



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

January 2021

Welcome to our inaugural Community Connection newsletter! Each month, we'll share district news, celebrate student accomplishments, highlight staff and recognize our community partnerships.

It takes a Village

Waco ISD is blessed to have scores of community partners who are deeply invested in our students, staff and their success. Each month, we recognize a community partner making a difference with the Waco ISD Award for Outstanding Community Partners.



August - Greater Waco Chamber



September - Family of Faith Worship Center



October - Creative Waco



November - Waco Fire Department



December - The Cove



January - Cooper & Waco Foundations

Student Success

And the Award goes to...

Troupes from both high school theatre departments competed virtually in performance and technical events at the Texas Thespians 2020 State Festival. A total of nineteen students from both troupes qualified to compete in the International Thespian Society's national competition in June 2021!



He's Going the Distance

Maximus Austin, a junior at University High School, qualified for and competed in the 2020 UIL 5A State Cross Country Championship in Round Rock. He placed first at the District 14 meet, followed by a successful run at the Conference 5A Region II meet held in Dallas, qualifying for the state championship. Maximus ran his 5K at the state championship with an impressive time of 16:33:53.



National Recognition

The College Board National Recognition Programs create pathways to college for students from underrepresented communities by awarding them academic honors and connecting them with universities across the country. University High senior Karin Rodriguez was recognized in the National Hispanic Recognition Program based on his performance on the PSAT/NMSQT.

The National Merit Scholarship Program for recognition and scholarship began in 1955 as a way to honor individual students who show exceptional academic ability and potential for success in rigorous college studies. Waco High senior Jon Martinez, whose score on the PSAT/NMSQT was in the top 3-4% in the country, received a Letter of Commendation in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program.



Message from the School Board President



Dear Waco ISD Community,

I am excited for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you each month in this newsletter. As Dr. Kincannon's message addresses how Waco ISD continues meeting the everyday challenges presented by the global health pandemic, I'd like to focus on how our community is helping us plan for the future of WISD.

Starting this month, the Waco ISD Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and district staff began meeting publicly to study the district's facilities needs and provide input into the development of a 10-15-year strategic plan for facilities improvements, known as a Facilities Long-Range Master Plan.

The CAC is comprised of over 80 participants including parent and community volunteers, district-level and campus staff and the full Board of Trustees. Over the course of eight meetings, we will review student enrollment projections, discuss our current facility needs, and identify strategies to maximize the use of our facilities to support student achievement. The committee is serving a crucial advisory role, helping our Board assess and prioritize capital improvement needs and long-range facility needs.

We have had two meetings, facilitated by the district's architect, O'Connell Robertson. I've been so impressed with the level of engagement and enthusiasm from our parent and community volunteers. This is a diverse and broad-ranged group whose eagerness and fresh perspectives are so welcomed by myself, my fellow Trustees and district staff.

It didn't take long for the group to reach an initial consensus, that we all have a common interest and love for

this community Waco ISD and for our students. I can't overstate how significant that is.

While the pandemic had us adapt what are traditionally in-person meetings, the virtual setting, particularly the smaller group breakout sessions, have not hindered the conversation. I'm confident that we'll continue to have robust exchanges as we dive into deeper topics in the coming weeks.

This year, the Board proudly adopted Waco ISD's mission to provide an educational foundation that empowers and values all. Developed as the result of a collaborative and inclusive process, this new mission statement remains a guiding principle for everything that we do. Last October, our Board approved a resolution, "To Be Silent Is To Be Complicit," taking a stand against racism and committing to work toward equitable transformation at all levels.

As we think about our facilities needs for the next 10-15 years, I am encouraged by how our community and parent volunteers are helping us keep equity at the forefront of the committee's work. To learn more about the Community Advisory Committee and see presentations and recordings of previous meetings, visit wacoisd.org/LongRangePlanning.

Sincerely,

Angela Tekell

Waco TSD Board of Trustees President

Celebrating the Holidays

2020 may have changed the way we celebrated our holidays but it did not change our spirits.

We look forward to continue celebrating holidays and milestones safely. Up next is Valentines' Day and the 100th Day of School!



Hispanic Heritage Month



Waco ISD Police Department Trunk-or-Treat



Thanksgiving Meals Provided by Waco ISD Child Nutrition Services



2020 Holiday Music Compilation

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Waco ISD Community,

If you walk the halls of Waco ISD campuses, you would be proud of what you see. Our health and safety guidelines are being fully implemented, teachers are providing high-quality instruction, and students are engaged in learning.

From daily health and temperature screenings, to frequent cleaning and disinfecting of district facilities, to transporting and feeding students, and numerous other safety measures, protecting our staff and children has been a true team effort.

I couldn't be more proud of the way our staff has responded during this pandemic. Waco ISD was one of fewer than 100 school districts in Texas, as of early November, to opt into the state's COVID-19 rapid testing program. As of this month, our health services team, has administered over 3,200 tests to staff and students. Drive-thru testing was offered for all students and employees the day before classes resumed after Thanksgiving Break and over several weekends including at the conclusion of Winter Break. We are extremely blessed to have an incredible nursing team, led by Director Rhiannon Settles, providing care for our students and staff.

Notably, many of the people who have tested positive were asymptomatic or had very mild symptoms and would have otherwise been on campus the following day. These pre-emptive measures help us keep kids and staff safe, as well as better inform our decisions whether to close a campus or not. We strive to be transparent throughout the process and provide ongoing communications of our pandemic response, including positive case notifications, updates on testing sites and a dedicated COVID-19 dashboard.

Throughout this pandemic, our ability to be adaptive has been essential. We haven't just adjusted or changed one or two of our routines, we have changed nearly all of them. Amidst the anxiety, stress and uncertainty, the commitment and resilience of our staff have remained unchanged. Each day we continue to focus on meeting our mission to provide an educational foundation that empowers and values all.

I want to extend my sincerest appreciation for your continued support of our schools.

Sincerely,

Dr. Susan Kincannon
Waco ISD Superintendent



Well Deserved Recognition



Cassandra Benjamin, first grade teacher at West Avenue Elementary, received a \$1000 gift card to purchase classroom supplies courtesy of Extra Yard for Teachers.



Emily DeRosier, a kindergarten teacher at Kendrick Elementary, received a grant totaling \$4758.88 for her proposal "iLearn by OSMOsis." from the ESC Region 12 Technology Foundation. Read the full story [here](#).

Yenny Martinez, a second-grade bilingual teacher at Provident Heights Elementary, received a \$500 online shopping spree from Academy Sports + Outdoors in Waco and their Teacher Appreciation Month Program.



Many teachers from all over Central Texas were nominated for 6 News and Greg May's "My Favorite Teacher" contest. Alfred Freeman, a College Readiness Counselor at Waco High School, was one of the five finalists.

Classroom Close-Ups

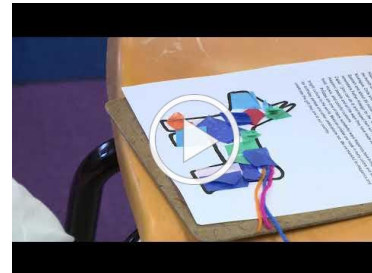
Although we must practice social distancing, the last thing we wanted our families to feel was distant. This year we started a new series called Classroom Close-Ups. These videos provide an inside look at how our teachers are delivering engaging and quality instruction to our in-person and remote students. You can find the videos below and more on our Waco ISD [Facebook page](#) or [YouTube channel](#). We look forward to bringing you into our classrooms!



Music Program at Parkdale



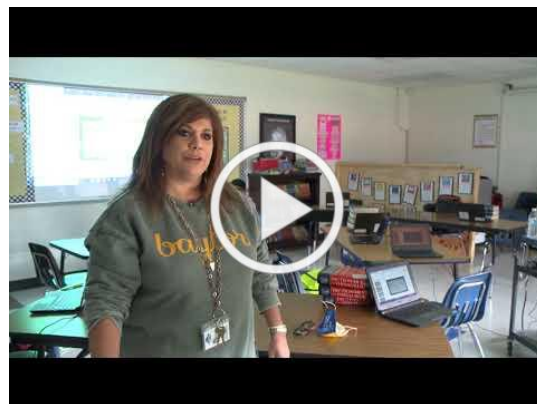
Pre-K Program at Dean Highland



Hispanic Heritage Month at Mountainview



Deaf Education Program at Waco ISD



English Program at G.W. Carver