

# All About ACE

News from the Spring ISD Advisory Committee on Education

2020-2021 Issue 3



## Advisory Committee on Education Reconvenes Focusing on District Issues that Matter

The district's ACE committee reconvened on Tuesday, Dec. 15 for its third meeting of the year, focusing on the Education Planning Guides and the preliminary discussion around the district calendar development process. As in previous meetings, the members posed pertinent questions about issues in the district and heard first-hand how they have or would be addressed, in addition to providing feedback on these and other matters.

The gathering commenced with a medley of holiday tunes as members joined the meeting, which prompted lots of smiles as Superintendent Dr. Rodney E. Watson opened the meeting with his customary segment, "What's on My Mind". First and foremost were his expressions of sincere gratitude for every member of the Spring ISD family. While so much of our attention has been directed to responding to the pandemic and its various challenges, Dr. Watson took time to shift the focus to the things - big and small - for which we should all be grateful. "Even in the midst of it all, I feel blessed to be here with each of you, to talk with you, and to say 'thank you' for all you do everyday."

Dr. Watson also shared his thoughts on critical issues that recently surfaced regarding the decision to not award employee holiday incentive bonuses, which he describes as an issue that "keeps me up at night." Central to these concerns were perceptions that other surrounding districts value their employees more, and worse, that Spring ISD does not care for its employees. To dispel such misconceptions, Dr. Watson spoke to the issues in detail and revisited some of the key changes the district enacted earlier this year to create long-lasting support for all employees. A summary of his points follows:

- This past year, a **2.5% salary increase for all employees** was approved by the Board of Trustees, after an extensive survey revealed differences between the district's salary plan at the time and the most competitive salaries in the state. Several employee groups received a higher percentage increase as recommended by the Texas Association of School Boards to remain competitive. While most of the surrounding districts increased salaries by 1% or simply awarded a one-time \$1,000 payment, Spring ISD remained committed to increasing its pay scales upward and proceeded with the pay raise, even in the midst of a pandemic.
- The district's enrollment decline of 1,600 students has resulted in a \$12 million shortfall. A \$500-per-employee-incentive bonus, at an estimated total of \$8 million, would compound the deficit to an unrecoverable level. An incentive bonus during a time of declining student enrollment could lead to position closures due to budget constraints.
- As school year 2021-2022 planning begins, the goal is to keep moving forward and retain our employees. With future increases in student enrollment, incentive bonuses can be considered in addition to an annual pay raise.

Watson closed with a commitment to maintaining comparable and competitive salaries. He leaned on his background in human resources administration and provided firm reassurance to always "pay people for what they're worth". He acknowledged Spring ISD's strong track record in providing annual pay increases, and this year was no different.

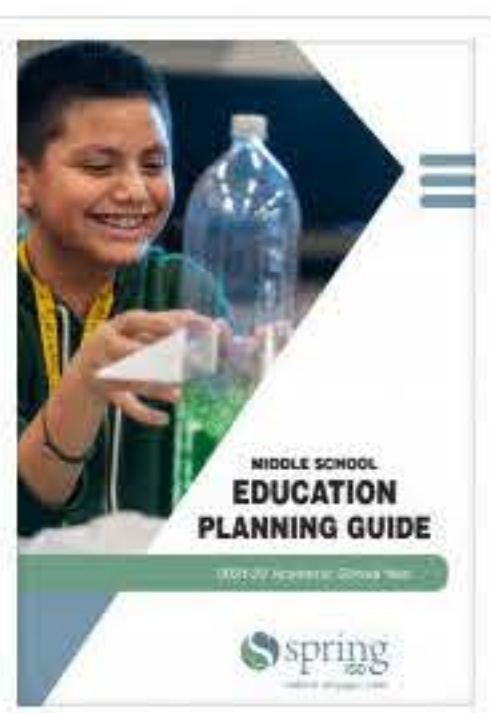
## Curriculum and Instruction Unveils the 2021-22 Education Planning Guides

Earlier this month, the Curriculum and Instruction team presented to the Spring ISD Board of Education its Education Planning Guides (EPGs), a comprehensive collection of courses and pathways that provide advice and guidance to secondary students and families for their academic, collegiate, and career trajectories. More than 100 district and campus leaders participated in the EPG development and vetting over a three-month period. The ultimate goal of the guide, according to Dr. Matt Pariseau, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, is for students to feel excited to explore and select the courses that will help them graduate with a diploma along with an endorsement.

Two new changes in this year's EPG are as follows:

- **Career and Technical Education Pathways** - Changes in pathway requirements were announced this year, which prompted the EPG task force to review each of the plans that were being offered to students. The team was prompted to streamline the pathways as varying student enrollment was evidence of interest and engagement. As a result of greater alignment between pathways and available courses, students will have more opportunities to enroll in advanced-level courses and other courses of interest.
- **From Advanced Placement to Advanced Courses** - This change pertains to the title of courses formerly identified under the trademark of Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement (AP) as registered by The College Board. Spring ISD will no longer apply these titles to courses, but rather, will refer to them as Advanced. For example, AP World Geography will be titled Advanced Geography. While the title may change, the rigor and course expectations remain the same for all advanced courses.

The annual EPG task force process is open to all employees who are interested in giving feedback on the selection and vetting of coursework and pathways. The input of all stakeholders will be considered in the plan as it is developed over the designated fall months in preparation for its approval and release by early January. This year's EPGs, for middle and high school students, are now readily available in a [digital format](#) for the course selection process, which will take place in January through Feb. 5.

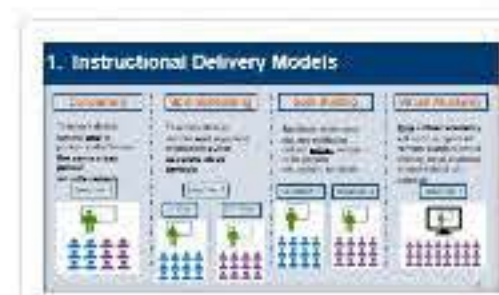


## Three Big Wins: Celebrating ACE Accomplishments

In a fast-paced district like Spring ISD, it is vitally important to pause and recognize accomplishments made from a group like the ACE. Dr. Lupita Hinojosa, Chief of Innovation and Equity, led the committee through this much-needed reflection and celebration of achievements thus far. The following Big Wins were highlighted with specific next steps for the coming months ahead:

- **New Staffing and Instructional Delivery Models** - The spring semester creates opportunities to pursue new staffing and instructional delivery approaches/models to better meet staff, student, and family needs. In addition to the concurrent teaching model the district adopted in September, the ACE provided insights on three other instructional delivery models, including Split Scheduling, in which the teacher delivers remote and in-person instruction in separate class periods; Split Staffing, where teachers at one campus are staffed to deliver either remote or in-person instruction (not both); and Virtual Academy, in which a virtual school is developed to support all remote learners, while students learning in person attend school on campus.
- **Monthly Professional Learning and Planning** - The message from the ACE resonated clearly around the need for regular professional learning and planning days for teachers throughout the spring semester. Specifically, the time is allocated for professional learning, instructional planning, and simply to catch up with little time directed by administration. Four days have been designated for this purpose - January 27, February 24, March 12, and April 21. On each of these days, all students - both remote and in-person - will learn asynchronously. A copy of the memorandum to the district staff is available [here](#). For clarification, these professional learning days will not be used for campus deep cleaning. Other dates will be designated for deep cleaning and announced as they are scheduled.
- **Parent-Student Commitment on Instructional Learning Model** - Parents will be required to confirm their student's learning setting, being remote or in-person, by Jan. 8. Schools will hold firmly that the transitions only occur at the end of the grading cycle. Students in a special situation involving a required period of quarantine will be allowed to switch learning settings.

These three Big Wins are a direct result of feedback from the ACE as well as from survey results of district staff. The goal to listen and respond to the ACE remains an ongoing commitment of the Superintendent and senior administration. As plans to rollout each of these Big Wins ensue, the ACE will be invited to share continued feedback and insights.



## ACE Calendar Ad-Hoc Committee

ACE members were invited to volunteer for an ad-hoc committee to give input and develop the district's 2021-22 instructional calendar. The volunteers who signed up will join other advisory group representatives, including the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee as well as the Parent Advisory Committee. The team will begin with the shared goals from Dr. Watson and the Board of Education, in addition to guidance from surrounding Region 4 districts to develop the instructional calendar throughout the month of January. The instructional calendar will be proposed to the Board for approval in February 2021.



## Meet the ACE Member of the Month

More than 20 years ago, Diana DelaFuente joined the Spring ISD family as a bilingual paraprofessional at Link Elementary School. Her talents were noticed by then-principal, Ms. Joan Harding, and with lots of words of encouragement, Diana decided to go back to college to pursue her degree in teaching. With Ms. Harding's help, Diana earned a full scholarship! She also experienced some of life's greatest joys and sorrows in the early years of her career, including the birth of her daughter in 2003 and unfortunate loss of her husband due to cancer. Diana left Spring ISD for a short time and returned in 2009 to Burchett, where she is currently a fourth grade ELAR teacher.

Diana has faithfully served the Burchett community in several capacities, including bilingual and adaptive behavior paraprofessional, resource aide, first grade teacher and team leader, ARK campus lead, and English learners lead teacher. She is inspired by the impact made on children's lives, not only academically but emotionally. To see their passion for reading grow, is the ultimate reward. As a member of ACE, Ms. DelaFuente is most committed to serve as a representative for all Burchett teachers and to share their voice. In her words, "I do my best to make sure this happens. I truly appreciate that the district truly does listen."

## Here's What's on the Agenda

The following is a list of the ACE meeting dates and topics of focus for the remainder of the year. The calendar is subject to change if additional items need to be added based on discussions, recommendations, or district priorities.

ACE Meeting Dates & Focus Areas 2020-21	
DATE	FOCUS AREAS
JAN. 20, 2021	2021-22 Strategic Plan Development
FEB. 24, 2021	2021-22 Budget Priorities
APRIL 28, 2021	2021-22 Professional Development
MAY 19, 2021	2021-22 Student Code of Conduct

## Make Your Voice Heard! Talk to your ACE Representative

Every campus in the district has at least two ACE representatives elected by the staff to serve in an advisory role to the superintendent. Central office representatives were also elected and serve in the same capacity. Devoted community members, appointed by the Superintendent, serve on the ACE as another integral voice as well. If you want to ensure your views are heard, reach out to your ACE member. Click [here](#) to learn who represents you.



The next ACE meeting will be held on **Wednesday, Jan. 20 at 5 p.m.**

[rhinoj@springisd.org](mailto:rhinoj@springisd.org) | 281-891-6736  
[springisd.org/ace](http://springisd.org/ace)

Check out the ACE website at [www.springisd.org/ace](http://www.springisd.org/ace)

Made with smore

Smore helps people create gorgeous newsletters in a snap.

Create your own for FREE!