

HISD PRESS RELEASE

HISD partners with NFL Veteran Whitney Mercilus to tackle essential life skills

Oct. 19, 2021 - The Houston Independent School District (HISD) and NFL Veteran Whitney Mercilus unveiled a newly renovated classroom for students with special needs at Fleming Middle School.

Whitney Mercilus, through his WithMerci Foundation, funded the renovation which refreshed the Skills for Learning and Living classroom (SLL) with all-new household appliances such as stoves, refrigerators, microwaves, dishwashers and cooking gear like pots and pans. The WithMerci Foundation, who provides advocate services and support to families of children with disabilities and special needs throughout Houston, spearheaded the project.

“The renovated classroom is a safe and dedicated space for our students to learn essential life skills on their path to independent living”, said Deputy Superintendent Dr. Richard Cruz. “The mastery of daily tasks like preparing your own meal and washing dishes are vital to the wellbeing of every child on their journey to becoming a successful adult.”

Whitney Mercilus has committed to teaching one class each month to lead by example.

“We are excited for our students to have the opportunity to work with updated appliances and learn essential life skills from Whitney Mercilus himself,” said Principal Yolanda Bruce. “It is great for our students to see that regardless of how successful you become, even professional athletes have to cook, clean and keep their refrigerator stocked.”

HISD’s SLL program curriculum is provided at 142 campuses district wide to students in elementary, middle and high schools. SLL classes are designed to address the needs of students with moderate cognitive impairments in the areas of communication, literacy, independent living skills and community based vocational instruction. Currently, over 2,000 HISD students receive SLL services.

[HISD photo of the event](#)

Please credit HISD

HISD PRESS OFFICE | 713-556-6393 | PressOffice@HoustonISD.org | HoustonISD.org/HISDmedia

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.

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