“It’s all about the kids.”

Dr. Christie Whitbeck
Superintendent
## Contents

1. Message from Superintendent
2. Police Sergeant’s Legacy of Service Endures
3. Exemplary Partnerships
4. Homegrown
5. FBISD Alum and Olympian Bryce Deadmon
6. Meet Dr. Christie Whitbeck
8. Bond Update
9. Federal Funding to Support Schools
10. Holiday Observances
11. Rest and Reflect
12. Carmela Levy-David Celebrates Her Heritage

---

Stay connected with us to get the latest District news and events. Visit [www.fortbendisd.com](http://www.fortbendisd.com) and connect with us on social media.

The FBISD Magazine is produced by the Fort Bend ISD Communications Department.
Hello, Fort Bend ISD Community,

Since receiving the honor of becoming your superintendent in early October, I have had the pleasure of doing “walk and talk” tours at several schools, and it has been wonderful to meet so many of our staff and students. It is a big district, and I have many more stops to make in the months ahead. I very much look forward to them.

To our community members who I have not met yet, I’d like to share a little information about myself.

• I was honored to be selected as FBISD’s superintendent this year after serving four and a half years as Bryan ISD’s superintendent.
• I previously served FBISD as deputy superintendent and have dedicated my life to public education.
• I earned my bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees at Missouri State, University of Houston, and Texas A&M, respectively.
• I am a wife, mother, daughter, sister and friend.

If you’d like to know more about me, there’s a very nice article in this magazine that our communications team wrote.

I look forward to working with every segment of this great community so that together we can navigate the challenges in today’s world while always keeping our focus on creating a bright future for our precious children.

Dr. Christie Whitbeck
Fort Bend ISD Superintendent
The Fort Bend ISD Police Department’s K9 unit was greatly enhanced in large part due to the expertise and service of Sgt. Richard John Frankie. He was instrumental in training the District’s K9 officer Keisha. He also developed the Trailblazers Program for students at Missouri City Middle School.

Sgt. Frankie brought decades of experience to the District after working in Houston ISD where he served for 24 years. He served three years in FBISD.

Sgt. Frankie passed away on September 17, 2021.

“In just a few short years, he quickly captured our hearts and he was always fun to be around,” FBISD Police Chief David Rider said. “His sense of humor and passion for the job were just a few of the things that made him special. He loved the people he worked with and the schools that he served. He is family and he is forever in our hearts.”

K9 handler Officer Jorge Adame worked closely with Sgt. Frankie to hone Keisha’s skills.

“He once presented me with a trophy and told me, ‘One day you will find someone like us and when that time comes, you will pass on this trophy I am giving you and the knowledge you have inside you,’” Adame said. “It is something that gives me great confidence and one day I will pass the trophy along to someone else and tell them all about Sgt. Frankie.”

At Missouri City Middle School where he served as the campus officer, Sgt. Frankie developed the Trailblazers Program for seventh and eighth grade students who are interested in a criminal justice career. The program provides students with an opportunity to engage in practical exercises, focus on personal growth and build leadership qualities.

Sgt. Frankie also created “Murphy” the canine mascot to develop an age-appropriate way to educate young children and build positive relationships between them and law enforcement.

To honor him, “Murphy” the mascot will now be named “Frankie” and will soon begin visiting campuses to engage with students.

Employee Recognition Initiative

Fort Bend ISD is excited to introduce its new employee recognition initiative, Star Awards. The purpose of the initiative is to highlight District employees who show up each day and shine their brightest light!

This campaign allows employees at all levels to be recognized for their great efforts, by starting a culture of gratitude. It is our way of saying we see you and appreciate you!

The Star Awards, designed to celebrate all employees and show the vital role they play in the lives of our students, will feature employees on social media shout-outs, a website mention and possibly a magazine feature story.

Any community member is welcome to submit the name of an employee who is caught being caring, going above and beyond or simply making you smile when visiting District sites.

Be on the lookout for more information in the new year!
Exemplary Partnerships

Putting the needs of students first, impacts everything Fort Bend ISD does because there is a direct link between student success and performance when their needs are addressed.

In January 2021, the exemplary partnerships model was launched in Fort Bend ISD at Elkins High School with its partner, River Pointe Church, and at Kempner High School with its partner, the Kempner Parent Organization. Support was also provided to the foundational exemplary partnership between Willowridge High School and Second Baptist Church. The partnership was extended to create additional supply rooms at schools within the Willowridge feeder pattern, at Ridgegate and Blue Ridge elementary schools.

The Department of Collaborative Communities has since expanded its exemplary partnerships to include three additional FBISD feeder patterns. The partnerships exist between the community and campuses to give students access to necessary, everyday needs like food, toiletries, clothing, shoes and school supplies.

The department recognized there was an access barrier due to the location of the Shared Dreams program, and some students were not able to directly benefit from resources and short-term assistance. The exemplary partnerships create designated rooms in each school that provide everyday resources and supplies for students.

An exemplary partnership is defined as a model, sustainable relationship between a school and a charitable partner that aims to collaborate and achieve impact across a district feeder pattern through shared goals.

The development of a truly effective collaborative community includes partnerships with parents and guardians, nonprofit agencies, local businesses and industry, interfaith agencies and community organizations. The partnerships align with the FBISD Board’s core belief that states the District will be a collaborative, efficient and effective learning community, and with the District’s mission to inspire and equip all students.

For the 2021-22 school year, the partnerships now include the Marshall, Bush and Ridge Point high school feeder patterns.

The long-term plan is to establish at least one exemplary partnership in each feeder pattern across the District.
For Mike Madden, education was a path already paved. His parents, Carolyn and Vernon Madden, are staples in Fort Bend ISD, having taught and served in administration for more than 60 years. Madden Elementary is named in their honor.

Madden credits his parents and teachers with influencing him to pursue a career in education. He began his career teaching at Hodges Bend Middle School followed by Elkins High School, and then his alma mater, Clements High School.

“I really enjoyed working with former teachers who had a huge impact on me, such as Ferndell Henry and Kenneth Blanche. I coached football and basketball alongside my former high school coach, James Sharp,” Madden said.

Madden currently serves as the coordinator of student leadership in the Department of Social Emotional Learning. He has dedicated more than 30 years of service to FBISD.

“It is a privilege to serve students and provide them with opportunities to grow holistically,” Madden said. “I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to not only attend Fort Bend ISD schools, but also to serve the very district that prepared me academically, socially and emotionally.”

Madden attended Lakeview Elementary, Sugar Land Middle School, Dulles High School and was rezoned to Clements where he graduated in 1986. He attended Texas A&M University and earned a master’s degree from the University of Houston.
Fort Bend ISD Ridge Point High School graduate and Olympic gold medalist Bryce Deadmon has been running his whole life. Along the way, he has learned how to stay inspired and overcome obstacles. The advice he and his mother share with student athletes is simplified but both firmly believe it is tried and true.

“Positive thinking can change the outcome,” Deadmon said. “I know it sounds like a cliché, but it’s true. It really can.”

His mother Nekita Deadmon said, “I believe you should write down a goal you think is unattainable and it can come to fruition. If you work at it, you can achieve it.”

In August, Bryce returned to Ridge Point High School to speak to student athletes. He said, “I always look at the people around me and say, ‘I’m no different from them. They’re no different from me. If they can do it, I can do it, 100 percent.’”

Deadmon ran the men’s 4x400 meter relay and the mixed 4x400 meter relay in Tokyo. He said it took him a long time to process the fact he was an Olympian, but it sunk in once he arrived in Tokyo.

“I was like, wow, I’m at the Olympics!” Deadmon said. “Of all the people in the world, I’m here competing in the Olympics.”

His mother said watching from home, “was surreal. It was very emotional. It was one of the happiest moments of my life.”

She said her son has always been a runner.

“When he was a toddler, he ran everywhere,” Nekita Deadmon said. “When he played little league football, he was the fastest on the team. Then when he was eight years old, he was recruited to run track. And I thought that was safer than football. I knew he was an elite athlete.”

She advises parents to support their children who pursue sports.

“There is value in it,” she said. “If your child runs, the time and effort can become overwhelming, but it could pay off in a college scholarship. But aside from that, it teaches selflessness and hard work and perseverance and discipline.”

Bryce has a sister who also ran track at Ridge Point. She is a student at the University of Houston. Bryce graduated from Texas A&M University.

He is preparing for the 2022 World Championships next summer. In 2024, he is packing his bags for the Summer Games in Paris, France.

“I definitely plan to return,” he said.
Meet Dr. Christie Whitbeck:
FBISD’s New Superintendent
Fort Bend ISD Superintendent Dr. Christie Whitbeck officially began her new role in the District a couple of months ago. And while our readers probably know she previously served FBISD as deputy superintendent for four years before becoming the superintendent of Bryan ISD, we thought you would be interested in knowing more about the personal side of this accomplished leader and educator.

Whitbeck took a few minutes to respond to more than a dozen FBISD Magazine questions about topics such as her hobbies, personality traits and a monumental loss she carries with her always. We appreciate that her responses were insightful, sincere and relatable.

Here is what she shared with us.

What are your hobbies? I probably need more of them, but I love to go for long walks, a little jogging to clear my head, decorating and traveling.

Who is your personal hero? My personal hero is my son Taylor who passed away at the age of 24, six years ago. He was born with a disease, but he lived a really good life. He did normal stuff, went to college, but the disease progressed. Twenty-four years was not enough, but I'm grateful I had them.

What is your all-time favorite book? Bringing Out the Best in People by Alan Loy McGinnis is my favorite book. It was given to me by my grandmother when I was in college. Our challenge should be what the title states. I keep the book displayed on a shelf in my office. My philosophy of education has become to bring out the best in people - big ones and little ones.

What inspired you to become an educator? My mother was a teacher and I studied pre-law, but I always loved kids. From a young age, I babysat and could work every single night due to parent demand. I would teach the children new things, read to them and play with them. In high school, I was student body president and my teachers encouraged me to go into leadership in my career.

What is something you wouldn't leave the house without? My phone, I hate to say it but the phone. I've left it and had to go back to get it. If you think about it, it's your contacts, your calendar, your communication.

What is a behavior or habit people have that you greatly admire? It is one that I'm told I have – listening. People who listen and genuinely focus on what others are saying, I admire and appreciate that.

What is a behavior or habit people have that you do not admire? It's when people insist on their own way and constantly argue. It becomes exhausting. I'm a solution seeker and I believe we need to find common ground. I believe our children have suffered because of so much constant disagreement.

What is your favorite charitable cause? I always donate to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). My son was a patient there for about 10 years. They are wonderful. I also donate to The Children's Inn. It's kind of like a Ronald McDonald house next door to NIH. My son always loved it. It was warm and welcoming, and the people were so friendly.

What do you like most about the holiday season? I love the memories. I have lots of items that evoke memories that I pull out and my tree is filled with ornaments like baby's first Christmas for both my children. I look at the tree and smile. That's my favorite and, of course, faith and family.
Extended Learning

FBISD’s Extended Learning Department also moved into a new space next door to the police department. Extended Learning’s new space was also designed purposefully for their function in the District.

Extended Learning oversees before and after-school care on campuses and hosts community education classes. The renovated space has multiple classrooms in addition to offices.

Fort Bend ISD Police Department Gets New Home

Fort Bend ISD’s new police department location was approved during the 2018 Bond election and was intentionally renovated to provide officers with resources they need to ensure the safety and security of the District’s students and staff.

Located at 550 Julie Rivers Road in Sugar Land, the 28,000-square-foot building is equipped with a state-of-the-art Dispatch Room, which acts as the central hub of the department and an Emergency Call Center for after hours and weekends. Alongside dispatch is an Intelligence Operations Center that is occupied by the District’s new crime analysts. These two functions are vital components of the department’s daily operations and thus contain upgraded equipment and technology so staff can best support officers and police personnel.

The Emergency Operations Center allows the department to operate during a crisis or natural disaster event and serves as a hub to coordinate an emergency response and disseminate information to the community.

Another goal of the renovation was to provide spaces that foster collaborative opportunities. Local law enforcement agencies also utilize the building’s two training rooms. One of the rooms is used for classroom-style instruction and has a capacity of approximately 100 people. Police personnel utilize the second room for simulations and hands-on training.

In addition, the redesign included space for the District’s Threat Assessment Team, which was previously housed at a different facility. The team, comprised of a child psychologist, two licensed professional counselors, an intake specialist and two police officers, can now more easily collaborate with officers and better support the District’s students, staff and schools.

Aligning with the District’s commitment to the health and wellness of its employees, the new space is equipped with a full-size kitchen and break room, a fully-furnished workout room and locker rooms with showers.

Almeta Crawford High School

Significant progress has been made on the District’s 12th high school, Almeta Crawford High School, which is scheduled to open in Fall 2023. The new high school is located on the southeast side of the District on FM 521.

Ronnie Davis Agriculture Center Barn

This spring, agriculture students on the east side of the District will begin to utilize a new agriculture center located at Marshall High School.

Every FBISD campus and facility benefits from the voter-approved 2018 Bond program. For a list of 2018 Bond projects that benefit your community, visit www.fortbendisd.com/bond.
This summer, Fort Bend ISD was awarded millions in federal funding to support students and schools as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The District applied for its share of funding through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and was awarded $42,170,127 as part of the ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) II funding, and $63,138,743 as part of the ESSER III funding for a total of $105,308,870. An additional $31,600,000 for ESSER III has been allocated to the District but not yet released by TEA.

ESSER II funds were allocated as part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act passed into law in December 2020. ESSER III funds were part of the American Rescue Plan and passed into law in March 2021. Both of these funding allocations were earmarked to support K-12 education across the nation by providing additional resources for students, teachers and school staff to supplement instruction and provide learning spaces for students and teachers where the spread of the virus was mitigated.

Per funding requirements, a portion of the ESSER III funding must be used to address students’ learning loss for the past school year. The District has used funds to hire literacy and math interventionists for schools and provide a summer bridge program for students. A share of the funding is also supporting the District’s Virtual Learning Program for students identified as being at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 and remote conferencing for students to continue learning from home while they are in isolation or quarantine due to the virus. The funding was also utilized to provide additional staff to provide an A/B block schedule to three pilot campuses and to provide for an additional planning period for secondary core teachers.

As part of its Strategic Plan, FBISD works to provide safe spaces to support the educational process for students and staff, and this goal has become even more crucial during the pandemic. A portion of the ESSER funding has also been allocated to pay for other COVID-19-related expenses such as the District’s wellness monitors and contact tracing system.

Visit www.fortbendisd.com/EsserIII to learn more.
The diversity of the Fort Bend ISD community is on full display beginning in mid-October until February when various cultural and religious observances are celebrated. Families across the District gather with loved ones, prepare special meals, attend services, and pass on traditions and customs to the next generation.

Here are some of the days and ways our community members celebrate during the season each year.

**Christmas**
Christian and secular families celebrate this day each December 25 which commemorates the birth of Jesus. Families and friends gather and exchange gifts. Christmas traditions vary around the world, but also include singing carols and decorating homes and Christmas trees.

**Dia de los Muertos**
Observed at the start of November, this holiday is celebrated in Mexican and Mexican American families to remember ancestors and celebrate the continuity of life. Families treat their deceased loved ones as honored guests, creating ofrendas, or home altars that contain objects to welcome them back.

**Diwali**
This Hindu holiday, observed in November, known as the “Festival of Lights” celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. Over the five days of celebration, individuals gather to wish each other good fortune and celebrate with food.

**Hanukkah**
Jewish families mark this eight-day “Festival of Lights” to celebrate the rededication of the Temple to the service of God in 164 BCE, commemorating the victory of the Maccabees over King Antiochus. Each night, families light a candle on the menorah, a nine-branch candelabra, recite blessings, exchange gifts and enjoy meals.

**Kwanzaa**
Named for the Swahili word meaning “first fruit” of the harvest, this seven-day celebration each December honors African American heritage and its vitality. Each night of the holiday is observed for one of seven principles and families gather to light the kinara, or candleholder, exchange gifts and celebrate.

**Lunar New Year**
Celebrated by East Asian families worldwide, and known as the Spring Festival, this holiday marks the start of the Chinese lunar calendar. Loved ones gather, hoping to bring good fortune into the new year, and children receive red envelopes filled with money. Next year will be the Year of the Tiger.

**Mawlid al-nabi**
Celebrated in October, this holiday is observed by Shi’a and Sunni Muslim families as the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Individuals celebrate by sharing meals, offering prayers and decorating homes.

**Thanksgiving**
Each November, this national holiday is celebrated by families across America as a day of gratitude for the good things in life. The day is typically celebrated with a big meal with family and friends, parades and shopping.

As one of the most diverse districts in the country, this is a small sample of holidays and observances celebrated by our community members. Visit the Fort Bend ISD Diversity Calendars at www.fortbendisd.com/diversitycalendar for more information and to learn about all the holidays celebrated year round.
The much-needed Winter Break is fast approaching, and whether you plan to spend quality time with loved ones, travel or just take it easy, it is important to take time to focus on yourself and your health. The Winter Break is a perfect time of year to rest and reflect.

Here are some tips to reduce stress and reignite the joy felt around the holidays during the Winter Break:

**Chill and relax** – The easiest form of self-care is to simply take a little quiet time to relax. Get outside and soak up some sun by going for a leisurely walk around your neighborhood or at a nearby park. Turn off the alarm and sleep in late when you can. Set aside ‘me time’ that can involve reading a good book, or watching a classic movie while enjoying a cup of your favorite warm beverage. Listening to music is also a great way to relax and unwind.

**Holiday shopping and preparing family feasts** – Holiday shopping can contribute to increased stress during the winter break. Instead of purchasing expensive presents that may be over your budget, think of thoughtful, inexpensive gifts. Consider pulling names to reduce your holiday gift list and ordering out for some or all of the dishes needed for big family meals instead of cooking everything yourself. You might also consider a potluck approach by asking family and friends to bring different foods, especially ones that may be their signature dishes.

**Managing conflict during gatherings**

Family gatherings can become stressful during the holidays. Patience and compassion go a long way. Take the time to really listen to others. You may learn something new about a loved one. If tensions do arise between you and a loved one or you find yourself in the position of refereeing conflicts between others, try these techniques:

- **Offer options**: Giving someone a choice instead of making a threat is an effective de-escalation technique.

- **Explain your why**: People are more likely to buy in to your request if they understand why it is being made.

- **Express empathy**: Doing so is not the same as agreeing with someone; it is letting them know you understand how they may be feeling. Expressing empathy builds trust and respect and reduces tensions.

**Declutter or redecorate your space** – Clutter can create stress. Getting rid of it and organizing is a great way to not only clear your mind but also your space. Redecorating can help make you feel refreshed and renewed. Take some time to rearrange what you have or add new decorative items. Make room for a new year with less clutter and a fresh look.

**Finding joy in the little things** – Do something that brings joy and laughter to your life, like chatting with family and friends, hosting a game night, attending a holiday party or watching a comedy or feel-good movie. If you have furry family members, take the time to play with your pet.

**Travel to close destinations by car** – Texas offers great places to visit, some with outdoor locations that allow you to get back to nature and take in the scenery. The holiday season never disappoints with bright lights and festive decorations. Visit areas that are known to decorate for the holidays. Simple sightseeing road trips are a great way to get out of the house without spending enormous amounts of money.

**Find a new hobby or rekindle an old one** – Hobbies are a wonderful way to reduce stress, and what better time than during winter break to get back into them? From baking to sewing or painting – creative activities are excellent for improving your mood.

**Express gratitude** – Take some time to write down a list of things for which you are grateful. Studies show expressing gratitude can have a positive effect on mental and physical health. One simple way to demonstrate gratitude is to say thanks to another. Take the time to tell a loved one, friend or co-worker how much you appreciate them.

No matter how you choose to spend the Winter Break, make sure self-care and gratitude are a top priority and make them part of your normal routine in the new year.

See you in 2022!
When considering her background, Assistant Superintendent Carmela Levy-David self-identifies as Latinx, which is an inclusive term for individuals with Latin American heritage, but it also encompasses her Caribbean heritage as well. She is part of the second-generation of her family born in Panama, and part of a wider and diverse tapestry of people of African descent native to the Caribbean and Central and South America.

“There’s a large, beautiful community of people of African descent who speak Spanish, Portuguese and French, and it just makes me really happy that that awareness is becoming more of the norm rather than the exception,” she said.

Levy-David traces her family’s origin beyond Panama to Jamaica at the turn of the last century, when both her maternal and paternal ancestors immigrated to Panama and Costa Rica when the sugar industry collapsed in the Caribbean. The family descended from a freed mixed-race plantation owner who was mostly white and one-fourth Black. With strong ties to their Jamaican heritage, Levy-David’s parents ensured that she and her siblings grew up with customs from both nations. Levy-David herself speaks both Spanish and Jamaican Patois.

In 1984, when she was 12 years old, Levy-David’s family immigrated to the United States from Panama to flee the dictatorship of Manuel Noriega, who imposed martial law that included nightly curfews and repression of civil liberties. Her family first landed in Miami and finally planted roots in Houston.

“Everything was challenging. Not speaking English was a challenge, not understanding American culture was a challenge, not having the limitations of living under a dictatorship and all the rules we had to follow, that, believe it or not, was a challenge. Whenever it was 8 o’clock at night, I still felt like we needed to be home to be safe.”

Levy-David began her teaching career in Fort Bend ISD, at Austin High School under Principal Mike Leach and earned a Rookie of the Year award and Teacher of the Year award before transitioning to leadership and administration.

“In Latin American countries, education is not free. Families have to make a choice about which child will receive an education, because you have to pay to enroll them, pay for their books, pay for their uniforms, pay for the transportation and pay for their meals,” Levy-David said.

She desired to be a teacher even as a little girl, recognizing the power of education. As the Assistant Superintendent who supports the District’s early education programs, she sees academics as a tool to not only transform a child’s life but also a family’s trajectory.

Levy-David embraces all parts of her identity, celebrating not only Hispanic Heritage Month but also Black History Month. For her, the celebration of culture is about bringing awareness to what it means to be an Afro-Latina and a member of the Latinx community. She is encouraged by the increase in diverse faces that represent the Latin American experience in this country and hopes that young people grow to have the same pride she has.

“We have to bring awareness to all the diversity that makes us such a rich and beautiful country and community, how all of the different cultures and immigrants have contributed, and how all of the Latinos who were never immigrants, who were living here for centuries, have contributed to the greatness of this country,” Levy-David said.

Visit www.fortbendisd.com to read more about Assistant Superintendent Carmela Levy-David, and to learn more about how Fort Bend ISD celebrates its diversity, visit www.fortbendisd.com/faces.
Fort Bend ISD’s Enterprise Learning Labs at the James Reese Career and Technical Center are now open to patrons, giving students real-world experience in automotive, culinary, cosmetology and early education childcare service. The students look forward to the opportunity to serve the community.

The Early Education Lab is a tuition-based program offering children exposure to Pre-K curriculum by certified teachers. Spots are limited; register today!

No worries about dinner plans, The Grill’s got you covered! Students in the Culinary Arts Pathway are serving it up with some delicious meals for the public at affordable prices. Reservations are appreciated to facilitate a great guest experience.

In need of cutting off some dead ends, a new hairdo or just wanting some spa time? Students at The Salon can take care of you! Services include manicures, pedicures, haircuts, styling and several other add-ons.

The Shop earned the Vehicle State Inspection License, which allows students to perform state inspections on vehicles. Additional services include oil changes, tire rotations and more!

Visit www.fortbendisd.com/studententerprise for more information and to schedule your appointment.
Fort Bend ISD is a great place to work and offers full and part-time opportunities in many areas.

We are looking for...

All teachers especially:
- Special Education Teachers
- Math
- Science
- Bilingual

- Nurses
- Bus Drivers
- Bus Monitors
- Substitute Teachers (incentive pay)
- Extended Learning
- Child Nutrition

Learn more and apply today!
www.fortbendisd.com/careers