



PRESS RELEASE

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Houston Business Leaders Tour Apollo Campus

Greater Houston Partnership renews pledge of support for HISD plan to transform struggling schools

January 10, 2011 – Leaders of Houston’s largest business organization pledged Monday to help the Houston Independent School District expand the ambitious Apollo 20 school transformation program to more campuses next fall.

The comments from Greater Houston Partnership President and CEO Jeff Moseley and Vice Chairman Larry Kellner followed a tour of Lee High School, one of nine HISD middle schools and high schools using a longer academic year, longer school days, intensive tutoring and other strategies aimed at reversing a trend of academic failure.

“The business community is committed to stand with Apollo 20,” Moseley said.

Moseley and Kellner called on the Houston business community to offer more financial support to the initiative, which HISD plans to expand into 11 struggling elementary schools next fall. Local businesses and foundations have already contributed more than \$1.4 million to the effort.

“It’s so critical that we find a way to fund this,” Kellner said. “We’ve got to get it in place at all the grade levels.”

The Lee High School tour was hosted by HISD Board President Greg Meyers, Trustee Harvin Moore, Superintendent Terry Grier, and HISD Foundation Chairman and CEO James Calaway.

Grier said the Apollo initiative is especially urgent because schools that repeatedly fail to meet minimum standards face state takeover and could eventually be forced to close. Apollo schools focus their efforts on five key areas, Grier said:

- Making sure each school is staffed with an effective principal and teachers
- Increased instructional time
- Using data to drive instruction
- Intensive tutoring
- A no-excuses culture with high expectations for all

Moore told students that the transformation at Lee has implications for schools throughout the state’s largest school district.

“You can be a beacon for what can happen,” Moore said.

Monday's tour included a stop at Lee's College Center, where students get the help they need to get into college. Every Lee senior has visited a four-year university campus this school year. Ninety-six percent of Lee seniors have signed up to take the SAT college entrance exam and 129 have already been accepted into a four-year university.

"The progress we've seen so far is phenomenal," Grier said.

The tour also included a stop at one of Lee's math tutoring classrooms, where tutors work personally with students to help them catch up academically.

"I had been having trouble with math," said Lee freshman Frank Vibanco, who said he's now on grade level in math after entering Lee behind. "They're making sure you understand everything. They break it down in easier ways."

The **Houston Independent School District** is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States with 298 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.