

West Dallas STEM School News

En Español



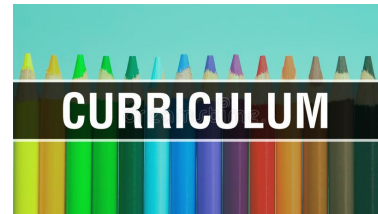
West Dallas

"Despite ongoing disruptions from the pandemic and the chaos created by 'snowpocalypse', the WDSS partnership continues to move forward toward our long-awaited school opening in August, 2021. The items below provide updates on three very unique aspects of our model design: project-based learning, coordination and integration of in- and out-of-school learning, and college and career readiness situated in the middle school grades. Congratulations to the teams who are developing and implementing these innovations!"

-Stephanie Knight, Dean of Simmons School of Education and Human Development

Curriculum Pilot

The start of this year brought the opportunity to pilot a STEM project-based learning unit developed by the Instructional Innovation and Equity Design Team at West Dallas's Pinkston High School. Engineers from Toyota helped kick off the unit in a Zoom meeting with the students in which they described the engineering design process, the notion of continuous improvement, and the importance of collaboration. Student learning activities centered on an engineering challenge of designing a helmet for protection during sports and recreational activities. It also included science concepts related to force and motion, algebraic calculations, and the use of technology to create final presentations of the helmet designs. Toyota employees provided feedback on the students' final presentations. Virtual learning students received materials kits so they were able to participate fully from home, and both the teacher and students found the pilot unit to be a positive experience. West Dallas STEM School design teams will apply lessons learned from this pilot to inform teacher professional development and curriculum development. We are thankful to Principal Marlon Brooks and Teacher Ari Levine and their students for engaging in this exciting opportunity with us.



Launch of Cohort 3 Welcomes Nonprofit Organizations

Six local and national nonprofit organizations have been selected to participate in the West Dallas STEM School's Cohort 3 experience, an intense four-month learning opportunity designed to prepare the nonprofits to collaborate and provide their programs and services to meet the priorities of West Dallas STEM School

students, their families, and the broader community. Cohort 3 is designed for participants to engage in targeted and collaborative work and determine how the nonprofits will be embedded within the school and nearby neighborhoods.

Cohort 3 launched March 5, 2021 and will conclude in June 2021. Cohort 3 nonprofit participants include: Brother Bill's Helping Hand, Dallas Afterschool, Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas, Momentous Institute, Readers 2 Leaders and Wesley-Rankin Community Center.



Launching a Holistic Approach to Empower Students for College and Career Readiness

As enthusiastic 7th and 8th grade students enter the WDSS in August of this year, their community-based school will launch an innovative, holistic approach to empower students to become fully prepared for college and careers in the workplace. WDSS will feature a STEM-focused, place-based curriculum, organize opportunities for students to engage with industry partners, and operate as a hub for wraparound services from community nonprofits.



In addition to the STEM School's unique approach to academic supports for students, college and career readiness programming will focus on adopting and integrating academic mindsets and perseverance, learning strategies to motivate students to complete academic assignments, and social skills to assist students in building peer-to-peer and student-teacher relationships. Students will continue to receive guidance from their school counselors, but they will also receive the benefit of college and career coaches who will coordinate teaching and learning of the non-cognitive skills to ensure alignment with instruction and support students' overall academic performance.

West Dallas STEM School Teacher Recruitment Underway

The success of a school is determined to a large extent by the effectiveness of its teachers. With this in mind, we have created a robust system to attract, support and retain the best teachers in and around the Dallas Fort Worth area. Interviews are ongoing to identify teachers who are collaborative, innovative and ready to meet the needs of our students. Our goal is to create a community of teachers that will cultivate a love for learning in our students and assist them with developing life long skills that can help change the trajectory of their lives.

