



SAN FELIPE DEL RIO CISD

Press Release – April 23, 2023

SFDR CISD HONORS THREE RURAL WEST TEXAS MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATIONAL LEARNING PARTNERSHIP (HELP) COUNSELOR CANDIDATES

(Del Rio, Texas) In just a matter of days, three of our own SFDR CISD teachers will walk the stage at Angelo State University (ASU) and graduate with a Master's degree in school counseling. Nydia Fernandez-Contreras, Vanessa James-Hjelmstad, and Karla Roman participated in the 2022-2023 cohort of the Rural West Texas Mental Health Educational Learning Partnership (HELP) Program, which prepares teachers in the ESC Region 15 area for the role of professional school counselor. Last Thursday, these women were honored in a brief ceremony, which marked the culmination of their studies, and in which Dr. Lesley Casarez and Mr. Greg Hickey, Education Specialists for Counseling & Mental Health at ESC Region 15, presented them each with a stole to be worn at their upcoming graduation ceremony.

The HELP grant is a collaborative partnership between Education Service Center Region 15 and ASU's Master of Professional School Counseling program to increase the number of school counselors employed and retained within the region, as well as to increase the training and professional development opportunities for school counselors and other mental-health professionals in the region. This is the second year in which San Felipe Del Rio Consolidated Independent School District's teachers have participated in the HELP Grant Program. Last year, seven teachers completed the program – the largest group in the ESC Region 15 service area. For SFDR CISD, the goal is place these candidates and soon-to-be certified counselors in high-need elementary and secondary schools to address counselor shortages and high student-to-school counselor ratios.

SFDR CISD proudly congratulates our newest HELP counselors and wish them much success in their continued service to our district and the children whom we serve. Together, we are better!