

Andrew Brinker - Paschal High School

TEEA 2020 Winner: Environmental Educator of the Year



Andrew Brinker teaches AP Environmental Science and AP Biology at Paschal High School in Fort Worth, where he has taught for the past thirteen years. His passion is teaching environmental subjects such as air pollution, climate change, and biodiversity. Every year Mr. Brinker inspires students to choose environmental science as their college major, which he says makes him very proud.

In the classroom Mr. Brinker uses hands-on labs to generate excitement. As a class project, students build a large terrarium using recycled 2-liter bottles. The terrarium consists of several chambers that demonstrate biogeochemical cycles, basic ecology, and the importance of water and soil testing. They then collect weekly data over the course of a month and compile a lab report that resembles a scientific manuscript. In another project, students collect data from local fast food restaurants to demonstrate food waste from average meals.

Beyond the classroom Mr. Brinker sponsors the Recycling Club as well as the Science Club, which won the District and Regional UIL Science Championships in 2019. Recycling Club students worked with the City of Fort Worth to measure the amount of organic and inorganic matter that would be prevented from entering storm drains if the city implemented a storm drain barrier.

Mr. Brinker is most proud of the Trinity River Turtle Survey, which was established with the support of the Texas Christian University College of Education. Students meet at the river at least once a month to pull traps, mark the turtles, collect morphometric data, and then release them. The data is then compiled and used to determine levels of contaminants, such as mercury, affecting the turtles. To date they've caught and collected data from over 1,000 turtles comprising six different species.