

HISD PRESS RELEASE

Crespo ES fourth grader wins 25th annual MLK Jr. Oratory Competition

Jan. 15, 2021 – HISD fourth grader Vivianna Serna from Crespo Elementary School finished first among 12 finalists in Houston’s 25th annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratory Competition with a dynamic speech that focused on prejudice, racial and social injustice, and the courage to confront them.

Click [here](#) for video.

Vivianna follows in the footsteps of last year’s winner who was also a Crespo Elementary School student. The 25th annual competition, which draws the eyes of the nation, was held virtually this year at HISD’s Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center in partnership with sponsor Foley & Lardner LLP law firm.

“This competition is one of the highlights of the year in the district because of the amazing skill and talent our students always display,” HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. “The subject matter the children delved into this year was extremely relevant. They are all excellent young ambassadors for the district.”

Competing finalists researched, wrote, memorized and delivered speeches inspired by the late Nobel Peace Prize-winning civil rights leader. Topics this year focused on civil unrest, the contentious presidential election, police brutality and violence.

In her winning speech, Vivianna spoke of the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Vanessa Guillen. She also spoke personally of another child refusing to take her hand due to bigoted viewpoints. She said strength and courage are the keys to overcoming hardships and hate.

“Participating in the competition means a lot to me because I know that it can make an impact in the world and help with situations going on right now,” Vivianna said.

The runner-up in the competition was Pahy’tton Williams, a fourth grader at Foster Elementary School. The third-place finisher was Jakiyah Bickham, also a fourth grader at Pleasantville Elementary School.

The winner received a \$1,000 cash prize. The second-place winner received \$500, and the third-place winner received a \$300 prize.

The remaining finalists who received \$100 are:

- Jason Hudson, Atherton Elementary, fourth grade
- Andrianna Harden, Bastian Elementary, fifth grade
- Jada Rountree, Dogan Elementary, fifth grade
- Skylar Stevenson, Law Elementary, fourth grade
- Mikeen Holiday, Bell Elementary, fourth grade
- Channing Roberts, MacGregor Elementary, fourth grade
- Kamila Reyes, Sutton Elementary, fourth grade
- Goodwill Nsude, Valley West Elementary, fifth grade
- Madison Jones Austin, Young Elementary, fifth grade

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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 280 schools and more than 209,772 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

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