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## **“You find out that life’s a game of inches.” - Al Pacino in Any Given Sunday**

Author: Dr. Gordon Taylor  
Region 10 Executive Director

Education is not a game, but gains measured in inches have always characterized the path of education. Perhaps few people ever realized that fact to the extent they do today. Beginning March 12, educators confronted a pandemic-induced challenge that is anything but a straight, flat path. In fact, it comes closer to resembling a sheer face of a cliff. There are no paths around it; so, starting that day the climb began, and more than six months later we continue up the mountain.

The world is facing challenges greater than any faced in generations. Yet since confronting the base of that cliff, educators have clawed their way up inch by inch. I told staff at Region 10 at the start of the pandemic that we would survive it; we would learn a lot about ourselves; and we would be better because of it. Today, more than six months later, I see all three of those thoughts coming true.

Consider words like hybrid, virtual, remote, zoom, asynchronous, and close contact, which are now everyday language. Some are new to our lexicon like “upper wear” – clothing worn above the waist that is acceptable for video conferencing, while others have taken on new meanings. Does anyone else long for the days when zoom meant to go fast? Like these new words, we are using new methods and new techniques to educate students. With varying levels of success, we are attempting instruction without immediate, direct contact between teacher and student; we are adopting new technology and adapting technology to new purposes; we are asking parents to participate differently; and we are asking students to change with us because teaching in a different way means learning in different ways. Like climbing a mountain, we have found handholds and toeholds, but we have also slipped, and along the way, we had to change our route up the cliff.

Some things we learned were good, and others were disturbing or disappointing. We learned that we were not ready to teach online on March 16, but we also learned that we could focus and be ready to teach within days, even if it was in rudimentary ways. We learned to rely on each other in different ways, and we learned that educators need to focus on taking care of each other’s emotional and physical health. Inch by inch we did things differently; we found what worked and didn’t work. Consequently, we are finding our way slowly up the mountain. However, we are surviving; we are learning about ourselves; and we are going to be better in the end.

When we have conquered this pandemic mountain, we will find new challenges, new mountains to climb. We will be better educators; and like all mountain climbers, we will walk to the base of the next mountain, stare up at it, and then start climbing it inch by inch.

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## **A Hurdling Success, Life School Grad Goes From Track To Courtroom**

Author: Chelsea Groomer

Life School Communications Specialist

Meet Kayla Jenkins: a Life High School Waxahachie graduate, track star, and soon-to-be Criminal Justice Lawyer. Currently attending Texas Southern University on a track scholarship. Jenkins is running her race with her sights set on a Criminal Justice degree.

"I plan on getting my bachelor's, master's, and juris doctor degrees," she confirmed. "After that, I plan to take my bar exam and pass it, so I can start practicing law and eventually own my own law firm."

With an impressive track record, Jenkins placed fourth in the 100-meter dash and won the bronze medal in the 300-meter hurdles at the University Interscholastic League Class 4A state track and field championships her junior year.

Though the Class of 2020 struggled with the COVID-19 pandemic during their senior year, Jenkins is choosing to look on the bright side of life by reflecting on the past. Beginning her Life School journey in the sixth grade, Jenkins graduated from LHSW this past June with over 200 fellow classmates.

"My experience at Life School was amazing," Jenkins expressed. "They make you feel like family [...] The teachers are always making sure you're on top of your grades and they try and help bring them up." One English teacher in particular influenced Jenkins in more ways than one.

"I have met so many amazing teachers while being at Life School, but I would have to say my favorite teacher would be Mrs. Langren," Jenkins recalled.

"She made it a relaxing learning environment and it was fun to learn and be in her class [...] She also was there when I needed a shoulder to cry on and listened to our problems. She was a teacher and a friend," she added.

From pep rallies to home games and spirit weeks, Jenkins also involved herself in a variety of extracurriculars during her high school career.

"I've been doing sports since the seventh grade. I did basketball and track, and then continued doing track all the way to my senior year," she explained, also including her participation on the cheer team during her eighth and ninth-grade year.

Continuing her love for athletics, Jenkins joined LHSW's Health Science Program as a Student Athletic Training Aide during her senior year.

"The athletic trainers were a family on and off the field, court, and track," she reminisced. "The bonds and relationships I made are something I'll never let go."

With over 1,000 students participating in 17 interscholastic sports across the district, Life School's reputation is known for character training and good sportsmanship. Student Athletic Training Aides have not only taken these attributes to heart, but have also demonstrated them by provided 3,447 treatments for athletic students throughout last year.

Jenkins adds to this, conveying how athletics empowered her to deal with success and how to overcome adversity in a variety of ways.

"Sports had an impact [on me] because it made me motivated, and gave me a reason to want to get up," she emphasized. "I created unbreakable bonds with my teammates and coaches."

Taking what she's learned, Jenkins remains resilient as she encourages the Class of 2021 to put their 'toe to the line' and make every moment count.

“It doesn’t get easier, but you have to put forth the effort or you’re just going to make it harder on yourself,” she advised. “Be self-motivated and aim for the goals you set for yourself, and continue setting them because the grind never stops.”

With a bright future ahead, Jenkins credits Life School for preparing her for the next step of her academic pursuit.

“Life School helped me because the teachers pushed me to be the best me I could be,” Jenkins acknowledged.

“They helped me along the way and guided me in the right direction. I thank them for believing in me and helping me become who I am today.”

## **Plano Student Cracks the Code on Cybersecurity Training**

Author: Dr. Lori Aden

Region 10 Program Coordinator, Digital Learning & Resources

When Plano East Senior High student Nikolai Rura isn't busy with IB English homework, ROTC, or Academic Decathlon, he focuses his attention on learning everything he can about cybersecurity and how to best protect organizations from attacks.

"I first became interested in the field of cybersecurity when my Boy Scout troop brought in experts who spoke to us about how it is critically important for our national defense," Rura shared.

Though Rura is only 17 years old, his knowledge in the field of cybersecurity is extensive. He joined his Boy Scout troop's CyberPatriot team in 2015 and competed with them for three years until he became a commander of the Plano East Panther Battalion CyberPatriot Team. He will continue to compete with them during his final year of high school. CyberPatriot is a cybersecurity and network administration competition created by the Air Force Association and sponsored by several Fortune 500 companies.

Region 10 Education Service Center found out about Rura after putting out a request for a cybersecurity subject matter expert (SME). Beginning last year, the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR) requires all state and local governments, which includes ISDs, to receive training on cybersecurity. Region 10 decided to become an approved training provider for this mandate to fit into our annual compliance regulatory bundle for state educators. An important piece of creating the training was to find a SME, like Rura.

Rura took the project parameters and guidelines and curated the content Region 10 needed to build the cybersecurity course. With the help of one of our Region 10 instructional designers and our Technology and Data Services team to verify his work, Rura successfully developed an e-learning course that was approved by the DIR. This course will be viewed by thousands of educators across Texas.

"The work itself was very straightforward and there were clear expectations. My goal was to develop a cybersecurity training that would be well received by all educators," Rura said. "I focused on creating something that was easy to understand and would help educators in their day-to-day teaching."

Dev Shah, Plano ISD's Director of Applications and Cybersecurity Services, is extremely proud of Rura's work, and Region 10 couldn't agree more!

"Nikolai, keep up the excellent work. The cybersecurity industry needs talents like yours," Shah said.

After graduating from high school, Rura hopes to attend George Washington University and major in Pre-Law. His goal is to work in a legal setting to help combat crime in the 21st century.

## **National Board Certified Teachers Soar to New Heights**

Author: Karen Barnes

Region 10 Assistant Director, Administrative Services

Despite the ever-changing educational scene, one aspect remains constant: the classroom teacher plays a vital role in student success. That's why it is so important to have accomplished teachers who can guide students to higher levels of success. Just imagine the benefits our students could reap if all students were guided by accomplished teachers! While that goal may seem lofty, it is becoming more of a reality, thanks to the House Bill 3 Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA). Another contributing factor is the support for National Board Certification, now available to teachers and districts by Region 10 Education Service Center and others.

Most, if not all, National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) will tell you that their teaching practices improved as a result of their certification experiences, and the depth of reflection they learned has become an embedded process. While most teachers reflect daily upon what they did with their students, National Board Certified Teachers take an extra step. They deeply analyze what they did with their students, and why they made those instructional decisions to help their students succeed. This deeper reflection leads to more positive change in the instructional approaches of an accomplished teacher, and thus, students excel at greater levels.

As a result of House Bill 3 TIA, there is an incentive for teachers to attain their national board certification. Region 10 is now at the forefront of leading teachers and district personnel by offering this certification process to build the capacity of NBCTs within the service area. As one of the few established programs that support teachers who participate in the certification process, Region 10 is poised to help teachers improve their mindset toward their teaching practices. This mindset shift, in turn, will help increase student achievement.

Research across several states has shown that students who are taught by National Board Certified Teachers typically achieve at higher levels than their peers who are not taught by NBCTs. By obtaining their national board certification, Texas teachers can earn the designation of "Recognized" through the TIA. Moreover, they receive a well-earned financial incentive to remain in the classroom because accomplished teachers play a vital role in improving their students' academic achievement.

Earlier this year, Region 10 established two cohorts with the goal of increasing the number of NBCTs within our region. The first cohort, Track 1, is for individual teachers who are interested in attaining their national board certification. Teachers selected for this cohort will work directly with current NBCTs to learn more about the process and to begin working toward their certifications. We are excited to share that our Track 1 cohort has been completely filled by teachers from across the region who began their National Board journey in August.

"I believe National Board will help enhance my instructional practices, so that I can become more proficient as a teacher, colleague, and future leader," said Dallas ISD teacher Jasmin Thomas. "It is my intention to be a great example of what an accomplished teacher possesses and to motivate other teachers to hone in on their practices and follow suit."

The second cohort, Track 2, was developed to help individual LEAs build their district cohorts with teachers interested in earning this certification. Through this cohort, selected district personnel will be mentored by current NBCTs to learn how to establish and effectively lead a cohort within the respective district. A smaller cohort of teachers within the district will also be established, and an NBCT mentor will lead the teachers through the certification process while the district representative learns and assists. Like Track 1, the work of the Track 2 cohort began in August.

"I was drawn to the idea that the National Board program does not dictate what a teacher has to do or be, but instead, teachers perfect their craft through continuous action and reflection," shared Josh Weger, Bells ISD assistant superintendent. "Bells ISD feels a National Board cohort can help us achieve two district goals. First, the

program will help promote high standards of academic achievement. Second, the program will help us attract and retain highly qualified employees for all positions in the district.”

The knowledge gained by the dedicated participants in this certification process will ultimately have a direct and positive impact on student success. Suffice it to say, Region 10 is excited about these opportunities to help guide teachers through their National Board journey. To ensure this process succeeds, our goal is to encourage all stakeholders to work diligently to add more NBCTs in our classrooms to foster increased academic achievement.

While our Region 10 National Board Cohort Programs will directly impact students in Region 10, we recognize the need to support teachers and students throughout the state. As the saying goes, a rising tide lifts all boats. With that in mind, Region 10 has urged other education service centers across our state to collaborate with service center teams, as they work to establish similar cohort-type programs.

Effectively developing and implementing new programs, like our Region 10 National Board Cohort Programs, inspires us to take the time to research, collaborate with NBCTs, and learn from those who have already succeeded with their cohorts. Our cohort members, mentors, and Region 10 staff are prepared and ready to face this challenge because all of our students deserve nothing less than our best!

## **Duncanville Graduates Publish Nationally Award-Winning Bilingual Children's Book**

Author: Lari Barager

Duncanville ISD Director of External Communications

Two members of Duncanville High School's Class of 2020, who wrote a national award-winning book during their senior year, just became published authors.

Diana Reyes and Kelly Gutierrez wrote and illustrated the bilingual children's book *The House Kitty!* for a Texas Association of Future Educators competition, where it placed in the top five in the state. They qualified for the national 2019 Educators Rising competition where *The House Kitty!* took first place in Children's Literature Pre-K.

The book follows pampered house cat, Luna, on her journey from being a scaredy-cat to learning how important it is to be brave and try new things. Diana says her love for children, family, and her cat, Luna, were her inspiration for writing the book.

Kelly illustrated the pages with colorful depictions of Luna's adventures. They said they want the book to encourage kids to step out of their comfort zones.

The book is available now on Amazon in paperback. Distribution of the e-book began on August 3, 2020.

Both Diana and Kelly earned their Educational Aide I certifications from the State of Texas while studying education in Duncanville High School's Career and Technical Education program. They both intend to study education in college with plans to become teachers.

Kelly became interested in education because she believes knowledge is power and enjoys the idea of sharing that knowledge with her future students. Diana says she hopes to change a child's life every day.

## Youth Music Program Hits the Right Notes

Author: Seth Phillips

Trinity Basin Preparatory Communications Director

Horsehair bows slowly drawn across nylon and steel violin strings resonate throughout the cavernous chamber of the Meyerson Symphony Orchestra Center in downtown Dallas. The conductor taps his baton on the podium and the instruments rise in unison, often obstructing their elementary-age players from view. A clarinet player takes a quick, deep breath and prepares to hit the high note he knows is coming.

These are the sights and sounds of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra's (DSO) Young Musicians program at Trinity Basin Preparatory's (TBP) Ledbetter campus in Oak Cliff where in December 2019, numerous at-risk students in first through sixth grade, performed a concert for their parents at the Meyerson Symphony Center.

Inspired by the success of El Sistema ("The System") in Venezuela, the DSO collaborated with partners like TBP to provide free music lessons, instruments, and new opportunities to children in south Dallas. The program elected to partner with schools south of Interstate 30 to reach students who have limited access to additional outside resources. The goal is to provide students the opportunity to engage in eight to 12 hours of free instruction each week.

"With smaller class sizes, we can move at a faster pace. Many student musicians do not get the chance to engage in this much music-making until college." DSO Director of Education Jennifer Guzmán said. "Music is the universal language. Through it, you have the opportunity to connect with everyone around you. The study of music helps you become more empathetic, tolerant, collaborative, and persistent. Music is an opportunity to form your own voice."

In January 2020, cellist Roberto Zambrano, a former student and teacher of *El Sistema*, joined the DSO to help bring the program to south Dallas as Artistic Director of the Young Musicians program at the DSO.

"In Venezuela, we used this program to transform our communities and our country," Zambrano said. "We have a lot of people in Venezuela in the program (around 500,000). Today, we have more than 300 students participating in Dallas."

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the learning continued, but the DSO had to adapt to the shutdowns affecting all US schools. As a result, DSO musicians and a team of teaching artists stepped in to help fill the gaps by providing online instruction through Zoom sessions.

"It is a great opportunity for the young students to work with professional orchestral musicians. It's so rewarding to be with the kids and see moments of deep learning," Guzmán said.

*El Sistema's* focus on getting instruments into the hands of students and the support of DSO sponsors ensures that each student in the program has their own instrument that they keep at home with them to practice.

"Funders and grants help to provide money to purchase instruments," Guzmán said. "The program is free to join. Everything is provided to them."

But free does not mean that these student musicians do not have responsibilities, but even those responsibilities are an opportunity to learn.

"As with any free program, the challenge is that it might not be 'valued' as much," Guzmán said. "So, we do ask for some buy-in from the parents and students. We expect that students will take care of their instruments; they only get to take them home when they earn the privilege to do so. We expect them to practice and we ask the parents

to support a regular practice routine. We really believe in the 'it takes a village' mentality and value our students and their families, the teachers, and the school districts who are a part of our Young Musicians program."

TBP parents have recognized the value of the program as an opportunity they might not otherwise receive.

"I enrolled [my daughter] in the program because I want [her] to learn to play an instrument, and my daughter was excited to play an instrument as well," Blanca Torrez, parent of a third-grade violinist, said. "This is a great opportunity for kids to be taught by professionals."

Other parents of Young Musicians performers have also noticed the impact the program has had on their children.

"The change has been positive," Daniela Cordova, another parent of a third-grade violinist, said. "[My daughter] gets excited when it's time for her music class. She likes to participate in her concerts, and she likes when me and her dad see her play a melody on her instrument."

But parents are not the only ones who recognize and appreciate the opportunities afforded by the DSO's Young Musicians Program.

"My son enrolled himself," Olimpia Medina, parent of a fourth-grade violinist and aspiring pianist, said. "He came to me and told me, 'Mom, I'm going to start playing an instrument.' It has been a positive experience for him. They learn to socialize; it teaches them to relax and be less fearful to be in front of people, and teaches them to be responsible. At times, it has been a little stressful, but it teaches him to stay strong and be persistent."

## **A Teacher Gave Me Wings**

Author: Dr. Shaunaisea Henderson

Academy of Dallas Charter School Principal

Teachers frequently have a hard time comprehending the impact they have on their students. I was one of those teachers, until the year I met the student who changed my life forever. I had only been teaching four years when I met Brittney, an introverted girl with eyes big as saucers, but as melancholy as the summer rain. I was a fifth-grade teacher, and the moment I walked into my classroom, I knew I had my work cut out for me. Nonetheless, I was their teacher and that was all that mattered.

I was new and innovative in my thinking, so I wanted to pull out all the stops to meet the needs of every student while building positive relationships with them. Brittney, however, proved to be hard to reach. She did not engage with other students and would barely communicate with me. Her spelling was phonetic, and she never volunteered to read or answer questions in class. Other students dismissed her as if she wasn't there.

One day, I held a Socratic seminar. Once desks were pushed back, and chairs were set in a circle, I posed a question and we began to discuss it, all but Brittney. I decided to take a risk and directed a question to her. The fear in her eyes spoke volumes. I smiled at her, gave her a few seconds and then began to guide the conversation to foster a response. To Brittney's credit, she gave a two-word, barely spoken answer. I encouraged her to continue speaking and once finished, praised her response. It was then I realized - Brittney was not just painfully shy, she also had academic struggles manifested by social ones.

Soon after, I developed a learning plan for Brittney to improve her reading skills and shared it with her mom. She desperately wanted to help her daughter, but just did not know what to do. Together, the three of us made an unspoken commitment to solve Brittney's learning challenges. As her learning increased, so did her confidence. Her mom was elated, and you cannot begin to measure my joy the first time she raised her hand in class. It was a great day.

Unfortunately, all days cannot be great, and one dark day almost changed the trajectory of Brittney's hard work. I noticed some students passing a note around, so I said, "I know we aren't passing notes when we are supposed to be working." The note fell to the floor, and as fate would have it, Brittney bent down to pick it up. No sooner did she pick it up, the note was snatched out of her hand by another student. Brittney blurted out, "You didn't have to grab it. I wasn't going to read it, because I can't read anyway!" My eyes met Brittney's and I silently shook my head.

Thankfully, the bell rang and as everyone headed for the door, I quietly pulled Brittney aside and asked why she said she could not read. Her eyes welled up with tears and she said, "Because I can't read like them. I read baby books." My heart broke. I told Brittney I wouldn't promise her that she would be reading Harry Potter books by the end of the year, but she would be reading chapter books. That weekend, I went to Barnes and Noble and purchased the *Junie B. Jones* book series. Her progress was remarkable, so much so, she asked if she could take a book home. Her family was amazed with her progress and I was proud of her tenacity. Not only did I see improvement in Brittney's learning, so did other teachers and students, proving yet again, a dark day can have a silver lining.

The school year was coming to its close, so Brittney would be leaving soon. During her remaining days, she became an engaged and participating learner. When it was time for Brittney to matriculate on to sixth grade, I spoke with her mom. Once a concerned parent, she now appeared confident about Brittney moving on to sixth grade. I must admit, I had some trepidation, but took a note from mom and hoped for the best.

Years passed and I became an instructional specialist at a charter school. One day, I was called to the front desk to pick up a package. Why would someone send me a package at school? I didn't see a name or return address, so I went back to my office to satisfy my curiosity. When I opened the box, there was a book titled, *A Teacher Gave Me*

*Wings* by Becky Kelly. What a pleasant surprise, but the best was yet to come. When I opened the book, it revealed the most beautiful written letter.

Dear Mrs. Henderson,

I want to first say, thank you. You mean the world to me. I didn't know how to read, and I had a difficult time writing. No matter my struggles, you always spoke to me with dignity and respect.

Mrs. Henderson, I love you for being the one to take a chance and helping me even when I almost gave up on myself. You see, I was the oldest student in the classroom, and I was embarrassed. I wasn't smart like the other students and I was ashamed. Until you came into my life, I didn't know how to help myself.

I have graduated from high school and will be attending Austin College. I am going to be a nurse. I've always wanted to be a nurse, but I knew to be a nurse, I had to know how to read.

When I left you, I was scared; there were teachers who weren't as sweet and patient as you. I had some difficult times, but I always remembered your voice. Your voice never made me afraid to make a mistake. It was like listening to windchimes on a winter's night. It calmed me. While I did not graduate at the top of my class, I did not finish at the bottom. I held my own with my head held high. Why, because you gave me the wings to fly.

Thank you with all my heart. I'll send you the invitation to my college graduation in four years.

Brittney D.

My day was flooded with tears of joy, knowing that I had such an impact on the life of one of my students. It also reminded me I wanted to be a teacher like my first-grade teacher Johnnie Hurd. What I didn't know then, I do know now - not only can I change the lives of students, but they can change mine. And yes, I received an invitation via Facebook to Brittney's graduation from nursing school. She is now a nurse practitioner, married, and living in Georgia. Enjoy your wings, Brittney.

## **Bring Home the Gold**

Author: Amy Talbert, MS, CAPE

Region 10 Adapted PE Specialist, Special Populations

Special Olympics athlete JD Bowdoin was surrounded by proud family members cheering him on as he steadily raced toward the finish line on the street in front of his home. While he wasn't joined by competitors racing by his side or a stand full of cheering fans, the excitement on JD's face was not diminished. Not even COVID-19 could keep JD down as he continued to compete virtually in Special Olympics. His family, working hard behind the scenes, helped him practice and submit video footage and entry times to the Special Olympics Area Office. Their hard work paid off; JD won three gold medals in the virtual meets!

Region 10's Adapted Physical Education team, Amy Talbert, Justin McCullick, and Hannah Reynolds, work with student athletes, like JD, to help them develop the skills necessary for a lifetime rich with leisure, recreation, and sport experiences to enhance their physical fitness and wellness. JD started receiving Adapted PE services when he was six years old, still learning to walk and manipulate objects. Due to the perseverance of his amazing parents and teachers, who never stopped believing JD could achieve more, he worked hard on his overhand throwing and walking in his gait trainer, so he could begin to participate in Special Olympics Track and Field meets. Today, JD competes in Special Olympics Aquatics, Bocce, Basketball, Track, Golf, as well as the Region 10 Sports Extravaganza and Region 10 Kid-Netic Games.

Our Adapted PE team develops and implements a carefully designed physical education instructional program based on a comprehensive assessment for each learner with a disability. Not only does the team provide Adapted PE student services, they also widen their reach by providing professional development to teachers across the state, helping them develop and support Partner PE programs, and offering more than 40 competitive sporting opportunities annually for students.

By identifying and focusing on fitness, wellness, and sport-specific skills, students gain the necessary skills that give them the confidence to exercise with their families, play leisure games with friends and other families, participate in community recreational and league sports, self-advocate, and live more independently. The added benefit of networking with other families through leisure and sporting opportunities, such as Kid-Netic Games and Special Olympics, is that they can further widen their circle of friends and opportunities for social interactions. After setting goals and working towards them for years and years, we love seeing the fruits of our labor as we watch our students compete in events using the skills that we have developed in Adapted PE.

Students and athletes like JD are exactly the reason why we do what we do. JD's victories, both in competition and his day-to-day life, inspire our team to work even harder to help improve the quality of life for him and other students with disabilities. In our opinion, there is no better reward.

## How's Your Cybersecurity?

Author: Chad Branum

Region 10 Chief Technology Officer

Cybersecurity has, and will always be, a serious concern for all organizations; perhaps more so for our fellow educators this year. Who knew a pandemic would force us to dramatically shift from teaching in the classroom to almost exclusively teaching in a virtual learning environment? Increased digital activity means greater security risks, so it is more critical than ever to take the necessary steps to secure our data systems. It is essential that our records are protected, so our systems must have the capacity to keep them secure, or if the worst should happen, must be able to successfully recover our data after an attack. In today's world, it is a matter of when, not if, your data system will be the target of an attack.

Two of the most prevalent cybersecurity threats in education are phishing and ransomware. Since 2005, more than 24 million records from US schools have been breached; 77% of those records were from K-12 education. How is that possible? Believe it or not, we are unintentionally accountable for most of the threats or attacks. Just imagine the volume of emails that are sent daily to you and your staff members with the goal of tricking the recipients to click a link and/or open an attachment. This scam tactic alone can lead to 90% of your district's attacks.

Over the past year, several districts have been hit by both phishing and ransomware attacks. As a result, they experienced significant disruptions to their district operations, critical data losses, and in some cases, had to pay large sums of money to restore and recover their own data. One example of this occurred in a Region 10 district. Prior to the cybersecurity attack, this district stored all their data on internal servers. When those servers became encrypted by ransomware, the district could not access any critical data, including data on the Student Information System (SIS), or restore data from another valid backup. The only two options available were to pay a large ransom to regain access to their district data or to lose all their historical data and start over again. That's a tough decision no one ever wants to face.

Technology practically changes overnight, so what can districts do to better protect data records?

Here are four key areas your entire team should focus on to improve your district's cybersecurity.

- Staff Education
- Policy and Procedures
- Protection Measures
- Risk Assessment

Investing time to determine where your district is, and where it needs to be, in each of these areas can go a long way towards protecting your data. It's also a good step towards avoiding a tough decision.

Here's another good step to consider. Region 10 is always looking for better ways to serve, so our Technology and Data Services team has developed a variety of helpful solutions over the years. Our newest solution is Region X Guardian, specifically designed to help districts mitigate ongoing cybersecurity challenges. Since the stakes are so high when confidential records are involved, Region 10 has also partnered with True North and Blackswan Cybersecurity. Together, our partnership can now offer 24x7x365 cybersecurity-managed services to not only Region 10 districts, but to ALL districts in Texas. The goal of this partnership is to identify, protect, detect, respond to, and recover from any cybersecurity threats within your district.

Region 10 districts can also take advantage of our new technology package for the 2020-21 school year. Our services in this package are centered around cloud and colocation services, such as offsite storage, Backup-as-a-Service (BaaS), and network rack space. If you want to explore our services in more detail or learn more about the four key areas of cybersecurity, please do not hesitate to contact Region 10 Technology and Data Services.

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## **Sherman ISD Wheels in New Food Truck**

Author: Kimberly Simpson

Sherman ISD Director of Communications

Sherman ISD has unveiled its new food truck called the Bearcat Grill on Wheels. It's run by the Sherman ISD Food Service Department and started serving food this past summer.

The new food truck is utilized as a learning tool for the Sherman High School Culinary Arts program, community service activities, outside catering events, lunches for secondary schools, and the district's summer feeding program.

"We're excited about our new innovative way to serve food to our students and community," SISD Food Service Director Mandy Stephens expressed. "Our students have already begun to utilize the truck to serve food at different community events. It's giving them the opportunity to get real-world experience and skills needed for the food service industry."

A school bus converted into a functioning mobile kitchen is the best way to describe *The Bearcat Grill on Wheels*. The inside contains an industrial grill, full-size oven, refrigerator and freezer, cold salad bar area, serving window, interior seating for 12 people, and more appliances. The outside of the truck is adorned with designs of food on each side, with accents of the classic Sherman maroon color and the district's Billy Bob Bearcat logo.

"It's an eye-catching food truck that will help us be creative with how we offer nutritious meals to our students and provide food service for special events," Stephens said.

SISD Food Service will begin to park the food truck outside of the district's secondary campuses on certain days so students can partake in lunch beyond the cafeteria. During school lunch hours, the food truck will serve fresh and delicious food to ensure that students are eating healthy while enjoying a food truck experience.

"We're always developing new ways to promote healthy eating. This food truck helps us accomplish that goal. Our menu will vary each week and will consist of many food items that are popular with our students," Stephens explained. "Our catering menu, which will include a variety of food options, will be placed on our website for the community."

*The Bearcat Grill on Wheels* is in motion and serving the community. Food truck locations, operating times, and information for catering requests are posted on the SISD Food Service website at [www.shermanisd.net](http://www.shermanisd.net).

## **Pivoting in a Pandemic**

Author: Rachel Frost

Region 10 Chief Communications Officer

For many parents and educators across the state, Spring Break 2020 will be one they never forget. However, it likely won't be remembered for of the family vacations, or time spent playing outside with friends. Instead, our education communities left for Spring Break with schools looking and operating as they always have and returned to an education system that was flipped upside down. Instead of learning in brightly colored classrooms with desks in neat little rows or collaborative clusters, students took to their kitchen tables or living room couches to do their classwork that was delivered to them virtually or through take-home packets.

In what seemed like the blink of an eye, parents were asked to juggle more than ever before. For Early Head Start parents Mayra Jimenez and April Loyd, the sudden change came as quite a shock. Mayra is a single, working mom with four children under the age of 12, and April is in nursing school and has three children ages 12 or younger. While working to maintain a sense of normalcy for their families, Mayra and April turned to the people, they knew they could count on for support – their Region 10 Education Service Center Early Head Start teachers.

"I don't have family here, so the Early Head Start staff have become like family to me. They are my support system," Mayra explained.

"My child's Early Head Start teacher is incredible, and she was with me every step of the way to support my son," said April. "We would text and call each other throughout the week, and I would send her photos of my son's progress."

Behind every parent struggling to get by in the midst of a global pandemic was an educator working tirelessly to help both the child and their family academically, socially, and emotionally. Working behind the scenes to support those educators were professionals and teams of experts at Education Service Centers across the state. In a time of uncertainty, a time of change, our education community came together – in a big way – to continue educating students.

At Region 10, the focus shifted, and work began the moment we received word that schools were going to have to make the tough decision to close their doors and begin educating students from home.

"As each hour passed, more and more districts were announcing their closures," explained Region 10 Digital Learning and Resources Coordinator Kathryn Laster. "The Region 10 team responded quickly by building the framework for the At-Home Instructional Support website, which was developed as a resource for high-quality content for educators."

"It was very frenzied. It felt like every day was an entire week. There was so much information being shared. It was a lot to sift through and figure out where and how we needed to pivot. We wanted to be a half-step ahead so we could be helpful for our teachers," explained Region 10 Learning Innovations Consultant Laura Kile.

Members of Region 10's Digital Learning and Resources team partnered with the Teaching and Learning team to create webinars and curate content and resources for educators. Simultaneously, the Special Populations team was hard at work focusing on how to meet the unique needs of the students they serve.

"Our whole focus was to get into the mindset of a 4th grade Special Education teacher, for instance, or to get in the mindset of a diagnostician," Region 10 Special Populations Services Director Dr. April Estrada remembers. "We had to figure out what those educators needed to get their job done. I supported the team with guidance from the state, and then charged them with filling in the blanks."

As days rolled into weeks, our Special Populations team continued to work together with school districts, sharing resources and developing strategies. Challenges included everything from how to provide basic level accommodations for students who were in general education settings, to finding ways to coordinate support and provide assistance in a virtual setting for students who were in self-contained Special Education classrooms.

“It was our goal to reach out to families to find out what parents really needed – to find out how we could help them as a family,” Dr. Estrada said. “In some ways, it has become an even more collaborative approach. In the sharing of resources, the coming together to develop plans to move forward, and the integration of educating parents and empowering them.”

If we have learned anything from this pandemic, it is that there is power in numbers, and our educators are as committed to learning as the students they serve.

“This situation forced everyone to be a learner because no one had been through this before,” Kile said. “Everyone had to feel what it felt like to struggle, to not know what to do, and to learn hard and quickly from mistakes.”

While there is still a level of uncertainty as to what the 2020-2021 school year will look like for educators and students, there are pieces of what we have learned during this time that will make us stronger as an education community. At Region 10, we will continue to provide professional development opportunities that are flexible so that educators have the opportunity to learn and grow in a setting that aligns with their own learning preferences. We will continue to answer questions and compile resources. We will continue to equip educators with the tools and knowledge they need to successfully implement various technologies in their classrooms regardless of whether students are learning at school, virtually, or in a hybrid model. We will continue to work collaboratively with educators across the region, state, and nation to make sure that our practices enable educators to reach all students. And most important, we will continue to love and support our parents, like Mayra and April, who need us more than ever before – parents who are counting on us to prepare their youngest of learners for the unique education journey that lies ahead.

## **Welcome the New**

**Four Region 10 Teaching and Learning Consultants share the struggles they've faced during the pandemic, the adjustments they've made, and the new practices they will carry forward.**

### **Kim Jones, Elementary Math consultant**

As I begin to think about adjustments I have made to math offerings during COVID-19, lots of things came to the forefront. For the first time in many years, I, alongside many longtime math educators, were forced out of our comfort zones of just teaching best practices within the confined walls of the classroom. We were now tasked with, “What does this look like through a virtual lens?”

I plan to continue offering professional learning that challenges mathematical thinking and allows math educators to productively struggle, which in turn, promotes growth and new mathematical discoveries. For the first time, many educators are in a state of uncertainty, and with that comes a level of vulnerability, which has allowed us to truly learn and grow alongside each other. After each session, I have had several one-on-one, follow-up conversations with educators regarding the learning. I want to continue to cultivate this practice of connecting in a deeper, more meaningful way to best meet the individual needs of all educators.

This time of transition has really allowed me to grow personally and professionally. I will continue to seek professional growth around best practices regarding virtual learning. COVID-19 has allowed me to interact with and connect teachers from all over Region 10. We are no longer working in silos and separated by physical distance. My hopes are to continue to build on these newfound relationships, so that together, we can truly impact student achievement and close opportunity gaps.

### **Meredith Clark, World Languages and Fine Arts Consultant**

When much seems lost, welcome the new. As an observer and as a participant in what I like to call, “The Great Scramble,” I saw competing, uncoordinated systems flooding teachers with resources, likely with mixed results. Zooming from zoom to zoom, I started reflecting with my amazing teammates on how to make a better impact. The result was to do what the other folks weren’t doing: create synchronous and asynchronous online workshops, not one-and-done webinars, that allow educators to connect, experience effective online practices, and receive immediate feedback on their plans for remote and hybrid instruction.

Related to planning services for educators, the pandemic also heightened my sense of empathy which I hope to continue. I imagine my teacher self, sitting alone, feeling totally overwhelmed with tears in my eyes as I attempt to wade through a swamp of resources. After this visualization, I’m ready to start designing PD for teachers that stands out from the rest and meets them where they are emotionally.

On a purely selfish note, thanks to the pandemic, I’ve reconnected to the pure joy of learning something just because I want to. Saturated with telenovelas from Spain (¡Dios mío!), I cast my net on a Korean drama that mysteriously appeared in my Netflix feed. Having spent half of my life studying the Spanish, Portuguese, and Quechua parts of the globe, the pivot toward Korea would be just the thing I needed. For over five months now, I learn a bit of Korean every day, and I talk it out weekly with my online tutor in Korea. It’s funny how curveballs in life take you to unexpected places. Will I continue honing my radar and leveraging technology to provide more effective and empathic learning experiences for educators? You betcha. Will I carry on with Korean? Destination Seoul 2025.

#### **Seth Bohlman, Elementary Science Consultant**

When we left for Spring Break, I, like everyone else, was in no way prepared for or had any intention of transitioning my work to a virtual format. I was thrust into a mode of trial and error (emphasis on error, early on) to find a method of virtual support that matched my style of delivery and impacted educators in a positive way.

I struggled at first, given that most of my online learning experiences had left me feeling less than fulfilled; a passive participant in dry content delivery. I strived to replicate the collaborative experience I had been able to participate in during my first year at Region 10. Knowing that our technological advances had lessened the physical distances between us in our personal lives, I aimed to replicate that experience with science educators across our region. With this goal in mind, I created the Region 10 5th Grade Science Cohort.

The distances that, in any other case, would have stifled connections and collaboration, have been bridged through technology. Educators as far away as Red Oak and Denison are able to meet, connect, and plan together, discussing successes, difficulties, and reflecting on their practice. It’s a work in progress and we’ve been adjusting as we go, but our group of educators are building capacity within each other and the impact felt on science students across our region will, no doubt, be noticed.

As we begin the transition back to some semblance of “normal,” I have no doubt that my dedication to virtual connections will remain intact. Though I yearn for the interpersonal connections of in-person learning, the power of the connections I have seen across our region these past few months have proven to me that our educational landscape is forever changed for the better!

#### **Susan Delarosa, Counseling Consultant**

As we transitioned into the new school year, I found myself being inundated with uncertainty and anxiousness. No matter your job, your hours, or your home life, there were stressors and fear all around us. As a school counseling consultant, I found myself struggling to take care of my own self-care when COVID first hit.

What does self-care really mean? Self-care is filling your cup before it's empty, so that you have enough to give. There is a reason that we call it "practicing" self-care, as it takes practice. Self-care is really about changing the way that you go about your day in order to take care of yourself. Self-care includes giving yourself time to do the things you enjoy, and planning ahead, so you don't feel as stressed or rushed. Something I practice is setting a self-care goal for the day. Sometimes it's going for a walk or leaving work on time, and other days, it is simply giving myself a 15-minute brain break during the day. Finally, it's important to have fun. After all, laughter is the best medicine. Surround yourself with people who make you happy and plan activities that brighten your day.

By taking care of yourself, you will become more resilient when challenges arise. Author Jamais Cascio wrote, "Resilience is all about being able to overcome the unexpected. Sustainability is about survival. The goal of resilience is to thrive." These self-care practices are ones I will carry forward, so I can continue pouring energy into what I love.

## **Terrell Student Gives Back to Children by Building Rockets**

Author: Olivia Rice

### **Terrell ISD Director of Communications and Marketing**

When Terrell ISD student Jakobe Garrett walked into his first robotics competition as a Furlough Middle School eighth-grade student, he said he felt like he stuck out like a sore thumb. Known for his size and talent on the football field, Garrett knew he did not fit the typical mold for what a robotics and engineering student might look like. Now, entering his senior year at Terrell High School, Garrett is one of the top robotics students at Terrell ISD and has his sights set on a future in the robotics field either as a teacher or an engineer.

Garrett was first introduced to the world of robotics in eighth grade at Furlough Middle School in Marcus Edwards' class. While he admits he did not know what to expect, he was surprised at not only how much he enjoyed it, but how naturally it came to him.

"I did not know I was capable of doing these kinds of things," shared Garrett. "I remember building a robot in just a couple of days and my classmates asking how I was able to do it. I told them I have no clue; it just made sense to me and I did it."

Years later, Garrett has all but perfected his craft and has taken it upon himself to pay it forward by raising up the future generation of Terrell Tiger engineers and robotics students. With the school closures due to COVID-19, Garrett saw an opportunity to share his experience and knowledge with young elementary students in his apartment complex who he knew may otherwise never have the exposure to robotics.

"Some of these kids are not able to be at school, do virtual learning, or have the experience of building," said Garrett. "I took it upon myself to grab some rockets and take them to my apartment, and these kids are very excited to see it. I did not have anything like this when I was a kid."

Garrett, who is also a center and nose tackle for the Terrell Tigers football team, says that while he is not ruling out playing football in college, he would only consider a school with a robotics or engineering program. Both Garrett's football coach and robotics teacher have been incredibly supportive and encouraging of his goals and aspirations.

"I know it is hard for the team for me to be gone from workouts when I come to robotics," said Garrett. "Coach Sedberry is so supportive and understands that robotics is an important part of my future."

Marcus Edwards, Terrell High School Robotics and Engineering teacher, recognizes that Garrett has learned to balance himself between his physical training on the football field and his mental training in the robotics lab, and applauds him for his ability to do both with excellence.

"Jakobe has figured out how to balance his interests to make the biggest impact with the people he is surrounded by," said Edwards. "From the time I met Jakobe until now, he has carried stuff home from the lab to share with the kids in his apartment and that is a big deal; it is what we are all about."

While there is once again uncertainty surrounding the 2020-2021 school year, Garrett is optimistic and looks forward to another season of robotics, performing more experiments with his students, and working towards his future in engineering and robotics.

"This is the best thing that has ever happened to me," shared Garrett. "Robotics changed my whole life."

## **Region 10 Honors**

### **Mesquite ISD, Region 10 Board of the Year**

The Mesquite ISD Board of Trustees is a high-performing team that is valued and respected by its parents, students, staff members, and community. Each member is tirelessly and selflessly committed to high standards of service, ethical practices, and effective policymaking. The district's vision of "Excellence Always" is consistently front of mind, like a beacon focused on improving student success.

Their important work is also reflected in their vigorous support of programs and initiatives that has led to high levels of achievement for the district and its students. The Board is especially interested in monitoring student learning and progress throughout the year. Serving students and their community by supporting a united vision is the core purpose of this exceptional Board of Trustees. It is a genuine privilege to honor the Mesquite ISD Board of Trustees as the 2020 Region 10 School Board of the Year.

### **Dr. Marc Smith, Region 10 Superintendent of the Year**

Dr. Marc Smith came to Duncanville ISD facing academic struggles and fiscal deficits that would be a challenge to overcome, but he had a plan. He instinctively knew he had to build a culture where communication is valued, leaders are developed, and partners are engaged in a shared vision. Dr. Smith strategically refocused his staff's work with a unifying mission and a limitless vision for academic excellence. Dr. Smith's leadership skills, honesty, and ability to regain community trust, made it possible to address his district's needs today and for years to come. Congratulations Dr. Smith!

### **Eric Hale, Region 10 Elementary Teacher of the Year**

Eric Hale, a teacher at David G. Burnet Elementary School in Dallas ISD, was named 2021 Region 10 Elementary Teacher of the Year. After being selected as one of three state-level finalists, he went on to earn the title of Texas Teacher of the Year.

Hale brings joy to his classroom through his passion for music. He prides himself in providing an engaging, safe, and nurturing learning environment where his students can thrive. Having endured both a tornado and a pandemic, he has supported and advocated for his students and families every step of the way. Hale's resilience, service to others, and passion for learning are traits he instills in each and every student who enters his classroom. Congratulations Eric Hale!

### **Helen Arceneaux, Region 10 Secondary Teacher of the Year**

Helen Arceneaux introduced her students to virtual learning long before the days of COVID-19. Arceneaux, a Richardson ISD Liberty Junior High STEM Academy teacher, has "gamified" most of her lessons as a way to connect with and engage students throughout the learning process.

Arceneaux has made it her mission to expose her students to potential careers in the STEM field by inviting local and national experts into her classroom. Congratulations Helen Arceneaux on being selected as our Region 10 Secondary Teacher of the Year!

## **Region 10 Elementary Teachers of the Year**

Bria Powell-Irby, A+ Charter  
Julie McGary, Allen ISD  
Chera Lambright, Athens ISD  
Laura Todd, Blue Ridge ISD  
Laurie Johnson, Caddo Mills ISD  
Deana White, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD  
Melissa Tyler, Cedar Hill ISD  
Dee Dee Harris, Commerce ISD  
Lacy Porter, Community ISD  
Ashley Hernandez, Coppell ISD  
Beth Carroll, Crandall ISD  
Eric Hale, Dallas ISD  
Jeremy Laroche, Denison ISD  
Kyria Moore, DeSoto ISD  
Adam Conant, Duncanville ISD  
Maria Coplen, Ennis ISD  
Lindsay Leal, Ferris ISD  
Brittany Hartley, Forney ISD  
Melanie Rutter, Frisco ISD  
Shannon Cunningham, Garland ISD  
Amanda Esquivel, Grand Prairie ISD  
Kristal Lopez, Greenville ISD  
Sara Meeks, Highland Park ISD  
Allison Carter, Howe ISD  
Julio Jacobo-Martinez, ILT  
Sherry Thompson, Irving ISD  
Tonya Lowder, Kaufman ISD  
Aimee Shaw, Kemp ISD  
Veronica Adame, La Academia de Estrellas  
Bridget Gamble-Thompson, Lancaster ISD  
Roxana Kerbow, Legacy Preparatory Charter  
Annie Alexander, Leonard ISD  
Latisha Jones, Life School  
Sarah Moody, Lovejoy ISD  
Shelly Donathan, Mabank ISD  
Laura Rice, Maypearl ISD  
Sandra Eiland, McKinney ISD  
Krystal Dumas, Mesquite ISD  
Tama Garrison, Palmer ISD  
Jacqueline Rosenquist, Plano ISD  
Sonya Watkins, Pottsboro ISD  
Tangy Lockman, Princeton ISD  
Jennifer Garich, Prosper ISD  
Jennifer Rickman, Quinlan ISD

Claudia Villanueva, Red Oak ISD  
Kimberly Terry, Richardson ISD  
Stacey Hawkins, Rockwall ISD  
Tim Nienstedt, Royse City ISD  
Jodi Amlin, Sam Rayburn ISD  
Roxie Goldsmith, Scurry Rosser ISD  
Cathy Van Horn, Sherman ISD  
Jill Bailey, Sunnyvale ISD  
Brittany Bosak, Terrell ISD  
Chelsea Serio, Van Alstyne ISD  
Myranda Cope, Waxahachie ISD  
Donna Hood, Whitewright ISD  
Kimberly Moir, Wills Point ISD  
Austin Keisler, Wylie ISD

## **Region 10 Secondary Teachers of the Year**

Misty Mix, A+ Charter  
Tommy Hylkema, Academy for Academic Excellence  
Sara Paa, Allen ISD  
Kristen Lentz, Blue Ridge ISD  
Arturo Castillo, Boles ISD  
Amanda Beene, Caddo Mills ISD  
Kevin Guillot, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD  
Angel Hale, Cedar Hill ISD  
Joyce Sample, Commerce ISD  
Debra McIlvain, Community ISD  
Stephen Danby, Coppell ISD  
Eyona Lewis, Crandall ISD  
Katie Benningfield, Dallas ISD  
Bryan Williams, Denison ISD  
Dexter Dotson, DeSoto ISD  
Alex Horton, Duncanville ISD  
Amanda Zabochnik, Ennis ISD  
Geneva Abrego, Ferris ISD  
Jacob Thomas, Forney ISD  
Chris Ham, Frisco ISD  
Brenda Martinez, Garland ISD  
Lauren Girsh, Grand Prairie ISD  
Mary Miller, Greenville ISD  
Robert Leidner, Highland Park ISD  
Natalie McCall, Howe ISD  
Courtney Putman, Irving ISD  
Steven Bucholtz, Kaufman ISD  
Leigh Lambert, Kemp ISD  
Peter DeSevo, La Academia de Estrellas  
Terrica Walls, Lancaster ISD  
Brandi Braley, Legacy Preparatory  
Nancy Longino, Leonard ISD  
Francine Reece, Life School of Dallas  
Ray Cooper, Lovejoy ISD  
Chelsea Hyles, Maypearl ISD  
Roselyn Govan, McKinney ISD  
Ty Belt, Mesquite ISD  
Julie Butler, Palmer ISD  
Jonathan Cao, Plano ISD  
Jennifer Tidwell, Pottsboro ISD  
Neal Stellpflug, Princeton ISD  
Amy Bermudez, Prosper ISD  
Lori Barber, Quinlan ISD  
Sara Young, Red Oak ISD

Helen Arceneaux, Richardson ISD  
Sarah Napier, Rockwall ISD  
Mackenzie Pettit, Royse City ISD  
Stena Brewer, Sam Rayburn ISD  
Barbara Ragan, Sherman ISD  
Samuel Thomas, Sunnyvale ISD  
Sarah Hinton, Terrell ISD  
Ross Andress, Van Alstyne ISD  
Molly Johnson, Whitewright ISD  
Tiera Homer, Wills Point ISD  
Grace Pak, Winfree Academy  
Mary Zucha, Wylie ISD

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## Podcasts for Learning

**Author: Kathryn Laster**

**Region 10 Consultant, Digital Learning & Resources**

Did you know that Region 10's Digital Learning Team hosts a podcast? For the past three years, we have produced Digital Learning Radio, and episodes include interviews with educators, authors, edtech coaches, and innovators from all over the country. The lens of the podcast is learning. Episodes focus on instruction and pedagogy, along with exploring ways technology empowers learning.

As of this writing, the podcast season that has had the greatest impact on both listeners and the hosts was from the fall of 2019. Misty Trevino, Nancy Watson, and I created the series "Step In: Conversations about Equity in Education," and educators continue to share and discuss these episodes. When we started planning this season, our original focus was digital equity, since we are the Digital Learning team. Once we began planning the episodes, however, we knew we needed to broaden our scope. We also realized that we had a lot to learn ourselves.

For the "Step In" series, we invited guests to share personal stories and experiences. The conversations in each of the episodes explored topics such as equity in race, sexual orientation, physical ability, language, housing/income, and recruiting and retaining educators of color. From all of the separate interviews, our team heard the following themes emerge: the importance of relationships, making intentional choices about whose voices are heard and amplified, the necessity of self-work, and listening first.

This series impacted other educators around the region, too. Meredith Torrence (Schnick), an Instructional Technology Coach in Richardson ISD, said this about the podcast:

"I really enjoyed the 'Step In' series because it made me as an educator re-evaluate my thinking. I thought I was accommodating all students, but after listening to the series, it really made me reflect on myself, or as Knikole Taylor put it, #Selfwork. My goal since listening to the podcast is to continue to educate myself on equity and inclusion so that I am supporting all students. Listening and reflecting has become a huge part of my learning."

Torrence shared that she was particularly moved by our episode on students facing homelessness. In that episode, we spoke with special guest Deon Quinn, Region 10 Program Coordinator of Homeless and Foster Programs.

"Despite having more than 10 years of experience as an educator, I was completely unaware of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. If I didn't know what some policies were to protect and support our students, I imagined that I wasn't the only educator that didn't know," Torrence said.

Inspired by the podcast, Torrence asked me to collaborate with her to create a campus-wide learning opportunity based on the series. We created "Step in Podcast PD" for other educators to learn about equity. Educators completed reflections for each episode, shared their ideas with colleagues, and met as a group to process their learning.

Our Digital Learning Team continues our self-work journey. We follow and learn from new voices on Twitter, blogs, books, videos, and podcasts. We work to amplify the voices of people from marginalized groups. Discussions frequently include topics surrounding equity, diversity, and inclusion, and we offer support and suggestions for additional ways to #stepinforequity.

Listen to the entire "Step In" series at [bit.ly/stepin-series](https://bit.ly/stepin-series).

Follow Digital Learning Radio:

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## **The Long Road to a Dream Job**

**Author: Ramona Oats**

**Region 10 Program Coordinator, Personnel & Certification Services**

You just can't predict if the road to your dream job has a detour in store for you. Just ask Dawn Thompson. With more than 25 years of dedicated experience as a Registered Respiratory Therapist, she decided to pursue her true calling – she became a teacher. Her inspiration? She wanted to teach students what she needed to learn back in high school.

"If I would have had a taste of this career field in high school, I could have gotten my feet where they needed to be earlier on," Thompson explained. "I want to give kids an early view of their potential in these fields, so they can determine if this is the right line of work for them. I want to give them the confidence and knowledge they need to enter the job market."

Thompson is now teaching *Clinical Practicum for Health Science and Medical Terminology* at Plano East Senior High School. She is also one of nearly 350 educators from across the region who has joined our Region 10 CERTification program. Our CERTification Program teaches candidates best practices of effective teaching, how to deliver instruction in a virtual and face-to-face classroom, and the importance of building positive relationships with students, colleagues, and parents.

Most of our candidates have recently graduated from college or are transitioning from another profession, which means acquiring a Texas teaching credential. Our application process is intentionally rigorous to ensure we are selecting the best possible teachers for our students. Once accepted, candidates begin pre-service pedagogical training where they receive valuable information from our highly skilled consultants. Next, candidates are hired by a district as full-time intern teachers or selected as clinical teachers. During the internship or clinical teaching experience, our consultants observe and evaluate the candidates as they teach and provide specific feedback in order to improve their skills.

"As soon as I started working in the field, I felt like I was an educator because it was my job to teach patients everything they needed to know in order to be healthy, and then to check for understanding," Thompson said. "I am excited to be part of the Region 10 CERTification program because I know it will help me develop the skills I need to be a successful teacher."

While there are many challenges for today's teachers, our Region 10 CERTification Program teaches them to prepare for the unexpected by providing relevant lessons that will meet the needs of each student while maintaining a professional, ethical demeanor at all times.

No two people learn the same way, so Region 10 offers both fully online coursework delivery or blended model coursework delivery (80% online, 20% face-to-face). You get to choose what works best for you.

To learn more about our Region 10 CERTification Program, we encourage you to explore our website: [region10.org/programs/teacher-certification](https://region10.org/programs/teacher-certification). You never know, you may just discover your true calling.

## **Region 10 Year in Review**

- Personal Protective Equipment distributed to 250 ISDs, Charters & Private Schools
- 11,500+ hours of technical assistance provided since March 2020
- 7,500+ views of Self Care & COVID e-newsletters created by Region 10
- 813,736 training hours delivered
- 483 School Safety Training & Round Table participants
- 13,000 views of Special Education Parent Webinars
- 1+ million students served by the Multi Region Purchasing Cooperative member LEAs
- 3 million at-home learning pages printed
- 3,000 participants in 12 emergency remote learning webinars within one week of the pandemic
- 3,225 new followers on Region 10's social media
- 171 teachers, counselors, & diagnosticians certified through Region 10
- 5,500+ Early Childhood professionals attended high-quality early childhood sessions
- 1,045 seats filled at the first Region 10 Virtual Fine Arts Summit

**Region 10 ESC**  
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