

# the loop

A quarterly magazine from Lewisville Independent School District

**SPRING 2023**

## RALLY DAY

Lewisville voices  
heard in Austin





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GAMING





# Spring adventures

**DEAR READERS,** Spring is in full swing and our students and staff are busier than ever celebrating one another throughout our district. This semester is full of events and festivities, and my #RappontheRoad adventures continue to give me a front seat to witness what our campuses are accomplishing together this school year.

Throughout this issue of The Loop, I take a minute to reflect on the past year as Superintendent of this great district. I have had the chance to visit with so many staff, students, and community members and have learned so much through their feedback and input. Without it, none of what we do as educators would be possible.

You'll also read about the incredible fine arts LISD has to offer, and how the hard work of our drill teams culminates during spring showcases. We introduce our 10 finalists for Teacher of the Year, and give you a glimpse into the real-world learning our junior and seniors recently experienced during our annual Career Out event.

I also recently had the pleasure of accompanying our amazing PTAs to the Texas State Capitol for our annual rally day, where we met with legislators to advocate for the benefit of all public schools. There are many important topics on the table during this 88th Legislative Session, so I encourage you to keep reading to learn about our priorities as a district and what you can do to advocate on behalf of LISD.

I want to thank you for your continued readership of this quarterly magazine, and for your support of our district. Your partnership in the education of our students is key as we make every day a great day for kids.

All my best,



**LORI RAPP, Ed.D.**

Superintendent of Schools  
Lewisville ISD





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# the loop

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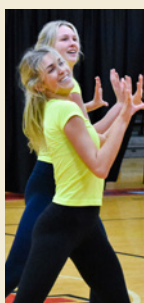
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## The year in review for Dr. Rapp

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# inside

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A large, stylized graphic of the year '2023' in a gold, metallic font. The '0' is a large circle. Inside the circle, the words 'LISD AWARDS' are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background is dark blue with many small, glowing gold dots and larger, bright gold starburst effects.

# LISD AWARDS

## 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.

**LISD.net/TOY**

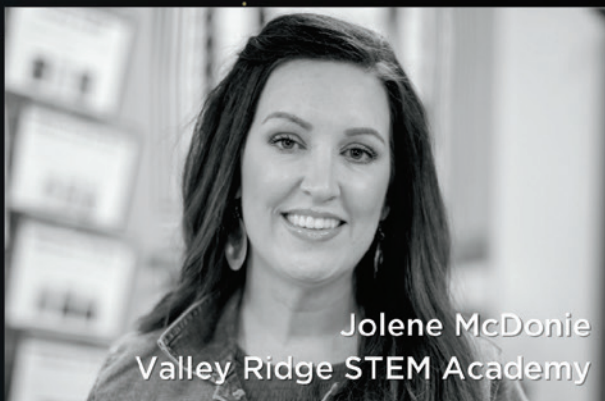




Morgan Bridges  
Lillie J. Jackson Early Childhood Center



Kendall Holland  
Indian Creek Elementary



Jolene McDonie  
Valley Ridge STEM Academy



Dr. Isela Russell  
Wellington Elementary



Kierstyn Warnell  
Camey Elementary



Lizzie Amick  
Briarhill Middle School



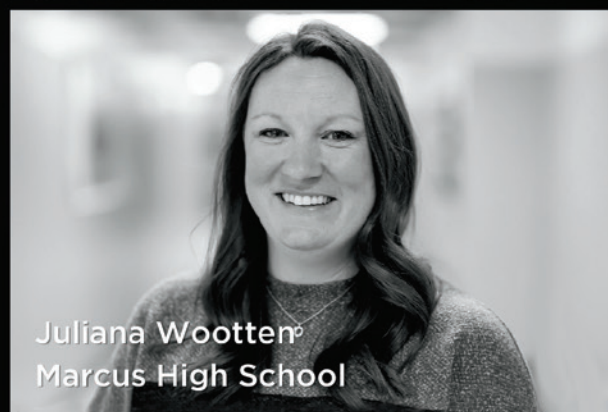
Katie Bragg  
Marcus 9th Grade Campus



Dave Cone  
Hebron High School



Patricia Toothaker  
Lamar Middle School



Juliana Wootten  
Marcus High School





Dr. Rapp recently joined representatives from LISD at the State Capitol for the Council of PTAs Rally Day to advocate for public education.

# By the numbers

Superintendent's first 365 days focus on Three C's: Culture, Connection and Communication

By Nick Gravois

**A YEAR INTO HER TENURE** as Lewisville ISD's 10th superintendent, Dr. Lori Rapp's "Three C's" have served as the bedrock for her leadership and set the direction for the district's continued growth. As the dust settles on what has been a landmark year for Dr. Rapp and for LISD, let's dive into some key figures from the previous 365 days.

In 1996, Dr. Rapp landed her first teaching job at The Colony High School, where she taught math and served as the campus's student council sponsor. In 2008, she was named LISD's Director of K-12 curriculum before becoming Chief of Learning and Teaching in 2015. In 2017, she was appointed Deputy Superintendent by Dr. Kevin Rogers. Dr. Rapp would serve in this role until 2022 when she was elected by the

2022	LISD Superintendent
2017	Deputy Superintendent
2015	Learning and Teaching Chief
2008	Director of Curriculum
'96	TCHS Teacher



**“I’m excited about the selection of Dr. Lori Rapp as Lewisville ISD’s next Superintendent of Schools. Lori’s long-term tenure, cultural awareness of LISD and professional capacity will serve the district well.”**

*Dr. Buddy Bonner, Place 1 Trustee, on Dr. Rapp’s announcement*

Board of Trustees to serve as LISD’s first female superintendent.

COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENTS

**500+**

From campus staff meetings, Teacher of the Year surprises, grant presentations athletic events, fine arts productions and everything in between, the number of interactions between Dr. Rapp and the LISD community are almost too numerous to count. Engagement, outreach and advocacy have become staples of Dr. Rapp’s first year as superintendent. Nowhere has this been more evident than with her emphasis on student advisory meetings, which provide student representatives from each of LISD’s five high schools the opportunity to directly engage with Dr. Rapp in order to discuss district initiatives and provide feedback on a wide variety of topics that impact them on campus. New this school year, elementary and middle school groups have also been established for each feeder pattern, allowing for even more feedback at all grade levels.



*Rapp regularly visits LISD campuses to meet with students and staff.*

As part of her ongoing efforts to visit LISD campuses and facilities to meet with students and staff, Dr. Rapp created “#RappOnTheRoad” in order to track her tour around the district. The hashtag was used 195 times on Twitter during her first year, highlighting over 100 campus visits.

#RappOnTheRoad



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NEWSLETTER  
EDITIONS

The “Rapp Up” staff newsletter and “RAPPort” community newsletter have each been sent monthly since February of 2022. These newsletters were introduced to create new communication touchpoints between Dr. Rapp, LISD staff and district families. These newsletters contain messages from Dr. Rapp recapping the previous month and sharing other important information and upcoming events. Each of these receive thousands of clicks every month, strengthening the connection between the superintendent’s office, the classroom and the household.

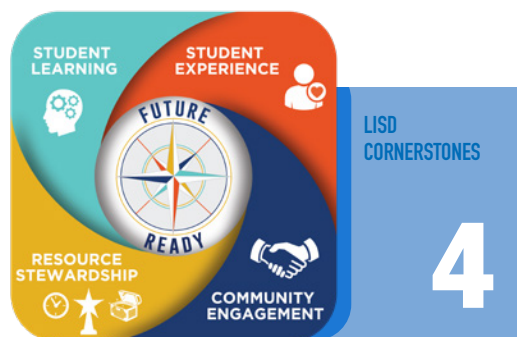


“Our LISD leadership starting with Dr. Rapp is inspiring on a daily basis. To see her commitment up close along with our other leaders, teachers and LISD staff that work hard each day to ensure our students have a better future is one of the things I love most about serving in PTA.”

*Jennifer Perry, LISD PTA President*



As part of her “#RappOnTheRoad” tour, Dr. Rapp can often be seen taking selfies with students and staff to share on her social media accounts.



Lewisville ISD’s Four Cornerstones have guided the LISD vision for several years, and continue to play a major part in shaping the district’s legislative priorities. As part of Dr. Rapp’s advocacy for public education, she has been active in meeting with legislators that are representing LISD during the state’s 88th Legislative Session. In December 2022, Dr. Rapp and district representatives hosted many of these elected officials for a meeting to discuss LISD’s legislative priorities, which are organized according to the Four Cornerstones: Student Learning, Student Experience, Resource Stewardship and Community Engagement. Dr. Rapp also joined the LISD Council of PTAs and the Texas PTA on their trip to Austin to continue this advocacy in the state capital.

3

The “Three C’s” of community engagement: culture, connection, and communication have become the foundation of how LISD community members interact with one another.

Dr. Rapp implemented these tenets as part of her commitment to improve community engagement throughout the district, and improve both internally and externally.



Revealed during the district’s annual Thrive conference for campus leadership, the goal of the #OneLISD campaign is to emphasize and highlight the shared culture of Lewisville ISD while celebrating the unique identity of each campus. The campaign encompasses social media content, branding, and internal programs such as the “Recognize SomeONE” initiative, which encourages students, staff and families to share kudos with staff members. Over 2,500 recognitions have been sent since the program began.





*LISD students and staff hear from Texas State Senator Drew Springer (District 30) at the Texas State Capitol for Rally Day.*

# Rally Day at the Capitol

By Ryan Cox

**HERE IN LEWISVILLE ISD**, our vision is simple: All of our students enjoy thriving, productive lives in a future they create.

In order to create that vision for the students, it takes a team of teachers, administrators and parents working together as one to continue advocating to legislatures to provide funding and resources in the classroom. On February 27, the Texas Parent-Teacher Administration (PTA) hosted its biennial Rally Day at the Texas State Capitol in Austin where LISD students, district staff and PTA members across the state rallied together at the steps of the Capitol and then met with local legislators throughout the afternoon to discuss

**Lewisville ISD joins PTAs  
from across Texas to  
advocate for public schools**

the district's and Texas PTA's legislative priorities regarding public education.

The biggest advocate for students and public education in Lewisville ISD is none other than Superintendent Dr. Lori Rapp. She was able to travel to Austin to meet with the local State Legislator and thought Rally Day was a positive experience for students, staff, and parents to ask questions.





*Led by LISD Superintendent Dr. Lori Rapp, district representatives met with local legislators on Rally Day.*

“Everything we do here at Lewisville ISD is for the students,” Dr. Rapp said. “I was glad to meet with our elected officials who have the power to influence positive change for our district and public education as a whole. As superintendent of this great district, I was impressed by our students, parents, and educators who attended the rally and spoke with their representatives. Their passion for education and future students was truly inspiring. I will continue to advocate for the betterment of education for our students.”

Dr. Rapp’s impact and support at Rally Day was felt, as she was one of only a handful of superintendents across the state to attend the event in Austin and her presence was noted.

“LISD was one of the few districts in Texas that had their superintendent attend,” LISD PTA President Jennifer Perry pointed out, “and when we walked into meetings and the representatives knew Dr. Rapp by name, it was very impactful. I’m grateful for a leader who goes above and beyond to advocate for our students and teachers.”

At this year’s Rally Day, LISD representatives were able to meet one-on-one with six local elected officials, including Texas State Senators Tan Parker (Senate District 12) and Drew Springer (30). They also met with four Texas State Representatives: Richard Hayes (House District 57), Ben Bumgarner (63), Kronda Thimesch (65) and Jared Patterson (106).

“The entire experience was incredible,” Downing Principal Curtis Martin said. “All of the State Legislators we talked to are genuinely interested in

supporting public education. The atmosphere truly made us feel valued by our elected officials.”

LISD administrators and staff weren’t the only district representatives to speak to State Legislators, but also a group of Marcus High School students attended and spoke passionately about ways to improve public education for themselves, their classmates, and future students. The speeches that the students gave at Rally Day validated that everything LISD does is for the students.

“Our student leaders who attended Rally Day were well spoken, knowledgeable, and

inspiring,” Perry said. “To hear them speak about their concerns and passion for our teachers and fellow students touched my heart and motivated me to work harder as LISD’s PTA President to make our voices heard in Austin.”

Martin said he attended Rally Day for one main reason – he believes in Texas public schools and public education.

“I have three children who all attended schools in LISD from kindergarten through 12th grade, and my wife and I are both lifelong educators,” said Martin. “Our LISD public schools provide world class education despite Texas ranking 38th out of 50 states in funding. With that, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find and retain quality teachers. With rising costs, it is also difficult to provide the resources necessary for our schools to run effectively. By joining Rally Day in Austin, we were able to share directly with our State Legislators that additional financial support of our public schools is needed to avoid larger classes, fewer programs, and reduced quality of our public schools. To me, public education is the cornerstone of our community and the most important investment in the future of our state.”

Additional funding is at the forefront of every legislative discussion and as noted in her recent monthly legislative newsletter, Dr. Rapp pointed out funding concerns pertaining to LISD. “Every \$100 increase to the basic allotment will decrease our recapture payment by approximately \$6 million,” said Dr. Rapp about current estimates for school funding. “Additionally, when adjusted for



inflation, per-student funding has declined in Texas over the past eight years.”

Being LISD’s PTA President, Perry strives to advance the Texas PTA’s goals and “realize every child’s potential by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children,” as stated on the Texas PTA’s website mission statement. By attending her second Rally Day this year, Perry was left inspired to continue working hard for a better future for the students and staff of LISD.

“Hearing from other PTAs from around the state was such a reminder of how blessed we are in LISD to have the absolute best leadership, teachers, and students,” said Perry. “They all deserve to have the resources they need to thrive. We can all do something to help, including contacting our legislators, thanking a teacher, and voting for representatives that support public education. We need to be shouting from the rooftops how much

we love our schools because they need our support now more than ever.”

After meeting with legislators throughout the afternoon, Martin also left Austin feeling proud to work for a district like LISD that has a Council of PTAs that continues to raise the standard for students in public education.

“As a principal in Lewisville ISD, I have always felt immense support from our LISD families for our local public schools,” Martin said. “Likewise, I know the educators in our district care tremendously about the success of every one of our students. It was my privilege to advocate for continued legislative support for our outstanding students, incredible community, and spectacular public schools.”

Lewisville ISD will always advocate for better resources for students so they can continue enjoying thriving, productive lives in a future they create, and Rally Day was no different.

*To learn more about LISD’s legislative priorities, and to read updates to our legislators from Dr. Rapp, visit [lisd.net/legislativepriorities](https://lisd.net/legislativepriorities).*



Lewisville ISD Career and Technical Education offers certification options to prepare high school students for whatever path their future holds.

**LISD**  
LISD.NET/CTE

# Career Out

For years, Lewisville ISD has emphasized the importance of mentorship and community engagement through our annual Career Out program. The program, which took place this year on Friday, March 3, is a day for juniors and seniors across all five high schools to job shadow executives, administrators and team members from host sites in and around the LISD community. The 160 host sites covered sectors ranging from real estate to retail, municipal services, aviation and many more.







# Building leaders one kid at a time

By Nick Gravois

**AS PART OF LEWISVILLE** ISD's commitment to producing students who are communicators, problem solvers and self-directed learners, LISD teachers and administrators are continuously looking for new ways to encourage students to become leaders within the district. In an effort to expand the impact of both longstanding and newly-created events and initiatives, Matthew Morris, LISD's Director of Diversity and Student Engagement, recently assembled a team of student leaders from across each of the district's feeder patterns.

This group, consisting of primarily seniors from each of LISD's five high schools, evolved from a handful of student assistants involved with the annual MLK Day Celebration to a full-fledged committee. This year, the committee has met regularly, either in person or via Zoom, to plan events, develop leadership skills and share feedback on both campus and district level engagement opportunities.

"Being in the central office can create a wide gap between the students we seek to serve and the initiatives we cast to campuses," explained Morris. "This committee came from my personal commitment to always meet students where they are and my desire to elevate student voice."



*Matthew Morris, LISD's Director of Diversity and Student Engagement, speaks at the 2023 MLK Jr. Day Celebration event.*

Morris began recruiting students to the committee at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, working with school principals and campus leadership to identify students that were making positive contributions in both their classrooms, organizations and communities. The group began to take shape, participating in discussions, team-building activities and meetings with LISD administration.

Jaden Clemons, a senior at Hebron High School and leader within the school's Black Student Union and basketball program voiced what inspired him to join the committee.

"I was selected to represent my school, but what intrigued me was the representation itself. Mr. Morris had a vision of inclusion from the start, which is something that is important to me as well."

"Being from different backgrounds, I wasn't sure



what to expect,” expressed Lewisville High School senior Olivia Kabano. “However, us being paired together from our mutual interest, our culture, it allowed us to form a bond I don’t have anywhere else. The bonds we’ve made are some that I’ll cherish forever.”

Ade Aje, a senior at Marcus High School, president of the MHS Black History Club and member of the Science National Honor Society, echoed Kabano’s thoughts.

“I love talking with all the people in the group and I just love how we all connected so fast and formed a good bond. It has allowed me to gain more insight as to how other schools run their own Black Student Unions and Mr. Morris’s presence truly affirmed the need to stay true to my beliefs in the development of my future aspirations.”

Throughout the 2022 fall semester, and into the early stages of 2023, the students held meetings coinciding with the planning of the 30th annual MLK Day Celebration, an event hosted by LISD in partnership with the MLK of North Texas committee. The student leaders were tasked with assisting in the planning, coordination, promotion and execution of the event, which saw hundreds of members of the Lewisville ISD community come together for an evening of reflection and celebration of the work of Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement.

Many of the student committee members had experienced the MLK Celebration in some capacity in their time with the district, but having a direct role in the event elevated its importance for the young leaders like Kabano.

As president of the LHS Black Student Union and secretary of the LHS Orchestra, the aspiring financial analyst is no stranger to leadership, but credits the committee for furthering her experience.

“The committee has allowed me to put my leadership skills to a larger scale. [The MLK Celebration] was by far the biggest event I’ve had the chance to work on, and I’ve learned so much about not only myself, but the preciseness everyone has to have to plan an event like this.”

Noah Rodriguez, Flower Mound High School’s representative on the leadership committee, hopes that events that celebrate the many aspects of culture, diversity and inclusion will continue to make a positive impact on his peers.

“Events such as our MLK celebration pay tribute to drivers of change and inspire students to follow



Ade Aje, MHS



Gianna Bienati, TCHS



Jaden Clemons, HHS



Olivia Kabano, LHS



Noah Rodriguez, FMHS

Chosen for making positive contributions at their high schools, students meet to build connections throughout the district.

*“I wasn’t sure what to expect. It allowed us to form a bond I don’t have anywhere else.”*

LHS senior Olivia Kabano



*The Student Leadership Committee met with senior LISD leadership to discuss diversity and student engagement.*

*“These events also help people outside become more open minded. I’m a big believer in the saying ‘distance breeds fear, proximity breeds care.’”*

*Jaden Clemons, Hebron High School senior*

in their footsteps.”

Rodriguez, who plans to attend Texas A&M as an engineering major in the fall, wants to ensure that the future of LISD is bright once he walks the stage in May.

“What inspired me was bringing inclusion into new aspects in LISD and helping brainstorm for the future of LISD, which my siblings will get to experience.”

According to Morris, this brainstorming and collaboration is the strongest aspect of the student leadership committee.

“The goal is to empower student voices. We have had several conversations on their K-12 experience as well as brainstorming impactful events and initiatives for future generations.”

This growth mindset has already helped to expand the scope of the committee, which was also heavily involved with LISD’s fifth annual Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Fair.

The HBCU Fair directly connects students with representatives from these historic institutions, providing an opportunity to learn about admissions, educational pathways, student life, athletics and more. This year’s event also featured on-site



**“Being in the central office can create a wide gap between the students we seek to serve and the initiatives we cast to campuses. This committee came from my personal commitment to meet students where they are.”**

*Matthew Morris, LISD Director of Diversity and Student Engagement*

admissions, a career pathway panel, an educational piece on financial literacy and more. Thanks to the efforts of those involved in its planning, including the student leadership committee, it was also the highest attended HBCU Fair in the event's history.

Gianna Bienati, who will be attending Southern University on both academic and athletic scholarships after graduating from The Colony High School, is grateful to see LISD place an increased emphasis on events such as the MLK Celebration and HBCU Fair.

“[These events] allow the community to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions that people of color have had on our community and the world. It has made me proud to be a part of a district that celebrates the diversity of its students and staff.”

Though proud of the work that the student leadership committee and LISD leaders have done for districtwide events such as the aforementioned MLK Celebration and HBCU Fair, as well as the Chin Festival and Guru Vandana among others, Morris credits each campus with celebrating diversity in their own ways.

“Each LISD campus has their own special way of creating a culture of belonging. I have been impressed with how each campus has its own way of celebrating the beauty found in our community.”

Jaden Clemons affirmed Morris' comments.

“These cultural celebrations cultivate a space for young people to be exposed to successful people that look like them while also being able to learn about their culture. These events also help people outside become more open minded. I'm a big believer in the saying 'distance breeds fear, proximity breeds care.'”

From Hebron High School's Hawkfest to Vickery Elementary's “Everyone Cooks Rice” event, cultural celebrations abound across Lewisville ISD's 127-square mile footprint. As staff and student leaders continue to champion diversity and inclusion,

the student leadership committee are excited to see the continued growth of these gatherings.

“These events provide a space that wasn't offered before,” reflected Olivia Kabano. “Having the chance to explore events such as these allows students, parents, and faculty to admire the beauty within our cultures. It is truly amazing to see our community be reflected in events like these.”



*Students assisted in the planning and execution of the MLK Day Celebration and participated in the annual day of service event at Lewisville's Champion-Macedonia Cemetery.*



*LISD's annual HBCU Fair connects students with dozens of historic institutions to explore educational opportunities.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

SCAN QR CODE FOR ATHLETICS SCHEDULES

FLOWER MOUND HS



HEBRON HS



LEWISVILLE HS



MARCUS HS



THE COLONY HS



## UPCOMING THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

HEBRON HS

MAY 11-14:  
**THE ADDAMS  
FAMILY**

LEWISVILLE HS

MAY 12-13:  
**YOU CAN'T  
TAKE IT  
WITH YOU**



UIL ONE-ACT PLAY CALENDAR

**BI-DISTRICT: MARCH 22-23**

**AREA: MARCH 27-APRIL 1**

**REGION: APRIL 20-22**

**STATE: MAY 4-6**



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## LISD RAPPORT

A community newsletter from Dr. Lori Rapp, Superintendent of Schools

"Rapport" is defined as a close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well.



[lisd.net/rapport](https://lisd.net/rapport)



## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED



### UPCOMING SENIOR AMBASSADOR PROGRAM EVENTS

**BBQ & Bingo at Sparrow on Main benefitting Direction 61:3**

Friday, April 14, 6:00-8:30 p.m. | 105 E. Main St., Lewisville, TX 75057

**Retired & Senior Volunteer Program 20th Annual Golf Classic**

Friday, May 19 | Wildhorse Golf Club @ Robson Ranch

**Denton County Par for the Kids benefitting the Boys & Girls Club**

Thursday, June 8, 9:00 a.m. | Tour 18 Golf Course

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### HAVE AN HOUR TO GIVE?

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We know that your time is valuable and that's why we appreciate each moment our partners give to our students. With our new VOLY platform, volunteering in our schools is easier than ever! Sign up to participate as frequently as your schedule allows. There are always opportunities to make a real impact on our students and shape the lives of the future workforce.

Visit [LewisvilleISD.voly.org](http://LewisvilleISD.voly.org) for more!



### LISD ADOPT-A-SCHOOL PROGRAM

*Assist LISD students and staff on campuses with limited PTA support.*

This school year, Lewisville ISD is introducing its Adopt-A-School Program, which is an opportunity for businesses in the community to support a school that may not have a strong PTA presence and/or parental involvement on campus.

*Interested in adopting a school?*

Please let us know by emailing [adoptaschool@lisd.net](mailto:adoptaschool@lisd.net) and we will get you connected with a campus that truly needs your support.

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# Let's dance

A closer look at LISD's  
talented drill teams

By Delaney Nicodemus

**AT ANY GIVEN LISD FOOTBALL GAME**, there are several notable campus groups working together to cheer on our football teams. One of these groups is the drill team; a group of students you'll usually spot performing on the field for halftime or dancing along with the band's songs in the stands. They're outfitted in the traditional Texas drill team uniform; stark white boots, cowboy-inspired hats, skirts layered over sparkling leotards and leather gauntlets on their wrists. This unique look is what they're best known for, along with impressing crowds with their high-kicks and precision routines during halftime. Drill team members do so proudly game after game, continuing traditions started years before they were even born. But when the football season ends, the stadiums are cleared and the record is set – that's when their dance work really begins.

Each of LISD's five high schools has a drill team program in which students earn placement through audition to earn an opportunity to dance year-round with a group of their peers. The Flower Mound Rosettes, Hebron Silver Wings, Lewisville Farmerettes, Marcus Marquettes and The Colony Topcats represent their schools proudly at events far beyond football games, including Holiday shows, dance competitions, community performances,





*Ahead of their upcoming spring show, the Rosettes hold practice in the FMHS auditorium to get used to the stage.*

spring showcases and so much more.

Tryouts for each team are typically in spring and consist of technique and dance combinations. “For the varsity drill team we’re looking for mastery of intermediate to advanced skills,” said LHS Farmerette Director Kimberly Sheeran. “Overall I really like to stress that we’re looking for people who want to be a part of the organization and a part of a team. For junior varsity, we’re looking for potential,” said Sheeran. “And that they’re putting in effort.”

Current members facilitate many aspects of the tryout process. “We host help sessions at the middle schools to help girls who want to try out,” HHS Silver Wing Director Anne Bowling said. “And I’m hearing the seniors tell the 8th graders ‘I’ve met all my best friends here.’ It’s an awesome opportunity for 8th graders to have instant friends when you know nobody at the big high school.”

But fortunately for the new team members, they don’t have to wait until the first day of school to get started. The teams work hard well before school starts to prepare dances for not only football games, but competitions and other performances too. “We start camp in the middle of July,” TCHS Topcat Director Alex Rogers said. “So they learn all of their football routines, all of their pep rally routines and even dances for our holiday show.”

Of course learning a dance is far more than just mirroring dance moves, as the directors can attest to. “You have to find music that inspires you,” Kimberly Sheeran stated, “and figure out who is going to choreograph. In my case I like to bring

someone in because that brings a lot of variety to our performances. So I find my choreographer and communicate with them. Then they’ll come in and teach the dance to the team and then we’ll come back and I’ll make any changes that need to be made. Then we clean...and cleaning is making sure that everybody is in the same position at the same time. And then eventually it goes on the competition floor or on the stage.”

The teams rinse and repeat this process through the summer and fall, perfecting dances for football halftimes, pep rallies, community performances and of course, dance competition. All five of our high school drill teams compete against other high schools from around the state and even across the country in rigorous competitions throughout the winter months, typically January through March.

“We usually get to Marcus around 4:45 or 5 in the morning [of a competition day] depending on what time our first dance is and where the competition is,” explained MHS Marquette Assistant Director Shelby Hladky. “We load up all of our props, load the buses and then we head to competition. Our first dance is usually around 8 a.m.”

The high schools typically take three or four full team dances. Each team’s officers, a smaller group of dancers selected to serve as leaders on the team, perform an additional handful of dances in addition to ensembles, solos and duets. “This year we have 31 solos and one duet,” Shelby explained emphatically. Needless to say with over 40 dances scattered throughout the competition, the teams



aren't enjoying an early bed time on competition days. "Awards typically start around 10:30 p.m. and we're usually getting back to Marcus around 12:30 and 1 a.m.," Shelby concluded.

The dances themselves are judged on specific rubrics that evaluate every aspect of the performance. "All of our dances are judged by performance and dance abilities," explained TCHS Topcat Senior Grace Talley. These specific abilities include showmanship, spacing, technique, execution, and overall performance quality. "It's all about how the team looks together and if everyone looks cohesive."

Though competition seasons are grueling, dancers across LISD relish in the opportunity to further hone their skills. "After football season, the level of difficulty only goes up," LHS Farmerette junior Bella explained. "We don't do fouettes on the turf. As a team we all grow as the season progresses. Football season is the fun part, and then once we get to competition season, it's that growing stage where we learn how to be better dancers and bond more as a team."

When they're not competing, some teams host holiday shows or participate in other community performances during the winter months. "It's become a really sweet community tradition," MHS Marquette Director Alice Dack said of the MHS Holiday Show.

The holiday season gives dancers a time to give back to their communities, a responsibility each team takes seriously. "On top of all the dancing, I think it's great how much we're involved in the community," HHS Silver Wing Assistant Director Hannah Pascual said. "This year [our team] made 500 sandwiches for the homeless community. They've done coat drives, fun runs, volunteered with Salvation Army, blanket making for a children's hospital, Adopt an Angel and more."

"We have four core values of kindness, integrity, respect and responsibility," FMHS Rosette Director Hannah Elmore continued. "So those are the things we're hoping they gain [throughout] in this experience."

Groups also use the winter and spring months to take trips throughout the country to perform and further master their craft. "We take trips every other year," explained Elmore. "This past trip [to Disney World] we took a class with a Disney cast member... they walked our dancers through an audition process of what it would look like to audition at Disney World. They taught them combinations and asked questions that they'd ask at an interview. In the past we've taken trips to New York City, Chicago, taken part in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and more."

As the weather warms, the teams prepare for one



HHS Silver Wing  
captain Caroline  
Holloway perfects  
her skills.



*LHS Farmerettes perfect their spacing in practice.*

of their most time-honored traditions, the spring show. The spring shows are a chance for the teams to perform their advanced dance skills in front of families, friends, classmates and teachers. Teams will rework their competition dances to fit on the stage, and learn new choreography in a variety of genres.

"The LISD dance program Spring Showcases are remarkable displays of student talents and director creativity", said Amanda Drinkwater, Director of Fine Arts. "Audience members are treated to a couple

hours of highly coordinated and sophisticated solo and ensemble dance routines set to musical selections. The wide variety of dance styles are enhanced by numerous costume changes and special effects, and choreography can be seen by world class consultants, program directors, and the students themselves."

"Our spring show consists of everything...literally," said Anne Bowling. "We do kick, contemporary, jazz, hip hop, modern, ballet, tap, and musical theatre. We hit it all. I like that the audience can see that we do everything." And though these genres provide constant entertainment for audiences, it's certainly no easy feat to pull off backstage. "Backstage is absolute mayhem," continued Anne. "Our girls are in up to 14 dances each night."

But when the mayhem is over and the curtains close, the feeling is indescribable for both dancers and directors. Typically this marks the end of the season, and the end of the drill team experience for seniors. "I've had a lot of girls come up to me and say, 'I don't think I would've made it through high school if I didn't have drill team to keep me on track,'" said Alex Rogers.

These strong bonds between dancers and their directors create the standard of excellence that has and will continue to define LISD's drill teams for many years. It's what inspires the next generation of dancers hoping to join one of these teams.

"Growing up, I would go to football games just to watch the Rosettes," said FMHS Junior Emma. "So being on the team... it just meant the world to me."

"It's life changing," concluded Alice Dack. "There's no way else to describe it."



*A TCHS Topcat practices with her teammates.*



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