



# Community Connection

*Wisdom works wonders.*

May 2025

## CONGRATULATIONS



**Daisy Barco**

VALEDICTORIAN



UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL  
CLASS OF 2025

*Wisdom works wonders.*



**Osmar Cazares**

SALUTATORIAN

## CONGRATULATIONS



**Lydia Allen**

VALEDICTORIAN



WACO HIGH SCHOOL  
CLASS OF 2025

*Wisdom works wonders.*



**Annabeth Carlson**

SALUTATORIAN

Congratulations to the Class of 2025! More than 800 graduates received their high school diploma during the University High School and Waco High School graduation ceremonies. Best of luck to the newest group of Waco ISD alumni! Click [HERE](#) to learn more information about the remarkable valedictorians and salutatorians from UHS and WHS.

Click [HERE](#) for photos and [HERE](#) to view the video from the University High graduation.

Click [HERE](#) for photos and [HERE](#) to view the video from the Waco High graduation.

## Adds New and Familiar Faces



At the beginning of the May school board meeting, Waco ISD Trustees Jim Patton and Taylor Bledsoe were sworn into office.

Trustee Patton is a retired principal, represents District 5, and serves as board Secretary. This is Trustee Patton's second term on the school board. When asked why he serves, Patton said, "As a life-long educator, I know that a quality education can open doors! Opportunities to learn, explore, and achieve goals help make well-rounded students into productive citizens.

Serving on the board allows me to support students, teachers, and families to foster these opportunities. Coming up through the ranks from teacher to campus administrator, I learned just how important the school board is to a healthy community. It is my honor to serve."

Trustee Bledsoe is a business owner, represents District 4, and is serving his first term on the board. When asked why he chose to serve on the school board, Bledsoe said, "I have always been passionate about Waco ISD. It's where I went to school. It's where my three kids go to school. It's a critical part of our community, and I want to do whatever I can to help it thrive. There are so many wonderful administrators, teachers, coaches and students. I want to be their advocate and help spread the word about the amazing stories that are happening across our school district."

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## Student and Staff Accolades



Congratulations to 55 amazing 8th graders from Tennyson, Cesar Chavez, and G.W. Carver Middle Schools, as well as those from Lake Air Montessori Magnet! What a momentous Waco ISD Future Educators Academy signing day! This group of future educators, surrounded by proud parents and students, officially committed to the program. These students are on the path to becoming future Waco ISD teachers, with a GUARANTEED teaching position right here in the district.



Prior to graduation, 10 Waco ISD seniors were awarded \$52,500 in scholarship funding. The scholarship presentations included those managed by the Waco ISD Education Foundation -- the Harper Elizabeth Miller Memorial Scholarship, Dorothy Crippen Hurd Scholarship, Kenneth B. Esterak Memorial Scholarships, Kenneth A. Love Memorial Scholarship, Matthew Barrera Memorial Scholarship, and Carlos Padron-Martinez Scholarship. The Waco Public Schools Alumni Association also awarded scholarships to students. Congratulations to this outstanding group of graduates!

Click [HERE](#) to view a complete list of scholarship recipients.

Click [HERE](#) to view more photos from the scholarship presentations.



The Waco ISD Police Department's new Jr. Police Academy held its very first graduation ceremony honoring eight outstanding students in grades 9-12! These students demonstrated perseverance, commitment, dedication, and consistency. Click [HERE](#) to view more photos from the ceremony.





The Waco Education Foundation and its SurPRIZE Patrol recently visited 19 Waco ISD campuses. The group surprised 50 teachers with the exciting news their 34 grant applications were approved for funding for the 2025-2026 school year. This year, the foundation is awarding \$148,406 back to the district, bringing the total amount of grants funded over the past decade and a half to more than \$2.45 million. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the 2025-2026 grants. Click [HERE](#) & [HERE](#) to view more photos from the grant presentations.



Waco ISD's English Learners Department was honored as the Leadership Team of the Year by ESC Region 12. What a well-deserved recognition for a hard-working department! Click [HERE](#) to view more photos from the awards ceremony.

The Texas Education Agency's, Emergent Bilingual Support Division, and the Title III Symposium Planning Team surprised Waco ISD's Bilingual Director, Grace Benson, with the Leader Award for her contributions and commitment in 2025. Three cheers for Ms. Benson! Click [HERE](#) to view more photos of the surprise.



Congratulations to the Waco ISD 2024-2025 Principal of the Year, Hillcrest Professional Development School Principal Haley Dean! Waco ISD could not be more grateful for Ms. Dean and her leadership. Click [HERE](#) to view more



photos.

## 2024-2025

Primary Outstanding District Teacher of the Year



★ Dara Altamirano ★

★ West Avenue ★

*Wisdom works wonders.*

## 2024-2025

Secondary Outstanding District Teacher of the Year



★ Taylor Adame ★

★ Waco High ★

*Wisdom works wonders.*

Waco ISD honored outstanding educators from across the district at the annual Teacher of the Year ceremony. Campus winners were celebrated for their impact in the classroom, and two remarkable individuals were named District Teachers of the Year for elementary and secondary education. Dara Altamirano and Taylor Adame will represent Waco ISD at the Region 12 Teacher of the Year competition with the goal of advancing to the Texas Teacher of the Year contest.

Click [HERE](#) to view photos and [HERE](#) to view the video from the event.



Congratulations to the 2024-2025 Virginia DuPuy First Year Teacher Award recipients, Araceli Rojas at West Avenue Elementary, and Sidney Kaliher at University High School! This award is named in honor of former teacher, former mayor, and one of Waco's strongest and most well-known education advocates, Mrs. Virginia DuPuy. It was established by Waco ISD 14 years ago, and is given to two of the district's many "rising stars" in the teaching profession.

Ms. Michele Owen, teacher at Mountainview Elementary School, was





awarded a \$1,000 WhataTeacher grant! As part of Whataburger's 75th anniversary celebration, they awarded \$75,000 to 75 amazing teachers across their 16-state footprint during National Teacher Appreciation Week. Ms. Owen was selected as a recipient in this elite group, WOW! Many thanks to Whataburger for your generous support of our incredible teachers!

Over 100 Waco ISD teachers qualified for the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) for closing the achievement gap and ensuring students meet grade level standards or higher. Congratulations to this amazing group of educators! Click [HERE](#) to view more photos of the surprise celebrations.



Waco ISD bid a fond farewell to thirty employees who are entering life's next journey of retirement. These incredible members of the Waco ISD family will truly be missed! Click [HERE](#) to view photos and [HERE](#) to view a video of the celebration.

## Message from the Board President

Dear Waco ISD Community,

What a true pleasure and honor it was to shake hands and congratulate more than 800 graduates as they crossed the stage during the graduation ceremonies. It was a powerful reminder of the strength, spirit, and determination that define our students and our community.

Throughout the year, our students have continued to demonstrate resilience, creativity, and a passion for learning. Our teachers, staff, and families have shown unwavering commitment to excellence in education, and the Waco community has remained a steadfast partner in the success of our schools

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude for the warm welcome and support I have received since stepping into the role of school board president. It is truly an honor and privilege to serve Waco ISD and this incredible community.

As we look ahead to summer and beyond, please know that the board remains



deeply committed to strengthening our schools through collaboration, equity, and innovation. We are listening, learning, and working to ensure every student has the opportunity to thrive.

Wishing you a safe, restful, and enjoyable summer.

With great appreciation,

*Jose Vidaña*



## Board Meeting Recap



Did you miss the May 15 Board of Trustees meeting? Get a quick update by watching the meeting recap video. Check out this [LINK](#) for the full board meeting from May 15, 2025.

The next regular meeting will be held on June 18, 2025, at 6 p.m. in the WISD Conference Center, 115 S. 5th Street.

## Outstanding Community Partner

Whataburger was honored as the Waco ISD Community Partner of the Month for May. Since August 2023, Whataburger has celebrated individual campuses and teachers in Waco ISD with Back to School celebrations, National Special Education Day donations, Baylor WhataTeacher Promotion Award winners, and multiple grant recipients through the WhataTeacher \$1,000 classroom grants in conjunction with National Teacher Appreciation Week. Whataburger generously gives back to the community it serves, and Waco ISD is extremely grateful for their continued support of our students and staff!



## Message from the Superintendent

Dear Waco ISD Community,

As the 2024-2025 school year comes to an end, I would like to take a moment to reflect on all that we have accomplished together. This year has been one of growth, remarkable achievements, and a few challenges along the way – each a testament to the resilience, dedication, and unwavering support of our students, staff, and Waco ISD community.

May was a month filled with numerous student achievement recognitions, teacher of the year and retiree celebrations, and a series of exciting surprises for our teachers and staff districtwide with classroom grants from the Waco ISD Education Foundation. These moments of recognition and celebration are made even more meaningful because of the deep-rooted support from our community partners.



Looking ahead to this summer, we are thrilled to see the completion of the new Waco High, Kendrick Elementary, and the renovated South Waco Elementary. These state-of-the-art learning spaces will welcome their first group of students this August, and I have no doubt that they will provide an environment where our students can thrive and continue to excel.

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Class of 2025 for receiving their new title of “Waco ISD Alumni.” This group will always hold a special place in my heart, as they were the first to graduate under my tenure as Waco ISD’s Superintendent. As they prepare to enter the workforce, pursue higher education, or serve our country by joining the military, I am confident that each of them is on the path to accomplish great things and will have bright futures ahead.

As always, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our entire school community. Your trust, commitment and passion for education have made this year truly special. I am excited for the future as we continue to work together to provide



Waco ISD's students with the best educational experience possible!

Warm regards,

*Tiffany Spicer, Ph.D.*

#InspireExcellence



The Magnolia Foundation made a generous donation of bedding, blankets, pillows, and some small furniture items to Waco ISD's highly mobile/homeless students that are served through the district's Student Services Department. Delivery was made to Waco ISD's storage space at the Brazos Early Head Start Center. Many thanks to the Magnolia Foundation for your generosity! Click [HERE](#) to view more photos from the event.

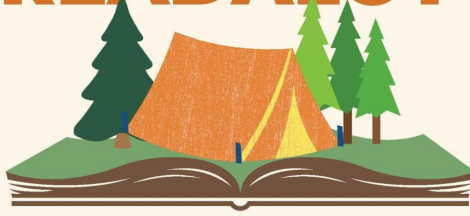
Kendrick Elementary students participated in their first bike bus day event with the Waco Metropolitan Planning Organization. They rode their decorated bikes and scooters from Kendrick Elementary to Pecan Bottoms where they enjoyed Field Day activities and the splash pad. Click [HERE](#) to view more photos from the event.



5th grade students at Alta Vista Elementary marked a bittersweet milestone as they celebrated their final day at the campus. They walked the halls for the last time as the final class to leave the school, marking the end of an era for Alta Vista Elementary! Click [HERE](#) to view more photos from the event.

WACO ISD PRESENTS

# CAMP READALOT



SUMMER 2025

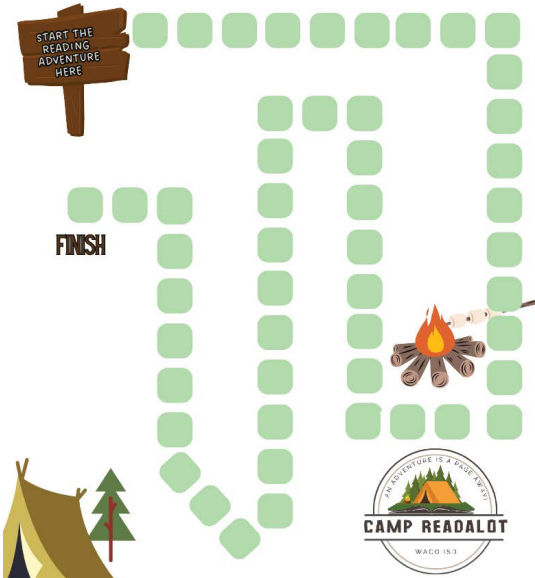
Students participate by reading 20 minutes a day in the summer. Log the minutes read on the Camp Readalot Log. Parents initial the log. Return the log to school by August 29th and receive a prize. Students in grades 1-5 will receive a Scholastic Summer Reading Pack.

CAMPER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

## CAMP READALOT LOG

READ OR LISTEN TO A BOOK 20 MINS A DAY. PARENT/GUARDIAN INITIALS IN THE BOXES.  
RETURN COMPLETED LOG TO YOUR SCHOOL LIBRARIAN BY **AUGUST 29, 2025** FOR A PRIZE.



Are you interested in joining the Waco ISD team? The district's Human Resources Department is looking for top notch folks to make WISD even better! Check out our vacancies [HERE](#).



## Community Resources

**SUMMER MEAL PROGRAM**  
May 27, 2025 - August 6, 2025  
Closed June 19 and July 4

Free breakfast and lunch at various campuses, community and mobile sites.

Children ages 18 and younger, regardless of where they live or go to school.

No paperwork required.

[WACOISD.ORG/DEPARTMENTS/CHILD-NUTRITION-SERVICES/SUMMER-MEALS](https://wacoisd.org/departments/child-nutrition-services/summer-meals)

Please contact WISD Child Nutrition Services with any questions: 254-214-2479. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Scan Here





We can all play a part in helping to keep Waco ISD safe! Our anonymous online reporting system, STOPit, is available to all students, staff, families, and the community. You can report bullying, violence, and other safety concerns anytime by following this link: [www.wacoisd.org/STOPit](http://www.wacoisd.org/STOPit).



Did you know ALL Waco ISD students ride FREE on the Waco Transit System? Yes, even during summer break! Take advantage of this great resource today.

Visit <http://wacotransit.ridesystems.net/routes>  
Download the Ride System app.

Waco ISD | 501 Franklin Ave | Waco, TX 76701 US

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