

“Great Things about West ISD”

By David Truitt, Superintendent

Back when I was a middle school principal in the Katy, Texas, I attended a weekend leadership retreat that included a training module called, *Capturing Kids’ Hearts*. This training session was created by a Texas A&M graduate named Flip Flippen who believed in an uncompromising mission: To build relationships and processes that bring out the best in people. With an emphasis on changing behaviors and attitudes that stand in the way of success, Flippen has helped organizations – from small rural school districts to Fortune 500 companies – achieve dramatic improvement in performance, leadership, trust, and productivity. He believes, like me, that truly remarkable outcomes are possible in a classroom where trust, respect, and caring relationships flourish. *Capturing Kids’ Hearts* provides tools for administrators, faculty, and staff to build positive, productive, trusting relationships — among themselves and with their students. These processes can transform the classroom and campus environment, paving the way for high performance.

One segment of the training is an exercise called “Good Things.” In order to promote a positive caring atmosphere in the classroom, *Capturing Kids’ Hearts* invites teachers to sponsor a portion of their class time for “Good Things.” When sharing good things, the goal of the activity centers on the hope to promote a positive attitude, encourage everyone to share, and build a sense of community within the class among all students. Sharing “Good Things” just takes a couple of minutes from each class period, but has long lasting effects. “Good Things” can include any aspect of life from school, faith, friends, or family. It is a great way to build confidence and positive, powerful relationships.

At the beginning of any West ISD meeting, I love to ask members of our leadership team to share “Good Things.” I know our campus principals begin their campus meetings this way as well. It is a great way to kick-off a meeting, so everyone can hear the positives or great things that are happening across our district and community. This is a purposeful activity to remind our team what is truly important, and that there are always things we should be thankful for in our daily work with our students. We know we are blessed in West, so “Good Things” gives us an avenue to shout it from the mountaintops. For this article, I thought I would share a few “Good Things” that are happening right now in our wonderful school district. Frankly, I even feel the need to change the name to “Great Things,” because “good” doesn’t quite fit the level of achievement our students are accomplishing right now. School has only been in session for ten-weeks, and our students are already doing incredible things.

Here are a few “Great Things” that are happening across West ISD:

- The West High School Pride of West Marching Band finished 11th at the University Interscholastic League (UIL) Area Contest. The band was 4 points away from a Top 10 finish and trip to Finals.
- West High School students, Allison Sexton and Katelyn Mayes, advanced to the State UIL Twirling contest.
- The West High School Trojan Football Team finished 9-1 on the season and second in District play. The 9-wins is the most for a Trojan team since 1992, and the Trojans have not lost a home game in two seasons.

- The West High School Lady Trojan Volleyball Team finished 30-12 on the season and won District (again). The team has not lost a District Match in two seasons, and the 30-wins is an all-time high for the end of a regular season.
- The West High School Boys' Cross Country Team advanced to the Regional Meet and finished 12th, and senior, James Wachsmann, advanced to State.
- Our West High School junior and senior classes are enrolled in over 260 dual credit courses at McLennan Community College.
- Eighteen West High School students are enrolled in our new Health Science course strand and are receiving specialized training for future careers in the medical field.
- Over 125 West Middle School students are enrolled in the new Project Lead the Way Gateway Engineering program. These students are learning all about STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and math) careers and skills.
- Six West ISD Destination Imagination Creative Problem Solving Teams are signed up for the Capital Regional Tournament.
- Our West High School Senior Class of 2016 just completed their "Senior Walk" after our final home football game versus Comanche High School.

As you can see, there are "Great Things" happening all across West ISD, and it is only the beginning of November. Wow, I cannot wait to see what all our students accomplish this school year! We are truly blessed in West ISD to work each day with such outstanding, gifted students. Go Trojans!