



Community Connection

Wisdom works wonders.

March 2026

Sixty Seconds with Spicer



Waco ISD to Launch Statewide Virtual Education Program Under Senate Bill 569

The Waco ISD Board of Trustees moved forward with a recommendation at the March 19 meeting to establish a new, full-time virtual education option, positioning the district as a "statewide district of choice" under the provisions of Texas Senate Bill 569 (SB 569). This innovative initiative will allow our current Waco ISD families to choose between an in-person or virtual education for their students; and will allow students from anywhere across the state of Texas to enroll in Waco ISD starting in the 2026-2027 school year.

The new legislation provides a flexible, fully-funded framework for virtual and hybrid education models. Students enrolled in these virtual programs generate Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding in the exact same amount as students attending fully in-person, ensuring the district can maintain high-quality instructional standards. A formal proposal from a prospective partner is expected to be brought back to the Board of Trustees in April 2026. Click [HERE](#) to read more.

H-E-B Celebrity Cookoff Event



The Waco ISD Education Foundation's annual fundraiser, the H-E-B Celebrity Cookoff, was a huge success! Twenty-five "celebrity" chefs/teams, both amateur and professional, along with community sponsors helped raise over \$119,000. Many thanks to the entire Waco community for your support! All funds raised go directly back to the Education Foundation, and then in turn, go back into the classroom to fund innovative teacher grants. To view more photos from the event, click [HERE](#).



New Leadership Named to Several Key Roles

The district recently announced the hiring of three key leadership roles. Congratulations to these new & familiar faces to the Waco ISD team!

Dr. Kimberly Winters was named the new Executive Director of Student Support Services. A veteran educator with over 20 years experience in public education, Dr. Winters brings a distinguished track record of systems leadership and a deep commitment to student well-being to the district. Click [HERE](#) to read more about Dr. Winters.



The district is proud to announce that Jerry Allen, Waco ISD's current Chief Technology Officer, has been promoted to an expanded leadership role. Mr. Allen recently assumed the responsibilities of Chief Operations Officer, where he will now oversee the integration of both the district's technology and operational departments. Click [HERE](#) to read more about Mr. Allen.



Daphanie Latchison was named the principal of J.H. Hines Elementary. Ms. Latchison, a product of Waco ISD, attended district schools from first through 12th grade, and is a graduate of Waco High School. Her appointment as principal follows a successful tenure as acting principal, where her extensive experience in instructional leadership and community

outreach has already begun to foster a supportive environment for students and staff. Click [HERE](#) to read more about Ms. Latchison.

Student and Staff Accolades



Waco ISD elementary students whipped up their favorite family recipes as they went head-to-head in the 16th Annual Elementary Future Chef Challenge sponsored by Sodexo and hosted by Waco ISD Child Nutrition Services. Twenty-five young chefs ranging from 3rd through 5th grades brought family traditions to life through this year's theme, "Your Favorite Recipe from a Country or Culture Around the World". Congratulations to all who participated! Click [HERE](#) to view more photos, and [HERE](#) to read more about the event.



Students who achieved perfect attendance at Dean Highland and Provident Heights Elementaries received bicycles thanks to NFL player, and Waco ISD alumnus, Andrew Billings and the Billings Family Find-A-Way Foundation. Many thanks to Mr. Billings and his foundation for the generosity! The events were made even sweeter with Dr Pepper floats courtesy of the Dr Pepper Museum.

Students from University High School recently participated in the Citizen Bee Competition. Xochitl Gardea placed first in the competition, and will advance to represent ESC Region 12 at the State level. Best of luck Xochitl!



The Bill Taverner Interscholastic Film Festival showcased student projects from Waco High and University High Schools. The festival began with promotions, commercials, and public service announcements (PSAs), followed by screenings of four animated shorts and six short films. During the event, the audience voted for the Audience Choice Award . The winner was "Sundance Showdown," created by Waco High senior Alana Bond. Click [HERE](#) to view photos from the festival.

Board Meeting



Did you miss the March 19 Board of Trustees meeting? Click [HERE](#) to watch the full board meeting.

The next regular meeting will be held on April 23, 2026, at 6 p.m. in the Waco ISD Conference Center, 115 S. 5th Street.

Outstanding Community Partner

Each month, Waco ISD recognizes a community partner making a difference for students and families with the Waco ISD Award for Outstanding Community Partners. March's Community Partner is the Bowen Family Foundation. The foundation has been a long-standing partner with the district, and Waco ISD is incredibly fortunate to have such a generous and dedicated partner in the Bowen Family Foundation.

In December 2025, the Bowen Family Foundation, through the Make-a-Wish Come True Program with Kyle Chapman, gifted 200 students at South Waco and Bell's Hill Elementary schools their Christmas wish lists in full. They also granted a \$10,000 donation to the Tennyson Middle School Choir Department and provided an unbelievable experience for the choir to sing with Wade Bowen at his local Christmas concert. Waco ISD is truly grateful for our partnership with the Bowen Family Foundation.



Notable District Events

Waco ISD is always busy celebrating and bringing together our students and staff. Click the photo(s) below to view more pictures from each event.





Mark your calendar!

FREE TAX SERVICES



University High School
 Tuesday/Thursdays
 4:30-6:30
 room W1522
 (Excluding Holidays and Closures)



Waco High School
 Tuesday/Thursdays
 4:30-7:00
 WHS Culinary Cafe
 (Excluding Holidays and Closures)



Please bring a Social Security card, ID, and tax documents for each person on the return.



Connecting today's ideas to tomorrow's leaders.

Scholarships Now Available!



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24.**

For more information and application requirements
please visit, www.wacoisd.org/ef-scholarships.

ICYMI



Waco ISD

March 2 at 10:01 AM · 🌐

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EMPOWERING YOUNG VOICES! 🗣️😊 [Parkdale Elementary School](#) students receive a visit from Waco City Council Member Andrea Barefield. Mrs. Barefield read a book called Ambiti... [See more](#)



👍❤️ 27

2 shares

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