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## #RethinkSchool: Flying Drones, Veterinary Care and a Chiropractic Clinic, All in a West Texas High School

Posted by Joe Barison ([https://blog.ed.gov?guest\\_author\\_name=Joe+Barison](https://blog.ed.gov?guest_author_name=Joe+Barison)) July 19, 2018 (2018-07-19T14:52:58) (<https://blog.ed.gov/2018/07/rethinkschool-flying-drones-veterinary-care-and-chiropractic-west-texas-high-school/>) Headlines (<https://blog.ed.gov/topic/headlines/>), Rethink School (<https://blog.ed.gov/topic/rethink-school/>)

“One of the workforce arguments is that we’re turning out folks that know how to color in the right bubble on a multiple-choice test, but they don’t know how to do anything,” said Dr. Kim Alexander, superintendent of the Roscoe Collegiate Independent School District (<http://www.roscoe.esc14.net/default.aspx?name=risd.home>) in West Texas. In 2012, Superintendent Alexander and his district colleagues started to address this problem by creating an innovative series of apprentice partnerships with local businesses, and today it appears that Roscoe high school students know how to do everything.

Alexander, who is a Roscoe area native, has worked as an educator in the Roscoe District for 32 years, with the last 15 years as superintendent. In 2012, Roscoe was trying to become a STEM academy. “We wanted to have real-world relevance and real workforce readiness, and even job creation,” Alexander said. “One of the rural dilemmas is to have proximity to meaningful [student] apprenticeship opportunities. You have to partner with profitable businesses.”

Roscoe's first business partnership started when the high school's athletic trainer, who is a Roscoe alumnus and a chiropractor in Abilene, Texas agreed to use a gym dressing room to see chiropractic patients with Roscoe students as apprentices.

Other partnerships offering apprenticeships to students followed. "There's a problem of a veterinary shortage for food animals in our region. So we got the concept of housing a mixed-animal veterinary clinic for educational purposes and for certified veterinary-assistant certification," Alexander explained.

(<https://blog.ed.gov/files/2018/07/Roscoe-Photo-1.jpg>)

A veterinary technician (holding the dog) instructs Roscoe High School students who are working toward their veterinary-assistant certification. (Credit: Roscoe Collegiate Independent School District)

People in the community said that Roscoe was providing students with good workforce readiness in biomedical education but not offering much opportunity in engineering. Alexander said that's when Roscoe came up with Edu-Drone. "Kids like the drones, and it's just robotics in the air. That's when we partnered with a local drone company that was working on a curriculum for FAA 107 commercial-drone certification. We had one of our business partners negotiate a deal to market our drone curriculum through [an office supply outlet]. Now at Roscoe, we do commercial drone flights for agricultural data collection, real-estate cinematography, topline, and windmill-blade inspection."

(<https://blog.ed.gov/files/2018/07/Roscoe-Photo-3.jpg>)

Instructor Dusty White (right) watches a Roscoe High School student fly a drone above Roscoe Collegiate Center. The 11th-grade student received his unmanned aircraft vehicle pilot license at age 16. (Credit: Roscoe Collegiate Independent School District)

The U.S. Department of Education's David Cantrell, director of School Support and Rural Programs, visited the Roscoe District recently, and he was impressed with the innovation. "[The district] received the Small Rural School Achievement Grant from my office for several years, and they're doing some really creative things with their educational funds," Cantrell said.

"My team and I spent three days onsite talking with the superintendent and meeting community members, school staff, parent groups, student groups. It's not like your typical K-12 school in an urban setting or any other rural district." The Department of Education grant averages \$25,000 per year, and the district has received the grant annually for the past 10 years.

In addition to business partnerships, Roscoe is starting a program to combine a high school diploma with earning a bachelor's degree.

The story of Roscoe’s creative approach is spreading throughout the state, and beyond. It is only fitting that these innovative educators have the eyes of Texas upon them.

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*Note: This is a post in our #RethinkSchool series. The series features innovative schools and stories from students, parents and educators highlighting efforts across the United States to rethink school. Check back on Thursdays for new posts in the series. The #RethinkSchool series presents examples of approaches schools, educators, families and others are using to rethink school in their individual and unique circumstances. Blog articles provide insights on the activities of schools, programs, grantees and other education stakeholders to promote continuing discussion of educational innovation and reform. The Department of Education does not endorse any educational product, service, curriculum or pedagogy.*

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