



CHISD CHOICE PROGRAMS

CHOOSE
→ **YOUR**
SEAT



2020 NATIONAL SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMUNICATION AWARD

GOLD MEDALLION ENTRY – SPECIAL COMMUNICATION PROJECT

Cedar Hill Independent School District - Cedar Hill, Texas

Prek-12 school district | 7,600 scholars

CHISD Communications & Marketing Department

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SYNOPSIS

In most Texas school districts, attendance zones determine where scholars attend school. But Cedar Hill ISD (CHISD) is an open enrollment district meaning families do not have to live within district boundaries to attend CHISD. The implementation of an open enrollment policy was in response to the steady decline in enrollment over the last seven years. Along with the open enrollment policy the district introduced school choice programs. Through 10 specialized choice programs, CHISD hoped to entice families outside of the district to consider and choose Cedar Hill ISD for their child's education.

Cedar Hill ISD offers the following choice programs:

- Fine Arts Academy (Bray Elementary School)
- Collegiate Pathway (an elementary and mid-high school campus)
- Computer Programming (Waterford Oaks Elementary School)
- Montessori (Lake Ridge Elementary School)
- Environmental Science & Engineering Academy (Bessie Coleman Middle School)
- Entrepreneurship & Design Academy (W.S. Permenter Middle School)
- Early College Academy (Cedar Hill High School)
- Fire Academy (Cedar Hill High School)

2020-21 6th-8th grade scholars

Find out which STEAM Middle School Academy fits YOU!

Do you like to:

- Work in a group
- Solve real-world problems
- Think logically

Environmental Science & Engineering Academy at Bessie Coleman Middle School is right for you!

Are you:

- Self-driven
- Creative thinker
- Ambitious

The Entrepreneurship & Design Academy at W.S. Permenter Middle School is right for you!

Apply for the 2020-21 school year by Friday, Jan. 10.

Learn more and submit your application at chisd.net/chooseyourseat.

CHISD CHOICE PROGRAMS
CHOOSE YOUR SEAT

In the past, it had been regular practice for CHISD to host a district-wide showcase to highlight the choice programs and kick off the application period. The “Experience CHISD” showcase was marketed to families in and out of the district. During the event campuses would host a booth to promote their school, and each of the 10 choice programs would provide information to attract parents and help them start the application process. With the summer 2019 hiring of a new superintendent and chief communications officer for the district, “Experience CHISD” was reviewed and showed that the time and dollars put into the annual event did not garner the intended results. A more hyper focused campaign aimed at informing CHISD families, staff and community of the choice offerings was needed.

RESEARCH

The Cedar Hill Independent School District is home of the Longhorns. CHISD sits in an area known as the Best Southwest; a collection of dynamic urban cities in southern Dallas county that touts business development, growth and a safe environment for families. CHISD serves more than 7,600 scholars at 13 campuses and as the city's largest employer, more than 900 people work for CHISD.

In July 2019, the Board of Trustees welcomed Dr. Gerald B. Hudson as superintendent of schools. During his first 90 days of leadership he requested a student transfer report, demographic study and enrollment review.

Annually, the Texas Education Agency releases the Student Transfer Report. This document lists by district the number of students transferring in and out and where they transferred. The information for CHISD was unsettling. In October 2018, the district showed 464 students transferring into CHISD from other districts and 2,873 students transferring out. The data showed that most of the students transferring into CHISD

came from the neighboring school districts within the Best Southwest (337 out of 464). In regards to transfers out, the majority of the students leaving CHISD were opting for area charter schools. (2,313 out of 2,873).

The results of the requested demographic study by Templeton Demographics showed a 7.8% increase in population within Cedar Hill city limits when compared to the 2010 census. The data also showed a 4.8% decrease in the number of residents under the age of 19 when compared to 2010. This too was unsettling for CHISD. The data revealed that while the population increased, families with young children were not moving into the city limits and the birth rate continued to decline annually.

A review of previous marketing strategies for "Experience CHISD" showed an emphasis on attending the event to learn about the choice programs and not a large push to actually complete the applications within the application window. Research showed during the 2018-2019 "Experience CHISD" 324 families registered for the event; also due to the low number of applications received the district was unable to open a Fine Arts Academy and World Languages Academy at two of the district's middle schools.



ANALYSIS/PLANNING:

Armed with this information, the communication department requested the cancellation of the long standing annual “Experience CHISD” event. The goal was to redirect the time, effort and dollars on a more focused campaign that informed the community of the school choice offerings and marketed to families within the Best Southwest area.

The focus now was not to “Experience CHISD” but to “Choose Your Seat” in CHISD.

The CHISD “Choose Your Seat” campaign kicked off on November 9, 2019 and concluded on January 10, 2020.

The CHISD communications team **implemented a project plan** with goals, staff responsibilities, a timeline of activities and campaign budget.

The objectives of the Choose Your Seat campaign are:

1. To build awareness and understanding of the CHISD school choice offerings among scholars, staff parents and the Cedar Hill community.
2. To generate 350 new school choice applications from students outside CHISD.
3. To generate 1000 school choice applications from scholars currently enrolled in a choice program.

Based on the choice programs offered, it was important to focus on scholars in their transition years: those selecting an elementary school, scholars moving to middle school and the current eighth grade scholars eligible for the high school choice programs.

Secondly, based on the data released in the TEA Student Transfer Report it was evident that families within the Best Southwest area had an interest in the CHISD choice programs. Also, efforts needed to be in place to inform and reconnect with families who transferred out of CHISD for a charter school.

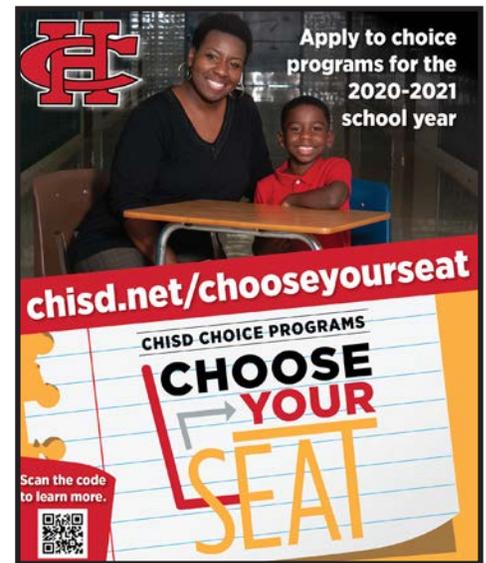
Target Audiences

Primary Audiences

- families of current CHISD 5th grade scholars
- families of current CHISD 8th grade scholars
- families of current CHISD elementary school scholars
- All CHISD staff members
- CHISD scholars who transferred out of the district

Secondary Audiences

- Board of Trustees
- all families living in Best Southwest
- Cedar Hill business community
- All CHISD residents



Branding & Campaign Imagery

A contracted graphic designer was secured to develop the [official campaign logo](#). Several options were provided with [variations of the group favorite](#) and voted on by select CHISD staff members. The winning logo was animated to help support planned videos and social media posts.



It was important to showcase the families who chose their child's seat in CHISD. The communications department worked with campus principals to identify current children enrolled in the choice programs to serve as the faces of the campaign. The families and scholars were interviewed and photographed sitting in a school desk to help drive messaging and campaign branding.



To help build awareness of the campaign and school choice programs, staff secured 13 old school desks that were collecting dust at the district's warehouse. Each desk was wrapped to showcase the 10 choice programs available, along with an interactive standing vertical banner that provided additional information. The Family and Community Engagement Director recruited and identified businesses in Cedar Hill to "host" the displays for the duration of the campaign.

CHISD Team Roles & Responsibilities

Chief of Communications Tierney Tinnin	Communications Coordinator I Christina Williamson	Communications Coordinator II Jasmine Sanders	Family & Community Engagement Director Alicia Davis
<p>Managed the overall campaign, oversaw the geofencing strategy, served as point of contact for media partners, drafted news releases, drafted written content mailer, website and social media, tracked and reported data to Trustees, executive cabinet and principals.</p>	<p>Managed the print and online promotional strategies, designed the majority of printed materials to support the campaign. Developed chisd.net/chooseyourseat webpage and other online materials.</p>	<p>Managed the campaign's social media strategy, created social media posts and paid social media ads, developed all choice program promotional videos and executed Facebook live events and Twitter takeovers.</p>	<p>Recruited and confirmed businesses to host Choose Your Seat displays throughout the community, coordinated the delivery and pick up of desk displays.</p>
Contracted Graphic Designer Crystal Cid	Instructional Coordinator/Technology Tracy Willyard	STEAM Coordinator Natalie Garrett	Cedar Hill HS Graphic Design Students
<p>Designed Choose Your Seat logo and animation that was used throughout the campaign, designed the accordion style mailer shared with Cedar Hill community.</p>	<p>Managed the online SchoolMint application process and provided daily updates on application submissions and provided training for principals.</p>	<p>Coordinated the middle school bus tours, supported the site based parent interest meetings and set the important dates for the application window.</p>	<p>Designed and wrapped the desk displays used for the Choose Your Seat campaign.</p>

Budget

The communications department set a budget of \$40,000 to execute the campaign. The majority of the expenses came from printing and mailing brochures to every CHISD staff member and resident in Cedar Hill. Additional expenses included a geofencing campaign for families living in the surrounding Best Southwest communities, digital media ads, traditional media ads, display ads at a popular shopping center and transportation for school tours. CHISD receives roughly \$6,000 per scholar in funding from the state of Texas, the addition of just six new students from this campaign would result in a return on investment.

COMMUNICATION/IMPLEMENTATION

Traditional Media

- A press release was drafted and shared with local media outlets prior to the kick off of the Choose Your Seat campaign, a follow up release listing the businesses serving as desk display hosts was also shared and [published in the community newspaper](#).
- The communications office was able to secure CBS 11 to broadcast live from Cedar Hill HS during the campaign. [Two of the four live hits focused on the choice programs available in CHISD](#).

Traditional Advertising

- A full page ad in the Southwest Now magazine was purchased for the month of [November 2019](#). Southwest Now magazine serves the communities surrounding Cedar Hill ISD and is the target audience for Best Southwest families. An additional ad was purchased for December 2019 with a focus on the middle school STEAM academies.
- A banner ad was on display at the Hillside Village Shopping Center in Cedar Hill. The promotional ad was placed near the Children’s Place store and available for viewing during the peak holiday shopping period of November through January.
- An [accordion style mailer was printed](#) and shared with more than 900 CHISD employees and 18,000 families with school aged children living in Cedar Hill city limits. The mailer showcased a family from each program and important application information and program facts.
- “I chose my seat at _____” signs were printed and distributed to the first 10 scholars at each campus who completed an application. Each child was encouraged to post the sign in front of their home and share a photo on social media.
- “Is STEAM academy is right for me?” quiz was printed and shared with all fifth grade scholars to complete during the winter break.

Online Promotions & Marketing

- The school choice page of chisd.net was redesigned with the friendly url chisd.net/chooseyourseat. The page had information on each of the available choice programs, important dates, link to the application and Frequently Asked Questions. Also, a link to the official Choose Your Seat page was added to the homepage of each of the participating programs.



Digital Marketing

- The district secured ReachLocal to lead the geofencing strategy for the campaign. Two digital ads were created each with 25 targeted locations, the campaigns focused on the [collegiate pathway programs](#) and the [middle school STEAM academies](#). The targeted locations included apartment complexes, neighborhoods, churches and shopping centers within the Best Southwest communities.

Social Media Marketing & Promotions

- The official hashtag for the campaign was [#chooseyourseat](#)CHISD and regular posts to Facebook and Twitter were scheduled through Hootsuite.
- Branded Facebook and Twitter headers were designed for the duration of the campaign.
- The department produced short promotional videos for each of the school choice programs. These videos were posted on the campus website and shared on social media.
 - [Fine Arts Academy at Bray Elementary School](#)
 - [Collegiate Pathway at Cedar Hill ISD](#)
 - [Montessori at Lake Ridge Elementary](#)
 - [Environmental Science & Engineering Academy at Bessie Coleman Middle School](#)
 - [Entrepreneurship & Design at W.S. Permenter Middle School](#)
 - [Early College Academy at Cedar Hill High School](#)
- The district held two Twitter Takeover events to help promote specific school choice programs, scholars at the [Early College Academy](#) and the Collegiate Academy and High School took the reins of @CedarHillISD on Twitter.
- Facebook Live events were held to promote the [Fine Arts Academy at Bray Elementary School](#), [Collegiate Prep Elementary School](#) and to showcase the middle school academies at [Bessie Coleman Middle School Collegiate Academy](#) and W.S. Permenter Middle School.
- [Parent testimonial memes](#) were created and [shared on social media](#) during the campaign.
- Facebook carousel ads were created to promote the application period and choice programs available.

Internal Communications

- Emails and phone messages were shared with all current families and staff to promote the school choice programs.
- Information was shared in the monthly “Leading Voice” staff newsletter.

Engagement & Events

- 13 area businesses signed up to host “desk displays” throughout the campaign, these businesses included: Old Chicago Pizza, Sylvan Learning Center, Zula B. Wylie Library, Alan Sims Recreation Center, Altitude Trampoline Park, Texas Trust Credit Center, Tri-Cities Animal Rescue Center and Cedar Hill Government Center. Each desk was accompanied by a vertical standing banner that included an QR code with more information about the choice programs.



- Tours of each middle school program was scheduled for all current 5th graders, the tours gave scholars an inside look at middle school spirit, academics and choice programs available.

f LIVE

BRAY CAMPUS TOUR

WHEN: Friday, December 13, 2019 | 8 a.m.

WHERE: Bray Elementary

WHY: We would like to give you an inside look at our unique fine arts elementary campus, designed specifically for creative scholars.

EVALUATION

The CHISD Choose Your Seat campaign proved to be highly successful gaining community wide awareness of programs and an increase in applications for choice programs for the 2020-21 school year.



1134

CURRENT SCHOLARS
APPLIED TO CONTINUE
WITH THEIR SELECTED
PROGRAM



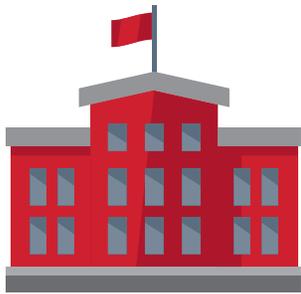
991

NEW
APPLICATIONS
RECEIVED



31

APPLICATIONS
RECEIVED, AN
INCREASE FROM 18
RECEIVED IN
2018-2019.



**SCHOOL DISTRICTS
APPLYING**

792

CEDAR HILL
ISD

279

OUTSIDE OF
THE CHISD

204

FAMILIES FROM THE
BEST SOUTHWEST COMMUNITIES

88

APPLICATIONS FROM CURRENT
CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS



DIGITAL MARKETING STATS

34,497
ENGAGEMENTS

AND

6,983
CLICKS

FACEBOOK ADS

8,397
ENGAGEMENTS

SOCIAL MEDIA

19,046
VISITS

CHISD.NET/CHOOSEYOURSEAT

85,768
IMPRESSIONS

GEOFENCE ADS

61

QR CODE SCANS

17,789

VIEWS

FACEBOOK VIDEOS
AND LIVE EVENTS