



ALAMO HEIGHTS ISD  
SCHOOL  
VIEWS **Spring  
2024**





final four teams. Wild Card voting begins at 5 p.m. and takes place inside the High School.

**Alamo Heights High School graduation is May 23, 2024 at 8 p.m.** This year's ceremony will be held at Harry B. Orem Stadium. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Seating and parking is first come, first served and families and guests are encouraged to arrive early and carpool. Overflow parking and shuttle service will be available at Alamo Heights United Methodist Church, 825 E Basse Road, beginning at 6:30 p.m. As a reminder, the district's clear bag policy will be in effect.

Come celebrate the Class of 2024 as they cross the stage and receive their diplomas.

## Save the dates!

Save the dates for two upcoming special events in Alamo Heights ISD.

The annual **Business Incubator Pitch Night** is scheduled for **Friday, May 3 at 6 p.m.** in the Alamo Heights High School Auditorium.

Five teams will pitch their business ideas to a panel of judges in hopes of earning seed money awarded by district partners.

Community members can vote for one of six Wild Card businesses that will be invited to pitch onstage with the



### IN THIS ISSUE

Save the Date.....	1
From the Superintendent.....	2
Bond Construction Updates.....	3
#ExtraordinaryAHISD Staff.....	5
Alamo Heights School Foundation.....	7
Community .....	9
Trustees at Work.....	10
School Life .....	12
Mule News, Bits & Briefs .....	14

## LETTERMAN JACKETS

A special group of junior and senior Special Olympics athletes were awarded their letterman jackets.

These accomplished athletes are in season year round competing in bowling, basketball, and swimming. They're also involved in many other extracurricular activities too.

"Our athletes put in the work each week during the school year to be tough competitors with excellent sportsmanship.



We are so grateful for opportunities like these to celebrate their efforts and accomplishments," said Austin Amaro, Special Education Coordinator at AHHS.



# A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Spring is a busy season in Alamo Heights ISD as we celebrate many events and milestones leading up to the end of another outstanding school year in Alamo Heights.

It's also an important time to look ahead. Our Board and District staff are already planning for the future by focusing on the budget for the upcoming year, the beginning of bond construction projects this summer, and the important priority of hiring the best staff to work with our students and in our schools.

## Recruitment and Retention of Staff

One of the highlights of our February Feedback survey revealed a 98% positive satisfaction rate among teachers working in AHISD. We continue to focus our efforts on both recruiting and retaining our staff and this data affirms that our district continues to be a truly special place to work.

This time of year we do traditionally see staff members choose to retire after years of dedicated service to AHISD and education, and we look to fill those vacancies with highly qualified staff. We all look forward to welcoming some new faces to AHISD over the summer.

## Bond Construction Updates

This summer, we will embark on an exciting new chapter for AHISD as we begin construction on our first Bond 2023 project - new academic and administrative building for Alamo Heights High School.

We know there will be some challenges during the next two years of construction, but we are working closely with the high school staff to mitigate any negative impacts on our student body.

We've launched a Bond 2023 Updates website to keep our community informed with regular updates about the design, planning, and construction of all Bond 2023 projects - [www.ahisd.net/Bond2023Updates](http://www.ahisd.net/Bond2023Updates).

## Budget Challenges

Alongside all other school districts in Texas, we find ourselves in a very challenging time as we close out this year's budget and plan for next year. Despite conservative pay adjustments for our staff, a Superior Financial FIRST rating, and continued community financial support through our Alamo Heights School



Foundation, PTOs and Booster clubs, we will end this year with a deficit. My intent below is to help our community understand the context for this and to share the critical time we're facing in regard to school finance for Texas public schools.

The state started the 88th legislative session in January 2023 with a surplus close to \$33 billion. We were cautiously optimistic that lawmakers would provide increased funding for teacher pay raises and rising operational expenses using that extra money. Since the last time the state adjusted the basic allotment for schools back in 2019, inflation rose by about 18%. When you experienced rising costs for your family, we experienced those same rising costs of operations in AHISD. To date, after a regular legislative session (and four special sessions that followed) **there has been no additional dollars allocated to public schools to adjust for those rising inflationary costs despite a record surplus at the state level.** And, it's important to remember that as a Chapter 49 school district, we were required this year to send over \$37 million of our local tax revenue back to the state due to Robin Hood legislation.



This lack of funding from the legislative session, a reduction of tax revenue due to the constitutional amendment passed in November, the ending of support through ESSER\* money and a reduction of SHARS\*\* funding by 50%, all contribute to a very challenging budget scenario for our district as we plan for the upcoming school year.

This perfect storm will require us to dip into our fund balance to cover this year's costs as well as next year's costs. We will work with Trustees to evaluate enrollment, staffing needs, revenue projections, compensation needs, and programming to plan how best to weather this storm as we wait for some relief with the next legislative session in January 2025.

## MULES UP!

Dr. Bashara

\*ESSER - Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds

\*\*SHARS- Texas school districts can get reimbursed for some of the special education services they provide by participating in the School Health and Related Services (SHARS) program. Federal reimbursement for schools is provided through Medicaid for designated services delivered to special education students.



# AHHS Schematic Design Revealed

The schematic design for Alamo Heights High School was presented at the January 2024 Board Meeting. It is the first major project funded by Bond 2023 which was overwhelmingly approved by voters in May 2023. The design is for a new academic and administrative building at AHHS that replaces the current structure.

“As a result of the year-long needs assessment meetings with a variety of stakeholders, our architects have arrived at a schematic design for AHHS that includes larger classrooms, more natural lighting, an increase in outdoor learning spaces and the inclusion of multi-purpose and collaborative spaces,” says AHISD Superintendent **Dr. Dana Bashara**. “Safety and security considerations are embedded into all aspects of the design.”

The front of the new building is designed to look similar to the current facade of the building facing Broadway, with the majority of trees untouched by the design. The third floor is even recessed to the back so as not to protrude on the appearance.

Acknowledging the historical and nostalgic significance that the current AHHS building has for the community, the District will identify key items to keep from the current building, such as the iconic mule in the entrance, the WWII military service display by the library, the class photos in the main wing, etc.

District staff and Trustees worked with architects from LPA Design Studios and Bartlett Cocke General Contractors in design and planning for construction at AHHS which is expected to last from May 2024 (after schools ends) until August 2026.

“Our community has a great tradition of honoring our past while embracing our future,” says Board President **David Hornberger**. “In that spirit, as an alum and also as a trustee and parent, I am excited about this opportunity to redesign the high school campus and tackle persistent issues while also meeting the needs of our students and teachers that frankly just did not exist when the building was first constructed.”



## HOW TO STAY UPDATED

Regular bond construction updates will be provided at Board Meetings, in this School Views publication mailed to AHISD residents, on district social media platforms, and on the district’s website, [www.ahisd.net](http://www.ahisd.net).

We’ve launched a Bond 2023 Updates website to keep our community informed. It has construction timelines, a Frequently Asked Questions section, and outlines how construction will impact AHISD learners of all ages.

The District also formed a Bond Community Council that will meet quarterly to learn about and be a resource to the community on

the design, planning, and construction of Bond 2023 projects. The Council is made up of staff and community members representing all campuses and areas of the district

Additionally, logistical information will be shared with AHHS students and

families as the 2024-2025 school year approaches. Campus leaders continue to collaborate and plan for the impacts of construction on classroom spaces, safety, and parking.

## CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULES/TIMELINE

The work will be divided into three project packages.

### PACKAGE ONE

Alamo Heights High School - construction May 2024 to August 2026

Central Office/Learning Center - construction June 2026 to April 2027

Excel Academy/Connects - construction May 2027 to December 2027

### PACKAGE TWO

Robbins campus (located next to Tennis Center/Natorium and current home of Excel and O9 Academies)

Softball Field and Accessory Buildings - construction October 2024 to September 2025

Tennis Improvements - construction January 2025 to December 2025

Baseball Improvements - construction January 2025 to December 2025

Robbins Building Removal and New Parking Lot - construction January 2028 to June 2028

Cambridge - construction January 2025 to August 2026

Woodridge - construction June 2025 to August 2026

Plant Services - construction September 2025 to March 2026

### PACKAGE THREE

Howard Early Childhood Center - construction May 2026 to July 2027

Alamo Heights Junior School - construction April 2027 to June 2028

All dates slated for campus construction projects are subject to change due to factors like weather.





# Frequently Asked Questions

## **When will construction begin?**

The timeline for the high school project includes moving out of the current building in May and June and into portable buildings. Demolition will occur in the south, central, north, and main wings of the current building starting in July. The new building will be ready for the start of school in August 2026.

## **Why construct a new building instead of renovating the current structure?**

At the direction of the AHISD Board of Trustees, the district's architects, LPA, conducted a structural assessment and cost analysis to guide the decision making. This analysis showed that it made more fiscal sense to replace the current structure rather than renovate it to update the classroom space and learning environments to meet the needs of our students.

## **What will be saved from the current building? What about the Mule Statue?**

Acknowledging the historical and nostalgic significance that the current AHHS building has for the community, the District will identify key items to keep from the current building, such as the stained glass mule in the entrance, the WWII military service display by the library, the class photos in the main wing, etc. The Mule statue out front will be protected during construction, which may include temporarily moving it during construction and returning it afterwards.

## **What additional safety features are included in the design?**

The new building will be designed with a secure vestibule entrance. All other AHISD schools already have vestibules. Glass will be bullet resistant on exterior windows and doors. These features are in addition to current safety features across the campus including controlled access doors, perimeter fencing, and the Centegix Crisis Alert system.

## **What are the current TEA standards for classroom sizes?**

Classroom sizes in the current main building of the high school are 650 square feet. The TEA standards for classroom sizes at the secondary level is a minimum of 750 square feet. Classrooms in the new building design will be on average 800 square feet.

## **Is the new building larger?**

The new structure will be three stories, allowing students to benefit from the expansion to more than 148,300 square feet in the new space from 110,900 square feet that is currently the size of the building.

## **Will trees be removed?**

An arborist has consulted with the district and determined that the majority of trees will be unaffected by construction.

## **What is the timeline for construction on the visitor's side of Orem Stadium?**

Construction of additional athletic spaces, along with new stands on the east side of the stadium will start after the 2024 football season ends in November. This project is expected to be finished by August of 2025.

## **What is the plan for portables?**

"Portables" are actually modular classrooms and office space, and they will be placed on the current practice field and in the parking lot on the south side of Orem Stadium. The modular temporary classrooms on the practice field are already surrounded by the current security fencing, and additional fencing for security will be added around the parking lot placement as well.

## **How does construction impact parking?**

There will be a net shortage of about 60 parking spaces during the construction period. The District is currently thinking through ways to best address parking during this two year period of construction in a way that continues to promote positive relationships with our neighbors.

Temporary parking will be added on the vacant lot at Broadway and Castano to help alleviate some of the shortages. In April, the District finalized the acquisition of property along Broadway, next to the current Central Office. During construction, it can be used for additional parking.

When construction on project one is completed, there will be an overall gain of 100 parking spaces.

## **Why is the AHHS project first? Why is the new Howard building last?**

The high school project is first as it is the most complex project with the most needs to address and the highest budget.

The high school is using its soccer practice field for portable classrooms during construction. The district needs to maintain the field at Howard for use by AHHS students until the high school construction is complete. At that point, the new Howard building can be started.

# BOND 2023

## ALAMO HEIGHTS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



# #ExtraordinaryAHISD Staff



## National Board Certified Teachers

Three Cambridge Elementary teachers have earned National Board Certification, the highest credential in the teaching profession.

**Julie Draper, Christi Criss, and Kevin Criss** are the first teachers to earn this certification while working in AHISD. Currently there are 1,375 National Board Certified Teachers in Texas which equates to less than 1% of Texas teachers.

As a part of the certification process, they built a portfolio that includes student work samples, assignments, video, and a thorough analysis of their classroom teaching. For this incredible accomplishment, each educator will receive over \$3,000 per year in additional compensation from the state.

## YOSA MUSIC EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

**David Stephenson**, AHHS Band Director and AHISD Fine Arts Coordinator, was named the 2024 Youth Orchestra of San Antonio Music Educator of the Year! We're so proud of Mr. Stephenson and we're happy he chooses to call AHISD home!



## Powering the Profile

**CARISSA GALVIS**  
Woodridge Elementary

*Think Critically and Creatively*

Carissa Galvis, fourth grade teacher at Woodridge, was recognized for Powering the Profile and embodying the AHISD Profile of a Learner. She encourages students to “think critically and creatively.”



**MANPREET BEHL**  
Cambridge Elementary

*Engage Socially and Globally*

Manpreet Behl, third grade teacher at Cambridge Elementary was recognized for Powering the Profile and embodying the AHISD Profile of a Learner. She helps students “engage socially and globally.”



**MICHAEL MCELRATH (“COACH MAC”)**  
The Junior School

*Employ Skills for Life*

Michael McElrath, Texas history teacher at Alamo Heights Junior School was recognized for Powering the Profile and embodying the AHISD Profile of a Learner. He helps students “employ skills for life.”

**The Profile of a Learner is a guide that articulates the knowledge, skills, and attributes students will need to pursue individual dreams and positively impact the world upon graduation. The video series Powering the Profile, available on the Alamo Heights Mules YouTube channel, highlights Extraordinary AHISD staff as they bring the district’s Profile of a Learner to life for students.**



# Meet the 2024 Alamo Heights ISD Teachers of the Year

The 2024 Campus Teachers of the Year are: **Sarah Holmes**, ELAR teacher, Alamo Heights HS; **John Sheppard**, 8th grade Advanced/GT English teacher, Gifted and Talented Coordinator, ELAR/LOTE department chair, Alamo Heights Junior School; **Kevin Criss**, PE teacher, Cambridge; **Megan Janak**, 3rd grade teacher, Woodridge; and **Anna Duce**, kindergarten teacher, Howard Early Childhood Center.

**Kevin Criss**, PE teacher at Cambridge Elementary, is the 2024 Alamo Heights ISD Teacher of the Year. He will represent AHISD as the district's nominee for the Trinity Prize for Excellence in Teaching and Region 20 Teacher of the Year.

"It is my goal to have each student find their own place to excel within physical education," says Criss. "For content to be meaningful to a student, they must have an emotional response to it. I have to plan very carefully because I want to create positive experiences for them. Not participating in organized sports as a child, I understand that not every student is a star athlete."

## ANNA DUCE

Kindergarten Teacher, Howard Early Childhood Center



Anna Duce has been teaching in Alamo Heights ISD since 2012. She says she didn't plan to become a teacher, but the teaching profession found her. She studied psychology in college and later worked as a behavior analyst at a clinic/school for children with autism. It was there she discovered her true calling.

## KEVIN CRISS

PE Teacher, Cambridge Elementary

Kevin Criss began his teaching career in Alamo Heights ISD in 2013. Though he never participated in organized sports as a child, a college course in kinesiology sparked his desire to become a physical education teacher.

In December 2023, he earned National Board Certification, becoming only the second educator in the state to earn the prestigious designation in Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood- Physical Education.



## MEGAN JANAK

3rd Grade Teacher,  
Woodridge Elementary

Megan Janak joined AHISD in 2014 and began her teaching career in 2009. She takes pride in building a classroom community for her third graders, showing students she cares about them and recognizes their unique learning needs. She helps them foster connections and discuss big ideas like honesty, integrity, and responsibility.



## JOHN SHEPPARD

8th grade Advanced/GT English Teacher, Gifted and Talented Coordinator, and ELAR/LOTE Department Chair,  
Alamo Heights Junior School



John Sheppard has spent his entire teaching career in Alamo Heights ISD. He's been teaching English at Alamo Heights Junior School since 1995. His original dream was to become a police officer. When he realized that wasn't the career for him, he decided to become a substitute teacher while he figured out his next move. He fell in love with the classroom and the rest is history.

## SARAH HOLMES

English Language Arts Teacher,  
Alamo Heights High School

Sarah Holmes has been teaching in AHISD since 2010, first at Alamo Heights Junior School and now at Alamo Heights High School. She started her teaching career in 2005. She knew she wanted to work with kids since she was in the fifth grade, and her love of sports and an influential senior English teacher guided her to the teaching profession.





# REUNITE *at Heights*

AN ALUMNI & HALL OF FAME CELEBRATION

## 2024 HALL OF FAME HONOREES

### DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

**Dr. Bill Colglazier '62**

**Rick Shaw '70**

**Bobby Chesney '89**

### LIFETIME EDUCATOR

**Mercille Wisakowsky**

### DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

**Suzanne and Jimmy Goudge '72**

## ONCE A MULE, ALWAYS A MULE!

On Sunday, March 3, 2024, the Alamo Heights School Foundation hosted its annual Alumni and Hall of Fame Celebration, Reunite at Heights. This all-class reunion was held at the San Antonio Country Club, where the Alamo Heights Mighty Mule Band greeted guests with nostalgic sounds. Student volunteers dedicated their time to help execute a memorable event for the community! Guests, AH alumni, and event sponsors had time to reminisce with classmates and celebrate our Hall of Fame honorees.

The Alamo Heights School Foundation Hall of Fame is comprised of alumni, faculty, and volunteers who have accomplished significant achievements in many aspects of their lives. Three Distinguished Alumni Awards, one Lifetime Educator Award, and one Distinguished Service Award are presented each year.

**As shown from left to right below: Bill Colglazier '62, Mercille Wisakowsky, Suzanne (Cheever) Goudge '72, Jimmy Goudge '72, Rick Shaw '70, Bobby Chesney '89**







## THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 REUNITE AT HEIGHTS SPONSORS!

### **Mule Sponsors**

Suzanne and Jimmy Goudge, Mays Family Foundation

### **Gold Sponsors**

Broadway Bank, Weezie and Mac Chesney, Nancy and Charles Hollimon, Barbie and Toby O'Connor, Ann and Rick Shaw, Susan and Van Stewart

### **Blue Sponsors**

Alcocer LLC, The Azar Family, The Ballantyne Family, The Dana and Collier Bashara Family, Peggy and John Colglazier, Julie and Kenny Dorbandt, Kelly and Carl Fellbaum, Friends of the Chesney Family, Friends of Honorees, Friends of Jimmy, Suzanne, and Mercille, Frost Bank, Kate and Bill Kingman, The Lutz Family, SAMCO Capital Markets, Ann B. Watson, Thad Ziegler Glass Family, Worth & Associates

## NOMINATE A MULE!

The Alamo Heights School Foundation is accepting nominations for the 2025 Hall of Fame! The deadline for submissions to be considered for the 2025 Hall of Fame is July 30, 2024. Visit [www.ahschoolfoundation.org](http://www.ahschoolfoundation.org) for more information about the Hall of Fame and to download the Nomination Form. If you have any questions about the Hall of Fame, please contact Jessica Kelley, Donor & Alumni Relations Manager, at (210) 832-5957.

The Alamo Heights School Foundation's mission is to enhance academic excellence for every student with a focus on funding teachers and staff. For ways to donate to support our children, back our teachers, and fund our schools, visit [www.ahschoolfoundation.org](http://www.ahschoolfoundation.org).

**Alamo Heights School Foundation**  
7101 Broadway, San Antonio, TX 78209  
[www.ahschoolfoundation.org](http://www.ahschoolfoundation.org)  
210-832-5957  
[ahfoundation@ahisd.net](mailto:ahfoundation@ahisd.net)





# COMMUNITY

## REGISTER NOW FOR 2024 SUMMER AT HEIGHTS!

Summer at Heights is back for 2024 with exciting classes for incoming kinder through sixth grade students.

There's something for everyone with an engaging line up of fun classes including sports and fitness, sewing, cooking, gaming, Spanish, STEM, art, theatre and much more. You'll find Summer at Heights classic offerings and some new original classes.

**Summer at Heights classes will be offered this summer from June 3 to June 28.** Classes are held at Woodridge Elementary and Alamo Heights Junior School and are taught by AHISD staff and local educators.

There are morning and afternoon sessions, before and after care, and supervised lunch for students staying all day.

Registration is now open. Visit the AHISD website at [www.ahisd.net](http://www.ahisd.net) and click on the Students and Parents tab to find the link to Summer at Heights online reservation.

Since 1995 Summer at Heights has been a staple in the AHISD community for educational and enriching summer experiences.

Email [SAH@ahisd.net](mailto:SAH@ahisd.net) with any questions.



## Celebrating Grand & Senior Mules!

Earlier this Spring, the District hosted the final Senior/Grand Mules event of the 2023-2024 school year at the Alamo Heights High School Barbara & Alan Dreeben Auditorium Foyer.

It was an opportunity for participants to learn about AHISD schools directly from students and staff and tour classrooms to see learning in action.

The program began last year to engage all members of the Alamo Heights ISD community in the efforts of our schools. It has been recognized as an innovative program by Texas School Business magazine in their annual Bragging Rights edition and highlighted as a Promising Practice by the national group [Character.org](http://Character.org).

Participants who live in AHISD receive a Gold Card which grants free admission to AHISD fine arts performances, free admission to regular season home athletic games, and free open swimming at the AHISD Natatorium, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. weekdays.

Dates for the next Senior/Grand Mules events will be announced in the coming months.

## AWARD-WINNING FIESTA MEDAL!

Congratulations to AHHS Visual Arts student **Zoe Rodriguez**! She's the winner of the 2024 Wash Tub Fiesta Medal Design Contest. Proceeds from the sale of these medals will benefit Haven for Hope.

AHHS Visual Arts has partnered with The Wash Tub since 2019. Students walk through the process of being a graphic design artist from beginning to end. The Wash Tub Executive team selects an artist to work with and the artwork is turned into a wearable work of art!

**Viva Fiesta!!**



## Artist recognized by Texas Cavaliers

**Scarlett Isaac**, a 5th grader at Woodridge, was recognized as a finalist in the 2024 Texas Cavaliers' River Parade Art Contest.

This year, more than 65 schools across the city submitted 1,400 pieces of art for the contest. Students were recognized by City Council District and Scarlett represented District 10. Her art teacher is **Anika Blanco**.

Scarlett was recognized at a press conference with the other finalists from across San Antonio. She met King Antonio Scott Allen Christy who shared that he also attended Woodridge. He and his entourage will visit the school during Fiesta.

As a finalist, Scarlett earned \$3,000 for her school's art program, a week-long summer art camp at UTSA Southwest, and prizes from sponsors including Whataburger. Her art will also appear on a VIA bus and in the River Parade program.

The theme of this year's contest was Viva America with an emphasis on the great American landmarks.

**Genevieve Willcox**, also a 5th grader at Woodridge, was recognized as a runner up in the art contest. She earned \$1,000 for her school's art program. Her teacher is **Adelaide Barnes**.





# TRUSTEES AT WORK

**David Hornberger, Board President**

If you haven't attended the annual Alamo Heights Strings Festival I highly encourage you to do so. Founded in 1973, despite debilitating budget constraints at the time and significant uncertainty in its potential success, our Strings program consistently produces highly motivated students who excel academically and who earn top awards at competitions across the state. To conclude the annual concert, the entire group - hundreds of students with a variety of skill levels from 4th grade through 12th grade - comes together to perform Beethoven's arguably best-known work: *Ode to Joy* from his *Symphony No. 9*. Can you imagine the hard work, discipline, and hopeful perseverance required to make this happen? In its own way, this performance manifests the hallmark of Alamo Heights ISD: a community coming together to achieve for its children what many might say is impossible.



It is a reminder that belief drives what is possible. Consider how your belief in the strength of a chair determines whether you sit in it. This belief that together we can push the limits of possibility for our children empowers our teachers and motivates our school district. In this spirit, our Board of Trustees, grounded in our culture of continuous improvement and our love for these schools, is working with the administrative team on multiple fronts.

Operationally, we continue to assess our budget situation. Political gridlock in Austin plus spiraling inflation created an untenable situation: we now operate at a substantial deficit of roughly \$2.5 million. Compounding the situation, just to offer a 1% raise to teacher salaries costs the district an additional \$390,000 annually. This is the result of an ill-conceived school finance regime. Bureaucrats in Austin set our base property tax rate which funds district operations. If our Board adopts a tax rate lower than this, then the state lowers our funding per student. If our Board adopts a tax rate higher than this, then the state increases our "recapture" amounts, which ultimately fund the state budget surplus rather than our own local operations. And, crucially, the funding formula has had no adjustment for inflation.

An analogy might help explain the predicament. Let's say you and I agreed back in 1990 to split the cost for dinner every night. I agreed to pay \$20 and you agreed to cover the rest. At first, with our dinner costing around \$25, you're getting a good deal but, as time goes on, the price of dinner escalates. Food prices rise while servers and wait staff need higher compensation. Add on top the increasing insurance and utility costs for the restaurant, and, today,

dinner is about \$100 for the two of us - but I've never increased my contribution and still pay only \$20. You have the misfortune of covering the rest, so your share of dinner has increased from \$5 to \$80, regardless of whether you have that \$80 to spend. While this arrangement may sound ridiculous, it is not too different from today's school finance structure.

So, with inflation spiraling and our revenue comparatively stagnant, our deficit grows, particularly in these last few years as we have struggled to maintain insurance coverage and to provide competitive teacher salaries. In the months ahead, the Board will work with the administration to identify options to optimize spending across campuses, with a focus on maintaining services and support for our students. Still, we need the Legislature to pass a school finance bill to increase funding on a per student basis—which they recently failed to do given the high-profile fight over vouchers, and despite a record surplus of over \$30 billion. We also continue to need the generous support of our community, particularly through the Alamo Heights School Foundation, our PTOs, and our extracurricular support groups.

Despite these financial headwinds, we press forward on multiple fronts. Design and implementation of projects under the 2023

Bond are well underway, and we are excited for improvements to our campuses and solutions to decades-old problems for our community. (Bonds are funded from a separate portion of our property tax rate, used only for capital improvements, and are not subject to state recapture.)

The Board also has worked closely with the administration to create new pathways and learning opportunities for our high school students, to include the ability for students to graduate with over 60 hours of college credit that is transferable to all Texas public colleges and universities.

This proposed expansion of

curriculum challenged us to reconsider how and why we rank our high school students and to re-evaluate our local grade "multiplier," moving from two tiers of multiplier to three. In doing so, the administrative team collaborated with the Board to directly source admissions criteria and information from over 50 colleges and universities to which our students regularly apply, including a live panel discussion with admissions leaders from Trinity, TCU, and The University of Texas at Austin. Through some 20 called, open Board sessions, we balanced student growth, college and career readiness, and student wellness to arrive at a revised policy that empowers our students and works to minimize unhealthy incentives.

As a school district, we have much to celebrate yet many seemingly impossible tasks still to conquer. Indeed, it is fitting then for the Strings program to choose *Ode to Joy*. A deaf composer crafted his *Symphony No. 9*, a seemingly impossible task, simply because he believed that he could. Perhaps there is no better anthem for Alamo Heights ISD.





# SCHOOL LIFE

## State Schools of Character

Cambridge Elementary and Howard Early Childhood Center have been recognized as 2024 State Schools of Character by the organization [Character.org](https://www.character.org).

This is the second time both schools have earned this distinction. Both were first recognized in 2019. Woodridge was named a State School of Character in 2020.

[Character.org](https://www.character.org) certifies schools and districts each year at the state level that have developed and implemented an intentional, proactive, and comprehensive approach that embeds character into all aspects of school life. This year, 87 schools earned this recognition from across the United States.

The State School of Character designation is valid for five years and both schools are now eligible to be considered for National School of Character designation. National School of Character is the highest honor bestowed upon schools by [Character.org](https://www.character.org).

The 2024 National Schools of Character will be announced in May.

Alamo Heights ISD has partnered with [Character.org](https://www.character.org) since October 2016 to implement the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education.



### All-State Student Hits the Right Notes

For the second year in a row, AHHS student **Elia Contreras** earned a spot in the Texas Music Educators Association, or TMEA, All-State Choir.

It's the highest public school award for individual achievement in music that a student can receive and represents the top student musicians in Texas.

The process began with over 70,000 students from around the state vying for this honor to perform in one of 18 ensembles. Only the top 2.6% of musicians who initially audition become All-State musicians. Students were chosen through a competitive audition process held this year across the state at District, Region, and Area levels.

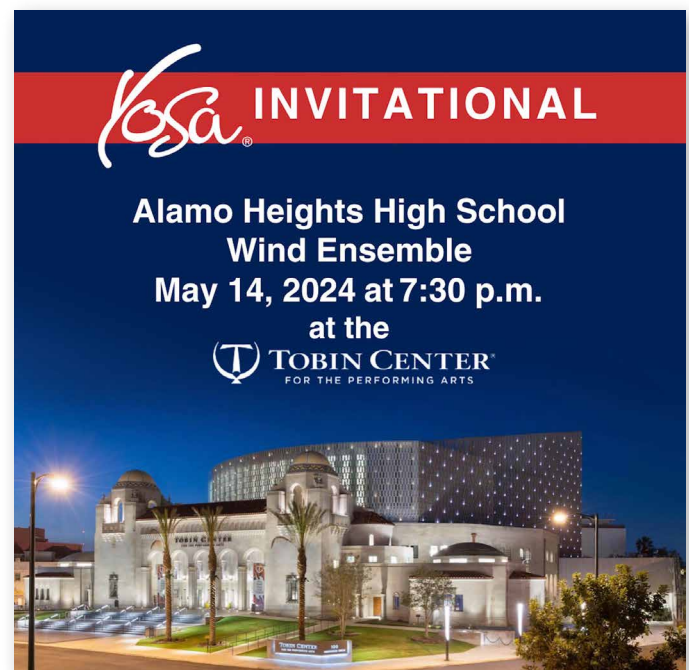
Elia performed with the All-State ensembles at the TMEA Clinic/Convention in San Antonio. Her instructors are **David Short** and **Linda Wilson**.

### BEAUTIFUL MUSIC WITH THE MIGHTY MULE BAND

The AHHS Wind Ensemble is honored to participate in the Youth Orchestras of San Antonio (YOSA) Invitational at the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts on **Tuesday, May 14, at 7:30 p.m.**

The performance will feature pieces from the group's UIL Concert Evaluation, including "Angels in the Architecture" which showcases talented soloists as well as All-State Choir member **Elia Contreras**.

The ensemble will also premiere a newly commissioned piece in celebration of the Mighty Mule Band's rich history of over 90 years in music.





# CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION UPDATES

By Dr. Jimmie Walker, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

As spring unfolds, our schools are busy with academic activities, a testament to the dedication and hard work of our students and teachers. This season, we focus on evaluating the progress of our students' academic growth through a mix of classroom assessments, grades, and various standardized tests, such as STAAR/EOC, MAP Universal Math and Reading Screeners, Advanced Placement Exams (AP), and finals for our secondary students. Results from Universal Screeners will be shared in May, and parents can expect the AP and STAAR scores over the summer.

Summer is just around the corner, and with it comes fantastic opportunities for our students to grow academically. For those needing a little extra help in math and reading, based on their STAAR/EOC scores, AHISD

is offering supportive summer programs. We also have special summer programs for our emergent bilingual students in grades PreK/Kinder, and some of our special education students will be eligible for extended school year services. Please talk with your child's



counselor or homeroom teacher to learn if your child qualifies for any summer school offerings.

Don't forget that our "Summer at Heights" enrichment classes are open to all students, promising a fun and educational experience! More information can be found on page 8 of this publication.

Finally, we're thrilled to share some wonderful news with our community.

Thanks to several generous grants, we're able to further enrich our curriculum. One of these grants is helping us ensure our K-12 math and reading programs are vertically aligned, a critical step considering many of our students stay with us from their first day at Howard Early Childhood Center all the way to their graduation from Alamo Heights High School.

Additionally, we've received grants to enhance our computer science and math curricula. And there's more good news: starting in the fall of 2024, all of our K-12 science students will be greeted with brand new instructional materials. We're excited for our students to dive into these updated resources and continue their journey of discovery and learning.



## Dinner is served!

AHHS Culinary students took over The Hayden restaurant and hosted a special meal for family and friends. Students gained valuable professional experience working side by side with restaurant staff and they also raised money for their culinary program.

"**Adam Lampin**stein, the owner of the restaurant, approached us via our Instagram account wanting to be involved with the community and give students an opportunity for a real world food industry experience," says **Emily Rangel**, AHHS Culinary Arts Instructor. "The Advanced culinary students assisted the chef with the prep, executing the dinner service, and then cleaning. The second year culinary students learned serving skills by being waitresses and waiters. The students were so excited to bring the knowledge they learn in our classroom to a real working restaurant. There were some nerves, but as the night went on, the rush took over and the students were loving it!"

*Pictured are culinary students Jacob Lange and Mila Escobar*





# MULE NEWS BITS & BRIEFS



## National Champion Cheer

Alamo Heights High School cheer won a national championship at the UCA National Cheerleading Championship in Orlando, Florida earlier this spring.

Junior Varsity earned their second consecutive national championship in the Large JV Game Day Division. Varsity won second place in the Super Large Varsity Game Day Division.

AHHS cheer also won a bronze medal in January at the 2024 UIL State Spirit Championships in Fort Worth. The squad competed in the 5A Division II category with 60 schools from across the state.

Cheer coaches are Taylor Bailey and Carrie Hill.







## Milestones for the Lady Mules

*It was a history-making season for the varsity girl's basketball team!*

The Lady Mules made the playoffs for the first time since 2012. They also advanced to the second round of the playoffs for the first time since the 2001 season.

Senior **Talaiyah Andrews** was selected for the inaugural San Antonio Sports All-Star Basketball Game. She represented AHISD on Team Black at the game on March 24.

Andrews is pictured with her coach **Marvin Walker**.



## MAKING A SPLASH AT STATE!

Alamo Heights swimming and diving qualified for the UIL state meet this February.

Diver **James Holloway** finished in 7th place. Swimmer **Philip Mu** earned 5th and 7th place in the 100 yard backstroke and 200 yard medley.

Other state qualifiers were **Cameron Percival**, **Wesley Cox**, **Mason Saunders** and alternates **Caleb Schnitzius** and **Liam Cox**. Also pictured are coaches **Ryan Akers** and **Norm Collins**.





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**WATCH: YouTube: [Alamo Heights Mules](#)**

## A NOD TO THE PAST & A LOOK TO THE FUTURE



Take a look at the schematic design for the new academic and administrative building at Alamo Heights High School. It is the first major project funded by Bond 2023 which was overwhelmingly approved by voters in May 2023.

The front of the new building is designed to look similar to the current facade of the building facing Broadway, with the majority of trees untouched by the design. The third floor is even recessed to the back so as not to protrude on the appearance.

District staff and Trustees worked with architects from LPA Design Studios and Bartlett Cocke General Contractors in design and planning for construction at AHHS which is expected to last from May 2024 until August 2026.

***Turn to pages 3 and 4 to learn more.***