

## THE BEST ARE IN THE EAST — HISD EAST REGION SCHOOLS



The **Houston Independent School District's East Region** is made up of 43 schools throughout Houston's East Side. The East Region serves more than 32,000 students in Pre-K through grade 12. Students from across the Houston area travel to East Region schools to participate in innovative programs for engineering, oil industry technology, early college preparation, dual credit courses, gifted and talented, and Magnet programs. East Region schools offer challenging academic curricula that supports the college-bound culture of HISD.

### Vara Center for Technology

The **Rudy C. Vara Center for Technology** is one of two technology skill centers within HISD. The center provides dual-credit college courses in computer technology for students from three East Region campuses, **Austin, Milby, and Eastwood.**



Students from Austin HS taking part in a Computer Maintenance class.

The **Vara Center** offers students the opportunity to obtain industry A+ Certification. In keeping with HISD's efforts to create a College-Bound Culture, the Career and Technical Education Department has developed six-year graduation plans for 20 of its career paths. Each plan outlines course offerings for every semester, from the start of a student's freshman year in high school to the end of his second year of college. When students graduate from the **Vara Center** program they have up to two years of college credit that may be put towards a degree from **Houston Community College.**

Each year, **Vara Center** students participate in city, district, and state computer maintenance and networking competitions as a part of the *SkillsUSA* program. *SkillsUSA* is a partnership of students, teachers and industry professionals working together to ensure America has a skilled work force. *SkillsUSA* offers many opportunities for growth through competitions. **Vara's SkillsUSA** Chapter 3636 has received recognition as Most Outstanding Chapter for consistently producing the most 1st place winners in every competition.

### Austin's Science Club Gives Back

The **Austin High School Science Club** participated in multiple community service efforts this fall.

On Friday October 17, 2008, twenty club members assisted with the **Texas Children's Hospital Fall Festival** for outpatient children and their families. On December 6, 2008 thirty Science Club and National Honor Society students and three faculty members joined with **Austin Middle School** of Galveston ISD to assist in a beach cleanup on the Galveston Seawall.

High school and middle school students worked from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. After their work was complete, **Austin High School** provided a Christmas Party for the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Environmental Science Club from **Austin Middle School**. Pizza, Christmas gifts and dessert were available for all sixth graders. **Austin High School** students commented that this made them feel very proud and they knew this was a great opportunity to assist Galveston students in their recovery from the continuing emotional and physical effects of Hurricane Ike.

### Milby High School Mentorship Program

**Milby's** Senior – Freshman mentorship program has made a dramatic impact on helping ninth graders successfully adjust to their first year in high school. Through the program, groups of senior students volunteer to peer-mentor freshmen students. In addition to mentoring the ninth graders, senior mentors facilitate discussions on important topics such as the credit system and grade point average during the homeroom period. Senior mentor teams are assigned to ninth grade homerooms.

**Milby** Principal, Richard Barajas says the program has helped by lowering 9<sup>th</sup> grade student referrals, reducing alternative placement, and increasing student attendance.

## ExxonMobil Funds Reasoning Minds

Three East Region elementary campuses, **Burnet**, **Park Place**, and **Port Houston** received funding through an ExxonMobil – Houston A+ Challenge grant to improve math instruction on their campuses.

The grant is designed to support students and teachers with the tools they need to increase math achievement. The program was piloted at **Burnet** during 2007–2008. The program expanded in 2008–2009 to twelve additional schools including **Park Place** and **Port Houston**.



dedicated keyboard lab outfitted with Yamaha M1E-3XG keyboards. Lessons are given during and after school. To supplement the in-school lessons, **Lewis** has expanded its after school music

program to allow all students to have the practice time they need to grow their musical talents.

## East Region Schools

Belfort Academy	Lantrip Elem.	Whittier Elem.
Bonner Elem.	Laurenzo ECC	Project Chrysalis
Briscoe Elem.	Lewis Elem.	Deady Middle
Burnet Elem.	Oates Elem.	Edison Middle
Cage Elem.	Park Place Elem.	Holland Middle
Carrillo Elem.	Patterson Elem.	Jackson Middle
Crespo Elem.	Pleasantville Elem.	Stevenson Middle
Dávila Elem.	Port Houston Elem.	Ortiz Middle
De Zavala Elem.	Robinson Elem.	Austin High
Franklin Elem.	Rucker Elem.	Chávez High
Gallegos Elem.	The Rusk School	Eastwood Academy
Harris, J. R. Elem.	Sánchez Elem.	East Early College
Harris, R. P. Elem.	Southmayd Elem.	Furr High / REACH
Henderson Elem.	Tijerina Elem.	Milby High



The ExxonMobil Foundation presented a check for \$1.2 million to Houston A+ Challenge to continue a number of math programs to improve student achievement.

**Burnet** principal, Cynthia Galaviz says, “the *Reasoning Mind Program* has been a hit at **Burnet**. Our fifth graders have never had so much fun while working on math problems. *Reasoning Mind* motivates students to continue to work to advance along the program and it allows student collaboration.”

Reid Whitaker of **Port Houston** adds, “the *Reasoning Mind*

program is truly a comprehensive math curriculum that meets the needs of the individual learner. Students are no longer frustrated when they do math because they learn at their own pace. It is excellent!” Kim Heckman of **Park Place** says, “The program is able to differentiate math instruction so that students can soar to new heights in math.”

## Lewis Elementary VHI Grant

**Lewis** Elementary was awarded two musical instrument grants from national foundations last year. Over 750 economically disadvantaged students at **Lewis Elementary** now have the opportunity to learn to play the piano and acoustic guitar, thanks to generous instrument donations from the *VHI Save the Music* and *the Little Kids Rock* foundations. The school now has a



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