

# RAISING the Bar



## Highlights and Happenings – October 2018

Welcome to our bi-annual “*RAISING the BAR*” newsletter.  
This newsletter is intended to keep you up to date on the *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* expansion initiative.

### **RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas at the KUCRL Learning Conference 2018**

In July 2018, the Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas held its annual Learning Conference. In attendance were campus instructional coaches from two *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* middle schools and an elementary instructional coach and principal



*RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas educators at the 2018 KUCRL Learning Conference*

from one of our first *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* elementary schools. The *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* educators participating in the KUCRL Learning Conference were from Farley and Hutto Elementary School —Hutto ISD and Deepark Middle School—Round Rock ISD. The KUCRL Learning Conference hosted a SIM Certificate Ceremony to recognize educators that completed their year-long apprenticeship to become a SIM Professional Developer. Out of the 38 recipients from across the United States, 24 were *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* educators from Deepark Middle School - Round Rock ISD, Elgin Middle School - Elgin ISD, Farley Middle School, Hutto Middle School, Hutto Elementary School - Hutto ISD, Lake Olympia Middle School - Fort Bend ISD, Lockhart Junior High School - Lockhart ISD, Martin Middle School and Mendez Middle School - Austin ISD, and Miller Middle School - San Marcos CISD.

The KUCRL Learning Conference 2018 offered the *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* educators learning opportunities that focused on supporting student achievement for all students. Among the educational experts presenting at the KUCRL Learning Conference 2018 were Dr. Douglas Fisher, James Basham, Jose Blackorby, Karrie Shogren, and D. Sue Vernon. The *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* educators presented multiple sessions during the conference to share the learning and best-practices coming out of our work with schools in Central Texas. *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* educators from Farley Middle School led a session focused on an innovative and creative learning strategy to structure student-led SIM Content Enhancement Routines that allow students to take ownership of their learning. *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* educators from Hutto Elementary School and Deepark Middle School led two separate poster sessions highlighting how to engage students by integrating technology with SIM Content Enhancement Routines and how to creatively plan for Thematic Units using the Unit Organizer. On the last day of the KUCRL Conference, the Farley Middle School educators led a second session on how to help students understand the power of using strategies in all of their classes. The Central Texas *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas* educators left Lawrence, Kansas excited to bring new learning back and ready to lead on their campuses.

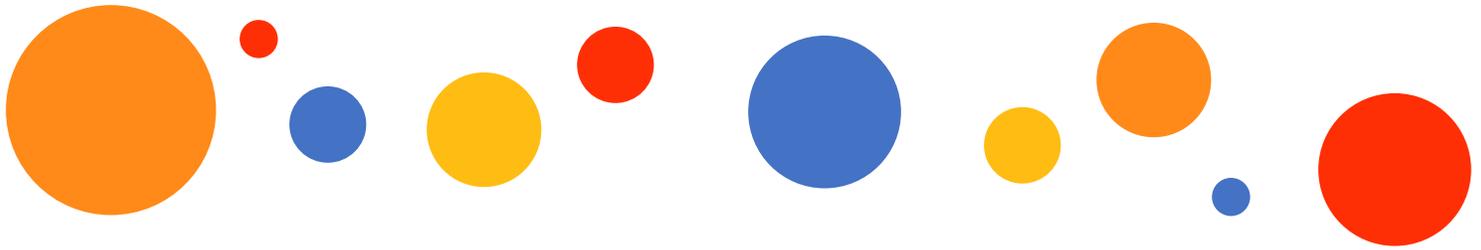


### **Kicking the Year off with a Great Start at Dessau Middle School**

This year, Dessau Middle School in Pflugerville ISD tried a different way to start the year with *RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas*. For the first three days of school, students participated in Diamondback Camp before officially starting their new schedules. A Dessau 8<sup>th</sup> grader said Diamondback Camp was a great way to readjust from summer and get ready for classes. An 8<sup>th</sup> grader claimed, “compared to last year, school feels way more organized!” During Diamondback Camp, students participated in the Possible Selves program to learn about



their strengths and set goals for the future. Students participated in team building activities to get to know their teachers and classmates. Diamondback Camp also allowed students to learn all the expectations for success at Dessau Middle School. A 6<sup>th</sup> grader explained that he had to learn from his mistakes at his old school, but thanks to Diamondback Camp he is clear on what he is expected to do while on campus. Another 8<sup>th</sup> grader said, “It was a lot better start to the year and really helped prepare us.”



In addition to starting the year with Diamondback Camp, Dessau Middle School is trying something new in all classrooms this year. Every teacher is using a Unit Organizer to help students understand what they are learning and to follow their own progress



Students explore shared campus culture.

through each unit of study. Students report that the Unit Organizer has already helped them this year. "We know what to expect in every class. The Unit Organizer has a schedule that tells us what will happen every day." A student recalls taking pages and pages of notes last year, but not really knowing what will be on the test at the end of the unit. "Now we can just look at the back of the Unit Organizer because the most important information is there. The tests that we have taken really match what was on the Unit Organizer, so it is easier to study."

A 6<sup>th</sup> grader said that in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, he wasn't really sure what they were learning but now he likes to color code his Unit Organizer to see the important stuff in each class. The Unit

Organizer is still new to Dessau Middle School, and teachers and students are learning each day how to use it enhance learning.



## **RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas Campus Principals Attend Harvard—Summer 2018**

Raise Your Hand Texas is a non-profit organization working to support research-driven innovation throughout Texas public schools. One important area of their focus is strengthening education by supporting and developing school leaders. Since 2008, they have sponsored more than 1,100 educators to attend and participate in the summer institutes at the Principals Center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. This year, they sponsored 109 Texas educators and leaders to attend a week-long institute where they learned and collaborated with other leaders.

Among the selected attendees were Lori Davis and Jason McAuliffe, **RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas** campus principals. Raise Your Hand Texas has partnered with **RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas** to provide leadership coaching in the first three years of the project.

During the institutes, the participants reflected deeply on their leadership practices and learned new strategies for addressing problems of practice on their campuses. Both Davis and McAuliffe, Principals of Lockhart Junior High and Hutto Middle School respectively, are leading campuses into their fourth year of the **RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas** project, choosing to continue as part of the **RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas** Sustainability Network. Both leaders noted that the diversity of fellow participants and the opportunity to network with leaders from Texas, other states and around the world (Australia, Mexico City and Jerusalem, to name a few) was both enlightening and empowering. "It was such a validating experience and interesting to see that we were all addressing, for the most part, the same challenges," says Principal McAuliffe. Both leaders also valued and look forward to integrating a focused study of problems of practice and subsequent strategies for school improvement. Principal Davis explained that her learning this summer helped her, "peel back the layers to get to the root of what was going on" so that she could then enhance her leadership with a focused set of tools. In putting those tools to work right away this school year, Principal Davis says that "we have already begun to see results." Principals Davis and McAuliffe both expressed gratitude for their experience. Principal McAuliffe says, "it was truly life changing." Principal Davis concurs, noting, "I am forever changed." Both Principals had to go through a competitive application process to be accepted and sponsored as participants. The work they are doing to lead their campuses to continuously improve for the benefit of students is to be commended. The **RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas** team is excited and honored to be a part of their journey!



Principals McAuliffe and Davis

The **RAISE<sup>up</sup> Texas** initiative is led by E3 Alliance, an education collaborative that works to support schools across Central Texas. It uses the Strategic Instruction Model, which was developed by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. To learn more about the program, please visit the following websites:

<http://raiseuptexas.org/>

<http://kucrl.org/sim/>

<http://e3alliance.org/category/topic/initiative-raiseup-texas/>

