

JANUARY 2021

Neuhaus News

BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE



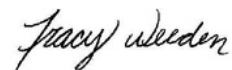
The year 2020 was an incredible transformation for Neuhaus. We rose to the challenge Covid-19 presented because our mission of reading success for all is more compelling than any obstacle we have ever faced.

In this newsletter, you will read of what is to come as we celebrate a superintendent who stayed the course as a leader so that evidence aligned practices have been scaled responsibly throughout his district. You will learn about how we embrace collaboration as we combine efforts with experts in the field.

Those who are champions of educational change are so much stronger when we align and coordinate our efforts in service to our community. Life is all about how we choose to frame what appears to be an insurmountable obstacle.

We are running our race well on this bridge to the future. The innovative practices we have implemented are so promising and exciting! Yet, there is more to learn about overcoming the distances that separate us from educators who need us and the students they serve. We need your support in this life-changing work that transforms the family tree through literacy.

You are on a rescue mission with us so that our precious children are pulled back from a "Covid Cliff" that could be so much more damaging than a "Summer Slide." I believe that we will take the mess Covid created and together create a masterpiece lovingly designed with brush strokes of hope we co-create for a brighter future for all.



Dr. Tracy Weeden, Ed.D



MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT/CEO

"The goal was to outlearn our competitors. We would stop the shaming and blaming and the judging and of outcomes as good or bad and, instead, continuously ask ourselves, What did we set out to do, what happened, what did we learn, and how fast can we improve on it? These are the central questions we will answer TOGETHER."

BRENE BROWN

Dare to Lead



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Text NEUHAUS to 22828 to get started.

Message and data rates may apply.





Dr. Art Cavazos, Ed.D has served as Superintendent at Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District for 20 years

LEADING WITH PASSION & PURPOSE

Leading with passion is about courageously casting off fear and giving people a sense of hope, optimism, and accomplishment. It is about bringing light in a world of uncertainty and inspiring others to do the same.

Well-known and respected within the education industry, Dr. Art Cavazos, Superintendent at Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District, has led a successful literacy program. With the continued support of Neuhaus Education Center and the announcement of his retirement at the end of the 2021 school year, Neuhaus CEO Dr. Tracy Weeden interviewed Cavazos as he shared his thoughts on sustaining the work of literacy and his hope for future leaders in promoting reading success.

What have you learned about sustaining the work of literacy and how does leadership fit in that big picture?

In putting your arms around solving a challenge like literacy, you must approach with vulnerability and embrace this concept of “you don’t know what you don’t know.” Oftentimes egos get in the way; but when you’re going to do the real work, you have to leave your ego at the door and roll up your sleeves. It’s not about titles but about bringing the brainpower together to solve a common challenge, and the only way to do that is to create a culture where everyone is valued and input is seen as value-added.

“People go through their whole journey in life and never know the impact they have had. I’m blessed to have gotten a glimpse of it before my journey ends, and so I know that my work is not done...”

DR. ART CAVAZOS
Harlingen CISD

Based on your experience, how should we be thinking differently about principal and superintendent preparation?

Here in Harlingen we knew our reality, but we had to be vulnerable enough to embrace this idea that we could not solve the problem alone. When I think about my role as Superintendent, I reflect on our strategic plan back in 2013-2014. We designed the district around design teams, or “think tanks,” that brought people to the table that were not thinking the same – ultimately, we wanted divergent thinking.

And as I reflect, I think about our early literacy design team who were used to working so structured that they did not know what was possible. So, our first task was to break down that barrier so we could see the possibilities. We would constantly remind ourselves that we owned a lot of the bureaucracies that needed to be dismantled and came to the realization that it is not enough to come up with a great idea and keep up with the systems and infrastructures. You must redesign to accommodate the new idea.

Can you explain more about the rationale behind these design teams?

The rationale behind the design team was not just to define our current reality only but to push the group to think of what is possible. We wanted to bring different parts of the organization to begin to solve the problem.

How does design teamwork help with overcoming initiative overload?

Our design teams had to be continuously reminded that the initial attempt of this literacy challenge was not to identify the bureaucracy but to identify what is possible. You'll get to a point where you'll list out what are some obstacles that are hindering you from achieving this great idea. In creating your list, you'll also include what you need to stop doing. But you will hinder people creatively when you do not openly define, explain, and have a conversation around how bureaucracy works. Don't worry about the bureaucracy, system, and structures because if it's good for the children, the system and structure will redesign themselves to accommodate the new idea.

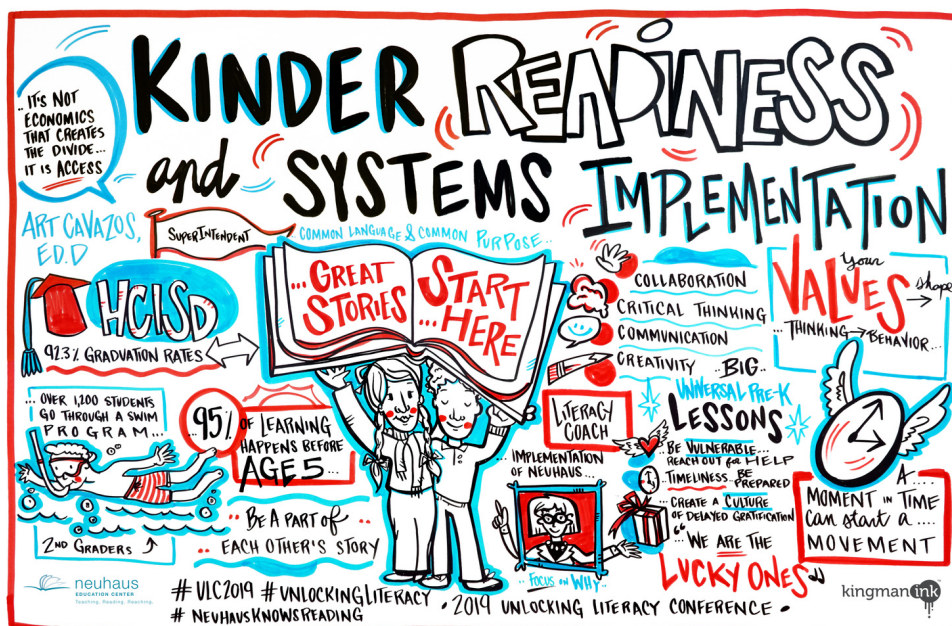
I would imagine that it's important to become comfortable with being uncomfortable for a team tackling these types of challenges.

Right! And lean into the fear. Always keep your eye on the child because that's who we are solving it for. And one day, they'll have an opportunity to solve it for those that come after them. So this is our chance – this is where the magic can take place, when we do not fear the possibilities. Now things can be constrained and get in the way, but I would rather spend energy dismantling bureaucracy than stifling creativity.

What are your words of wisdom to leaders who will walk in your footsteps or are leading other districts or schools. What should they should be thinking about when it comes to equity and access?

Opportunities are incredible and can be transformational if the kids can access them. And access is literacy. The frustration of some children can be seen when they access innovation programs and realize it begins and ends in their ability to read. It doesn't matter how great your initiatives are; the frustrations will begin and end at the reading level of children.

The bigger picture is that 1) you have to understand child development, how it works; and 2) be bold to make the decisions – there are federal, state, and local laws that govern school districts; but even within all that, there are slivers of opportunity where the magic occurs, and you can create the culture for the organization to fill in the gap and make the magic happen. Literacy is the highest crime scene, and every great opportunity will only be greater if you are literate.





As you prepare for your next season, what is the most important part of your literacy legacy you hope lives on?

Accessing the American dream is only possible if there is literacy attached. We all have literacy levels at different stages, but we all want students to be the best version of themselves; and that's only possible if we talk about that being the highest currency. The research is very clear - we shouldn't be sitting around waiting for more data points to tell us that if we don't fix the literacy problem in this country, in this State, and within our communities, we will always be playing "catch up."

It is my hope that we continue to invest in the right literacy programs and be very strategic. And, that kind of commitment has to be parallel with the commitment to this appetite for delayed gratification, because if you are going to live life looking for the silver bullet to solve the problem, sometimes the problems are so deeply rooted that they need systemic change - and literacy is one of them.

Dr. Art Cavazos retires June 30, 2021. During his tenure, Harlingen CISD has developed numerous innovative programs, including highly successful multiple specialty campuses which include Early College High School, Harlingen School of Health Professions, and Transition Academy.



Dr. Tracy Weeden, Neuhaus Education Center President & CEO and Dr. Art Cavazos, Harlingen CISD at 2019 Unlocking Literacy Conference

OUR FUTURE IS BRIGHT

EDUCATION OUTLOOK

Cavazos shares his perspective on finding the silver lining in these unprecedented times.

SCALE CHANGE RESPONSIVELY

If you are going to solve the problem, you can't be scared of your reality.

COVID-19 & EDUCATION

What we have lost during the "Covid Cliff," we gained in other areas - technology access, infrastructure, technology tools, remote learning, teacher professional development. COVID-19 has also improved teachers' engagement with students - they have been innovative in engaging students.

ACCESSIBILITY

Tutoring... we've known it only one way and now we can do Zoom tutoring and it can be everyday, anywhere learning.

2021 ANNUAL BENEFIT LUNCHEON

WORDS CHANGE WORLDS

April 16, 2021

Chairs: Suzanne Sklar McCarthy &
Leslie Wade

Join us virtually to celebrate Neuhaus Education Center. Neuhaus will honor their largest corporate donor in recent years, PNC, who has helped share the gift of reading with the Houston community. Learn more about this event at www.neuhaus.org/luncheon.

Featuring luncheon speaker Wes Moore



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

**JENNIFER LAHAIE, M.ED., CALT
INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF**

Jennifer LaHaie is a Coaching Coordinator who has been with Neuhaus since the summer of 2017. She is also a Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT) who can provide diagnostic, explicit, systematic Multisensory Structured Language intervention for students with written-language disorders, including dyslexia.

Among Neuhaus' greatest assets' are the highly competent staff who are passionate about the life-changing work we do to promote reading success. Recently, LaHaie completed the requirements needed to become a Qualified Instructor (QI).

We encourage our staff to develop further their professional skills and to enjoy celebrating their career milestones.

ON WORKING AT NEUHAUS...

My colleagues challenge and encourage me professionally. We care deeply about each other, what we do, and the people we serve.

BECOMING A QI...

I decided to pursue this certification for two reasons -- to deepen my knowledge and reach teachers that work with struggling readers. I love making an impact by empowering teachers so they are confident in their classroom. Although the program requirements were challenging, it was well worth it.

I want to grow as a coach, instructor, and leader, and with opportunities that support the growth of Neuhaus coaches and the clients we serve.





STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The Neuhaus Education Center Strategic Plan is currently underway with an extensive refresh. Established in 2018 and driven by stakeholder engagement and feedback, this document guides the work of our organization to ensure we continue to meet the evolving needs of our communities. The plan calls out our achievements as well as the action steps we believe are necessary to support our mission.



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Since 1980, more than 90,000 teachers and their students have benefited from Neuhaus Education Center's systematic, multisensory, evidence-based approach to literacy instruction and basic language skills of reading, writing, and spelling.

LEARNING THAT WORKS FOR YOU

We're offering our in-house classes virtually! Virtual classes provide remote learning with real-time instruction from Neuhaus instructors.

[VIEW CLASS SCHEDULE](#)

ON DEMAND CLASSES

At Neuhaus, we make it easy for you to gain access to a variety of classes that offer flexibility in learning our curriculum.

Our on-demand classes are online, pre-recorded, and available with immediate access from our [eStore](#).

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THE MUSIC CONNECTION

PROMOTING LITERACY THROUGH MUSIC IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The successful acquisition of reading and writing in early childhood depends on a solid background in oral language skills. What better way to gain knowledge and confidence in oral language than through music? We chatted with Ana Trevino-Godfrey for an enlightening conversation about music and its value in children's literacy development.

Imagine a young child learning letter names and sounds. Add music to it with an inviting beat and melody. Now add whole body movements that help a child memorize the shape of the letter and the sound of the letter. Music has much value and can teach students many skills necessary for well-rounded development. Value can be found in music for music's sake, but it can also enhance other subject areas.

Ana Trevino-Godfrey, Director for Prelude Music Foundation partnered with Neuhaus Education Center for support and guidance for precise phonological sounds in a research-based music and movement program called Music Together®. The program hosts weekly classes that support existing classroom instruction of preschool teachers and serves approximately 2,600 children in low income areas of Houston.

Music learning supports six early literacy skills: vocabulary, narrative skills, print awareness, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and print motivation. "We know children learn through the magical world of play, and so we teach the way they learn.

Our developmental approach helps children learn while they play," stated Trevino-Godfrey. "As you know, children take play seriously."

When Trevino-Godfrey was asked how Prelude's mission aligns with Neuhaus, she said, "Music supports all learning, and it is important to check our work with Neuhaus to make sure our work supports teachers, children, and parents – we are stronger together!"

Tell me more about your classes. What was the role for Neuhaus?

Our classes are designed to have tonal and rhythm activities which support learning visually, aurally, and kinesthetically. We wanted to make sure our classes were helping Pre-K children, teachers and parents sing using correct letter sounds.

Neuhaus instructors provided guidance on precise phonological sounds that will lay the foundation for successful readers.



Interesting. So, there's a common existence between music and literacy. How are music and the brain connected when learning?

Well, we know that music supports cognitive, language, and social emotional development as well as executive function. Current research suggests that making music activates many parts of the brain. The prefrontal cortex, frontal, temporal, parietal, and occipital lobes, as well as our cerebellum and limbic systems, are all stimulated while we make music.

"Making music" is an active process and not just listening. When we sing and use an early childhood instrument such as an egg shaker, the sensory cortex (parietal lobe) controls the tactile feedback and process. Imagine what must happen when a child is singing a song while shaking a shaker to a pattern of movements.

So, music is both science and art?

Absolutely! Our movements engage the visual cortex (occipital lobe). The sensory input is taken in through the eyes and ears into the thalamus which sends information to the visual and auditory cortex. The cerebellum helps us coordinate the movement with the egg shaker and the music. The children most likely have a great time doing this activity; therefore, their amygdala (the place where fear and pleasure are sensed) is stimulated. The prefrontal cortex where higher cognitive functions happen is also stimulated through singing as the child processes the syntax of the music, determines patterns, and follows the sequence of the music.

Our classes provide opportunities for stimulation of important neural networks and areas of the brain during the most critical time for brain development. Can you tell we love learning and teaching about brain development and music?

Intense, but fascinating. Why is it important to consider music education when learning literacy acquisition including oral language?

Children build vocabulary through singing songs. Children can tell and retell stories from a song. Sometimes they even invent their own verses and practice sequencing of events while singing (what happened first, next, and last). We often show them a picture as we sing a melody without words, and children come up with their own brilliant stories.

Are there materials or handouts distributed to support classroom instruction?

Yes. The children we serve receive a book with the lyrics of the songs, engaging pictures, and activity ideas. Family engagement is also important, and we provide the same resources to parents to encourage student growth in their home environment.

Why was Neuhaus Education Center partnered to acknowledge the science of what you do and what Neuhaus does in promoting the science of reading?

There's no one better in town promoting early literacy than Neuhaus Education Center. There is a common alignment between our organizations – we want all children to succeed in school. When we work together, we are working towards meeting the needs required for the child's success.

Prelude Music Foundation was founded with the mission to transform the lives and education of underserved children in Houston through the power of music.



1: Prelude Music Foundation staff hosting class via Zoom. 2: Neuhaus Instructor Vanessa Grant and Prelude Music Foundation Director Ana Trevino-Godfrey working together first collaboration. 3: Music class instruction via Zoom

Here are a few examples of how your donation can help Neuhaus Education Center impact the community.

\$5,000 PROVIDES 3 DAYS
of Neuhaus coaching support to a campus

\$2,500 PREPARES 9 EDUCATORS
to help 180 students learn to read

\$1,000 ENROLLS 5 ADULTS
in adult literacy classes to learn to read

\$750 HELPS 1 STUDENT
receive 1:1 dyslexia therapy for one month

\$500 UNDERWRITES 1 INFO SESSION
for families of struggling readers

\$250 EQUIPS 1 EDUCATOR
with supplies for early literacy activities
and vocabulary development

\$100 PROVIDES 4 BOOKS
for the Neuhaus Education Center
Collie Resource Library

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