

the loop

A quarterly magazine from Lewisville Independent School District

SPRING 2022



MEET DR. RAPP

A conversation
with our new
Superintendent

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Great happenings



Dr. Rapp greets students and staff during campus visits throughout her first week as Superintendent. In her first 100 days as LISD's new leader, Dr. Rapp plans to visit every campus in the district.

DEAR READERS, I am thrilled to be writing to you in my first-ever edition of *The Loop* as Superintendent of Schools for the greatest district in the state of Texas, Lewisville ISD. My experience over the last couple of months as I have visited campuses across the district has absolutely solidified that statement for me. Our staff, students and community amaze me in the things they accomplish day in and day out, and I am so proud to be able to share a little bit of those highlights with you in this spring issue.

You may know a bit about my career at this point, but in this issue of *The Loop*, I'll give you a little glimpse of a more personal side of who I am and where I come from. LISD has become family to me and I am excited to show you why that is.

Spring is a time in our district when festivals and events are happening, and when everyone rallies together as we work through the last nine weeks of school. We recently hosted our annual Chin Festival at Lewisville High School, and if you haven't had the privilege of attending this event, I encourage you to do so in the future. Our Chin community is incredible and you'll get an insider's look at their history and story in this magazine.

It's also the time of year we recognize our outstanding Employee of the Year finalists and winners, which includes our elementary and secondary Teachers of the Year. You'll meet our 10 Teacher of the Year finalists in this issue, who I got to meet and surprise with the great news earlier this semester. The winners will be announced soon, so stay tuned.

You'll read about our technology department and their commitment to not only providing safe digital learning environments for our kids, but also an amazing program they have for students in our technology repair center.

As I close, I want to thank each and every one of you for your incredible support over the last couple of months - staff members, students, families, community members, board members - you each have made my transition into leader of this great district something I will hold in my heart forever.

All my best,

LORI RAPP, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools
Lewisville ISD

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LISD Aquatics

LISD's Aquatic Centers are home to many events, including the second grade swim program. LISD second graders travel to the aquatic centers during their normal class time to learn about the importance of water safety.

Diving in

Elementary school students learn valuable water safety skills

By Delaney Sanders

STUDENTS AT LISD are diving in, one lesson at a time.

For years, LISD has been focused on providing water safety education for our students. The goal is simple—to allow all students to be introduced to the pool and develop basic swimming skills, all during normal class time.

Originally fourth grade students were invited to the pools to participate in these lessons, but former Superintendent Dr. Kevin Rogers sought to change that. With the opening of the Westside Aquatic Center in 2014, LISD began targeting younger students who were more at risk for water-related accidents.

So in 2014, students walked into the massive Westside Aquatic Center for the first time. The building, a 1.3 million-gallon, state-of-the-art facility,

received funding from the 2008 bond. The students were greeted that first morning by Sherry McGuire, who has greeted every class since.

Sherry has been working for the district for 25 years, as the diving coach for all the LISD high schools and the Water Safety and Swim Coordinator for second graders.

At the Eastside Aquatic Center, Jennifer Peele welcomed second graders that first morning in 2014 as well. Jennifer has been the Swim Lesson Coordinator and Assistant Manager at the Eastside Aquatic Center since its 2007 opening, and is also The Colony High School Swimming Coach. But her time with LISD actually started long before that—as Jennifer herself participated in the LISD swim program as a fourth grader at Stewart's Creek Elementary.

Both Sherry and Jennifer, along with the rest of their teams at the Aquatic Centers, have carefully planned the four day swim program with safety as the top priority. “It is imperative that we teach the students as young as possible how to be safe around water,” Jennifer said.

On the first day of the program, students are directed to a classroom before they get into the pool to learn basic water safety rules, many of them for the first time. Students finish their lesson, meet some of their instructors, and then—it’s time for the pool.

The first dip in the pool is focused mainly on water adjustment. “Sometimes this is the first time a child has ever been in a pool,” Sherry explained. “So for some beginners, we are just working on getting them comfortable enough to take additional lessons in the future.”

But for some students, getting comfortable in the water isn’t easy. Instructor Jeanne Hansen focuses on these students, who need a bit more support. For these students, Jeanne works on slow progressions to get them in the water.

“I try to make it their idea, and I try to make it fun,” she said. “I show them, and let them watch me. I try to earn that trust in the beginning, and go slowly. I had a kid recently who wouldn’t put a toe in the water, and I told him to watch me. And he sat there and watched, put a toe in, then another toe in, then he smiled.”

Once the students are in the water, they begin a set of drills designed to teach them additional safety skills. One drill in particular, the “Reach or Throw, Don’t Go,” allows students to practice throwing a floating object to someone who is drowning or in need of help in the water. Jennifer and Sherry agreed that this drill is a fan-favorite among students.

For Sherry, this drill is her favorite part of the entire lesson too. “When a kid saves another kid, the look of gratification, and doing something that means something ... is amazing. That’s my absolute favorite part.”

Normally students continue with water safety drills, work on several different strokes, and more throughout the next few days. But due to the pandemic, the lessons have moved from a four-day program to a two-day program. The move to two days was made to accommodate both second and third graders, since this year’s third graders weren’t able to attend the swim lessons last school year.

“We look forward to going back to the four-day program soon,” Sherry and Jeanne agreed. “The two-day [version] is really just the nuts and bolts.”

But these nuts and bolts are crucial to preparing



Above, students practice the “Reach or Throw, Don’t Go” drill designed to help students offer aid to a distressed swimmer. On the left, a trained swim instructor works on water adjustment with a student.



students for the culmination of both the two and four-day course. “Our main goal is for a beginner to [be able to] jump in, float on their back, and swim to the side of the pool,” Sherry said. “And at the end of the first day the students either take the Water Competency Test, or they just work on those skills, depending on their readiness.”

The Water Competency Test LISD uses was developed by the American Red Cross, and consists of a series of skills that determine if a student is safe and competent to swim in the pool setting.

The design of the test is to address panic in the pool. “The kids jump in, do a 360 degree turn, and then point to the closest exit,” Sherry said. “A lot of drownings happen because a kid jumps in, freaks out, and thinks they need to swim across the pool to get out instead of turning around and reaching for the edge of the pool.”

For these students, passing this test can give parents an extra sense of ease about letting their children swim freely. After the course is over, Sherry instructs second and third-grade teachers to administer a written water safety test to ensure these skills stick with students. But even after

these evaluations, Sherry always recommends that someone over 15 years old watches a child when they are in the pool.

Sherry stressed the importance of not only thinking of LISD’s program as typical swimming lessons, but also as lessons in water safety. “We’re giving kids the confidence to not panic when they get in trouble in the water,” she said. “It’s not important what level they are, it’s important for them to know what level they are and respect it.”

Jeanne agreed and emphasized the importance of at-home drills to get kids comfortable in the water. “First of all, I want parents to try to get in the water with their kids.” Even during bath time, students can practice water adjustment. Blowing bubbles and humming in the water can be helpful. Kids don’t like getting water in their ears, so even practicing that in the bathtub can help.”

With these lessons and regular water safety education from teachers and parents, LISD students are equipped to stay smart in the water and enjoy swimming safely. “Water is amazing,” Jeanne concluded. “It’s really a powerful experience [for a child] to know they can be in the water safely.”

In addition to the second grade swim lessons, LISD Aquatic Centers host summer swim lessons for students of varying ages. For more information, visit LISD.net.





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Crossroads of Culture

EIGHT THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED and twenty-seven miles.

There are few places on Earth with a longer commute to Lewisville High School than from Hakha, the capital of Burma's Chin State. Yet, since 2007, hundreds of Chin students whose families fled religious persecution in Burma have entered the doors of LISD schools.

The Chin, an ethnic group originating from the mountainous region of western Burma bordering India and Bangladesh, have been the target of oppression for decades. After a military coup overthrew the democratically-elected government in the 1960s, the predominantly Christian Chin have suffered imprisonment, extortion and forced labor among other human rights violations. As anti-Christian violence began escalating in the 1990s and into the early 2000s, Human Rights Watch estimates that the number of Chin refugees has ballooned to over 100,000, with many settling in India and Malaysia. Several thousand Chin have also immigrated to the United States, primarily in Indianapolis, Tulsa and Lewisville.

The arrival of Chin families in Lewisville had been slow but steady. Many came to the United States by way of Malaysian refugee camps, which proved to be a protracted and often dangerous process. The journey generally involved navigating treacherous jungles and mountains, usually under the cover of darkness. Much of it had to be made on foot, as relying on other means of transportation could be life-threatening.

The Story of LISD's Chin Community

Over the last two decades, the LISD community has become one of the nation's largest hubs of Chin culture.

By Nick Gravois



During the Chin Festival, students perform traditional Chin songs against a backdrop featuring photos of Chin State.

Par Hniang, who graduated from Lewisville High School in 2019, described having to be smuggled across the Malaysian border in a truck.

"They didn't care who went in first, it was just about being efficient. I was one of the people they shoved in and these huge adults started sitting on me. I was only seven years old at the time, and I couldn't breathe. I thought I was going to die."

Many Chin would find that reaching Malaysia provided little respite. Philip Cung, currently a senior at LHS, spent five years in Malaysia before his family was able to reach the United States in 2011. He described acts of terror committed towards himself and his mother.

"We were not free," he emphasized. "In Malaysia, we were illegal immigrants. Refugees. I think it was worse for us in Malaysia."

Once consistent refugee relations opened between the U.S. and Malaysia in 2006, many areas struggled to provide necessary resources to the incoming Chin. A majority of Chin families in DFW arrived without much of the promised support. Leaning on local church and municipal leadership, Lewisville Chin found themselves reliant on a community that knew very little of the culture, and even less of the language.

Then, in 2007, everything changed.

Becky Nelson, a member of Flower Mound First Baptist Church, received a call from her minister about supporting a neighboring church's growing Chin population, which had doubled almost overnight. Nelson immediately obliged, pulling together resources donated by her congregation. She was determined to promote unity through the church, one of the few familiar settings for Chin in Lewisville.

"They've been persecuted, so their biggest experience is fear," said Nelson in a 2015 interview with the Dallas Morning News. "The only thing they trust is the church."

Andy Plunkett, one of Lewisville ISD's Chief of Schools, and former principal of Lewisville High School's Killough 9th and 10th Grade Campus, recalls the arrival of the first Chin students to be enrolled in LISD.

"Usually schools know when refugees are going to be coming and are prepared. Becky Nelson was [at Killough] one morning with three or four students.

The next day, she was there with three or four more students. Then the next day – sure enough – she was there with four more and we said 'how many more do you think are coming?'"

"At first she thought there was only going to be 80 or 90 – by 2009 I think we had 2,000."

Together, Nelson and Plunkett led the charge to provide the burgeoning Chin population with everything necessary to succeed in Lewisville. According to Plunkett, Nelson would routinely drive to the airport to pick up families, drive them back into town, then help them get their children enrolled in school. In order to assist families in completing enrollment paperwork, Nelson

worked with Chin pastors to translate as they were one of the few available sources for overcoming language barriers. District ESL teachers quickly rose to the occasion of learning Chin in order to effectively teach new students.

Tluang Hmung, a 2014 graduate of LHS, was among the first Chin students to enroll in LISD. Hmung, whose family endured a trek through the jungle of Southeast Asia, forced to travel by night before reaching relative safety in Malaysia, recalls his first days at Vickery Elementary School.

"At the time I didn't speak any English or have any friends. At first, school was very hard. It was very hard and I remember crying my first day because I didn't know what was going on."

"But then there was this lady – her name was Ms. Ferguson – the next day she came to class and



Dr. Lori Rapp (left) and Andy Plunkett (right) stand with LHS senior and Chin Club President Bawi Sung (center).



Chin seniors were honored with certificates and medals at the 2022 Chin Festival.

they told me to go with her. She started teaching me English, and that really helped me get through school. She made a big impact in my life at the time.”

Hniang shared a similar experience.

“It was just so unfamiliar. I was just questioning my existence. Lakeland Elementary was the first school that I went to and the people there were the most amazing that I met. Ms. Mary was the sweetest. She would check with us all the time, ask if we needed uniforms, things like that.”

“Ms. Statler, she was my third grade teacher. When I moved to Creekside and she retired, she would come and eat lunch with me, just to make sure I was okay and not lonely at the new school. I think they really helped shape me to care about people and to give back as well.”

By 2011, it became clear that Lewisville was becoming a hub of Chin culture. Moved by the stories of Chin students and the drive they showed in the classroom in the face of adversity, Plunkett decided it was time to honor their commitment to education.

“By the time we opened Harmon in 2011, the kids we had in ninth grade were already in AP classes. The older students were scoring really well on the SAT and the ACT and earning scholarships. We said ‘we’ve got to celebrate the fact that, where they came

from, the obstacles they have overcome in such a short period of time, that needs to be celebrated.’”

Chin students unanimously agreed to hold the celebration in conjunction with Chin National Day, which occurs annually on February 20 and honors the date the Chin people voted to become a democratic state in 1948.



Since 2011, what became known as the LISD Chin Cultural Festival has occurred annually and celebrates traditional Chin song, dance, fashion and food. What began as a small way to recognize a group of LISD students quickly transformed into a community-wide event that is now attended by hundreds

each year. For current Chin student leadership, it also represents a way to both hold onto their culture and share it with future generations.

Bawi Sung, a senior at LHS and current Chin Club president, was just three years old when her family escaped Burma in 2007. After spending over a decade in the United States, Sung felt disconnected from and, at times, even resentful towards her Chin background.

“I got teased a lot,” she said, describing her early experience living in Michigan. “I got teased for looking Asian. I felt like I didn’t belong there.”

Her attitude changed when she took a return trip to Burma and became heavily involved with Chin



Students perform the traditional Bamboo Dance at the 2022 Chin Festival.

Club and the Chin Festival.

“Before high school I was never as involved in the Chin community. After going back to Burma and then coming back here, I realized that so many people wanted to hear my story. It made me rethink, like, ‘Bawi, you have a community that’s willing to embrace your culture that you don’t even want to embrace.’”

And embrace it she has. At the 2022 Chin Festival, Sung gave an impassioned speech about the current unrest and continued violence in Burma, and the need for communities to not just hear, but understand the story of the Chin. Her hope is that by sustaining and growing the Chin Festival, more people will lift up the voice of the Chin.

The Chin Festival has also helped Philip Cung reconnect with his heritage.

“Sometimes I just forget about my culture or traditions, but the Chin Festival helped remind me who I am. It really helps us remember who we are and sharing with other people, other teachers, other students, it’s very special for us.”

Rosie Pui, a junior at LHS and Chin Club vice president, echoed the impact that the festival has had.

“I think it’s so amazing that we get to be blessed with something like this and to have people who care about us so much. We’re so blessed to have a community full of so many Chin people who we can embrace our culture with, and so many people who are not Chin who want to embrace our culture with us. I think that’s so important. I think that’s a beautiful thing.”

As of the writing of this piece, graduating Chin seniors have been awarded \$50,000 in scholarships and make up a significant percentage of Lewisville High School’s top academic ranks. A scholarship named in the honor of Becky Nelson was created in 2017 and awards \$2,000 to selected Chin students.

LISD would like to thank the faculty, staff and community members who have been a part of creating a welcoming, nurturing environment that has allowed for Chin students and families to thrive in Lewisville.



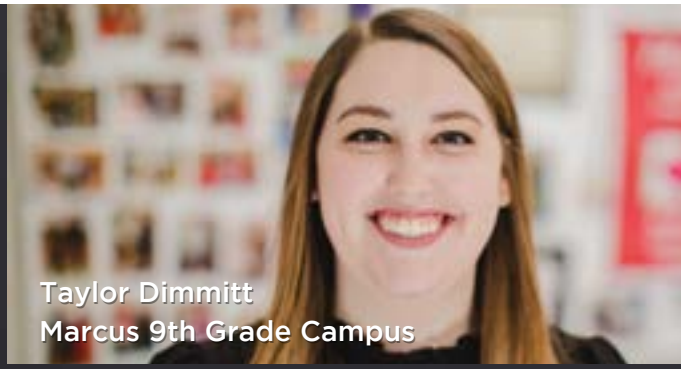
TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

Each year, Lewisville ISD's 69 campus teachers of the year are narrowed to ten finalists; five elementary teachers and five secondary teachers. They represent some of the best and brightest stars in the district. Get to know each of them as LISD highlights their passion, talent and heart for their students.

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Charity Barth
Wellington Elementary



Taylor Dimmitt
Marcus 9th Grade Campus



Beth Carpenter
Coyote Ridge Elementary



Lisa Gardner
Lewisville High School



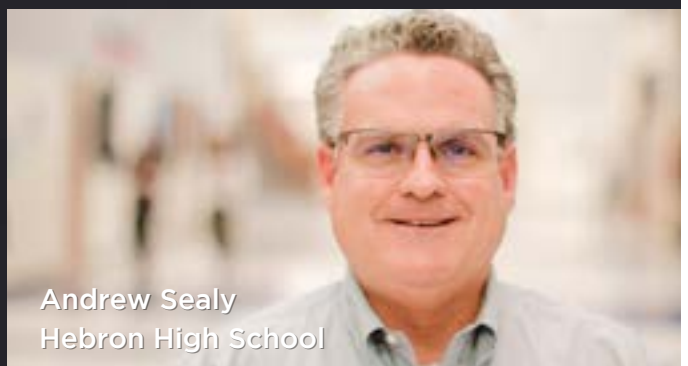
Christina Garza
Peters Colony Elementary



Cindy Lisenby
Flower Mound High School



Peggy Hill
Rockbrook Elementary



Andrew Sealy
Hebron High School



Natasha Millard
Vickery Elementary



Beth Yanda
Killian Middle School

Get to Know Dr. Lori Rapp

In February Dr. Lori Rapp was named Superintendent of Lewisville ISD. We recently sat down with Dr. Rapp to ask about family, education and community.

How long have you been in public education, and what inspired you to pursue this career path?

I am in my 26th year in education. I was inspired to pursue education because of the impact that teachers had in my life when I was growing up. I realized at a young age that a teacher has an opportunity to make a difference in this world because they get to help people. I believe that education is the most important investment because you are impacting the future by impacting students.

Where did you go to college and what did you study?

I attended Texas Tech University for my undergraduate degree and I studied Mathematics. I also have a Masters degree in Mathematics and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership.

What does the word 'education' mean to you?

Learning the knowledge and skills that help one find and develop their talents, passions and interests to pursue for the future.

What is the number one thing you want to accomplish as LISD Superintendent?

Ensuring that our students are prepared for their future and equipped to take their next steps toward their goals after graduation.



What is the best piece of advice that you've ever received?

You can never listen too much.

- Dr. Lori Rapp

What does a normal workday look like for you?

In this role there are very few days that are exactly alike, but one commonality is that I am always engaging with stakeholders (students, staff, parents, community members) in a variety of formats, venues, meetings (in-person and virtual), phone calls, emails, etc. This job is a fast paced role, with a very full schedule from early in the morning to often late in the afternoon and many evenings.

Who is the best teacher you've ever had?

I have had many great teachers, but the one who impacted my life at a critical time was my 3rd grade teacher Mrs. Robertson.

If you could sum up being a part of the LISD Family in five words or less, what would they be?

Special, Community, Heart, Passion, Family

What is one thing that you think most people would be shocked to learn about you?

I grew up in a very small town with less than 30 people in my graduating class.

What is your favorite lunch spot within LISD?

My favorite lunch spot is going to become our Cafe 3040 at TECC-W!

What's your favorite way to spend time with your family?

Traveling together and supporting my girls in their pursuits.

If you could spend an hour with four people, living, historical or even fictional, who would they be and why?

Living: my family because my girls are growing too fast and I need to spend time with them while I can.

Historical: Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Margaret Thatcher, The Apostle Paul - all because they are leaders whose life experiences I would want to hear more about.

If you didn't work in education, what career path do you think you would have pursued?

I never considered another career, but maybe working in politics to impact policy and legislation.

What are you most looking forward to during the 2022-23 school year?

Exploring new ways to bring our communities and schools closer together.

Follow along with Superintendent Rapp

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Running the show

By Nick Gravois

IN THE HISTORY OF GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY, no one has ever had a more dominant individual season than Natalie Cook's 2021-22 campaign. But for Natalie, success is a product of both team and family.

In November 2021, the Flower Mound girls cross country program left the competition in the dust at the Texas 6A State Championship in Round Rock. As Cook crossed the finish line (nearly a full minute ahead of the second-place finisher) she was greeted by head coach Andrew Cook in celebration. Assistant coach Melissa Cook quickly joined in the festivities. As both coaches and parents of the FMHS senior, the pair could not be prouder of their daughter.

For the Cooks, distance success runs in the family.

Melissa Cook, an alumna of Texas A&M, is widely considered a pioneer of the university's distance program. She sits comfortably in the top ten of several program records, was runner-up in two NCAA National Championship meets and ran in the U.S. Olympic Trials in 2004, 2008 and 2012. Andrew, also a proud Aggie, was an All-American cross country runner and has won multiple marathons across the country, including the 2018 Cowtown Marathon in Fort Worth. As a head coach, he has led student athletes to multiple individual and team championships including, most recently, back-to-back 6A titles for the FMHS girls cross country program.

Melissa and Andrew agree that growing up being surrounded by running surely impacted Natalie's decision to pursue the sport.

"She was really involved in soccer, and she liked to play basketball," explained Melissa. "But early on she also showed a lot of talent for running. She was starting to get fast – she ran a 4:55 mile in eighth grade and shocked us."

"Natalie was just two or three when she got to see her mother run in the Olympic Trials in Eugene," said Andrew. "Most people's kids don't get to watch their parents compete. She got to watch her mother run, and see me win the San Francisco marathon. I just think that running background, you know, is why she might gravitate towards that. That's just the household she grew up in."

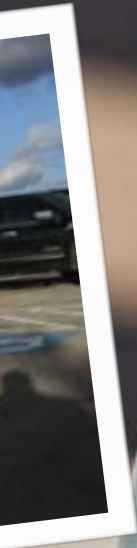
Now, Natalie stands poised to leave her parents accomplishments in the dust.

Following the state championship meet, Natalie, encouraged by her parents, made the decision to run in the Garmin Running Lane Cross Country Championships in Huntsville, Alabama. What would have been

Flower Mound High School senior Natalie Cook made history with one of the most dominant cross country seasons in the history of the sport.



The Flower Mound High School Girls Cross Country team claimed the 2021-22 UIL State Championship on Nov. 6, 2021.



an obvious choice for many was much more calculated for Natalie, who battled injury for most of her high school career.

"I used to be really stressed all the time because I was always injured," Natalie said in an interview with Runner's World. "But I feel like I'm in a better mindset now that I'm healthy and figured out what to do."

Confident in her new training regimen and emboldened by the results of the state meet, the Cooks headed for Alabama.

Natalie scorched the competition with a time of 16:03.93, just a few seconds shy of the meet record.

A week later, on December 11, 2021, the Cooks were in San Diego celebrating another victory. With a time of 17:15, Natalie claimed the Eastbay Cross Country Championship title, and cemented her spot in the history books.

Natalie Cook became the first woman to ever claim both national titles and become the undisputed national cross country champion. For her, the results are representative of her dedication to the sport.

"The past couple of years have been rough. I've been dealing with injuries and I'm really happy that I was able to overcome it and be able to run and have an amazing season."

Her humble demeanor, however, has not kept her out of the national spotlight. Following the conclusion of the season, Natalie was named Gatorade National Player of the Year, becoming the first-ever female cross country student athlete from Texas to earn the prestigious honor.

On February 2, 2022, in front of her team and, of course, her parents and coaches, Natalie was presented the award. Beyond just athletic success, the trophy represents dedication to both academics and community service. Natalie has maintained a 3.63 GPA while still finding time to share her love of running with local middle school students.

"I help a lot with middle school meets," she told Gatorade. "I used to be a part of that group. The high school runners used to encourage me a lot and tell me to keep going and that made me want to continue running in high school. Cross

country can teach young athletes that they need to have perseverance, you'll see improvements, you just have to stick with it."

Andrew was unable to keep his pride as a father from overtaking his generally calm coaching demeanor.

"It's awesome. She's just the best athlete in the country this year. It really blows us away. It's just crazy that she was able to achieve what she achieved. It was just unreal this year."



Melissa and Andrew Cook discuss their daughter Natalie's accomplishments with members of the media.

Those achievements put Natalie in good company with other Gatorade National Players of the Year. She joins Jayda Coleman from The Colony High School, who was named the National Softball Player of the Year for 2019-20, as the only other LISD student athlete to earn the award. More than 400 athletes have been honored across 14 sports in the 36-year history of the award. Natalie is just the 22nd DFW-area student athlete to receive the honor.

After graduation, Natalie will not be following in her

parents' footsteps to Texas A&M. Instead, she will head to Stillwater, Oklahoma in the fall to attend Oklahoma State. Speaking with the Tulsa World, Natalie said she based her commitment off of one, perhaps now unsurprising, element.

"I love the teammates there. They're like one big happy family."

And her big happy family at home in Flower Mound?

"We're excited," exclaimed Melissa. "She's going to Oklahoma State and we're excited about the well-roundedness of what this award represents. It has to be about more than just sports, it has to be about your academics, and your character – who you are as a person."

While Andrew agrees, he's already prepared to put his coaching hat back on ahead of the 2022-23 season.

"I think we have a great chance to go for a third title. I like the way we look going into next year and I'm thankful for the group we have. Besides being fast, they're also just really good kids, hard-working kids, which makes them fun to coach."



SENIOR AMBASSADOR PROGRAM



Lewisville ISD schools are successful because of the supportive communities we serve.

To show our appreciation, we invite local senior citizens (60+) to be a part of an exciting group, the Senior Ambassador Program.

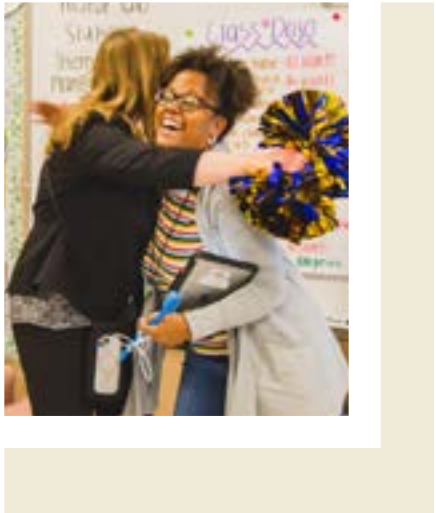
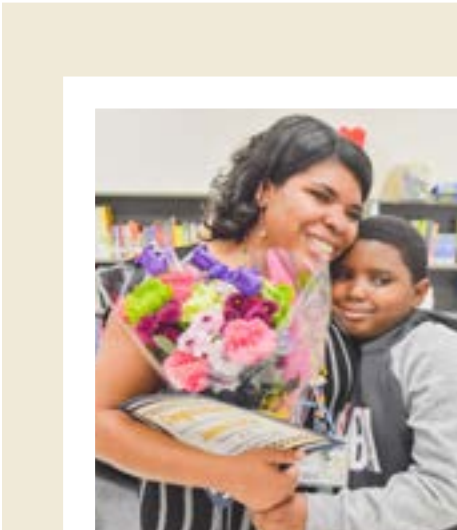


FIND OUT MORE:
LISD.net/seniors

Grant Day!

Leading up to Paraprofessional Appreciation Day on April 6, LISD surprised six paraprofessionals across the district with grants provided by TEA as part of its Texas COVID Learning Acceleration Supports (TCLAS) program, to help fund their education for finishing their degrees and teaching certifications. LISD awarded \$87,000 worth of grants to district paraprofessionals.





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Inside the Technology Repair Center



High school student techs run LISD device repair shop

By Ryan Cox

HAVE YOU EVER DROPPED AN IPAD and cracked your screen, or your Macbook stopped working and needed repairs before you could get back to using your device? Almost every student across Lewisville ISD has some sort of technological device to learn on, so chances are at some point, a device has needed to be fixed. That's where LISD's Technology Repair Center (TRC) comes in.

LISD's TRC started in 2016 and is a student-staffed repair shop located in the Lewisville ISD Administrative Center that supports the 1:X iPads, MacBook's and Microsoft Windows devices used by students and staff. Between students and staff, LISD manages over 55,000 iPads daily. It's essentially LISD's version of Best Buy's Geek Squad, except it's run by students, for students.

"As a school district, we ask other local businesses to provide real-world work experiences for students,"

Bryon Kolbeck, Chief Technology Officer for LISD said. "In this case, LISD is just one of the employers providing that opportunity in information technology. I really like this program because the students involved have an opportunity to learn the industry and hone their technical and soft skills while doing it. I have observed a lot of growth in past students working in the TRC and that has led to many opportunities to take what they have learned and apply it into the future."

TRC student interns learn how to troubleshoot and repair hardware and work with vendors for devices that are under warranty or are being repaired by third-party vendors. The students also get Apple certified and trained to fix all the devices, something they can put on their resume and college applications.

The TRC employs 10 LISD high school students at a time where they work four-hour shifts Monday



The LISD Tech Repair Center employs up to 10 high school students per year, offering classroom credit with a paid position.

through Thursday during the school day in exchange for classroom credit and also get paid an hourly rate. The shifts are either morning or afternoon with students working a maximum of 16 hours per week during the school year and 32 hours in the summer.

“Working in the Technology Repair Center gives the students hands-on experience,” TRC Coordinator Valory Abboud said. “Not only is it hands-on for fixing devices, but they also learn soft skills in the business world they may not have known before. Many students don’t know how to conduct business emails. We let them experience and learn hardware aspects but they also learn how to interact with vendors, get quotes and purchase orders.”

For many of the interns, this is their first job they’ve had. Abboud says working at the TRC is much more than fixing technology, it prepares students for life after high school.

“The students are representing LISD, so I always emphasize they’re representing the district as a staff member and they learn how to be a representative of a business,” Abboud said. “They learn how to work together as a team and train each other. They even learn customer service skills and how to interact with adults in a business setting.”

The students also learn the importance of going through an interview and selection process, something that might be new to them. Abboud said it was nearly every student’s first time experiencing a panel interview and believes it’s important for them to gain that experience at a young age.

“I want to have a career in technology and get into networking,” TRC student intern and Flower Mound senior

Andrew Brown said. “I’ve always had an interest in technology so this is a great place to work. I’ve learned a lot of technical skills and repair knowledge since I started working here. This is my first job, so I’ve also learned what a work environment is like as well. We work with vendors so I’ve had to learn about professional communication.”

Brown said the day-to-day job at the TRC can vary from handling all the Apple warranty repairs to fixing iPad cracked screens, usually a few iPads per day and around a dozen per week. “We have to look at the iPads and determine what’s wrong with them and communicate with Apple about the problem. When we aren’t doing that, we are fixing MacBook’s, teacher and student iPads, along with Dell products,” Brown said.

Alexander Rodriguez, a Hebron High School senior and current intern at the Technology Repair Center, plans on attending the University of Houston to study computer engineering technology. The TRC was a perfect job opportunity for him.

“I’ve been into computers my whole life,” Rodriguez said. “I built my first computer when I was nine years old. This job was a natural gravitation and helps me grow my portfolio as I head to college.”

Rodriguez isn’t the first TRC student intern to go onto college and major in technology. The TRC has opened doors into career paths for students they may not have known existed.

“Students have gone on to major in cybersecurity, computer science, information technology and software engineering,” Abboud said. “Another intern was initially going to major in computer science but when he was here, he was given a project to collect a lot of data, and throughout the course of that big project he learned he liked working with data and so he went to college and got his degree in data science.”

With only 10 internship spots available each school year, the TRC is a rare opportunity to be employees and students at the same time and it’s something that the interns are proud to be a part of.

“We take pride in the fact that LISD’s equipment is fixed by students,” Rodriguez said. “Being a student and an employee at the same time, not only is it bragging rights for us to have, but it’s also cool to be a part of the district that I attend.”

Even for students that have been building computers since they were nine years old like Rodriguez, he says he’s always learning something new at the TRC.

“If you’re looking for a job to learn and further your experience with computers, the Technology Repair Center is a great place,” Rodriguez added. “Even if you think you know everything about computers, you’re going to learn something new regardless of your experience level.”

LISD high school students interested in working for the TRC and jump-starting their career in tech are encouraged to talk to their teacher, academic advisor or email Valory Abboud at abboudv@lisd.net.



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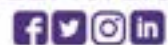
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