

# UPDATES & OBSERVATIONS

EANES ISD



# ENVISION EANES

A Future-Focused Committee  
to Advise the Board of Trustees

January 2021

Part I

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## INTRODUCTION

Envision Eanes is an advisory committee charged by the Eanes ISD Board of Trustees to aid the administration's review and implementation of matters as may be requested by the Board, providing feedback consistent with the Trustees' direction.

### *Charge to Envision Eanes*

- The Envision Eanes committee will use its collective expertise and creativity to explore how Eanes ISD can become a greater institution of education and innovation for the next generation, being mindful of student wellness and achievement. The committee will begin with the current state, using comparative data to frame the initiatives, priorities, structures, facilities, resources and issues guiding the school district toward its aspirations.
- The charge may be expanded, condensed or constrained from time to time at the sole discretion of the Board of Trustees. Future subsets of the committee may include but are not limited to assisting the administration's efforts to evaluate and implement initiatives related to (a) campus attendance zones, (b) medium and long-term facility planning, (c) land acquisition, (d) community engagement and (e) other bond proposals.
- All committee activity shall align with the Eanes ISD strategic values, priorities and goals. Committee considerations may have academic, financial, contractual and transportation impacts on students, staff and community members; as such, objectivity, creativity and resourcefulness are essential.

The Envision Eanes Advisory Committee is organized in subcommittees tasked with specific charges as detailed in this summary document. While this report is presented as observations at this time, further discussion could lead to formal recommendations in the future, according to the timeline and process outlined in the official Envision Eanes charter. After more than two years of in-depth research and review meetings, this document is Part I in a summary of the work to date of these five subcommittees. A status report of observations regarding School Funding and Collaborative Fundraising will follow at a later date in Part II.

On a personal note, we are inspired to serve alongside this impressive group of dedicated and passionate leaders. The collective strength of this committee is fueled by the individual commitment and care of each member. For their thousands of hours invested, collaborative spirit and desire to promote the best interests of the district and community, we are grateful.

**Thank you** to the teachers and principals for the significant investment of time and insight. Your experience and devotion, coupled with the leadership of our trustees, gives us confidence Eanes ISD's longstanding legacy of excellence will continue. **We applaud** district administrators and the Board of Trustees for their leadership. By granting our committee unfettered access and inviting raw reflections about growth opportunities, they continue to build community trust and demonstrate how a high-achieving school district can become even better. The Envision Eanes Advisory Committee would welcome an audience with the trustees to discuss this impressive body of work and the findings therein.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenny Aghamalian, Co-chair

Bob Weinschenk, Co-chair

# COMMUNITY SUBCOMMITTEE SUMMARY

## Members

David Barrutia, Chris Grammer, Mo Greulich, Martha Hansen, Cathy Hoover, Anne Monnig

## Charge

Ensuring our district supports, communicates with and engages our community.

## Scope of Work

Community engagement is vital to the mission of Eanes ISD. In an effort to reach a range of community stakeholders, our subcommittee decided to utilize interviews and surveys as our key research methodology. Research inquiry intentionally focused on the three key elements of the charge: (1) support, (2) engagement and (3) communication, albeit from the various perspectives represented. Interviews were the method of choice for Eanes ISD administrative staff, local businesses and public sector organizations. Multiple meetings were held with the Eanes ISD Director of Communications and Community Engagement, Ms. Claudia McWhorter. Interviews were conducted with staff from Baylor Scott and White, Amegy Bank, Belmont Village Senior Living Westlake, Westbank Library, Westlake Fire Department and Realtor, Cord Shiflet. Interviews were also held with Christie Bybee, retired Eanes ISD School Board Member and Matt Zemo, Eanes ISD Director of Special Education. Eanes ISD principals ([Appendix A](#)) and local community members who had Westbank Library cards completed surveys. The Westbank Library kindly sent out a brief survey on our behalf to 6,000+ members via email. The responses of 193 residents were collected ([Appendix B](#)). The Westlake Chamber of Commerce sent out a brief survey to its members. Five out of 220 members responded ([Appendix C](#)). Findings and observations have been periodically shared with the greater Envision Eanes committee as well as the Eanes ISD Director of Communications and Community Engagement.

## Current Strengths

- The Eanes community values education.
- Eanes ISD provides multiple social media platforms to connect with residents. (principals' survey and website data)
- Residents with children volunteer at the district and/or school levels and they attend events. (community survey)
- Eanes ISD students/families have numerous opportunities for giving back to the community. (principals' survey)
- Residents with children receive ample communications from the district. (community survey)
- The Westbank Libraries continue to cultivate partnership opportunities with the school district.
- The businesses in the Eanes community want to support and engage with the school district. (interviews)

## Key Discoveries

Two salient themes emerged from our surveying, which limit our district's ability to fully support, communicate with and engage the community:

- a lack of a point of contact
- a lack of awareness of how to engage with the district

### Observation 1: Need for a Consolidated Community-Wide Calendar

**Concept:** Imagine if you could select any related Eanes ISD group (schools, grade levels, PTOs, sports/fine arts events, etc.) from a single calendar source, follow them and easily integrate them into your personal calendar. Feedback from community residents, businesses, non-profits, residents without students, Eanes faculty and staff and Envision Eanes committee members is the difficulty in finding events.

**Benefit:** There are numerous benefits of a master calendar including organizational, time, monetary, community building:

- Administrators, principals and teachers could reduce work time spent on planning for events. Currently, this work is very time-consuming.
- Residents with and without children could find and add district and school level events to their personal calendars (or follow - event shows up on personal calendar) increasing support and engagement.
- Local businesses and organizations can plan around or in conjunction with district events for more effective community-building coordination, such as fundraising and pep rallies. It can also help people avoid schedule conflicts, which can reduce traffic and parking issues.

**Cost/Timeframe:** This concept is already made possible through a calendar software by a company called Tandem, used around the United States including at over 460 Texas school districts, e.g. Highland Park ISD [Calendar](#) with an estimated cost of \$150/month (\$1,800 annually) for a district the size Highland Park ISD. [Appendix D](#) shares more details and contact information for Tandem.

**Option(s):** Engage Tandem or similar company. This is an easy fix at a reasonable cost. The time saved would be priceless. In addition, we believe the calendar should be highly visible on the homepage of the district's and each campus' website. This idea is ready to be vetted internally.

### Observation 2: Need for Enhanced Tours of Eanes ISD Schools

**Concept:** How can we attract more students who live inside our district, or families who are considering a move to our district, to our schools? Local realtors notice tours of private schools seem more "polished" than tours in the Eanes ISD schools. It is also difficult to schedule since there is not one point of contact who is "in charge" of the tours. To be competitive, we should consider enhancing school tours.

**Benefit:** A more formalized marketing of our district through school tours by trained personnel has the potential to increase the number of Eanes families who choose to send their children to Eanes schools. Eanes ISD has so much to offer potential students; let's showcase the district!

**Cost/Timeframe:** The cost is the time of training the designated school personnel who are in charge of the tours. Enhancing school tours involves not only time of school personnel, but the trained volunteers who may be assisting. After visiting private schools and gathering feedback from some local realtors, this idea can easily be implemented as early as decided by the district personnel involved.

**Option(s):** Develop a “School Tour Program” to make a priority of “selling” our district and campuses. The development of this program should involve relevant staff and offices, including growth opportunities for students to train and be tour assistants. Designate a person at each campus and/or the Director of Community Relations and Marketing (see Observation 4) to “sell” the district.

### Observation 3: Implement a “Bring a Neighbor” Program

**Concept:** What if students were asked to invite a neighbor to a school event such as a concert, sporting event or carnival (when space allows)? Based on the community survey results, residents without children attending schools in the district were also interested in attending district and campus events but were unaware of the opportunities.

**Benefit:** Opportunities to showcase the district can increase support and engagement by more community members.

**Cost/Timeframe:** Inviting neighbors is free, fun and a fantastic way to celebrate once we are ready to be all back together safely.

**Option(s):** Develop a “Bring a Neighbor” program.

### Observation 4: Need for a Director of Community Relations and Marketing

**Concept:** How can we better coordinate an effort to unite our community and support our district? Think big! Start with small steps. This position serves as a tangible solution for the unresolved board priority to increase community engagement. It would be created to reinvent Eanes ISD community relations and marketing, while strengthening the various initiatives and programs currently under the domain of the Director of Communications. The Director of Community Relations and Marketing would be responsible for creating unique opportunities to support an Eanes ISD education through the use of outside financial and human resources.

Our reality is we can no longer afford to fund the “extras” that make our district exemplary on state funding alone. Spanish Immersion, Advanced Placement classes, Gifted and Talented programs, nurses, librarians, counselors and a myriad of electives at the secondary, to name a few, would not be possible without private donations.

The Director of Community Relations and Marketing would serve as a point person and lead organizer for community-school district relationships to help maintain the tradition of excellence in Eanes ISD.

Key responsibilities include:

- Encourage unity and involvement, not only amongst families with school-aged children, but also with the empty nester community.
- Oversee engagement opportunities such as the Senior Gold Card Program, senior and middle school career days and intra-campus collaboration.

- Drive awareness of various efforts, needs and accomplishments to all stakeholders (i.e. daily “Dragon eBlast” - Carroll ISD Board and Community Relations Department to create greater understanding and support of the CISD).
- Market our district to potential families, through a variety of approaches, such as the enhancement of campus tours and a video capturing the value of an Eanes education in developing well-rounded citizens.
- Work in partnership with the Westbank Library, Westlake Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and other outside organizations for mutually beneficial opportunities.
- Head the creation of new advertising opportunities, grant opportunities, promotional events and corporate relationships to drive financial contributions and support the district’s general fund.
- Coordinate the partnership of revenue generating entities such as EEF, booster clubs and district advertising in discovering how to maximize the use of donor contributions for the benefit of Eanes ISD while ensuring ownership from the start.
- Make it easier for outside organizations and residents without students to know who to contact and how to engage with the district.

Examples from our research:

Carroll ISD [Dragon Marketing](#)

AISD: [Office of Innovation and Development](#) and [School Grants and Fundraising](#)

**Benefit:** This hire would facilitate an entire district and community partnership so Eanes ISD can maximize revenue generation, creating a strong sense of community towards a common goal of providing an exceptional education to all students and benefiting all stakeholders.

**Cost/Timeframe:** Remaining mindful of future district fund balance challenges, one approach might be similar to what is used by the Chap Club, hiring someone who receives a lower base salary and then works on commission. Anything the person earns in commissions could translate into 10 times more for the district. Another model for funding would be to pitch the position to potential donors as a pilot position for a given amount of time so the value can be objectively determined before committing district funds. An example of this was used by the United Way who obtained financial backing to pay an employee for three years so their program could gain traction before deciding whether or not to create a permanent position. A third option would be to hire a part-time person for a one year pilot and then evaluate how to proceed.

**Option(s):** Explore the potential of hiring a person focused on community relations and district marketing. To this end, we suggest forming a committee that represents key stakeholder groups such as EEF, booster clubs, district personnel, the Westlake Chamber of Commerce and other members of the community, ensuring ownership from the onset and greater opportunity for success. Community engagement has been an ongoing priority of the Board of Trustees and we offer this position as an actionable solution.



## Observation 5: Opportunities for Improvement

What if we explore some of the following concepts through future committees, involving stakeholders beyond district personnel? We have learned through our journey how district personnel work above and beyond on a daily basis. They were stretched even further due to recent events. Small groups of community volunteers may be able to assist with the following suggestions.

### ***Senior Gold Card Promotion***

What if more seniors attended events? What if this program was expanded to seniors who are retired staff members who live outside the district? The Senior Gold Card is one of the Eanes ISD community-engagement highlights. From our research, this community group wants to attend events but is not aware of the opportunities. Starting with the premise of reciprocity, encouraging seniors to attend Eanes ISD events may not only brighten their lives, but it also provides an insight into the results of their tax dollars and passed bond projects. Attending special events can also open the door of opportunity to volunteer. We have been in discussions with Ms. McWhorter who is starting to explore possible mediums for promotion, especially since our Community Survey revealed that seniors did not seem to follow social media as much. The consolidated calendar would also increase awareness. Consider using the WHS Alumni Association as another means of connecting with seniors. Involving more stakeholders in the promotion of this program benefits the entire community.

### ***Eanes ISD Website Adjustments - Digital Branding & Marketing***

How can we support the district to continue making the website more welcoming, transparent and user-friendly for all stakeholders? Further, to the wonderful wealth of information the website already contains, how can we create a more inviting environment and experience to attract potential families, future employees and local organizations and establishments? One example is the Human Resources page, which, when compared to other districts, could be modified to attract new hires. Improving brand image and usability of our district website enables various community members (residents with children, residents without children, business owners, donors, etc.) to increase engagement and support. Through our research, we collected and already relayed feedback from local businesses to Ms. McWhorter, who made adjustments to the Community Engagement webpage. Based on this proven method of cooperation and due to the ever-evolving nature of digital platforms, it is worthwhile to engage community members (such as the recommended Industry Advisory Council or a task force or a focus group) to continuously assist in seeking community feedback. Let's welcome people to our digital community and be a friendly neighbor, making it easy to find what they need.

# CURRICULUM SUBCOMMITTEE SUMMARY

## Members

Laura Clark\*, Mo Greulich, Pamela Horn, Robbie Millest\*, Monique Payne Pikus, Ph.D., Shaku Selvakumar\*, Alison Stilp, Laura Suggs, Ph.D., Channing Wiese

*\*Retired members*

## Charge

Understanding trends and requirements in education and how those are applied in our district.

## Scope of Work

Curriculum is at the core of student learning. What and how students learn impacts their ability to lead meaningful and purposeful lives. And, as we have recently experienced, it is constantly impacted by external events. While Eanes does an exemplary job in designing and delivering content, we would also like to develop skills and provide experiences that allow students to be continuous active learners in order to adapt to change. Skill development and experiential learning should therefore be infused throughout curriculum design and delivery. This is very much in line with the current research in learning science.

As of Dec. 2, 2020, the curriculum subcommittee met 18 times over 23 months and conducted multiple interviews or meetings with experts, stakeholders and district administrators and staff. These meetings included the Honorable Jeff Moseley, CEO of Texas Association of Business; Todd Washburn, former Eanes Associate Superintendent of Curriculum; tour and conversation with Irad Allen, Director of ViperBots Robotics at Vandegrift; Brent Iverson, Dean of the Undergraduate School at University of Texas at Austin; Dr. Richard Rhodes, President and CEO of Austin Community College; and an open house at Austin's Academy of Thought & Innovation. We met with all of the CIA/SEL administrators/staff in December of 2019 to present our preliminary findings and discuss preliminary priorities for the following academic year.

Topics of study emerged over time based on information from these interviews, including the concept of skills and experience development "flags". Noticing trends in education also led us to several observations related to technology, being cognizant of the continuing need for a holistic education. Making learning relevant was mentioned as a key theme in the 2012 Eanes Community Dialogues and remains important in guiding curriculum decisions.

We sincerely wish to be mindful of the workload of teachers as we share the following observations. Finding teachers who are already moving in the direction of an idea or involving teachers who are open to exploring a new concept creates opportunity for organic growth and buy-in from other teachers. Our experiences during this journey have solidified our recognition of the AMAZING teachers and staff in Eanes ISD and we want to be sensitive to their needs and work capacity. We believe teachers should be recognized for innovation as well as receive opportunities including dedicated time and resources to devote to developing new approaches.

## Current Strengths

We want to acknowledge the many things Eanes does exceedingly well, but cannot list all of them here. Below are a few that warrant highlighting.

1. Eanes ISD has a robust Special Education Program, demonstrating its commitment to serve the needs of the individual.

2. Eanes ISD supports Innovative Programs such as the Business Incubator and Spanish Immersion.
3. Eanes ISD School Board has set a goal to continue to develop interdisciplinary units of study in its annual priorities.
4. Westlake High School offers a wide range of academic classes and extracurricular opportunities, such as Tech Theatre, Robotics, Model UN and HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) Club.

### Observation 1: Need for Skills and Experience Development “Flags”

We believe the school district should identify current curriculum offerings to capture key educational elements beyond TEKS and/or graduation mandates and integrate these into the district’s current curriculum. Elements may include experiences, understandings and skills to support the Eanes [WHEEL](#) graduate profile and better prepare our students for life after graduation. Efforts could also be made to start pilots in certain classes and/or grade levels to model how these elements could be integrated throughout the K-12 curriculum in a thoughtful manner by building on current best practices. For example, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class might analyze an historical event from the perspective of two different cultural groups, thereby fulfilling the TEKS requirement for content, but also providing opportunities for the development of cultural awareness. A middle school student might have an ethical discussion about the decisions made by a character in a reading assignment, again fulfilling content requirements while simultaneously developing critical thinking skills. A junior in high school might similarly take Capstone and conduct independent research on writing.

Utilizing a “flags” concept as a tool to capture key educational elements beyond required TEKS/ graduation mandates better prepares students to achieve their current and future goals, providing the skills and experiences needed for entry into a changing workforce. We remain mindful of the outcomes of an Eanes education. As such, please see the information from the University of Texas at Austin [Center for the Skills and Experience](#) website: “According to a recent survey of US employers, when employers hire new graduates and describe the best preparation for career success, they place just as high a priority on skills like written communication, ethical decision making and critical thinking as they do on field-specific knowledge learned within the major. Employers expect graduates will be prepared to work and communicate with people whose cultural backgrounds may differ from their own so they will be able to work with numbers and understand statistics. The flags are designed to ensure every UT Austin undergraduate, regardless of major, graduates with a broad education to prepare them for these expectations and for success in a changing workforce.” Current flags at UT include Cultural Diversity in the United States, Ethics, Global Cultures, Independent Inquiry, Quantitative Reasoning and Writing. We suggest a similar system for Eanes because it embodies elements of a successful education endorsed by most, if not all, of the people with whom we have met and to which we also subscribe.

This observation is not intended to evaluate existing instructional content, but to suggest possible parameters to consider as a teacher is planning content to meet state standards (TEKS). Many teachers are probably already incorporating these elements as they plan instruction while others may just need to make minor adjustments to existing curriculum. Curriculum integration and interdisciplinary education are important trends

in education and we include here examples of both vertical integration in K-12, as well as horizontal integration across disparate disciplines.

Some specific potential “flags” supporting our research:

- Independent inquiry
- Diversity
- Project Based Learning
- Ethics
- Coding

**Possible Timeline:** We realize this observation concerns a long term commitment, personnel and time; however, students will be better equipped to participate as contributing citizens in a diverse world. Again, we remain sensitive to teacher workload and recognize the need for further exploration of this observation by teachers and other impacted staff members. In an effort to start slow and build capacity through ownership and buy-in, we believe a study group should be created next year to include teachers who may already be demonstrating some form of integration of this concept into their curriculum and teachers who are interested in potentially piloting the concept. Other members of the study group should be determined by the appropriate district personnel. The study group would develop the goals, objectives and timeline.

## Observation 2: Explore Opportunities for Experiential Learning & Skill Development

Curriculum is an expansive topic. Thus, at this point, we believe a review of the following list of suggestions is necessary to determine future potential explorations. More in-depth exploration can be done either through volunteer groups such as ours or using district personnel. The key is to include teachers in any further exploration and development to seek interest and the opportunity for organic growth. Again, being respectful of teachers’ time and workload is at the forefront of our minds. The resources devoted to any one or more of these suggestions depends on the level of interest and commitment. One may be interested, but not have the resources to be committed. We did not exclude a suggestion due to resource limitations.

Our goal is to highlight some ideas under the following two categories that may merit further study based on our interviews and research.

### General Suggestions:

1. **Continue to support relevant, experiential and interdisciplinary education opportunities.** Both remain active trends in the field of education. Consider interdisciplinary classes at the high school similar to Highland Park. The classes offered through the [Moody Advanced Professional Studies Center](#) create relevant experiences by connecting interdisciplinary coursework with profession-centered experiences. One of the offerings is similar to what is offered through participation in the Business Incubator Program.
2. **Increase CTE opportunities** (professional and certification programs) to meet current workforce trends and student needs. This effort demonstrates a recognition of diverse paths students may choose after graduation and provides relevant, supportive experiences. [Career Academies](#) at Austin Community College are a

partnership between ACC and employers to increase hiring for high-demand technical jobs. Students who complete the short list of courses earn entry-level certification recognized by employers. Students can use these certifications to enter the labor force immediately.

Certificates available:

- Information Technology - User and Computer Support, Web Developer Specialist
  - Phlebotomy - Phlebotomy Certificate
  - Emergency Medical Technician - Emergency Medical Technician Certificate
  - Pharmacy Technician - Pharmacy Technician Certificate
3. **OnRamps** is a dual-enrollment program offered through UT. In addition to offering college / high school credit for students, OnRamps provides professional learning for their teachers to deepen their content knowledge and impact in the classroom and robust professional development for educators. This program can help Eanes with distance learning and teacher training as well. In each academic year, new OnRamps teachers receive over 80 hours of in-person professional learning and development.
  4. **Expand Arts (Liberal and Fine Arts) and Humanities** based on the needs and interests of students. This expansion could happen through academic offerings and/or extra-curricular activities. Students need to be able to articulate the goals and perspectives of others in a global society. The ability to think critically and to distill information to different audiences is also vital. An example from Westlake High School is the development of the AP Capstone Seminar and Research courses. This course is focused on foundational research skills and critical thinking rather than content delivery. We believe some exposure to these skills to all high school students and the incorporation of these elements to the lower grades is essential.
  5. **Boost experience-oriented STEM curriculum** within schools by providing the developed content, materials and teacher training and support throughout the year. Curriculum can be developed in house or purchased through organizations like [Project Lead the Way](#), a nonprofit that develops STEM continuum curriculum, including content, materials and teacher training and support. Leander ISD utilizes PLTW curriculum..
  6. In keeping with Eanes' SEL goals, we also suggest **reviewing programs to help with academic transitions**. For example, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi's [First-Year Learning Communities Program](#) (FYLCP) is an innovative nationally recognized program which helps students to make successful academic and social transitions from high school to the University. In 2001, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board recognized the excellence of the program by awarding it a Texas Higher Education Star Award. TAMU-CC students enroll in their first year in specially selected groups of 2 to 4 classes known as dyads, triads and tetrads. The students and teachers within each dyad, triad, or tetrad form a *learning community*. The same group of students takes all of the classes within a given learning community together, which gives them many opportunities to work together, get to know each other and learn together. A review of this concept might spark an Eanes version of grouping students in learning communities to help with academic transitions.

## Technology Suggestions

We believe new technology should be motivated by curricular needs and used to augment and enhance teacher efforts. The current state of curriculum delivery has brought into stark relief the limitations of educational technology. However, we have identified areas where technology may enhance classroom education.

- 1. Explore how to integrate artificial intelligence curriculum into classrooms.**  
According to the [“ISTE -AI is Already Here”](#) video clip, 77% of people are already using AI, although they may not even know it. The current Technology [TEKS](#) (dated 2012-2103) are lagging behind student needs. In addition to coding, students should also start to learn how to design and work alongside AI machines as they build foundational skills needed to enter the workforce. The UF article, [“Gardner-McCune Working on a National Effort to Define K-12 AI Curriculum”](#) describes an example of a current project focused on the goal of developing a continuum of what every student should know about AI, machine learning and robotics. The Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI) and the Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA) are two respected organizations involved in this initiative ([AI4K12](#)).
- 2. Investigate ways AI solutions can be used as a tool** to assist with content delivery, data collection, assessment and network safety. [“Artificial Intelligence trends in education: a narrative Overview”](#) describes how AI will reshape the education landscape.
- 3. Seek opportunities to integrate Virtual Reality into learning experiences.**  
Numerous educational articles point to the increasing trend of using VR in classrooms as a tool to enhance learning. [The Art of Virtual Reality](#)
- 4. Promote experiential learning such as Software Simulations.** Instructional, software driven simulations can offer experiential learnings not otherwise accessible in a classroom environment. These simulations can engage students in deep learning, which empowers understanding as opposed to surface learning which deals with memorization. Through acting out the experiences in a simulated environment, a learner must reflect upon and apply knowledge by their active exploration and interactive problem solving approaches. As a result, the student garners higher interest through engaging participation; develops critical thinking, imagination and creativity; connects real-life phenomena to underlying concepts; and gains SEL experiences and skills.

Examples:

- [Statecraft US Government](#) (designed off of the AP Government Curriculum and Standards; Houston ISD added to its curriculum this fall semester). Other [Statecraft Sims](#) include U.S. Foreign Policy, World Affairs, Model United Nations, National Security and International Organizations. US Government sim is in process.
- [MarkStrat Business simulation](#). While this is not yet available at the secondary level, it is a great example of an impactful, 30 year proven, business simulation.
- Another benefit of software driven simulations is they can offload work from teachers by reducing time spent instructing and grading for the material covered by the simulation.

**Possible Timeline:** We believe this list should be reviewed by internal personnel to determine areas of immediate and/or future interest. The list could start with the Campus Leadership Teams which would promote ownership from the beginning. More in-depth explorations could be completed by groups, including volunteers from committees such as ours and district staff and teachers. After further exploration, a more specific timeline regarding steps for implementation can be explored.

### Observation 3: More Teacher Training, Support and Recognition is Needed

Ensure adequate teacher training and support requiring specialized expertise such as coding classes, Spanish Immersion and any new curriculum content or delivery changes. Training and support should be on-going and offered as needed for any staff who are involved in curriculum changes.

We believe teacher compensation should be considered beyond traditional routes. We recognize training and development of new approaches takes time. We suggest implementation of a competitive process to award “protected time” for the development of new and innovative approaches. This might be a protected class period or weekday but would require a proposal submission and review for award.

Similarly, we believe specific new teacher award categories should be developed for educational innovation. We propose local companies and organizations may be recruited by Eanes Education Foundation to provide named awards for such innovation. An [American Statesmen article](#) noted a WHS high school history teacher just received an award from Southwest Airlines for taking her history students on a driving tour of the US. HEB honors Texas teachers each year through their [Excellence in Education Awards](#).

One could even envision a named “Teacher-Scholar” award. For example, the “Dell Teacher-Scholar in Educational Innovation” might go to a teacher who proposed to integrate a coding element into a course or unit of study at the middle school level. Another example might be a teacher or team of teachers in fifth grade who wish to develop a simulation combining TEKS in Language Arts and American History while focusing on different cultural perspectives. This Teacher-Scholar award might include protected class period(s) from the district, funds from Dell to purchase software (or in kind donations) and a teacher's assistant from the high school. The details and needs of the teacher would be formulated according to the particular goals of the project.

As an additional comment to this observation, we reiterate teachers should be part of the decision-making process related to any changes related to curriculum (beyond required curriculum) from the onset. Implementing a proposal process as well as a reward system for such changes ensures teachers are both driving innovation as well as being recognized for their efforts. Buy-in and ownership are integral to successful change in any organization. This may mean a change in delivery or content takes a longer time to implement. However, the result is more sustainable.

**Possible Timeline:** We suggest a review of this idea by appropriate district personnel to determine next steps during the 21-22 school year with the goal of implementing awards in the 22-23 school year.

### Additional Areas of Interest:

*The following suggestions are meant to be secondary to previous observations, giving consideration to available resources at this time.*

1. Explore infrastructure to incorporate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion oversight
2. Create Maker/Breaker spaces across campuses and develop district wide support protocols. This may be another opportunity for EEF involvement in order to recruit companies for funding, giving visible recognition to the companies/sponsors. The benefits of these maker/breaker spaces include building creativity and problem solving skills; providing a place for students to go in off time- potential community; and offering a stress reducer for many kids
3. Industry Advisory Councils
  - a. Industry members provide advice on trends and hard and soft skills needed in work world
  - b. Possible source of industry guest lecturers and mentors for specialized classes and extracurriculars like Incubator, Culinary and Robotics
  - c. Possible sources of internships
  - d. Once vested in Eanes community and understand needs and gaps, may choose to further support in other ways including funding
  - e. Austin Community College utilizes this concept and suggested it as a conceptual consideration for secondary schools
4. Educate parents and students about alternative college and career paths
5. Evaluate interest among students and educate parents regarding:
  - a. Dual Credit
  - b. Articulated Courses
6. Explore becoming ACC in district - analyze the cost savings and benefits against expansion of the tax base with regard to expanded CTE, dual credit and articulated course offerings.
7. Expand Community Education Classes

**Possible Timeline:** Since these are secondary suggestions, the timeline should be based on interest, time and resources.



# EDUCATORS & EMPLOYEES SUBCOMMITTEE SUMMARY

## Members

Cassandra Barnhart, David Barrutia, Martha Hansen, Laurie Maccini, Lisa Palmer

## Charge

Hiring, supporting and retaining top talent in our district.

## Scope of Work

It is an understatement to say Eanes ISD is nothing without our teachers. In order to understand the sentiments of our faculty/staff, our group visited all district campuses and departments, including but not limited to the 6 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, the high school, principals/assistant principals/campus leadership teams, district administration, nutrition, transportation, custodial staff, operations and the CDC to inquire:

- What makes EISD a more desirable place to work?
- What makes you feel valued as an employee?
- What makes EISD a less desirable place to work?
- What makes you feel less valued as an employee?
- What does your ideal work environment look like?

Multiple methods were used to collect data. Padlet was the key mechanism to deliver questions and collect data anonymously, both in English and Spanish. The Educator and Employee Subcommittee designated a specific time at each EISD campus or department to offer the opportunity for face to face conversations should the employees have interest. Additionally, a message box was left at each campus and an email address and contact information for the subcommittee should staff prefer to submit feedback in that manner. Padlet questions could be answered at any time within the survey period from the beginning of February to mid-March 2020, concluding prior to Spring Break 2020 and the Covid-19 crisis. The data from these different methods were reviewed by Envision Eanes Educators and Employees Subcommittee Members with the purpose of presenting the data and following observations to the EISD Board of Trustees. We asked employees to Think BIG! Get creative! Think outside the box! Inspire us! Our desire was to offer the opportunity for staff to provide ideas or solutions to make working in Eanes ISD more sustainable, enjoyable and competitive than surrounding districts.

## Current Strengths

- Staff has access to other like-minded, dedicated, collaborative, professional and highly talented educators and/or other staff members who are equally committed to positive campus culture.
- Parents, booster clubs and the Eanes ISD community are supportive.
- High expectations are established for staff and students.
- Campuses are well maintained and the staff feel safe.
- Campus administration is engaged and district administration is accessible.
- Access to continuing professional development resources

## Key Discoveries

Our district-wide surveying uncovered patterns of underlying psycho-social issues among educators and employees evident across different environments. Despite providing unwavering dedication to Eanes ISD students, sentiments such as fear of retribution for speaking up, resentment from feeling underappreciated and distrust in administration leadership have been deeply stifling to our district's capacity to hire, support and retain top talent.

### Observation 1: Need for Enhanced Communication

**Concept:** Commit to a top-down culture shift that includes all employees in the decision-making process and promotes thoughtful, honest communication between various staff groups and administration to encourage participation and ownership, reaffirming the administration's commitment to supporting staff agency. Our survey uncovered a climate of fear, hesitation and/or disengagement among faculty/staff, with underlying power dynamics having unintended consequences, e.g. subverting good ideas and shutting down communication, which cumulatively and clearly inhibit the district's capacity to support and retain top talent.

**Benefit:** By encouraging open, honest and difficult conversations, reducing administrative pushback and mandating a culture of transparency, our district leadership can encourage collaboration and a democratic partnership amongst staff. This connection is what creates a safe space where our human capital can grow and thrive and is particularly important in the workplace to ensure motivation and longevity. A feeling of worth and purpose is integral to employee productivity and quality of work. Prioritizing personal connection with employees allows the administration to create a stronger commitment to achieving a common goal and affirms employees' sense of value and importance.

**Cost/Timeframe:** Our committee has identified several cost-free options that can be implemented as soon as possible to begin making a difference.

**Option(s):** The following list of suggestions have been curated from staff feedback, serving as a starting point to enhance communication and cultivate trust with staff:

- Create an Enhancing Communication with Staff Questionnaire to gather qualitative information, such as staff interests and how staff would like to be involved in decision making and quantitative information, such as how staff would like to receive important information. The Questionnaire would give administration at all levels insight as to how to connect with staff. To be clear, this questionnaire is not a survey, but rather a means to learn better ways to connect with people throughout the organization. The knowledge obtained through the Staff Questionnaire allows more staff members to become involved on district committees and staff needs to be better understood by administration. Results of the survey should be provided, along with an administrative response, as well as plans to address concerns.
- Develop an internal District Communication Plan, creating guidelines to inform staff of decisions in a timely manner. Start small by sending the Board Overview to all staff by email after every Eanes ISD board meeting, summarizing decisions and events.
- Designate a minimum of 2 public Board meetings each year exclusively dedicated to hearing from staff and addressing staff needs and concerns. This forum should be well advertised to district employees and public assurances provided that employees who speak respectfully at the meetings will not be subject to punitive actions.

- Hold small group meetings on campuses where together school staff, all levels of administration and Board leadership delve into creative thinking, generating fresh ideas, grand possibilities and new approaches to district happenings. Every effort should be made to build relationships and foster a culture of collaboration and trust between school employees, administration and the Board of Trustees.
- Explore ways to improve communication between the Human Resources Department and employees that demonstrates a commitment to retaining staff through demonstrable actions, such as: facilitating campus-to-campus transfers and on campus transfers from department to department along with a clear timeline of when such transfers can be honored, providing timely responses to staff questions and performing staff exit interviews to identify key deficits or needs.
- Research ways to improve how we broadcast our image and engage with potential employees, for example redesigning our district HR webpage to one more enticing and informative to potential applicants, keeping in mind the webpages of other comparable districts ([Appendix A](#)).

### Observation 2: Need for an EISD Faculty/Staff Council

**Concept:** Assign a committee charged with establishing the constitution and bylaws of a district-wide EISD Faculty/Staff Council. As reflected in Observation 1, faculty and staff, individually and consistently across all our campuses, feel they lack a voice, a phenomenon eroding our district’s ability to hire, support and retain top talent. This endemic problem also presents itself as an opportunity to found a body that can sustainably face these issues now and in the future. The establishment of a professional self-governing body (with leaders who are elected amongst faculty and staff and not appointed by administrators), in which peers can exchange views, recommend resources, share opinions, crowdsource ideas, support each other, inspire each other, train each other, counsel each other, honor and pay tribute to each other and have democratic representation with a voice, has become a common best practice at institutions of higher education as well as at a growing number of independent schools districts. See [Appendix B](#) for examples of faculty/staff councils.

**Benefit:** Enhancing the value, job satisfaction and social-emotional well-being of our staff, while promoting community and kindness.

**Cost/Timeframe:** While the Council could be self-managed, the district would need to find ways to provide office-related supplies, office space and access to meeting rooms.

**Option(s):** Since the establishment of the Council would involve a variety of questions and complex issues, the Board should assign a committee and give them authority to make their own decisions, as long as they are within district rules and other legal parameters as clearly pre-determined by the Board. The committee’s charge is to establish the constitution and bylaws of a council “of, by and for” the faculty/staff. The responsibilities of the Council should not stand in conflict with currently existing district-wide leadership groups, such as DLT, but rather add a new dimension and open up growth opportunities. Retired faculty and staff should be encouraged to join for their wealth of experience, history with the district and independence from undue influence. The people who know how to best hire, support and retain top talents in our district are our own faculty and staff themselves.

### Observation 3: Need for a Parent Code of Conduct

**Concept:** Affirm the need to support our teachers and staff by creating a Parent Code of Conduct to outline appropriate parent behavior and ensure respectful dialogue for all parties, while upholding the professionalism, dignity and honor Eanes ISD staff deserve. Our survey revealed Eanes ISD parents are not only one of the biggest strengths, but also one of the most challenging aspects of the district. The Parent Code of Conduct serves as a foundation for the district to nurture respectful interactions and healthy relationships, honoring staff expertise and demonstrating to all stakeholders that Eanes employees are highly valued professionals and are expected to be treated as such.

**Benefit:** At many campuses teachers experience defenselessness and lack of support from administration with conflictual parents. Creating a Parent Code of Conduct provides a framework for appropriate behavior, communication and resolution of differences while always acting in the best interest of the students.

**Cost/Timeline:** Developing a Parent Code of Conduct is cost-free and can be implemented at the start of the 2021-2022 verification process when commitment to the Student Code of Conduct is required.

**Option(s):** Devise a set Parent Code of Conduct to establish appropriate parent and staff interactions and potentially mitigate sensitive parental situations. This serves as a guideline to ensure teachers and staff are fully supported by the school district. Parent consideration is obviously important and the Parent Code of Conduct outlines appropriate behavior in a non-threatening way, while reinforcing the shared goal of promoting positive student outcomes. The purpose of a Parent Code of Conduct is to foster collaborative relationships, maintain mutual respect and support the best possible learning environment for the student.

### Observation 4: Need to Prioritize Better Compensation & Benefits

**Concept:** Commit to making the employee compensation package as praiseworthy as our student outcomes. In our survey, compensation was the single biggest factor mentioned pertaining to needs of the workplace and decisions regarding where to work. Surrounding districts are getting first pick of top talent due to compensation packages reflecting their recognition of a competitive marketplace. While boasting excellence in many other areas, Eanes ISD does not fall in the top quartile of twelve surrounding school districts in terms of salary, nor does it meet any of the reported goals of our own Board ([Appendix C](#)).

**Benefit:** Facing the largest factor in teacher hiring and retention and becoming more competitive amongst the 12 surrounding districts would aid in the attempt to give Eanes ISD a competitive advantage in top tier employment. This would also ensure Eanes ISD is hiring and retaining the best and brightest talent for financial reasons.

**Cost/Timeframe:** Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, teacher salaries must rise to the forefront of budgetary decisions. In terms of the scope of costs, Eanes ISD uses the metric a 1% raise is the equivalent of \$610,000.

**Option(s):** Begin to prioritize teacher compensation by stopping the use of “industry standard” as a benchmark for teacher compensation. Maintain a consistent standard of excellence as we do for the performance for our students. Ideas gathered from our survey for your consideration:

- Research raise scenarios aside from a district-wide raise situation and prioritize salary increases for the most critical positions for student success.
- Consider offering alternatives to salary increases during leaner years. Ideas include but are not limited to sign-on bonus, year-end bonuses and raising hourly wage for applicable employees.
- Investigate non-financial compensatory measures such as training, assigned parking spots and free lunches, specifically to critical need, hourly positions such as the Special Education TA.
- Re-evaluate whether our district is carefully reviewing all its possible resources to find the best possible health care insurance options for our employees, while also welcoming employee input on what is desired.
- Explore ways to cooperate with community partners (e.g. H-E-B, local restaurants, gyms, yoga studios, etc.) to offer Eanes ISD employee discounts as a form of nontraditional compensation.
- Consider partnering with apartments in proximity to our district to provide reduced rents as an incentive to compensate for lengthy commutes (another stated criteria for determining employment).
- Never stop engaging employees to search for other types of meaningful and cost-effective benefits.

#### Observation 5: Response to Specific Staff Requests is Necessary

**Concept:** Based on specific feedback from faculty and staff, these are presented as seemingly quick fixes to enhance our work environment. If there are legitimate reasons why they cannot be fulfilled, the district should communicate them clearly in order to reduce misunderstanding.

**Benefit:** Fulfilling reasonably simple requests can build trust and a positive work environment.

**Cost/Timeframe:** Varied costs. Implementation can occur immediately or within 3 months or less.

**Option(s):**

- Defined process for scheduling educator evaluations.
- After-school staff meetings held on Zoom or recorded when appropriate.
- Snack machines back on all campuses, specifically for staff break rooms.
- Cafeteria workers request eliminating uniforms, since other staff do not have to wear them.
- Condiments in the staff lounges.
- Eliminating “Campus Use Fee” for staff providing after-school tutoring.

# FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE SUMMARY

## Members

Alan Knox, Anne Monnig, Jeff Ulmann, Laura Clark\*, Laurie Maccini, Yan Cheung

*\* Retired member*

## Charge

Meeting mid- and long-term needs and exploring innovations in education spaces.

## Scope of Work

The Envision Eanes Facility Committee spent a great deal of time learning more about issues relating to the EISD facilities. It was foundational work to develop an understanding of the existing conditions, so as to be better positioned to study and evaluate future areas of need or interest. To that end we participated in the following activities:

1. Visited all Eanes Campuses and met with principals and parent representatives. Each principal provided a list of either needed repairs or needed enhancements and explained how this would affect the learning environment.
2. Met on several occasions with Jeremy Trimble, COO for Maintenance and Operations and reviewed plans or proposals for new facilities.
3. Visited all the schools of the Highland Park ISD. This District had recently completed a rebuild of all their elementary schools (except for one, which had a major refurbishment). This visit provided inspiration for how the facility can impact educational opportunities and enhance learning.

## Reflections - Highland Park ISD Tour

1. New facilities
  - a. In the new elementary school, learning neighborhoods for each grade level was executed in a thoughtful manner and showed promise.
2. Renovations
  - a. The Moody Advanced Professional Studies is an intriguing example of combining school programs, forward thinking collaborative workspace and entrepreneurial student drive. WHS would benefit from a comparable designated space, which does not currently exist on par with the space as Highland Park.
  - b. Underground Parking Garage below playing fields – invaluable space savings & helps solve impervious cover limitations but it comes with a cost (underground parking level under the practice field or relocate practice field to “over” another parking area to allow for new development at WHS?)
  - c. Themed renovations focusing on shared learning space for group and individual activities at existing schools were well received and thoroughly utilized.
  - d. The group was shown successful examples of identifying the key ideas and/or components that were sentimental/emotional charged for stakeholders and how those elements were carried into renovations and/or new development projects for the district.

## Areas of Focus

Our observations were significantly impacted by Covid. With the changes in learning environments, unknown financial impacts to the district, etc., we are unable to identify specific options at this time. Also, it is felt post-Covid there will need to be a re-evaluation of needs. The following general areas, however, did stand out and it is felt these will be an area for additional research and observations in the future:

1. Spent time on discussion of ways to maximize the Eanes ISD facilities in relation to income production.
2. Spent time reviewing possibilities for school utilization which would include ways to have an additional elementary in the western portion of the district.
3. **Outdoor learning areas** – Tours of each school consistently showed areas with great potential for outdoor learning areas. With Covid, this seems even more timely. Many of these needed either shade, grading of the area, etc.
4. **Lighting** – One of the notable findings in our visit to the Highland Park Schools was the innovative use of lighting in many areas to significantly enhance the learning environment. This is something to be explored and upgraded within the existing school configurations.
5. **Additional elementary school in western part** – There continues to be a desire to minimize travel for the students who attend Valley View elementary. Our committee had intended to visit a school in the Dripping Springs ISD with a combined campus of Middle School and Elementary. The committee believes exploring this concept as a way of providing an additional elementary in the western part of the district is vital.
6. Continue to work with administrators at each campus to prioritize their needs/wants and evaluate how this most effectively can be done with the current budget or a potential bond proposal.
7. **General Observations**
  - a. District Master Plan - It is currently unclear what bearing/importance the 2013 master plan currently holds on future EISD development & projects.
  - b. For the most part, there could be a perception that the holistic understanding of EISD facilities rests with Jeremy Trimble (who is great). A centralized accessible database of information does not currently exist. (See Austin Web Development Map for example).
  - c. The group felt it would be good to organize future focus areas into categories:
    - a. System type of information (transportation, space utilization, etc.)
    - b. Localized Campus Projects (needs/wants-usually conveyed by principals)
    - c. Big Picture Studies/Ideas (new campus, magnet school, etc.)
  - d. At the elementary level, there is an imbalance in the quality of space, natural light and easy access to outdoor space, this is most apparent at Valley View Elementary vs. the facilities at other campuses.

## Additional Areas of Interest

The following suggestions have been discussed in our subcommittee and can be further prioritized and developed:

1. Space planning in a post-Covid educational environment.
2. Develop a framework/system for identifying and conveying localized project needs/wants to keep each campus up-to-date and not forgotten about.
3. Generate revenue by renting out school spaces as conference venues or for community events.
4. Explore the potential implementation of passive or active energy efficiency and/or green energy solutions across the district with the goal of reducing ongoing energy costs in order to free up dollars in the M/O budget. This would include an analysis of where the most dollars are being spent at the various campuses and on which type of resource/energy/system.
5. Along with item 4. the district could set a goal to either reduce the gross conventional energy usage by a certain percent by a certain year, or to go as far as a goal of net zero energy usage by 2030, similar to the existing 2030 challenge currently adopted by the American Institute of Architects and others.  
[https://architecture2030.org/2030\\_challenges/2030-challenge/](https://architecture2030.org/2030_challenges/2030-challenge/)



# STUDENT WELLBEING SUBCOMMITTEE SUMMARY

## Members

Andrea Bradford, \*Laura Clark, Lisa Palmer, \*Elizabeth Poole, Alison Stilp, Maggie Suter, Melinda Valdez, Channing Wiese

*\*Retired*

## Charge

Ensuring the physical and emotional health and safety of children at our schools. Identify areas for student wellness improvement within Eanes, research trends and best practices and provide recommendations. Ensuring the physical and emotional health and safety of children at our schools.

## Scope of Work

The holistic wellbeing of students is paramount to learning and becoming successful persons of a community. Being healthy of mind, body and spirit will empower students to lead enriching and rewarding lives. The focus on mental and physical health and development should be on par with academics.

In addition to committee meetings, our subcommittee conducted the following reviews of data and meetings:

- Two hour interview with psychiatrist William C. Streusand, M.D.
  - Dr. Streusand has counseled Eanes students over his 40- year career. Dr. Streusand was the co-founder of the Texas Child Study Center and was Chief of Psychiatry at Dell Children's Medical Center for 12 years.
- Met with Eanes CIA/SEL staff at a working session on 12-20-19
- Reviewed 2016 WHS Alumni Survey data conducted by the District
- Reviewed Community Leadership Forum Data presented 1-17-19
- Attended NAMI Central Texas (National Alliance on Mental Health) presentation to high school students and parents 10-28--19
- Reviewed Eanes Inclusive Culture Committee 2019 Focus Group Data
- Viewed documentary film [“Race to Nowhere”](#)

## Areas of Focus

Our subcommittee has the following areas of focus, which fall under three major themes:

1. Inclusive Community Building
2. Mental Health Awareness and Support
3. Self-Discovery and Positivity

### Observation 1: Inclusive Community Building

We believe providing more opportunities for students to “find their community” at all grade levels will improve students’ school experiences, resulting in more well-adjusted students who have a network of people to help support them. The suggestions below may primarily fall on counseling staff, principals and assistant principals, as well as

Curriculum and Instruction administrators. However, PTOs, booster clubs and parent groups could also be engaged to facilitate some of this programming. Below are examples of possible programs or dedicated efforts to achieve the goal of all students finding their community.

### ***First-Year Interest Group (FIG)***

Here we use the example of a program at the University of Texas at Austin. A FIG is a “group of 18-25 first-year students who take two to four classes together during their first fall semester at UT. Each group attends a weekly seminar led by a peer mentor and a staff facilitator. FIG students develop a sense of community as they attend classes, study and participate in various activities and events with their mentor and fellow first-years. Students discuss issues like study and time management strategies, campus life and involvement opportunities and social opportunities and issues.” The UT-Austin first year experience team has continued to work remotely during the pandemic.

### ***Advisory Groups***

Every student in middle and high school would be assigned to a small Advisory Group consisting of peer students and one adult advisor - Eanes faculty or staff member. Unlike the FIG group above, these advisory groups would be for students of all ages (6th-12th) and the meetings would be informal and less structured. The primary purpose would be to serve as a social outlet and a chance for students to bond with an adult mentor. The mentor relationship can be invaluable, particularly in large school settings like Eanes, for students to have someone to go to, if needed, and for mentors to observe and hear what is on their students’ minds. It also would provide an opportunity for students to get to know other students outside of their usual friend groups. The advisory group would meet regularly throughout the year, such as biweekly during lunch, to establish continuity and a strong relationship among its members.

- St. Stephens has successfully utilized this advisory group concept for years. Adult mentors range from teachers to administrative assistants and up to about 10 students per group. They meet weekly for 20 minutes. No work or preparation is needed from the mentor nor students. It is simply a great opportunity for the kids to relax, share what is happening in their lives that week and often offload their concerns and worries with one another. Their advisory groups are by grade for middle school and then a mix of 9th-12th graders in high school. The older students often are a great resource for the younger high school students.

### ***Peer Partner Concept***

Establish or enhance a peer partners concept for students who are new at a campus, or those having trouble finding a peer. Match a peer who can serve as a role model and connector to other students with similar interests and opportunities to socialize. At the elementary level, this is the Lunch Buddies program. At the middle school, this is a life skills class called Peer-Partners. At the high school level, this could be handled through the Student Council.

### ***Open Extracurriculars***

Based on data from the 2016 Alumni Survey, almost 60 percent of students surveyed said they connected with peers through clubs whereas 38 percent connected through sports. Opening up clubs and sports to include school-run intramurals and additional

academic clubs could offer even more opportunities for students to connect and support one another, particularly for students who choose not to play competitive sports, play a non-UIL sport, or have been cut from Eanes athletic teams, but still want to engage in their chosen sport.

## Observation 2: Mental Health Awareness & Support

Data from the 2019 Community Forum presentation (which was gathered from students in 2018) suggests students at the high school level, in particular, struggle with anxiety (47%), body image (39%), friend problems/not fitting in (30%) and depression (27%). Importantly, 88% of the 1606 students surveyed reported stress comes from school. While we do not have collected data for other years, or other campuses, we suggest the following for consideration to both provide proper support and to reduce stressors. **We encourage the SSHAC (School Safety and Health Advisory Council) to evaluate and review the following points.**

1. Mental Health Support Evaluation on Each Campus
  - a. Evaluate mental health support on each campus. Assess awareness for current services, adequate staffing to provide quality coverage and identify opportunities for improvement.
  - b. Consider focus groups, followed by surveys, to assess these and other attributes related to mental health support.
2. Increased Mental Health Education, Training and Access
  - a. Provide mental health education for students through curriculum (e.g., include as a component in the required Health class) and a speaker series
  - b. Provide mental health training for all staff so they can better detect symptoms and alert counselors
  - c. Provide easy access to staff as well as students needing mental health support
3. Stress-Reduction Activities: Proactively implement activities which can reduce stress.
  - a. Yoga (meditation, or other application techniques) for students, teachers and staff
  - b. Makerspaces on all campuses. These are not only a great way to boost creativity and innovation, but also a great source of stress relief for many students as well as a bonding opportunity for like-minded students
4. Thoughtful Approach to School Assessments
  - a. Measured approach to grading activities and homework assignments. When do disadvantages to grading or weighting outweigh the benefits (e.g. written math explanations, group work)?
  - b. Should homework assignments be tailored to student needs and capabilities?

## Observation 3: Self Discovery and Positivity

Self-Discovery and Positivity are often intertwined. Knowledge and understanding of one's self and others can lead to empowerment and fulfillment as well as empathy and acceptance. We envision the day when ALL students define themselves as more than a number (a ranking or a grade) and discover and appreciate their unique talents and

interests and have the ability and confidence to pursue their self-defined passions. Supporting this path to self-discovery and its application is an integral part of a holistic education. In this spirit, we suggest the following considerations.

### ***Alternative Learning Environments***

Provide an opportunity for an alternative learning environment similar to The Learning Center (TLC) <https://sites.google.com/eanesisd.net/whsthelearningcenter/home>. It could be beneficial to have this available to all students at the middle school and all levels of high school, not just 11th and 12th graders as is presently offered. This could be advantageous for many students, particularly in the current environment of blended learning styles, as well as remote and in-person learning.

- The TLC provides teaching in core classes in a self-paced environment. It offers a smaller group of students, focused instruction, individually paced and an in-house counselor. There is an application process which includes an interview with the coordinator and counselor; the parent(s) and student. Students sign an agreement regarding attendance and expectations. Because attendance can be an issue, if a student is absent, the coordinator and/or counselor will call the student and check on them. Students are 'seen' which equates to being cared about. The 'big' campus is so large, students can go under the radar, especially students with anxiety, depression and social issues. Within the TLC (located across the street from WHS), there is a kitchen area in which the students can eat lunch, getting away from the cafeteria which can be a stressor due to the noise and large number of people. At least once a quarter, students and staff go on a field trip to celebrate the hard work students have completed.

### ***Vocational and Technical Learning Opportunities***

Increase vocational and other career exploratory opportunities for students. Not all students are best suited for a four-year college after high school graduation. WHS is limited on courses of study for these students. Many high schools in Texas have programs such as Future Farmers of America (FFA) where the focus is on agriculture, animal science and natural resources. Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corp (JROTC), automotive technology, and carpentry, hospitality, and career and technical education (CTE) programs are other options for students. CTE programs allow students to gain industry certification which they can take with them when they begin their post-secondary work. There is a shortage of workers in skilled trades. Students with industry certifications will find it easier to gain employment and internships during college or to immediately enter the workforce, often finding employment immediately after graduation. Eanes could explore partnering with other districts or other outside resources for programs not feasible for Eanes to offer.

### ***Raising Awareness for Learning Differences and Twice Exceptional***

"Twice-exceptional students demonstrate superior ability in one or more areas (specific academics, intellectual ability, creativity, leadership, visual or performing arts) and one or more social, emotional or academic challenges. These may be caused by a neurobiological disorder or an emotional, sensory or learning disability. Twice exceptionality can be difficult to understand and identify because most twice exceptional students use their strengths to compensate for what they cannot do. When that happens, their abilities and disabilities mask each other, often resulting in average

performance or underachievement.”<sup>1</sup> Many of these students would thrive with minor accommodations and interventions. When these students’ hidden struggles go undetected, it can significantly impact their self-confidence, anxiety levels, attitude towards school, and trajectory for academic success and overall wellbeing.

The challenge of identification can be attributed to a number of causes. This makes it especially important to educate students and families about recognizing signs that may explain why their child is struggling. Once diagnosed, these 2E students will benefit from the accommodations, supports and services that having a 504 or an IEP in place would provide.

Our suggestions to raise awareness and support include the following.

- Improve and enhance information on [Eanes Student Support](#) webpages
  - Consider adding information about common types of learning disorders in addition to dyslexia such as dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, vision tracking and other processing issues.
  - Consider adding a Parent/Community resource drop down menu for topics related to learning disorders similar to the one found on this [SEL webpage](#). It would include a list of programs, support groups, podcasts, speaker series and events.
- Provide an overview of learning differences and disabilities as part of a curriculum, such as in health class. Sometimes students themselves may be able to recognize their own differences.
- Offer and promote a speaker series with topics of interest for parents who want to learn more about why their child may be struggling, that would include information about learning differences and disabilities. Schools and parent organizations could be encouraged to host.
- Provide district-wide forum for parents who would like to learn, share and network more about these topics and encourage connection amongst families. Promote this forum on Eanes Student Support webpages and other venues like school newsletters, PTO meetings, etc.
- Offer continued professional development opportunities for recognizing and supporting students with learning differences and twice exceptional students.
- Consider leveraging community volunteers as mentors to help students develop skills needed for successful participation in extracurricular activities. Weak soft skills from learning disorders (e.g. executive functioning, attention, etc.) or “quirky” behavior can preclude these students from participation despite strong talent, potential, and desire.
- An important part of student wellness means that students are enrolled in the appropriate educational program and receiving the supports and services they need to achieve success academically, socially and emotionally. Current data from the Department of Education and the Texas Education Agency reveal:

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<sup>1</sup> Sornik, Melissa “What does it mean to be twice exceptional?” *Twice-Exceptional Children’s Advocacy* <https://www.teca2e.org/about-2e/>

- The current national average for students receiving special education services is 13.7%<sup>2</sup>
- The current average in Eanes ISD is 9.4%<sup>3</sup>
- Within our district there is wide variation between campuses:
 

HCMS 8.3%	WRMS 11.8%	WHS 8.4%
Eanes Elem. 12.1%	Cedar Creek 5.9%	Forest Trail 7.2%
Valley View 16.4%	Bridge Point 7.2%	Barton Creek 9.4%

These numbers reveal inconsistencies between campuses as well as a district average that is well below the national average. Students are not being identified and there must be an emphasis on identifying students with disabilities, including 2E students, and recognizing obligations under Child Find.

***Formal Instruction in cognition and mental health***

Formal instruction focused on cognition and mental health can lead to self-discovery as students better understand how the brain works and how best to care for it.

- Consider supplementing existing health curriculum with instruction related to mental health and cognition. Topics such as learning differences and disabilities, impacts of substance abuse, addiction, depression, anxiety, and other mental health related issues would be included.
- Include a speaker series with mandatory attendance. As an example, St. Stephens incorporates a segment about learning differences and disabilities into their middle school health class. More than one student learned about their own learning disability through this class. St. Stephens also required student attendance for a speaker series on the science behind addiction.

***Positive School Culture***

The term “school culture” generally refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions, but the term also encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces, or the degree to which a school recognizes and embraces racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural diversity. A campus culture is established from the top down.

- Collaborate with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee and implement the recommendations of the diversity and inclusion expert. Of note, there is an official DEI committee as well as two “unofficial” groups made up of students, parents, community members and alumni.
- Develop a pledge for the Eanes community that includes DEI language and personal responsibility. This pledge could be posted in classrooms, cafeterias etc.... and used as a reminder of what our community stands for.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=64>

<sup>3</sup> [https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/src/src\\_srch.html](https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/src/src_srch.html)

- Extend positive school culture to school related extracurricular activities with set expectations and accountability. The pledge will go everywhere our community does.

## Secondary Observations

*The following suggestions are meant to be secondary to our previous observations, giving consideration to available resources.*

1. Add a specific topic for "experienced racist comments or threats" to the anonymous reporting form "Quick Report" each campus uses for students to report bullying, dating violence, harassment and suicide.
2. Stanford 2025 Axis Flip concept (skill print) - holistic profile of child's skill and aptitudes vs a one dimensional GPA number <http://www.stanford2025.com/axis-flip>
3. Soft Skills Peer evaluations - in class and/or from extracurriculars.
4. Evaluate the need for more data from Eanes graduates. In collaboration with the Eanes Education Foundation and the new Westlake Alumni Association, work to develop consistent methods to collect, evaluate and distribute necessary data.
5. Ask counseling staff at all campuses to conduct exit interviews when a student leaves the district. Collect and distribute this data to appropriate district administrators, teachers, board and principals.
6. Consider offering an International Baccalaureate diploma for students who attend the TLC for 11th and 12th grade. IB is a two-year educational program primarily aimed at 16-to-19-year-olds. It provides an internationally accepted qualification for entry into higher education and is recognized by many universities worldwide. There are hundreds of Texas schools that currently offer an IB diploma. The Diploma Programme (DP) curriculum is made up of six subject groups and the DP core, comprising theory of knowledge (TOK), creativity, activity, service (CAS) and the extended essay. Through the Diploma Programme (DP) core, students reflect on the nature of knowledge, complete independent research and undertake a project that often involves community service.

*Lastly, we want to leave you with captions we hope will one day represent education for all students...*

- "More Than A Number" - students will be evaluated and valued holistically and not defined by their GPA or any form of ranking (competitions, etc.). Similar in thought to the 2025 Stanford Axis flip concept but additionally capturing and valuing mental and physical health aspects.
- "Just One Thing" - every student needs just one thing where they really excel - academic subject, art, music, sports, building, inventing, dance, volunteering, programming, robotics, mechanics, debate, etc. It does not matter what it is, but they need to feel a deep sense of pride and accomplishment and the joy and recognition they get from one thing in which they excel. This will be especially important for those kids who feel like they do not excel in many things, especially in those early, formative years where self-confidence and self-worth is so important for inspiring their future pursuits.