Mostly Hispanic campus gains academic honor

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Estrella Middle School Prin-cipal Pat Heichel returned to good news about her math de-partment after spring break. It turns out that Estrella, a predominantly Hispanic cam-pus in the Cartwright Elemen-tary Schood District, was se-lected as one of 12 schools that beat the academic odds. Many of its students struggle to learn English, are on the free or re-duced-cost lunch program and live in blighted and crime-rid-den neighborhoods.
The good news came re-cently from a three-year study conducted by the Center for the Future of Arizona, headed by former Arizona State President

Lattie Coor, and ASU's Morri-son Institute.

The study looked at what works at the 12 schools and

compared them to other schools with the same popula-tion that didn't do well. It f ound

principals and teachers at schools like Estrella test and retest students and use the re-sults to deliver focused lessons

until every child understands math.
Cartwright's students were away on a two-week break when Estrella was noted as one of 12 Arizona schools in the study, "Why Some Schools with Latino Children Beat the Odds ... and Others Don't." Heichel attributed the good work to nine math instructors at Es-trella, which has 1,800 stu-dents.

"I have great math teachers," Heichel said. "They all have the same philosophy, and we will follow the stand-

odds
ards. If my math departmen went to another school, you would see good results." Cartwright Superintendent Michael Martinez said Heichel

is "at the top of her game" in academics. Martinez oversee the education of 21,000 students at 22 schools, includin
Estrella, in the Maryvale area

"I was ecstatic, truly," he

said. "You are so used to heaing about our types of school
not doing so well and problem schools. This was extremely gratifying."
Estrella math instructors simplified learning for Maria

Garza, an English-learner student, who now attends Trevo
Browne High.
"I miss my old math class and teacher Jim Gowdy, Garza said. "He was just really cool because he is the onl math teacher who explained things. I can't say that of my high school math teachers."