



PRESS RELEASE

HISD Media Relations Department

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HISD Board of Education Creates Mandarin Chinese Language Immersion Magnet School

December 8, 2011 – HISD’s first ever Mandarin Chinese Language Immersion Magnet School will open in time for the 2012-2013 school year, the Board of Education decided Thursday with a unanimous vote.

The school will be located at the site of the former Holden Elementary School, 812 West 28th Street, and will initially serve students in the early elementary school grades, with additional grades to be added in subsequent years.

HISD Trustee Harvin Moore, who took the lead in proposing the new school, said it will serve students from throughout the city.

“This is a program for everyone,” Moore said, adding that such programs in other U.S. cities have drawn heavy interest from families of all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Mandarin Chinese is the most spoken language in the world and Texas trade with China has increased more than 600 percent over the past decade. Texas is second only to California among states that do the most business with China.

Last week, national leaders in Chinese language and culture education visited HISD to discuss the district’s plan to expand programs that teach Chinese language and culture. [Click here](#) to watch a video about the meeting.

HISD has applied for a \$150,000 seed grant from the College Board to create a prestigious Confucius Institute, which would serve as a central hub of HISD’s Chinese language program, offering information and instructional resources, coordinating professional development for teachers, and strengthening partnerships with local and national organizations and institutions that have expertise.

The district, in partnership with the Asia Society, currently operates Confucius Classrooms at three schools: International High School at Sharpstown, Houston Academy for International Studies, and Kolter Elementary School. HISD also plans to expand the number of these classrooms and to seek additional models to increase access for students to learn about the language and culture of China.

Martha Blackwelder, executive director of the Asia Society Texas Center, said the new school will be “a great asset for Houston.”

“It’s essential that more Americans study foreign language in general, and in particular Chinese,” Blackwelder said.

Gordon Quan, a member of HISD’s Asian-American Advisory Committee, said the school will offer a much-needed program for children such as his grand-daughter, who will enter an HISD kindergarten next year.

“I look forward to her having opportunities that I did not have when I was a student in HISD,” Quan said. “Thank you for listening to our ideas and suggestions.”

Superintendent Terry Grier said the program helps meet the demands of a city competing in a global economy.

“We don’t live in isolation,” Dr. Grier said. “Houston is a world player.”

The **Houston Independent School District** is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States with 281 schools and more than 200,000 students. 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.