

# HISD PRESS RELEASE

## Lockhart Elementary School student wins annual Martin Luther King Jr. Oratory Competition

*Fifth-grader wins \$1,000 prize for original speech inspired by civil rights icon*

Jan. 18, 2019 – Lockhart Elementary School fifth-grader Nyla Johnson passionately touted our nation’s legacy of overcoming great challenges and called on the community to work together during her winning speech on what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would say to the children of today’s world.

Eleven-year-old Nyla was awarded first place for her original speech titled “What Would He Say?” at the 23rd annual Martin Luther King Jr. Oratory Competition. The event was held Friday at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Christ in downtown Houston. She was among 12 HISD fourth- and fifth-grade students to participate in the final round of the competition sponsored by Foley Gardere LLP.

“I’m honored to have witnessed the outstanding speeches given by our incredible HISD students,” HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. “It’s powerful to know that 9- and 10-year-olds know what is going on in our country and can address critical issues that impact our communities, such as immigration and bullying.”

The program invites students to write and present a short original speech that envisions King’s message in today’s world. This year’s theme was “What would Dr. King say to the children of today’s world?”

“I worked so hard and I’m so proud of myself,” said Johnson after being announced as the winner. “The inspiration for my speech was Dr. King himself. I know what he fought for and I knew how he would say [his message] to the children of today’s world.”

Second-place winner Asia Jefferson of Blackshear Elementary School and third-place winner Chrisette Wigfall of Askew Elementary School both called on their peers and community to love one another and be agents of change in their speeches.

During the competition, students were judged based on delivery, stage presence and decorum, content interpretation, and memorization. The winner was awarded a \$1,000 prize. The second-place winner received a \$500 prize, and the third-place winner was presented with a \$300 prize.

A \$100 monetary award was given to the remaining finalists:

- **Corinne Ellis**, Law Elementary School
- **Annoria McDuffie**, Pleasantville Elementary School
- **Raheem Khokhar**, Sutton Elementary School
- **Leik Mire**, Windsor Village Elementary School
- **Emmanuel Akukoro**, Valley West Elementary School
- **Irmani Garcia**, Bastian Elementary School
- **Mya Parnell**, Foster Elementary School
- **Beverly Antia**, Bell Elementary School
- **Alexandria Zelaya**, Cornelius Elementary School

**Media interested in securing one-on-one interviews with Johnson can contact the HISD Press Office at 713-556-6393 or [PressOffice@houstonisd.org](mailto:PressOffice@houstonisd.org).**

The winning speeches can be viewed online at [www.Facebook.com/HoustonISD](http://www.Facebook.com/HoustonISD) and on <http://blogs.houstonisd.org/news/>.

**HISD PRESS OFFICE** | 713-556-6393 | [PressOffice@HoustonISD.org](mailto:PressOffice@HoustonISD.org) | [HoustonISD.org/HISDmedia](http://HoustonISD.org/HISDmedia)

The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States, with 284 schools and more than 214,000 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

**HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT** 4400 West 18<sup>th</sup> Street | Houston, Texas 77092-8501  
[HoustonISD.org](http://HoustonISD.org) | [facebook.com/HoustonISD](https://www.facebook.com/HoustonISD) • [facebook.com/HISDEspanol](https://www.facebook.com/HISDEspanol) | @HoustonISD • @HISDEspanol