

C-P advance academics students on the road to education

Written by By fAITH HUFFMAN, News-Telegram News Editor
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Como-Pickton's advanced academics students for the next five days will be learning about science, technology, engineering and math up-close in Houston and Galveston — and they plan to send daily updates from the road to the *News-Telegram*.

Each year, a theme is adopted for the class, which meets during the school day during their enrichment period right before lunch. This year's focus was "STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Frontiers."

The advanced academic students participate in lessons and projects with that enrichment focus. They also take a few day field trips during the year.

The students paid for part of the cost and the school district is footing part of the tab too, including hotel fees. Students also pay for extras like souvenirs, according to Marilyn Powers, who coordinated the trip.

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The group consisting of 26 students from grades six through 11 as well as 11 adults — some staff and some parents — departed from Como-Pickton Consolidated Independent School District at 7 a.m. Friday for Houston and the group won't be back from Galveston until Tuesday night.

The first stop on their journey will be at Shriners Hospital for Children in Houston, where they will learn more about the different occupations at the facility, which specializes in treating children with bone deformities and neuromuscular conditions.

They're scheduled to tour Hermann Park later Friday; the conservatory is celebrating its 100th year anniversary.

Saturday, the students will visit the Houston Museum of Natural Science focusing on the Energy Hall and Chemistry Hall. The CP advance academics will also participate in Living in Space, a simulated future Challenger crew mission in which the group will divide into two crews, with each student designated a different crew task for a space mission. The mock mission features one crew in the distant future at mission control on the moon. They guide the second crew in to replace them, so they can leave for a Mars mission.

Later Saturday, CP will visit an iMax theater to view "Mysteries of the Unseen World."

On Sunday, students will tour Space Center Houston, taking the NASA tram tour, visiting the Starship Gallery and learn about "Living in Space" although not in a "zero gravity" atmosphere.

From the Houston space center, the group will depart for Galveston. Sunday night, they'll tour Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier.

Monday, they'll take an outing on the ocean with a marine biologist leading the tour, showing various aquatic life, including dolphins and wetland ecosystems. They'll then tour National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Sea Turtle Research facility in Galveston. They'll get to see up-close the steps taken to preserve the turtles, usually removed from Florida, grown, then released into their natural habitats.

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From the sea turtle facility, CP will tour the Ocean Star Drilling Rig Museum to learn how the rigs operate in the ocean.

They'll close out Monday at Moody Gardens Rainforest Pyramid, where they'll take a guided tour to learn about the plants and birds and generally experience what it's like to be in a rain forest.

The students' last leg of the trip is perhaps one of their most anticipated, Powers noted. Tuesday, the advanced academics students will visit Texas A&M-Galveston and the sea center's shark program. They'll learn about marine biologists' preservation efforts, then one of the TAMU-Galveston students will lead the students in dissecting a dogfish shark to learn more about its anatomy and how its system works.

The students expect to return enriched with new knowledge of various aspects of math, technology, engineering and science, including physics, chemistry, medical specialties made possible with technology, biological and earth sciences, astronomy and how they affect transportation, space discovery and communications.

Como-Pickton advanced academics group plans to send photos daily of various locations while they're on the road and the *News-Telegram* will be posting them as they come in at www.myssnews.com and www.facebook.com/myssnewscom and maybe even a few tweets at <https://twitter.com/myssnews>