

## **Team of Eight**

By David Truitt, Superintendent

Across all Texas public school districts, the term “Team of Eight” is used to describe the roles and working relationship of the Board of Trustees and Superintendent in leading the work of a District. This term and vision is a part of annual training for Boards and Superintendents through the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). The premise is that all Board Members and Superintendent must share a mutual understanding and respect for their respective roles and responsibilities and work together as team for the good of the students and community. In West ISD, the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees truly function as a “Team of Eight.” The School Board is the corporate policy making body for the District, and the Superintendent provides leadership and manages the District within the framework of these policies.

The West ISD Team of Eight wants first and foremost to ensure that our students across the District succeed at the highest levels possible. Every decision the Team of Eight makes and all the resources it marshals for the District are ultimately intended to promote this end. To be successful over the long haul in promoting increased student achievement, there are several roles the Board strives to embrace and carry out for our students. Our Board greatly desires to govern with vision, knowledge, and consistency. TASB training states that effective Boards are usually marked by certain characteristics: (1.) They have embraced a vision and a set of clearly defined priorities for the District that structure both the Board’s decision making and the work of the District staff. (2.) They have a clear picture of what their work entails. That is, the Board understands its job relative to the work of others and knows the tools at the Board’s disposal for performing the job. (3.) They have formalized their work. That is, the Board has developed and follows clearly defined procedures and schedules for doing its work. (4.) They foster, through their own practices, the flow of information within the community. The free flow of information ensures the community is informed about and involved in the District’s efforts to make its vision a reality. Every day, the West ISD Board works hard to embody these characteristics in some measure. Our Board has learned that a truly effective Board has institutionalized through the District’s culture and climate certain practices to make sure the tasks that promote improvement are performed regularly, consistently, and effectively. The key to making these characteristics a reality in West is the effectiveness of the Team of Eight.

Over the past few months, the Board has approved goals for the 2019-2020 school year. Our five goal headers are: (1). Achieving Educational Excellence, (2). Ensuring Safe and Secure Schools, (3). Recruiting and Retaining Committed Educators, (4). Increasing Community and Parent Involvement and Engagement, and (5). Operating Efficient and Effective Facilities. These goals are always a work in progress, but they must be in place to provide direction in achieving the District’s vision. Through these goals, the Team of Eight coordinates the decisions and focus of our work. These goals help articulate the culture the District hopes to embody, establish the outcomes the District is striving to achieve, and express and support the aspirations of the community for the future of our children. These goal headers are the cornerstone of our District and Campus Improvement Plans and always listed on our Board Meeting Agendas. Every Agenda Item is tied back to one of these goal headers.

In addition to our goal work, the Board also has two, new members who are working hard to acclimate themselves to our goal work and their role as Trustees. As you know, Mrs. Holly Willis was sworn in back

in November in Place 4. Mrs. Willis has been a wonderful addition to the Board and brings many welcomed experiences and new perspectives to the Team of Eight. Also new to the Board is Mr. Jason Janek. During a Special Called Meeting on Tuesday, January 29, 2019, Mr. Janek was appointed and sworn in as a new West ISD Board of Trustee for Place 7. This Trustee position was available due to Mr. Robin Waters request to resign from the Board for the remaining year of his term. Mr. Waters has been a valued Trustee for many years, and one proud West Trojan. The Board cannot thank Mr. Waters enough for his years of service to the students, staff, parents, and community of West. Mr. Janek will now complete the remaining ten months of Mr. Waters' term. Mr. Janek and his wife, Lori, have three children in West ISD. He served as the co-chair of the West ISD Strategic Planning Team and is a proud graduate of West High School. The other returning Team of Eight members include: Dr. Larry Sparks, Mike Gerik, Leigh Crawshaw, Ken Sykora, and Dr. John Crowder.

Our Team of Eight is strong. We are blessed in West to have seven, committed, student-centered, outcome-driven, Trojan-loving Board Members in place and ready to ensure the Team of Eight is working efficiently and effectively for the community of West. Our Board Meetings are traditionally the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM at the West ISD Administration Building on 406 West Shook Street. Our Team of Eight is here to serve, and we are committed as a team to help ensure 2019 is the best year in the history of West ISD.