

Teachers to study brain mapping

ECISD official: Educators were selected, in part, due to school size

BY RUTH CAMPBELL

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Two teachers have been selected to attend a brain mapping conference at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Janelia Research Campus in Ashburn, Va., next week. Stephanie Marin, a biology teacher at OCTECHS, and Angela Garlington, a biology teacher at Falcon Early College High School, along with Ector County Independent School District Chief Innovation Officer Jason Osborne and Science Coordinator Ashley Bryant, will join scientists from around the world at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

The four will leave Wednesday and return March 11.

Mike Cashin, an advanced placement biology teacher at Permian High School, attended the institute a little more than a year ago and was on hand Thursday at George H.W. Bush New Tech Odessa to offer a tutorial on what Marin and Garlington will learn.

Throwing its support behind the PICK Education initiative, the Education Foundation of Odessa offered to pay for the group's travel. Osborne said the HHMI is paying their way for the conference and food while they're there. "We do two intense days of training, which will be the 9th and 10th. We will also be giving a presentation at HHMI about doing neuroscience in high schools and what that's like, what it means for us (and) how can we benefit the science. We'll have a segment there as part of the conference to do that," Osborne said.

On Thursday, Osborne gave an overview of what to expect at HHMI and the reason they're studying what they're studying.

Osborne said Marin and Garlington were selected because their campuses are small, making implementation easier because there are fewer students. Both campuses are adding a grade a year and are up to sophomore this year. Falcon and OCTECHS will add juniors next fall.

"We can design it a little bit more dynamically. These people actually spoke out and wanted to be a part of it, as well as they seemed to be most fit for their

biology.

This is her first year at OCTECHS, an early college high school on the Odessa College campus that allows students to earn an associate degree and high school diploma at the same time. OCTECHS stands for Odessa Career & Technical Early College High School.

"Usually teaching biology every year, I have to rush through. I can't focus on neuroscience and things like that," Marin said.

Garlington is in her first year with ECISD, but it is her 24th year of teaching science. She spent seven years in Stanton ISD and was in Farmington, N.M., previously.

"... I think it's kind of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and just to be in the same room with Nobel Prize laureates and people who are on the cutting edge of neuroscience. It's exciting to me as a biology teacher. It's a little nerve racking, but it's exciting," Garlington said.

She's hoping to be able to translate what she learns into her teaching at Falcon Early College High School, an early college high school on the University of Texas of the Permian Basin campus that lets students earn college credit while still in high school.

"I have probably four students right now whose goal in life is to be a neurologist and so they are so excited about me going because they can't wait to see what I learned and pick my brain," Garlington said.

Cashin said the opportunity to visit Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Janelia Research Campus, was "really nice."

"It was interesting to see so many scientists actually working together outside the realm of college, which has been my entire science experience before. It was interesting seeing how this actually worked when they're not at a school," Cashin said.

background in science and biology. ... If we can go in and work with a smaller, dynamic school it can also help compliment Permian and Mike Cashin ...,” Osborne said. Eventually, Bryant said some teachers from Odessa High School and New Tech will participate in the program. “So we’ll have teachers from each of our high schools trained in how to implement the program,” she said. “... Now we’re getting other people trained, so we can collaborate in our own school district and get the program off the ground and running.”

Marin, from OCTECHS, said she is looking forward to the conference because it’s something different and she can focus in a specialized area in biology. Marin is in her 13th year of teaching with ECISD and has always taught biology, advanced placement biology and International Baccalaureate



Mike Cashin, an advanced placement biology teacher at Permian High School, gives a preview Thursday to students and teachers of what two ECISD teachers will experience when they travel to a Brain Mapping Conference with the district’s science coordinator and chief innovation officer next week at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Cashin attended the institute a little more than a year ago.

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