

Achievement Highlights

Graduation Rate at All-Time District High

The four-year graduation rate for the HISD Class of 2010 was 74.3 percent, a 4.3-point improvement from the prior year. The graduation rate improved among every racial and ethnic group.

HISD Dropout Rate at All-Time District Low

The district's dropout rate now stands at 12.6 percent, a 3.2-point decline from 2009. The dropout rate declined among every racial and ethnic group.

HISD Students Surpassing Their Peers on National Exam

HISD students are out-scoring students across the nation on the Stanford and Aprenda exams in math, science, social science, and language.

More HISD Students Excelling on Advanced Placement Exams

The number of HISD students earning college credit on Advanced Placement Exams has never been higher. In the 2010-2011 school year, HISD high school students scored a 3 or better – the score most colleges require to grant course credit – on 6,657 college-level AP exams, a 35 percent increase from 2009.

Students Excelling on SAT Exams

The number of HISD students scoring 500 or higher on each of the three subjects tested on the SAT college entrance exam is up significantly from the previous year – 18 percent in math, 13 percent in reading, and 10 percent in writing.

Students Earning College Credit While Still in High School

During the 2010-2011 school year, HISD students passed 10,302 college courses through dual-credit partnerships with local colleges, a 21 percent increase from the previous year.

Record Number of Schools on NCEA List of Higher Performing Schools

Eighty-seven schools were listed on the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) List of Higher Performing Schools—more than Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and El Paso combined.

More Schools on *Washington Post* Challenge Index

The *Washington Post* Challenge Index, which focuses on academic rigor, listed 25 Houston schools on its 2011 list, up from 16 schools in 2009.

HISD Schools Set New Record for TBEC Honor Roll

HISD had a record 24 schools on the 2011 Texas Business and Education Coalition Honor Roll.

HISD Schools Listed on *Newsweek's* List of America's Best High Schools

Three HISD schools were listed on *Newsweek's* 2011 List of America's Best High Schools. The schools are Carnegie Vanguard at No. 11; DeBaKey High School for Health Professions, which ranked No. 30; and Challenge Early College High School, ranked No. 327.

National Blue Ribbon Award

Challenge Early College High School, Lyons Elementary School, and Eastwood Academy won the prestigious 2011 National Blue Ribbon Award from the U.S. Department of Education.

ABOUT HISD

- HISD is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States.
- Instruction and school-support services account for almost 82 percent of HISD's general fund budget.
- Central administration accounts for 5 percent of HISD's general fund budget.
- HISD is one of seven districts with the highest school district bond rating in Texas.
- HISD has the lowest property tax rate in Harris County.

HISD has 279 Schools

166 Elementary
41 Middle
44 High
28 Combined/Other

HISD has 203,066 Students

25.1% African American
3.3% Asian
62.4% Hispanic
8.1% White
80.4% Economically Disadvantaged

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Driving Innovation. Transforming Education.

2011
ANNUAL REPORT
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



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MESSAGE FROM THE 2011 BOARD PRESIDENT

In 2011, the Houston Independent School District faced challenges unlike any seen in many years. State budget cuts reduced financial support to our classrooms by \$77 million at a time when a new state accountability system was raising academic standards to a level of rigor intended to prepare every child for college. I am proud to report that

the HISD Board of Education came together to adopt a budget that reflected our desire to protect classrooms while also maintaining the lowest property tax rate of any Harris County school district.

In 2011, we began seeing the fruits of our ambitious initiatives that were designed to make HISD the best school district in America. More HISD students than ever are earning college credit on tough Advanced Placement tests. The number of students beating the national average on the SAT exam is up. Attendance rates improved after we began serving free breakfast to all elementary and middle school students. Graduation rates have never been higher and fewer students are dropping out of school since we opened Grad Labs on every high school campus. Nine secondary schools, that for years had been unable to meet state standards, are now showing real improvement, just one year after we launched the Apollo 20 school turnaround program.

I believe that superior teachers are vital to ensuring the success of our students. And I am proud of the steps HISD has taken to make certain that we have an effective teacher in every classroom. In 2011, we adopted a new teacher appraisal and development system, and we created a new team of specialists to provide more professional development opportunities to our teachers. We understand that our teachers are professionals and they deserve regular feedback, support, and rewards for outstanding performance through the ASPIRE program. Our teachers are on the front lines in educating our students. They play a vital role in shaping the lives of our children, and they have earned our respect, our admiration, and our appreciation for the amazing job they do.

We all know how hard everyone has been working for our children's success and I want to say THANK YOU, on behalf of Houston's children, to our partners, parents, administrators, staff, and especially our teachers. In 2012, we will continue to be faced with challenges. But I know we will continually strive to provide the best education, and ensure that every student in every HISD school is successful through high school and beyond.

Paula M. Harris
2011 President
Board of Education



MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

When a student walks into a classroom on the first day of school, he or she should begin nine months of learning in a safe, inviting environment with caring adults who are dedicated to seeing that student succeed. Imagine what that classroom looks like – and now imagine that classroom for all students, regardless of ZIP code, race, or socioeconomic background.

That's what we've set out to do at HISD – provide a complete education for every student, in every school, every day. It's a simple goal, but the path to it is complex. It starts with an effective teacher in every classroom.

In 2011, we took bold steps to transform the way top teachers are recruited, trained, evaluated, and retained. Teachers now get regular feedback and coaching from specialists right in their classrooms. They're sharing ideas, identifying what works, and developing new ways of teaching lessons to engage students with different learning styles. HISD is committed to recognizing and rewarding top teachers. And teachers whose students consistently demonstrate weak academic growth are asked to exit the organization. Teachers and principals must be held accountable. Children only have one time in school. We owe it to them to deliver a rigorous educational program that prepares them for today's world.

Our focus on meeting the needs of every student is producing exciting results. We have the highest graduation rate and the lowest dropout rate in the history of the district. Schools that were once considered dropout factories have turned around, and 88 percent of the Class of 2011 was accepted into a two- or four-year university. I am proud of the work that we are doing to challenge students and push them to new levels of academic success. The number of students earning college credit on Advanced Placement exams and posting top scores on the SAT has never been higher. HISD's Apollo 20 program is producing results similar to those of the nation's top charter schools. In just one year of increased instructional time and small-group tutoring, students in Apollo 20 schools posted significant gains in math.

In this report, you'll see a glimpse of the innovative thinking that's changing the landscape of our district. In HISD, we are not just focused on a handful of schools or select group of students. We are committed to every child in every school.

Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Investing In Those Who Shape the Future

"I want to applaud the Houston Independent School District for (the) vote to create a new evaluation system ... Houston is providing a model for the state and other districts to follow."

-U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan



HISD Committed to an Effective Teacher in Every Classroom

HISD took bold steps to transform the way top teachers are recruited, trained, and retained with the launch of its Effective Teachers Initiative, a part of the district's Strategic Direction.

HISD created a new Teacher Appraisal and Development System that gives educators fair and useful feedback that is based, in part, on the academic growth their students show in the classroom. The goal is to guarantee HISD has an effective teacher in every classroom.

Moreno Elementary School fifth-grade reading teacher Shanikia Johnson is one of the educators who helped create and refine the new Teacher Appraisal and Development System.

The system "takes into account actual situations, not just the idea of them, or things on paper, or data," Johnson said. "It focuses on what is fair for all teachers across the board, as far as expectations go, and teachers are judged based on multiple observations."

Johnson found value in her own appraiser's observations. "Appraisers can see things sometimes that teachers can't," she explained. "They'll say, 'Maybe you should try this,' or give you some examples of what the ideal looks like. My appraiser has been wonderful. She's given me a lot of resources. For instance, when I was trying to increase the use of technology in my class, she suggested various websites and programs. These allowed my students to work on vocabulary while reinforcing what I taught earlier in the week."



Shanikia Johnson serves as the Effective Teachers Initiative representative at Moreno Elementary School.

EXITING TEACHERS WHOSE STUDENTS SHOW WEAK ACADEMIC GROWTH

In 2010-2011, 373 teachers exited the organization for performance reasons. That's up from 77 in 2009.



HISD Teacher Development Specialist Ben Hernandez works with Davila Elementary School Teacher Michael Meremikwu.

Teacher Development Specialists Coach and Mentor Educators

When it came time to find the best people for coaching and mentoring teachers, HISD went to its deepest talent pool: the current teaching ranks.

The Teacher Development Specialists (TDS) provide teachers with professional development and training that aligns with the new teacher appraisal system. They spend time in teachers' classrooms observing and identifying development areas, and helping teachers with everything from planning lessons to asking questions that improve student performance.

Ben Hernandez spent nine years teaching at Lantrip Elementary before becoming a TDS. He encourages HISD teachers to reach out to other educators for

help with lesson delivery and development.

"This initiative is changing the culture of the district by showing teachers that it's OK to share and to get feedback," Hernandez said. "My job is to show teachers that they are their own best resource."

HISD has hired 130 Teacher Development Specialists, and they have conducted more than 13,000 observations this school year.

"The TDS position is an example of how HISD values its teachers," Hernandez said. "Creating a system that focuses on individually tailored development is a testament to the tremendous respect the district has for teachers."

"This initiative is changing the culture of the district by showing teachers that it's OK to share and to get feedback... My job is to show teachers that they are their own best resource."

- Ben Hernandez

AN EXTRA YEAR OF LEARNING

"The students of an ineffective teacher learn an average of half a year's worth of material in one school year, while the students of a very good teacher learn 1.5 year's worth, a difference of a year's worth of learning in a single year."

Source: Eric Hanushek, 2010

Supporting Principals and Grooming School Leaders

HISD Grows the Leaders of Tomorrow

HISD is committed to having an effective principal leading every school, and the search for talented leaders often begins within the walls of HISD schools. In an effort to aggressively recruit, develop, and mentor talented individuals, future leaders are now taking part in ground-breaking programs.

GROW YOUR OWN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

For: Educators with leadership potential

- The program provides intensive training about decision-making, data analysis, budgeting, and instructional leadership.
- Since the inception of the program, 67 principals and 101 assistant principals and deans have been recruited, selected, and hired into leadership positions within the district.
- Leadership Development supports administrators who are hired into leadership positions by providing ongoing professional development.

THE NEW AND EMERGING LEADERS INSTITUTE

For: First-year principals and educators with leadership potential

Participants will:

- Attend sessions led by leading experts to learn about big picture thinking, instructional leadership, and effective management
- Take personal assessments to identify their leadership strengths and weaknesses
- Complete an individualized learning plan
- Meet with a coach who will work with them throughout the school year

SUMMER LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

For: Principals and their leadership teams

- This three-day institute is focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment.



Ebony Cumby is a first-year principal at Askew Elementary School who participated in the "Grow Your Own" Leadership Development Program. "I always knew I had it in me to affect instruction on a larger scale," she explained. "I have a passion for administration."

University Partnerships Help Current, Emerging Leaders Build Strategy



Strategic Marketing

Principals and assistant principals have the opportunity to learn about strategic ways to market their schools and programs.



Collaborative Urban Leadership Program

Teachers and other campus leaders are able to earn a master's degree in administration and supervision. Approximately 20 employees are enrolled in the program.



University of St. Thomas

MBEA

Teachers and instructional coordinators have the opportunity to earn a master's degree in business education administration. Fifteen educators are currently enrolled in the program.

Principal Academy for Collaborative Engagement (PACE)

Teachers and instructional coordinators who have a master's degree can receive certification to become principals.

National Blue Ribbon Award

Three HISD schools won the prestigious 2011 National Blue Ribbon Award



Challenge Early College High School

Principal Justin Fuentes (2010-2011)
Principal Tonya Miller (2011-2012)



Eastwood Academy

Principal Rolando "Rudy" Trevino (2010-2011)
Principal Paula Fendley (2011-2012)



Lyons Elementary School

Principal Cecilia A. Gonzales

The U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes the nation's schools that either are high-performing or have improved student achievement to high levels, especially among economically disadvantaged or minority students.

Principals of the Year

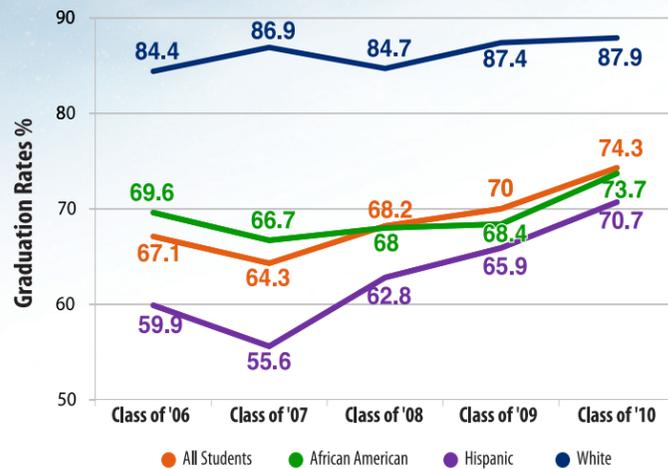
HISD recognized three outstanding school leaders as 2011 Principal of the Year. At the high school level, the honor went to Richard Barajas. He is the former principal of Milby High School and now serves as a school improvement officer. Marla McNeal-Sheppard was recognized at the middle school level. Formerly the leader of Fleming Middle School, she is now the principal at Yates High School. HISD's Elementary School Principal of the Year is Marala Blackmon of Thompson Elementary.



HISD Schools were listed on the Washington Post Challenge Index, which focuses on academic rigor

Meeting the Needs of Every Student

HISD'S GRADUATION RATE IS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH.



Data-driven Mentoring Committees Keep Tabs on At-risk Students

When Principal Jaime Castañeda first took the helm of Davis High School, he was overwhelmed by the school's soaring dropout rate.

But in the past six years, Davis has gone from a school with one of the district's highest dropout rates to a school with one of the lowest.

Castañeda credits the turnaround to the school's dedicated teachers and support staff, and a community that rallies behind the school. But he says the school's Dropout Recovery Intervention Prevention (DRIP) program created the structure school administrators needed.

The school's DRIP committee, which is made up of assistant principals, teachers, college access coordinators, clerks, police officers, and counselors, meets every Wednesday morning to talk about students who are at risk of dropping out. During the meeting, staff members analyze data and share information about the students. Once at-risk students are identified, individual plans are created and implemented.

"We've come a long way," he said. "We're just doing what works."



Principal Jaime Castañeda helps students at Davis High School prepare for college.

High School Ahead Gets Students Back on Track to Graduate

When HISD students returned to school after the winter break, several hundred started course work in a new grade.

The High School Ahead Academy is essentially a middle school for older students and it's designed to get students back on track to graduate with their peers. Students at the High School Ahead Academy are exposed to an accelerated curriculum that combines two years of school into one. By mid-year, 86 percent of the student body had qualified to be promoted to the next grade.

"If you come in as a sixth-grader, we give you all of sixth grade in three to four months, and then we test and assess students to make sure they have mastered the concepts before moving them on to the next grade," said Principal Tynette Guinn.

Students at the High School Ahead Academy are given individualized lesson plans and double blocks of reading and math. They are also taught in a smaller classroom environment with teachers trained in accelerated instruction. The school has a licensed social worker on staff and offers a variety of counseling services for students, including anger management and conflict resolution.

88%
of the Class of 2011 was accepted into a two- or four-year university



Twilight High School graduate Gary Banks plans to attend college and become a chef.

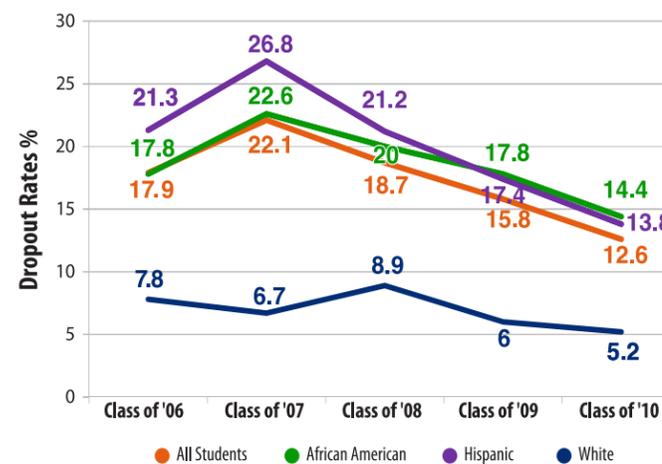
Twilight High Schools and Grad Labs Help Students Earn Diplomas

Gary Banks wasn't sure if he would ever graduate from high school, but every day his phone would ring. His graduation coach would check in with him.

In June, he walked the stage in a cap and gown and earned a diploma from one of HISD's Twilight High Schools. The program allows students to do online coursework at their own pace. It's designed for those who find it difficult to attend class during the regular school day.

Students who need extra help to graduate are also finding support in the district's Grad Labs. Students can work online to recover course credits and receive tutoring on state tests and college entrance exams.

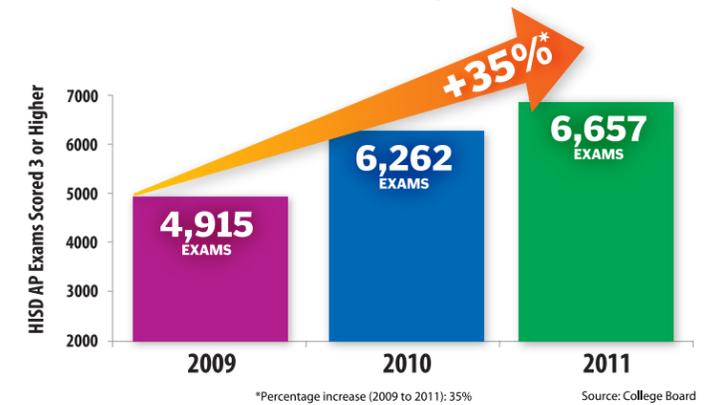
HISD'S DROPOUT RATE IS AT AN ALL-TIME LOW.



More HISD Students Excel on Advanced Placement Exams

Those who take HISD's Advanced Placement (AP) courses will tell you the teachers push their students until they can't be pushed any more. The hard work is paying off, as the number of HISD students earning college credit on Advanced Placement exams has never been higher. HISD covers all AP exam fees for students and has vastly expanded the number of AP courses available at every high school.

HISD AP Exams Scored 3 or Higher



Thu-Mai Nguyen, a graduate of Lamar High School's International Baccalaureate (IB) program, won a car, the grand prize at HISD's Cool to Be Smart celebration. The event recognized and rewarded students who challenged themselves in AP and IB courses.

Leading the School Turnaround Charge

“In the first experiment of its kind in the country, the Houston public schools are testing whether techniques proven successful in high-performing urban charters can also help raise achievement in regular public schools.”

–New York Times, September 6, 2011

The
New York
Times

Groundbreaking Apollo 20 Academic Achievement Gains Match Top Charters

It was a first-of-its-kind program built on the idea that practices from the nation’s most successful charter schools would produce the same results in a large, urban school district. And after just one year of increased instructional time and tutoring, the results can be summed up in two words: it’s working.

Apollo 20, a groundbreaking program designed to improve the academic achievement of students in HISD’s historically underperforming schools, is creating models for excellent teaching and learning that can be adopted throughout the district – and the country.

“No one has tried to do this in public schools; they just have not because of how hard it is,” said nationally recognized education reformer

“No one has tried to do this in public schools; they just have not because of how hard it is.”

– Geoffrey Canada
President and CEO,
Harlem Children’s Zone

Geoffrey Canada, President and CEO of the Harlem Children’s Zone. “I don’t want to pretend it is going to be easy, but I am going to say it is absolutely doable.”

The Apollo 20 model features five key practices from the nation’s most successful charter schools, including: increased instructional time; highly effective teachers and principals; intensive, small-group tutoring; a data-driven approach to teaching and learning; and establishing a culture of high expectations for all students, regardless of background or past performance.

In 2010–2011, the academic gains were particularly strong in math, the subject for which all sixth- and ninth-grade Apollo 20 students received intensive tutoring. The percentage of Apollo 20 ninth-graders passing the TAKS math exam increased 16 points last school year, compared with a 2-point increase districtwide.



APOLLO 20 TUTORS COME FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE

Monica Edwards Nixon believes every child has the ability to learn. She says it just takes the right combination of respect, care, and discipline to ensure children succeed in school.

Nixon is one of more than 230 Math Fellows hired to deliver intensive math tutoring to students in grades 6 and 9 at Apollo 20 schools. She left her financial planning job two years ago to explore a career in education and is working at Fondren Middle School.



Sharpstown High School Campus Improvement Coordinator Brandi Brevard tracks student data.

Sharpstown Data Room Tells Story of Innovative Teaching Practices

From within the walls of Sharpstown High School, an innovative way to shape instruction using data was born.

It’s called the War Room, and it’s catching the attention of schools across the state.

Converted from a classroom, all four walls are covered with color-coded information about every student, displaying their common assessment and benchmark scores. Teachers can visually track their students’ progress, and collaborate regularly to compare results and identify effective strategies.

Brandi Brevard, the campus improvement coordinator, led the effort to convert the Sharpstown classroom into a data room.

“I am very data-driven,” said Brevard. “As a classroom teacher, I used data to drive my instruction and provide prescriptive interventions based on an individual student’s needs. Without data, how do we know what students have learned or what they still need to work on? Using data and tracking students’ progress is what made me a better teacher; it enabled me to help all of my students grow academically.”

PROMISING RESULTS

After the first year of the Apollo 20 three-year program:

- Math skills acquired by the average Apollo 20 student represent an estimated 3½ months of additional schooling.
- Sixth-grade students, who received daily math tutoring, gained the equivalent of six additional months of schooling.
- Gains achieved by ninth-grade students ranged between nearly five months to more than nine months of additional learning.



HISD has received \$14.4 million from businesses and charitable foundations in support of Apollo 20.

HOUSTON
CHRONICLE

“HISD deserves a badge of courage for trying to do hard things in real schools. One year into a three-year experiment, the results may not be perfect, but they’re certainly promising.”

– Houston Chronicle editorial, October 17, 2011

TOGETHER WE CAN... WHATEVER IT TAKES... NO EXCUSES.

Recognizing Teachers and Developing Partnerships



National Bilingual Teacher of the Year



Lantrip Elementary School Teacher Elizabeth Martinez was named 2011 National Bilingual Teacher of the Year by the National Association for Bilingual Education.

HISD Secondary School Teacher of the Year Michael Clark

Michael Clark encourages students at Bellaire High School to challenge themselves in Advanced Placement classes and uses creative techniques to advance their learning.

"They do everything from writing songs to producing plays to demonstrate their knowledge, [and] might develop a presentation on fiscal policy and use characters from *Glee* to ask the questions," Clark said.

Despite 20 years of experience in the classroom, Clark is always looking for ways to improve his teaching in order to give his students the critical thinking skills they need to succeed on AP exams,

in college, and beyond.

The Advanced Placement (AP) teacher in government and economics says, "Every day, I ask myself a series of questions: 'Are the students excited about learning? Do they feel like a valued participant in the lesson? Are a variety of strategies and evaluations being used in the instruction?' I then adapt my style to the changing dynamics of the classroom."

Clark wants to make sure that no student up for a challenge gets left behind. He encourages students who may not have ordinarily taken AP social studies courses to join his class, and uses creative techniques to advance their learning.



Michael Clark and his students discuss the impact of fiscal policy on international trade

HISD Elementary School Teacher of the Year Heather Gaines

Heather Gaines, HISD's 2011 Elementary Teacher of the Year, is the instructional coordinator at Lovett Elementary School. In her previous role as literacy coach, she worked with struggling third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students to increase their reading comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Now, she uses her expertise to benefit all students in every area of study, including reading.

Gaines has created book clubs, literature circles, and workstations to help students improve their reading skills. She believes her students can learn at high levels and achieve at least a year's growth in reading, if not more.

Much like their students, teachers also have to push themselves, Gaines said.

"The best teachers continue to learn and grow. They seek out new information and ideas by either consulting with knowledgeable colleagues or attending workshops," she said. "They try out what they have learned and share both successes and challenges with colleagues."



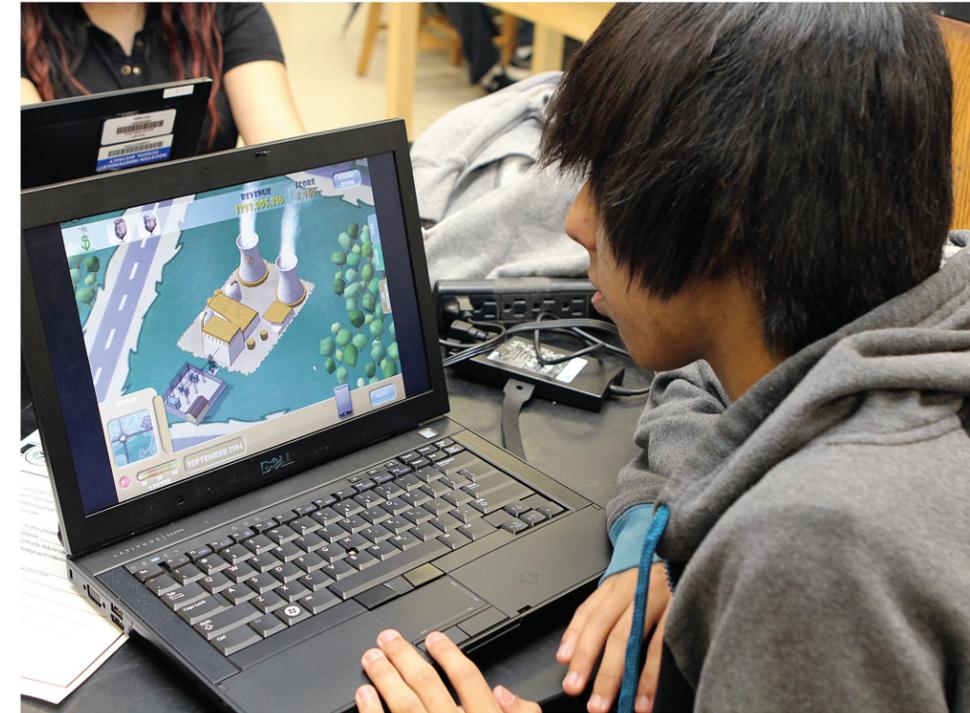
Heather Gaines has created book clubs, literature circles, and workstations to help students learn to read.

Computer Simulation Links Energy Industry, Learning

Houston is the energy capital of the world and, to work in this exciting industry, HISD students must be prepared to take on advanced concepts in math and science. During the 2010-2011 school year, HISD and partner Chevron collaborated to expose sixth through 10th grade students to energy, engineering, and strategic planning by using one of the most popular and interactive educational devices—computer games.

In the New Digital Energy (NDE) computer game, HISD students build and maintain energy companies to meet the needs of 12 cities throughout the United States. The game challenges competing teams to make decisions about where to place and maintain power plants, what type of power to use, and how to handle environmental issues and emergencies. To unlock options within the game, students must master lessons that require an understanding of concepts in physics, chemistry, earth science, and math.

Chevron and HISD plan to expand the game to include fourth, fifth, 11th, and 12th graders next year.



Angel Flores, an eighth-grade student at Stevenson Middle School, plays the New Digital Energy computer game.



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HISD schools were named to the 2011 Texas Business and Education Coalition Honor Roll.

Lanier Middle School is one of two dozen schools on the TBEC Honor Roll.

Delivering on Promises, Improving Our Schools



Students enjoy recess on Peck Elementary School's new campus.

Students Seeing Benefits of 2007 Bond Referendum

Thousands of students at HISD schools are enjoying new, renovated, and expanded campuses, and many more students will have the same opportunity as HISD works to complete additional construction projects in time for the 2012-2013 school year.

Each new, renovated, and expanded campus is part of a \$1.176 billion capital construction program, made possible in part by the \$805 million bond referendum approved by voters in 2007.

Since the bond was passed, HISD crews have been hard at work building 16 new campuses and renovating more than 100 others.

Delivering on bond promises is one way HISD is building a strong culture of trust through action in the community. The district is working with our schools and the community to fulfill the commitments funded by the 2007 bond.

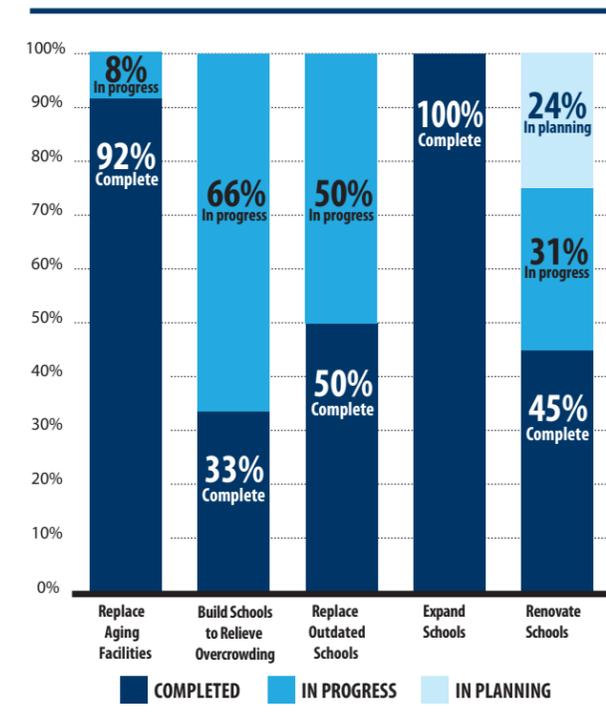
Each new and expanded HISD school is a "green" school, built to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. Key features in LEED schools include the installation of water-conserving plumbing, energy efficient systems and controls, improved air quality, and use of natural light.



Crockett Elementary School was expanded to relieve overcrowding.

Bond Construction Being Completed on Budget and On Time

HISD is fulfilling its commitment to voters by making major facility upgrades at schools across the city. This chart provides an overview of work initiated and completed thus far under the 2007 bond.



An expansion of Grady Middle School was completed in December 2011.



DeAnda Elementary School opened in November 2011.



Carnegie Vanguard High School is set to open in August 2012.

HISD EARNS EXCELLENCE IN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AWARD

HISD is one of only two school districts in America to receive the Excellence in Financial Management Award from the Council of the Great City Schools. The honor was presented after a panel of senior financial executives from some of the nation's largest schools systems reviewed HISD's management practices. Areas reviewed include budget and finance, business services, human resources, and information technology.

"HISD is leading the way in teaching students more effectively and running schools more efficiently."

-Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools

Using Technology in Strategic Ways

Laptops, Tablets Enhance Daily Instruction

Susan Laforet's fifth-grade class was learning about ecosystems. But instead of studying a traditional textbook, students plugged longitude and latitude coordinates into Google Earth. Within seconds, students were hovering over mysterious landscapes, zooming in on terrain, and making observations about the ecosystem based on evidence.

Welcome to a 21st century classroom at Herrera Academy of Technology.

In Laforet's classroom, students worked in small groups and used iPads, laptops, smartboards, and PowerPoint presentations. If they needed research materials or photos, students downloaded materials from iBooks or a special folder on the classroom server.

"It's fun," said fifth-grader Olympia Sprague, about the iPad she used to zoom in on a snowy mountain landscape and determine what country her ecosystem was located in. "This goes faster and it's big and easy to use."

Technology is integrated throughout the classrooms at Herrera Elementary School. But the technology integration doesn't come from only the equipment students have access to. What sets the school apart is the innovative way educators use the equipment to enhance, supplement, and differentiate daily instruction to meet the



Students at Herrera Elementary use iPads and other technological devices in daily lessons, but the success of the program begins with an effective teacher.

"We don't use technology to drive instruction, we use it to supplement and enhance."

— Herrera Principal Christopher Carnes

diverse needs of students.

"We don't use technology to drive instruction," said Herrera Principal Christopher Carnes. "We use it to supplement and enhance."

Teachers incorporate multiple technologies, such as SMART Boards, iPod Touches, iPads, and Kindles, into their lessons, through small group activities and workstations, making truly differentiated instruction possible. Students at the school are often placed in small groups based on learning styles and are given technology devices that meet their learning needs.

"Education needs to go in this direction," said Carnes. "We aren't doing this to improve test scores. We are doing this to prepare students for the future. They are going to be citizens in this world of technology, and if they aren't comfortable with it, they aren't going to shine."

Resource Consolidation Bringing Innovation, Efficiency to HISD

Giving educators the technological foundation they need to do their best teaching is what drives Chief Technology Information Officer Arnold Viramontes. A member of Team HISD since April 2011, he came to the district with the goal of creating an infrastructure that makes it easier for teachers to teach and students to learn.

A key component of Viramontes' plan is the creation of a "data warehouse," which will give educators quicker and easier access to the data they need to do their jobs. "The goal is to keep a single repository of information that, over time, allows you to conduct analyses and

data-mining to see how students are doing," he said. "This will allow us to look at the anomalies in a way we never have before."

Another goal is to upgrade the district's infrastructure—not just the bandwidth—by leveraging the \$68 million in eRate funding the district received in 2011. The "virtualization" of the district's 2,500 servers will also enable the consolidated system to pull precisely—and only—the amount of resources it needs to accomplish any given task at a particular work location.

Finally, the district is developing "blending" strategies that will allow teachers to use whatever technological tools or resources they might need to deliver their lessons most effectively. A study of the Bering Strait, for instance, might incorporate the projection of topographical data from various geological epochs, or other data from online sources. A pilot program based on "blended" technologies is expected to be in place by the start of the next school year.

Lee High School Student Develops App

Lee High School sophomore Mustafa Taleb exemplifies the innovative spirit that is taking hold at HISD. Mustafa not only developed a smart phone app for both Windows- and Android-based platforms while still a freshman, he also worked closely with Assistant Principal Rupak Gandhi to code Lee's online course selection tool.

The app he invented allows Lee students to keep up with campus news and athletic scores, as well as email teachers. It also has a direct link to Parent Student Connect, so students can log in to their accounts at any time and check their grades. The course selection tool, meanwhile, uses real-time data to limit students' choices at registration time to the classes they still need for credit to graduate.

"I've had a computer since I was 3 years old," explained Mustafa, who plans to become a doctor and considers programming a hobby. "My dad was always encouraging me to go on it and learn stuff, so I did, and when I came to the U.S., I decided to learn programming, because I thought it would be fun. And it was."

Mustafa has already completed three more apps for Windows-based platforms, and has two more under development.



Lee High School sophomore Mustafa Taleb has created four apps and has two more under construction.

HISD Addresses Special Education Needs



Cristian Amaya-Vazquez uses a Universally Designed for Learning workstation at Dowling Middle School.

HISD is using cutting-edge technology to teach students with special needs.

Last summer, 583 Universally Designed for Learning computer workstations were delivered to 224 campuses housing self-contained special education programs supporting students with the most-significant, disability-related needs. The workstations feature adjustable-height desks, computer monitors on monitor arms that can be raised and lowered and viewed at any angle, and special learning software. All stations also feature flatbed scanners to enable teachers to convert text-based materials into digital text that can support students with special needs to independently read, edit, and respond to the text.

HISD Manager of Occupational/Physical Therapy Elizabeth Goodrich said the power

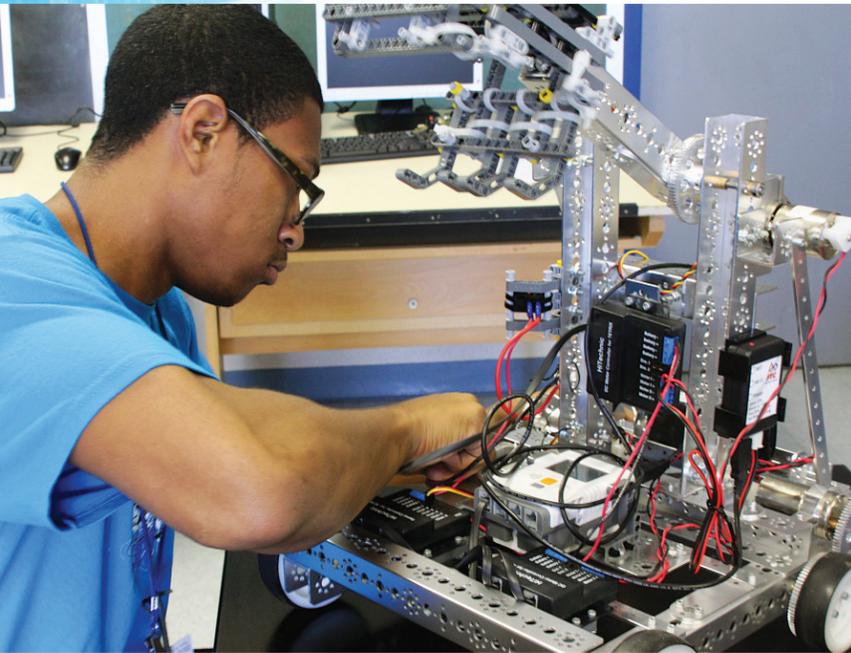
of these workstations is in the flexibility they afford teachers to design instruction to meet an individual student's learning needs.

"If any child needs to be able to utilize technology, it is the child with special needs," she said. "This technology builds a bridge that helps children with special needs overcome the barrier to learning that they may experience as a result of disability."

The workstations were installed after an independent review of the district's Special Education Department identified a number of areas in which the district could improve. The Universally Designed for Learning workstations align directly with recommendations made in the review.

HISD has also created a Special Education Advisory Committee to obtain feedback directly from parents and other student advocates.

Preparing Students for Today's World



Washington High School will be the site of a new HILZ academy.

10/30/11

College courses were successfully completed by HISD students through dual-credit partnerships with local colleges during the 2010-2011 school year.

HISD Launches Houston Innovative Learning Zone

Students at six Houston ISD campuses will have the chance to earn associate's degrees and receive career training in high-demand technical fields.

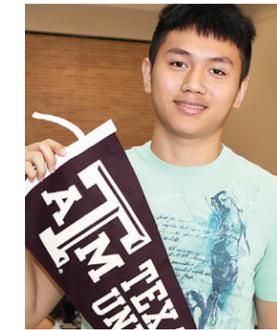
HISD plans to establish the Houston Innovative Learning Zone (HILZ) schools in direct response to frequent requests from students, and the Houston community at large, for HISD to bolster its portfolio of Career and Technical Education offerings.

Students who successfully complete the program will graduate from high school with an associate's degree and valuable industry credentials that can lead to rewarding careers in high-growth technical fields.

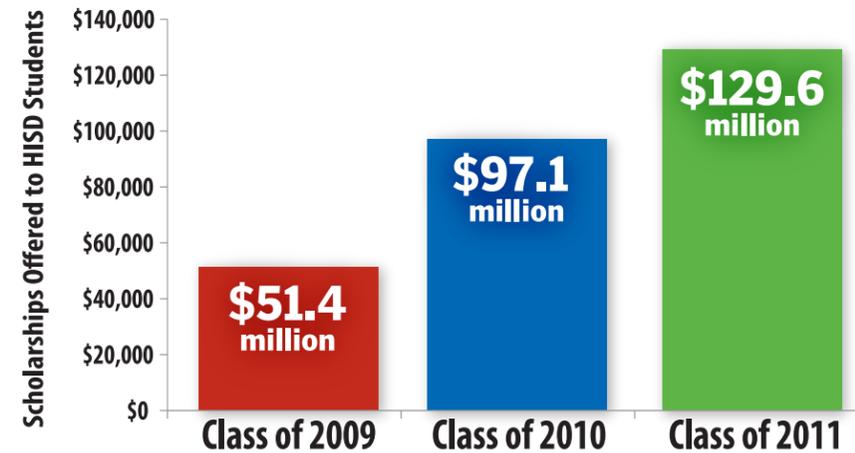
Working in partnership with the Houston Community College System,

HISD will be prepared to open these six new HILZ academies in time for the 2012-2013 school year:

- The School of Logistics and Global Supply at Sterling
- The School of Manufacturing Engineering Technology at Washington
- The School of Electronic Engineering Technology at Furr
- The School for Process Technology at Kashmere
- The School for Pharmacy Technology at Long
- The School for Network and Computer Administration at Scarborough



The Class of 2011 Earned a Record \$129.6 Million in College Scholarships



Source: HISD Department of College, Career, and Counseling



Newsweek
AMERICAS BEST
HIGH SCHOOLS

Carnegie Vanguard High School
DeBakey High School for Health Professions
Challenge Early College High School





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MESSAGE FROM THE 2011 BOARD PRESIDENT



In 2011, the Houston Independent School District faced challenges unlike any seen in many years. State budget cuts reduced financial support to our classrooms by \$77 million at a time when a new state accountability system was raising academic standards to a level of rigor intended to prepare every child for college. I am proud to report that

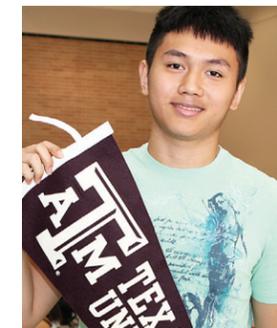
the HISD Board of Education came together to adopt a budget that reflected our desire to protect classrooms while also maintaining the lowest property tax rate of any Harris County school district.

In 2011, we began seeing the fruits of our ambitious initiatives that were designed to make HISD the best school district in America. More HISD students than ever are earning college credit on tough Advanced Placement tests. The number of students beating the national average on the SAT exam is up. Attendance rates improved after we began serving free breakfast to all elementary and middle school students. Graduation rates have never been higher and fewer students are dropping out of school since we opened Grad Labs on every high school campus. Nine secondary schools, that for years had been unable to meet state standards, are now showing real improvement, just one year after we launched the Apollo 20 school turnaround program.

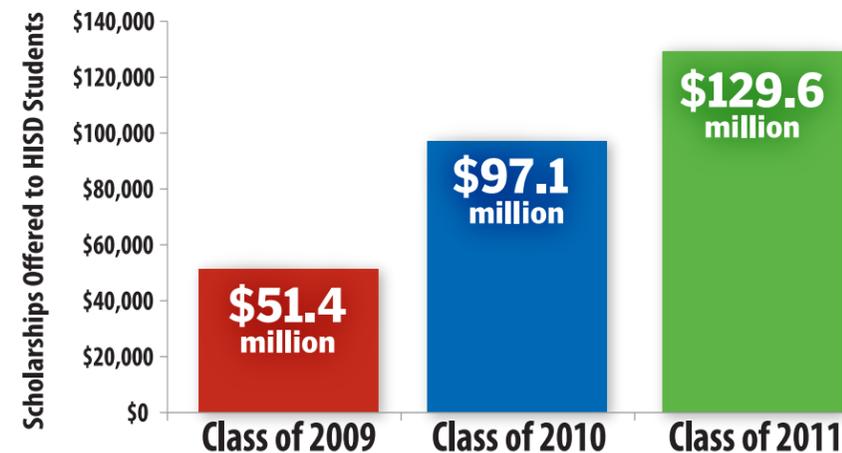
I believe that superior teachers are vital to ensuring the success of our students. And I am proud of the steps HISD has taken to make certain that we have an effective teacher in every classroom. In 2011, we adopted a new teacher appraisal and development system, and we created a new team of specialists to provide more professional development opportunities to our teachers. We understand that our teachers are professionals and they deserve regular feedback, support, and rewards for outstanding performance through the ASPIRE program. Our teachers are on the front lines in educating our students. They play a vital role in shaping the lives of our children, and they have earned our respect, our admiration, and our appreciation for the amazing job they do.

We all know how hard everyone has been working for our children's success and I want to say THANK YOU, on behalf of Houston's children, to our partners, parents, administrators, staff, and especially our teachers. In 2012, we will continue to be faced with challenges. But I know we will continually strive to provide the best education, and ensure that every student in every HISD school is successful through high school and beyond.

Paula M. Harris
2011 President
Board of Education



The Class of 2011 Earned a Record \$129.6 Million in College Scholarships



Source: HISD Department of College, Career, and Counseling

