

**HISD announces new college and career readiness initiatives**

*May 10, 2018* – The Houston Independent School District on Thursday announced the creation of new programs to expand college and career readiness opportunities for students across the district: Launch HISD and Project Explore.

The new programs are under the newly established Office of Strategy and Innovation led by EMERGE founder Rick Cruz.

Launch HISD is a comprehensive college and career readiness and advising program. The program will serve students at every middle and high school campus in the district, expanding advising and college and career exploration for larger groups of students. The Launch HISD curriculum will incorporate college visits and career exploration, and will include a capstone college or career readiness project that every middle school participant will have to complete to develop their personalized graduation plan.

“If we’re going to live up to our district’s mission to equitably educate the whole child so that every student graduates with the tools to reach their full potential, we have to invest the necessary resources into making sure they’re prepared for life after HISD,” Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. “This program gives our students another vehicle through which they can be ready for a successful and thriving into whatever path they choose - college or career.”

Project Explore is a middle school program modeled after the nationally renowned EMERGE program that was founded in HISD. Students on 10 high-need middle school campuses will receive college and career exploration support, after-school workshops, local and out-of-state college visits, intense one-on-one advising, summer programming and cultural outings.

“The goal of Project Explore is to prepare more students for post-secondary success starting in middle school,” Cruz said. “If we get these students on track to be college- and career-ready early, then it’ll be easier to keep them on track as they matriculate through high school.”

The district also announced an initiative to provide additional supports to African-American and Hispanic male students. National, state, and local data show the two groups are furthest behind in a number of indicators, including college and career readiness. The new initiative will include mentoring with professionals of color, college and career exploration, academic and social emotional support, and leadership development.

All three new initiatives will begin in the 2018-2019 school year.