

# Our VOICES

MULTILINGUAL

Fall 2021

[www.houstonisd.org/multilingual](http://www.houstonisd.org/multilingual)

Edition II Issue 1

## MESSAGE TO PARENTS ...

### An Answer of Hope for Our Community of Refugees

Haven of Peace, Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) is the meaning and name of the city I grew up in. My name is Shirin Herman, and I came to the U.S. as a student at the University of Detroit. After graduating from university with a B.A. in psychology, I lived in Minneapolis, Milan, (Italy), Boston, Fairfield (Texas) and then in Houston. I worked in the Houston Independent School District as an ESL teacher.



Now I work in the Multilingual Programs Department assisting refugee students and families get acclimated to the Houston school system. In my past, I fled two continents due to political strife, which has made me very sympathetic to the plight of refugees.

Tanzania, which is a country in East Africa, was the first place I had to leave because my father's business got nationalized and it was dangerous for us to live there. I went to Dhaka, Bangladesh (East Pakistan at the time) for two years to finish high school. While I lived in Bangladesh, it also experienced political strife in the form of demonstrations, strikes and general violence. Then, my father sent me to live in Detroit with my brother who was completing his residency.

I very much relate to the refugee stories of fleeing hunger, violence and the loss of one's country, family, and friends. It is a difficult adjustment at any age and not knowing the language is a huge challenge for many refugees. The Multilingual Programs Department is instrumental in easing the transition of refugee and turning immigrant students into academic achievers. My passion and life's work has been to help refugee students continue their academic progress in HISD regardless of their history or education level.

After all, every refugee family I meet tells me the reason they are here is for their children's education and I am very determined to make that a reality for them.

As it turns out, I found my "Haven of Peace" right here in Houston, working to make the life of those who have fled their home country realize the American dream through education.

Learn why Shirin's work was honored with a monument by Craig Walsh at Discovery Green. To read more about Shirin Herman's life-changing contributions to Houston's refugee community visit the following site: <https://www.discoverygreen.com/shirin-herman>.

## DROP OF WISDOM

A few years ago, I recall coming across a quote from Amy Chua that reads, "Do you know what a foreign accent is? It's a sign of bravery". The more I think about that quote, the more I believe in the power of bilingualism, better yet in the potency of multilingualism.

Having a second language opens doors that for others are simply not even an option, such as functioning in international markets, or a career field based on knowing multiple languages. More importantly, the ability to understand, firsthand what people in other languages are communicating to you.

Parents, if you are reading this in your native language, chances are you care about your child's education, their bilingualism, and their future. I want to encourage you to continue talking and reading to your children in your native tongue, celebrate your culture, traditions, beliefs, and yes, your accent. You are here, that makes you and your family BRAVE. So, continue to teach them to be proud of where they come from and of WHO they are: **BRAVE children**.

- Martha Preston, M. Ed.

Executive Director, Elementary School Office 1



## BENEFITS OF SCHOOL - FAMILY CONNECTIONS

### The Importance of Creating School-Family Partnerships

Parent involvement in education significantly correlates with student learning. When parents are involved, students' grades, test scores, and participation in the classroom improve. Additional benefits include fewer special education placements, greater postsecondary enrollment, higher attendance, lower dropout rates, and a reduced likelihood of engaging in high-risk behaviors. Benefits extend to students' social and emotional learning and engagement. Research shows that enhancing cognitive engagement (e.g., self-regulated learning), behavioral engagement (e.g., participation), and psychological engagement (e.g., identification with school) correlate significantly with academic achievement. Full engagement—requiring a high level of parental involvement—is needed to meet the demands of schooling. Youth perform better in school when both home and school actively provide the support and opportunities that promote student engagement.

For extended information on the importance of developing school-family connections please click on the following link: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497159.pdf>



## UPCOMING STATE ASSESSMENTS



Stay well-informed regarding your child's upcoming State assessments by visiting the Texas Education Agency's Testing website; simply click on the following link: <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2021-2022-testing%20calendar-updated.pdf>

## Using Imagine Reading at Home



Parents and caregivers of students may help support the use of *Imagine Reading*, a tool that helps students engage in reading, writing, listening, and speaking about engaging topics. By clicking <https://bit.ly/320VeMG> parents may view how they can help support their children; a Spanish version is also available by clicking <https://bit.ly/2Qon3cd>.

The instructions provide the following steps:

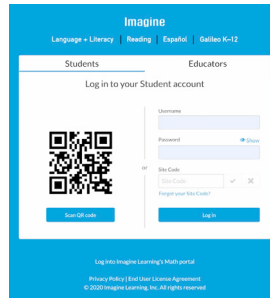
- how to access Imagine Reading from home, including what devices and browser to use
- how to log in
- how to retrieve your student login information, if unavailable

Districts using a Single Sign-On portal should follow the instructions provided by your student's teacher.

### How parents and caregivers can support their students:

1. Help your student set a regular time and place when they can focus on using Imagine Reading. Contact your student's teacher to find out how long your student should use Imagine Reading each week (also referred to as their weekly usage goal).
2. Help your student [log in to Imagine Reading](#) from home and [retrieve their login information](#) if they don't have it. If your district uses a Single Sign-On portal, follow the instructions from your student's teacher.
3. Contact your student's teacher if your student doesn't know which unit and reading text to start on.
4. As your student uses Imagine Reading throughout the school year, ask them to read the texts they encounter aloud to you or share with you what they're learning as they read about different topics.
5. Review your student's progress with their teacher throughout the school year. Discuss your student's overall progress as well as their growth metrics, test results, performance predictions for state tests, and skill areas where they may be struggling.

Using Imagine Reading at home: <https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/192171> ■



## TEXAS ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Learn more about the importance of and the role the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System plays in your child's language development. Responses to questions you may have can be found by clicking on the corresponding link:

### What is TELPAS, who participates, when and how?

[https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2020-2021\\_TELPAS\\_FAQ.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2020-2021_TELPAS_FAQ.pdf)

[https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2020-2021\\_TELPAS\\_Spanish\\_FAQ.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2020-2021_TELPAS_Spanish_FAQ.pdf)

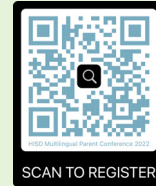
### Parent tips on how to prepare your child to participate in TELPAS:

<https://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=51539628159>

[https://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=51539628160\\_Spanish](https://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=51539628160_Spanish) ■

**A Road Map to Success:**  
Connecting Schools, Parents and the Community

**HISD'S Multilingual's  
Virtual Parent Conference**  
February 19, 2022



Listen to the rave reviews echoed about the  
**Multilingual's October 23, 2021  
Parent Conference**

**UNITED FORCES: ALL FOR ONE!**

<https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/192171>

The dedicated advocates of the Multilingual Department would like to extend their gratitude to all our HISD families who chose to join us in empowering the academic, social, and emotional growth of our children. ■



## SUPPORTING ENGLISH LEARNERS IN TX

### Houston ISD Supports

Parent Course: <https://bit.ly/3182RRO>  
Information about learning at home with HISD

### Multilingual Parent Resources

<https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/32060>

### Parent Resources

Texas Education Agency Supports:  
<http://bit.ly/3t69k8k>

### Helpful websites for At-Home Learning

These websites will help in strengthening the English Language Proficiency Skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

English: <https://bit.ly/3dyBtXT>

Spanish: <https://bit.ly/3mxiBDH>

### Internet Providers: Keeping Families Connected

English: <https://bit.ly/2OteIN2>

Spanish: <https://bit.ly/3mkfFtG>

### Adult Education and Literacy Programs

<https://bit.ly/3wqVOxl> ■