

HISD PRESS RELEASE

Hundreds join HISD experts at televised town hall on improving education locally and nationally

Sept. 24, 2019 — Houston Independent School District experts took center stage along with community leaders, social service experts, and child advocates at a nationally televised town hall broadcast Tuesday evening by NBC News Learn, the educational division of NBC News.

Hundreds attended the event, which took place at University of Houston-Downtown. It was televised on KPRC 2 and streamed live on NBCNews.com

An interview with HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan kicked off the two-hour program. NBC News Chief Education Correspondent Rehema Ellis asked Lathan about the challenges of being the top educator in a district with more than 209,000 students.

“We are focused daily on preparing our children for their best outcomes,” Lathan said. “We have more students earning associate degrees or career certificates while they are still in high school. We are empowering our students in HISD.”

The event included panel discussions. Worthing High School Principal Khalilah Campbell-Rhone participated in one of them, discussing the academic turnaround on her campus.

“Part of the 180-degree turn we made included things that showed we care,” Campbell-Rhone said. “For instance, I’m at the door each day saying, ‘Good morning.’ We also show our students possible paths they can take by exposing them to various professions and going on college tours.”

Campbell-Rhone said another significant factor is wraparound services.

HISD Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer Rick Cruz expanded on the topic during a later panel discussion.

“Wraparound services is HISD’s concerted effort to bring in resources to assist our students with non-academic challenges, like homelessness, food insecurity, and a variety of social and emotional issues,” Cruz said.

Cruz also spoke of HISD’s initiatives that promote the goal of higher education for students who are economically disadvantaged, immigrants or children of immigrants.

Other HISD staff members featured as part of the event included Kashmere High School Principal Reginald Bush, T.H. Rogers School Educator Barrett Doke, Heights High School student and EMERGE participant Emily Ramirez, and student leaders from several HISD campuses.

The community event was sponsored by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, a philanthropy which was founded in 2015 by Dr. Priscilla Chan and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg.

NBC News Learn distributes the journalism and storytelling of NBC News to students in the classroom, at home and in the community. It incorporates award-winning content, innovative live broadcasts, and extensive, exclusive news archives into educational town halls. They take place in various cities across the country to facilitate constructive conversations about important initiatives in the nation's education system.

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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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