

BURNHAM WOOD AND VISTA CHARTER SCHOOLS

Spring 2019, Volume 1, Number 1

Burnham Wood
and Vista
Make the “A”
Honor Roll

TUITION FREE

TEA ranks us among the
best in the state in:

- Accountability
- Financial Management
- Closing the Gap



Howard Burnham
Elementary School



A Message from our Superintendent



Dr. Joe E. Gonzales
Superintendent

Greetings fellow citizens, parents and students!

It is with excitement that I share with you this magazine that we at Burnham Wood Charter Schools believe will be an effective communications instrument between the schools and you, the community.

I have been a member of the Burnham Wood Family of Charter Schools for nearly two years. During that time, I have become aware of the great education that is provided

to the students who attend our schools.

As noted elsewhere in this publication, the Burnham Wood Charter Schools have been classified as exemplary, with an **"A" rating from the Texas Education Agency (TEA)**, a highly sought-after and prestigious honor.

How did this come to be?

First and foremost, we must recognize the tremendous vision and service that our schools' founders, Mrs. Iris Burnham and her husband, Mr. Howard Burnham, exhibited by establishing this state- and nationally recognized educational enterprise.

Without their fortitude, determination and persistence, Howard Burnham Elementary, Vista Elementary and Da Vinci Middle and High School would not exist today.

Thus, hundreds of El Paso students would have been denied the **"World Class"** education that they have experienced. The winning traditions that have become "the culture" of our schools are unmatched anywhere.

So, a big thank you, first and foremost, to Mr. and Mrs. Burnham.

Now the present challenge: **How do we maintain and safeguard the established levels of excellence and prestige that we have been handed?**

I believe the answer is in the personnel who are allowed to work with our students. We must retain our best employees and be certain that any new employees are properly screened so that only the most competent are hired.

If those of us who are entrusted with the "hiring process" are diligent and detail-oriented with all the important hiring responsibilities, we

will not only maintain, but improve our level of excellence.

Further, the **discipline and worthy character of the student body** cannot be allowed to be comprised. We must continue to insist that all adult members of this educational initiative provide safety and stability for all our students.

"The discipline and worthy character of the student body cannot be allowed to be compromised."

We must insist that all adult members of this educational initiative provide safety and stability for all our students."

My vision for our school district, for both now and the future, include:

- * A strong partnership with parents.
- * Continued emphasis on academic excellence.
- * Further additions to our extra-curricular activities.
- * Greater exposure of our students to colleges and universities through on-campus visits.
- * Greater opportunities for student leadership experience.
- * Greater student intern placement experiences.

I hope you will join us in providing our students the best educational opportunities possible, and hang on because **We're Moving Forward!!!**

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Educational Woman Pioneer Ms. Burnham Insists on STEM

p.3

By Rod Santa Ana



Retirement has deprived the El Paso community of its legendary pioneering woman in local education. After a stellar career that included opening El Paso's first charter school, Iris Burnham, of the Burnham Wood Charter Schools, has retired to a life of less work and more leisurely travel.

Iris Burnham was born and educated in New York City, surrounded by the constant and vibrant display of the arts and humanities that have always been a large part of her life. As a young girl, she was attracted to all things culture: music, dance, poetry and art, to name a few. She was a fan of the humanities from a very young age. Despite the family's economic hardships, her parents encouraged participation in the arts.

Parents were a driving force

Her father, Edward, the son of farmers, labored in many jobs, including as a welder at the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard.

He often proclaimed to his daughters how valuable a good education is in reaching one's true potential.

Iris' mother, Ida, was an immigrant from Poland who endured the hardships of war and dislocation before she, her mother and siblings were able to journey across the Atlantic Ocean to join her father in America. Her parents both lamented their limited educational opportunities, and encouraged their daughters to select professions that would serve others.

Iris chose the life of educating children and adults as her personal pathway to fulfillment.

Her take on education now included something she considers paramount: exposure of visual and musical arts to El Paso youngsters in the public school setting. She attended public schools in New York City, including Hunter College of the City University of N.Y where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in English in 1964.

After graduation, her first job in education took her to the only academic high school in Harlem that was considered "tough," certainly no place for a young lady to be teaching school.

But Iris was determined that regardless of their backgrounds, her students would get the best education possible.

She taught English with the help of real actors from New York's Broadway stage whom she enticed to visit her students and read to them the works of Coleridge and Shakespeare.

Iris wanted to teach her students how to properly express themselves in order to escape their meager surroundings and make something of themselves in the world.

The saga moves west

Iris then moved to California to pursue graduate studies at UCLA and California State University where she earned a Masters of Arts degree in English.

While in California, she met her future husband, Howard Burnham, in 1968.

Burnham was involved in social work.

The family would eventually include a daughter, Esther, and a son, Leonard.

The family then moved to Buffalo, New York, where Iris taught Adult Literacy and the Study of Folklore at State University of New York.

But after four years of "very cold" weather, they moved to El Paso in 1975 where she began teaching English at both UTEP and EPCC.

In order to address the individual learning needs of students of all ages, she started the School for Educational Enrichment (SEE).

Literacy expands in El Paso

Since 1979, El Pasoans have used SEE's services to learn English, improve their writing and speaking skills in many languages, prepare for college entrance exams and receive high school course credits, including high school diplomas.

In 1997, Ms. Burnham applied to the Texas Education Agency for a charter and opened what would become El Paso's first charter school: Burnham Wood.

The elementary school eventually became Howard Burnham Elementary in honor of her husband and co-founder, Howard Burnham.

Da Vinci is born

Ten years later, The Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts was created when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation approached Ms. Burnham to design a prototype of the first STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) high school.

During the planning phase for this new school, Ms. Burnham proposed to the Gates Foundation that the STEM school begin in grade six, and that it include the Arts.

The foundation resisted at first, but Da Vinci was opened as one of the first of three STEM schools in Texas.

Ms. Burnham's next challenge was to develop a STEM curriculum that included the "E" in STEM, engineering. The first four-year curriculum for teaching engineering in high school was finally developed, thanks to several highly dedicated and diligent members of the community, including Da Vinci teachers, parents, local



engineers and Professor Shamsnaz Virani, a UTEP Systems engineer.

Da Vinci's reputation reaches far and wide

What followed was international recognition by professional engineering associations. Ms. Burnham, Dr. Virani and Da Vinci teachers have presented papers on the school in Vancouver, Canada, Louisville, Kentucky, San Antonio, Dallas, and Amherst, Massachusetts.

One invitation to present at a conference came from as far away as Capetown, South Africa.

The hard work of so many, under the direction of Ms. Burnham, has paid off in immeasurable ways, she said.

"When Da Vinci students applied to colleges and universities across the country," Ms. Burnham said, "institutions of higher learning were so impressed with their STEM education that scholarships were offered to almost every graduating senior."

And as has been required every year since, all seniors must be accepted to a four-year baccalaureate-granting institution in order to graduate from Da Vinci.

THE BURNHAM WOOD SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

Burnham Wood is Making the Grade, on the State's "A" Honor Roll



Burnham Wood has zoomed to the top of the charts in the state of Texas.

This past year, after tremendous work by our staff and students, the Burnham Wood Charter Schools' performance has earned an A in state accountability.

What does this mean? Well, first of all, we are one of very few school districts in Texas to make the A honor roll.

There are over 1200 public and charter school districts in the state of Texas. Only 153 of all those districts received an A. This shows how challenging it can be to receive an A in the ratings. Burnham Wood has always focused on students and their achievement. The results are very telling of how we place learning first.

Earning an A, whether in the classroom or in state accountability, means you are mastering the material and at the top of your class. An "A" shows the hard work you have put in and that you excelled. This past year, Burnham Wood has earned A's in three categories: State Accountability, Closing the Gaps, and Financial Accountability.

What is "State Accountability?"

State accountability is a huge deal in public schools. It determines how successful a public school is in multiple factors. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) oversees state accountability and ensures that every public school in the state of Texas is doing what is right for kids. The different aspects of state accountability have changed over the years, but currently, the system focuses on five areas. They are student achievement, student progress, closing performance gaps, postsecondary readiness, and community and student engagement.

All Areas Count

When the state looks at all the five areas that are measured, they determine a final grade for each school and district. The grade falls on the A-F scale just like a classroom. Every area is important, and it only takes one low score in an area to bring the entire grade down. Therefore, it is critical that campuses and districts pay close attention to all areas all the time.

One notable area where Burnham Wood went above and beyond is in closing performance gaps with its students. Many times, a school will rely on its smartest

students to do very well and get them the scores they need on overall achievement tests. However, with this new accountability system, the state looks at students who have struggled in the past and sees how well a district or campus improves their performance over time and closes any performance gaps between its top and struggling students.

Burnham Wood received an A rating in closing performance gaps. This is a testament to the responsibility the district has in ensuring every child is growing in their learning.

Being Smart, Responsible with District Funds

Aside from the outstanding work the district has achieved in educating students, it also believes in being responsible with its finances. After all, it takes money to provide opportunities and educational resources for its students, staff, and communities.

The TEA gives all school districts a financial accountability rating through its School Finance Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST). Just like academic ratings, FIRST ratings are designed to ensure districts are properly handling their money.

This past year, Burnham Wood received an A in the FIRST ratings. This is a rating of "Superior" and speaks loudly to how well the district is managing its finances to provide maximum dollars to instruction.

We All Played a Role

Grades are always important. We always want to do our best and reach the top of our class. Just like our students, who are always working hard in and out of the classroom. Burnham Wood administrators believe in working hard too.

As an educational family, we all play an important role in the success of the district and campuses. We will continue to provide an outstanding education to all students and remain good steward of finances.

And even though we received A's, we are never done improving. There is no doubt that Burnham Wood is fulfilling its promise to the community and delivering a well-rounded education with great opportunities for all its students.

Sports Programs Exploding at Burnham Wood Schools

A new commitment to develop a full roster of sports across our district is generating excitement among students who are rushing to take part.

Each of our three schools has seen exciting progress as new sports offerings are being made available.

In just the last year, Da Vinci has seen the introduction of cross country, track and field, flag football, cheerleading and wrestling. Burnham and Vista Elementary schools have seen the addition of flag football.

And more sports are on the way.

The spring semester will see the introduction of baseball and softball to Da Vinci, as well as basketball, track, wrestling and soccer at the elementary schools.

"It's very important that we develop sports activities to help round out a complete education for all our students, boys and girls," said Dr. G, Superintendent Dr. Joe Gonzales.

He added that many new students have recently joined the Burnham Wood family of schools after the success of the first-ever summer camps for sports, academics, music and art.

"The goal of growing a quality sports program for the region is quickly becoming a reality," said Dr. G. "And that's happened thanks to the coordinated efforts and the commitment of our administration, coaches, teachers, parents and the community."

Efforts to expand Burnham Wood's sports programs include:

- Additional administrative support
- Recruitment/retention of seasoned coaches
- Quality training for coaches
- Monthly coach debriefings
- Upgrade of athletic facilities
- A new Booster Club
- New community partnerships



"The addition of sports have taught me how to have discipline and become a leader." **Emiliano Mayorga Junior @ Da Vinci**

"I have found that being able to choose a sport I really like has been a great release. I can now focus more when I don't have myself pent up" **Maya Avila Junior @ Da Vinci**



Burnham Wood Charter Schools Sports 2018

Volleyball MS
Volleyball HS
Girls Basketball MS
Girls Basketball HS
Boys Basketball MS
Boys Basketball HS
Elementary Basketball
Flag Football MS
Flag Football HS
Elementary Flag Football
Wrestling MS
Wrestling HS
Cheerleading MS
Cheerleading HS
Elementary Cheer/Dance
Track MS
Track HS
Soccer MS
Soccer HS
Elementary Soccer
Baseball MS
Baseball HS
Softball MS
Softball HS
Golf
Tennis

2017

Volleyball MS
Volleyball HS
Girls Basketball MS
Girls Basketball HS
Boys Basketball MS
Boys Basketball HS
Soccer MS
Soccer H.S.



Burnham Wood Spotlights the Fine Arts of Theatre, Art and Dance!



Scores of Burnham Wood students, faculty and staff are now deeply involved in learning and mastering the fine arts of theatre, art and dance.

The district's theatre program is off and running with actors at Da Vinci quickly making their mark on the UIL stage.

In just their second year, the Da Vinci theatre program has made impressive advances in competition, advances usually realized only after years of practice.

And there are ambitious plans for the future. A state-of-the-art performance stage is just one of the many program improvements jumping from the drawing board to reality.

Under the direction of Wayne Davidson, the theatre program is also planning future productions, including dinner theatre, musicals and more UIL competitions.

After-school and summer theatre offerings to all district students across all grade levels will allow a nurturing of love for all aspects of theatre, including acting, direction and production, said Mr. Davidson.

Theatre at Burnham Wood Charter schools is growing at a record pace and will continue to be a highlight of the district!

Working on a Masterpiece

Burnham Wood Charter Schools knows that exposing art to young people can do wonders for their development. As an essential component of the district's mission to grow the whole student, the plan for a comprehensive art curriculum across grades pK-12 has been of the utmost priority since the school district's inception.

Multiple art options for students of all grade levels, as well as a 4-week art camp in June, are examples of how Burnham Wood is shooting for our students to be at the top of the art game!

District facilitators and school administrators are working on a plan to ensure that all district students are provided with the tools to grow their artistic talents as they achieve academically.

The district is working to provide all the resources needed to develop a top-quality art program so that both enrolled and prospective art students have all the tools they'll need to become the creators and innovators they aspire to be.

Shall We Dance?

Dance is another favored discipline at Burnham Wood. Both boys and girls at all campuses enjoy the benefits of qualified dance instructors.

Opportunities include after-school dance instruction at both Vista Del Futuro and Howard Burnham Elementary. In addition, Da Vinci will continue to offer dance options during their school day.

Concerts and other venues throughout the year give district parents, families and the community a chance to see the fruits of all the dancers' hard work throughout the year! Contemporary, jazz, and hip hop seem to be the most popular genres among students and fans alike, so plenty of related dancing is on the way.

Burnham Wood Charter Schools will continue to invest in a robust fine arts program, knowing full well the tremendous inspiration and benefits they provide to our students, schools and community.

Burnham Wood Exudes Musical Pride!

Burnham Wood's music program is bursting at the seams with pride and an ever-growing number of students, some of who will be performing later this year at Disneyland!

The district's music program has been growing since 2015 when Mr. James Hamilton was hired to lead the orchestra, then made up of only 30 students. Soon after, students joined a 20-member band, followed closely by a choir.

Lots More Coming!

But more growth was in store for the music program.

Charged with aligning all the district's schools toward an enhanced music program, Mr. Hamilton now reports that there are 90 students in orchestra, 40 in choir, 40 students in the Middle/High School Da Vinci Band, plus hundreds of Burnham Wood Elementary students receiving musical instruction.

"Studies have shown that studying music is a major component in boosting the intellect of young minds," said Superintendent Dr. G. "We believe our students should have every opportunity to study music in a highly structured learning environment. Mr. Hamilton has provided that, thanks also to the efforts and support of our district's administration and staff."

As a result, said Dr. G, the district's music program has grown and evolved into a quality and esteemed program.

How it All Started

From its inception, Burnham Wood's program focus on Science and the Arts required efforts to accommodate a student's desire to enjoy the many benefits of studying music.

The program's early stakeholders understood the proven rewards received through student participation. Since those early years in the program, decision makers have maximized the opportunity for all students

across the school district to enjoy and reap those rewards.

They include early and consistent skill development, culminating in efforts to place gifted music students in esteemed university programs.

The music program provides many opportunities for all involved to showcase their musical talents and tireless efforts.

Time to Shine!

Several concerts are held throughout the year that not only allow students to perform in public, the events have become a highlight of the district's many activities and events.

Competition with other schools has also sharpened our students' skills. In fact, when Da Vinci students vie at the Texas Music Educators Association All Region competition, 75 percent move on to the next level of competition.

In an effort to contribute to the quality of life of the community, Da Vinci's Choir and Orchestra consistently travel and perform at various local venues, including area nursing homes and community events.

California or Bust!

And to close out the year with a bang, plans are now being made for a trip to Disneyland in California for a performance by the 170 or so students who make up the Da Vinci Orchestra, Choir and Band.

Congratulations to all those students making the trip to see Mickey, a milestone that will surely inspire more of our students to get involved with the district's ever-growing and highly successful music program.

Obviously, Burnham Wood's future will involve expanded educational efforts through music, creativity and innovation as we continue growing young leaders.



Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts... Innovative, Inclusive and Award-Winning!



The University of Texas at Austin
OnRamps



The Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts is an innovative public charter school serving grades 6-12. It is open to all students who live in El Paso County.

Da Vinci is part of the award-winning Burnham Wood Charter School District, which opened El Paso's first charter school in 1998.

As a charter school, we are required to maintain state and federal accountability standards as well as the high academic performance goals mandated in our charter. In return, we are given more freedom than traditional public schools in developing and implementing our curriculum.

Da Vinci Leads the Charge!

We have designed a ground-breaking teaching model that focuses on the STEM subjects: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

The arts are also integral to our daily curriculum and include classes in music, dance, drama and the visual arts.

Da Vinci began operations in August 2006. Since our inception, Da Vinci students have out-performed traditional district public schools on statewide exams.

We have been recognized for our achievements by the Texas High School Project — a public-private partnership to increase high school student performance, sponsored by the Texas Education Agency, the Communities Foundation of Texas and the Gates, Dell and other private foundations.

The opportunities for DaVinci students continue to increase with the district's latest partnership with the University of Texas at Austin and its OnRamps program.

Now Take the OnRamps for Free College Credit

As a proud partner with OnRamps, students will be able to take rigorous college courses at DaVinci that are taught by district staff members and by UT-Austin faculty members.

One of the best aspects of OnRamps is that it provides students exposure to postsecondary education and allows them to experience what a real college class is like.

In addition, students are able to take the class and earn college credit from UT Austin, which is also transferrable to any public university or college in Texas.

Best of All...It's Free!

Above all, we value being able to extend these opportunities and programs to DaVinci students free of charge.

College can be expensive. Having to spend money on tuition, textbooks, supplies, etc. can add up. We are thrilled to be able to offer OnRamps completely free of charge.

Students will not have to pay a single cent and will have all their expenses covered. The only thing they need is the dedication and desire to learn.

Athletics Expanding for All

Under the direction of Superintendent, Dr. G., who long ago recognized the benefits of sports in the development and enrichment of a young learner, the Da Vinci Athletics program has dramatically expanded its roster of sports opportunities.

Students are not only allowed, but encouraged, to participate in as many sports as their hearts desire. With no child being "cut" from any sports team, Dr. G has taught a model of "all participants adding to the quality of a program," while building the confidence and academic performance of every athlete.

Although Da Vinci has enjoyed a long history of academic success since its inception in 2006, under Dr. G's lead, Da Vinci has quickly become the program that other schools emulate.

Join in on the Success

Hundreds of new students and their families visit this revered campus every year hoping to join the ranks of the many distinguished alumni that have walked the halls of Da Vinci!!

The future shows nothing but more opportunities, and this esteemed program is offered only at the Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts!

Space Travel Competition

Dominated by Da Vinci Students

A communications satellite the size of a small car is orbiting around the earth helping humans make cellular phone calls.

However, something has gone wrong with the satellite; it's not working properly and needs to be fixed.

Imagine being told that your job as a scientist is to come up with a payload -- the equipment, tools and spare parts -- needed to propel astronauts into space to repair the satellite. It's a one-shot opportunity and you have to get it right..

Build a Payload ...And Get it Right!

Figuring out how to assemble that payload, or one like it, has been the challenge of Da Vinci students in the School for Science and the Arts who are taking part in InSPIRESS.

InSPIRESS refers to the Innovative System Project for the Increased Recruitment of Emerging STEM Students. It is an outreach project that provides the opportunity for high school students to develop and design a scientific payload on a spacecraft.

Our Students Work With Engineering Students

That payload will be sent aboard a mock spacecraft designed by college students at the University of Alabama at Huntsville. Da Vinci students have been working with undergraduate engineering students for years to understand what it would take to come up with the design for a payload.

Da Vinci students, as well as other high school students, collaborate with the undergraduate engineering students to understand the engineering requirements, the design process, and the role a customer plays in design.

Da Vinci Dominates the Competition

InSPIRESS teams compete for selection by the undergraduate engineering teams. Da Vinci students have excelled in competition. Over the years, Da Vinci has collected more trophies and won most overall divisions than any other school.

"Just getting into the competition is tough," said Mr. Alexandro Medina, the project sponsor at Da Vinci. "The high school teams turn in a written report that has very strict rules in order to compete for selection by the college engineering teams."

Students are also required to speak publicly in the community to explain their project. This includes describing what their objective is, the experiments they are doing, and the research and computer software they are using."

Make It So We Can See It

Students also have to design and print a 3D model of their scientific payload. After five months of research, students then present their findings to professional judges that include professors from the university, NASA and the U.S. Department of Defense.

"A few years ago, Da Vinci was the only school outside of Alabama doing this," Mr. Medina said. "But since then the competition has continued to grow and has added schools from other states, as well as four other schools from El Paso. The competition now has a total of 15 schools and over 30 teams competing in several categories."

Despite the added competition, Da Vinci students continue to dominate.

Dr. P. J. Benfield, an InSPIRESS representative, said Da Vinci's performance is amazing.

They All Know Who Da Vinci Is

"This is the most number of trophies ever won by high school students in this competition," he said. "Up here in Huntsville, everyone immediately knows who Da Vinci is as soon as they walk into the building."

In presenting Da Vinci students with their awards last year, Mr. John H. James Jr, the executive director of the Missile Defense System, said to our students, "We need you. We need students like you in the country's Department of Defense."

InSPIRESS seeks to provide examples of real-life uses for upper-level math and science



*"Just getting into the competition is tough...but we continue to dominate."
Mr. Alexandro Medina, Da Vinci InSPIRESS*

courses. The program shows high school students why they need the upper-level math and science courses, before they take them.

Get In Early!

The InSPIRESS mentors believe the best way to get students interested in engineering (and recruit more engineering students), is to introduce it to

them when they are young, before they come to the false realization that engineering is hard, potentially scary, and a field without creativity.

The program is designed to show high school students how fun, exciting and varied real engineering can be.

For more information please visit www.inspiress.org

Free College Credit!

Take the Next OnRamps

Opportunities for Da Vinci High School students have increased dramatically thanks to the district's latest partnership with the University of Texas at Austin and its OnRamps program.

As a proud partner with OnRamps, our students will be able to take rigorous college-level courses at DaVinci taught by district staff members and by UT-Austin faculty members.

Students' exposure to postsecondary education will allow them to experience what taking a real college class is like. In addition, students who participate earn college credit from UT Austin, which is also transferrable to any public university or college in Texas.

The cost? That's the best part.

It's FREE!

Da Vinci students who take advantage of the OnRamp program will attend classes free of charge. As we all know, college can be very expensive as expenses add up for tuition, textbooks, supplies, etc. With OnRamps, students will not have to pay a single cent and all expenses are covered.

What an Opportunity!

"This is a tremendous new opportunity for our high school students," said Superintendent Dr. G. "We've all heard of the tremendous student loan debt that college graduates are burdened with after graduation. This program will provide students with the college ex-

perience and college credits they need without the expense or debt. The only thing they need is dedication and the desire to learn."

OnRamps currently offers courses at DaVinci in the following disciplines:

- **Computer Science**
- **English: Rhetoric and Writing**
- **Geoscience**
- **History**
- **Pre-Cal**

Da Vinci's OnRamps program helps achieve one of the main goals of Da Vinci High School: providing students with a well-rounded curriculum in science, technology, engineering, and math, better known as STEM education.

"It's free! This is a tremendous new opportunity for our high school students."
Superintendent Dr. Joe E. Gonzales

Go For It!

Students benefit greatly from completing classes that allow their creativity and talent to bloom in STEM classes that are highly technical, but also engaging and dare we say, fun! By participating in OnRamps, students can now take their interests and talents to the next level.

OnRamps for DaVinci students is yet another example of the district's constant efforts to provide our students with every positive opportunity available to help them achieve their goals and dreams in life.



The University of Texas at Austin
OnRamps



Superintendent Invites Da Vinci Alumni to Come Home Again

District Superintendent Dr. Joe E. Gonzales is extending a heart-felt invitation to the many alumni of Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts to return once again to their high school alma mater.

Dr. G is leading the efforts to maximize the potential of all our students who can benefit from the experience and knowledge Da Vinci's distinguished alumni can bring to the table.

The district is committed to making every effort to welcome its alumni to become a part of our many successful and innovative programs. Those efforts include:

- *An online alumni newsletter*
- *Alumni email invitations to upcoming events*
- *Alumni appreciation at events*
- *Invitation to mentor students*
- *Invitation to present at school sponsored activities*



Here is the invitation Dr. G has extended to all our distinguished alumni:

Message from the Superintendent:

In May 2012, Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts celebrated its first graduating class. Seven years later the school has graduated over 130 students. Our proud heritage in education continues as Da Vinci graduates students with the foundations that assure student success in their post graduate endeavors. In addition, the ongoing expansions, beautification of our campuses, and program enhancement are increasing the opportunities for our Da Vinci students to excel.

As Da Vinci graduates, you have been recipients of a prestigious education. As alumni, you can ensure that the diploma that you received retains value and relevance for future generations of Da Vinci students. Da Vinci alumni can help ensure that the school continues to satisfy its mission by staying involved. I invite and encourage you to return to campus, speak to student groups, mentor, attend sporting events to support student athletes, or enjoy a concert or theatre production. Through the participation of our alumni, we can help Da Vinci keep all its wonderful programs, increase the number and amount of scholarships offered to our graduates, and continue to help maintain Da Vinci as a premier program. Alumni working together can make a difference in the lives of today's Da Vinci students who are destined to be great leaders tomorrow.

Finally, a big thank you to Ms. Iris Burnham for your vision which has impacted so many lives in a positive manner. Remember, Ms. Burnham built it, nourished it, and made it grow.

With the Highest Regards,
- Dr. Joe E. Gonzales

Da Vinci Interns Step in to the Real World of Their Future Careers

In older times, an apprenticeship allowed a person to learn a skill or trade from an expert. The apprentice became the student of the master and learned the ins and outs of the profession.

Over the years, apprenticeships have died down, but internships have risen in their place. An internship provides experience for an individual in a specific organization or career field.

At Da Vinci, we believe every student can benefit from an internship and are proud of the vast amount of experiences our student interns have gained.

Everybody Gets to Intern

Da Vinci provides students with a diverse curriculum in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). However, not everything can always be learned in a classroom.

Developing a wide range of skills and a network of individuals to recognize those skills is what can make the difference in post-secondary education, college, and careers. For this reason, every student at Da Vinci is required to participate in an internship as part of their graduation requirements.

Every Da Vinci student must complete 40 hours in an internship beginning in their junior year. The internship sites are approved by the campus and each site has a supervisor who rates the student's performance and provides feedback to help the student.

Being an Intern Pays Off

Interns benefit from taking a deeper dive into an organization or business and learning about the various aspects of that entity. They work alongside professionals and will often work on real-time projects.

Once an internship is completed, the student **has a much greater knowledge of the profession, and a list of contacts in that field** who can serve as a recommendation on college or job applications.

Interns Fly to Central Texas

Recently, a few of Da Vinci interns took the opportunity to fly to central Texas along with Superintendent Dr. G to learn more about government, business, and higher education.

The students visited the capital in Austin and toured the University of Texas at Austin. They were able to visit the McCombs School of Business and other departments on the campus.

The following day, the students visited Texas State University in San Marcos and ended the day visiting with a legal firm in San Antonio.

One Step Closer to Success

These types of internships expose students to places and people that they might not have seen encountered otherwise. While in central Texas, our students asked plenty of questions and walked away with a positive experience filled with new knowledge.

The interns were able to explore these locations and reflect on the opportunities in their futures after graduation.

Da Vinci will always place an emphasis on internships and exposing students to the real world. While we continue to provide an engaging curriculum in the classroom, we are also preparing students to graduate and have success in whatever path they choose.

"We are preparing students to graduate and have success in whatever path they choose."



Da Vinci High School student interns recently flew to Central Texas for campus and business visits. From left are Sebastian Contreras, Alan Sanchez and Christopher Wright. Above, the trio visits the UT-Austin campus and the Darrell K. Royal - Texas Memorial Stadium. Below, the trio visits The Texas Union on campus.



Sebastian Contreras

From Da Vinci to the Ivy League

When Sebastian Contreras entered Burnham Wood Charter Schools in the second grade, he probably wasn't thinking about college just yet.

As an eager student, he found his home at Burnham Wood and excelled in his studies and extracurricular activities.

But Then Something Happened

It was in the 8th grade that Sebastian learned that he had a desire to study architecture. He said, "In 8th grade I was assigned a capstone project from my math teacher to create a business, and as something extra to enhance our project, I designed a layout of what our business would look like."

From there Sebastian knew that he wanted to take his interests to the next level. However, finding a university to meet his needs was not an easy step.

"It was very difficult figuring out where I wanted to go," he said, "but knowing what I wanted to do helped."

"Just like colleges look at specific criteria for the students they want to admit, I had my own criteria for the universities I was considering, and I even made my own decision matrix when doing my college research," he said.

Making the right choice

"The accomplishment of being the first Ivy League-bound graduate from Da Vinci is nice, but there will be more like me that follow," Sebastian Contreras

After narrowing his prospective university list, Sebastian decided it was time to visit the campus at Cornell University in New York state.

He went on to apply for a summer program to assure himself that Cornell provided the environment he would like to live in and study.

"By spending the summer at Cornell, I gained a new understanding of what architecture really was," he said. "And I had new perspectives about college standards and living styles."

Not an Easy Road

Sebastian said he's seen his share of adversity while trying to reach his dream university. But he also knows what it takes to push through and get there.

He has advice for the younger people who are also dreaming big.

He reminds them that, "Ridicule of your dreams should only push you to exceed past the barriers of expectations others may have put on you. Strive for what you want. Be what you want."

But Not Solo Either

Finally, Sebastian recognizes that his journey has not been taken alone. He mentions those who inspire him to become successful.

"My mom, my grandparents, Mr. Medina, Mr. Hernandez, Dr. Gonzales, my friends, and anyone who has doubted my abilities," he said.

We are all proud of Sebastian and look forward to the great accomplishments he will achieve at Cornell.



Sebastian Contreras takes a break between summer classes at New York state's Ivy League school.



How He Got There

"I believe because I have such close connections with my teachers, when asking them to write recommendation letters, they were able to give sincere and concise advocations about the person I am."

Cornell University was founded in 1865 in Ithaca, New York.

It is considered an Ivy League campus and carries a prestigious reputation for its academics and research.

Only 10 percent of students who apply are admitted.

Sebastian will be one of approximately 3,300 freshmen admitted this fall.



Sebastian Contreras celebrates his acceptance to a summer program at Cornell University.

"I want to be remembered for my work ethic, my contribution of time to the school, my social qualities, and for my endeavor to be a leader in everything."

Show Me the Money!

Scholarships Exceed 1 Million Dollars

Applying and getting to college can be challenging. Years of schooling prepare students to apply to the next level, and if you do everything right, you can be accepted to a great university.

However, after you are accepted, paying for college can still be difficult. Luckily, at Da Vinci, **we place an emphasis on scholarships and grants.** And within the past year, students on campus have been able to receive scholarships topping one million dollars!

College is Not Cheap!

Preparing students for college means measuring up both academically and financially.

For many of our students, college isn't a question, it is the absolute next step in their path to their dream career and pursuit of happiness.

While our teachers work with every student in the classroom on core content, our staff is also working with every student on applying and securing funding for college. **They don't want students to just get accepted to college, they also want them to not worry about funding it.** This is why counselors and staff are relentless in helping students on financial aid and scholarship applications.

"Preparing our students for college means measuring up both academically and financially."



We're Here to Help

Whether it is editing a scholarship essay or looking over draft applications, Da Vinci is committed to helping every student find ways to fund their continuing education. Over the past year, students have been receiving scholarships as a result of their hard work, and to date, there has been over one million dollars in scholarships that Da Vinci students will be taking with them to college.

One Million and Counting

For a campus of a modest size, this is a tremendous amount of scholarship dollars. The best part is that the year still isn't over, and students are still applying or waiting to hear back from scholarship applications. So the final scholarship tally has not yet been tallied.

We look forward to the continued success of our students in funding their college dreams.

Teacher, Staff Recruitment And Retention Are Key At Burnham Wood



Studies show that the number one factor in student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom.

At Burnham Wood, we understand how important it is to place high quality teachers in every single classroom. Students deserve to learn from exemplary professionals who care about each and every child's progress.

But that's only part of the faculty focus. Administrators at Burnham Wood place a high value on quality personnel and take great efforts to not only recruit the best, but to retain them as well.

Dr. G's Focus on Faculty, Staff

Dr. Joe Gonzales, the superintendent of Burnham Wood School District, has been in the education profession over 45 years and has seen how hiring and keeping strong staff members not only contribute to student achievement, but to the success of the entire campus.

For this reason, he is always eager to meet new people and learn about other high-performing schools and school districts.

(Maybe a Dr. G quote here)

Finding Them is Key

Recruiting has been a focus for the district, said Dr. Gonzales.

Administrators have even gone as far as recruiting from out-of-state to promote diversity and quality education in our schools. Building a strong recruiting network ensures that the school district will always have talented individuals ready to come on board.

You Gotta Know When to Hold 'Em

Where Burnhamwood truly shines is in retaining quality staff.

Teacher turnover is an epidemic that is currently hurting schools nationwide. Many teachers leave their jobs before their fifth year in the classroom. High teacher turnover causes students to suffer by not having experienced teachers qualified to meet their educational needs.

Fortunately, students at Burnham Wood don't have to worry about this problem. The district has an exceptional teacher retention rate. In the past school year, 100 percent of teachers submitted "intention to return" letters.

Little to No Turnover Here

Approximately 90 teachers returned to the district in the 2018-2019 school year. For the coming school year, the same high retention rate is expected.

The district retains its teachers by creating systems that value them. Incentives have been placed for staff members who show that going above and beyond is not just the expectation, but is rewarded.

Drop By Anytime

In addition, since day one, Dr. G has implemented an open-door policy. He is always available to any staff member to hear about issues that might need attention or to hear about the great things that are going on with students.

The Burnham Wood School District believes in giving every child the best education possible. We fulfill that belief by recruiting strong teachers and staff, and by retaining them as they strive daily for excellence.

"Recruiting quality faculty and staff is a focus of the district." Dr. Joe E. Gonzales

Howard Burnham Elementary



Howard Burnham Elementary... It Shines Above the Others (same as Cornell: Large font size for the school name, smaller for the rest of the headline)

Howard Burnham Elementary School has been awarded an honor very few schools in the state have achieved.

It was recently selected as a Texas Higher-Performing School and named a Texas Honor Roll School by the Educational Results Partnership (ERP).

ERP is a non-profit organization that applies data science to help improve student outcomes and career readiness. ERP works with schools throughout the nation's educational system, tracking student achievement from kindergarten into the labor market.

Lots of Copy Cats

With honors like these, it is easy to see why there is so much at Howard Burnham Elementary for others to emulate. Having assembled quality staff and administration, plus a com-

plete plan for student achievement, this campus has it all!

The Howard Burnham Elementary School is the flagship school in the Burnham Wood Charter School District. When it opened in 1998, it became the very first charter school in El Paso County.

Setting the Pace

The school's creation was the result of the vision and hard work of its original founders, Howard and Iris Burnham. He had served as executive director of several social service agencies in the area, including the Jewish Federation of El Paso and El Paso Family Services, before joining forces with his wife to embark on their dream to offer high-quality education to El Paso children.

Since then, the school has provided all students an education of the highest quality. Along with our other Burnham Wood schools, Howard Burnham Elementary (HBE) has a science and fine arts focus.

When Howard Burnham Elementary opened in 1998, it became the very first charter school in El Paso County.

Elementary Robotics

A strong robotics program that consistently outperforms the competition is a highlight of the STEM-based school. With a highly effective tutoring and academic enhancement plan in place, parents are assured students are provided with prescriptive attention to their academic needs.

The results are in the stellar scores achieved on standardized testing such as the STAAR and IOWA tests.

Following the district's plan to grow the whole student, mainstays at HBE include music and art. Violin, choir and art instruction are provided year-round by highly qualified artists and musicians.

Showtime!

Several times throughout the year, the progress and talents of our young musicians and artists are showcased through

several concerts and activities within the district, as well as out in the community.

Cultural awareness is fostered through comprehensive programs that highlight student accomplishments through events such as International Day.

A robust roster of new sports opportunities has also been introduced to HBE. The school has enthusiastically introduced the inaugural seasons of flag football, basketball, soccer, track, cheer and dance.

Summer Camps Coming

District Superintendent Dr. Gonzales' proven strategy of utilizing middle and high school leader athletes to facilitate elementary sports has led to an amazing year of firsts for HBE.

This summer will see an entire month of highly structured student camps in sports, academics, music, art, dance, theatre and leadership, all designed to further maximize the many opportunities for our students' successes.

Vista Del Futuro Elementary Is A Blue Ribbon School



Vista Del Futuro (VDF) is a proud member of the elite Blue Ribbon School Community!

On September 27, 2016, the U.S. Secretary of Education, John B. King, Jr., announced that our Vista del Futuro Charter School had been named a National Blue Ribbon School.

Vista del Futuro Charter School was one among only 279 public and 50 private schools receiving this honor in the country!

(Get rid of the space here that the logo created in YOUR layout)

But Wait, There's More

In addition, Vista Del Futuro is one of a very few schools in the state to be selected as a Texas Higher-Performing School and named on the Texas Honor Roll by Educational Results Partnership, (ERP)!

There is much to celebrate at this revered school program. The administration does not simply rest on their laurels, but instead set yearly goals to surpass their already exceptional student performance.

VDF has also been recognized by the Texas Education Agency as a Superior Achievement School. They have also been acknowledged as a High-Performing Reward School in Mathematics and Reading.

Quality is Number One!

The school's number one goal is providing its students with a high-quality educational experience in a safe and caring environment. With the support and guidance of the District Superintendent, school board, campus administration, staff, parents, and community, students are part of numerous exciting, engaging, and rewarding academic experiences.

Together, teachers, students and parents make a strong Vista del Futuro family in which students thrive. Vista Del Futuro is a high-rigor, STEM-based program with the highest expectations for its students.

Like the other schools in the Burnham Wood Charter school family, it has a science and fine arts focus. With the implementation of a strong robotics program, the future is bright for our young engineers-in-the-making!

VDF has a highly effective tutoring and academic enhancement plan in place, assuring parents that their children are provided with prescriptive attention to their academic needs. The exceptional scores achieved on standardized testing such as the STAAR and IOWA tests are evidence of the effective teaching methods used at VDF.

It's About the Whole Student

Following the district's plan to grow the whole student, music and art are also mainstays at VDF. Violin, choir and art instruction are provided year-round by highly qualified musicians and artists.

Several times throughout the year, the progress and talents of our brilliant young students across the district are showcased at events both in and outside the district.

Long recognizing the benefit of a hearty sports program in schools, Superintendent Dr. "G" introduced a full roster of new sports opportunities at VDF. This year the school saw the inaugural seasons of flag football, basketball, soccer, track, cheer and dance.

Dr. G's Strategy Works

Dr. G's proven strategy of utilizing middle and high school leader athletes to facilitate elementary sports has led to an amazing year of firsts for VDF.

The community and participants are very excited about the announcement of a month of sports, academics, music, art, dance, theatre and leadership camps that will further enhance the opportunity for student success.

Burnham Wood ROBOTICS Students Step Onto the World Stage!

The Da Vinci Robotics teams, which have developed a sterling reputation based on their impressive wins, awards and trophies over the years, recently returned from competition at the 2019 FIRST Championship in Houston.

But it was a competition like they'd never seen. The event drew 30,000 students, 70,000 spectators, more than 1,400 teams from 70 countries all over the world, and a whopping 2,400 volunteers.

The event is the world's largest celebration of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) for students ages 6-18. Their task? To build a 120-pound robot that can complete tasks that change every year.

Proud Just to Be There

Burnham Wood was very proud to have the Da Vinci Robotics Team represent the district at the prestigious championship on April 17th.

The team, made up of students at Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts, and known as Team 5670, has set a very high bar for the community by simply being invited to compete, according to Ed Rubio, the Da Vinci Robotics mentor.

"Team 5670 is the first team from El Paso to compete in the FIRST Tech Challenge Division at the World Championship," Mr. Rubio said. "Team members prepared themselves by participating in the toughest robotics program Da Vinci has to offer. Their passion and work ethic are truly impressive."

It's All About Networking

The event also served as a great opportunity for students to network with event sponsors, industry leaders, prestigious universities and government agencies, including NASA, he said.

Victoria Garcia, a member of the Da Vinci team, said she was just grateful to have made the trip.

"For the first time, I was able to experience the FIRST Robotics Championships in Houston," she said. "Not only was it a first for me, but also for my fellow teammates. Even though we didn't win, we came back with our heads held high and had the chance to meet some amazing teams."

They Came From All Over

Victoria said the 30,000 students competing were from far and wide, but mostly from the U.S., Mexico, Canada, Turkey, Israel, Australia and China.

"Hopefully, we'll get to go to Worlds again," she said "Thank you #5670 Da Vinci Dragons for letting me come along on this amazing trip!"

Maya Garcia, a senior DV Robotics team member, said she was impressed with the global makeup of competitors.

"I think the best part about going to Worlds was being able to meet other teams from different states and countries, and to learn different things in order to prepare ourselves for next year," she said.

Robotics is Super Popular

Burnham Wood's robotics program has long been a draw for new students at all grade levels who want to develop their STEM knowledge and abilities, according to Superintendent Dr. G.

"This program will continue to be a focus of the Burnham Wood Charter School's mission to enhance our students' potential for success in a highly competitive international workforce that demands the many skills fostered in our robotics programs," he said.

These skills include problem solving, team work, communication and critical thinking.

We've Got Trophies to Prove It

The high school and elementary school teams have a long tradition of excellence and honors that include:

- 2018 Design Award
- 2018 West Texas Regional Competition Champions
- 2019 Connect Award Winners
- HBE Dragonbot 3rd place for Strategy and Innovation at the 2019 FTC Regional Competition

Everybody Wins!

Karen Saunders, the Howard Burnham Elementary School robotics coach, said the school's fifth graders have demonstrated especially high levels of achievement.

"While we are proud to have received the recognition of a trophy at competition," she said, "We are most proud of the teamwork, perseverance, and courage that our fifth grade team members have shown. Way to go HBE Dragonbots!"

Robotics is the Future

William Wilson, the Vista del Futuro robotics coach, said the future is wide open for robotics students.

"They are having lots of fun thinking of all the possibilities when making their robots and programming them to do certain functions," he said. "Our students believe they can change the world with their robots."

"It's no easy feat to commit to several hours daily and sacrifice every Saturday morning, but the evidence of their dedication is indisputable."

- Jonathan Fernandez, Coach



Vista LEGO EV3 Tracker



Vista Robotics

Improvements/Future Projects



"What a beautiful school!"

This is the mantra most often spoken by new families visiting one of our Burnham Wood Charter Schools.

Recognizing that one of the many jobs of a school superintendent is to make sure that all students are provided with an environment most conducive to learning, District Superintendent Dr. G. quickly identified needed facility improvements across the district.

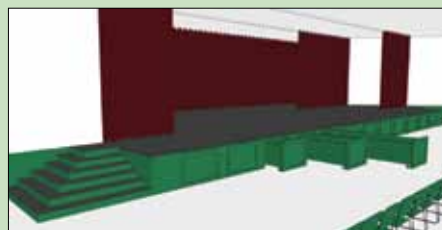
Soon, hammers, paint brushes and construction tools were flying!

The comprehensive plan for improving all district schools, while ambitious, is intentional and student-centered.

And while most school districts would hope to see the same improvements over a span of several years, Burnham Wood has seen a dramatic transformation of facilities quickly, due to the effective and cost-efficient measures implemented by Dr. G. and wholly supported by the school board.

Current and future improvements in our district plan include:

- A basketball court at Vista Del Futuro
- Sports track at Vista Del Futuro
- Teaching garden at Vista del Futuro
- Sports field at Vista Del Futuro
- Restucco of all structures at Vista Del Futuro
- New basketball court goals at Howard Burnham Elementary
- Repainting all interior/exterior walls at all campuses
- Blacktop parking lot surfaces at da Vinci
- Covered courtyard at Howard Burnham Elementary
- New computer lab at Da Vinci
- Weight room, coach's offices, storage at Da Vinci
- Enlarged performance stage, storage at Da Vinci
- Resurfacing of gym floor at Da Vinci
- Gym bleacher enhancement at Da Vinci
- Soccer field umbrella structures at Da Vinci



New Stage



Weight Room

One can readily see that this ambitious plan for our district is in full swing, ensuring that all district students and their families can be proud of the space they call "their school."

Make Plans for a Fun-Filled Summer!

Summertime is a great break for students to recharge their batteries after a long year of learning in the classroom. But Burnham Wood students have a great opportunity to still be involved on campus during the summer.

Because the district recognizes how important it is to keep students engaged in a learning community while allowing them to still be kids, we're making plans.

This summer, come enjoy fun-filled days at our 2019 Summer Camps! We will have something for everyone at all three campuses: Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts, Howard Burnham Elementary, and Vista Del Futuro.

Students will be able to take part in sports, music, art, and academics.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Summer Camp 2019

Offered at two campuses:

Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts

9am - 4pm fee: \$50/week

Ages 5-18

June 3rd - June 27th

Music

- Violin
- Piano
- Guitar
- Band
- Choir

Art

Academics

- French
- Spanish
- German
- Theatre
- Debate

Sports Offerings:

- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Flag Football
- Soccer
- Track
- Baseball
- Softball
- Wrestling
- Cheer
- Dance



Vista Del Futuro

9am - 12pm fee: \$25/week

Ages 5-18

June 3rd - June 27th

Sports Offerings:

- Basketball
- Soccer
- Track

Registration and other details announced on our website after May 1st!

www.burnhamwood.org

Summer Camp Contact:

Yvette Buehring M.Ed., ybuehring@burnhamwood.org