

*Supporting stakeholders in preparing all learners for tomorrow's opportunities*

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### **Mansfield ISD Leader Named Regional Superintendent of the Year**



(White Settlement, TX) Dr. Kimberley Cantu, superintendent of Mansfield ISD, has been named the Region 11 Superintendent of the Year for 2024. The Superintendent of the Year Award, sponsored by the Texas Association of School Boards, honors outstanding Texas administrators for achievement and excellence in public school administration.

Candidates for the award must be nominated by their school boards and must demonstrate strong leadership skills, dedication to improving the quality of education in their districts, commitment to public support and involvement in education, and ability to build good employee relations among teachers and staff members. The award application highlights the following performance areas: (1) Leadership, Management, and School Climate; (2) School Board-Superintendent Relations; (3) School Improvement and Instructional Leadership; (4) Fiscal Management; and (5) School-Community Relations. In addition to addressing the specified performance areas in the application, school boards were asked to answer the question, “Why should your chief administrator be selected as Superintendent of the Year?”

The regional selection process also included an interview piece that allowed candidates to voice their views on great leadership, current events in education, and highlights of their careers.

Dr. Kimberley Cantu is in her 32nd year of service in public school education with 25 years of service to MISD. She began her career as a teacher and coach at Llano High School in 1992. The following year, she accepted a teaching and coaching position at Mansfield High School where she spent five years in the classroom before becoming an assistant principal and then the academic associate principal of Mansfield High School. In a neighboring district, Dr. Cantu later served as a principal, a director in curriculum and instruction and executive director of human resources. She returned to Mansfield in 2012 as a director in human resources and held various leadership roles in human resources before being appointed as the district's deputy superintendent. After being named the lone finalist in the Mansfield ISD superintendent search, Dr. Cantu was officially named the superintendent of Mansfield ISD on December 17, 2019, becoming the second female superintendent in the district's history.

The state winner of the Superintendent of the Year award receives a \$5,000 professional development award and a ring, which will be presented at the 2024 TASA/TASB Joint Annual Convention. All other finalists will receive a \$1,000 award. The award program is funded by Balfour and coordinated by TASB.

Texas is divided into 20 education service center regions. ESC Region 11 serves 76 traditional school districts and 90 charter schools in the north central Texas area.

In her application packet, the Mansfield ISD board shared that “Dr. Cantu fosters a team-oriented environment within the board and staff. She does not surround herself with “yes” people. She depends on her cabinet to provide necessary information from their areas of expertise then weighs all perspectives before making decisions that are best for students. She ensures that every cabinet member understands all aspects of the organization so they can evaluate the systemic impact of all choices. While she exhibits great business acumen, she exemplifies compassion. Dr. Cantu provides a calm, confident presence for staff and community, even in the face of crises such as a pandemic, a massive cyberattack, and a student shooting. Her resilience is an inspiration for everyone.”

As part of TASB's award process, regional winners for the SOTY award must be selected by a panel of local school board members. This year's panel included trustees from districts throughout the north central Texas (Region 11) area.

Marilyn Tolbert, a judge from Eagle Mountain Saginaw ISD, applauded Dr. Cantu's dedication and leadership. “It is obvious that Dr. Kimberley Cantu is committed and focused on the district, and she clearly demonstrates exemplary leadership and adherence to the core values of Mansfield ISD,” she shared.

As the Region 11 winner, Cantu will move on to the state level of the competition. The state selection committee will interview all regional winners in August and choose five finalists. The finalists will then be called to participate in a second interview by the state selection committee in September, and the state winner will be announced at the Texas Association of School Administrators/Texas Association of School Boards (TASA/TASB) joint annual convention on September 28, 2024.

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