

JUST JEFF

Taylor High School principal and career educator, Jeff Stocks, utilizes social media and banjo playing skills to connect with students

Written by Shetye Cypher | Photography by Anetrius Wallace

Jeff Stocks flew helicopters in the National Guard and Army Reserve for 11 years before following a career path in education



Jeff Stocks didn't always plan on having a career in education. Growing up in San Antonio, he was inspired to go into education by a teacher he had his senior year, Vic Harris. "I wish I could find him to tell him," he says.

Stocks now serves as principal at James E. Taylor High School (THS) and utilizes his dry sense of humor to build relationships with staff and students.

Path to Education

Stocks' path to education was not a straight one; he worked in the private sector in the business world and in the military. He flew helicopters in the National Guard and Army Reserve for 11 years and feels that was a very formative time for him as a leader.

"Getting to education was hard and required some soul searching. Once I got into education it was great. I've loved almost every part of being a teacher and administrator," Stocks says.

Stocks attended University of Texas-Austin for his undergraduate degree and went to University of Houston for his Master's.

Banjo Playing Principal

THS was his first teaching job where he taught economics, AP economics, U.S. history, AP U.S. history, and AP government. He stayed there for 13 years as a teacher and assistant principal. He left for four years to be a principal at Beck Junior High before coming back to THS as principal in 2013.

Under Stocks' leadership, "Take a Stand, Taylor!" was created two years ago. "It is a student-developed initiative that gives kids a framework for making tough decisions, such as drinking and driving or other risky situations," he explains.

He recognizes that social media platforms, such as Twitter, have helped him and thousands of other educators connect and stay relevant. "Of course, you have to have a desire to stay relevant," he adds.

"I have a pretty good sense of humor and I share that with students. I put some funny stuff on Twitter for students occasionally," he adds. "I have an ongoing promise of posting a video of myself playing the banjo whenever I get 500 new followers."

Leaders of Tomorrow

In true form, he wants to give a shout-out to his administrative team and to his secretary Susan Gaston. He also adds that the high school principals in Katy ISD are a pretty fun group and they enjoy each other's company.

"There are so many things to love about Taylor, the population is very diverse and the students are very open and friendly. It's a very supportive environment," he says.

Stocks adds that one of his primary goals is to help build a school environment that is engaging for students and staff. "I want to help build our leaders of tomorrow. My beliefs truly center around our motto, "Think. Work. Grow." KM

SHETYE CYPHER is a freelance writer who is also the journalism teacher and publications adviser at Tompkins High School.



Stocks posts a video of himself playing the banjo every time he gets 500 new Twitter followers

STOCK STATS

Skilled at playing the banjo

Can play the *William Tell Overture* on a pencil

Frequently ate cold spaghetti for breakfast as a kid

Wife, Melissa, is a teacher at Rhoads Elementary

Son Jake, 13, is a gymnast

Likes to play golf with son Sam, 15

Plans family trips that involve the outdoors

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