

Lotara's found home in AISD

Young Junior High custodian Luke Lotara came to the United States in 2000 looking for a better life for him and his family as they were trying to find a way out of the civil war in his native South Sudan.

His first stop when the family arrived with the World Relief organization was Arlington. It was also his last stop as Lotara and his wife have raised their six children in a district he's spent 18 years working for, with the last eight coming at Young.

"Let me take us back to early 2000," Lotara said. "When we first came, we were the only Acholi [part of South Sudan] people in Arlington. A lot of people said Dallas was good because there were some over there. I wanted to study Arlington for the first three months. For the first three months I studied Arlington and in the fourth month I was



Young Junior High custodian Luke Lotara has been with the district for 18 years.

hired here. Dallas was on the news every month and it was for crime. I thought that wasn't a good place to raise kids. I chose Arlington

because it was important for me for my kids to grow up in this environment."

Not only have Lotara's children grown up in the

AISD environment, but also have thrived.

His oldest daughter has already graduated

SEE LOTARA, PAGE 2



A message from Dr. Cavazos

Employees in the AISD come from all kinds of backgrounds, but the path Young Junior High custodian Luke Lotara took to the district is unique.

He came to us by way of South Sudan through Sudan, Kenya and Somalia. I know the staff and students at Young are happy to have him there.

The 2014 Bond continues to make a big impact in the district. All you have to do is go see the new cafeteria at Sam Houston High School to know that's true. And there's more work still going on at Sam as well as throughout the district as we strive to give our students all the resources they need to be exceptionally

prepared for college, career and citizenship when they graduate.

Our students also have interesting resources available to them, like the inflatable planetary systems. The days of waiting to go to the planetarium are over as now the planetarium can come to you.

You can also find out in this edition of *My AISD* that there are ways to achieve academic success other than the traditional way of starting school in kindergarten and graduating from high school. Our adult education and literacy department does an outstanding job of helping people from non-traditional paths excel.

Lessons that stick make impact

Have you ever walked away from an amazing experience and thought to yourself, “Wow! That was awesome!” What was it about the experience that made it so memorable and meaningful to you? If you had to describe the experience to someone else that wasn’t there, what words would you use to articulate the power of the moment and the reason why it impacted you?

Researchers have spent some time investigating what makes something memorable. According to the *Scientific American Mind*, there are many factors that play a role including how much attention the person is playing, how novel the experience is and what kinds of emotions the experience evoked. These are things to consider as we design the learning experience our students have each day.

As we know, our students experience learning approximately 20,000 hours during their elementary and secondary



education. I would suggest that during that time, the experiences they are having that are most memorable are probably ones that are well designed and not only effectively grab their attention, but also are novel and creative enough to hold that attention and evoke enough enthusiasm to see it through.

In an article, “What Makes Things Memorable,” Gayle Allen highlights the book *Healthy Brain, Happy Life* by Wendy Suzuki and shares four tips about how memories form in the brain and stick. I would like to

invite us all to consider these tips as we design and provide our students with daily learning experiences.

1. Link It! When introducing a new concept or idea to a student, link it to something they already know well. By helping the student associate the new learning with a variety of other things that they are deeply familiar with, they will be able to retrieve that information more easily.

2. Get Emotional About It! Experiences that generate emotion are stronger and last longer. Think about the memories that came to your mind at the beginning of this article, chances are they are linked to some strong emotion. How can you evoke emotion among your students when launching a concept? What hook is so effective that it grabs their interest and holds on tight?

3. Repeat It! Practice, practice, practice. Students need opportunities to practice their new learning in a variety of contexts and settings. It’s one

thing to learn a concept; it’s another to have the opportunity to practice and apply that understanding in unpredictable situations.

4. Shake It Up and Add Novelty! Our brains look for patterns and are trained to notice when things are new. Think of a time when something unexpected happened. Did you rush to tell someone the second you got home or want to text a friend? Novel and unique learning experiences also generate a similar response for students. Don’t we want students to be talking about how much they love what they are learning in class?

We are natural learners and learn through our experiences. We should design our learner experiences in a way that not only helps our students master concepts, but also love the experience so much that it creates lasting memories.

Dr. Steven Wurtz is the chief academic officer for the AISD

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from college, and he has three children currently in college, including one in the TCU Community Scholar Program. He also has a son who is a sophomore at Sam Houston and his youngest daughter is an eighth grader at Workman Junior High.

It should come as no surprise that Lotara puts a high value on education. He studied theology and taught the equivalent of social studies before he came to the United States.

The civil war in Sudan between the north and south was bad enough that Lotara decided he and his family

had to get out of the country. They lived in a refugee camp for two years and were granted asylum to Norway in 1998. But Lotara didn’t move his family to Norway because he was studying theology at the time in Kenya. Two years later the family was granted asylum in the United States.

The agency that settled families had sent some to Arlington, which is where the Lotaras went despite not knowing anyone.

He met a couple of people who were working for the district and a pastor at Mission Arlington also

encouraged him to give it a try. While it wasn’t a teaching job, it was a good fit for Lotara.

“I applied to the AISD because since it was an education place, I decided it was good for me,” he said. “I miss teaching some, but I’m within the environment.”

Before coming to Young, Lotara worked at Bowie High School and Atherton and Hale elementaries. He feels home at Young and the feeling is mutual.

“Mr. Lotara is the heart of the school,” Young principal Kelly Hastings said. “He reaches out to adults to

see how he can help them, and he builds positive relationships with students. He high fives people he meets, always has a smile on his face, and even sings while he is working. When I think of customer service his face comes to my mind.”

Lotara is happy he’s had the opportunity to provide a better life for his family.

“My kids go to the same school,” he said. “They have the same friends. The most important thing is they don’t have to go through the hardships that I went through and we went through.”

New cafeteria at Sam open

[Sam Houston High School](#)'s new cafeteria is now open for students. The bond-funded addition opened in December and provides a larger dining space for students with plenty of natural light and an outdoor courtyard. Across the courtyard is the new ninth-grade classroom addition that opened at the start of the school year. Now that the new cafeteria is open, work in the old cafeteria has begun. That space will be converted into new classrooms, including science labs and art rooms.

While construction of Sam's new cafeteria has wrapped up, bond projects are ongoing or just beginning at schools throughout the district. Many of the projects are at elementaries, which are all receiving two STEM labs, an acoustically-appropriate strings room, a front-entrance security vestibule and many deficiency upgrades. Construction recently started at [Amos](#), [Atherton](#), [Berry](#), [Dunn](#), [Rankin](#) and [Roark](#), and work will begin later this year at 13 more elementaries.

Other major projects are still in the design phase, including the future [Fine Arts Center](#) and [Athletics Complex](#). The architect's schematic design for the Fine Arts Center was approved by the AISD Board in October and for the Athletics Complex in December. The Fine Arts Center will serve the entire district with world-class performance and demonstration venues, along with classroom and gallery space. The Athletics Complex will provide competition and practice venues for sports lacking adequate space at existing campuses, including swimming and diving, wrestling and gymnastics. Both facilities will be located together and built simultaneously in the Entertainment District of Arlington, near the Cowboys' and Rangers' stadiums, and both are scheduled to open in the fall of 2020.

Those are just some of the AISD's bond projects. There are many more – like the major auditorium renovations currently underway at [Martin High School](#), the classroom addition at [Seguin High School](#) that now has its foundation poured and the nearly-finished addition at [Crow Elementary](#). Keep up with all of them at www.aisd.net/bond.



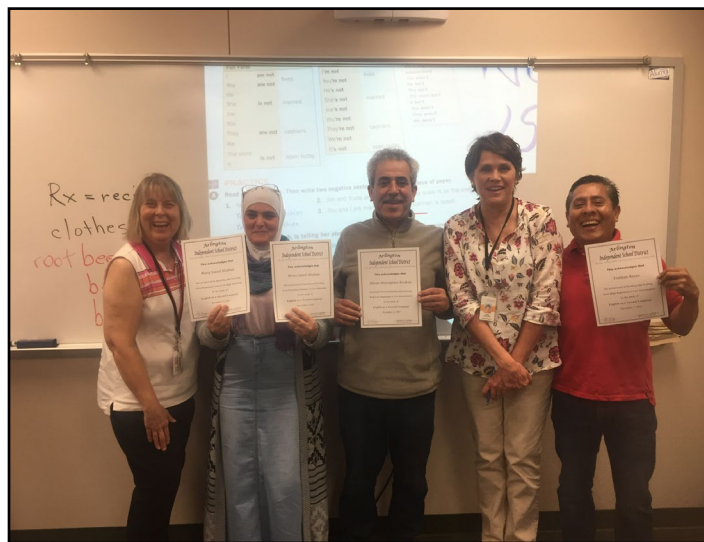
The new cafeteria at Sam Houston has been in use since December.

Plenty of options with AEL

The AISD adult education and literacy department offers English as a second language, high school equivalency (GED, HiSET) and workforce preparedness classes. These classes are offered at no cost to participants and are located at sites across Arlington. Classes are offered in the morning, afternoon and evening four days of the week.

The ESL classes emphasize growth in listening, speaking, reading and writing in English. The adult students in these classes learn English in the context of daily interactions and needs such as shopping at the grocery store, communicating with a doctor, helping their children with homework and understanding English at work. Many adult ESL students have newfound confidence and are more involved at their children's schools after attending these classes.

The HSE classes are designed so that students can earn their GED or HiSET. Each student is tested and has an



ESL students work on growth in listening, speaking and writing in English.

individualized learning plan developed to address specific gaps in knowledge.

The HSE teachers accelerate instruction so that students are successful in

obtaining their HSE within a reasonable timeframe.

The AISD adult education and literacy workforce preparedness classes focus on specific high-demand jobs in Arlington, offer training toward industry-recognized certifications, feature contextualized learning for specific careers and can be located at local job sites.

Transitions classes focus on building a resume, filling out job applications and answering job interview questions. Transitions students also receive a referral to the local workforce center where they are matched with an employment caseworker.

In order to build a stronger, self-sufficient community in Arlington, adult education and literacy classes affect the financial stability of families, the literacy of youth and the success of AISD students. Seeing family members pursue education and benefit from it is an excellent motivator for K-12 students and will act as a catalyst for them to make their own education a priority.

OGLE SCHOOL
ARLINGTON

WOULD LIKE TO HONOR OUR BUSINESS OF THE MONTH.

BUSINESS / EMPLOYEE NAME:
Arlington Independent School District Staff

PLEASE ENJOY ONE OF THESE COMPLIMENTARY SERVICES:

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ALL SERVICES ARE PERFORMED BY STUDENTS UNDER SUPERVISION OF A LICENSED INSTRUCTOR.

February Spotlight Discount of the Month

Take students out of this world

Two inflatable planetary systems are available from science curriculum and instruction

Teachers and students can take a field trip into space or deep into the earth by utilizing the Digital STARLAB planetarium while never leaving their campus. The Digital STARLAB planetarium is a projection system within an inflatable, portable dome. Powered by projection software, it yields a truly breathtaking and realistic sky or burrows deep into the earth in 3-D view.

The science curriculum and instruction department has two planetariums for checking out, one for elementary campuses and one for secondary campuses. The elementary planetarium has three main



Astronomy and earth and space science teachers attended training in December.

topics – constellations, Earth and mythology. The dome is smaller in size but is great for an elementary

science class or science night.

The secondary dome is more high tech and

geared toward students in astronomy or earth and space science.

These teachers were invited to an all-day training in December to learn how to use the more sophisticated software to run the secondary system.

If you or your campus is interested in training or checking out the planetarium systems, please join the Canvas course at <https://arlington.instructure.com/enroll/YFLDXW>.

The course will also inform you of our department's checkout procedures and who to contact for more information.



Arlington
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

February Dates

National Children's Dental Health Month

Black History Month

Career & Technical Education Month

National Freedom Day	Feb. 1
Groundhog Day	Feb. 2
National School Counseling Week	Feb. 5-9
National Signing Day	Feb. 7
National Pizza Day	Feb. 9
National FCCLA Week	Feb. 12-16
Valentine's Day	Feb. 14
Ash Wednesday	Feb. 14
End of Fourth Six Weeks	Feb. 16
Chinese New Year	Feb. 16
National PTA Founder's Day	Feb. 17
National FFA Week	Feb. 17-24
President's Day	Feb. 19
TSPRA Conference	Feb. 19-22
Start of Fifth Six Weeks	Feb. 20
National Tortilla Chip Day	Feb. 24

New discounts available for AISD employees

The revamped intranet is up and running and constantly being updated with discounts for AISD employees.

The Ogle School of Arlington is our February spotlight discount. Every AISD employee is eligible for a service at the school. The rules for using the discount - which is only available in February - can be found on page 4 of *My AISD* as well as on the perks page on the intranet.

The Dallas Mavericks have also expanded their discount program, adding more games that have discounted prices for AISD employees for games in the 2017-18 season. Those

discounts can be found [here](#).

And if you're hungry and looking to save some money, Pasta Masta (620 W. Park Row) across the street from Arlington High School has a 20-percent discount for all AISD employees. Remember you must show your employee identification.

The site also includes the staff favorites section, which will quickly guide you to the most commonly used links, and the employee perks and discounts.

If you have any suggestions about links or discounts you want to see, send an email to aandro@aisd.net.

ACCESSIBILITY
TANGIBLES
RELIABILITY
RESPONSIVENESS
EMPATHY



Accessibility
Shanna Grindle
Special Education

What they said: Shanna is my new diagnostician mentor. No matter how many times I've contacted her, she has always been willing to help me out as I learn my new job.



Tangibles

Suzanne Severns
Martin High School

What they said: She is a key person in the workings of instruction and activities at MHS. Besides maintaining an orderly and easy-to-use library, she houses the GoCenter and UTA admissions representatives and schedules spaces to be used for tutoring, club meetings and staff meetings.



Reliability

Terri Higgs
Barnett Junior High

What they said: She ensures that all classrooms are covered with subs when teachers are out for the day. She is a vital tool to the day-to-day operations of Barnett Junior High School. She continually goes above and beyond the call of duty of her position.



Responsiveness

Linda Booth
Sam Houston High School

What they said: She responds not only quickly and positively, but also consistently. Linda ensures that every internal help ticket is closed as quickly as possible, she logs many miles each day checking on the status of our teachers to ensure they have all they need to meet the demanding needs of our scholars.



Empathy

Brianna Harman
Career & Technical Center

What they said: Brianna cares so much about the students and the staff. She is always watching out for the students who have health issues. She tries to educate them so that they are able to manage these issues. If a co-worker asks for her help with a health issue she goes out of her way to help them.

A customer forms an impression of service received over time depending on a range of experiences. Have you recently experienced exemplary service from anyone in the AISD? If so, affirm their practice by sending a shout out to bit.ly/AISDSERVE, and we'll recognize them! Be sure to let us know which component of the framework was exemplified (accessibility, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness or empathy).

Tina Baze, Specialist
Risk Management
Arlington ISD
1203 W. Pioneer Pkwy.
Arlington, TX 76013
Office: 682-867-7649
Fax: 682-867-4682

*****Accident*** What to Do Next?**

- Contact supervisor. If an emergency response professional is needed call 911.
- Contact the risk management office at 682-867-7649
- Complete workers' comp packet.
- Completed packet should be sent to risk management office at the administration building.

One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.

Bryant H. McGill

Risk Management Review January 2018

Accident Prevention

Accept accident prevention as part of your daily duties and as a personal challenge. If you see an unsafe working condition, promptly report it to your supervisor and try to offer suggestions for a solution. Follow instructions; stick to a safe, approved method; and do every job the right way. Keep your work area neat and orderly. Develop an interest in your job and think about your duties. Try to improve methods and quality while keeping an eye on safety.

Safety in Cold Weather

You can protect yourself from the hazards of winter by planning ahead. Keep others notified of your travel plans, winterize your car, check antifreeze and batteries, wipers and windshield washer fluid, lights and flashing hazard lights. Keep your gas tank full and dress for winter weather. If you do have car trouble, remain in the car where help will be looking for you. Avoid getting out and walking in snow unless you see buildings close by.



Don't Slip Up

Be aware of changes within your work environment. Watch for stairs, curbs and ramps. Keep cords away from walkways, clean up spills as soon as possible and use caution signs to warn others of wet floors. Wear appropriate footwear that is respectful to your work environment. For example, you don't want to wear sandals while working in a vehicle maintenance shop area. Never carry items in your hands while climbing a ladder. To avoid falls, stay aware of your surroundings and walk at a pace that is convenient for the surface you are walking on and task being performed.



Happy New Year! Be Alert & Stay Safe!

JANUARY EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



Beatrice Davis
Remynse Elementary
Elementary Teacher of the Month



Erika Alvarez
Operations
Department Employee of the Month



Casey Cagle
Young Junior High
Junior High Teacher of the Month



Michelle Heath
Seguin High School
High School Teacher of the Month