

Local presented with research opportunity

Permian teacher to map fly brains

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Permian High School **science teacher** Michael Cashin has been selected to be part of a week-long **research** project at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Janelia **Research** Campus in Ashburn, Va., from Jan. 24-31.

Ector County Independent School District **Science** Coordinator Ashley Bryant said he will be one of two teachers, also from Texas, working **with** upper-level biology students to map neurons in fly brains.

When he returns, Bryant said Cashin will be working **with** a couple of top-level **science** students who haven't been selected yet to contribute data to the **research** institute. "So it's true data. It's real **science** and it's current **science**," Bryant said. She added that students contributing to **research** isn't something you necessarily find in schools a lot.

In his second year as an instructor at **Permian**, Cashin teaches AP biology and Pre-AP biology. Previously, he worked in the oilfield.

He earned a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from Roanoke College in Salem, Va., and a master's in biology from Angelo State University.

Cashin worked **with** a species of fly to study nerve development in brains when he was pursuing his master's degree. He said it was "kind of surprising" to be selected because he didn't realize it was as selective as it turned out.

He added that a lot of how fly brains work is "the same as how our brains work, so we can take what we learn in fly brains and apply it almost directly to human brains without having to open up a human brain."

He said he hopes to take what he learns in Virginia and apply it to his students.

Cashin said he likes the idea of giving students a chance to try "real **science**" before they go to college because they might like it.

Bryant said the district is excited about having an ECISD **teacher** participating in this pilot program.

"It's a great honor," she said.

She added that the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Janelia **Research** Campus is known worldwide. "We're definitely looking forward to having him go there and then come back and let us know what it's like."

According to information from the district, Cashin interviewed **with** Jason Osborne and Scott Lauritzen last week to be part of the program. What made him stand out was his experience and enthusiasm, Bryant said.

Osborne is a **science** project strategist at HHMI Janelia **Research** Campus. He initiated this project to bring real **science** to the classroom through **teacher** training on tracing brain neurons **with** the intent that teachers train students.

Lauritzen is a postdoctoral researcher working in the Davi Bock Lab at Janelia **Research** Campus. **research** project.

MARK STERKEL

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He and Davi are trying to ramp up neural tracing to get a better understanding of how the brain works. Lauritzen has trained many scientists including undergraduates on tracing neurons and will be training Cashin, according to ECISD information.



ECISD Science Coordinator Ashley Bryant, right, announces Monday that **Permian** High AP Biology

Teacher Michael Cashin has been selected to participate in a weeklong



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