

HISD PRESS RELEASE

HISD Foundation’s State of the Schools event focuses on achieving excellence with ‘One Voice, One Vision’

March 6, 2020 – A packed house of public education supporters from the business, academic, advocacy, and faith communities attended the HISD Foundation’s Public Education Matters fundraising luncheon on Friday.

HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan delivered the annual State of the Schools address during the benefit. Lathan issued a call to action urging supporters to work together by employing, “One Voice and One Vision” to equitably raise the standard of excellence for all students in the district, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Lathan also told the crowd of about 700 that despite the challenges faced by the district, innovative teachers, inspiring leaders, and resilient students have helped HISD earn its current high “B” rating, with a score of 88 under the Texas Education Agency’s accountability system.

“I appreciate everyone in HISD who has worked diligently to achieve an impressive list of notable accomplishments,” Lathan, said. “We have expanded access to pre-K classes for our youngest learners and created productive mentorship programs for our students. Across the district, we are expanding and transforming educational opportunities for our scholars at every grade level.”

The event included a panel discussion with Lathan, Professor Stephen Klineberg of Rice University, and former New Jersey Education Commissioner Christopher Cerf.

Klineberg, founding director of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research, moderated the discussion, which centered on challenges and opportunities as they relate to preparing students for profitable futures.

“Issues of high-tech literacy are absolutely critical to the kind of city we will build for the 21st century,” Klineberg said. “If students are not properly equipped to succeed in these areas, it will not bode well for the City of Houston and young people will not be able to support themselves and their families.”

“The role of education is to create pathways for young people to have an opportunity to achieve any goal they desire, regardless of who their parents are or where they were born,” Cerf said. “A student’s circumstances should not limit their future. That should always be the ideal function of school districts.”

The benefit luncheon supports the HISD Foundation, which provides financial support through its Innovation Fund for strategic academic programs, including animal-assisted counseling, drone design and fabrication, biotechnology instruction and miniature flood-prevention modeling projects.

“Thank you all for being here today to support the district and the foundation,” HISD Foundation Executive Director Katherine Smith said. “We cannot accomplish our goals and facilitate the dreams of HISD’s students without your generous contributions and commitment to public education.”

Musical entertainment was provided by HISD’s Westside High School Chamber Singers and Westbury High School’s Jazz Ensemble.

The event took place at the Royal Sonesta Hotel.

B-roll from the event for use on air and online may be viewed [here](#).

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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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