The LONGHORN
DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Celebrating Our Students, Schools, and Community

Message from the Interim Superintendent, Dr. Randal O'Brien



As we enter the holiday season and reflect on the past several weeks, we have so much to be thankful for and so many accomplishments to celebrate. Our Lady Longhorn volleyball team advanced to the state playoffs for the first time in several years, a testament to the dedication, perseverance, and teamwork of our players and coaches. Our football players, coaches, and supporters have also brought our community together each Friday night. Win or lose, the lessons learned through commitment, teamwork, and character extend far beyond the scoreboard. Our Thundering Horns Marching Band also made us proud, finishing 8th at the UIL Area competition! These accomplishments remind us that excellence comes from hard work, commitment, and supporting one another.

One of the highlights of our fall community calendar was the Tarkington Student Foundation Round-Up. This event brought together families, friends, businesses, alumni, and supporters of our schools. We were especially proud to honor Michelle and Eddie Emmert as Community Impact Recipients of the Year and Mary Jo Havard as Citizen of the Year. Their generosity and service represent the very best of Tarkington Prairie.

This fall, we also held our first Superintendent Student Advisory Council meeting, bringing together middle and high school students to discuss leadership and share their perspectives. Students identified things to celebrate on their campuses, concerns for us to consider, and ideas they would like to create. Their thoughtful conversations reminded me how important it is to listen to our students. I look forward to continuing this work with them throughout the school year.

Our recent elections brought many community members to the polls to exercise one of our most fundamental rights as citizens: the right to vote. Thank you to everyone who participated in the state and local elections. We welcome Samantha Childress (Position 1), Ryan Smith (Position 2), and John Kirchner (Position 3) to the Tarkington ISD Board of Trustees.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to outgoing trustees Mrs. Paige Bostwick, Mr. Kevin Johnson, and Mrs. Susan Rollins. Serving on a school board requires time, thoughtful decisions, and a steadfast commitment to students and schools. Their dedication, leadership, and years of service have made a lasting difference in our district. We are grateful for the time they have given, the challenges they have helped navigate, and the care they have shown for our Tarkington community.

As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, special thanks go to our teachers, principals, administrators, support personnel, transportation and maintenance teams, cafeteria and custodial staff, and everyone working behind the scenes. We are equally thankful for the families, volunteers, and local businesses who support our students every day. There truly is something special about being a Longhorn. It is about working hard, lifting each other up, and taking pride in the place we call home.

Thank you for all you do to support our schools. It is a privilege to serve Tarkington Prairie, and I wish you and your family a wonderful holiday season!

Dr. Randal O'Brien



Early Childhood & Elementary Schools

Lisa Stephens, Principal

We are excited to share that the latest campus-based assessment data shows growth in both reading and math across grades 1–5! We are proud of our students and teachers for their hard work and dedication. We look forward to building on this progress as we continue to grow and learn together. We will continue to build on foundational skills in all subjects for grades Pre-K to 5.
We are also keeping students motivated through fun incentives that encourage excellent attendance and positive behavior! Students in grades 1–5 can look forward to weekly arcade visits as a reward for having perfect attendance and great behavior. We will also celebrate perfect attendance with a special challenge—students with perfect attendance in grades 1-5 will get to pie Mrs. Stephens in the face and students in grades pre-k and kindergarten will get to pie Ms. Rawls in the face. In addition, students are being recognized through positive behavior referrals for making great choices and demonstrating positive character.
Thank you to our families for your continued support as we work together to help every student succeed. We are looking forward to a wonderful November and December!

High School

Chris McClanahan, Principal

As we finish out this semester, it is important to keep a few things in mind to finish out this grading period on a high note. Attendance continues to be an important focus. THS currently has a 93.87% attendance rate, with a goal of 97%. Every class period counts! At the high school level, attendance is recorded each period, and students who miss more than 15 minutes of a class are marked absent for that period. Remember, absence notes should be emailed to thsattendance@tarkingtonisd.net.

December Testing and Semester Exams

STAAR End-of-Course (EOC) retakes will take place during the first week of December, followed by MAP testing during the second week.

- Tuesday, December 15: 5th and 7th Periods
- Wednesday, December 16: 1st, 2nd, and 4th Periods
- Thursday, December 17: 6th, 3rd, and 8th Periods

Semester Exam Exemptions

Students may qualify to exempt up to two semester exams if they meet all of the following requirements:

- All fees and fines are paid.
- No more than 8 absences.
- No more than 5 tardies.
- A course average of 80 or higher, based on the 1st and 2nd six weeks averages.

Middle School

Dr. Mary Lariviere, Principal

Exciting things are happening at Tarkington Middle School! We are seeing meaningful improvements in student behavior, classroom engagement, and academic achievement as our students and teachers continue working toward higher expectations. Our recent Curriculum-Based Assessments (CBAs) reflect this positive momentum. Across Grades 6–8, Reading performance increased by 12 percentage points at Approaches, 14 points at Meets, and 9 points at Masters between CBA 1 and CBA 2. Mathematics also showed encouraging growth at the higher achievement levels, with a 12-point increase at Meets and a 7-point increase at Masters. While we still have work ahead, we are proud of the progress our students are making!

As we move into November, our focus is on maintaining this momentum and helping students finish the semester strong. Our instructional team is emphasizing the importance of strong foundational math skills, consistent practice, and developing confidence as problem-solvers. Students are encouraged to set academic goals, learn from mistakes, ask questions, and take ownership of their learning. Families can support these efforts by encouraging daily attendance, maintaining consistent routines, and spending a few minutes each day practicing essential math skills.

We are also continuing to strengthen our academic support systems through High Impact Tutoring (HIT) and Thursday Night Live (TNL). HIT provides targeted instruction to help students close learning gaps, while TNL offers additional time and assistance for students who need help completing assignments or getting back on track. These opportunities are designed to support student success, and we encourage families to prioritize attendance when their child is recommended for additional assistance. Our goal is to ensure every student has the support and encouragement needed to succeed.
Beyond academics, we are proud of the positive choices our students are making and the growing culture of kindness, responsibility, and respect across campus.

Generation Texas Week



Generation Texas Week: November 16–19
What's next after high school? During Generation Texas Week, Tarkington ISD students will explore opportunities for their future, including college, trade schools, and military service. This statewide initiative encourages students to begin thinking about their goals and the education, training, and skills needed to achieve them.

Students and staff are encouraged to participate in themed dress-up days throughout the week!

- Monday, Nov. 16: Military Camo Day
- Tuesday, Nov. 17: Dress for Your Future Career Day
- Wednesday, Nov. 18: College Shirt Day
- Thursday, Nov. 19: Hat Day



A Little Holiday Fun at Home!

Looking for something fun to do with the kids over Thanksgiving or Christmas break? Create a special ornament that you can hang on the Christmas tree year after year!

What You'll Need:



- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1 cup water (add gradually)
- Cookie cutters or items to make handprints
- Straw for making a hanging hole
- Paint, ribbon, or string

Let's Get Creative!

1. Preheat the oven to 250°F.
2. Mix the flour and salt in a bowl. Slowly add water until a soft dough forms.
3. Knead the dough until smooth, then roll it out to about ¼-inch thick.
4. Use cookie cutters to create holiday shapes or press a child's hand into the dough for a special keepsake.
5. Use a straw to make a small hole near the top for hanging.
6. Place ornaments on a lined baking sheet and bake for approximately 2 hours, or until completely dry. Thicker ornaments may need more time.
7. Once cooled, decorate the ornaments with paint and hang them on the tree with ribbon or string.



Giving Back This Holiday Season

The holiday season is a time for giving, and across Tarkington ISD, several groups are finding special ways to make a difference for our students and families.

Our **Child Nutrition Department** is once again hosting its **Christmas Kids Fundraiser**, selling homemade turkey dressing, hot rolls, and cookie dough. Proceeds from these holiday favorites go toward purchasing Christmas gifts for students in our district. It's a wonderful way to check something off your holiday cooking list while helping make Christmas a little brighter for a child! To order, click here --> **Order Form Link**.

Lucky's Elves, TISD's Christmas sponsorship program, is another opportunity to spread some holiday cheer. Through this program, individuals and families can sponsor a student and help provide Christmas gifts. Those interested in becoming a sponsor can contact jowens@tarkingtonisd.net or stlambert@tarkingtonisd.net.

And because the **gift of reading** lasts long after the holidays, the **Tarkington High School Book Club** is collecting new and gently used children's books for our **Pre-K and Kindergarten** students. Donations can be dropped off at the THS front office or the TISD Administration Building. For more information, contact Melanie Lasater at mlastater@tarkingtonisd.net.

Whether it's purchasing holiday goodies, sponsoring a student, or donating a book, there are several ways to help make the season special for our Little Longhorns. We are thankful for the staff, students, and community members who continue to find ways to give back and support our kids!



Every Day Matters: Understanding School Attendance



Showing up to school each day makes a difference! Regular attendance helps students stay on track academically, build friendships, develop good habits, and feel connected to their school. When students miss school, they miss more than just assignments. They miss classroom discussions, hands-on activities, and learning experiences that can be difficult to make up.

We know that illnesses, appointments, and unexpected situations happen. However, there are simple things families can do to help their children maintain good attendance. Scheduling appointments outside of school hours when possible, establishing consistent morning routines, and making sure students arrive on time can all make a difference. When an absence is necessary, remember to submit a signed absence note within five school days of your child's return. You can even take a picture of the note and email it directly to your campus attendance clerk!

Good attendance is a team effort, and we're here to help. If your family is experiencing challenges that affect your child's attendance, please reach out to your campus so we can work together to find solutions.

Frequently Asked Questions About Attendance

How long do I have to turn in an absence note?
Parents have five school days after their child returns to school to submit an absence note. Notes received after that deadline can be kept on file, but the absence will remain unexcused.

When is a doctor's note required?
A doctor's note is required when a student misses more than five consecutive school days due to illness. Additional documentation may also be requested if a student has frequent illness-related absences.

What if the school nurse sends my child home?
Even when a student is sent home by the school nurse, a parent or doctor's note is still required within five school days of the student's return. The absence is not automatically excused.

See Something, Say Something: STOPit Reporting System

At Tarkington ISD, keeping our students safe is about more than just physical safety. We want every student to feel safe, supported, and comfortable coming to school each day. One of the tools we have in place to help is STOPit, an anonymous reporting system that allows students and parents to share concerns about bullying, cyberbullying, inappropriate behavior, safety, or situations where a student may need help.

Through the free STOPit app, students and parents can anonymously report concerns directly to school administrators. The app also includes a messaging feature that allows for two-way communication, so administrators can ask questions or gather additional information while the person reporting remains anonymous.

STOPit is available for free through the Apple App Store and Google Play. Reports can also be submitted online, and no personal information is required to use the system. **To access online → STOPit**

We encourage families to talk with their children about speaking up when something doesn't seem right, whether it involves them or someone else. Sometimes, a simple report can make a big difference in helping a student get the support they need.



Available on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events subject to change. To view the most up-to-date events, visit the TISD website.

NOVEMBER

November 5
THS Varsity Football at Orangefield, Orangefield HS, 7:30 PM

November 6
No School for Students/Staff

November 7
THS Boys Basketball Scrimmage at Goodrich, 10 AM

November 9
TECS Kinder Field Trip, Chambers County Children's Museum (Lambert, Parma, White)

November 11
TES 4th Grade Field Trip, Space Center Houston
Veterans Day Breakfast at Campuses

November 12
THS TSIA2 Testing
THS Open Door Theatre Performance, TMS Auditorium, 6 PM

November 13
THS Girls Basketball vs. Groveton
No School for Students
Superintendent Appreciation Day

November 14
THS Junior Class Car Show, THS Parking Lot, 11 AM–3 PM

November 16
TECS Kinder Field Trip, Chambers County Children's Museum (Scott, Holt, Miller)
THS Band Region Auditions, Shepherd HS
School Board Meeting, 6pm

November 16–19
Generation Texas Week

November 17
TMS Band Region Auditions, Shepherd HS
THS Girls Basketball at Lumberton, 4:30, 6 PM
THS Boys Basketball vs. Liberty, THS Gym, 4, 5:45 & 7 PM
FFA Meeting, THS Commons, 6 PM

November 19
TES 3rd Grade Field Trip, Oil Ranch, Hockley

November 19-21
THS Girls Basketball Nederland Tournament

November 20
No School for Students/Staff
Substitute Appreciation Day

November 21
THS Boys Basketball at Silsbee

November 23
THS Boys Basketball at Shepherd

November 24
THS Boys Basketball vs. Evadale at THS
THS Girls Basketball vs. Little Cypress Mauriceville

November 23–27
Thanksgiving Break, No School

November 28
THS Girls Basketball at Hardin



UPCOMING EVENTS

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DECEMBER

December 1
THS English I EOC Retesting
TES NWEA MAP Reading, Grades 4–5
THS Boys Basketball at Hamshire-Fannett
THS Girls Basketball at Buna

December 2
THS English II EOC Retesting
TES NWEA MAP Reading, Grade 3

December 3
THS Algebra I EOC Retesting
TES NWEA MAP Reading, Grades 1–2
THS HOSA Blood Drive, THS Gym, 7:30 AM–3 PM
TMS Girls Basketball vs. Trinity at TMS

December 3–5
THS Boys Basketball West Tournament, West HS
THS Girls Basketball West Hardin Tournament

December 4
No School for Students/Staff
TMS One Act Play Public Performance

December 4-5
TMS Girls Basketball Cleveland Girls Tournament at Cleveland MS/HS Gym

December 7
THS Biology EOC Retesting
THS NWEA MAP Reading, Grade 9

December 8
THS U.S. History EOC Retesting
NWEA MAP Math, Grade 4, 5, 9
THS Boys Basketball at Kirbyville
FFA Meeting, THS Commons, 6 PM
THS Girls Basketball vs. Trinity at THS

December 9
NWEA MAP Science, Grade 9 and Math, Grade 3

December 10–12
THS Boys Basketball Warren Tournament, Warren HS

December 10
THS Band Christmas Concert, TMS, 7 PM
TES NWEA MAP Math, Grades 1–2
TMS Girls Basketball at Crockett MS
THS Girls Basketball at Anahuac

December 11
No School for Students/Staff
TES UIL Academics, Onalaska Elementary

December 11–12
ATSSB Region 9 Band Clinic & Concert, TMS

December 14
THS NWEA MAP Testing, Grade 10 Reading
School Board Meeting, 6pm
TMS Girls Basketball vs. Anderson Shiro at TMS

December 15
TMS Band Performance, TMS, 7 PM
THS Boys Basketball vs. Diboll, THS Gym
THS Girls Basketball at Crockett
TES NWEA MAP Science, Grade 5
THS NWEA MAP Testing, Grade 10 Math

December 17
THS Theatre Arts Class Performances, TMS Auditorium, 5:30–8:30 PM
Student Early Release

December 18
No School for Students/Staff
THS Boys Basketball vs. Onalaska, THS Gym
THS Girls Basketball vs. Onalaska

December 21–January 1
Christmas Break, No School

December 28–30
Tarkington Christmas Classic Basketball Tournament, THS & TMS Gyms, All Day

January
School Board Appreciation Month

January 4
No School for Students

January 5
First day of Second Semester