

DATE: September 25, 2018

DSHS TEACHERS COMPLETE EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM

For the second year in a row, a group of teachers from Dripping Springs High School participated in a summer “externship” program supported by the Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce and Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area. The externship program is designed to connect teachers to local businesses related to their subject area so that they may incorporate real-world experience into authentic learning for their students.

The program, now in its second year, matches each educator to a local business in an appropriate industry to observe how academic classroom content is applied in the real world. During the externship, educators observe the application of academic skill sets required for a given industry by shadowing workers at that business for three days in the summer. In doing so, they gain insights not only into technical and academic skills, but also about the ethics, communication, interpersonal, and soft skills required at the worksite. The goal of the program is to connect classroom content to the workplace in order to motivate students to master the academic and technical skills needed to enter and successfully compete in the workforce.

“The externship program helped to affirm and validate many of the practices I do in my classroom,” said English teacher Sara-Jane Shepperd, who spent time at Asuragen Biotechnology. “I went to Asuragen to get a STEM experience to bring back to my English classes because a lot of my students are highly motivated in math and science. My externship helped me to see that STEM is truly multidisciplinary and that the skills I teach in Pre-AP English help mold students who want to become doctors, scientists, and engineers into good communicators.”

Before the shadowing experience, teachers draft an outline of the lesson with their anticipated outcome, which helps the business and teacher devise a meaningful experience. In some cases, the teacher may opt for a new and even better plan with input from the business. They also schedule a one-day educator orientation by phone or in person. Following the three days shadowing one or more employees at the business, the educator plans one day as a “wrap-up” and to work on curriculum development. They then give a

presentation about the experience to other DSHS teachers. Lastly, during the school year the developed lesson is implemented in the classroom.

The teachers who participated, along with the location of their externships, is listed below:

Brenna Albrecht, Biology teacher – Asuragen Biotechnology

Jillian Besemer, German teacher – Ten Thousand Villages

Jessica Chambers, Health Science Technology teacher – Stem Cell Center DS

Adrienne Jones, Special Education/Math teacher – Dripping Springs Ranch Park

Allyson Mayer, Math teacher – American Campus Communities

Elisa Metzger, Science teacher – PEC

Tracy Neef, Dance teacher – Ballet Austin

Jennifer Riddlebarger, Business and Career Prep teacher – Milk & Honey

Sara-Jane Shepperd, English teacher - Asuragen Biotechnology

Piper Stankard, Math teacher – PEC

Angela Tennison, Social Studies teacher – LBJ National Park

Jason Wahlers, Social Studies teacher – Pioneer Bank

Brenda Womack, Social Studies teacher – Broadway Bank

The Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce recognized the teachers who participated at the Sept. 27 luncheon, and presented each participant with a \$500 stipend check for the time spent during the summer. Chamber businesses that hosted teachers also attended.