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# Hays teacher heading to NASA next month

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Hays Steam Academy Fifth grade teacher Amanda Webber was selected for the LiftOff Summer Institute to be held at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas this summer. This nationally competitive program sponsored by NASA's Texas Space Grant Consortium selects teachers who want to increase their knowledge of science, technology, engineering, art and math through space education.



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Posted: Friday, May 18, 2018 1:45 am  
By Ruth Campbell [rcampbell@oaoa.com](mailto:rcampbell@oaoa.com)



Posted on May 18, 2018  
by Ruth Campbell

Hays STEAM Academy fifth-grade science teacher Amanda Webber is heading to NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston this summer for the LiftOff Summer Institute.

STEAM stands for science, technology, engineering, art and math.

Selection for LiftOff, which will include teachers from across the nation, is competitive. Set for June 24 through June 29, it is sponsored by NASA's Texas Space Grant Consortium.

With a theme of "Reach New Heights, Reveal the Unknown, Benefit all Humankind!," it will give Webber and her fellow teachers a chance to attend workshops and work with professional scientists and engineers who are working on space exploration, a news release said.

The workshops center on aerospace or space science themes drawn from NASA's engineering and scientific research programs, the release said.

The weeklong institute also includes hands-on activities, field investigations and presentations by NASA scientists and engineers working on various missions, the release said.

Webber said about 60 teachers are expected to attend and she's excited about it. The Ector County Independent School District innovation department sent an email out about the opportunity and Hays STEAM Academy Principal Amy Anderson emailed it to teachers on campus.

"I'm a nerdy teacher and science is a passion," Webber said.

Plus, she added that she's always trying to continue her education and this would give her a chance to show her students what she's learned and how to apply it to what they're learning.

## Today's Edition



"They ask us to bring a lesson plan to share. That way, we can get ideas from each other, from all these teachers across the nation and then (focus) on the applications of the science, math and engineering in the real world and outer space," Webber said.

LiftOff is a collaborative effort of the Texas Space Grant Consortium members and affiliates, NASA and industry.

Getting some real-world experience to bring back to her students is going to be really neat, she said.

The goal is even if the students don't turn out to be a NASA scientist, they can be the teacher that inspires the next one, she said.

Webber said she was surprised to be selected.

"When I first applied, I thought it was just Texas. Then I started reading the information they sent after I was accepted and realized it was nationwide," she said.

It's recommended that teachers bring an extra suitcase.

She's also signed up to be certified to work with moon rocks.

Chief Innovation Officer Jason Osborne said he was pleased Webber was accepted to the LiftOff Summer Institute and to have her represent the district and community at the Johnson Space Center.

"It's a real honor and we're excited too to learn from her when she comes back with a lot of new ideas things that the district can use ...," Osborne said.

He said he found out about the institute because he's in a NASA email community so they blast out opportunities sometimes. Osborne said he forwarded it on to the staff.

He added that there are many things teachers can get involved in.

Osborne said the district will again be involved in the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program. The Texas Space Grant Consortium has agreed to grant ECISD \$10,000 toward that program for the coming year.

Students from Falcon Early College High School are going to Washington, D.C., at the end of June to present their work in front of scientists from NASA.

Osborne said his office also is in the process of creating a professional development for teachers at Tulane University's medical campus in July to tackle tissue engineering.

He said there also is a possibility of sending teachers to the University of Texas at Austin to work with Kate Biberdorf, who was here in April to present "Fun with Chemistry."

**Ruth Campbell covers education for the Odessa American. Reach her at 432-333-7765 or 432-333-7765 or [rcampbell@oaoa.com](mailto:rcampbell@oaoa.com)**

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