

## DALLAS ISD

### Kramer Elementary leading a wave of schools seeking IB status



Tom Fox/Staff Photographer

**Third-grader Jaime Tobon** observes the power of a magnet as her dual-language science teacher, Carmen Arellano, quizzes her about it at Kramer Elementary School, which is the Dallas Independent School District's first International Baccalaureate elementary school.

# 'The final puzzle piece'

By **CORBETT SMITH**

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Kramer Elementary's efforts to become Dallas ISD's first International Baccalaureate elementary school were sparked by a neighborhood rivalry.

"Three years ago, we heard buzzing about IB, and parents started asking about it because Preston Hollow [Elementary] was going to go that way," said Kim West, Kramer's IB co-

ordinator. "This is the result of three years of hard work."

Kramer is part of a larger movement in DISD, with several schools striving to become IB World Schools. The stamp is prestigious. Fewer than 70 public elementaries in Texas hold the designation.

For Kramer, it adds to a rich portfolio of instruction offered at the school, including two-way dual-language instruction, that can entice parents to stay in DISD.

"It seems like the final puzzle piece," said former Kramer principal Katie Eska, now at North Dallas High School.

So what does IB mean for a school? The program melds rigorous curricula with a wide-ranging educational philosophy, infusing social and emotional concepts such as appreciation, respect and tolerance throughout the school day, and asking students to think about globally significant topics.

"It's about developing the whole child," said Marcie Verastiqui, Kramer's PTA president, "and helping children grow into global leaders, interested in a world that's larger than their own."

Instruction is also student-driven, which, as West described, uses "the kids' interests and desires and questions to drive instruction. Every kid is inquisitive. And all the things

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## THE WATCHDOG



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## Data for ID theft is just a leak away

A mystery package arrived last week in my mailbox. The contents inside scare my family and friends who fear it's a threat to steal my identity.

The big envelope contains a 59-page dossier on my life built from public records. If a criminal got hold of these 59 pages, he or she could take over my life. Like in a movie.

The dossier shocks me in its detail. Every possible piece of information needed to steal my identity is included.

My full 9-digit Social Security number is here. I count it

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## FRISCO

### Once upon a Star ...

By **VALERIE WIGGLESWORTH**

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FRISCO — Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones talked about catching the Frisco flu at the 2014 groundbreaking for the team's world headquarters and practice facility.

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# DISD seeks to expand number of IB schools

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that make up the components of IB, it's really just a framework of good practices."

One of the biggest challenges for getting an effort like this off the ground, administrators said, is linking IB's model with the requirements DISD and the state demand in curriculum planning.

West and her team started with district requirements and state standards that the Texas Education Agency has for every grade and class, and bundled them so they could make sense in a transdisciplinary way — linking reading and science, writing and math. They then tied those together with the units that IB instruction follows.

"For example, one of the units is 'Sharing the Planet,'" West said. "So we took conservation, natural resources, and we put it in that unit. We tied it to math and problem-solving, we tied it to nonfiction texts in reading and writing, and then we tied it to citizenship in social studies."

The staff has been integral in the IB process, with teachers not only having to go through additional training, but also having to commit to altering their teaching methods.

"And that's an area that we'll always work to refine," West said. "It's hard for a teacher to say, 'I don't know where the kids are going to drive the lesson today. I'm prepared for this, but their questions might lead me down this path.'"

Fourth-grade teacher Eliza Oliva called it "a learning process."

"At first, I thought it was going to be a lot of work, but honestly, it hasn't been too much — because everything



**Fifth-grade science teacher** Daisy Rivera shows how heat can separate mixtures and solutions during a class at Kramer Elementary School in North Dallas.

ties together with what we already had in our curriculum," she said.

Kramer is the first of several DISD campuses that could receive their IB designations over the next two years.

All of the aspiring campuses are in Hillcrest and Woodrow Wilson high schools' feeder patterns, and that's not by accident. There's been a conscious effort by school leaders, parents and district administrators in those feeders to grow IB pathways from

kindergarten to graduation.

Before leaving the DISD board, Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath — a graduate of Garland High School's IB program — pushed for expansion of IB in the Woodrow feeder and elsewhere in the district.

Kramer and Preston Hollow feed into Benjamin Franklin Middle School, which had its authorization visit from the IB organization last week. Hillcrest High has started on its path to be-

come DISD's second "diploma programme" school, joining DISD's IB flagship, Woodrow Wilson.

Woodrow's middle school, J.L. Long, is the district's lone IB middle school. Two elementaries that feed into Long, Robert E. Lee and Lipscomb, are striving for IB designation.

Giving students access and familiarity with the IB program before they head into an IB high school offers a huge benefit, West said.

"Jumping into the diploma



**Kramer fifth-grader** Yosberany Acosta (right) takes notes on a science experiment.



**Kramer is the first** DISD elementary school to receive IB status, but several other campuses could earn the designation over the next two years.

programme is intense," she said.

Kramer's accomplishment also differentiates the campus from surrounding private and charter schools, Kramer principal Kate Walker and West said.

"We know here in North Dallas, we have to be competitive," West said.

It appears to be working already. The school has over 600 students for the first time in seven years.

"So many kids are excited to be a part of this now," Walker said.

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Fourth-grade teacher  
**Eliza Oliva**