

Mary Torres: Hello, Hays, CISD. Thanks for joining us and listening to HaysBeat! the HR podcast. We're so excited to be able to connect with you through a new mode of communication for us. I'm Mary Torres, HR Project Management Coordinator and I'm your host. The Hays CISD Human Resources Department is committed to bringing you the latest and most accurate information on HR related topics, like health insurance, salary and compensation, teacher incentive, allotment, wellness, the topics are really endless. We hope that through HaysBeat we can provide you information in a timely manner and that we get a chance to get to know each other. This podcast is all about recruiting and hiring season.

Ginger Blanchon: Yes, we want you to join our job fairs. We have our first one March 25th at the PAC (Performing Arts Center) from 10:00-12:00, which really focuses on bilingual and special ed teachers. And then we have one April 29th at Johnson High School, also from 10:00-12:00. Continue listening to find out why you should #JointheMovement with Hays CISD and you can always find out more information on our website under the employment tab.

Mary Torres: Today with us is Ginger Blanchon, the Assistant Director of Talent Acquisition, and Dr. Medina, our (Former) Chief Human Resources Officer. Ginger, could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Ginger Blanchon: Yeah. Thank you, Mary, so much. I'm so excited to be here. Well, I'm the Assistant Director of Talent Acquisition. As Mary said, my role in HR came with a long journey. I started off as a teacher. I taught science at a high school for seven years. And then during the summer, I would work over in the HR office. And then I moved into HR about six years ago for a large district and I've been in Hays for about a year. So I'm excited to be here and I'd love it here.

Mary Torres: Well, it's been so great really getting to know you. I always heard the name Ginger Blanchon at all the recruiting events. So I finally know **THE** Ginger Blanchon and I can see why she is so popular.

Dr. Fernando Medina: She is bubbly for sure!

Mary Torres: She is. And I just have loved really getting to know Ginger. Doctor Medina, could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Dr. Fernando Medina: Sure. I guess the most important thing that I want people out there to know is that first and foremost, I'm a teacher. You know, in every role that I've taken as it first has a teacher, like a formal teacher, but even as an administrator, assistant principal, principal, assistant Superintendent, no matter what role, even to being a human resources officer, I'm first and foremost a teacher.

Mary Torres: I'm Mary Torres and I'm the Project Management Coordinator and the host of this podcast. I was a former teacher and all the work I've done since I've left the classroom has been to support and develop teachers because I know what a quality teacher can do for a child. So

we are entering recruiting and hiring season and school districts all in the surrounding areas, all across the state are going to be hiring for all types of positions, especially teachers. Dr. Medina, why is this podcast so important?

Dr. Fernando Medina: I have to tell you, and I've said this, you know my whole career, that one of the most important things, if not the most important thing that we do is hire a teacher? All of our classrooms deserve to have a teacher. And that is our goal. That is, our mission is to have not only a teacher, but the highest quality teacher with the greatest passion.

Mary Torres: And so as I mentioned you know we're entering this hiring season, Ginger is on a mission to help us find all of the best teachers out there to come to our school district and teach our kids. And she's got this whole schedule planned to get out there and tell everyone about why they should come to Hays CISD and why they should come and grow with us. So, Ginger, we are talking a lot about that. And we've discussed, you know, what are we going to tell people? What is it about Hays CISD that's special? And so Ginger's going to talk first a little bit about, you know, what is it about our location, Ginger, why would people want to come here?

Ginger Blanchon: Yeah, thanks, Mary. People can also find a list of all our recruiting events on our website. So it would be if I could not plug that out there. But as far as our location, the best part is that we are 30 minutes from Austin and an hour from San Antonio. We are right in the middle of everything. We do cover 221 square miles. So that includes all of Kyle, all of Buda, and there's so many events in Buda. Buda is the outdoor capital of Texas. And Kyle, you can't miss the Pie in the Sky Festival. That is the best festival. If you haven't been, you have to go!

Mary Torres: OK, I'm going because I haven't been. I love pie!

Ginger Blanchon: And we, of course, we also have outdoor music, we have festivals, there's fishing during the summer, they have movies in the park here at the Kyle Park that you can go to. So there's just so many things to do here and around this area, indoor and outdoor. And it's very family friendly.

Dr. Fernando Medina: And it's the gateway to that Hill Country for all our outdoor activists that want to canoe, bike, run, hike, have a place for their dogs and animals to roam and stroll.

Mary Torres: That's right. Yeah. You live in this area. You have to have a dog. Required. Required. You can take them everywhere. They're allowed everywhere. So you have a dog? Come here! And we're just growing so much. Something that I've said in some other podcasts is that I moved away for 11 years and came back to Central TX and Kyle, the city of Kyle is just booming, it's just growing, which is our theme. Grow with us, right Ginger, tell us about that.

Ginger Blanchon: Ohh man, there's so much popping up. When I first lived in Kyle, there was only the Evo that was there and now there's restaurants, other activities that you can do just all along the corridor. I feel like every day I go somewhere to visit a campus, something else is building up whether the campus has construction because the district is growing or something is getting built right next to it. So that's just awesome to be able to see and be part of all that.

Dr. Fernando Medina: That's a really good point. I mean, there's so much growth and you know where other districts might have challenges with cost of living. There's so much affordable housing coming up all around Kyle, which is a great attraction to our teachers. Um, you know, we because we're so spread out, they can still live in Kyle and work in Kyle. So it's kind of like this: come live here, play here with us and work here and teach here.

Mary Torres: Yes, right, we're getting to Costco. So you like to buy 24 rolls of toilet paper at one time, right? You can come here. So we're just so excited about that growth. And there's fun things to do nearby for all of the people that are coming, just graduating from college, there's a lot to do. But if you're also just thinking of moving to the area and you've been living somewhere, you have a lot of experience, there's a lot to do here for anybody and everybody to enjoy!

Dr. Fernando Medina: That's also a really good point, Mary. Because we are growing not only in numbers, we're also growing in terms of opportunities. You know, when you're opening up new schools, opportunities to teach in different schools, opportunities to lead in different schools as an instructional coach or as an assistant principal or principal or even at the central level. We know that we grow proportionately and so there's lots of career advancement opportunities in our district. So if you are starting, a novice teacher or if you are growing and advancing your career, that's absolutely, yeah, something to look forward to.

Mary Torres: Right. So I know that here at Hays, we really value our employees and there's so many ways that our district shows that. I've been here for a little more than six months now and I can really see all these ways that we value our employees. And one of those ways is through benefits and compensation, which is what a lot of people want to know about. So what can teachers expect at Hays CISD?

Ginger Blanchon: Now with Hays, we have zero cost insurance for employees only. So if you choose that medical plan, you won't have to pay for medical. But if you want to add dependents or you want to change plans or look at all the other options, you can always look online at our

website, we have pretty much everything. We even have a pet insurance which I was pretty surprised by, but we have the whole gamut of insurance choices that you can pick from and we are partnered with TRS. So our plans are the TRS active plan. But we also have an EAP plan or? I went blank on what it's called.

Dr. Fernando Medina: Employee Assistance Program

Mary Torres: All the acronyms!

Ginger Blanchon: So for our employee assistance program, that's really people forget about that program, but it is a really great program. Not only does it focus on mental health, you can get counseling sessions for free, but also if you're looking for a daycare center or an elder care center, they can help you shop around for that. They offer financial assistance, tax advice, financial advice. It's a great, great benefit to have. Then if you have a child, a young infant, we have our Daycare Centers for our employees and you can find out information about that, they are located at some of the schools. And then also if you work with us and you want your student to come with you to that school that you're at, we have in-district transfers for that. So you can transfer your child with you to the campus that you teach at.

Mary Torres: Wow, that's amazing. I knew I came here for a reason, right?! I mean, there's so many opportunities and you know, as we mentioned before, our city is growing, which means that our district is growing. Can you tell us just about the district growth, maybe like student population or campuses or programs that support that growth?

Ginger Blanchon: Yeah, as a district, we are growing. We are one of the fastest growing school districts here in central Texas. So I think right now we have a little over 22,000 students and that's up from when I started, it was at 21,000 I believe or 20,000. Yeah, we just built our 15th elementary school, I'm losing track of the numbers here and we were getting ready to plan and build our 16th elementary that will be in the Anthem subdivision. We are lucky to have a very supportive community who approved our bond in 2022. So they helped us buy buses and those buses will serve for growth, but also replacement. Also, the design fees for the 17th elementary. In a different bond they approved to expand Live Oak Academy because there is a wait list for those students. So on the admin side, we're going to get a new building and be able to house us all in one building, which is great. So that way the students can grow at those other campuses that currently C & I (Curriculum and Instruction) are at like Live Oak and Kyle Elementary, they're there. So that way we can expand for the student growth there.

Mary Torres: Yeah, we're really, we're excited about that new building because it's going to have such great spaces for our teachers to come and do professional learning. You know, be able to grow there and meet together, see what everyone else is doing in the district. And so we're happy to have a space where we can all gather for that. And so talking about professional learning in human resources and all over the district, but in human resources part of our mission is to build and support employees. So how do we, what are some examples of how Hays CISD does that?

Ginger Blanchon: Yeah, so for all first and second year teachers, we have a mentor program, but we also have our Inspire Hays Academy and that's really a cohort based model for our teachers coming in where they can plan with other members and learn about the curriculum and just get the feedback that they need to be more effective teachers. So when I talk to the new teachers, they really like that Inspire Hays program because it's a personalized experience for them. We also have for our current paraprofessionals who are non-degreed, we have our Lamar Institute of Technology where the district will pay for them to go to school to earn an associates degree, to get that Masters or Bachelors degree to come back and be teachers in our district. We have our education and training program with our CTE department. So for our students who want to become teachers we will pay for them to get their educational aide certificate and get them a position in our district so that way we can build them and grow with them to go and get their bachelors degree, masters to come and teach with us. We also for our degreed para-professionals or degreed employees, we have a partnership with Texas teachers where that's an ACP (alternative certification program) program and so they can come back and get their teacher certification with a plus Texas teachers and go into the classroom.

Mary Torres: I love all those ways that we're growing teachers or growing our own into teachers, which is part of the Grow Your Own initiatives that we have here at Hays CISD. We also have the two programs that I have been talking about. If you haven't, listen to the others.

Ginger Blanchon: How could I forget? How can I forget about TIA? We're just giving money to these teachers. I'm a little jealous. I'm jealous of the new teachers coming in. We did not have TIA when I was teaching.

Mary Torres: I know. So Teacher Incentive Allotment is a way for teachers to come in, earn a designation through the state, through their student growth, you know, excelling through their student growth and teacher evaluations and earn a designation which comes with money. So there's lots of ways to earn more towards your compensation. And then we also provide the opportunity for teachers to become National Board Certified teachers. So we have a cohort program for that, for teachers that want to become National Board Certified that also gets them

an automatic Recognized designation when they become certified and there's also a stipend for that. So there's just so many ways and I wish you could see Ginger smile on her face when she talks about all of these ways because it truly makes us feel happy and proud that we offer these opportunities. So we've talked a lot about hiring teachers. What other positions are available right now?

Ginger Blanchon: Yeah, when I go out and recruit, I always tell people that a school district is a business. Of course we are going to hire a lot of teachers because that's who we serve, right? We serve students, so we need teachers. But because we're a business, we have departments all over. We have a communications department. We have a technology department, finance. So all those positions will be open and available. And you can find the list of anything that's open online on our website. Just go to hayscisd.net and then click under the employment tab. Yes, yes, there's all kinds of web pages and resources on our website to be able to apply. And then to research any of these other programs, they're also available on the HR page. OK, So what are some final thoughts on why anyone out there listening should choose Hays CISD?

Ginger Blanchon: Yeah Mary, I chose Hays CISD because when I was researching it, it really did feel like a family. And I have to say being here a year, it is a family. I feel very connected to every single employee, not only in the Central Office, but when I go and visit the campuses I feel just this sense of belonging and this sense of acceptance by the other employees. Also side note, one thing I forgot to mention was our referral incentive. So if you know any employee, whether it be a teaching position or an auxiliary or a paraprofessional position. If they refer you here, you can get \$50.00 up front and then \$50.00 for six months if they stay. So you can get a total of \$100 and then if you find a bilingual teacher for us it's \$250.

Mary Torres: Yo hablo español.

Ginger Blanchon: I'll just put my name down when you wanna transfer.

Mary Torres: Thank you, Ginger. Dr. Medina?

Dr. Fernando Medina: No, I think that, yeah, that's just one way of, you know, rewarding our existing employees for referring people. So I really do value that incentive. But there are other instances as well that the board approves and typically at this time of the year they begin to think about compensation, new ways of compensating and any adjustments to compensation. We have very competitive salaries. We're very proud to be at the leading edge and all of Central TX as it relates to compensation, there is no other district in Central TX that can compete against our compensation plans. And so that and then the other thing is, is that this is a district

where we really value employee input, engagement and understanding. That at the end of the day, if we do right by our employees, they will do right by our students. So being very employee centered is critical here. So that sense of my voice matters and that I belong in a place where my voice matters is very important. So for those individuals that are wanting to come out here and know that you matter and your voice and your opinions and your contributions matter. So yeah.

Mary Torres: Well, great what I hope for, anyone, this is our conclusion, but for anyone out there listening to this podcast around Texas, that you listen and you get to meet Ginger or come on down to Hay CISD, we're ready to hire you! We have a lot of great opportunities for you and we hope that you choose us. Come grow with us! Yes! Join the movement!