

# HISD PRESS RELEASE

## **HISD Foundation dinner spotlights national conversation on importance of public education**

*March 5, 2019* – About 1,500 public education advocates, HISD educators, supporters and students attended the HISD Foundation’s first-ever Public Education Matters Benefit Dinner.

The highlight of the evening was a fireside chat between Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan, CEO of Teach for America Elisa Villanueva Beard and Harlem Children’s Zone Founder Geoffrey Canada. The discussion was moderated by ABC’s *What Would You Do?* host John Quiñones who recalled his childhood as a migrant worker and a defining moment when his father asked if he wanted to do that kind of work the rest of his life or get a college education.

“Public education levels the playing field,” Lathan said. “I want people in the community to reach out to elected officials and encourage them to increase funding for our school district so that our students can continue to grow and thrive academically and compete with their peers worldwide.”

Canada spoke about the importance of having a foundation that raises money to support under-funded enrichment programs.

“Kids have to have the arts, sports and tutoring programs. Why is it that for poor kids this has to be an exceptional provision?” he asked. “Providing these things for poor kids should not be exceptional but the norm.”

The benefit dinner took place this year in lieu of the State of the Schools Luncheon with a goal of raising \$50,000 for strategic student-centered initiatives, like the Innovation Fund, which financially supports community gardens, robotics, coding and literacy programs. The foundation is a non-profit organization which raises money for student enrichment programs that do not receive adequate public dollars.

HISD student Sarah Grace of *The Voice* fame, opened the evening with a performance. The emcee for the event was Northline High School student Tren’kell Reeves. Spotlight speakers included HISD students Nia Burch and Naizeth Leal and parent Shawn Boswell Rushing. The Kashmere Reunion Stage Band also performed. The benefit dinner was held at the Hilton Americas Hotel.

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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 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.

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