

## **The Mentoring Partnership**

### **A Bit of History**

The Local Outreach Team is always asking the question – “How do we best impact the world for Christ in a local context?” Instead of spreading out and watering down the efforts of the FBC congregation, the Lord was leading us to drill down in one area and invest in a manageable location.

In 2014, after a volume of study, research, and prayer it was determined that the Quarles Elementary School district was the most in need – not only in our area, but in the state.

Quarles is a Title 1 School and has extra Federal funding because of the economic need of the student population. At the time 65% of the students came from non-English speaking homes and graduation rates at Winchester Public Schools were lower than the state average.

The Principal of Quarles – Joanie Hovatter was asked how FBC could help at her school – at first, she wasn’t sure. Again, the Local Outreach Team felt lead to step into this neighborhood with intentionality and asked if FBC could host a one-week Kids Camp at Quarles that summer. It was held in the evenings and dinner was provided for the families. It was a great success.

The next school year reading groups were started and an evening ESOL class was held for adults at the school. We learned that children picked up English exponentially faster than their parents. Again, FBC provided dinner and childcare – to remove as many hurdles as possible.

Within that year, we hired a pastor, Ben Santamaria, to help plant a Hispanic church. Iglesia Bautista Hispana Winchester is thriving just a few blocks south of Quarles.

Shortly thereafter, the Local Outreach Team attended a Tony Evans Conference – “The Every Church Adopt a School Initiative.” Statistics tell us that there are three churches per school in the US. What positive impacts for Christ could occur if those churches invested in their local school.

The focus of this conference was how to create a mentoring partnership program.

Children who meet regularly with a mentor are:

- 52% less likely to skip school
- 46% less likely to use illegal drugs
- 27% less likely to start drinking alcohol
- and 55% more likely to go to college

Again, with much study, planning and prayer we created a mentor training curriculum and presented it to the administration of Winchester Public Schools and Quarles Elementary.

The partnership launched and became a great success. So much of a success that Winchester Public School requested in 2022 that the program be enhanced to include all seven Winchester city schools.