

HISD PRESS RELEASE

Crespo ES fourth-grader takes top prize at annual MLK, Jr. Oratory Competition

Jan. 17, 2020 – Crespo Elementary School fourth-grader Brandon Curbow's speech on what civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision would be for America in 2020 won first place at the MLK, Jr. Oratory Competition, which featured a field of 12 Houston Independent School District students.

The 24th annual competition, which garners national attention, took place before an enthusiastic and packed audience Friday at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Christ in downtown Houston. Brandon stood out among the 12 finalists for his stage presence, decorum, content interpretation, and memorization.

"This competition showcases the outstanding talents of our students," HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. "I am so proud of each of them for the stellar, insightful speeches they delivered. They are all winners in my book."

Competing finalists wrote, memorized and delivered speeches inspired by the Nobel Peace Prize winning slain civil rights leader.

"I was surprised and excited to hear my name called as the winner," Brandon said. "I practiced every day for hours. I want to thank my mom, dad, sister and all my teachers."

The runner up in the competition was Ayomide Lawrence, a fourth-grader at Blackshear Elementary School, and the third-place finisher was Jenny Teague, a fifth-grader at Sutton Elementary School.

The winner received a \$1,000 cash prize. The second-place winner received \$500, and the third-place winner received a \$300 prize.

The remaining finalists who received \$100 are:

- Ananya Cherkuri, Askew Elementary, 4th Grade
- Aniyah Williams, Burrus Elementary, 5th Grade
- David Ozuzu, Cornelius Elementary, 4th Grade
- Kaydence Fletcher, James H. Law Elementary, 4th Grade
- Symphony Stroud, Lockhart Elementary, 5th Grade
- Hanah Hamilton, Pleasantville Elementary, 5th Grade

- Sean Gair, Thompson Elementary, 5th Grade
- Gabrielle Marshall, Valley West Elementary, 5th Grade
- Leo Serrano, Windsor Village Elementary, 4th Grade

The nationally recognized competition has taken place for more than two decades and is sponsored by Foley & Lardner LLP law firm.

Media interested in arranging interviews with students are asked to contact the HISD Press Office at PressOffice@houstonisd.org.

Winning speeches can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/385579744>

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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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