

Cedars International Academy To Open New School For Grades 8-12

Cedars International Academy is teaming with Austin Community College (ACC), members of Advanced Reasoning In Education (ARIE), New Tech Network, University of Texas (UTeach and UT NASCENT), along with Communities Foundation of Texas, to create an open enrollment, tuition-free public charter high school dedicated to serving students in grades 8 through 12. Every design decision about the school, which will be adjacent to ACC's Highland Campus, is informed by the goal of ensuring student success and readiness for the future.

"Cedars International Academy is dedicated to best preparing children for the world they will inherit, teaching them with genuine respect and the most effective instructional strategies to meet their learning needs," said Superintendent Dr. Mark Diaz. "Now it is time to scale up that commitment."

"It begins with a complete pedagogical shift," said Founding Principal Steven Zipkes. "First, Cedars International and Austin Community College have forged a unique partnership where our

students and teachers will have access to ACC, providing college level classes complete with college credits. Second, this will be a Next Generation High School, where the attention will be on personalized learning through a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) focused curriculum, using Project Based Learning (PBL) and real world essential skills for authentic problem solving as the the instructional model. This original curriculum, to be authored by our veteran teachers, will be aligned with the State Standards/TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), but also go above and beyond state requirements."

Like Zipkes himself, the veteran teachers and staff opening the new school are all nationally recognized experts in Project Based Learning. They have all worked at the successful Manor New Tech High School and with ARIE, which provides training in Project Based Learning to educators around the world. When President Barack Obama visited the team's previous campus in May of 2013, he declared their teaching model "what every school should be."

"We know the best way for students to gain mastery isn't by sitting in rows of desks and being lectured to," said Zipkes. "We're going to have them moving around, diving deep into subjects and creating their own knowledge. In every class, they will work in groups with other students, teaching and learning from each other."

Students enrolled in 7th and 8th grades and attending Cedars International Academy as of March 1, 2016 will be automatically accepted into the new school's incoming 8th and 9th grade classes via the applications which will be posted at cedars-academy.org on February 1. For other potential students in the Austin area, a simple lottery for the inaugural 8th, 9th, and 10th grade classes will take place March 4, 2016. The admissions applications will be available on February 16 from the Cedars International Academy website. Each grade level will be capped at 50 students total.

For more information, contact Steven Zipkes via email (szipkes@cedars-academy.org) or phone (512-419-1551).