

HISD PRESS RELEASE

Thousands of HISD graduating seniors celebrate at citywide event in their honor

June 5, 2020 – Several thousand Houston Independent School District graduating seniors gathered simultaneously on their respective high school campuses in their caps and gowns today to celebrate during a **citywide event** spearheaded by Mayor Sylvester Turner in collaboration with HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan.

Lathan greeted students at Butler Stadium, site of Westbury High School's celebration and on the campuses of Yates and Wheatley high schools. Turner joined her at Wheatley.

A total of 169 Wheatley High School seniors will receive their diplomas later this month. Nearly 100 percent of the graduating class has met graduation requirements. Among them are college-bound students who have been awarded \$3.2 million in scholarships, and students ready to enter careers equipped with professional certifications as medical technicians or culinary artists.

"We are very proud of all our seniors and their milestone achievements, especially during these unprecedented times," HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said, "It was a joy to see them in their caps and gowns as they enjoyed the celebration that was organized especially for them."

Seniors also assembled in four other districts throughout the Houston area during the one-hour program to view video messages from star athletes such as J.J. Watt, Carlos Correa, Simone Biles and James Harden, and rappers 50 Cent and Slim Thug. Students then enjoyed speeches from their valedictorians, car parades or special photo opportunities.

"The Class of 2020 will go down in history for their enduring spirit during the current crisis," Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said. "The students have successfully navigated throughout a pandemic and protests to improve the relationship between police and the community. I'm so glad they were able to attend the citywide event in their honor. I salute each and every one of these students."

At the Yates event, students and staff observed a moment of silence in honor of former student George Floyd whose death has sparked nationwide protests and calls for an end to police brutality and racism. The Yates Class of 2020 includes 173 graduates who have been awarded \$1.75 million in scholarships.

The celebration at Westbury included members of one of the school's largest senior classes in recent years, 503 students. The class has been awarded \$16 million in scholarships.

The celebrations took place outdoors where social distancing was facilitated and masks were required.

HISD will hold graduation ceremonies virtually starting on Sunday, June 14. Each virtual ceremony will include recorded messages from the superintendent and other district officials, as well as audio of each student's name as their personalized slide is displayed.

Graduates and their families will have the opportunity to remotely view the ceremonies on multiple platforms including at HoustonISD.org.

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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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