



VISTA DEL FUTURO

Charter School

Summer 2020, Volume 1, Number 1



Vista Del Futuro
Blue Ribbon
School of Excellence!



Dr. G Works His Way From Farm Worker To School Superintendent

Superintendent of Burnham Wood Charter Schools, Dr. Joe E. Gonzales, was born in Saginaw, Michigan, in the early 1940's. He was born into a large migrant farmworker family of six sisters and one brother.

Dr. Gonzales' mother, Luciana (Lucy) Canales-Gonzales, and his father, Rosalio (Ross) Gonzales, dedicated their lives to their children's well-being. They were determined that their children would attain the necessary education to be capable of escaping the physical hardships of migrant labor.

Mr. and Mrs. Gonzales were convinced that the path to a more secure future for their children was one that included a lifetime of educational endeavor.

As a result, all the Gonzales children grew up knowing that the minimum level of education expected of them was a high school diploma. All of them reached that level of education, and then some.

Joe Gonzales was destined to pursue a much higher level of education. After high school, the future "Dr. G" went on to attend Delta Junior College where he received an associate's degree.

After that, he went on to attend Michigan State University where he received both a bachelor's and master's degree. But he went even farther than that.

He attended Wayne State University where he was awarded a doctorate degree in curriculum and instruction, as well another doctorate in bilingual education.

After all that schooling, Dr. G's work career has included experience as a teacher, a coach, an assistant principal, a principal, an assistant superintendent, and finally a superintendent.

In his current assignment as superintendent of the Burnham Wood Charter Schools, Dr. G said, "It's an honor to be in this position, especially because of this institution's proud tradition and high level of accomplishment."



Dr. Joe Gonzales
Chief of Staff/Acting Superintendent



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Welcome to Vista del Futuro



The Vista del Futuro Charter School is home to almost 300 students in grades preK-3 through sixth grade. We are located at 1671 Bob Hope Drive in El Paso, and we've been at this location since the school opened for the 2010-2011 school year.

We were so successful in educating our students that just a few years later, in 2016, the Vista del Futuro campus was named a National Blue Ribbon School. Very few schools in the United States are ever honored with such a high distinction. Our campus consists of 27 classrooms, office space, a cafeteria/kitchen, and a vast, well-

equipped playground area. At Vista del Futuro (which means vision of the future) everybody strives daily to be the best we can possibly be. Our Blue Ribbon status and the educational development of each of our students reflect on the success of that endeavor.



Vista Parade of Graduates!



Vista Del Futuro Elementary, one of Burnham Wood's distinguished family of charter schools, recently invited the community to help celebrate the graduation of kindergarten and sixth grade students.

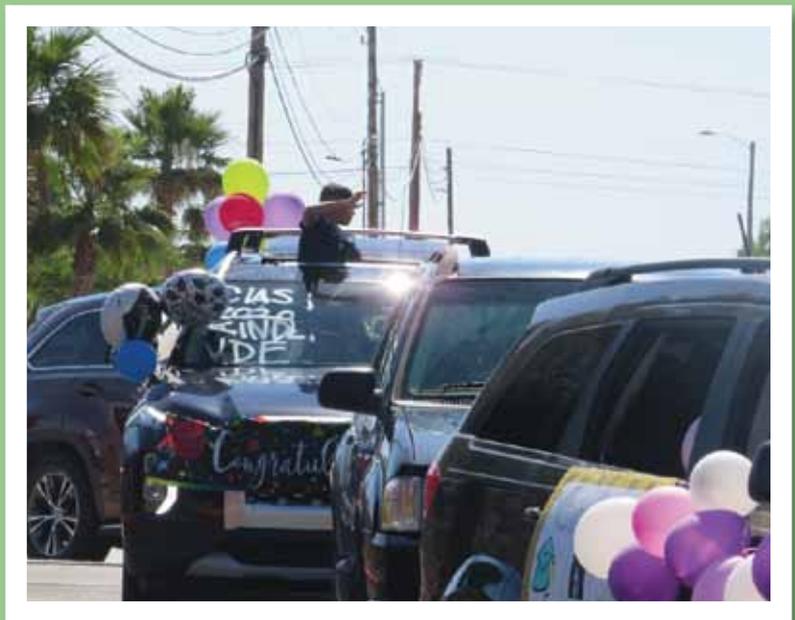
But unlike traditional walk-across-the-stage graduations, this one was unique, an event to be remembered for years to come.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and to maintain the health and safety of all involved, parents and students celebrated what we called "Drive Through Graduation!"

The car-honking and exciting event was held Friday, May 29. Kindergarten classes graduated in "drive-through" fashion at 10 a.m., followed by sixth graders at noon. It was attended by all graduates and their families.

Decorated cars carrying the honored graduates, all garbed in cap and gown, filed past our Superintendent, Dr. G., administrators and teachers as they all cheered for the success of the school's hard-working students.

Congratulations to all our grads!



Message from the Principal: Ana M. Candelaria



Ana M. Candelaria
Principal

“Vista Del Futuro will continue to work together with all students’ families, staff and the community to ensure the academic success of all our students.”

-- A. Candelaria



I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am honored to be the new principal of Vista Del Futuro.

It is my goal for Vista Del Futuro to continue providing a nurturing and safe environment that fosters the development of responsible, caring students who are critical thinkers and college-ready learners.

I am very fortunate to be part of this amazing community and I look forward to continue carrying out the vision of Dr. Gonzales, our Superintendent, who is committed to the development of the whole child.

Vista Del Futuro will continue to work together with all students’ families, staff and the community to ensure the academic success of all our students.

It is with great pride that we will offer our district’s original two-way dual language education at Vista Del Futuro. All educational programs will be coordinated to ensure both English-only and bilingual students receive quality and rigorous instruction.

Our school will also continue our uniform dress-policy that adds to its sense of pride and order as well as Social Emotional Learning, a school wide program across grade levels to promote the process for helping children develop fundamental skills for life effectiveness.

SEL teaches skills that include recognizing and managing emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically.

In addition to a rigorous curriculum, we will continue to offer various extracurricular classes such as Spanish, Chinese, Robotics, Coding, Art, Guitar, Violin, Choir, and Orchestra classes.

Once we get clearance that it is safe for our athletic activities to resume, flag football, basketball, track, and cheerleading teams will be offered.

Our goal is to enhance our students’ educational experience and continue our path to excellence.

Yours in education,

Ana M. Candelaria

Principal

Ms. Chavira aspires to inspire one and all

By J Chavira

Teaching is much more than just educating students in math, science, reading, writing and social studies. It is having an everlasting impact on students to help them continue to grow in their education and in their lives.

Being a teacher is an absolute joy and privilege, watching all these different personalities and growth mindsets learning and developing.

As a teacher, I truly believe that no matter the challenges any child faces, all children are capable of learning. It is up to us as educators to find the right tools and plans necessary to help each child to learn.

Any student can accomplish any goal they set their mind towards. As a teacher, it is vital to enhance students' abilities to grow and excel in critical thinking, maintain curiosity, develop compassion, humor, self-discipline, leadership and have a sense of wonder about the world around them.

At Vista Del Futuro, the growth I see in all students is amazing! All the students know all the teachers, and it is such a tight-knit community that we have created for these kiddos.

Our many clubs have given students of different ages the opportunity to work together. It has created a positive learning environment where our students flourish in academics, music, sports and other areas.

I truly aspire to constantly inspire my students to be all that they can be. I have had the privilege to work with Student Council this year and it's been amazing. The kids involved have taken off with their ideas and are having an impact on the school. The

great thing is that we have been able to include all students in all grade levels from pre-k to sixth grade.

Student council has put together events that included all grade levels and fundraisers for the school. Whenever students are given the responsibility and opportunity to step up and get things done, they will! We truly help form independent, creative leaders.

Teaching is not a one-person job by any means, and I really take pride that here at Vista Del Futuro we truly work well together and make an outstanding team. There is no school like ours. The unity and comradery here can be found nowhere else.

Students and parents, both past and present, love to visit and to keep up-to-date with all Vista has to offer. Our mighty Vipers are held to higher expectations and standards, not just academically but as all-around productive citizens and leaders. Our students consistently meet these high standards and continue to set the bar even higher. Each student here is a role model to the next student.

As teachers we must lead by example, and I truly feel we fulfill that part of our mission. We all really put our hearts into our jobs because we love all our students. They are our kids. They are the future.

What we teach, how we guide, and how we enhance student learning will certainly come to fruition when our students' lives begin to impact their homes, communities, and the entire world around them.



Chavira, Jessica
6th Grade

"Whenever students are given the responsibility and opportunity to step up and get things done, they will!"
--J. Chavira



Coach Wilson has always been here

By Yvette Buehring



Wilson, William
Physical Education

Everybody knows him as Coach Wilson. He's always been a part of Vista del Futuro Elementary School, from Day One.

He was also here in 2016 when the school earned the special designation of being a Blue Ribbon School. Vista del Futuro was the only school in El Paso to receive the award that year.

All schools in Texas strive and dream about earning the state's Blue Ribbon title, but only special schools get it. And it takes special staff members, like Coach Wilson, to get it.

William Joshua "Coach" Wilson is the physical education teacher and athletic director at Vista del Futuro.

The year 2010 is special to him because it's the first year of Vista del Futuro's existence, and the first year of his teaching career.

"That first year we had only 100 students and I had to teach PE out in the parking lot," he said.

Today, Vista del Futuro has nearly 360 students, and parking lots are only used for parking cars. The school now has plenty of facilities for PE, including track and soccer fields and several modern basketball courts.

For Coach Wilson, his career started at the University of Texas at El Paso. That's where he earned his undergraduate degree in kinesiology with a minor in education. Then he went on to earn his master's degree in education administration there.

Coach Wilson has played a major role in making sure Vista del Futuro thrives by helping provide high-quality educational programs and professional development for students.

He said his philosophy on education is simple.

"I think if I provide a firm and positive educational environment, students will learn," he said. "My lesson plans are student-centered and are related to my core values, such as hard work, learning all the

rules and respecting others."

He said he believes in teaching students how to properly respect each other and how to treat each other with courtesy, even in difficult situations.

"I think these lessons are the key to living well in the real world," he said. "I also encourage and teach my students to become lifelong learners, not just when they're in school."

Coach Wilson is also a strong believer in the benefits students get from horticulture and nature classes at Vista del Futuro. He said several areas of learning are taught when students learn about gardening.

"For teachers, gardening can be both a direct and indirect approach to teaching lessons in science, math

and art, just to name a few. Plus, it's important that students get outdoors for a break from their seven-hour days indoors."

Coach Wilson's wife's name is Denise. She's been a nurse for 28 years and the two have been married for more than 32 years.

The couple has had three children: Brenna, Kevin and Eric.

Eric lived for 22 years before passing away. Brenna and Kevin are currently working on their master's degrees in business administration.

Coach said he spends his leisure time fishing and hiking. He loves being outdoors.

"There is something about nature that feeds my soul and gives me a sense of awe," he said.

Coach loves being outdoors so much, he estimates he's walked literally thousands of miles in Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon, California, Arizona, and Texas. He has also completed two pilgrimages in Spain and Italy.

Coach Wilson said he'd like to return to his alma mater to earn another master's degree, this time in Kinesiology for Fine and Gross Motor Skills.

He feels that his skill sets are best suited for working with young people.

Whether it's teaching a new sport to a student or supporting and encouraging them to be ready to face an ever-changing world, Coach Wilson said he's ready for whatever the future holds.

"Our society is changing so quickly that our students need educators to help them get through periods of uncertainty," he said.

Coach Wilson also likes the benefits he gets from collaborating with fellow educators, whether he's teaching alongside them now or did so in the past. He said communicating with other teachers helps both sides improve the quality of their educational journeys.

Coach didn't want to end the interview for this article without thanking a few people who have influenced his life and guided him in his successful career in education.

"First I want to thank Mrs. Iris Burnham and the late Dr. Debra Martinez, who both took a chance on hiring me as a rookie when our school first opened," he said. "And Ms. Yvonne (Bonnie) Whitman has a special place in my heart because we've done so much work together."

"By example Dr. Joe Gonzales has shown me how to be strong, and he's brought a lot of educational balance to our school. That's special," he said.

"I want to thank all my past and present professional and staff members whom I've had the honor and pleasure of working with through the years," he said. "And a special thanks to all the parents who allowed me to be present in their children's lives."

And of course, Coach Wilson didn't leave out his students.

"I want to give a heartfelt thank you to all the students who I have encountered and taught, both this year and in years past. I know that because of all these exceptional people and children I've had in my life, I am truly blessed."



Outgoing Principal Mr. Gallardo is Proud of Vista del Futuro

I am very proud to say that Vista Del Futuro Elementary School's faculty, staff, parents and community are fully committed to the academic, social, personal and physical growth of all our students.

Our highly qualified administration and faculty recognize the value of professional development as we strive to rigorously challenge our students every day.

Our school's teaching practices are both responsive and reflective to the needs of all our students, from kinder through sixth grade. By working collaboratively, we are able to promote a community that is respectful of differences among us, and expects all our students to be successful.

Through diverse experiences, the students at our school are able to discover their potential, achieve college and career readiness, thrive in a caring and safe environment, and become leaders of their lives.

I am very proud to say our school was named a National Blue Ribbon School in 2016. This award confirmed all the hard work of the many fine people who were here back then: teachers, students, families, and community. We're carrying on the tradition. They produced a welcoming and safe school where all our students continue to master rigorous content.

Our school was one of only 28 schools in Texas to achieve this prestigious award from the U.S. Department of Education. We strive to continue that dedication to academic excellence.

In addition, we offer various extracurricular classes such as Spanish, Chinese, Robotics, Coding, Art, Guitar, Violin, Choir, and Orchestra classes which further enhance our students' education.

We believe that all of these extracurricular classes not only enhance our students' educational experience, but allows them an opportunity to explore their talents in a safe and nurturing way.

All of these efforts are made possible by following the leadership of our superintendent, Dr. Gonzales. As a result of his guidance, direction and unrelenting efforts to provide a top-notch education to all of our students, our school has truly become better in every aspect since his arrival here.

The improvements to our school are evident not only aesthetically with the addition of a beautiful playground, but academically as well, which is evident in our student data and results for the last two years. We are truly fortunate and appreciative to be under his leadership.

I am very honored to be the leader of this great school and I look forward to helping our students achieve great success!

F. Gallardo
Principal, Vista Del Futuro



For Ms. Contreras, Vista del Futuro is her second home

By Yvette Buehring



Contreras, Julie
Assistant Principal



Vista del Futuro's assistant principal is Ms. Julie Contreras. Although she's traveled throughout the world, she considers VDF her home away from home.

Ms. Contreras came to El Paso and VDF the same year the school was awarded the state's coveted Blue Ribbon status.

"In 2016, I was fortunate to find the best school in El Paso, Vista del Futuro Charter School," she said. "I started as a kindergarten teacher and the rest is history. I've been blessed to become the assistant principal at a place I call my home away from home."

During her time here, while working full-time, Ms. Contreras also worked to receive her master's degree in educational administration and is now working on her doctorate degree.

Her path to the role she works today has been interesting and eventful.

Ms. Contreras was born and reared in Laredo. Her father, Ramiro R. Rendon, is an engineer, and her mother, Diana H. Rendon, retired after a 40-year career as a school teacher. She has one brother, Ramiro R. Rendon II, who now resides in Laredo with his wife Erika and their three children.

Ms. Contreras looks up to her parents as strong role models for all married couples, saying they still look lovingly into each other's eyes and ALWAYS walk hand-in-hand.

Ms. Contreras first left Laredo to attend Texas State University in San Marcos where she earned her undergraduate degree in 2004. She then returned to Laredo where she taught kinder, first, second and third grade students

In 2011, Ms. Contreras did what very few people, especially females, have done. She decided to leave her teaching profession to serve her country. She joined the U.S. Army and became what's called a 68T, an animal care specialist.

While stationed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, she was chosen for a tour of duty half-way around the world, in Afghanistan, in 2012-2013. It was during this tour that she met her future spouse, Ruby E. Contreras.

In 2015, she left the military and moved to El Paso to reunite with the love of her life she'd met in the Middle East.

"Ruby and I have been married for five years and have started a busy household," she said. "We have a beautiful set of twins, Audrey and Romeo, who turned two in April."

Ms. Contreras said the family has a cat who "rules the house" named Nala Monroe and a chorkie, Maddie Mae who "is always in everybody's business."

In her spare time, Ms. Contreras loves taking "tons" of family photos. But her free time may become limited soon because she plans to enroll in a doctoral program in educational leadership and administration.

While firmly rooted to her family traditions and work ethic, Ms. Contreras said her teaching philosophy is ever-changing.

"I believe a teacher's philosophy should change to reflect the present time," she said. "My philosophy appears to be more of a meme, but it is no less true in all its entity. I believe we should be kind to each other, always. And I believe that students learn best when they are comfortable, trusted and feel like they are in a safe environment."

Ms. Contreras believes that the professional growth of school staff should always include the responsibility of always doing right by their students. She leads by example, treating everybody justly and remembering that in conflict there are always two sides to every story.

Since her arrival at Vista del Futuro, Ms. Contreras said she has witnessed many wonderful changes that have made the school one of the best in El Paso.

She especially respects the fact that Vista del Futuro was designated a Blue Ribbon school in 2016.

She credits the "amazing things" going on in the classrooms with teachers holding students accountable for their education and teachers going above and beyond, doing everything possible to make the learning process successful for each individual child.

She also credits the school's success on the genuine relationships established by teachers with their students and their families throughout their education at Vista del Futuro. Family is important to her.

"We are literally a family here at Vista and will continue to move forward with our minds set on one goal: the success of each and every individual child!"

International Day

All schools in the Burnham Wood Charter Schools family strive to teach students the importance of embracing the diversity among people to help create an atmosphere of respect and appreciation in classrooms.

One way this is done at our elementary schools is by hosting our annual International Day, one of our district's more popular enrichment programs. Prior to the big day, students research countries chosen by their teacher. Students present their findings on International Day.

Each culture is celebrated by displaying its traditional costumes, patriotic music and international cuisine.

Students, staff and their families become familiar with each country's geography, history, language, customs, and culture. By working together, all participants benefit by making fascinating discoveries together and learning about the wide diversity among people in the world.

Exploring such discoveries promotes empathy in our classrooms for others. Being culturally aware of other ethnicities and races can have a significant effect on students' success by promoting creativity, high-level thinking and collaboration.

Because our classrooms themselves represent different backgrounds, cultures, language, ethnicity, religion, and physical abilities, it is essential that we acknowledge the following:

- It is important for students to be culturally aware. Learning about other cultures, languages, religions, and holidays help our students learn that differences among classmates should be embraced, not feared. Being culturally aware is a positive way to promote inclusion among all in the classroom.

- It is important for students to appreciate cultural differences. In addition to knowing their peers may be different, it's also important for students to learn that some aspects of their own culture may have adapted from other cultures and ways of life.

- It is important for students to overcome stereotypes. Celebrating different cultures will bring to light new thinking and understanding. Students need to understand there is never a right or wrong way to practice our cultural differences. What's important is to embrace the fact that we might all be different in some ways but we learn and grow as we discover and celebrate those difference. This type of learning can encourage students to be creative thinkers. *Jacqueline@<https://thelittleladybugshop.com/the-importance-of-celebrating-different-cultures-in-the-classroom/>*



Market Days

Part of the mission of Burnham Wood Charter Schools is to grow leaders who have a deep appreciation for what's important in life. Preserving natural resources, and doing what we can to protect the environment, while understanding how to responsibly utilize resources available to us is essential.

In 2012, Burnham Wood Schools applied for and received a grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture to assist with the costs of adopting a permaculture initiative at all its schools.

Permaculture is a set of design principles centered on whole-systems thinking, simulating, or directly utilizing the patterns and resilient features observed in natural ecosystems. It uses these principles in a growing number of fields ranging from regenerative agriculture and rewilding to building community resilience. Part of the objective of the initiative was to use the gardening project to teach across all disciplines in our curriculum.



The garden is an outdoor classroom rich with opportunities for our students to explore and engage in hands-on activities. Science, math, health and language arts are just a few of the many subjects that can be taught using the garden, all while meeting state education benchmarks and standards. Vista students designed, planted and grew produce gardens which were then harvested and prepared for market. That led to the birth of "Market Days!" Twice yearly, Vista del Futuro students and their teachers take full advantage of the opportunity to promote healthy eating while honing their skills as young horticulturists, marketers and public relations agents. Mastering those skills helps ensure that Market Days is a successful event.

To promote community engagement, the school reached out to vendors and artisans to participate in the event, ultimately making the occasion a huge draw and wildly popular.

After a few years of cultivating the Vista garden, Ms. Yvonne Whitman, a former principal, implemented the "La Semilla" program for the school, or The Seed.

La Semilla's learning gardens are designed to grow an abundance of healthy food and serve as classrooms and living laboratories for hands-on learning.

Students are involved in every step of the "seed to table" process, from preparing soil for planting to harvesting and eating the resulting vegetables. The process ends with composting food scraps in order to return nutrients to the soil.

In their first year, schools created a design for their garden space. In the fall, raised-bed vegetable plots are constructed so that the areas are ready for planting in January.

La Semilla was established here in 2010, modeled after education programs in New Mexico that use the creation of community garden to promote youth development and food system education.

Thanks to these efforts, La Semilla is the only nonprofit organization solely devoted to fostering a healthy Paso del Norte regional food system. The group and Vista Del Futuro are committed to building strong relationships that empower youth and families to grow and cook good food, create positive change, and foster connections among safe foods, healthy living and boosting local economies.



Market Days @ Vista Del Futuro

Vista Del Futuro Super-Achiever: Ava Saucedo



When asked to identify a single student who exemplifies the core values, work ethic and expectations of the Vista Del Futuro student body, school administrators unanimously named 6th grader, Ava Saucedo as their choice. What follows is an interview conducted with Miss Saucedo:

Q: What do you enjoy most about school?

A: One of the things I enjoy most about school is getting to see my fellow classmates and participating in the activities the school offers.

Q: What do you enjoy doing outside of school?

A: My favorite activity that I do after school is practicing my writing and drawing. I do a lot of this in my own home I usually come up with little stories in my head and try to make a storyline. One of my most recent story idea is titled "What If..." this is going to be a romance and tragedy novel (soon).

Q: What is your favorite part of the school day?

A: My favorite part of the school day is when we have brain break, which is when students go outside for a break from our school-work. And the main reason I like it is because we get to run around and get fresh air.

Q: How does Vista Del Futuro prepare you for Da Vinci?

A: It prepares me for high school by telling me how it will be like over there and what to watch out for and it also makes sure that we are academically ready for high school as well.





Q: What are 3 highlight from your outside activities?

A: My 3 highlights are EPSYO (El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestra), piano and drums rehearsal.

Q: What is a typical day's schedule for you?

A: I wake up, get dressed, head off to school, eat breakfast in the cafeteria, go to class, once school is over I go to my afterschool activities. At the end of the day, I finish any homework I have, and if not, I have free time.

Q: What are areas that you are interested in studying in college?

A: For me I would like to study video, writing, art, and animation.

Q: How is Vista helping you achieve your dreams?

A: Vista helps me learn more ways to improve my writing, so I guess that is one-way Vista is helping me achieve my dreams.

Q: What are your goals for high school?

A: I hope to get into engineering, the fine arts programs, and maybe even into science programs.

Q: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

A: Yes, I have a younger brother, Eli Mateo, who is 9 years old and is a 3rd grader here at Vista.

Q: What is your favorite subject? What do you enjoy about it

A: My favorite subject is science. I like it since it talks about the world around us but my favorite part of it is learning about space and our universe.

Q: What is you enjoy about music? Favorite instrument?

A: I love that when you play an instrument there are various sounds that you can play. My favorite instrument is the violin which I've been playing since kindergarten.

Q: Who are your heroes?

A: One of my heroes is a fictional character who is named Kaori Miyazono, she inspires me to continue to do all the amazing stuff I do no matter how hard it is for me to do it. For example, even though she did not have much time left she continued to play the violin no matter how severe her health was. And this is exactly why she inspires me to continue doing what I love!

Q: What organization are you involved in at school?

A: I am involved with student council and I am vice president, too, while my friend Isabella is president.



Deni Padilla is a Superstar Volunteer

Parent volunteers play a huge role at Vista del Futuro. They serve as an import resource and support base for our school community. They also help students learn the importance of volunteering to improve one's community.

One of our outstanding parent volunteers is Deni Padilla. She is a long-time volunteer who has become a valued member of our support staff.

As you'll see in this interview, Ms. Padilla provides high-quality, invaluable resources and services to many of our young scholars.

Q: Please tell us about what led you to become a volunteer librarian at VDF?

A: I have been at VDF since 2014 when my daughter started first grade. I didn't start volunteering right away but before long I was helping in any way possible.

In the last six years I have helped with dances, movie nights, the Garden Market Fair, after school sales, and field trips. I've also helped organize special events, escort students from class rooms to their vehicles, and on picture day I help make sure kids are looking their best.

I have also helped with Cheer and Dance to help get the girls warmed up for their routines. I also assisted when the cheer coach was out during games.

In 2017, our former principal, Mrs. Whitman, asked if I knew any volunteers who had any sales experience running book fairs. I told her that my background was in business administration and sales. I

volunteered to help with the Scholastic book fairs. They became very successful, and I have overseen all the book fairs since then.

With the earnings from the first book fair we were able to buy lots of classroom necessities for the pre-k classes and STEM-related materials. By the second year, I came up with a plan to purchase books for the library. I had worked in a library during college and I knew the basics, so I knew we could be successful, especially with my experience with Scholastics book sales. So far, I've helped purchase more than \$2,000 in books and lots of needed library furniture! We've turned our library into a huge success.

*"I feel so much joy seeing all the students sitting around the library reading their books."
-- Deni Padilla*

Q: How does one effectively manage the VDF library?

A: Working with Scholastics book fair has taught me a lot, from working the cash register to knowing all the latest on new books. I have also learned how to get the best deals on books purchased for library. I attend two trainings each year from Scholastics. I've also enjoyed shopping from their warehouse many times and bringing the books to our library. That saves on shipping costs. Once I've selected which books we want, I enter them into the library system called M5. That allows me to keep a detailed



inventory of our books and helps us keep track of books checked in and out. I tag each book, stamp and categorize them, then they are placed on the proper shelves ready to be read.

I run frequent reports to make sure there are no missing books. If a book is overdue or lost, a note is sent to the student's home to make sure it's replaced soon. Outside the library I have placed a book drop box, which allows the students to return books at any time.

Each morning that I'm scheduled to work in the library I come in and make sure the library is clean and ready for the students. I make sure all the books are back on the bookshelves, the seats are in the right positions and the shelves are clean.

I also make sure the computer and the system are up and running. Then I walk each class of students to the library and back again.

If I have new books, I make sure I explain a little about them, as well as remind the students of the rules of the library, or any new announce-

ments we might have.

Once the students have checked out their books we have story time, where a book of their choice is read to them. If the class goes to lunch after being in the library, I make sure the books checked out are taken to their class.

I have decorated and made the library very comfortable for the students. I really enjoy watching students as they look forward to their library day. It makes me feel very proud of all the work I have put into the library.

I feel so much joy seeing all the students sitting around the library reading their books. I always tell them, "This is your time with a book. It's not friend time, but your time to enjoy a good book."

I also repair and do minor fixes on damaged books. I have sent books to Scholastics for repairs under warranty. I place an order on-line and a shipping label is sent to me so I can track the books shipment.

I also encourage reading by decorating the bulletin board in the hallway. I try to put up fun book-related decorations. I have also made my own DIY decorations inside the library to make it more inviting. I have a comfortable reading corner and nine bean loungers that the kids love.

In the morning I pass out a Star Reader lanyard to each class that's assigned to visit the library. If a student has shown good behavior, the teacher awards him or her with the lanyard which entitles them to sit and read on the bean loungers. The teachers have enjoyed this system I created.

It takes organization and sometimes being strict to keep everything in the library running smoothly, functional and organized. Communication with the students has allowed me to know the students likes and what inspires them to keep reading. My goal is to have a book for every student and keep their interest in books for a lifetime!

Q: Tell us a little about yourself?

A: I have been married for 15 years. My husband and I met in middle school, so we have known each other for a long time.

Together we have a daughter named Nyssa. She is 12 and in the

sixth grade, and a son named Mark. He is 8 and is in third grade. Nyssa is part of violin, orchestra, guitar and used to be in Cheer and Dance. Mark is on the Robotics team and Art club. My kids have really loved being part of VDF.

We also have a very beautiful and crazy husky named Terra, plus two male guinea pigs named Kurby and Sir Gibbles, and a neon-yellow fish named Pikachu.

My hobbies include crafting. I love to create cute, fun things. My new crafting adventure is die-cut stamping and shakers. I'm really into making fun shaker bookmarks or tags.

Q: What are some of the changes you've seen at VDF over the last three to four years? And what do you gain from working with the VDF students and staff?

A: I have grown at VDF because of my experience in working in a school environment. Working with kids has opened my heart so much more. I care for so many kids. I have fun getting to know them and listening to their funny stories. That brings a joy I would not get in any other job.

I am also a substitute teacher, which has given me the opportunity to know the students in a classroom setting. Being able to help the stu-

dents in the classroom environment is also rewarding for me.

I have a true respect for teachers; I see firsthand how much they care for their students and how much effort and hard work they put into each lesson and teaching. I really admire them.

When I first started VDF, I was a little scared not knowing what to expect. But because of the time I've spent here, I know as a parent that my kids are getting the best education at VDF. I speak very highly of the school because I believe in the teachers and the staff who are constantly working to make sure my kids, all the kids here, have everything they need to succeed.

The school is very different from when it first opened its doors. I have seen so much improvement and changes for the best, from after school clubs to remodeling projects. But the best part is seeing how much my kids have learned and succeed in the STAAR Test.

I could never be more thankful and proud of Vista Del Futuro for setting those elementary educational roots, their scholastic foundation, in my children.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

A: Only that I am always here to help the school and the children in any way I can. I am very self-driven and once I set my mind to doing something, I equip myself with knowledge and I run with it.

I always try to do my best work and I feel proud to show off the results. I accept all criticism, good and bad, because that is what helps us see our strengths and weaknesses. It allows me to make the proper corrections and keep going strong.

I have always been a volunteer. I think it's important. In high school I was a candy striper at Province Hospital for four years. Then at my church I have volunteered for almost 12 years now.

I've done a little of everything. I coordinate and set up the huge Christmas decorations, come up with crafts for the toddlers' classes, and I'm the crafts teacher for our vacation bible school. But the most important thing I do at church is being coordinator and coach of MOPS International. That is a support group for moms with newborns to preschool moms, encouraging them to be the best they can be as mothers. I truly believe that moms make the world a better place.



p.16 **Vista Del Futuro Graduates Make the Transition to Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts!**



Rubian Martinez



Victoria Romero

One of the steps in Superintendent Dr. G's district plan this year was to provide our Vista Del Futuro graduates the opportunity to attend our esteemed Da Vinci Middle School and High School, located on the far west side of El Paso.

This goal was realized as part of a bigger plan to purchase a fleet of vans to accommodate travel for our students to and from sports, academic and other student enrichment events.

Recognizing the high demand for our schools, but the sometimes-impossible task for parents to drive their students to our schools, Dr. G. implemented a plan for daily transport of students from across town.

It has been a very popular strategy, one that will continue with additional vans and buses to be purchased as the need arises in our growing programs.

Two Vista Del Futuro graduates who have enthusiastically accepted the opportunity to continue their education with Burnham Wood Family of Charter School are Victoria Romero and Rubian Martinez, now both seventh grade students at Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts.

Both students were interviewed regarding the opportunity to continue with the Burnham Wood Family of Charter Schools. Excerpts of those interviews are provided below:

Q: What do you enjoy most about Da Vinci?

A. While Rubian suggested that making "life-changing" friends was what she enjoyed the most, Victoria offered that it was the challenging coursework that she most admired at Da Vinci. She credited smaller class sizes with more effective teacher instruction.

Q: What do you enjoy doing outside of school?

A. Victoria enjoys going to synagogue as well as playing video games with friends. Rubian favors the arts on weekends, including dance and playing the ukulele and violin.

Q: What is your favorite part of the school day?

A. Rubian thoroughly enjoys her elective class, while Victoria cannot wait for her social studies class to begin, citing her teacher making learning enjoyable while still rigorous.

Q: How did Vista Del Futuro prepare you for Da Vinci School for Science and the Arts?

A. Victoria believed that Vista prepared her for both Da Vinci and for life, with Vista staff preparing students for their futures. Coach Wilson was credited for building strong young leaders. "I believe because of teachers like them, we have successful students who apply themselves to learning and striving for the best, each and every day." Rubian noted that Vista Del Futuro prepared her by challenging her with rigorous classes, evidenced by her easy transition to Da Vinci.

Q: What are highlights from your days at Vista Del Futuro?

A. Rubian offered that Mr. Munoz's fun end-of-year projects, science

experiments and field trips are what she would remember as highlights. Victoria said it was "really" learning in school because her teachers did such an amazing job teaching. Also, creating lasting friendships and attending events like the talent show were special highlights she will always hold dear.

Q: What is a typical day's schedule for you?

A. Victoria's day starts at 5:40 a.m. to get ready to meet the school van at the Vista Del Futuro campus. It's then a full day of learning at Da Vinci, then returning to the eastside Vista campus by school van. Homework and studying Hebrew precede retiring for the night. Rubian wakes at 6:15 a.m. to take the van to Da Vinci where she will engage in learning until 4:00 p.m., when she returns to Vista Del Futuro in the same school van. After a family dinner, deep sleep follows.

Q: Why did you decide to attend da Vinci?

A. Rubian said she really liked the Da Vinci campus. Victoria said it was wanting to attend a school that would challenge her more than a public school. She added "Da Vinci is a school for students who strive to be more than average."

Q: What are areas that you are interested in studying in college?

A. Victoria is most interested in the areas of psychology and neurology, having always been interested in the human brain and how it operates. Rubian is interested in pursuing interior design.

Q: How are Vista Del Futuro and Da Vinci helping you to achieve your dreams?

A. Rubian suggested that the schools are helping her achieve her dreams by giving her the challenging education she needs. Victoria said the schools are helping her achieve her dreams by teaching her the basic fundamentals of being both a good student and citizen.

Q: What are your goals after eighth grade?

A. Victoria said she intends to take what she has learned and continue to apply it to the remainder of her education. Rubian plans to master all her STAAAR tests and to get accepted into more advanced classes.

Q: What are your hopes for high school?

A. Rubian aspires to achieve all A's and high B's in high school as well as participating in more school clubs and activities. Victoria hopes to graduate eighth grade in the top ten of her class, then enter a Marine Corps ROTC program, to one day join the military as an officer of the United States Marine Corps.

Q: Who are your heroes?

A. Victoria said that her parents, teachers and the professional athlete Stephen Curry, who all beat the odds to make something of themselves. Rubian proposed that her mother was her hero because it was Mom who first taught her to always "try her hardest" in whatever she did.

Our Support Staff is Vital and Up to the Challenges

When one thinks of the success at a school like Vista Del Futuro, one might be limited to thinking of only the students. We think of the hard work they put in everyday, and the practice and homework that go with it.

The principal and assistant principal also come to mind and the hard work they put into maintaining a successful campus.

But how does one think of the individuals who make a school successful? Well, at Vista Del Futuro, we think about our support staff every day!

Our support staff is a major cog in the success of our campus. They may not always be visible, but rest assured they are always there working hard.

One department within our support staff are our cafeteria workers. Every student should have a healthy and delicious meal to give them the fuel they need to learn all day in the classroom. Thanks to our cafeteria workers, they are given all the tasty nourishment students need!

Our cafeteria workers' day starts bright and early. They are often on campus long before any students and teachers show up. They begin their day by prepping and cooking. They ensure that every meal is meeting the national nutritional requirements and that they are tasty for students.

Then, when lunch starts, they are ready and eager to serve. They make sure every student gets a meal. Through their daily routine they are able to add to the success of our students.

We don't forget about our cafeteria workers for one minute, and their importance to our campus success at Vista Del Futuro.

In addition to our cafeteria workers, there is a wonderful group of individuals who make sure the campus is clean and orderly, 24/7.

Our custodial department is always up to the challenge and responsibility of keeping the Vista campus spotless. Cleaning a campus is no easy task. Think of all the chores required to keep a house tidy, then multiply that by the many classrooms and work areas of the campus.

The custodians don't just have to clean sections of the campus daily, they clean it all!

To stay on task, our custodians keep a regular cleaning and maintenance schedule. They spend their time ensuring that any immediate safety issues, like spills, are quickly cleaned up and dried.

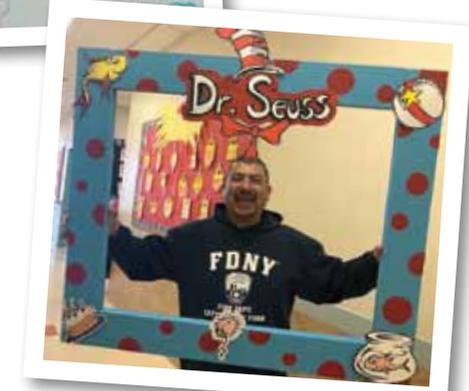
When all the students are gone for the day, their day is not over. They go to work sweeping, mopping, wiping, etc. They have a goal every day of making sure students are able to focus on the teaching and not worry about unsanitary grime or trash.

Nobody likes to work in a dirty area with sticky tables or overflowing trashcans. We can depend on our custodial staff to properly maintain our campus at Vista Del Futuro.

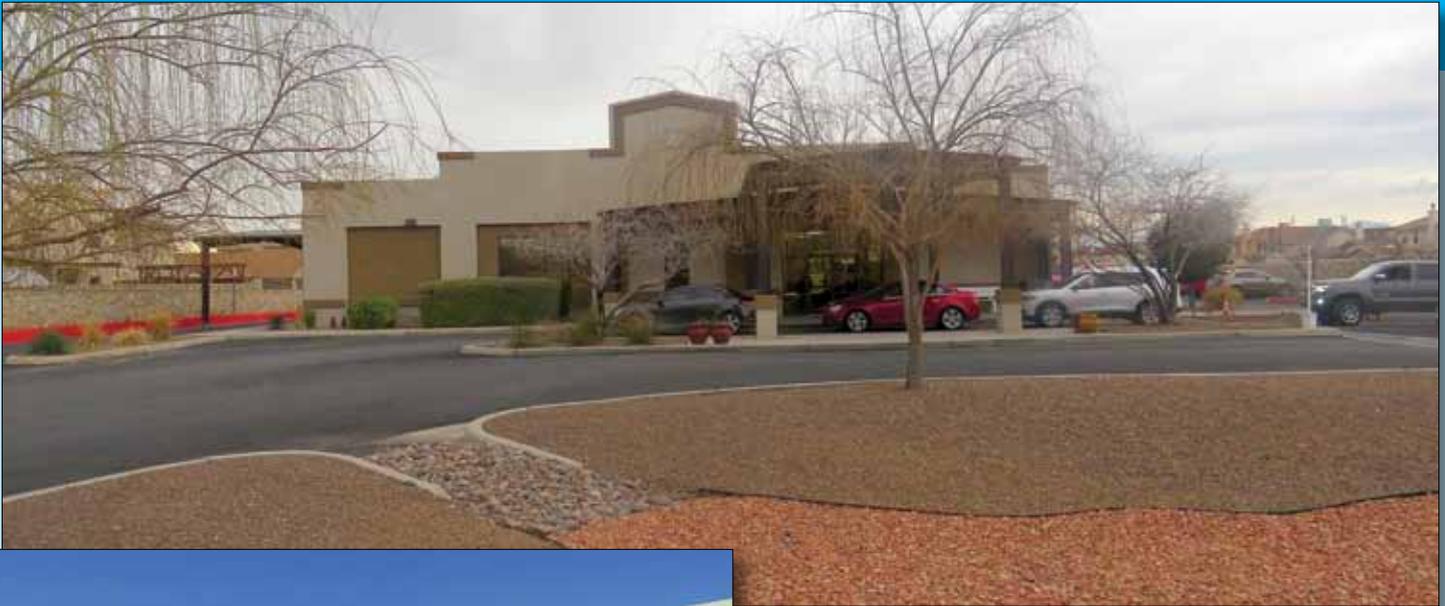
Support staff on campus play a vital role in a school's success. It's almost impossible to imagine what a school would be like without either of these two departments.

We thank both departments for making our campus highly productive for our students and their families!

"Our support staff is a major cog in the success of our campus."



Campus Improvements: Always in Motion in the Past, Present and Future



Do you remember stepping into the building on the first day of school?

That feeling of excitement, or maybe nervousness, floods the senses as you learned where your classes were and the layout of the campus.

At Burnham Wood Charter Schools, we love being able to provide students, teachers, and families that feeling of excitement whenever they step into one of our buildings.

Our superintendent, Dr. G., is always on the lookout for how to make improvements, not just in what and how students are learning, but in the facilities that make everything possible.

He knows that having pride in your school can often be linked to what your school looks like.

When your campus is clean, painted, organized, safe, and in excellent condition, you feel proud of going to school there. You tell others about the great learning spaces that you either use or your kids do. You don't worry about the condition of the classroom but instead can focus on the teaching and learning.

Under Dr. G's steady hand, Burnham Wood Charter Schools has made a strong commitment over the last few years to making campus improvements.

This commitment, he said, is easily made because of the importance of our students and their learning environment.

But campus improvements are never easy, or cheap. They require

time, people, and money. They need to be planned for and thoughtfully budgeted, always on the lookout for future needs. But once completed, they showcase the value that a district places on its students and teachers.

If you have been to any of our campuses, you have probably seen the many improvements that have already taken place. Maybe you've noticed the landscaping that has been redone and meticulously maintained at each campus.

Or maybe you've noticed the fresh painting and cleaning that has gone on to make sure each building provides a safe and enjoyable environment for students.

Some of our more major projects have included adding a beautiful running track behind Vista Del Futuro, along with new basketball courts. They gleam in our El Paso sun.

Both the track and basketball courts have already seen tremendous activity and events. Any day of the week you can see and hear the smiles and glee of students as they enjoy those facilities.

Our facilities have seen many upgrades and are still in the process of being improved. Looking to the future now, Burnham Wood Charter Schools plans to continue campus improvements by adding some high tier facilities.

First, we are looking at the possibility of adding a new wing at the current Linguistic Academy to house more classes. Additional classes will allow the campus to enroll more students and provide more opportunity to the community.

Next, we are proposing a new Community Wellness and Academic Facility. This state-of-the-art facility will be placed at the Da Vinci campus and provide space for students to workout and learn.

As we continue to grow our learners, we want to make sure we also look to our campuses and identify ways we can improve the learning environment to expand opportunities to all.

We strongly believe that students learn best when they are in an environment that challenges them and has the resources to push them beyond their limits. We are excited about the district's campus improvements and what the future holds!

Vista's After-Care Program Has Been a Winner for Many

The majority of students at Vista del Futuro, about 200 of them, participate in a program that helps take away the after-school blues and boredom.

We call it the After-Care Program and both students and parents love it. Students stay active and parents know their children are being well cared for until they can take over.

For many families, there are a few hours between the time school lets out and the time parents get off work to go pick them up.

There are other programs students can take part in after school is done for the day. These include sports, music, robotics, art and even Chinese. But the After-Care program is not so rigid.

It runs from 2 p.m. when daycare students are dismissed until 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

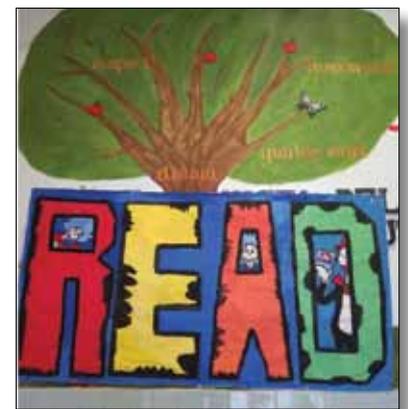
Ms. Myrna Becera leads the program, assisted by Mrs. Kosemchak. Together these highly qualified teachers make sure that students in the program are intently involved in hands-on activities, like arts and crafts, board games and Lego construction.

"Believe it or not," said Ms. Becera, "homework is also a popular activity. It helps them because as they do their homework, they get academic support from us before they leave school. Many kids go home with all their homework out of the way."

While it sounds like fun and games, research shows that programs like After-Care can be of great benefit, if certain conditions are met.

"A study at New York University showed that programs like ours at Vista can have many academic advantages for children, provided the program is positive, responsive to their needs and we operate under an organized environment. And we provide all three for our students."

This is just one more effective, quality program offered to our Vista del Futuro family that helps increase students' likelihood of academic success.



Our Students are Learning Chinese from Teachers in China!

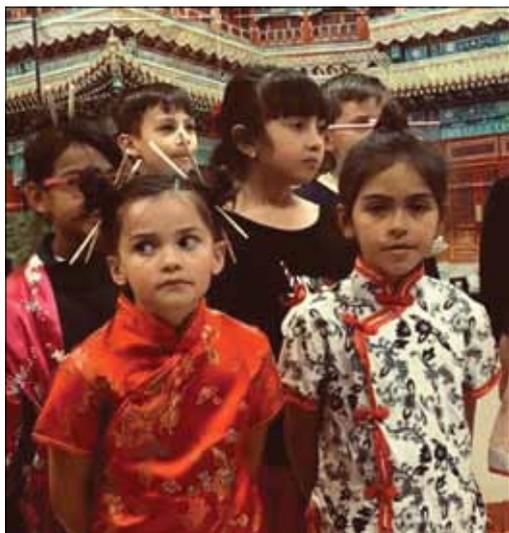


Jessica
Shanghai International
Studies University



"Having fun while we're learning helps students concentrate and stay involved in the learning process."

-- Jessica, Teenkids



Vista Del Futuro is unique among schools in the United States. Not only is it a Blue Ribbon School, but its students have the opportunity to learn Chinese Mandarin.

Vista students are taught on-line by a company based in Shanghai, China, named Teenkids. The company teaches Chinese students to learn English and American students to learn Chinese.

The Chinese language courses are especially helpful to students who one day hope to study abroad, or for students just interested in the Chinese language and culture.

The course is also taught at our sister schools, the Linguistic Academy of El Paso and at Howard Burnham Elementary.

Students at all three schools benefit from this unique opportunity to learn Chinese from teachers living in Beijing, China, who provide on-line, real-time instruction.

Teenkids is a relatively new company that was founded in 2019. Twelve English teachers and four Chinese teachers are on-line everyday teaching some 200 students around the world.

Here are several Teenkids employees who make this program possible.

Lucy is the founder of Teenkids. She had been an employee of Whales English, a huge on-line language learning program with thousands of students and hundreds of teachers worldwide.

Before that, Lucy had been an English teacher for 8 years. During that time she began developing on-

line language programs, working with large corporations including Nokia and IBM.

Jessica, who teaches Chinese on-line to Vista students, graduated from Shanghai International Studies University where she developed very strong English and communications skills.

Jessica said she loves her job. "I love kids and I am very proud that I can teach Chinese to Vista students," she said. "I have been learning English for many years, so I know how difficult it is to learn a new language"

To help herself, Jessica said she developed some "fancy tools" for her on-line students to make learning fun.

"Having fun while you're learning helps students concentrate and stay involved with the learning process," she said.

Joy, another teacher, graduated from Shanxi Normal University she majored in teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

She said she is passionate about interacting with her students.

"I get so excited teaching on-line," she said. "And I'm so happy that I can apply everything I've learned about teaching language. I wake up early each morning and almost immediately log into my classroom. I turn on my welcome music and wait anxiously for the kids to show up to learn and have fun doing it. We all have fun learning."

Music is a universal language that fires up the brain

When you ask Vista music teacher Priscilla Mora what she thinks about teaching music to her students, she's not shy.

"The power of music is strong!" she said.

Ms. Mora knows full well that teaching music to young children will develop their brains beyond belief.

"It has been proven," she said, "that there is a correlation between playing a musical instrument and achieving academic success."

There's something about learning how to play an instrument, she said, that "fires up the brain."

"When playing an instrument, both sides of the brain are being used," she said. "Research has shown that this has a positive effect on many skills, including verbal memory, spatial reasoning and literacy skills."

But wait. There's more!

"Learning an instrument teaches children practice patience and discipline. It also gives students social opportunities in which to engage with others," she said.

It also allows children to tap into their creativity and explore a language known the world over.

"Learning music allows children to explore this global language of music where they are free to express themselves and gain confidence in themselves."

Ms. Mora said teaching music is exactly what she was meant to do.

"I feel very fortunate to be able to share the gift of music with my students," she said. "It is undoubtedly one of the purest art forms that exists in the world."

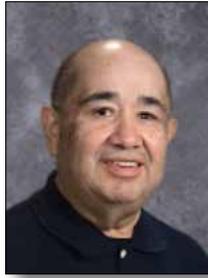
*"There's something about learning how to play an instrument that fires up the brain."
-- Ms. Mora*



Our Faculty and Staff Who Keep Vista Humming



Adovasio, Teresa
1st Grade, Bilingual
Bachelors from UTEP
*"One Child, One Teacher, One Book,
One Pen Can Change the World."*



Aguilar, Victor
2nd Grade
Masters in Organizational Management
*"Whatever you do in word or deed,
do it all in the name of the Lord..."
-Col 3:17*



Castillo, Angeles
2nd Grade, Bilingual
Bachelor Degree in Business Administration
*"I live with happiness, grateful and blessed
by God; always doing my best for my stu-
dents and my family."*



Cervantes, Thomas
SPED
Bachelors
*"Treat kids fairly based on
their needs"*



Chavira, Jessica
6th Grade
Generalist EC-6 and 4-8 ESL Certified
*"The mediocre teacher tells. The good
teacher explains. The superior teacher
demonstrates. The great teacher
inspires."*



Esco, Lisa
Kindergarten
Bachelors degree from UTEP
"Forgive and Forget"



Garcia, Esperanza
3rd Grade Bilingual
Bachelors Degree in Interdisci-
plinary Studies EC-6
*"Surround yourself with tacos,
not negativity."*



Gomez, Christina
Physical Education
Bachelors, working on Masters
"Always do your best!"



Holguin, Dulce
6th Grade Bilingual
Bachelors in Criminal Justice, Minor in
Sociology, Alternative certification EC-6
Generalist, EC-12 Special Education,
Bilingual Supplemental
*"Our way of
thinking creates good or bad outcomes."*



Jacquez, Jacquelyn
2nd Grade
Bachelors from the University of
Texas at El Paso
*"Be the teacher you needed
when you were younger."
-Unknown*



Mora, Priscilla
Music
*"Whether you think you can or
think you can't, you're right."
-Henry Ford*



Munoz, Jesse
5th Grade
Bachelors of Arts
"Another day in paradise"



Ramirez, Abigail
Kindergarten
Bachelors of Interdisciplinary
Studies (Bil-ED)
*"We are what we repeatedly do.
Therefore, Excellence is not an act,
but a habit."*



Rivera, Jose
5th Grade, Bilingual
BFA Studio Art Drawing and Painting,
Minor in Ceramics. Alternative teaching
certification as a Bilingual Teacher
EC-6 and Master's Degree as a Bilingual
Instructional specialist from UTEP.
*"Art has the power to transform, to illumi-
nate, to educate, to inspire and motivate."*



Sarinana, Martha
4th Grade
Bachelors in Social Psychol-
ogy; 18 hours of Masters
Program/Concordia University
*"Live your life as if it were
your last day."*



Tombosky, Miyeon
1st Grade
Bachelor Degree in Library and
Information Science, ATCP at UTEP
"Walk with Grace"



Torres, Elizabeth
3rd Grade
*"Believe you can and you're half-
way there." - T. Roosevelt*



Wilson, William
Physical Education
Bachelors of Science in Kinesiology with a
minor in Education, Masters in Educational
Administration
*"If there is anything that a person can do
well, I say let the person do it. Give the
person a chance." - Abraham Lincoln*



Cafeteria Personnel



Cuellar, Veronica
Cashier for the nutrition program
Degree in Industrial Relations-Human Resource
"El respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz"



Lopez, Claudia
Cafeteria
GED

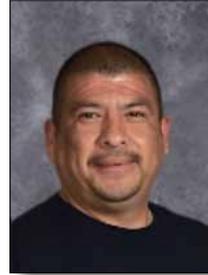


Olivares, Luz
Cafeteria
1.5 years at EPCC
"Don't take life for granted"

Maintenance



Hernandez, Anthony
Custodian
Dona Ana Community College, Western
Tech-Diesel technician
*"If you settle for just anything you'll
never know what you're truly worth."*



Martinez, Jesus
Custodian
Secundaria
"Solo se vive una vez"



Office Personnel and Staff



Becera, Myrna
Lunch Monitor and After-
school Daycare
Trade School, Surgical
Technician
*"Treat others how you want
to be treated."*



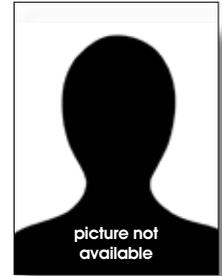
De Santiago, Rosie
School Service Worker
Currently going to school to get my
Bachelors in Kinesiology
*"I've failed over and over again in my life. And that
is why I succeed." - Michael Jordan
"Learning is a gift, even when 'pain' is your teacher."*



Gomez, Vanessa
Front Office PEIMS Clerk
*"Just keep taking chances and
have fun."*



Juarez, Susana
Nurse
Master's
*"God will place you where he needs
you, when he needs you."*



Kozemchak Morales, Chela P.
Sub (lunch monitor/daycare)
Bachelors of Science in Business
Administration
"Yes We Can!"



Macias, Sylvia
VDF Secretary
Associates Degree
*"Spread love every
where you go"*



Ramos, Edgar
Violin and Guitar Teacher
University of Texas at El Paso
*"The human mind is like a fertile field on
which seeds are constantly being planted, all
human minds are fertile, but only for the kind
of seed they are prepared for." - Miguel Ruiz*



Rodriguez, Sonia
Spanish Teacher
Secondary Education - Spanish
"Different doesn't mean wrong"



Sandoval, Myrna
Daycare/Pre-Kinder
Teacher
"Positivity always wins...always!"



Tarin, Leonor
School Tutor
Bachelors in Interdisciplinary
Studies EC-6
*"Let all that you do be done with
LOVE" -1 Corinthians 16:14*

Administration



Gallardo, Fernando
Principal
Master's Degree, Management, Webster University
*"Ask not what your team can do for you. Ask what
you can do for your team!"*



Contreras, Julie
Assistant Principal
Bachelors in Interdisciplinary Studies (Texas State University at San Marcos),
Masters in Educational Administration (University of Texas at El Paso)
*"Be Kind to One Another" -Ellen Degeneres & "Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid
or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you may go." Joshua 1:9*



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