

PICK Education brings life into classrooms

Students to collaborate, share results with others in Fort Worth

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Ector County Independent School District officials this week announced the launch of PICK Education, a variety of projects aimed at bringing curriculum to life.

The three projects and future projects that come about fall under the umbrella of PICK Education. Superintendent Tom Crowe said PICK Education exemplifies the choice each of us makes to prioritize learning. Pick a problem to solve, pick a project to design, pick education.

"Our kids are going to be able to communicate with people across the country," Crowe said in a news release. "They are

going to work on projects that make education real life."

Crowe said the genesis of PICK Education came during the summer when he met Jason Osborne, the co-founder and president of the internationally recognized non-profit organization Paleo Quest. Osborne is now chief innovation officer for the district.

Osborne described three projects already in the works for this school year.

>> The first is Sharkfinder. Students will dig through untouched, 19 million year old matrix (science term for the ancient marine sediment. It's not dirt.) A student could

find a significant fossil and have their find published in the research project being headed up by the University of Maryland. Fifth-graders at Buice Elementary School will get this off the ground as a pilot program with plans to then extend it to the other two new elementary schools, Downing and West, and then to all elementary schools.

>> The second project is called Backyard Brains, which will introduce middle school students, and eventually high schoolers, to electrophysiology. Students and teachers will have the chance to talk neuroscience with TED Talk participant Greg Gage, leading to students coming up their own questions about local problems and building their own hypotheses to test.

In addition, Odessa Col-



lege plans to join in this effort with undergraduate students working with kids and professors collaborating with ECISD teachers.

>> The third is Project Brain Stem. Here high school students will take part in neural mapping — studying the anatomy and function of the brain — through the study of microscopic slices of a fruit fly brain. As they trace the brain they create 3-D structures, learn the nomenclature of the science, and even share results with scientists at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute located just outside of Washington, D.C.

Students will be using

the same data set HHMI uses for its post doctorate or undergraduate students. This pilot program will begin at Permian High School with teacher Mike Cashin, who attended a brain mapping training at HHMI earlier this year.

In all of these pursuits, ECISD students will be collaborating and sharing results with students in Northwest ISD in Fort Worth. The comparison groups among students will allow data to be compared and validity to be tested, the release said.