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THE MAGAZINE | Vol. 5 No. 1

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A letter to our community

At HCISD we are extremely proud of the enduring legacy of innovation our district has set forth by continuously adapting to the needs of our students, staff, and community.

Remaining committed to our mission of providing educational excellence for all students, cultivating college, career and workforce readiness, and providing choices for a meaningful and successful life, we continue to transform the learning experience for our students. Some of our latest transformational initiatives include a K-12 HCISD Robotics Program and grade-specific initiatives at the elementary level such as fourth-grade gardening, and third-grade tennis and golf.

In this Experience HCISD issue, we introduce our HCISD Academies, which will entirely transform our Career and Technical Education classes and give students the opportunity to earn their certification in several areas of study. The redesign will enhance learning by

providing authentic learning opportunities aligned with true industry practices.

I am proud to serve as superintendent of this trailblazing district and working alongside outstanding students, teachers, administrators, staff and board members on a daily basis to remain true to our vision. Your continued support along with successful community partnerships have led to life-changing projects like the all-inclusive playgrounds and statewide recognitions for promoting healthy lifestyles.

Take great pride in all we have accomplished together and in knowing that the work we do today has the power to shape the future.

We reach, we aspire, we dare to be. We are HCISD!

Dr. Art Cavazos

Dr. Art Cavazos
Superintendent of Schools

HCISD'S TEAM OF 8



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DISTRICTWIDE ROBOTICS



In this day and age where technology has transformed and revolutionized human interaction, the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) approach to education is now more critical than ever. It is with this philosophy in mind that the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District has implemented a districtwide Robotics program across all elementary, middle, and high school campuses.

“It is an exciting time for our district as we take robotics full-scale with the HCISD Robotics initiative thereby ensuring widespread accessibility of STEM-related activities for our students,” said Superintendent Dr. Art Cavazos. “Robotics are an excellent way to engage our students in authentic learning experiences that will inspire them to pursue careers in STEM and show them what is possible when they work collaboratively to solve real-world problems.”

Robotics club sponsors across the district have met to ensure vertical alignment across all levels and to cultivate a FIRST program that seamlessly flows from introduction to mastery of concepts and skills. Paul Tenison, an engineering teacher at Harlingen High School, is enthusiastic about younger students strengthening programming and code-writing skills, allowing him and his team more time to fine-tune their robots, rather than spending time on learning coding fundamentals.

The University Interscholastic League (UIL) Robotics pilot program began during the 2015-2016 school year, prompting the district initiative to extend the already growing Robotics program.

“Adding Robotics to UIL has made funding available to promote and build robotics teams at every HCISD campus,” said Tenison. “Starting programming and coding for robotics at the elementary school level will provide a great foundation for the development of a STEM pathway to lead Harlingen students and the community to a level of technical ability greater than anywhere in the Valley.”

In the past 16 years, students from the HHS Engineering and Tech clubs have qualified and competed at two state and four national competitions in various robotic events. Teams work two hours after school, five days a week, Monday through Friday and some Saturdays. Out of 33 HHS Engineering Club members, 10 students will be screened and selected to partake in UIL robotic competitions, where they will implement design processes used by engineers to solve problems.

Students use drafting, CAD skills, 3D modeling, and 3D printing technologies, and they must adhere to engineering safety and documentation procedures. Teams are responsible for the research, design, assembly, troubleshooting, and operation of different types of robots including underwater remotely operated vehicles (ROV), autonomous robots, and rockets with sensors and recovery systems.

The high school robotics teams have previously collaborated with elementary schools through mentoring and motivational events created to promote robotics with the young students, but now the aspiring learners are experiencing first-hand the application of critical skills to real-world scenarios.

Lamar Elementary Library Media Specialist Diana Alfaro identifies public speaking as a major challenge at the elementary level. The robotics program addresses this challenge and promotes the 4Cs of the 21st century—Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, and Creativity.

“Robotics is not just about robots,” said Alfaro. “Team members must also become comfortable speaking in front of an audience. Once our team creates their model, they will need to present it to classmates, parents, and eventually to unfamiliar audiences and judges. We work with the team and help them build their confidence and presentation skills, so they will be able to deliver an awesome presentation. We are opening the door to the world of STEM-related activities. This knowledge will help our students discover how science and technology impact our world. Having exposure to these skills will give them a wider range of opportunities in their futures.”

Second- and third-grade students are challenged to use curiosity, teamwork, exploratory research, and



collaboration to solve a real-world scientific problem and express the solution using a model created with LEGO bricks. The model must include at least one simple machine and have moving parts.

“HCISD embracing the FIRST philosophy and implementing this program throughout the district means that our HCISD students will have unparalleled access to skills and knowledge starting in kindergarten that truly build upon themselves all the way through high school,” said Caitlin Acosta, Vela Middle School science teacher and Robotics Club sponsor. “A lot of students can get involved in clubs, sports, music, or arts, but none of those

extracurricular activities are supported from Kindergarten through 12th grade. Parents have to look into private options for younger students and only in middle and high school does training for school programs become cohesive. Having FIRST robotics on every campus in our district guarantees student access to training and skill development over the course of their entire educational career.”

The VMS Robotics Club fosters problem-solving strategies, computer programming skills, and critical thinking tactics as students in their competitive team design the construction of an EV3 Mindstorms robot and program it to perform a variety of missions. As

part of FIRST LEGO League, students work for two to three hours a week learning the basics of programming while cultivating the FIRST core values. ★

► **ROBOTICS IN STEM**

STEM careers have higher job security and average a higher yearly income than most other fields.

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Turnip the Beet

HCISD launches new initiative to teach 4th grade students about gardening, nutrition, and exercise



will complement and offer another take on what they are learning in the garden.”

Each week, teachers deliver lessons that cover topics like plant needs, nutrients, food groups, staple crops across cultures, and portion sizes while also incorporating the physical education component of the curriculum. Understanding of the concepts is enriched through student garden journals in the classroom.

With the support and guidance of the AgriLife Extension Service, each fourth-grade class is responsible for planting, growing, and harvesting a garden at their campus to complete the curriculum.

Bouls said that the hands-on learning experience offered by the program is a source of pride for the students as they begin to see the progress of their garden and see the culmination of their efforts with that first harvest.

Christopher Heiskell, a student at Bowie, revealed his favorite part of participating in the gardening program.

“The best part about growing food is seeing it grow, and seeing the process, feeding it with water, and caring for it,” he said.

He added that another perk of the program is that students get to sample the food grown in the garden.

“One year, one of our classes grew pumpkins,” Heiskell said. “We made empanadas and roasted pumpkin seeds out of them.”

Nutrient-rich vegetables to be cultivated as part of the program include carrots, lettuce, broccoli, potatoes, Swiss chard, bell pepper, cauliflower, spinach, Bok Choy, cherry tomatoes, sugar snap peas, and squash.

“Our garden here at Bowie has prompted our students’ families to grow their own gardens at home,” said Bouls. “That tells me that what we are doing here is truly making a difference, so I’m very excited about the impact this program will have as the initiative goes full-scale throughout our district.” ★

Fourth graders across Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District are being treated to an experience beyond their wildest dreams. They get to play in the dirt as part of an initiative to encourage healthy eating habits and exercise among young students.

Dubbed the GROW program, the new measure is a result of a partnership with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to encourage healthy eating habits and exercise among young people through the Learn, Grow, Eat and Go! curriculum project of the International Junior Master Gardener Program.

“We are proud to provide our students authentic learning experiences in gardening and nutrition with our new GROW program while supporting both STEM and healthy lifestyles,” said Superintendent Dr. Art Cavazos. “Fourth-grade students at HCISD will be harvesting vegetables grown in their own garden and with that, gain a new understanding and appreciation for the food they eat. This is all thanks to our partnership with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Learn, Grow, Eat and Go! curriculum.”

The 10-week program teaches students about gardening, nutrition, physical activity, and how to prepare nutritious recipes all while supporting academic standards in science and writing.

“We have partnered with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension for the GROW program for our fourth graders,” said Special Projects and Grants Specialist Jessica Hruska. “The AgriLife Extension provided us the curriculum and training from a grant that they are working with.”

Though the program may be new to the district, Bowie Elementary has been gardening for many years.

“We have established a lot of the concepts from the Learn, Grow, Eat and Go! curriculum over the ten years we’ve been gardening. Now with the full-scale implementation, we are adding the physical education component into the mix,” said Physical Education Teacher Graciela Bouls. “What students learn in P.E.

The GROW program cultivates carrots, lettuce, broccoli, potatoes, Swiss chard, bell pepper, cauliflower, spinach, Bok Choy, cherry tomatoes, sugar snap peas, and squash.



Swing into Action

New initiative teaches third-graders the fundamentals of tennis and golf

Students learned to balance a ball on their tennis rackets as a new wellness program swung into action for third-graders at Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District.

Lee Means Elementary students were among the first to participate in HCISD's new Tennis and First Tee Golf Program, which introduces third-grade students across the district to the game of tennis and golf as part of their physical education class.

"Students are gaining a basic understanding of tennis," said Physical Education Teacher Suzanne Aranda. "We talked about the different parts of the racket, safety, how to grip the racket properly as well as different techniques and drills before they get into a game situation."

"I like tennis. So far, we learned to balance the ball on the racket, and it's kind of tricky because it tends to move around," said third-grader Maya De La Pena. "I've never played before, but my sister and I want to be in tennis, so it's good that we get to try it out."

Along with the great exercise these sports provide, students will develop valuable skills that will benefit them in the classroom and beyond. Participants learn responsibility, discipline, perseverance, problem-solving, and mental strength among other things.

"We are excited to see the transformation of the elementary learning experience continue to take shape for our HCISD students with our Tennis and First Tee Golf program," said Superintendent Dr. Art Cavazos. "This new program supports our efforts in promoting healthy lifestyles and is a great complement to our SEAL program that was launched



last year for our second-graders. I am excited about the positive impact this program will have because not only will students benefit from the wellness aspect of the game, they will also learn life-enhancing values."

For most students, this is their first exposure to tennis and golf. Coordinator of Athletics and Wellness Luis Solorio expects this program to be a game changer that will create interest for these sports at an early age.

"You'll be surprised how many kids don't know about these sports," said Solorio. "After third grade, I believe some [students] will be saying that this is the sport for them. Our tennis and golf coaches at the high school level are super excited because they know that they will reap the rewards down the line."

Each of the district's 17 elementary campuses is equipped with its own tennis and golf kit that gives teachers the flexibility to teach the courses indoors or outdoors free from weather restrictions.

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) and The First Tee National School Program have provided everything schools need – curriculum, training for PE teachers, and equipment – to easily deliver the program in a variety of settings.

During the summer of 2016, PE teachers received training on USTA School Tennis, "The games were so fun that even our adults got a kick out of it. It's a great time to be a third-grader at HCISD," said Solorio. Training for The First Tee Golf is expected to take place in October.

Solorio stated that, ultimately, the district's goal is to incorporate "thematic units" at each elementary grade level.

More opportunities for elementary students are in the works as HCISD pursues a grant to help fund a course to teach first-graders how to ride a bicycle as part of their physical education class.★

I AM EXCITED ABOUT THE POSITIVE IMPACT THIS PROGRAM WILL HAVE BECAUSE NOT ONLY WILL STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM THE WELLNESS ASPECT OF THE GAME, THEY WILL ALSO LEARN LIFE-ENHANCING VALUES.

DR. ART CAVAZOS



A Modern Approach

HCISD transforms classrooms with furniture and technology upgrades across district

Students at elementary campuses across the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District were greeted with transformed learning spaces as they entered their new classrooms for the 2016-2017 school year.

In January 2016, a committee comprised of teachers and administrators from all 17 elementary schools rated and ranked designs from different classroom furniture vendors. The focus was placed on selecting furniture and technology that would optimize the classroom environment by creating spaces for active learning and increased productivity. New desks with angular shapes would allow teachers to quickly and effortlessly assemble different group configurations into pods of various sizes, maximizing student engagement and participation. This type of collaboration is evident in collegiate and professional workspaces.

“The integration of the new, collaborative furniture into my classroom helps foster an environment of creativity,” shared Ruth Garcia, a fourth-grade teacher at Dr. Rodriguez Elementary. “Utilizing the benefits of teamwork, my students enhance their interpersonal skills. As a digital classroom teacher, I incorporate lessons focusing on relevant technology to make sure my students leave my classroom prepared for the diverse challenges of modern society.”

Each third, fourth, and fifth-grade classroom received 25 new chairs and desks in addition to a 52-inch monitor. Each grade level also received a digital package including 12 iPads, a Mac computer, and an Apple TV. Larger campuses with more than four classrooms in a grade level received two digital packages.

“The impact on morale was exhilarating. Everyone was excited. Teachers, parents, and staff alike,” said Dr. Rodriguez Elementary principal Traci Gonzalez. “The new furniture and technology facilitate learning by tailoring to the evolving needs of the 21st-century learner. The design of the new desks is conducive for group collaboration, optimizing the learning environment. The iPad is what they know. When teachers can deliver instruction using

THE NEW FURNITURE
AND TECHNOLOGY WILL
FACILITATE LEARNING
BY TAILORING TO THE
EVOLVING NEEDS OF THE
21ST CENTURY LEARNER

TRACI GONZALEZ

the latest technology, all barriers are removed, and students have the opportunity to take their learning to the next level.”

The modernization of classroom furniture directly aligns with the district’s strategic plan, “Transforming Learning for Global Achievement,” by creating flexible learning spaces. The goal is to expand technology-rich environments that empower students to maximize their learning experiences.

“Our ultimate and primary goal is academic success,” said Administrator of Elementary Education Loranda Romero. “We want students to be able to participate in a rigorous, challenging environment, not just to regurgitate information. We want them to be motivated to analyze, collaborate, and communicate at a much deeper level. The new furniture gives teachers the liberty to transform their classrooms into flexible learning spaces adapted to the specific lesson presented.”

The district has allotted \$480,000 per year from the approved tax ratification, and the plan has been accelerated to furnish three grade levels this upcoming school year. The remaining elementary grade levels will be furnished and infused with technology within the next three years. ★

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Joel Stone

Harlingen HS '82

We've all seen the red and yellow SpawGlass sign adorning major construction sites across the Valley. The chairman and CEO of one of the leading commercial and civil contractors in Texas, Harlingen High School class of 1982 grad Joel Stone, takes a moment from his busy day to share some knowledge gained only by climbing the quite literal rungs of a construction site.

Unbeknownst to him, Stone's career path would be set in motion as a young 8-year-old boy during a visit to a nickel plant in the Dominican Republic, where he saw his grandfather as the passionate superintendent of the worksite. The young boy was the typical dirt-loving, mud-jumping boy who loved the outdoors and building things, and listening to his grandfather's stories about traveling to projects in Guatemala and around the world further fueled his interest in construction.

Stone attended Stuart Place Elementary, Minnie B. Gay Junior High School, now known as Memorial Middle School, and then went on to graduate from HHS. In his adolescent years, Stone always opted for a practical approach to education, and favored and excelled in math and science classes that offered hands-on, applicable, and real-world scenarios.

In the midst of his education, Stone grew to love the fast-paced world of motorcycles and motorcycle racing. However, he did not deviate very far from his construction calling. He was involved in various construction projects at the motorcycle shop and even participated in remodeling projects at home.

Embarking on a somewhat uncertain path after high school, he attained a Building Construction Craftsman Certificate from Texas State Technical College.

He decided to pursue a degree in higher education and enrolled in the civil engineering program at The University of Texas at San Antonio. He then learned of a construction program at Texas State University, and consequently transferred to San Marcos, where he earned a degree in construction science.

Today Stone oversees approximately 600 employees in six offices statewide and manages an award-winning project portfolio with an impressive scope—with projects ranging from aviation, government, and industrial sites to healthcare and education facilities.

"Most of my day is spent with people," Stone says. "I spend my day meeting with clients and internal leaders. My role is to provide strategic vision and build the culture of the company."

He strives to adhere to the founder's philosophy and motto: "We don't just build buildings; we build people."

"Every day is different," he continues. "One thing that's very important is to start the day with something personal—some sort of physical or mental reflection, meditation, a collection of my thoughts, or exercise to plan the day."

If you don't get to know yourself, you will never find satisfaction in your career and how you measure yourself.

He fondly describes the most memorable moment of his professional career as the first day being in a large construction site.

"It is very intimidating, but exciting," he vividly recalls. "Chaotic, but organized and challenging," he adds with excitement.

Stone put on a hard hat for the first time at the Valle Vista Mall construction site in Harlingen. He clearly remembers walking up to his first SpawGlass assignment in May 1988, mesmerized by the massive size of the project.

Stone summarizes the top three most fundamental skills for success in his field.

1. Have an open mind. You have to be willing to learn and push yourself in uncomfortable situations. You have to do something you fear every day in order to broaden your perspective.
2. Gain technical knowledge. Whether it is concrete, masonry, or roofing, there is always great opportunity in gaining specific, technical knowledge.
3. Work with people. There is nothing built by just one person. You have to be able to work with a diverse group of people from a variety of backgrounds.

"Growing up in the Valley you learn so much about the value of diversity," Stone says. "There is so much good in diversity and differences. You definitely learn an appreciation for all different ways of life and learn to integrate." He indicates this is a crucial skill in his field.

The SpawGlass executive recounts the lessons he learned from his auto mechanics teacher, who constantly emphasized the importance of work ethic and the significance of instilled integrity and pride in one's work. "It makes a difference if you instill pride in your work—a proud mechanic, a proud carpenter, a proud parts replacer. Your work represents who you are."

The many years of experience have provided Stone with encouraging words of

advice for Harlingen's aspiring students.

"Attempt to tackle something you fear every day," advises Stone. "I was a terrible public speaker in high school and college. I have made an effort to develop that skill over the years and can now present seamlessly to over 250 people at our annual shareholder meetings."

"You have to know yourself and spend time discovering who you are and what make you tick," he continues. "If you don't get to know yourself, you will never find satisfaction in your career and how you measure yourself."

Stone emphasizes how important it is for students to know it's okay to make mistakes and to not be afraid of being wrong.

"We all wake up human every day," adds Stone. "You're going to make mistakes and it's okay, as long as you're learning from them and translating them into valuable experiences." ★



David Lopez

Harlingen HS South '08

Deep in the heart of San Antonio, a tight-knit team of creative design gurus works cohesively to develop tailored corporate identity projects at the full-service branding firm Hilmy. Part of this team as project manager is Harlingen High School South alum and video production specialist David Lopez.

The agency, specializing in branding and identity for residential and commercial developments, requires Lopez to multitask as he facilitates the production of design, photography, print, and video elements. He serves as the liaison between clients and their creative services while managing emails, deadlines, inquiries, proofs, vendors, and all roles necessary to bring the projects to fruition.

The HHSS 2008 graduate headed to The University of Texas at San Antonio to pursue a career in film. His interest in the technical aspect of film, coupled with his talent with the camera, led him to transfer to The University of Texas at Austin where he was subsequently accepted into UTA's top-ranked and highly competitive Moody College of Communication.

"I always knew I had a knack for video production and short story telling," shares Lopez.

He participated in a combination of media theory and production classes that earned him a degree in Radio, Television, and Film. He recalls this experience as the first time he had been left to his own devices and where he quickly learned the real life lesson was not about making good movies, but about being able to accomplish tasks with limited resources.

After college, Lopez landed a six-month internship in London in the Development and Acquisitions Department of StudioCanal, a leading European production company. He became the "first set of eyes" on numerous scripts and was lucky to see some become multimillion-dollar film projects.

While he was able to apply the skills he learned in film school, he was exposed to the business side of the media film industry and was somewhat disillusioned to discover how much of the business aspect verged on the uncreative side, rather than the art side, causing it to lose some magic for the creative film student.

Upon his return to Texas, his path crossed with his childhood friend Alexander Hilmy, who had recently turned his photography business into a small multimedia production company in San

Antonio. Lopez jumped on board as a video production assistant, but when the company added graphic design and veered towards a different direction, the need for a leadership role was imminent, and he became the agency's project manager.

Growing up in Harlingen and HCISD allowed Lopez to appreciate the small-town feel and develop close personal relationships within the community. He asserts this really helped mold his values and goals and how to attain them. Compared to his peers from larger school districts, he believes his background with a close-knit community allows him to treat everyone as family and enables him to build trust and a solid rapport with his clients.

Lopez credits his HHSS media tech teacher, Patricia Guajardo, and his participation in her class as the source where his opportunities originated.

"She had a way of recognizing talent and empowering her students," he shares.

Guajardo recalls Lopez as an exemplary student. "No matter how big or small the project was, he handled each one with pride," she shares. "He always used his talents and time wisely and was never satisfied with anything less than perfect. He had a great attitude and was well liked by his peers and always offered a helping hand."

"I knew he would go far in this industry," Guajardo adds proudly.

Lopez also acknowledges it was tough teachers like Mr. Keeler, his history teacher, who taught him life lessons in preparation and perseverance—skills he attests are crucial in the workforce.

"Do your research, prepare yourselves, and don't stop," Lopez advises upcoming media and film students. "In order to succeed in any area, you need to get as much knowledge beforehand and

assess the leap to see if it's feasible. There is no turning back once you're committed."

Although Lopez once entertained the idea of pursuing a film career in California or New York, he feels fortunate to have engineered himself into a position at Hilmy.

The Hilmy team has been recognized throughout San Antonio for its successes, including the grand moment when the firm was awarded the branding of the new glass-faced Frost Bank Tower to be built in downtown San Antonio by 2019. However, the 26-year-old project manager prefers to celebrate the little, daily successes in order to constantly aim for greatness, and he hopes his most memorable career moment is yet to come. ★

In order to succeed in any area, you need to get as much knowledge beforehand and assess the leap to see if it's feasible. There is no turning back once you're committed.

Trixie Intal

Early College HS '12

Many students' future professions are forged deep within the walls of their early education classrooms, which is exactly where Early College High School alum Trixie Intal's career originated.

Driven by her love for science, the ECHS Student Council president graduated from high school with an associate degree in biology through ECHS's concurrent enrollment at Texas State Technical College. With more than 80 college hours under her belt, Intal went on to the University of Texas at San Antonio, where she earned her bachelor's degree in biology with a concentration in neurobiology after two short years.

"One of my greatest passions in life is learning," shares Intal. "Whether I'm learning about innovative methods for wiping away cancerous tumors, or current events happening across the world, or just simply learning about a regular person's interests and goals in life, to be able to absorb the different aspects and perspectives the universe offers is fulfilling for me"

After graduating, it took less than a year of substitute teaching at HCISD for her to opt to further pursue the route as an educator.

"To be able to learn is already satisfying for me, but what more if I were the source of someone's knowledge?" questions Intal. "That's what ignited my motivation to become a teacher in the first place. It's quite inspiring to see students manifest not only learning, but growing from what they've learned."

Intal embarked on the path to become certified to teach secondary (grades 9-12) science and secured a position to teach chemistry and anatomy & physiology at Harlingen School of Health Professions. There, she uses her passion for learning and shares her knowledge of science with aspiring students interested in highly specialized medical professions.

Even as a newcomer, the ambitious neurobiology major wears many hats at HSHP—taking on leadership roles such as the campus Science Department lead and sponsor of both the Student Council and HSHP's Legacy Class of 2018. Intal also leads and organizes Engage Learning Models, a concept she refers to as "organized chaos," where students come in at different levels, and they master standards by participating in a variety of activities resembling authentic, real-world scenarios.

"One of the methods I consistently use in my class and have seen prevail is project based learning," says Intal. "Through this method, students work collaboratively to apply what they are

learning in class into the real world and vice versa, applying real-world concepts into what they are learning in my class. Project based learning can be challenging for the students, but it's through PBL where students hone skills like problem solving, interpersonal, planning, research, literacy, and so much more."

She credits her success to the numerous teachers who prepared her for the road to a professional career.

"HCISD is doing a wonderful job moving students towards the right path," she shares. "It's hard work to keep grades up, but so many teachers motivated me, and I believe the teachers are the product of the district."

Intal identifies some of the key participants in her education, and has a difficult time narrowing it down to just one. She attended

Long Elementary and then Memorial Middle School, where she dove head-first into the world of science in Ms. Handley's 6th grade science class. She recalls Ms. Hackbarth and Ms. Achtsam making math very easy for her, paving the way for mastery in the demanding college courses in her future.

Intal explains how her experience with Ms. Rodriguez, her high school biology teacher and Student Council sponsor at ECHS, led her to seek this leadership role for students at HSHP. She also fondly refers to Mr. Valencia, her Engineering Club sponsor, as "a father figure," attributing her success in difficult calculus courses to the time he spent ensuring her understanding of complicated concepts.

Unlike most high school classes usually comprised of more than 500 students, Intal's graduating class of 72 students allowed her to get to know everybody. ECHS became like a second home to the future chemistry teacher, where she participated in various leadership roles in student led organizations—all while remaining in the top 10 percent of her class.

She explained how growing up in HCISD classrooms helped her prepare for higher education and her career. The interpersonal skills she acquired in the classroom transitioned easily into the university setting, working collaboratively carried over to study groups at UTSA, and learning how to network was crucial in college coursework.

"Every day can be a hurdle offering life lessons, but they are all blessings in disguise," she says. "There isn't a set formula or way for anybody to just learn to become successful. I want my students to enjoy learning—to discover how they each learn best and to utilize what they've discovered to become successful outside of my class and in their future." ★

HCISD is doing a wonderful job moving students towards the right path. It's hard work to keep grades up, but so many teachers motivated me, and I believe the teachers are the product of the district.

COLLEGE

Showcase

As students at the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District get ready to graduate, the valedictorians, salutatorians, and campus organization presidents at each of the district's comprehensive high schools share their future plans.

Alec Riley Macmanus
HARLINGEN HS - VALEDICTORIAN

"I will be attending Texas A&M University College Station to major in Chemical Engineering. I am looking into agriculture and making fertilizers and pesticides. I have always liked math and science. I plan on opening my own business one day. I would like to thank my parents, siblings, grandparents, teachers, counselors, and all my friends."



Cole Hale Charvat
HARLINGEN HS - SALUTATORIAN

"I will be attending the University of Oklahoma, and I want to study Business. Business runs our economy, and I think there are a lot of opportunities out there. I would like to use my education to become a lawyer and maybe open up my own law firm. I would like to thank my parents because they showed me the work ethic it takes to be successful in life. I would also like to thank all my teachers."



Sonia Quintana
HARLINGEN HSS - CLASS PRESIDENT

"I will be attending Texas A&M University College Station, and I want to major in Political Science and minor in English. I want to be a family attorney because I want to help people. I would like to thank my grandparents because they have always supported me in everything I do."



Carlos Arnaldo Torres
HARLINGEN HSS - VALEDICTORIAN

"I plan to attend The University of Texas at Austin and major in Philosophy with a minor in Economics. I aspire to become a criminal lawyer. My gratitude has to be extended to Anthony Mink, my United States history teacher. Also, I would like to extend my thanks to my parents for giving me the desire to further my education and my life."



Thiffany Lilian Yeupell
HARLINGEN HSS - SALUTATORIAN

"I will be attending either Schreiner University, University of Texas at Austin, or Saint Mary's University. I want to major in Political Science and hope to become a lawyer in the future. I was inspired into this career by my mother and my cousin. I would like to thank my mother and my father. They always kept pushing me and kept me on the right track. I also want to thank my cousin for being a role model."



Sabina Garza
EARLY COLLEGE HS - CLASS PRESIDENT

"I plan to attend Texas A&M Kingsville for my Bachelors and then San Antonio to continue my education. I want to study Psychology because I like interacting with people and getting to know how they feel. I was inspired to pursue this career by my aunt who is a psychology major. I would like to thank my mom, my grandparents, my whole family, and the teachers and faculty at my school."



Ginger Bennett
EARLY COLLEGE HS - VALEDICTORIAN

"I plan to attend The University of Texas at Austin. I really like the city, and they have a really good program for Environmental Science, which is what I want to major in with a focus in Biology. I want to focus on pollution and littering and look for ways to save the planet. I want to thank my mom for helping me."



Jose Feliciano Velazquez
EARLY COLLEGE HS - SALUTATORIAN

"I will be attending the University of Texas at Austin and major in Biology. I want to be a Plastic Surgeon. In my past, I had surgery on my eyelids for my condition of Ptoisis. I want to be just like the doctors who performed my surgery, and I want to be able to help other people. I want to thank my mother for always telling me to achieve what I want."





HCISD Board of Trustees recognized in 2017 H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards

The Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District Board of Trustees continues to be honored at the state level for excellence in leadership.

H-E-B announced on January 13, 2017, that eight school districts and five early childhood facilities have been selected as finalists for the retailer's 16th annual 2017 Excellence in Education Awards program. For the third year in a row, H-E-B is recognizing five public school boards to highlight the importance of strong leadership at the board level.

This is the second time in three years HCISD's Board of Trustees is recognized in the H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards Program.

"We are honored to be recognized as an Outstanding School Board by the H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards program. It is an incredibly high honor for us," said Board of Trustee President Gerry Fleuriet. "I commend H-E-B and Mr. Butt for their leadership in advocating for Texas public schools. We are deeply grateful for this recognition of our efforts and H-E-B's valuable work on behalf of students in Texas."

Since the program's inception, H-E-B has awarded more than \$8.5 million in funding to benefit outstanding Texas public schools. This year, H-E-B will award a total of \$85,000 to the

finalists and school boards, who will go on to compete for even greater cash prizes at the statewide level. Each finalist in the large district and early childhood categories, as well as the five recognized school boards, will receive \$5,000; the three finalists in the small district category will receive \$2,500.

"To have our Board of Trustees named an Outstanding School Board in the HEB Excellence Award for the second time in three years is truly an honor and a great celebration of

our board's everlasting commitment to the students of our district," said Superintendent Dr. Art Cavazos. "As superintendent, I have the opportunity to see firsthand the countless hours our board members volunteer to advance the work in our schools. This recognition speaks volumes of their dedication and resolve in preparing our students for global achievement."

To determine overall statewide winners, a panel of judges visits each district, early childhood facility and school board, tours campuses and talks with administration, staff, parents and community members.

The winning large district will receive \$100,000; the winning small district \$50,000. An early childhood facility will receive \$25,000. If selected, one or more school boards will receive up to a total of \$25,000. ★

THIS RECOGNITION SPEAKS
VOLUMES OF THEIR
DEDICATION AND RESOLVE IN
PREPARING OUR STUDENTS
FOR GLOBAL ACHIEVEMENT.

DR. ART CAVAZOS

PREPARING STUDENTS

FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER SUCCESS



Long gone are the days where pens, paper, and rulers were the classroom supplies needed to get through a school year. As professional careers continue to evolve, HCISD is ensuring students are equipped with the tools needed to thrive in their future workplace.

Beginning Fall 2017, HCISD will launch six new Academies featuring Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses of high demand career tracks. Hands on training, skill development and educational achievement are all part of the unique experiences students will receive through these exciting district opportunities.

As HCISD adds these academies and enhances certification opportunities for high-school students, they will discover their passions and gain a head start in their future college and career paths. ➤

2017-2018 ACADEMIES

APPRENTICESHIP ACADEMY

FIREFIGHTERS ACADEMY

HEALTH SCIENCE

MEDIA ARTS AND COMMUNICATIONS ACADEMY

TEACHER ACADEMY

TRANSPORTATION, DISTRIBUTION AND LOGISTICS



APPRENTICESHIP ACADEMY
WELDER

HCISD has launched an academy for Architecture, Construction, Masonry, Plumbing, Electrical & Welding. With several certification opportunities, students choose their path of interest after taking Principles of Construction, Principles of Architecture or Introduction to Welding their sophomore year. While in the process of earning certifications, senior level students will be offered opportunities to intern with local businesses, enhancing their skills to become work-force ready.

Academy Certification:
NCCER Core/OSHA-10

Masonry Certifications:
NCCER Masonry/OSHA-10

Construction Certifications:
NCCER Carpentry

General Facility Maintenance Certifications:
NCCER Electrical
NCCER Plumbing
NCCER Electrical

Welding Certifications:
HCCER Welding

Architectural Certifications:
NCCER Core



FIREFIGHTERS ACADEMY
FIREFIGHTER

Providing students the opportunity to receive a head start in a career as a firefighter, HCISD has launched the Firefighters Academy. Beginning in ninth grade, students will take Principles of Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security. After taking Law Enforcement 1 their sophomore year, students interested in becoming a fire fighter will apply to the academy. Working side by side with the Harlingen Fire Department, students earn 468 hours of credit towards two certifications while gaining hands on experience in the field.

Certifications:
Basic Structure Fire Suppression
First Responder





MEDIA ARTS AND COMMUNICATIONS ACADEMY (MACA)

TV PRODUCTION

Whether students are meeting with clients, working on the sidelines of an event, or designing materials for publication, students in the Media Arts and Communications Academy are exposed to situations and experiences that help shape their passion for potential careers in the industry. MACA captures interests and awakens creativity as students gain in depth knowledge in the field of visual communications through real-world experiences.

Certifications:
Adobe Photoshop CC
Adobe Premiere CS
Television Operator
Radio Operator



HEALTH SCIENCE ACADEMY

LICENSED VOCATIONAL NURSE

HCISD is empowering students to make a difference in the future of healthcare. By offering career and post secondary educational learning opportunities, our district's students are gaining a head start in the medial field. Thanks to a strong partnership with Valley Baptist Health System, HCISD is introducing an LVN program to high school students, providing hands on experience in a hospital setting. In addition to the medical pathways of Harlingen School of Health Professions, there will be six new health science certification options to students district-wide.

Certifications:
Certified Nursing Assistant
Certified Medical Assistant
Dental Assistant
EKG Certification
Licensed Vocational Nurse
Pharmacy Technician
Phlebotomy Technician



TEACHER ACADEMY
TEACHER

HCISD's Teacher Academy will provide students with experiences and skills necessary to be college, career, and workforce ready. Through the four-year academy, students will receive two certifications and experiences to ensure success in their future endeavors. The experience will create a culture of committed professionals and prepare educators for highly effective classrooms.

Certifications:
CPR Certification
Educational Aide Certification



TRANSPORTATION,
DISTRIBUTION AND
LOGISTICS ACADEMY
MECHANIC

HCISD offers five certification opportunities for students seeking careers within the automotive services industry. These certifications can lead to professions as Service Technicians and Collision-Repair Specialists as well as the opportunity to earn credit towards an Auto Collision Generalist Specialist Certificate 1 and 2 or even an associate's degree in Auto Collision Technology at Texas State Technical College. Furthermore, students will benefit from continued certification and endorsement by the Inter-Industry Conference on Auto Collision Repair (I-CAR) as well as local job internships.

Certifications:
ASE Automobile Service Technology
ASE Engine Repair
iCAR Estimator
iCAR Non-Structural Technician
iCAR Refinishing Technician





HCISD and its students continued a tradition of excellence this school year by earning prestigious awards and working to make a difference in the lives of others.



► **HCISD EARNS 72 DISTINCTIONS IN TEA ACCOUNTABILITY RATINGS**

HCISD earned 72 distinction designations in the 2016 accountability ratings announced September 14, 2016, by the Texas Education Agency.

The district along with each of its 29 campuses earned the highest rating of Met Standard based on four indexes – Student Achievement, Student Progress, Closing Performance Gaps, and Postsecondary Readiness.

In addition, Harlingen School of Health Professions and Bowie Elementary School were among 400 campuses across the state to achieve a Met Standard rating and earn all distinction designations applicable to their individual school.

Campuses that receive an accountability rating of Met Standard are eligible to earn distinction designations. Distinction designations are awarded for achievement in several different areas and are based on performance relative to a group of campuses of similar type, size, grade span, and student demographics. The number of potential distinctions varies by campus.

► **HOUSTON ELEMENTARY STUDENT NAMED CO-CHAMPION AT STATE CHESS TOURNAMENT**

Michael Casas, a fifth-grade student at Sam Houston Elementary, is always a few steps ahead of his opponent when it comes to the game of chess, so much so that even his coach has not been able to outdo him since Casas was in third grade.

This year, he blew the competition away during the individual contest at the 2017 Texas Chess Association State Scholastic Championships. After facing the highest-rated player in the tournament and going undefeated, he tied for 1st place and was named the State Co-Champion.

Casas will travel with his team this summer to Nationals which will be held in Nashville, Tennessee.



► **HHS HONORS BAND ON 20-YEAR UIL SWEEPSTAKES STREAK**

The Harlingen High School Honors Band received superior ratings at the 2017 Region 28 High School Concert and Sight-Reading Contest. This is the highest award a music group can receive from the University Interscholastic League in the state of Texas.

The band earned Sweepstakes for the 20th year in a row by obtaining all Division I ratings at the contest which was held at the HCISD Performing Arts Center on April 11-12, 2017.



► **HSHP'S MATTHEW GARCIA SELECTED FOR MUSICAL TOUR OF LATIN AMERICA WITH NYO-USA**

Music has the power to transport you to faraway places, and for Matthew Garcia, a sophomore at Harlingen High School of Health Professions, musical success is giving him an opportunity to tour Latin America as part of the prestigious National Youth Orchestra Program of the United States.

Only 116 of the most talented players across the country were admitted into the program. Garcia who has exhibited continuous success in music began his music career at the age of twelve in the Gutierrez Middle School Band Hall where he first was granted a spot in the Honors Performance Series at Carnegie Hall, and then the National Youth Orchestra 2 program, predecessor programs to NYO-USA. Now he has become one of only ten musicians chosen to advance from NYO2 to NYO-USA.

Musicians of NYO-USA will study and perform with renowned Conductor Marin Alsop, performing concerts in New York and debut performances in Mexico, Ecuador, and Colombia.

The 2017 NYO-USA program runs from July 1 through August 6 and begins with a three-week residency at Purchase College State University of New York where orchestra members will work with Orchestra Director James Ross and a faculty of principal players from many of America's greatest orchestras.

► **HCISD TAKES WIN IN 2017 IT'S TIME TEXAS COMMUNITY CHALLENGE**

For the second year in a row, HCISD walked away with top honors in promoting healthy lifestyles throughout the community. The district took first place in the Mid-size school district category of the It's Time Texas Community Challenge presented by H-E-B.

The City of Harlingen which also took part in the challenge came in second in the Mid-size community category.

"This is another great example of a partnership. We are super excited that the whole Harlingen community came together for the It's Time Texas Community Challenge by H-E-B," said Superintendent Dr. Art Cavazos. "I think it gave us the opportunity to change the narrative and change the conversation to really look at what else can we do to promote healthy eating and staying active."

Schools, principals, teachers, students, and staff throughout HCISD participated in the challenge from Jan. 9 – March 3, 2017, by hosting events, logging workouts, and posting on the It's Time Texas website.

This year, the It's Time Texas Community Challenge had over 23,500 people register for the community challenge representing over 330 communities. The community challenge is a state-wide friendly competition among different communities to prompt people to take healthy actions.



► **HARLINGEN SOUTH GIRLS BASKETBALL NAMED 32-6A BI-DISTRICT CHAMPIONS**

The Harlingen High School South Girls Basketball team earned the Bi-District 32-6A Champion title after a great season.

The team had an outstanding performance against Edinburg Vela with a final score of 46-42 and advanced to the area round.





▲ **TEA NAMES BOWIE ELEMENTARY AS A HIGH-PERFORMING AND HIGH-PROGRESS REWARD SCHOOL**

Bowie Elementary was recognized among 300 Title I Reward Schools across the state in a report recently announced by the Texas Education Agency.

Bowie was named as a High-Performing and High-Progress school based on statewide reading and mathematics assessments under the State Accountability System in the 2015-2016 school year.

A high-performance reward school is identified as a Title I school with distinctions based on reading and math performance. Also, at the high school level, a reward school is a Title I school with the highest graduation rates.

A high-progress school is identified as a Title I school in the top 25 percent in annual improvement and/or a school in the top 25 percent of those demonstrating ability to close performance gaps based on system safeguards.

Title I schools are defined as campuses with a student population of at least 40 percent low-income.

▲ **TOP BOTS: HCISD ROBOTICS TEAMS SWEEP FTC LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP**

Harlingen CISD Robotics teams surpassed the competition at the FIRST Tech Challenge League Championship held February 4, 2017, at PSJA Southwest High School.

More than 40 teams from across the Rio Grande Valley assembled to battle for the coveted championship title. Early College High School, Harlingen High School South, and Harlingen High School took first, second, and third place respectively. The final team rankings were based on points accumulated throughout 15 matches.

Teams were randomly divided into three leagues – Red, Silver, and Blue. ECHS and HHS took first and second place respectively in the Blue League while HHSS finished first in the Red League.



▲ **HIGH SCHOOLS GIVE STELLAR PERFORMANCES AT 74TH PIGSKIN JUBILEE**

The Harlingen High School Big Red Cardinal Band and Harlingen High School South Mighty Hawk Band gave stellar performances at the 74th Pigskin Jubilee on October 22, 2016.

Hosted at Boggus Stadium in Harlingen for the first time in living memory, the annual contest brought together 6A bands from across Region 28.

This year, the Big Red Cardinal Band and the Mighty Hawk Band delighted the audience and judges alike with their shows respectively entitled “Fall of Rome” and “H2O.”

Both bands finished the evening with Division 1 ratings. This marks the 20th consecutive year for HHS and 15th consecutive year for HHSS winning top honors in the annual contest.



▲ **ZAVALA ELEMENTARY TAKES FIRST PLACE IN TASB STUDENT VIDEO CONTEST**

Zavala Elementary has been selected as a first-place winner of the student video contest sponsored by the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). These videos illustrate the true value of public education and emphasize the many positive aspects of our state’s public schools.

The contest was open to all Texas elementary and secondary public school students, and winners were selected in three categories: elementary school, middle/junior high school, and high school. As a first-place prize winner, Zavala was presented with a \$5,000 check at the regular April board meeting for use in the students’ classroom or campus.

Students were asked to tell what makes their school exceptional, how the school has earned community support, how their school is making a difference in students’ lives and future success, and what makes Texas public schools the best choice. All entries can be viewed on the TASB Website.

TASB is a nonprofit association established in 1949 to serve local Texas school boards. School board members are the largest group of publicly elected officials in the state. The districts they represent serve more than 5.3 million public school students.



▲ **HARLINGEN SOUTH BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM NAMED 32-6A BI-DISTRICT CHAMPIONS**

The Harlingen High School South Boys Basketball team earned the Bi-District 32-6A Championship title after an outstanding 42-41 win over Edinburg High School.





◀ **HHS AND ECHS TAKE TOP TWO SPOTS AT SEAPERCH COMPETITION**

Robots took a dive at Harlingen CISD's Aquatic Center as the district hosted the HESTEC Navy SeaPerch Underwater Robotic Challenge for the very first time on October 7, 2016.

The annual event is part of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's Hispanic Engineering, Science and Technology Week.

Two HCISD schools walked away with the top awards. Harlingen High School and Early College High School took first place and second place respectively out of 33 participating schools from across the Rio Grande Valley.

Teams were faced with the task of building an underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) that could successfully pass a series of challenges. Contestants were judged by a point system that takes into consideration a timed finesse challenge, an obstacle course challenge, and the teams' visual presentations.

In the final portion of the challenge, the top five teams interviewed with a group of judges and had the opportunity to discuss the design of their robot as well as their application of STEM concepts.

SeaPerch aims to inspire students to look into the STEM fields as a future career choice and opens their eyes to the opportunities that are available through the Navy.



▲ **HIGH SCHOOL MUSICIANS NAMED TO TMEA ALL-STATE ENSEMBLES**

Select high-school students from HCISD's music programs recently received one of the highest honors a music student can achieve – to be recognized among the best in the state of Texas.

Eight HCISD students earned spots on the 2017 Texas Music Educators Association All-State ensembles: Josue Ayala – Jazz Ensemble 1, 1st Chair, Baritone Saxophone; Abel Garza – 6A All-State, 1st Chair, Tenor Trombone; Joe Gonzalez – 6A All-State, 2nd Chair, Euphonium; Aaron Zapata – 6A All-State, 1st Chair, Baritone Saxophone; Victoria Monroy – Mixed Choir, 1st Chair, Alto 2; Jordi Mendoza – Tenor Bass Choir, 4th Chair, Bass 2; Julia Bender – Treble Choir, 4th Chair, Alto 1; and Matthew Garcia – Philharmonic Orchestra, 33rd Chair, Viola.

Over 1,700 students are selected through a process that begins with over 60,000 students from around the state vying for this honor to perform in one of 15 ensembles including bands, orchestras, and choirs. Because of their All-State qualification, students traveled to San Antonio to participate in the TMEA Convention/Clinic from February 8-11, 2017.

Students took part in three days of intense rehearsals directed by nationally recognized conductors, and performed before thousands of attendees during the TMEA All-State Concerts.

▶ **HAWKS DOMINATE AT DISTRICT 32-6A TENNIS TOURNAMENT AND REACH STATE REGIONAL QUARTERFINALS**

The Harlingen High School South Hawk Tennis team had a clean sweep at the 32-6A District Tennis Tournament. For the second year in a row and the second time in school history, the Hawks won every division at the district tournament.

The team made it all the way to the State Regional Quarterfinals before closing out their season.



◀ **SOUTH TRACK WINS DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIP**

The Harlingen High School South Hawks Men's Track Team won the 32-6A district title held in Weslaco on Saturday, April 8, 2017.

The meet came down to the mile relay, the final race of the evening. The Hawks finished in 1st place winning the meet by 1 1/2 points. Harlingen High School Men's Track Team came in second place. It was a total team win and every point was crucial to the team's success and the second team title in school history.



◀ **HCISD CHESS TEAMS ADVANCING TO NATIONALS**

With more than 1,500 participants, HCISD Chess teams, ranging from kinder to high school, participated in the State Chess Tournament on March 10-12, 2017, in Edinburg, Texas.

The Wilson Elementary Primary K-3 Team finished in 8th Place; Sam Houston Elementary K-5 Team took 1st Place; Coakley Middle School won 2nd Place in the Middle School Championship, and Early College High School took 12th Place in the High School Championship.

All five teams will be competing in the National contest in Nashville, Tennessee.

▼ **6 HCISD ROBOTICS TEAMS MAKE IT TO STATE FIRST COMPETITIONS**

HCISD Robotics teams had a successful season in FIRST Lego League and FIRST Tech Challenge competitions with six teams making it to the state competitions.

The following teams advanced to the state championship after achieving success in qualifying challenges this season: Harlingen High School, Harlingen High School South, Early College High School, Rodríguez Elementary, Travis Elementary, and Vernon Middle School.





HCISD AWARDS

► HARLINGEN CARDINALS FOOTBALL TEAM NAMED DISTRICT CHAMPIONS

The Harlingen Cardinals brought home the District Championship after defeating the San Benito Greyhounds in the 87th Battle of the Arroyo and Great American Rivalry Series spotlight game.

Football fans converged in a sold-out game at Boggus Stadium on November 4, 2016. Cardinal pride was at a fever pitch as Harlingen's Giovanni Guillen kicked a 52-yard field goal sealing the team's win at 29-27.

The team went on to win the bi-district title in a 43-28 win against Edinburg Economedes.



► HCISD RECEIVES \$300,000 GRANT FROM TWC

Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District's auto collision and repair courses were awarded a Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant by the Texas Workforce Commission.

The JET program disbursed almost \$300,000 towards the upgrade of class equipment to meet industry standards and will offer HCISD students a new opportunity to gain college credit towards certification or an associate's degree in the auto collision field.

"The Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant will bring auto collision and repair concepts to life in the classroom giving our students the hands-on experience they need to be successful in the field and the opportunity to earn college credit," said Superintendent Dr. Art Cavazos. "We thank the Texas Workforce Commission for their outstanding commitment to education and are grateful for our partnership that will enhance the learning experience for our students."

The JET program supports new, emerging industries or high-demand occupations by allocating \$10 million each biennium for eligible educational institutions to meet the costs associated with developing career and technical education programs.

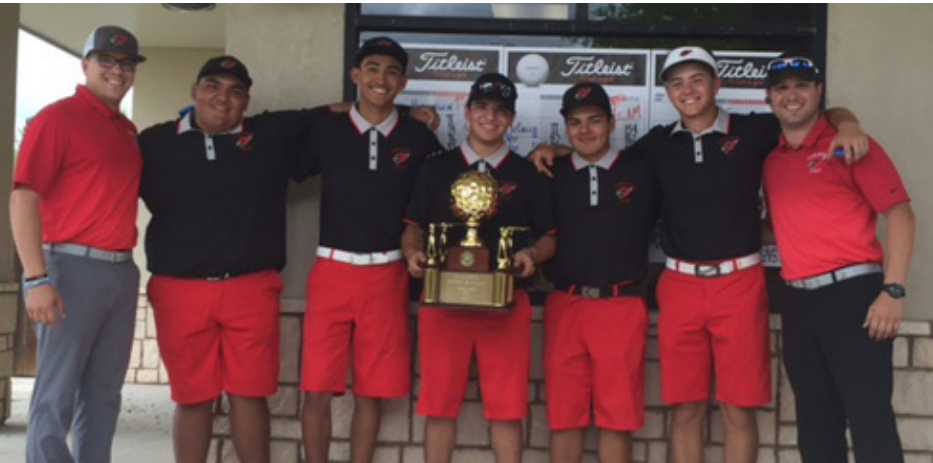


► HARLINGEN SOUTH'S ONE-ACT PLAY CLOSES SUCCESSFUL SEASON WITH REGIONAL CONTEST

Harlingen High School South's One-Act Play cast and crew delighted audiences this competition season with their rendition of The Elephant Man. Their outstanding performances at Zone, District, and Bi-District propelled them to the Regional contest - this is a first for the South OAP team in nearly ten years.

The team, directed by Lee Ann Ince, Crista Conley, and Julia Wise, brought their season to a close with the regional contest held at Southside High School in San Antonio. The OAP team was one of 24 remaining in the state representing Conference 6A. Before regionals, the team took 1st place at the Area 2 contest.

The 2016-2017 cast and crew were honored at the April regular board meeting. Cast members include Jaime Gomez, Christian Ingram, Savannah Smith, Carmela Benavides, Lauren Ponce, John Duncan, Jordi Mendoza, Alejandro Garcia, Julia Bender, Nate Carney, Mark Colmenares, Valerie Luevanos, and Isabella Connel. Crew members include Chris Smith, Jessica Durant, Molly Vela, Joseph Decilos, and Angela Gonzalez.



► HHS GOLF TEAM TAKES 32-6A TITLE

The Harlingen High School Cardinal Golf Team won the 32-6A district title on April 11, 2017, after shooting a season-best 294 on the last day of the competition sealing a 50-shot victory over the rest of the field.

Senior Cole Charvat captured the second place medal with rounds of 74-71 while teammate Dylan Martinez, a Junior, finished right behind him with the third place medal shooting 73-74. Sophomore, John Ortega also finished as the fourth place medalist with rounds of 75-76. Sophomores Nicholas Galvan, 82-73, and Sammy Rios, 94-91, also played well contributing to the team's commanding victory. The Cardinals qualified to compete in the regional golf tournament.

Sophomore, Micaela Leandro also advanced to regionals as an individual finishing in the top five for the tournament with rounds of 86-76. This was her first regional appearance.

► LADY HAWKS SOCCER NAMED AREA CHAMPS

The Lady Hawk Varsity Girls Soccer Team won the Area Championship after winning their match against San Antonio Southwest 4-3 in penalty kicks on Friday, March 31, 2017.



► HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR SKILLSUSA STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Hundreds of students throughout the Rio Grande Valley put their skills to the test during the SkillsUSA District 13 Leadership and Skills Conference held on February 24-25, 2017, in Harlingen.

After earning top spots in their respective categories, members from the Harlingen High School and Harlingen High School South teams advanced to the SkillsUSA State Competition.



► MEMORIAL MS BAND ACHIEVES 19 YEARS OF UIL SWEEPSTAKES

The Memorial Middle School eighth-grade band received superior ratings at the 2017 Region 28 Middle School Concert and Sight-Reading Contest held at the HCISD Performing Arts Center on April 4-7, 2017.

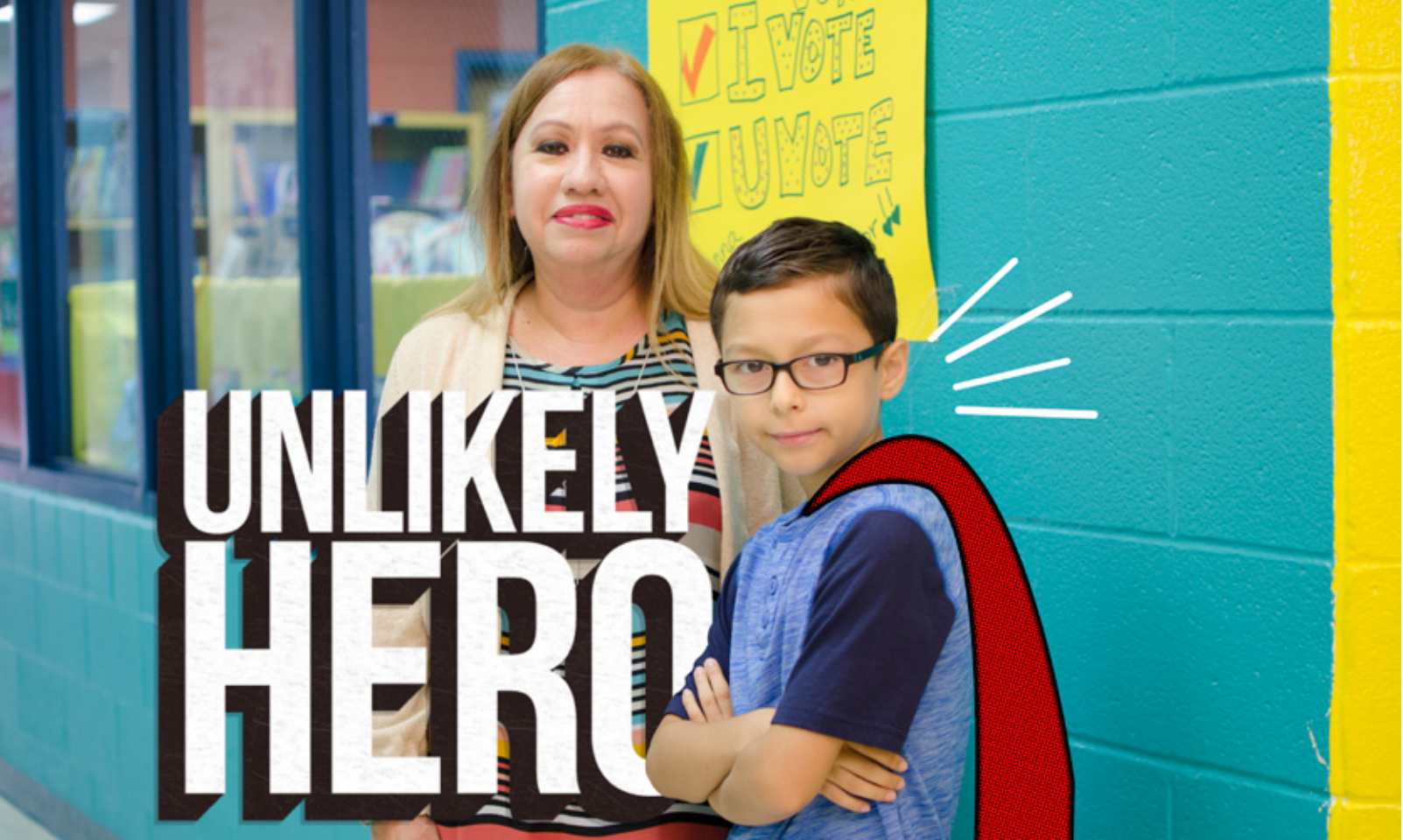
The eighth-grade band holds a 20 year-in-a-row win in concert, and for 19 out of the 20 years, they have achieved Sweepstakes. Together with the 7th-grade band, they earned 12 superior ratings this year.



► SOUTH SDD TEAM RANKED 7TH AT TFA STATE MEET

The Harlingen High School South Speech Drama and Debate team completed their TFA season at the State Meet in Plano, Texas on March 9-11, 2017. The team was ranked number seven in the state for qualifications with a grand total of 34. The team also had members make it to the final rounds of competition in their respective events. The state meet is the largest academic competition in the state of Texas.





Bonham Elementary student saves grandmother from drowning after taking SEAL swim lessons

When Irma Figueroa’s grandson took Safely Educating Aquatic Learners (SEAL) swimming lessons in second grade, she never imagined he would be using the skills he learned through the program to save her life.

Over the summer break, Figueroa had been left to watch her grandson for a few minutes while she rested on a pool float. Suddenly, she lost her balance and fell back into the water, head first.

“I was waving my arms everywhere and my feet were all over the place,” Bonham Elementary Paraprofessional, Irma Figueroa said. “If I had been able to stand up, I would have been okay, but I panicked because I don’t know how to swim. I remember thinking nobody is out here to help me. My son and daughter-in-law had gone inside. You would never think your 8-year-old grandson could do it.”

Fortunately, for Figueroa, her grandson Gabriel Figueroa went through a 2-week SEAL program the previous year where he learned how to float, proper breathing techniques, and how to jump safely into the water. Skills he used to save her in the nick of time.

“I was panicking, and my grandma was drowning. I knew it was up to me to do something, so I picked her up from the straps,” Bonham Elementary third-grader Gabriel Figueroa said. “I didn’t think about it; it just came to me.”

Gabriel went around behind his grandmother and after two attempts managed to pull her out of the water and help her stand up. He

then led her to safety at the edge of the pool where they hugged each other in silence thinking of what had just happened.

“If it weren’t for that SEAL program that taught him how to swim, Gabriel would not have been able to get me out,” Figueroa said. “It saved my life. I am so grateful, and I hope these swimming lessons continue.”

“Stories like this are so validating to the mission of our SEAL program,” said Sandra Flinn. “The HCISD Aquatic Center staff was deeply moved to hear about this life changing moment. We are thankful for the support of our community, school district and families that entrust us with educating the youth of HCISD in water safety and swimming skills. We are so proud of Gabriel and his heroic actions that saved his grandmother’s life. We truly believe we are making an impact daily through the lessons learned in the SEAL program.”

Flinn said statistics show that participation in organized swim lessons like SEAL reduces the likelihood of childhood drowning by 88 percent.

The SEAL Program was launched in March 2015 with the purpose of teaching all second-graders swimming fundamentals and water safety. HCISD’s Aquatic Center, a cutting-edge athletic and wellness facility, hosts the program for all 17 of the district’s elementary campuses.

Classes are taught by one certified aquatic professional for every eight students and are closely monitored by American Red Cross First Aid Certified Lifeguards at all times to ensure the highest level of safety. ★

IF IT WEREN’T FOR THAT SEAL PROGRAM THAT TAUGHT HIM HOW TO SWIM, GABRIEL WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GET ME OUT

IRMA FIGUEROA



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 EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

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The City of Harlingen and Harlingen CISD joined forces to provide the community with three all-inclusive playground facilities with structures and features designed to accommodate children of all abilities.

City and district officials collaborated to design playground structures that bring all children together—regardless of physical abilities—in a fun and active environment that promotes exercise and social interaction.

“Our community’s approval of the tax ratification as well as our partnership with the City of Harlingen have made this project a reality,” said Superintendent Dr. Art Cavazos. “These all-inclusive playgrounds stand to benefit not only the children of our district but all of Harlingen. They will be a place where children with a wide spectrum of abilities can come together and have fun.”

The Lon C. Hill playground was funded through a \$425,000 grant received by the city of Harlingen from the Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation. The Pendleton Park and Victor Park playgrounds were co-funded by the city and HCISD, both of which agreed to fund a total of \$400,000 each for both playgrounds. The district’s TRE funds made this partnership possible.

HCISD will incorporate the use of these playgrounds into the curriculum for special needs students.

“It is easy to overlook the importance of social skills,” says Daniel Garza, Director of Special Education. “In the new playgrounds, students will be able to play in conjunction with each other, enhancing cooperation and communication. Social building and recreational activities filter into the curriculum. One of the biggest catalyst for cognitive development will be the stimulation resulting from having multi-sensory features in the park, incorporating components that allow opportunities for students to play both cooperatively with each other and independently.”

After visiting all-inclusive playgrounds in neighboring cities, the design committee identified the most vital feature needed is the space itself to accommodate the physical needs of handicapped visitors.

Students with disabilities such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida who require a mobility device to move around will have pathways and transfer points that exceed ADA standards, enabling them to move more freely in the play spaces. The playgrounds will have ample nooks and niches within the main play structures for students to momentarily recharge as needed. A 5-foot walkway connecting the various structures and activity pods within the playground will provide sufficient space for a walker, wheelchair, or an additional person.

For Kristen Resendez, knowing that her son will have access to a playground just like any able-bodied child, makes all the difference in the world.

“Sometimes you don’t know what other people live through until you must live through it yourself. My son was born with a disease called spinal muscular atrophy which affects his ability to sit up, hold his head, breathe, and eat. He can learn just like any other child, but his body is very limited. Before I had my son, I would never have known to suggest to build something like this. The likelihood of him walking is still up in the air, but having access to a park like this will allow me to bring him to the playground just like any other child. We are excited for his future here in Harlingen.”

The inclusive approach will alleviate some limitations for approximately 1,800 of the district’s special needs students, including 363 students with severe handicaps in life skills programs across multiple grade levels. The playgrounds will create an environment fostering a feeling of success as students interact on the same level as their peers. ★

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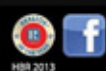
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**TRE
TAX
UPDATE**
Tax Ratification Election



Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District is making progress on upgrades throughout its campuses and facilities, all of which were made possible with the passing of the tax ratification in September 2015.

PA system, A/C, and roof upgrades to take place at several campuses

Voter approval of the TRE generated approximately 5.8 million dollars in state funds and 4.2 million dollars in local funds, allowing the district to increase the Maintenance & Operations component of the total tax rate and address necessary upgrades in HCISD campuses.

"We want to provide our students with a great learning environment where they can produce their very best, and the TRE continues to support that goal with improvements to our schools and facilities," said Superintendent Dr. Art Cavazos. "I commend our staff for their diligence in ensuring these projects are completed in a responsible and timely manner. We take great pride

in our progress and in knowing that this is all thanks to our community who supported the betterment of our schools through their approval of the tax ratification."

HAVING ACCESS TO
ADEQUATE EQUIPMENT AND
FACILITIES ENSURES THAT OUR
STUDENTS HAVE A GREAT
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
WHERE THEY CAN PRODUCE
THEIR VERY BEST.

DR. ART CAVAZOS

Upgrades will address needs at Travis, Zavala, Lamar, Milam, and Bowie Elementary Schools along with improvements at Early College High School and Harlingen High School.

Travis is receiving roof and air conditioning upgrades while Zavala will get roof upgrades to one of its classroom wings. The bid was awarded to Central Air & Heating Service, Inc. (CAHS) in the amount of \$1.6 million at the October regular board meeting. This project is at 70 percent completion as of April 2017.

Lamar and Milam have received upgrades to their outdoor chiller plants. This project came in at \$274,000 and was awarded to CAHS. 🎵



The bid for air conditioning upgrades at HHS was awarded during the November regular board meeting in the amount of \$3.1 million.

“We are replacing all of the A/C units of classroom wings 1-8, science rooms, administration building, gymnasium, as well as the dressing room areas,” said Oscar Tapia, Assistant Superintendent for District Operations & School Safety. “It’s going to take approximately 10 months to complete this project.”

Public Announcement (PA) Intercom System Upgrades have been completed at HHS, Bowie, and ECHS with the project cost totaling \$226,800.

Middle-school athletic tracks to be renovated as part of TRE projects

The Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District Board of Trustees approved a bid to replace existing running tracks at Coakley, Gutierrez, and Vela Middle Schools as part of continuing TRE projects.

“Students’ middle school years are where they lay the foundation for their high-school athletic careers,” said Superintendent Dr. Art Cavazos. “Having access to adequate equipment and facilities ensures that our students have a great learning environment where they can produce their very best. We thank our community as these upgrades would not have been possible without their support in the Tax Ratification Election.”

The district awarded the project to Beynon Company for \$1.6 million. Upgrades will include a new track surface installation over an existing sub-base structure at Vela. Coakley and Gutierrez will receive new athletic tracks complete with demolition of existing tracks, construction of new sub-base structures, and new track surface materials.

All three tracks will be six-lane Beynon Sports Tracks. The high jump, long jump, triple jump, and pole vault running lanes will also receive new track surface material.

The Vela and Gutierrez tracks are complete, and the Coakley track is expected to be finalized by June 2017.

► BY THE NUMBERS

Total cost for air conditioning upgrades at Harlingen High School

\$3.1M

Total cost for air conditioning and roof upgrades at elementary schools

\$1.6M

Total cost for middle school athletic track upgrades

\$1.6M

Total cost for LED lighting upgrades at elementary campuses

\$991,522

Total cost for Public Announcement Intercom System upgrades

\$226,800

Total cost for new handrail installation at Boggus Stadium

\$148,945

New handrail installation at Boggus Stadium, and lighting upgrades to take place at several campuses as part of TRE

The Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District Board of Trustees approved bids during a special board meeting on February 7, 2017, to install an aisle handrail system at Boggus Stadium and carry out lighting upgrades at several elementary campuses.

The district awarded the railing project to Sturdisteel for \$148,945. Upgrades will include the installation of railings throughout all the aisles of the home and visitor sides of the stadium.

“It’s for everyone climbing up the stadium stairs. In case someone loses their balance, they can hold on to the rail,” said Oscar Tapia, Assistant Superintendent for District Operation/School Safety. “From children, to adults, to seniors, the new improvements will enhance safety for all who visit Boggus Stadium.”

Work at Boggus is expected to begin during the summer and should be completed by the start of the 2017 football season.

As part of the district’s Energy Conservation Plan, HCISD continues to find ways to save on electricity costs. LED lighting upgrades will take place at 13 elementary schools.

“Some elementary schools have already had some lighting improvements over the years, so in some schools, it’s just partial work. Upgrades could take place in the cafeteria, the gym, in a hallway, or just in certain classrooms; every school is different,” said Tapia. “This will help reduce our utility usage and our utility bills for the year, as well as enhancing our lighting levels to improve learning.”

The LED lighting project was awarded to Metro Electric at the cost of \$991,522. Work has already started on this project and will continue through the summer with an expected completion set for August 2017. ★

\$10M/yr

Total amount for HCISD students generated by the Tax Ratification Election



TRE Projects Completed

- Installation of camera surveillance systems at all elementary campuses
- Modernization of 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade elementary classrooms
- Security camera upgrades to school buses
- Purchase of new musical instruments for high school band programs
- Athletic track upgrades at Vela and Coakley Middle Schools
- Upgrades to outdoor chiller plants at Lamar and Milam Elementary
- Two new all-inclusive playgrounds
- Technology infrastructure upgrades
- Auto collision and paint booth upgrades at Harlingen High School

TRE Projects In-Progress

- Athletic track renovations at Gutierrez Middle School
- Roof and air conditioning upgrades at Travis Elementary
- Roof upgrades at Zavala Elementary
- Air conditioning replacement and upgrades at Harlingen High School
- Upgrades to facility parking lots at Harlingen High School, Vernon Middle School, Crockett and Lee Means Elementary Schools
- Upgrades to elementary playgrounds and replacement of outside water fountains
- Upgrades to Varsity Baseball/Softball field restrooms, parking lots, and bleachers
- Boggus stadium handrail installation
- Career and Technology classroom upgrades to industry standards at both comprehensive high schools
- New electrical and plumbing shop at HHS
- Media Arts and Communications Academy (MACA)
- Automechanics shop upgrades at Harlingen High School
- Welding shop improvements at Harlingen High School and Harlingen High School South

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