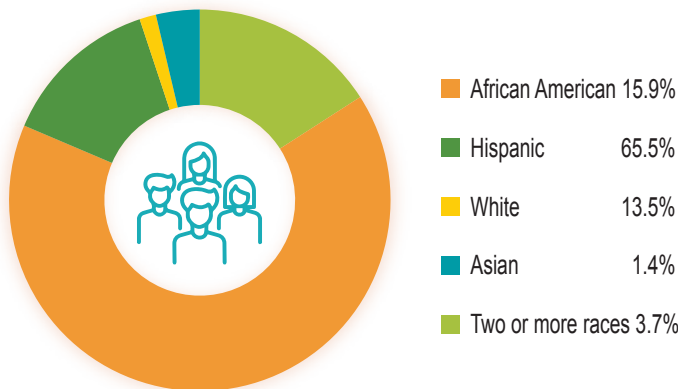
REVENUE



EXPENSES

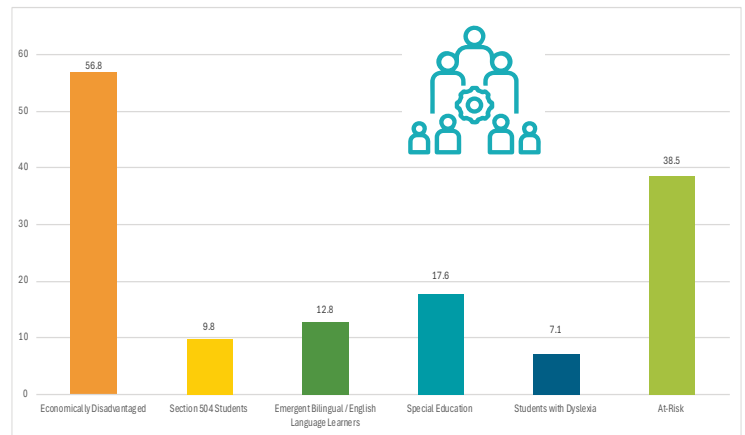


STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



Total student count = 309

STUDENT POPULATION



*Financial information is based on the 2022 - 2023 school year audited financials.

Additional financial and academic information is available on our website: www.utelementary.org under the Public Information section.

WELCOME TEXAS COWBOYS TO THE LITTLE LONGHORN NATION

UT Elementary welcomed a new partner for the 2023-2024 school year: the Texas Cowboys. Best known for firing “Smokey the Cannon” at UT football games, the Texas Cowboys is an honorary student service organization that provides leadership opportunities to young men. Active since 1922, the Cowboys boast notable alumni, such as former Texas Governor Dolph Briscoe, former University President Larry Faulkner, former Dallas Cowboys Coach Tom Landry, and Texas Football Legend Earl Campbell.

In this first year of partnership, the Texas Cowboys have supported our programs philanthropically, serving as one of the title sponsors for the From Pre-K to Ph.D. awards dinner and raising money at their Spring BBQ for the Little Longhorns. Both student members and their alumni association play active roles at UT Elementary. Partnership activities include Texas Cowboy members serving as:

- Mentoring UT Elementary students
- Volunteering at school events like Spooktacular, Thanksgiving and Bevo Bash
- Hosting fundraisers that benefit UT Elementary
- Serving on the UT Elementary Management Board as non-voting members



Superintendent Nicole Whetstone, Board Chair Bill Lasher, Texas Cowboy board representatives Jebin Justin and Jeremy Chen and Executive Director Melissa Chavez

Additionally, Eddie Lopez, the Executive Director of the Texas Cowboys Alumni Association, will join the UT Elementary School Management Board as a voting member for the 2024-2025 school year.

The Little Longhorns have joyfully welcomed the Cowboys on campus. They love seeing the young men in their boots and cowboy hats, and the teachers appreciate the extra hands at our events.

“The Texas Cowboys’ partnership with UT Elementary, whether it’s through mentoring, working events or as a board member has been such a beneficial experience during my time in college; has been a privilege to work with these students and their energy is what makes coming to UT Elementary such an enjoyable experience every week for the Cowboys.” - Jeremy Chen, Texas Cowboy and UT Elementary Management Board Member, McCombs School of Business, BBA, Class of 2025





UT ELEMENTARY 2023-2024 MANAGEMENT BOARD

William F. Lasher, Ph.D., *Chair*

Kathy Armenta

Debra Cantu, Ph.D.

Felipe Estrada

Alexandra Eusebi, Ph.D.

JE Johnson, Ph.D.

James Kallison, Ph.D.

Jessica Loreda

Starla Simmons

Kathryn Tackett, Ph.D.

Sharon Vaughn, Ph.D.

Mark Williams

Sarah Woulfin, Ph.D.

Justin Jebin*, *Texas Cowboy*

Jeremy Chen*, *Texas Cowboy*

Nicole Whetstone, Ph.D.*, *Superintendent*

Melissa Chavez, Ph.D.*, *Executive Director*

* *non-voting members*

UT ELEMENTARY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Mickey Klein, *Co-chair*

Brian Antweil

Laura Beuerlein

David Bourland

Felipe Estrada

Mark Williams, *Co-chair*

Vaughn Gross

Jeanne Klein

William Lasher

Jan McMillan

Pat Oles

Ramona Treviño

Ace Schlameus

Randa Safady

OUR MISSION

To develop students into lifelong learners through rigorous, research-based curricula, individualized instruction, high expectations, and a nurturing environment that includes parental and community involvement;

To provide opportunities for professional development and outreach for The University of Texas at Austin's academic units; and

To serve as a model of an exemplary education program for diverse learners.

UT Elementary School
2200 East 6th Street
Austin, TX 78702
www.utelementary.org



The University of Texas at Austin
UT Elementary School
College of Education