

## Comfort ISD Ready for Students to Arrive Leslie Vann

Comfort Independent School District students will begin the school year August 22, 2016. The administration and staff have been busy this summer preparing for the arrival of the students. Securing staff, developing a budget, enhancing delivery of curriculum, training staff, addressing facility needs, and preparing for the future are examples of the tasks necessary to assure that Comfort ISD is prepared to cultivate the hearts and minds of the students who enter the doors.

The students will be greeted by familiar staff faces and a number of new administrators and teachers. The Elementary will be led by Donald Love, principal, and Kristin Day, assistant principal. Joshua Limmer is returning to Comfort ISD as the Middle School principal. Comfort High School students will be welcomed by Katherine Kuenstler, principal, and Brad Kinney, assistant principal. Thirteen new teachers have joined the faculty. Students and parents will have an opportunity to meet the staff at meet the teacher events. Dates and times can be located on the CISD website, [comfort.txed.net](http://comfort.txed.net).

Meeting the academic needs of the students continues to be the primary focus for the administration and staff. The administration and District Wide Committee have revised the District Improvement Plan that will serve as the road map for the District. Several teachers have participated in training events specific to their assignments. Secondary math teachers attended CMAT, a math conference that provides up to date resources for math instructors. Several elementary teachers attended an English Language Learners training entitled Abydos. The program is based on brain research and addressed the challenges faced by students when learning vocabulary in two languages. Building a strong foundation in reading and math is crucial for the educational development of children. A team of teachers attended the Texas Education Agency sponsored Reading and Math Academies and will in turn provide training for the appropriate grade level staff. Career and Technology faculty members attended their professional association conferences preparing them to build students' ability to enter the workforce.

Thursday, August 11, teachers and teaching assistants began professional development. Curriculum Director, Mollye Williams, and campus administrators will guide the teachers and teaching assistants through student assessment data. The five lowest TEKS, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, based on student STAAR results will be identified and plans to address the areas will be developed based on the research. Staff will participate in a conference style training that covers ELL, English Language Learner, strategies, academic accommodations, behavior management, inclusion, and intervention. Teachers will receive an orientation on the new teacher appraisal system and a day will be devoted to campus level items including policies and procedures. Comfort ISD staff will also complete required compliance training online using a new program called EDUHERO. Staff will complete modules on bullying, FERPA, blood borne

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pathogens, child abuse awareness and reporting requirements, and suicide awareness. Teachers will also complete Gifted and Talented differentiation training online.

Summer months are the prime time to address facility needs. The maintenance staff completed tasks repairing electrical, plumbing, and structural issues. Several HVAC units were repaired or replaced. The high school received new paint in select areas. A new practice field was installed and will be ready for use the first week of school. The meats lab received a facelift and will be ready for students this fall.

The One-to-One program is entering its second year. The CISD technology team continues to enhance the capacity for educational delivery. All students in grades 6-12 will be given the opportunity to receive an HP Stream computer. Grades 2-5 will have access to iPADS in each classroom. Students and teachers will have access to a new learning management system, Schoology. A team of teachers received training earlier this month and will provide two days of training for all teachers during professional development. The platform is used by 250 plus universities across the nation. Teachers will be able to provide students access to assignments, provide project based learning opportunities, and communicate in real time with students who are working on assignments. Students will be assigned CISD emails this year to be used for academic purposes.

Parental engagement is key to the success of a child's educational growth. Every parent is encouraged to visit their child's campus and participate in the many volunteer opportunities available at every campus. CISD strives to provide information to parents in various formats. The primary source of information will be the Comfort ISD website, [comfort.txed.net](http://comfort.txed.net). Scheduled event dates and times may be viewed in the calendar section of the homepage. There is a wealth of academic information for parents available on each of the District and campus homepages and can be accessed by clicking on the blue box titled Parent Resources. Information provided includes access to the TEKS, the school calendar, handbooks, ESL, GT, Special Education, student assessment resources, and a volume of technology based items. A new feature added to the website this past spring is a translation button that will translate the site into more than 100 languages.

Providing a quality educational program requires that a District continue to make adjustments based on the ever changing educational standards, technology and workforce needs. This fall the District will participate in a strategic planning project. Students, staff, parents, business leaders and community members will have the opportunity to participate in the project that will develop a long range plan for the District. The District is also exploring facility upgrades and a community based facilities committee will be asked to review current facilities, work with the board, administration and the architect firm to develop a long range facilities plan for the District.

Educating students is one of the most important task we have as a community. The administration and staff look forward to working with the parents and community members through out the 2016 – 2017 school year "Cultivating the Hearts and Minds" of the students who enter the halls of Comfort ISD.

