

portraits

Amarillo Independent School District | Volume 12 • 2023



Our Ensemble of **More**

Getting More From Education

DOING MORE, BEING MORE,
ACHIEVING MORE

PLUS:

State of the District
Safety Progress

@ I HAVE FRIENDS. @

AISD provides excellent opportunities for students to learn. My three students all had many opportunities and were well-prepared for college and beyond.



👍 Likes

💬 Comments

➦ Share

We are new to the district from private school and I have been thoroughly impressed with their response to our concerns and also they are accessible.



• I belong at this place. ★ * I feel safe and smart. *

this school makes me actually feel like I have a meaning.



I love the school because they love me. 😊



No matter how many times I have questions, they are always happy to help.



When I was new, every person was Σ nice. Σ

I was homeschooled and I can say my kids flourish in a school setting more than they do at home so I am glad AISD has kept its doors open.



The teachers reach hearts and not just the brain.



AM-TECH is a game-changer for the students in AISD.

AMARILLO ISD

PROUD TO BE HOME TO THE

PANHANDLE'S ONLY 2023

NATIONAL MERIT FINALISTS



Michael Carathers
Amarillo High School



Connor Castaneda
Caprock High School



William Ellis
Tascosa High School



Elijah Hamilton
Tascosa High School



Lily Sobey
Amarillo High School



Jeffrey Zheng
Amarillo High School

SEMIFINALISTS:

Amarillo High School:
Mehtan Rahman

COMMENDED:

Amarillo High School:
Eleanor Archer, Serenity Canales,
Sofia Deichert, Steven Jalbert,
Kaylie Ledbetter, Nathaniel Logsdon

Tascosa High School:
Ethan Evans

NATIONAL MERIT recognition is one of the most distinguished honors a high school student can earn. Over the last decade, Amarillo ISD is the only area school district to consistently produce National Merit Scholars.





Mission

TO GRADUATE **EVERY** STUDENT PREPARED FOR
LIFE AND SUCCESS BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL.

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Volume 12 • 2023

AI SD Portraits, an award-winning magazine published by the AI SD Communications Department, serves as an annual report to the community. The stories inside are intended to educate readers of the district's ongoing efforts to graduate every student prepared for life and success.

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CONTENTS



more for Everyone:

These are the stories of real students and the real difference made by getting “More” from their education. Emerald took a chance on herself as a dancer and one good thing led to another and another. Dance has a way of bringing all different kinds of people together, says Palo Duro Dance Director Erik Prospero. “Dance is a universal language. Anyone can understand dance. In every culture and every society, there is dance.”



“Warriors who are good with kids.”
 Officially a police department, AISD PD adds officers and focuses on one mission. “We have a responsibility to make sure schools are safe,” says Chief Paul Bourquin.

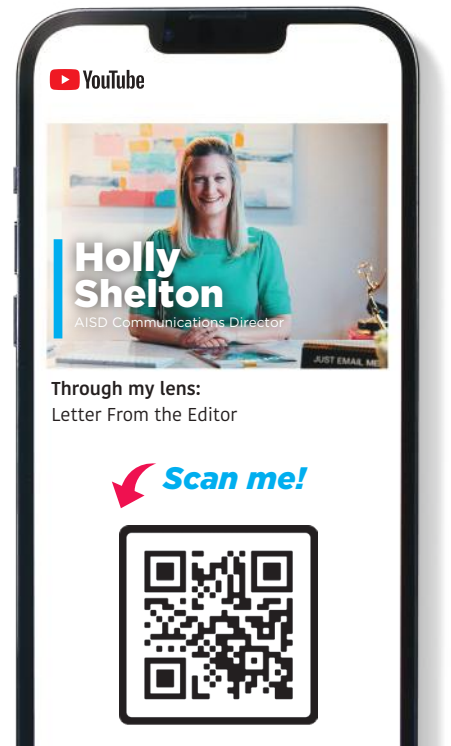


AmTech Hour Extravaganza:
 From helping load the Bible on a tablet to installing routine updates, AmTech students provide invaluable tech support at Amarillo’s Park Central Retirement Community.



InSync & Ready to Read:
 See what the path to reading looks like in early childhood education and how you can support the littlest learners along the way.

More:
 10 / STATE OF THE DISTRICT
 25 / SCHOOL CALENDAR





The Secret to Their Success

The Large District Luxuries That Help Turn High School Champions Into College Standouts



In Amarillo ISD,

the word **"More"** and the confident optimism of all it promises is becoming our identity. Here, **more** means exclusive opportunities to do **more** and experience **more**. It means **more** training and **more** resources, empowering students to achieve **more** and elevating them into champions. **More** means more support and better outcomes, so our students—no matter who they are, where they come from or what challenges they face—take it all in and leave here capable of so much **more**.

But don't take our word for it. These are the stories of students built up by **more**, by the people, places and programs not available anywhere else for miles and miles.

In Amarillo ISD, bigger means **more**. Our size is our superpower.

more
AISD
more



At just 16, Amarillo High's Eleanor Archer is already a three-time UIL state tennis champion with gold medals in mixed doubles, girls' singles and team tennis. Eleanor will graduate high school in May—she says she skipped kindergarten—with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. No other school in the Panhandle offers the IB diploma, which is known for its rigorous, high-level academic expectations. Then, Eleanor heads to Washington University in St. Louis where she is committed to playing tennis.

If it sounds like a lot, it's because it is a lot. But, Eleanor says there's no real secret to her success other than hard work and catching some solid Z's. "I think we go to sleep a lot earlier than a lot of other people," laughs Eleanor.

She certainly wasn't sleeping when opportunities to chase those championships and a chance to take her game to the next level came along. With its 13 percent acceptance rate and stellar reputation, getting into Washington for both academics and athletics is no easy feat, especially in a sport that sees a ton of international recruits. "I thought getting recruited to play in college was pretty difficult," says Eleanor, who acknowledges one simple advantage from her time as a high school tennis player that might have given her an edge in the recruitment circuit. "I've learned to play as part of a team. A lot of colleges look for good team players and doubles players, not just individuals."

As a sophomore, Eleanor spent some time with AISD's athletic trainers rehabbing a shoulder injury. The District has the most robust sports medicine program in the area and students are able to benefit from therapies that might include a foam roller, a whirlpool hydrotherapy tub or physical therapy exercises. "Even today, I still do the exercises they showed me," says Eleanor. The experience inspired her to want to become an orthopedic surgeon. "I want to

be able to help other athletes like that."

Luxuries like a dynamic sports medicine program contribute significantly to AISD's ability to develop and support high school champions who, like Eleanor, have the talent and work ethic to potentially become college champions. AISD's size is its strength, says Assistant Athletic Director Justin Hefley. "The level of competition that our athletes play day in and day out is a real advantage," notes Justin. "And, we have luxuries which elevate their play."

The fierce competition of 5A powerhouse players, plus the important advantages bigger schools can provide combine to create a formula for success. "What it comes down to is we have the coaches who are dedicated experts in their sport, we have the training component with weights and speed, we have the medical support with athletic trainers and team doctors, we have the built-in competition from big schools, and you put it all together and we're producing those kinds of athletes," says Justin.

Amarillo ISD has a full roster of those kinds of athletes making a name for themselves in the college scene right now. Amarillo High's Luke Laminack and Tascosa's Major Everhart were on the field with TCU at the college football national championship in January, Amarillo High's Zayla Tinner won a national junior college women's basketball championship with Northwest Florida State College in March, not to mention former Sandie Brendan Hausen who plays basketball at Villanova. And there are many AISD standouts who are now football, volleyball as well as track and field student athletes at Texas Tech and West Texas A&M. The list goes on and on.

Soon, Eleanor will join the ranks of high school champions who level-up and, hopefully, become, college champions. "I feel like I'm always surrounded by people who push me to be better."

“What it comes down to is we have the coaches who are dedicated experts in their sport, we have the training component with weights and speed, we have the medical support with athletic trainers and team doctors, we have the built-in competition from big schools.”



more
AISD
SEE ELEANOR
IN ACTION



Shine Bright Like a Diamond

Three of Amarillo ISD's Most Exclusive Opportunities Help Emerald

In high school, the key to being successful is often just a matter of being involved in anything at all. As a cheerleader at Palo Duro High, Emerald Htee Wah Naing was as involved as anyone. Ask any of Emerald's teachers and they'll say she is a gem of a student. But it wasn't until Emerald stepped out of her comfort zone and took a chance on some other unique opportunities at her school that she really began to shine.

"I think becoming a Diamond is the best decision I ever made," says Emerald. By "Diamond", she means a Don Diamond Dancer, Palo Duro's dance team. All four AISD high schools offer dance for PE and fine arts credit and for those who want to

take it a step further, each has its own unique dance team.

School dance programs aren't offered anywhere else in the Panhandle and with each year, Amarillo ISD's program grows in size and variety. At Amarillo High, for example, next school year students will be able to enroll in yoga for PE or fine arts credit. These kinds of experiences wouldn't exist for many students if not for their public school.

Dance turned out to be a real jewel for Emerald, giving her the confidence to dream bigger and take big steps toward making those dreams come true. "If I wasn't a Diamond, I don't think I would have ever been able to go to AmTech," she says.

AmTech Career Academy is Amarillo ISD's premier high school hub for career and technical education. There's nothing like it anywhere else in the state. This school year, 2,600 students spend a portion of their school day away from their home campus at AmTech immersed in 28 programs of study. As a practicum student in AmTech's School of Law and Public Service, Emerald is an intern at the Amarillo College (AC) Police Department.

"Dance pushes you to learn to work under pressure which is a really great skill in the real world. I would never have gone to AmTech and been confident to learn to network with so many different types of people without it," she says.



With that confidence, Emerald is polishing her plans for the future and adding to her collection of industry certifications, a perk of an AmTech education. Along with 911 Dispatch, Private Security Level 2, CPR, and FEMA, Emerald, who speaks three languages—English, her native Burmese and Karen—hopes to soon be certified as a court interpreter.

“*Dance pushes you to learn to work under pressure which is a really great skill in the real world. I would never have gone to AmTech and been confident to learn to network with so many different types of people without it.*”

In the fall, she'll start at Amarillo College with the eventual goal of law school. With acceptance to West Texas A&M, the University of North Texas, and AC, Emerald had her pick of several colleges. She chose AC because of yet another AISD exclusive opportunity, the Thrive Scholarship. Thrive is a full ride to Amarillo College for AISD graduates who qualify. For Emerald, it's all life-changing. “Definitely life-changing,” she agrees. “There are so many different opportunities. You never know what's going to be headed your way. Don't be scared.”



more
AISD
WATCH EMERALD
PERFORM

Ed-YOU-cation

Individualized Programs Help Every Student Find Their Fit

A nervous Kendra Murray flings her hands, trying to loosen up in the chilly spring air. Decked out in Rebel red and black, complete with matching Jordan low tops, the Tascosa High School senior grips the shot put ball and brings it to her chin before lunging the 8.8-pound sphere 14 feet across the field. The throw was a personal record for Kendra, and the wise words of her dad echoed in her mind. “My first time throwing, I threw very low but I didn't have any competition so I still won an award. I wasn't happy about it because it just didn't feel like I earned it. And then my dad told me that sometimes it's not about competing against someone else and winning, it's about competing against yourself.”





“ My first time throwing, I threw very low but I didn't have any competition so I still won an award. I wasn't happy about it because it just didn't feel like I earned it. And then my dad told me that sometimes it's not about competing against someone else and winning, it's about competing against yourself.”

In so many ways, Kendra competes against herself every day of her life since receiving a spinal cord injury in a car accident just days before the start of her freshman year. And Kendra is definitely keeping score. “I told myself that I wanted to make my senior year my year and I wanted to make this year different and change my life for the better. I used to be very hard on myself and wouldn't think of small things as success. Now I realize even if it's one of the tiniest things, like waking up in the morning, that is an accomplishment.”

AISD has the systems and culture in place to help any student, no matter their background or challenges, be successful in school and beyond. That means providing services and support for students with any kind of special need, ability or learning difference, even those that fall outside of the special education umbrella. Robust ESL programs and dual language campuses support second-language learners. Hundreds of gifted learners take part in the District's dynamic GT programs that extend through the summer.

There are individualized services for students with learning disabilities, those on the autism spectrum and those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or blind. “Special education encompasses a broad range of students and abilities,” says AISD Special Education Coordinator Jessica Hathaway. “We serve students with ADHD to autism to those with multiple disabilities.”

When a student is ready, the District's comprehensive transitional services help bridge the gap between school and adulthood. Project Search, for example, is a collaborative effort between AISD, Northwest Texas Healthcare System (NWTHS), Texas Workforce Solutions and Quest Employment Services. The one-year program places special education students in intensive internship roles at NWTHS in jobs such as receiving deliveries and stocking shelves, sterilizing instruments, prepping meal trays, or answering phones. Many of these students retain their jobs after graduation. “We're going to make sure our students are successful after high school and we have the support in place to meet their needs in our district now and beyond high school,” says Jessica.

As her senior year wraps up, Kendra is looking beyond high school toward a career, thanks to a whole new side of herself she discovered as a student-teacher through AISD's Instructional Practices of Education and Training (IPET) practicum. Her IPET assignment just happens to be in a special education classroom. It's serendipitous, says Kendra. “I love being a teacher. I love being around the students. They are funny and so sweet and that really is the best part of my day. I see myself doing this for a long time.”



more
AISD
SEE KENDRA
IN ACTION



Unexpectedly Rare

Where Many Schools Don't Offer Orchestra, Amarillo ISD Introduces Students to Strings in Fifth Grade



“ *Music is very introspective in the way you can learn so much about yourself you wouldn't know otherwise. Almost like having a diary, you can convey so many emotions through music when words might be awkward or wouldn't do it justice.*

When Quan Nguyen is on stage with his violin, he likes to take a moment to just take it all in. “Especially in the slower movements when everything is more at peace and I’m more in control, I like to look at the audience and see how they react to my music,” says Quan.

The 15-year-old Amarillo High freshman began learning the piano at age six and the violin a year later. Now, he’s regarded as a prodigy and has even been invited to play a challenging repertoire of music with the West Texas A&M University Symphony Orchestra.

Quan is indeed a rare student, agrees Amarillo High Orchestra Director Breanna Parker. When she and her husband moved with their kids from Wisconsin to the Amarillo area, Breanna discovered school orchestra programs are unexpectedly rare in the Panhandle. “When we lived in Wisconsin, orchestra was considered common and every school district offered it along with choir and band,” says Breanna. Growing up, Breanna’s band director parents encouraged her to play an instrument that she loved to hear, so she took up the cello. “And I have never regretted choosing that instrument,” she says. It’s no surprise Breanna values orchestra as a choice among the fine arts.

Amarillo ISD students can enter the strings program in the fifth grade and the District provides instruments at low or no

cost for students who need them. Besides AISD, no other public school in the area offers orchestra, most often because small school districts don’t have the resources or the student population to support band, choir and orchestra.

Yet, the effects of music training on the brain can be significant. We’ve all heard of the “Mozart Effect,” the idea that music boosts IQ. Study after study suggests that students who play an instrument perform better in the classroom and on tests than those who don’t. College music majors are the most likely group to be admitted to medical school.

Even for those not on the path to an MD, the ability to read and play music can lead to other lucrative opportunities. “A lot of times people only connect playing an instrument to music careers, but there is a vast array of musicians who don’t even touch an instrument and can make a six-figure salary in the music industry,” says Breanna.

That is music to Quan’s ears. The young maestro imagines himself becoming a music professor and dreams of playing on stages all over the world. “It just fills me with excitement,” he says. “Music is very introspective in the way you can learn so much about yourself you wouldn’t know otherwise. Almost like having a diary, you can convey so many emotions through music when words might be awkward or wouldn’t do it justice.”



more
AISD
LISTEN TO QUAN
PERFORM



State of the District

55
schools

2,098
teachers

30,343
students

Do **more**^{AI}SD Exclusive Opportunities

- String Orchestra offered beginning in 5th grade
- The area's only high school dance curriculum
- Competitive high school swim teams
- Advanced Academics: 9 UT OnRamps + 28 Advanced Placement + 11 dual credit courses offered.
- Specialty Diplomas: International Baccalaureate (IB) and AP Capstone
- 2,300 students enrolled in AmTech, the nation's premier career academy
- 575 industry-based certifications earned by students last year in advanced-level CTE courses
- 30+ Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs of Study offered
- The area's only opportunity to earn the respected International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma program.
- Thrive Scholarship: For students who qualify, the Thrive Scholarship is their reward for working hard in high school. Exclusive to Amarillo ISD, Thrive picks up the tab for 60 hours of college credit at Amarillo College, along with books and fees.

Achieve ^{more} *more*

Next-level athletes, state champions, national champions, super scholars

- More Champion Athletes: 35 playoff berths, 12 district champions, 8 regional qualifiers, 2 state champions (THS Boys Wrestling, AHS Team Tennis)
- More Fine Arts Champions: 6 All-State Musicians, 3 All-State Dancers, 14 Qualifiers for 2023 State Visual Art Scholastic Event, 1 Winner and 3 Qualifiers in UIL State Student Congress, 4 Qualifiers in UIL State Cross-Examination Debate, 6 Qualifiers to the National Speech and Debate Association Tournament, 14 Qualifiers in the State Texas Forensic Association Speech Tournament, 11 Qualifiers in the Texas High School Mock Trial Competition, 150 music students qualifying for Texas State Solo and Ensemble competition
- National Champion Caprock MCJROTC Drill Team
- National Champion Amarillo High Sandie Steppers
- AmTech E-Sports recognized by USA Today as a Top 10 program in Texas
- AISD student qualifies for National Spelling Bee for the second year in a row
- 6 National Merit Finalists, 1 National Merit Semifinalist, 7 National Merit Commended Scholars
- AISD consistently produces National Merit Scholars, year after year



Be ^{more} *more* EdYOUcation

More expertise means more possibilities

- 921 AP test-takers earned college credit with their AP exam scores
- 181 GT students enrolled in AISD summer gifted camps
- 152 GT students attended AISD after-school gifted enrichment programs
- \$36,164,005 in college scholarship offers for the Class of 2022
- Since 2018, Project Search has helped prepare 46 students with significant disabilities for success in competitive integrated employment. Project Search is a collaborative effort between AISD, NWTSS, Texas Workforce Solutions and Quest Employment Services.

AISSD PD

NEW OFFICERS ARE ON THE JOB AND
MAKING FRIENDS **in Elementary Schools**





“ THIS JOB GIVES ME A WAY TO CHANGE THE COMMUNITY BY INTERACTING WITH KIDS AND HAVING A POSITIVE INFLUENCE EARLY IN THEIR LIVES. ”

On an ordinary Wednesday between Thanksgiving and Christmas, the chaos at Rogers Elementary, though organized, was anything but ordinary. Newly sworn-in Amarillo ISD Police Officer Josh Newlun was just settling into his third day on the job when he arrived at Rogers that morning. Second graders behaving like, well, kids at Christmas, filled the cafeteria, each clutching a brand new bicycle courtesy of Xcel Energy and The United Way. Josh surveyed the room. A boy in the corner of the cafeteria caught his eye. What happened next wasn't Josh's law enforcement instinct kicking in, but instead, the kind of intuition that comes from just being a dad. "I could tell he didn't know how to ride the bike," he recalls. Josh and the boy made their way outside. Volunteers guided the excited students anxious to take their new wheels for a spin. Josh and the boy joined in, turning a few circles around the parking lot to get the hang of things. "There's nothing that makes your heart happier. I thoroughly enjoyed it," says Josh.

If a good day on the job is measured in smiles, hugs and high fives, this is Josh's lucky day. As he finished with one student, another awaited his help and one more after that. This is exactly why Josh took the job. "I worked narcotics for years and that is really the point of no return for many people. Putting someone away for life is not an effective way of changing the community. This job gives me a way to change the community by interacting

with kids and having a positive influence early in their lives," he says.

When it comes to Amarillo ISD's freshly formed police department, that's kind of the point. "Having officers in an elementary school, they are able to start interacting with kids at an early age and change the culture before kids get to high school," says AISD Police Chief Paul Bourquin.

In April 2021, the Amarillo ISD School Board voted to begin the process of establishing a district police

department, with Paul as chief. More than 300 Texas school districts have their own police departments, mostly because it makes sense at a time when resources are stretched thin for many law enforcement agencies. Until now, AISD relied solely on local police and sheriff's departments, with the District funding the bulk of salaries and benefits for high school liaison officers and footing the bill for off-duty officers at middle schools, when—and sometimes if—officers were available. Commissioning its own police department, while leveraging the support of Amarillo Police, gives the District more control and flexibility to meet the safety needs of 55 campuses, 30,000 students and more than 5,000 employees.

Paul came to AISD in 2017 to direct the District's safety and security efforts. His background is peppered with experience that uniquely qualifies him for the complex demands of developing a school district police department, with stints as a patrol officer, an arson investigator, and even a few years in the classroom teaching middle schoolers. Now Paul leads a force of five officers and a handful of support staff. "Our goal and mission, as the police department of Amarillo ISD, is protecting our students and our staff and building relationships. Our search for officers has been very focused on finding warriors who are good with our kids," Paul emphasized.

Though the focus for the AISD Police officers is primarily on developing relationships in elementary schools, each officer is assigned to the feeder pattern of

each school cluster. Paul estimates when officers are in the field, they are never more than three minutes from a school. Not only can they respond quickly where needed, but the structure also allows the new-school officers of AISD PD to really get to know their "beat," in an old-school kind of way, and develop relationships with the families and communities of their assigned schools.

If anecdotal evidence offers any proof, Paul says the relationship approach is already working. "I've had staff come up and say, 'I'm glad you're here.' We've had parents tell us, 'We're so glad you're here.'"

They will wear a lot of hats. It's what the job requires. For Josh, the first few weeks back in December were "like drinking through a fire hose... Games and athletic events, a door that won't shut at a campus, someone who shouldn't be on school grounds, and dealing with a water main break at a school," he recounts.

"It's busy," Paul says, acknowledging the reality of what he has come to know. The days that bring opportunities to teach kids to ride bicycles lend some levity to the pressure of what can be, at times, a heavy job. "We have a responsibility to make sure schools are safe. I have one of my own kids in Amarillo ISD schools. It's a calling and you feel like, 'I need to be here and I need to do this.'"



“ OUR SEARCH FOR OFFICERS HAS BEEN VERY FOCUSED ON FINDING WARRIORS WHO ARE GOOD WITH OUR KIDS. ”

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to attend any other college or university
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EVERYBODY HAS A STORY. AND, IN AMARILLO ISD'S FAMILY OF STUDENTS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS, THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF GREAT ONES. FROM AISD'S REGIONAL EMMY-WINNING SERIES "STORIES," GET TO KNOW THE HEARTS OF SOME OF THOSE WHO MAKE THIS PLACE EXTRAORDINARY.

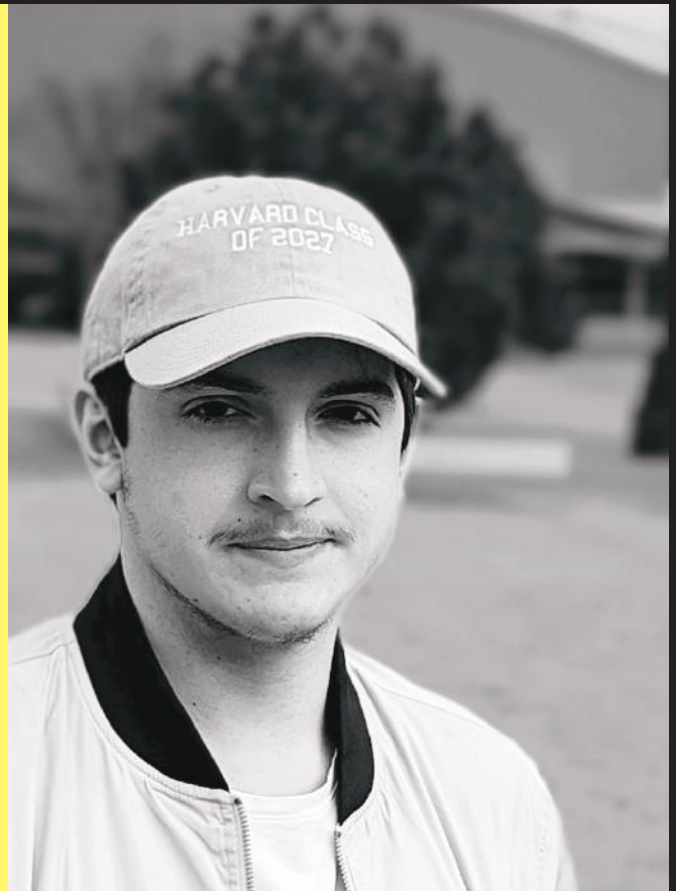
STORIES

(amarillo isd)

Connor

Caprock High School senior Connor Castaneda was in the middle of a shift at Target when he got the news of his life. Shaking with anticipation, his fingers fumbled across his phone. "I probably put in my username and password like ten different times and finally it opened up," recalls Connor. "And then I click on it and it lags for 15 seconds or so, and I'm thinking, that's pretty good because a video or confetti graphics wouldn't load right away." Sure enough, after the longest 15 seconds, the web page—and the confetti he had been waiting for—loads. The message welcomes Connor to the Class of 2027 at Harvard University. Each

year, more than 60,000 hopeful students apply. Harvard accepts fewer than 2,000. Connor is a National Merit scholar, plays in the Caprock band and takes all of the more difficult classes, but he thinks what got him into Harvard is what he puts into everything he does. "You know, I'm not the best in band, but man, I go and try my best. I do science. I work hard to satisfy my own brain. A lot of people just see me, but they don't see what goes in." With Harvard a mere 1,904 miles from Caprock High School, Connor knows things will be a bit different. "Worse Mexican food, better seafood," he laughs. "I think it's going to be pretty fun."



*"You know, I'm not the best in band, but man, I go and try my best. I do science. I work hard to satisfy my own brain."
-Connor*



"We won a couple of state championships, and it doesn't trump that. But, it ranks up there and that is really odd to say in a game you didn't win." -Jeff

Jeff

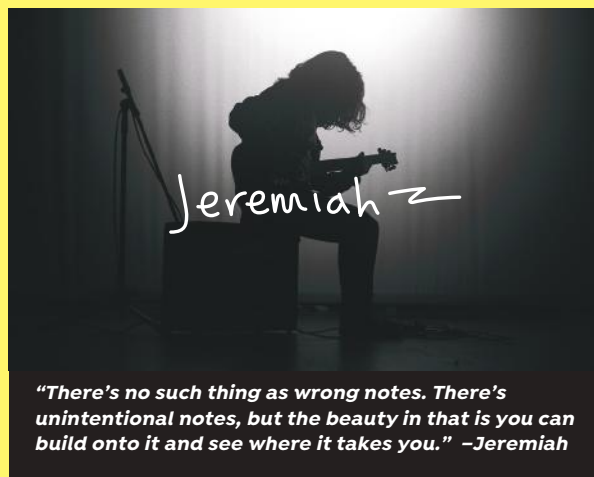
When Amarillo High Lady Sandies basketball coach Jeff Williams finally had time to take a breath and look at his phone following February's regional quarterfinal game, hundreds of text messages were waiting for him. "I've heard from coaches and people all over Texas," says Jeff. Surely, the whole crazy, unbelievable, probably once-in-a-lifetime battle his team waged that night has to rival winning a state championship. It's close, he says, but not quite. "I mean, it's way up there. We won a couple of state championships, and it doesn't trump that. But, it ranks up there and that is really odd to say in a game you didn't win. But when you get to 5 OTs like that... If we had won, it might be at the top." Yeah, about that tough loss... With three-point buzzer-beaters at the end of the third AND fourth overtime periods, the thriller against Lubbock Monterey was the game that just wouldn't quit. Jeff's

Lady Sandies didn't quit either. "I have really no regrets. I don't feel like I should have regrets. Now, there are things I could have done better as a leader. But as far as the girls' perspective, they gave me everything they had." A playoff battle with five overtime periods must surely be some sort of a sports unicorn. It was enough of an enigma to prompt people watching playoff games in other gyms near and far to take out their phones and turn their attention to the spectacle playing out in Littlefield. It was something special, agrees Jeff, even for a guy with a 518-121 record, two state championships—so far—in his time at Amarillo High and whose program Max Preps ranks 23 out of 24,000 public schools in the country. "Coach Hebert looked at college games, and there has been one six overtime game and one five overtime game, and they were in the 1940s, so it's uncharted waters."



Chris ✓

"I've always thought of myself as a teacher first. And when I retired, I realized I wasn't ready to walk away from education. I just wanted to change my focus." -Chris



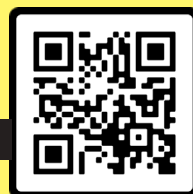
Jeremiah z

"There's no such thing as wrong notes. There's unintentional notes, but the beauty in that is you can build onto it and see where it takes you." -Jeremiah



BETH

"I serve in the company of heroes and I am better for the company that I keep." -Beth



Watch Stories

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MONTHLY TEACHER RECOGNITION PROGRAM

AMTECH IT STUDENTS

Make Help Desk House Calls



“I have a Kindle,” says a petite woman, device in hand, walking toward a table where two high school students are seated. Palo Duro High School senior Jerry Phan and Amarillo High School senior Kyle Cooper are ready to help troubleshoot just about any tricky technology issues the residents of Amarillo’s Park Place Towers at Park Central can bring them.

Kyle and Jerry, interns from AISD’s AmTech Career Academy, provide IT services for many properties owned by Baptist Community Services, which include senior living communities like Park Place. The Information Technology Support and Services pathway is one of four areas of study in AmTech’s School of STEM and Information Technology.

Within nine Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools of study, AmTech students can choose from among 28 diverse career pathways, such as IT Support and Services.

On this Tuesday afternoon, the dynamic IT duo of Jerry and Kyle are hosting AmTech Hour Extravaganza, an opportunity for the residents of Park Place to sit down for one-on-one help with everything from flip phones to printer connections. Few would argue there is nothing more annoying than a printer that just won’t print. While Jerry and Kyle provide valuable services and sharpen their own IT skills, they’re also learning some things they didn’t expect. “Apart from the IT technology side, I’m learning how to talk to people. My

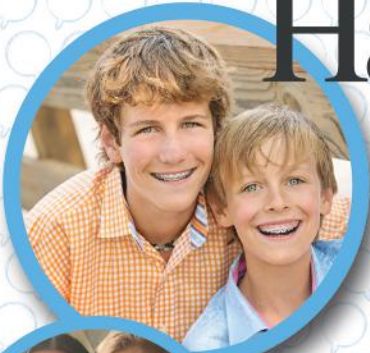
social skills have definitely gone way up because of working with the residents,” says Jerry. “It helps me realize the need to be clear and concise with words and ensure the people I’m helping know what I’m talking about.”

But the talk isn’t all tech, says Jerry. “They come with a lot of interesting stories,” he says. “I met a person here who met Marilyn Monroe, and I just found that fascinating.”

“ My social skills have definitely gone way up because of working with the residents. It helps me realize the need to be clear and concise with words and ensure the people I’m helping know what I’m talking about.”

smile
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Reading.

Let's be honest, does it feel like a chore? What if you could reclaim the fun in reading? What if reading with your child could be a chance for connection instead of just an item to mark off a checklist? Let's start there — you have permission to let reading just be fun! Because when it comes to supporting your child's literacy skills at home, connection and creativity can lead the way.

Connection.

As a parent or a caring family member, when you read with your young children, focus on the time spent together instead of the technicalities of the process. "One of the most high-leverage things that parents can do is to simply read to their kids. Sometimes as parents, we think that is not enough, but it truly is," says Brittany Hinz, Amarillo ISD's Early Childhood Education Director.

Enjoyment.

Enjoying reading is a huge win for kids and sets them up to enjoy reading for the rest of their lives. So, what makes reading enjoyable for kids? You do! Your presence and your attitude have a huge impact on how your child approaches reading. Beyond that, kids also enjoy routine. Let reading be a part of your daily routine. Maybe it is a moment in the afternoon, or maybe it is a moment before bed.

Creativity.

Supporting your child's literacy can go beyond the pages of a book too! For example, cooking together can provide a ton of opportunities to support reading and vocabulary, and you don't need any special skills or tools.

Partners.

Remember that you are not alone! If your child is a part of an AISD Pre-K or Elementary classroom, you have partners in this reading journey. At school, your child is surrounded by highly qualified professionals (teachers, librarians, reading resource specialists) who are leading and assisting your child in the technical development of their reading skills. The classroom experience is key in building literacy. It also highlights the beauty of a system that is InSync! Educators can provide their technical expertise, while families can lean into connection and creativity, and together work to help our children thrive in reading!

Community.

Not only does your family have the benefit of partnering with teachers and school staff, but there is a deep community of support. AISD is proud to collaborate with one local source of support, Storybridge. Thanks to the organization, every family in Potter and Randall County with a child between birth – 5 years old is eligible to enroll in "Dolly Parton's Imagination Library" to receive an age-appropriate book in the mail every month for free.

Reading for Life



AMARILLO ISD

Ever wonder

what that path to reading looks like in early childhood education?

Here's a quick glimpse...



In a Pre-K classroom, students will be:

- Listening to stories for enjoyment
- Understanding that books tell a story
- Handling books every day
- Pretending to read
- Hearing how books sound
- Practicing rhyming and alliteration
- Recognizing letters
- Recognizing that letters make words and words make sentences



In a Kindergarten and 1st Grade classroom, students will be:

- Building on foundational skills
- Hearing words and saying words (phonological awareness)
- Beginning to decode words (sounding them out and beginning to read!)
- Hearing higher-level texts read aloud
- Reading lower-level texts to themselves
- Going to the school library on a regular basis



In a 2nd Grade classroom, students will be:

- Building vocabulary and foundational skills
- Reading rich and complex texts to themselves
- Going to the school library and checking out books of interest

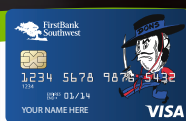
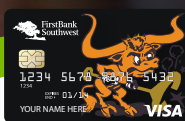
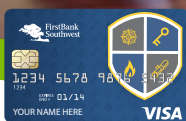


For more tips and encouragement checkout this video from InSync all about reading with your kids!



“The Amarillo community always rallies for our schools. That legendary AISD school spirit is a perfect fit for the FirstBank Southwest School Spirit Card program. It’s an easy way to make a difference for our students just by doing the things we are already doing.”

Doug Loomis
AISD Superintendent



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July 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 July 4 - Staff Holiday	August 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 August 4 - Professional Development August 7-10 - Professional Development August 11, 14 - Teacher Preparation August 15 - First Day of Instruction August 15 - Beginning of Grading Period	September 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 September 4 - Student/Staff Holiday September 22 - End of Six Weeks, 28 days September 25 - Beginning of Grading Period	October 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 October 6 - Student/Staff Holiday October 9 - Student Holiday/ Campus Directed Work Day	November 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 November 3 - End of Six Weeks, 28 days November 6 - Beginning of Grading Period November 22-24 - Student/Staff Holiday
December 2023 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 December 5-8 - Testing December 15 - End of Six Weeks, 26.5 days, End of Semester, 82.5 days, and Student Early Release/Teacher Prep. (p.m.) December 18-22 - Student/Staff Holiday December 25-29 - Student/Staff Holiday	January 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 January 1-3 - Student/Staff Holiday January 4 - Student Holiday/ Campus Directed Work Day January 5 - Student Holiday/ Teacher Preparation January 8 - Beginning of Grading Period January 15 - Student Holiday/ Campus Directed Work Day	February 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 February 15 - End of Six Weeks, 28 days February 16 - Student/Staff Holiday February 19 - Student Holiday/ Campus Directed Work Day February 20 - Beginning of Grading Period	March 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 March 11-15 - Student/Staff Holiday March 29 - Student/Staff Holiday	April 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 April 1 - Student Holiday/ Campus Directed Work Day April 5 - End of Six Weeks, 27 days April 8 - Beginning of Grading Period April 16-19 - Testing April 22-26 - Testing April 29-30 - Testing
May 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 May 1-3; May 6-10; May 13-17 - Testing May 24 - End of Six Weeks, 34.5 days, End of Semester, 89.5 days, and Student Early Release/Teacher Prep. (p.m.) May 24 - Last Day of Instruction May 27 - Staff Holiday May 28 - Campus Directed Work Day May 29-31 - Staff Only/Make Up Days (Snow Days)	June 2024 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 June 18-21 - Testing	○ First/Last Day of Instruction 📎 Testing 📅 Teacher Preparation 📁 Professional Development/Campus Directed Work Day 🟢 Holiday / Student Early Release/Teacher Prep (p.m.) 🏠 Beginning of Grading Period 🟠 End of Grading Period ❄️ Staff Only/Make-up Days (Snow Days)		

(Approved January 23, 2023)

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