

## GET TO KNOW

# Pasadena Independent School District



Traci Powell  
Executive Director,  
Innovation &  
Development, PISD

## TYPE OF SCHOOL

Urban

## LOCATION

Pasadena, TX  
(Houston area)

## TOTAL STUDENTS

50,000 - 60,000

## THE VISION

### One school inspires three others to prioritize relationships

Since the 2021-2022 school year, Thompson Intermediate School principal Tanis Griffin, has made it a priority to put relationships and people first at her campus. That vision setting was due to the relational and academic deficits caused by pandemic-related disruptions.

“That’s something that I always tell my staff,” said Griffin. “We’re always going to put people first, and the content will come.”

Now, years past the brunt of COVID-19, that focus hasn’t changed. That’s because after Griffin implemented a whole school roll-out of Along, she saw how strengthening teacher-student connections helped to build community at Thompson. **Over the course of that first school year using Along, educators sent over 1,268 reflection questions, leading to over 9,000 response reflections and a 95% response rate by students.**

This success led Griffin to share with her peers within the urban Pasadena Independent School District (PISD) at a collaborative school leader session. “We offer opportunities for our leaders

to collaborate with one another to talk about what’s working, what’s not working at your campus, what do you think is having the biggest impact on students,” said Traci Powell, Executive Director - Innovation & Development for PISD. “Out of these conversations, Tanis was able to share about Along and I think that is why it has bridged out.”

This school year, 2023-2024, three additional PISD schools—Bondy Intermediate School, Melillo Middle School, and Rick Schneider Middle School—have introduced Along on their campuses and have implemented consistent weekly strategies after seeing what worked for the students and staff at Thompson.

## THE STRATEGY

### Weekly touchpoints in classrooms

Griffin’s strategy is to use Along throughout all advisory classrooms each week. **Teachers share an Along question each Tuesday with their students, which has positively impacted school-wide culture by consistently offering opportunities for teachers and students to get to know each other and provide support.**

## THE IMPACT

### Students feel connected to teachers at school

“I think the thing that stands out to me the most is when we talk to our students about Along and we have conversations about whether they like it or not, is that most of our students can talk in depth about the impact that it’s had on them,” shared Powell. “And, that they are appreciative to have the opportunity to build connections with their teachers.”

**Claudia Denoon, a teacher at Bondy Intermediate School, said Along has “made an impact if [students] have problems with their parents or are upset about something that happened at home. It really has been great using Along in the classroom.”**

For Tyler Oakes, a 5th grade reading teacher at Melillo Middle School, focusing on relationship building is “really hard without a tool. As teachers, we have a million things on our plate. [With Along], we’re able to keep track. Having a digitized form of questions helps the kid, because that’s what they are used to. It keeps some accountability on both ends.”