



# PRESS RELEASE

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HISD Media Relations Department

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## Board Accepts \$1.5 Million Donation for Student and Parent Incentive Program

*Program will be part of a Harvard EdLabs research project*

August 26, 2010 – Today, HISD Board Trustees voted to accept a \$1.5 million private contribution made to the HISD Foundation that will support an incentive program for fifth grade students and their parents in 25 HISD elementary schools.

The incentive program will center on students mastering 200, fifth grade math objectives aligned to the Texas math curriculum. Part of the program will include incentives for parents to encourage their children to complete and master the math objectives and to attend teacher conferences.

“Research has shown that incentives for performance can work,” said Superintendent Terry Grier. “Charter schools widely use this strategy and many parents reward their children when they get good grades, but it certainly is not a one size fits all approach. We will be taking great care in how we implement this new program and how we measure the results.”

The program and its results will be part of a research partnership with Education Innovation Laboratory (EdLabs) at Harvard University and Dr. Roland Fryer, who is also an advisor on HISD’s Apollo 20 program. The EdLabs team will conduct research around the relationship between student and parent incentives and student academic gains.

Each 5<sup>th</sup> grade student and his or her parents at the 25 schools will have an opportunity to earn up to \$1020 over the school year. Students can earn \$2 for every math objective they master and parents will also receive \$2 for every math concept completed. In addition, parents will receive \$20 for every parent meeting they attend. Students can earn a maximum of \$440 and parents can earn a maximum of \$580.

“With many parents working one or even two jobs just to make ends meet, the reality is they lose income if they attend parent-teacher conferences,” said Chief Academic Officer Chuck Morris. “The incentive helps make up for that lost income. The money earned will go into a savings account or on a pay card, similar to a debit card, and will offer the opportunity for further instruction of math concepts and financial responsibility.”

The 25 schools will be chosen based on grade level performance on the math TAKS from 2009-10. So far, 70 schools have been identified based on low scores. A presentation will be made to those schools, and those who are interested will be placed into a lottery where 25 will be randomly selected to participate and another 25 will be used as a control group.

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The **Houston Independent School District** is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States with 297 schools and more than 200,000 student. The 301-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area with nearly 30,000 employees.

For more information, visit the HISD Web site at [www.houstonisd.org](http://www.houstonisd.org).

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