

## The Power of Public



By David Truitt, Superintendent

This week, February 27 through March 3, is Texas Public Schools Appreciation Week. With this news, I wanted to take a moment to remind the community of West of the “power” of Texas Public Schools in our community and across Texas. With all the recent talk from Austin about new letter grade accountability standards, cuts in public school funding, bathroom bills, and vouchers, I felt this week was the perfect time to focus on the extraordinary results public schools are achieving in spite of overwhelming challenges at every turn. Our schools, students, and staff rarely receive praise for their hard work and accomplishments, so this article is dedicated to all the wonderful cheerleaders and proud supporters of the mighty West Trojans and Texas Public Schools. We definitely have many reasons to be proud and celebrate!

Recently, I spent some time reviewing all the great things happening in Texas Public Schools on the Friends of Texas Public Schools website at <http://fotps.org>. Just on the front page of their site, the lead news headers center on Texas leading the nation in Early College High School programs, STEM programs, Graduation Rates, Grade 4 and 8 Math Scores, Gains in Reading Scores, and much, much more.

In West ISD alone, we are experiencing all-time levels of success in the areas of athletics, agriculture, academics, and the arts. Our football, volleyball, girls basketball, and boys basketball teams all advanced in the playoffs. Our powerlifting teams are consistently at the top of every meet. Our baseball and softball teams are up for the challenge of defending their state championship titles, and the track and golf teams are preparing for successful seasons. The West High School band just received the news that 19 students are advancing to state in the UIL Solo and Ensemble contest. Our theater department just competed in UIL One Act Play, and our new Musical Theater class is a hit with the students. Our art program is constantly winning awards at numerous art shows, and our new improv troupe, Mission Improvable, is performing all over the community. Fifteen Destination Imagination teams just competed in the Heart of Texas tournament, and we have our highest number of Technology Student Association entries ever in the history of West ISD. West High School is even hosting the upcoming UIL Academic Meet for District 19-3A. I cannot look at social media without seeing the great things that are happening in our FFA program. Just last week, we even learned that Senior, Cade Fleaher, was named a National Merit Finalist. He is one of 15,000 Finalists from across the entire nation who is up for one of 7,500 Merit Scholarships. I also should mention that Cade was just accepted to West Point.

As a reminder, West ISD is a Texas High Performance Consortium Associate School District. West High School finished tied for 6th place in the University Scholastic League (UIL) Lone Star Cup. This finish is the highest in the history of West High School. Teacher.org ranked West ISD as the 36th best school district for Teacher Support in all of Texas. Only 419 school districts in Texas made the rankings, so we appreciate this special recognition from this organization. Educational Results Partnership, or Edresults.org, notified West ISD that both West Middle School and West High School were named Texas Honor Roll campuses. Only 713 campuses were recognized in Texas for this honor, and two West ISD campuses made the list. The U.S. News and World Report recently issued their annual ratings and rankings of the top high schools in the United States. West High School achieved the Bronze Medal for high-performance in student achievement. This rating moved West High School into the top 30% of all high schools across the country. West Middle and High School were named a Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) Academy by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and serve as Texas demonstration schools and learning labs, which develop innovative methods to improve science and math instruction across the state and nation.

As you can see, we have much to be proud of in West ISD. As we celebrate Texas Public Schools Appreciation Week, let's remember the "Power of Public" and all the great things happening in our West ISD schools. I am one proud Superintendent, and I know you will join me in recognizing the hard work and commitment of our students, staff, and parents. Go Trojans!