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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PICK Education will bring real life into ECISD classrooms

Thursday afternoon officials from Ector County Independent School District announced the launch of new initiative called PICK Education that is created to bring school to life for students, and connect them to real world problems far beyond their classroom walls.

Superintendent of Schools Tom 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. Mr. Osborne's work in science, engineering, communication, and education has been featured in publications and media outlets like National Geographic, Discovery Channel, and Scientific American to name just a few. "What struck me about Jason," said Mr. Crowe, "is his educational experiences mirrored my oldest son's educational experiences so closely. A traditional education experience bored him stiff. So he went out on his own and found ways to make education more exciting. To make it real."

In July, ECISD hired Mr. Osborne as the Chief Innovation Officer to be a catalyst for thinking about education differently; to bring real data and real science to ECISD classrooms; and to initiate partnerships not only locally but also nationally, and across a wide spectrum of interests.

Mr. Osborne said he is excited to be a part of ECISD and the changes that are in store. He 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. The 5th graders at Buice Elementary 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 noted TED Talk participant Dr. Greg Gage leading to students coming up their own questions about local problems and building their own hypotheses to test. In addition, Odessa College plans to join in this effort with undergraduate students working with kids and professors collaborating with ECISD teachers.

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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. In fact, students will be using same data set HHMI uses for its post doctorate or undergraduate students. This pilot program will begin at Permian High School where teacher Mike Cashin 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 Ft. Worth. The comparison groups among students will allow data to be compared and validity to be tested.

The three projects, and future projects that come about, fall under the umbrella of PICK Education. Mr. Crowe explained 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,” he said. “They are going to work on projects that make education real life.”

For more information about this release please contact ECISD Communications at 456-9019.

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