

FALL 2013 | Vol. 2, No. 1

# *Experience* HCISD

THE MAGAZINE



HARLINGEN CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT





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### ON THE COVER

For our Moving Forward issue, our mission was to showcase the transformation HCISD has experienced within the last year. With the Dr. Abraham P. Cano Freshman Academy being one of the most monumental pieces, we wanted to capture the beauty and innovative environment of the campus and the dedication of its students. For the cover, five students that exemplify academic and extracurricular excellence were chosen to represent their selected pathway.

# Experience HCISD

THE MAGAZINE | vol. 2, no. 1

## EDITORIAL TEAM:

This publication is the result of a team of excellent editors, writers, designers and photographers.

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# Message

from the Superintendent

The beginning of this school year has brought much transformation to the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District. A transformation that begins with the way our teachers instruct, and how our students learn and interact in their classrooms.

Our students are our greatest assets, and we understand that each of them possess individualized learning needs. With transformation comes the opportunity to further create an environment that promotes college and career readiness for all students, and provides the means to compete in a globalized economy.

This fall we opened our Dr. Abraham P. Cano Freshman Academy to 1,300 incoming freshmen, expanded our Dual Language Academies to three more campuses and are continuing to responsibly roll out our digital initiatives each day. Our progress will continue in the coming years as our district will keep our students at the core of our mission, and our focus set on preparing them for the 21st century.

With the first half of the year complete, important work lies ahead that will impact students, teachers and the entire community. We look forward to seeing our students, parents and teachers return safely and eager to continue an outstanding year at HCISD.



*Arturo Cavazos*

Dr. Arturo J. Cavazos  
Superintendent of Schools

## HOW TO CONTACT US

We would love to hear from you. You can email us at [experience@hcisd.org](mailto:experience@hcisd.org), write to us at 407 N. 77 Sunshine Strip, Harlingen, TX 78550 or give us a call at (956) 430-9530.

**Experience HCISD The Magazine** is published twice a year by HCISD with a circulation of 15,000. **Experience** is distributed to every elementary student and available at all campuses for parents and community members.

Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, disability, or any other legally protected status in employment or provision of services, programs, or activities.





**GILLMAN AUTO GROUP OF THE RGV**



# Drive for Perfect **ATTENDANCE** Awards

Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District

## Grand Prize

2014 Chevy Sonic

High School Juniors and Seniors with perfect attendance can win a new car



## More Prizes: \*

**1st Prize** 13" MacBook Pro

**2nd Prize** iPad Mini

**3rd Prize** Samsung Galaxy Tablet

## Quarterly Awards

# 72

iPad mini raffles at Coakley, Gutierrez, Memorial, Vela, Vernon, Cano Freshman Academy, KEYS, ECHS, HHS, and HHSS.

## Campus Cash Rewards for ALL Schools



[www.hcisd.org/driveforattendance](http://www.hcisd.org/driveforattendance)

\*Prizes and participation are subject to rules available at HCISD schools, [www.hcisd.org/driveforattendance](http://www.hcisd.org/driveforattendance), and Gillman Auto of Harlingen.

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# ATTENDANCE Incentive

Nicole Flores will have to amend her Christmas list after winning her top gift request by attending school. Now, the seventh grade student at Coakley Middle School can't wait to start using her new iPad mini for homework, research and playing games, she said.

Flores was one of 18 secondary school students in the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District to win an iPad mini as a result of achieving perfect attendance in the first academic quarter through the Gillman Auto Group of the RGV Drive for Perfect Attendance Awards.

"My dad is always pushing me to go to school and to get perfect attendance," said Raymundo Figueroa, a sixth grade student at Coakley, who also received an iPad mini. "There are some mornings when I feel tired and don't want to go to school, but I force myself to wake up and go to school."

HCISD's top priority for the attendance incentive program is to boost student achievement. Educators throughout the district strongly agree that attendance has a direct effect on learning and

student performance.

"I think it's cool that we're getting rewarded for attendance because coming every day is the way you learn," Figueroa said.

The Drive for Perfect Attendance Award includes over \$100,000 in prizes that reward students and schools for reaching attendance goals during periods throughout the year, as well as for the entire year. The grand prize will be awarded to one junior or senior in HCISD, who will take home a new 2014 Chevy Sonic presented by Gillman Auto Group of the RGV.

District-wide, HCISD saw an increase of 67.5 students in Average Daily Attendance (ADA) in the first reporting period and 167.5 in the second period for the school year in comparison to the previous year.

Schools in Texas receive funding based on an average daily attendance statistic that is monitored by the Texas Education Agency in six, six-week periods during the school year. Because HCISD meets a state set threshold of migrant students, over 5 percent of the student population,

the state considers the district's best four of the six periods in calculating its ADA. For every student, HCISD receives \$5,102 in state funds.

In addition to the individual iPad mini raffles at secondary schools, HCISD rewarded 21 campuses a total of \$15,000 for reaching attendance goals based on the size and past attendance performance. Those schools receiving reward funding have or will be rewarding students for attendance. Examples of how some schools are using the money include bike raffles, movie passes and the purchase of more iPad minis.

HCISD set a goal through the program for an increase of ADA by 50 students this year, equaling about \$250,000 in additional funding for schools. HCISD budgeted \$90,000 for prizes to students and schools through this program, while Gillman Auto Group of the RGV donated \$20,000 in prizes.

*For more information on the Gillman Auto Group of the RGV Drive for Perfect Attendance Awards, parents and students can visit [www.hcisid.org/driveforattendance](http://www.hcisid.org/driveforattendance).*

Average Daily Attendance (ADA) determines the state funding school districts in Texas receiving, equalling just over \$5,000 per student in HCISD. With the attendance incentive program, HCISD hopes to grow its ADA by at least 50 students, equaling an additional \$250,000 in state revenue. ADA is calculated each of the six, six-week periods in a school year. The following data showcases the success of the program through the first two, six-week periods across HCISD.

## ADA Growth Across HCISD

### Period 1

2013-2014	17,347.8
2012-2013	17,284.5

### Period 2

2013-2014	17,345.5
2012-2013	17,178.0

# DIGITAL DISTRICT

## at a glance

*As the world becomes increasingly information based and complex, students are better prepared for success when skilled in creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration and information technologies. HCISD recognizes the importance of adapting to these changes and has rolled out digital initiatives that will have a positive impact on the way students learn and engage in their classrooms, said Superintendent Dr. Arturo Cavazos.*

*From curriculum enhanced with technology to study areas designed to create a college level environment, each of the 28 campuses will see transformation. As changes continue, we showcase these initiatives and explain how the new programs will impact our students and parents.*



89

Number of digital classrooms at HCISD with plans to increase this number each year



26

Number of HCISD Information Literacy Centers which are considered to be the largest digital classroom on a campus





**Power Up** and **Device Down** are used to describe the periods that devices will and will not be used in an HCISD Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) or Digital Classroom. The Power Up sign will be on display when the use of digital devices are permitted, and Device Down signifies when the devices should be set aside for instructional purposes.

## Common Q's and A's:



How do you know if your child is in a digital or BYOD classroom?



What type of devices can a student bring to a BYOD class?



Does your child need to have a device to participate?



If their child is in a BYOD or Digital Classroom, parents, along with the student, will receive a copy of addendum to review and sign. Teachers will also have posters outside of their classroom which designate them as a BYOD or Digital Classroom. Students can bring smartphones, mobile devices, iPads, laptops and tablets if they are in a BYOD or Digital Classroom environment. If the student does not have a device, it will not slow them down. Our HCISD Information Literacy Centers are equipped with iPads and devices as well as our digital classrooms.

## Rules and Guidelines:

*When in a digital or BYOD classroom HCISD students must:*

- Use the District's wireless internet services and are prohibited from using a personal wireless service. The District's wireless network system must be disconnected from the device when the device is not being used for instructional purposes.
- Follow the rules and guidelines for non-instructional use on campus, as published in the student handbook. These guidelines require the device to be turned off.





# ROBERT FLORES

Harlingen High School South

**ABOVE**

Robert Flores creates innovative and custom solutions as a software engineer in Austin, TX.

*As a software engineer at Design and Assembly Concepts, Inc., Robert Flores began fulfilling his dreams at the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District. A 2007 graduate of Harlingen High School South, Flores kept mathematics and engineering on his mind as he continued his education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) until graduating with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. Learning from his experiences, he took any opportunity he could to find his true calling and create his path in life. Now, he is right*

*where he wants to be, assisting in the development of innovative and custom designed manufacturing solutions for companies in the U.S. and around the world. Taking time from creating transformational software, he answered questions from Experience HCISD.*

**Having attended one of the most prestigious universities in the nation and having met extraordinary people, what does it mean to you to be able to say you're an alumn of Harlingen High School South and of the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District?**

It means a lot to me. When I graduated, I felt like there was a stigma about leaving Texas. Leaving was too scary or maybe too intimidating. Few people tried applying to the top U.S. colleges because those people thought graduating from a high school in the Rio Grande Valley was not good enough to be admitted. I felt like escaping the norm and being confident in my abilities. While at MIT, I was always proud telling people where I was from.

Also, personally it showed how far I had come. Growing up in one of the least culturally diverse places I know and then being thrown into the diversity of MIT and, more importantly, Boston showed me my true character. It reassured me of my morals and values. It solidified my culture and beliefs. I would not have had it any other way.



**How did your experience in the classrooms at HCISD help prepare you for college and your career?**

I believe two teachers in particular really prepared me for college. The first was Rodolfo Monsevalles. I went through his pre-calculus, calculus AB, and calculus BC classes. He gave me the tools I needed to systematically analyze and solve problems.

The second was Roxanna Moore. I went through her AP chemistry course. She had well-prepared lesson plans, and I used everything she taught me to pass my college chemistry course.

I cannot really say I had any preparation for my career. One could argue academics prepares someone for his/her career, but I would have to disagree. Academics provides knowledge, but a career requires experience. During my time in high school, few engineering clubs or programs existed. I have recently heard of new programs that have developed since I graduated from high school, which is a definite step in the right direction.

**What memory from your time in Harlingen has had the greatest impact on who you are today?**

To be honest, it had to be my church play. I attended Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church and starred as Juan Diego in our Virgen de Guadalupe play. The first time I did the play, I was horrible and fumbled through lines, but seeing my grandmother brag to her friends about the "star" being her grandson lifted my spirits. It taught me to get out of my head and to stop being so self-critical; advice I still use today. I did the play again the following year and didn't miss a single line, not because I practiced any harder, but because I felt more comfortable.

**Becoming a software engineer must entail many trials and tribulations. What knowledge have you taken away from these ventures?**

I have taken away the importance of planning. Having a plan is usually half of the battle or more. I initially just wanted to start writing the program and probably took three times longer to finish than I would have had I planned it all out first. However, it does not help to spend

all of your time planning. Finding the balance has been difficult but not impossible.

**Becoming a software engineer must allow you to do some amazing things. Is there anything you've done that stands out to you?**

I wasn't always a software engineer. My bachelor's degree is actually in mechanical engineering; however, specializing in robotics got me into the software engineering world. I think what stood out to me was a Mars Rover project I did while at MIT. The goal of the project was to build a robot capable of autonomously navigating through an unknown environment while detecting blocks, recovering those blocks, and using them to build a structure. Our robot was composed of the following: 1) bump sensors to detect walls and obstacles; 2) a camera to detect the blocks and calculate the block's position; 3) a motherboard to act as the "brain"; 4) a mechanical arm to grab the blocks; and 5) a container to store the blocks and even build the shelter. It was an intense project that took months to finish, but it was a great experience.

**What advice would you give other students from Harlingen pursuing careers in technology or any other field?**

I think my advice would be take advantage of opportunities as early as possible. Take that extra math class. Join that extra club. It's better to figure out early on the workload you can handle. It's also better to learn how to manage your time early on.

Robert Flores

## HCISD SNAPSHOT

**Schools Attended:**  
*Lamar Elementary, Gutierrez Middle School and Harlingen High School South, graduating in 2007.*

**Favorite Classes:**  
*AP Calculus, AP Pre-Calculus, AP Chemistry, and Orchestra.*

**After HCISD:**  
*Studied mechanical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and is currently a Software Engineer.*

Also do not be afraid of rejection. Whether it is applying for college, or an internship or a job, be confident that whatever happens is for the best. Do not live your life thinking what if I had... It will never end well. Instead, think if I had not done this, I would have never been able to...

Next I would suggest learning how to study. Most students underestimate how difficult this actually is. Those same students tend to struggle in college because of the lack of a transition period from high school to college. ■



# DR. BOBBY MUNIZ

Harlingen High School



As a graduate from Texas A&M in 1998, Dr. Bobby Muniz began his educational journey at Harlingen CISD. A former Harlingen High School football player, he earned much recognition up to his graduation in 1992. With all roads leading back to the field of Pharmacy, Dr. Bobby Muniz has had his share of learning experiences. He received his MBA from St. Mary's University in 2002 and worked for Abbott Pharmaceuticals in Columbus OH, as a production supervisor developing products like Enfamil. In 2004, he went to pharmacy school at Texas Southern University and is now helping run the family business, which has been serving the Harlingen community for over 40 years. He took some time to answer questions from Experience HCISD.

**Being an active participant in many extracurricular programs, what were the life lessons that you learned? Does a program stand out as having the most affect on you?**

Football was a big influence for me. It taught me discipline, teamwork, the importance of exercise and nutrition, and to never give up. During those years, I gained a lot of values in the program, and it's something that I will always look back on with pride.

**Throughout your time at HCISD, you must have had the opportunity to work with many outstanding educators. Did any of your teachers in particular have a big impact on your life?**

Coach Lunsford at Coakley Middle School had a great impact on me. He took the time with us to make sure we were our very best. He really taught us discipline and had high expectations of us both on and off the field. If we misbehaved in the classroom we would pay for it on the field. It's great because now I see him at the gym being active, eating right and living a healthy lifestyle. He's still in great shape and continues to serve as a role model. Also, Bertha Campos and Michael Gerleman from HHS are true standouts. They really challenged me and stretched my thinking. Both of those teachers had high expectations of their students and I appreciate them for

preparing me for college.

**Becoming a pharmacist and successful business operator must entail many trials and tribulations. What obstacles did you have to overcome in order to get to where you are today?**

The transition to college was very difficult for me. Looking back, I wish I had focused more on my academics. It was really tough, but the discipline I learned from football helped me get through it and persevere to get to where I am today.

**From the experience and knowledge you have had the opportunity to gain, what advice would you give to students today?**

Education is the key to success. Get a college education, first and foremost. Be self-motivated and try to get as many experiences as you can in the real world to help guide you in finding what you're passionate about. There are great programs in our region like Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Mentors, which assists students by helping guide them toward their future paths. It's amazing what Dr. Nolan Perez does with the program.

**Being an active member of the community, what are you most passionate about?**

Being a pharmacist, I'd have to say I'm passionate about educating our young people about prescription drug abuse. It has become more widely abused than any illicit drug. I want to educate children that taking their parents' or anyone's prescription drugs can lead to a deadly outcome. I plan to visit schools and have conversations with students and their parents about the dangers of this. ■

## Dr. Bobby Muniz

### HCISD SNAPSHOT

**Schools Attended:**  
*Treasure Hills Elementary, Coakley Middle School, Alamo Ninth Grade Academy and Harlingen High School, graduating in 1992.*

**Favorite Teachers:**  
*Coach Stephen Lunsford (Coakley Middle School); Bertha Campos and Michael Gerleman (HHS).*

**After HCISD:**  
*Attended pharmacy school at Texas Southern University and is currently a pharmacist and co-owner at Muniz Rio Grande Pharmacy.*

#### | ON THE LEFT

Dr. Bobby Muniz serves the Harlingen community as a pharmacist at Muniz Rio Grande Pharmacy.

# FROM TOWN TO TABLE: CHILD NUTRITION

*The Child Nutrition Department works diligently to provide the highest quality meals to the students of Harlingen CISD.*

Every week, trucks from across the great state of Texas make their way to Harlingen to deliver the highest quality food products to Harlingen CISD kitchens. Watermelon from Brownfield, oranges from Mission, and tortilla chips from Dallas are just a few of the tasty Texas foods that the HCISD Child Nutrition Department purchases for the district's 18,000 students. "Supporting the agricultural industry in Texas is most important and purchasing Texas products is a win-win for Texas farmers, producers, manufacturers and our school district," says Child Nutrition Director, Judy Baker, R.D.. While it is not feasible for all products served in the cafeteria to be Texas grown due to growing seasons, price and volume, the department continues to search for new partners within the state.

For their efforts to include more locally sourced foods into the meals of HCISD students, the Child Nutrition Department was recognized by the Texas Department of Agriculture and were one of 37 school districts across Texas honored for their participation.

① **Watermelon**  
Brownfield, TX

② **Tortilla Chips**  
Dallas, TX

③ **Taco Shells**  
Dallas, TX

④ **Milk**  
El Paso, TX

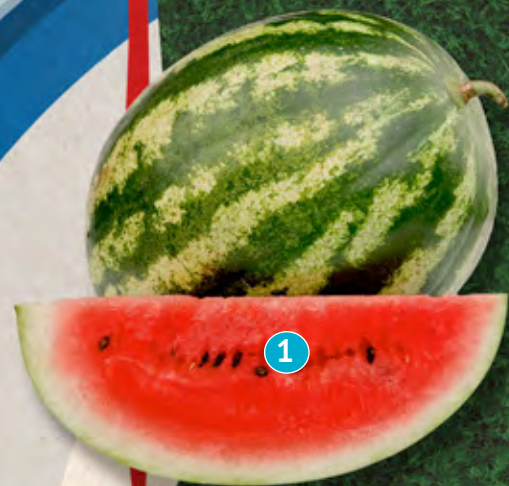
⑤ **Whole Wheat Bread**  
San Antonio, TX

⑥ **Whole Wheat Hamburger Buns**  
San Antonio, TX

⑦ **Oranges**  
Mission, TX

⑧ **Corn Tortillas**  
Edinburg, TX

⑨ **Star Fruit**  
Bayview, TX







## MONTHLY STATISTICS



**459,860**  
meals served



**540,057 lbs**  
of produce served



**399,882**  
milk cartons served



**25% Texas**  
products served



# 2013 HCISD Awards

The students at HCISD continued their tradition of excellence this school year by earning prestigious awards and working to make a difference in the lives of others. Below is a snapshot of their achievements so far during the 2013 – 2014 school year.

## 1 EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL & HARLINGEN HIGH SCHOOL SOUTH

The high school robotics teams at HCISD swept the 2013 RGV Boosting Engineering, Science & Technology (BEST) Robotics Competition with an outstanding performance.

The Early College High School and Harlingen High School South teams took home first place in the BEST and Robot Performance Category, respectively. The two awards are the most prestigious teams could receive during the tournament and were only the beginning achievements for both campuses.

ECHS added the most spirit and sportsmanship award, first place in the Team Exhibit Category and third place in the Engineering Notebook Category to their list of achievements.

It was the second year HHSS had taken home the top spot in the Robot Performance Category. In addition, the team was also awarded the Most Robust Machine for the third consecutive year and the Most Elegant Design Award.

The Harlingen High School team earned first place in the Marketing Presentation Category.

At the Region competition, the HHSS team brought home the prestigious Lockheed Martin Award. The award recognizes the top three teams for excellence in robotic design. It is the first time a team from the Rio Grande Valley has placed in any category at the region level.

## 2 HARLINGEN HIGH SCHOOL

Climbing fast in the field of Agriculture, Harlingen High School senior, Morgan Martin, was named 2013 Junior Agricultural Ambassador by the United States Department of

Agriculture (USDA).

This past summer, she took several steps to pursue a career in agriculture. In June she served as an intern with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in San Benito.

The USDA also sent her and a group of students from across the United States to a three-day leadership training seminar at the agency's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

## 3 LONG ELEMENTARY

With his green tie perfectly knotted and his smile ear to ear, Isaac Castaneda, third grade student at Long Elementary, prepared for his future as a superintendent with a little help from the Greater Texas Foundation (GTF).

Students and staff at Long Elementary cheered Castaneda on as he received a \$1,000 scholarship from the GTF during a special assembly on Sept. 16. Along with his classmates, members of administration, school board and special guest, Dr. Wynn Rosser, CEO and President of the GTF, were there to show their support for his dreams.

The scholarship he received will be put towards completing his post-secondary education at any college or university of his choice.

## 4 SAM HOUSTON ELEMENTARY

The girl's on the Sam Houston Elementary Chess Team proved that they are some of the best in the state during the Girl's State Chess Tournament on Oct. 5.

The team was awarded the title of State Champions in the K-3 division. Individually, Gianelli Serrano earned first place. With her win, she was awarded the

state cup to hold for one year.

Teammates Izabel Vasquez, Jazmin Olivares and Rory Jimenez placed fourth, sixth and 12th, respectively.

The girls' chess team also placed second in the K-5 division. Individually Gabriella Seranno, Mikayla Garza, Ashley Young and Ingrid Banda placed sixth, ninth, 12th and 17th, respectively.

## 5 HARLINGEN HIGH SCHOOL

After an outstanding season, the Harlingen High School football team was named the District 32 -5A Champions.

The awarding came after the triumph against the Brownsville Hanna Eagles.

HHS finished their regular season with a record of (10-1, 8-0).

## 6 HARLINGEN HIGH SCHOOL SOUTH

The Harlingen High School South Speech, Drama and Debate team put their skills to the test during their first national tournament of the year in Dallas.

While at the "Heart of Texas" invitational, HHSS made an impression by leaving the competition with a total of 11 bids for individual events at the 2014 National Tournament of Champions in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Students must earn two bids in order to qualify for this prestigious tournament.

Seniors Chris Esparza and Paige Robles earned their first bid to the national tournament at the invitational in Duo Interpretation, Dramatic Interpretation, and Humorous Interpretation.

Sophomore Sawyer Warrenburg also earned her bid with partner Matthew Cannon, in Duo Interpretation, Dramatic Interpretation and Humorous Interpretation. Jann Soto, senior, earned his bid in Foreign Extemporaneous Speaking.





1



2



3



4



5



6



# 2013 HCISD Awards



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2013-2014 theater season.  
Ticket office located at HPAT.



Music by **Richard**

**Rogers**

Lyrics by **Oscar**

**Hamerstein II**

Performance Dates:

**January 30, 31**

**February 1, 2, 6-9**



**A dramatic comedy**

**by Beth Henley**

Performance Dates:

**March 28, 29, 30 &**

**April 4, 5, 6**



Book by **John M.**

**Tebelak**

Music/Lyrics by

**Stephen Schwartz**

Performance Dates:

**June 25, 26, 27, 28, 29**

## 7 HARLINGEN HIGH SCHOOL

Keeping in tune with some of the best student musicians in the state of Texas, Harlingen High School students Carter Mink and Stephen Garcia proved themselves to be part of that select few.

The students recently earned a spot on their respective 2014 Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) All State ensembles.

Mink was ranked first chair in the All State Symphony Orchestra for his musical talents with the String Bass, while Stephen Garcia also earned a first chair position in the All State Jazz Ensemble 1 with the Bass Trombone. This is the second year Mink has earned a spot on his respective ensemble and the first for Garcia.

For students to qualify for an All State ensemble, they had to go through a series of audition rounds. Students' musical skills were put to the test as each level of auditions increased in difficulty and competition. As a result of their all state qualification, selected students will travel to San Antonio to participate in the TMEA convention early next year.

## 8 MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL AND DR. ABRAHAM P. CANO FRESHMAN ACADEMY

Former Memorial Middle School and current Dr. Abraham P. Cano Freshman Academy student, Kenneth Reininger, completed a monument for the campus that is sure to last generations.

As part of his Eagle Scout project, Reininger, along with the help of Troop 142, chose to build a stone display with the school's name proudly showcased at the front of the campus. The project was completed in two weeks and Kenneth says he chose the project because he wanted to give back to the campus both he and his father attended.

The project was part of his journey to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. The Boy Scouts of America requires that each scout complete a project that benefits the community in order for them to reach the rank of Eagle.

## 9 HARLINGEN HIGH SCHOOL AND HARLINGEN HIGH SCHOOL SOUTH

Receiving honors and recognition, both the Harlingen High School and Harlingen High School South Marching Bands ended their competition year with an outstanding performance at the 2013 Pigskin Jubilee.

The annual competition, held at San Benito's Bobby Morrow Stadium, brings together marching bands from across the Rio Grande Valley to compete for top ratings. Both HHS and HHSS received first division ratings, which is the highest score possible.

Pigskin Jubilee marks the end of the competition season for the bands, as it is an odd year. During even numbered years, the bands have the opportunity to advance to state competition.

## 10 GUTIERREZ MIDDLE SCHOOL

The students in the Gutierrez Middle School Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) program had another shining year, walking away with two awards at the ACE convention in Austin.

The program received the Top Academic and Top Enrichment Activity award for their "Good Times" project. The video was created by the students in the program's Lip-Dub class and was a music video that would show the fun experience and the academic environment they experience every day during the ACE program.

The students' goal for this project was to encourage more students to join the ACE program. Through the making of the video, students were able to develop new skills that could potentially guide them toward a career path in video production.





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FALL  
SPORTS  
*photos*











## Setting the stage: **Performing** Arts Center

From baseball games to festivals, fourth grade Austin Elementary student, Aaron Blount is an experienced veteran when it comes to singing in front of large crowds.

As one of the largest performances of her short but expansive career, she sang for over 10,000 people under the spotlight at the 2012 Sombrero Festival in Brownsville. From audiences of hundreds to thousands, she has a special place in her heart for each one of them, but if you ask her, the most meaningful performance she has ever done was this fall.

At the start of this school year, Blount served as the first student performer at the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District's Performing Arts Center (PAC) during its annual Kick-off ceremony.

With her mother, Austin Elementary Nurse Monica Blount, by her side, she beamed with pride as she belted out a classic from Reba McEntire in front of teachers from across the district as they celebrated a new school year.

"It was a special day," said Aaron. "It was nice to be the first student to perform on that stage and even better because the whole district got to hear me sing."

With Aaron's performance kicking off a spectacular school year, she hopes that other students will have the opportunity to perform on its stage and help their talents grow, she said.

Her wishes have been met in just a few short months, as the PAC has quickly become the home of fine arts performances at the HCISD. From choir concerts to musical productions, the facility has seen its fair share of high caliber performances.

The PAC, located at 3217 W. Wilson Road, is a state-of-the-art performance center complete with 958 cushioned seats throughout the facility to give parents and



**ABOVE**  
Austin Elementary student Aaron Blount shines under the spotlight of the Performing Arts Center as its first student performer on Aug. 21.

community members the opportunity to watch district performances in style.

The change has definitely been felt by Harlingen High School senior Daniel Perez, who played Danny Zuko in the school's production of *Grease* this October. He says that it makes a big difference to have the opportunity to perform in front of the almost 1,000 people the PAC offers in comparison to 110, which previous performance areas could hold.





"You want to practice more and do better because you know that you will be performing in front of more people," said Perez. "It makes you want to bring out the best in you."

Harlingen High School South senior Christopher Esparza, who also played Aladdin in the schools' November production of *Aladdin Jr.*, holds the same sentiment as he attributes the size of the stage to bringing his and his classmates performances to a new level.

"It creates major benefits," said Esparza. "There are things we can do here that we couldn't have done at the old theatre. It pushes us as performers and actors, because the facility is so beautiful. We want to give them a performance up to par."

The goal of its construction was to further efforts to emphasize the three A's, which are academics, fine arts and

athletics and increase interest in the district's art programs. It also allows the district, for the first time in its history, to host regional music events that show-

**"When they see our fantastic facility, they are going to want to come and see what our programs have to offer."**

**CHRISTOPHER ESPARZA**  
Harlingen High School South Senior

case some of the top talent in the lower Rio Grande Valley.

For HCISD parent Monica Blount, that goal has been met. She is confident that it will have a positive impact on the students at HCISD, she said.

"It's a beautiful room for our children to perform in," said Monica. "I know it

will inspire and influence our talented students to pursue their dreams and get into our school's fine arts programs."

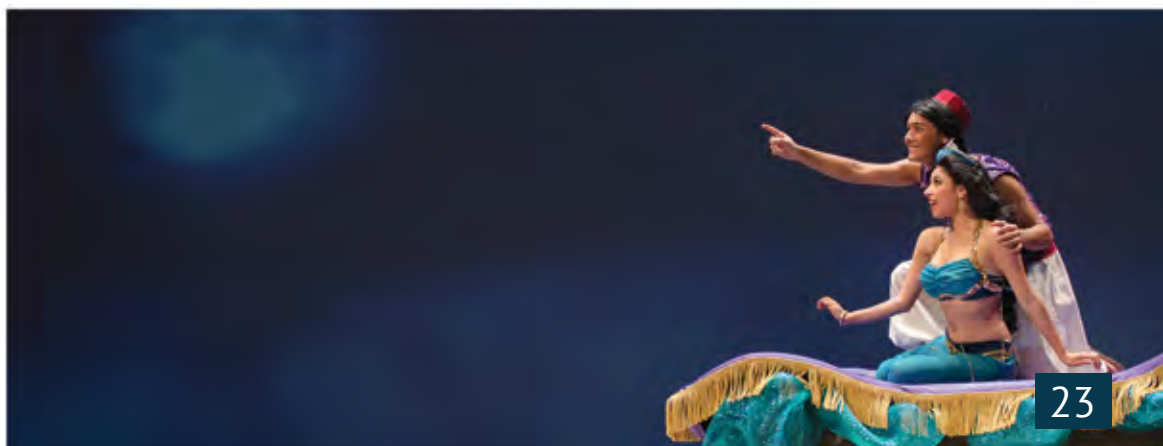
Just as impressive as its interior, is the colorful exterior of the building. The front is adorned with decorative tiles to complete a colorful piece of artwork during the day. At night, the building, equipped with LED lights is programmed to change colors throughout the evening. The colors and lights dance in the Harlingen sky as cars pass by and take notice.

"The lights are inviting," said Esparza. "They bring in myself and people in our community. When they see our fantastic facility, they are going to want to come and see what our programs have to offer."

The building was part of the \$98.6 million bond that was passed in May 2010 by Harlingen voters. ■

#### ON THE RIGHT

Harlingen High School South students take audience members to a whole new world during their performance of *Aladdin Jr.* in November.



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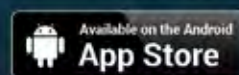
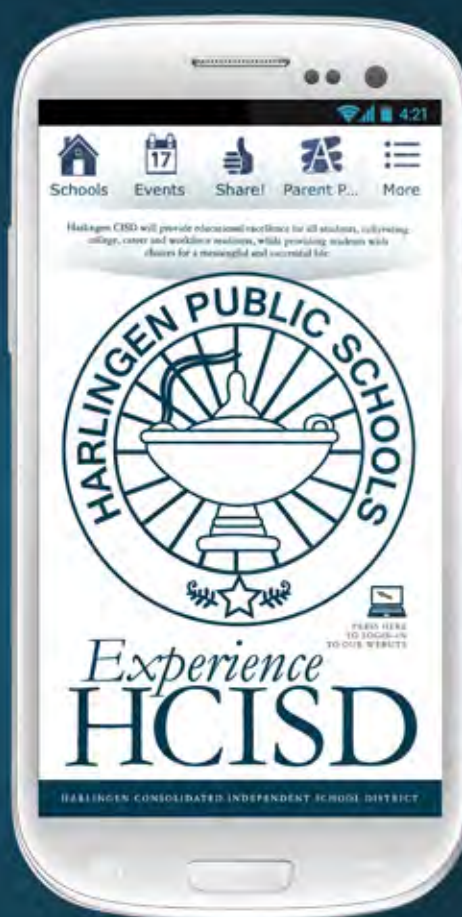
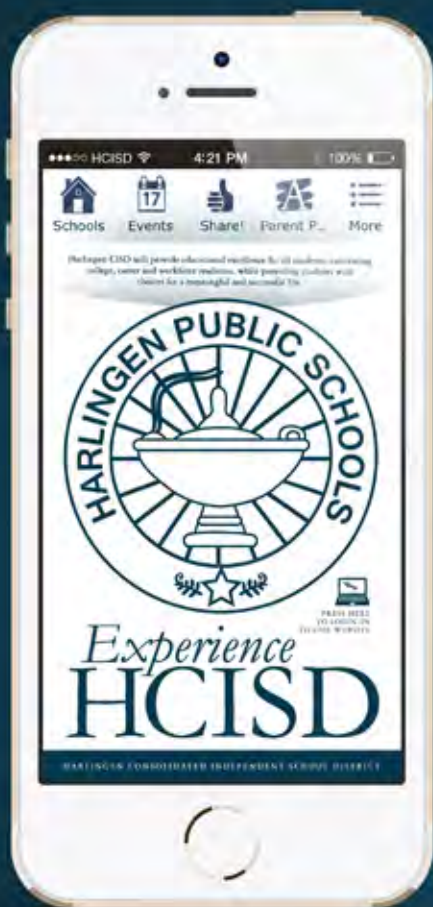
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# DR. ABRAHAM P. CANO FRESHMAN ACADEMY

## A STRONG START FOR COLLEGE AND BEYOND



During their eighth grade year, if you had asked Norman Torres, Miranda Del Valle, Rebekah Anderson, Jacob Hallett and Jordan Pemelton how they saw themselves in a year, the answer would have been as a typical incoming freshman. Fast-forward to a year later, and they would tell you that their freshmen year is nowhere near typical and they are learning in ways never expected.

"I feel like I'm at a university or college," said Del Valle. "We get to have that college experience so that when we do go to college, we know exactly what to expect."

Del Valle, like 1,300 students at the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District, are receiving an early start on their college experience at the Dr. Abraham P. Cano Freshman Academy. The Academy, opened in Fall 2013, gives students a technology-rich learning environment, while allowing students to discover their passions early on by selecting one of five areas of study, much like the major a student would select in college.

"We get a taste of the career we are going into," said Anderson.

Areas of study include business, education, liberal arts, science engineering mathematics and technology (STEM) and health sciences. Their pathways are incorporated daily into their class work, and projects consistently reflect their potential future careers.

"Everyday I'm learning about the body and how it ties in with biology," said Torres, who is enrolled in the School of Health Sciences. "I can apply it back to how everything works. It's creating a connection between our classwork and the real life situations we would experience if we really were in the medical field."

It's not just what they are learning, it's how they are learning. The campus takes pride in its method of instruction by encouraging teachers to act as facilitators that help guide the lessons, rather than lecturers. It's noticeable as you walk into any of the classrooms and take a little more than a minute to find the teacher sitting amongst the sea of students discussing the day's lesson.

"Our teachers sit with us and talk with us like we are adults," said Pemelton. "It encourages me to work harder because I feel like we have more responsibility."





"It's a great transition from middle school to high school, and we get a taste of the career we're going into."

Rebekah Anderson  
Education



"This school gives you the opportunity to be your own achiever."

Jacob Hallett  
Liberal Arts

"I love the campus. A lot of responsibility is given to us and we are working hands on."

Jordan Pemelton  
Business



"The Academy has shown me what it's like to be a student at a university. When I do get to college, I think I'll have a better idea of what I'm going to study, and what I want to do when I get older."

Norman Torres  
Health Science

"As a student, it's great the way the technology and curriculum is set up. I really like Project Based Learning, because we're actually doing hands on activities"

Miranda Del Valle  
STEM



It's a mentality shared by her classmates. The collaborative setting creates a philosophy of the students having an important role in their achievements.

"This school gives you the opportunity to be your own achiever," said Hallett. "It's up to you to study, do your work and put effort into your classes. How well you do is completely up to you, and it has helped make me a more responsible student."

Along with the career, technology and collaborative focus, the campus was also designed to pay special attention to one of the most important years in a student's academic career. The focus paid off for Del Valle as she saw an easier time going from eighth grade to the Dr. Cano Academy. This transition could have been difficult considering she went from a total of 13 to 1,300 students in her grade level, she said.

"This is a completely different experience for me coming from a private school," said Del Valle. "It's been a great transition though because of the hands-on learning, and the fact that we are all incoming freshmen. You relate to everyone because they are new to the school just like you."

Being the first set of students to walk through the halls of the Dr. Cano Academy is not something that they take lightly, said Hallett. They see their enrollment at the new campus as an opportunity and challenge to set an example for incoming freshmen in the years to follow.

"We are setting the stage for years to come," said Torres.

With their freshmen year going strong, the students are confident that success will translate to the rest of their high school experience and beyond. ■

#### ON THE RIGHT

A student gets instructional support as a teacher at the Dr. Abraham P. Cano Freshman Academy promotes collaboration and academic excellence in the classroom.





# LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS GET A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TWIST:

## DIGITAL INITIATIVES GROW FOR ALL CAMPUSES

On an average day, you can find Seven Gonzalez sitting at her desk with an iPad researching tutorials on the latest mathematics lesson, taking verbal notes on a scientific theory, recording a performance of an original poem for an upcoming project or looking up synonyms for an essay.

From the description, Gonzalez sounds like any other student at one of the top universities in the nation, but in reality she is a fourth grade student at Dr. Rodriguez Elementary School. Like students in 89 classrooms across the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District, she is in a digital classroom which incorporates technology into daily curriculum to give them an idea of what it's like to study at an actual high school or college class. Her classwork takes a 21st century approach as she uses applications and features on her assigned iPad to help her progress her mathematical, writing and reading skills, but for her, she sometimes forgets she is learning with the fun that her technology enhanced lessons can bring.

"I've always enjoyed learning new things, but now we learn in new ways," said Gonzalez. "When we use the apps, sometimes it's games and sometimes it's to look up stuff. What you don't know though, is that you're actually learning instead of playing."

Although technology is frequently utilized in the classroom, it's not intended to be the focus of the classroom. The technology is set in place to help the teacher facilitate meaningful lessons, while students learn the technological skills they'll need for the future, said Kasey Boykin, HCISD instructional technologist. To help ensure that students use the technology responsibly and the teacher's directions remain a classroom focal point, systems have been put in place. For times where the focus needs to be on the instructor, a sign will be placed in front of the class to Device Down. When the time comes for the technology to be utilized again, the sign will be switched to say Power Up.

It's a move that Gonzalez and her classmates have come to know well, she said.

"The whole class gets excited when the sign changes to Power Up," said Gonzalez. "When the sign changes though, we know it's time to focus on Mrs. Ayala [fourth grade teacher at Rodriguez] until she changes it again."

Gonzalez and her fellow digital classroom students are not the only ones learning with technology every day. Their instructors agree that with students becoming more experienced with technology before they even step foot into their classroom, there is an opportunity for students to facilitate learning as well, said Claudia Pompa, kindergarten teacher at Dishman Elementary School.

#### ON THE RIGHT

Students utilize the resources available to them at their campus Information Literacy Center (ILC) this past school year.

#### AT BOTTOM RIGHT

Seven Gonzalez, Rodriguez Elementary School student, researches more information about her latest lesson while in her digital classroom this fall.



“My students teach me new things on the iPad almost every day,” said Pompa. “For some, it’s very natural to them. They are digital natives. On the first day of school, I told my students that I’m not the only teacher in this room. We teach them, and they teach us.”

To give all students the opportunity to learn and study in a technology-rich environment, they also have access to digital resources at their campus Information Literacy Center (ILC), which is considered to be a school’s largest digital classroom, said Boykin.

Gonzalez said her ILC has whatever she would need to complete the assignments given in her digital classroom. She also loves that she gets to read interactive books that help bring the story to life.

“The [electronic] books are really fun to read,” said Gonzalez. “Sometimes I read them and the picture moves. It helps me imagine the story and predict what is going to happen next.”

Digital Classrooms and ILCs are only two components that make up the district’s digital initiatives, which also includes the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program. With BYOD implemented, students have the opportunity to bring their personal devices to school and use them in class, just like a Digital Classroom. Instructors have the opportunity to choose if they would like to practice BYOD in their classroom, and currently, the program is being practiced throughout all classrooms at the Dr. Abraham P. Cano Freshman Academy.

With the technological transformation in full gear, the district’s digital initiatives are expected to further expand in the next few years until all classrooms are either digital classrooms or practice BYOD. The goal is to have all students learning in a classroom that reflects a college or university, while

responsibly rolling out the technology, said Boykin.

Anxious for the future, Gonzalez is excited for the day that all of her classrooms will incorporate technology into lessons. She knows that with 21st century lessons, she will receive the tools necessary to be an interactive learner as she progresses through her education and works to follow her dream of becoming a therapist, she said.

“The more I learn, the smarter I get,” said Gonzalez. “I can be an interactive learner, and that will help me when I grow up.” ■

“ I’ve always enjoyed learning new things, but now, we learn in new ways. ”

SEVEN GONZALEZ  
4TH GRADE RODRIGUEZ ELEMENTARY







# A Heartbeat Away:

School of Health Professions  
opens Fall 2014

With her practice stethoscope in one hand and magnifying glass in the other, second grade Bonham Elementary student Rose Martinez dreams of one day helping others by becoming a doctor.

"I want to help make people better," said Martinez.

It's a path she's wanted to pursue since her schools Career Day when she saw a pediatrician speak to her class. Her mind was filled with questions as the presentation continued, and once the opportunity was given, she took the chance to ask as many questions as possible.

"There was so much I wanted to ask," said Martinez. "I just wanted to know how you become a doctor. What do you have to do?"

Her residency may be more than 15 years away, but her medical education may start sooner than she could have ever imagined. In a few short years, Martinez will be able to enroll in the district's School of Health Professions, which is expected to open in Fall 2014.

The school will open to eighth and ninth grade students next fall. These students will be able to continue their enrollment throughout their senior year. The school intends to add additional grade levels each year until 12th grade is reached.

Students will have hands on learning experience in the classroom. The goal is to blend curriculum with projects that reflect real life scenarios that a professional in the medical field may encounter.

Challenging students and developing the future minds of the medical profession, the campus will focus on providing students with curriculum geared

towards placing students on career paths for medical professions, including doctors, nurses, and medical technicians. Students will have six areas of study to select from that include The School of Pharmacology/ Biomedical Technology, The School of Dental Science, The School of Patient Care, The School of Medical Science Research, The School of Sports Medicine and The School of Surgical Procedures.

Located on 2302 N. 21st Street, the school has taken some of the first steps toward completion during its groundbreaking ceremony on Nov. 5. While there, School Board members, administrators and teachers looked to the future and have already set high expectations for what the first year will bring.

"Our campus is one step closer to reality as the first half of the school year nears completion," said Tina Garza, principal of the SHP. "We look forward to the opening of our campus in Fall 2014, and the opportunities it will bring the students of HCISD to learn in an environment that is focused on rigor and application." ■

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# AGRICULTURAL PROJECT CENTER

The acronym FFA represents three words for Cristian Mendoza: family, friends and agriculture. With the opening of the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District's Agriculture Project Center, the FFA family is sure to grow stronger in building on the tradition of agriculture success in the Rio Grande Valley, the president of the Future Farmers of America club and senior at Harlingen High School said.

"Agriculture really is an ancient practice and tradition," Mendoza said. "It drives the economy here in the Rio Grande Valley and it's exciting to have this new facility for students."

HCISD celebrated the ribbon cutting ceremony on October 29. The \$1.35 million facility designed by Harlingen-based Megamorphosis Architects is located at 23146 Hand Road down the street from Gutierrez Middle School and the HCISD Performing Arts Center. The building can hold 135 animals with 10 large

animal pens for cattle, 5 large poultry pens for chickens and turkeys and its 120 multi-purpose pens for lambs, goats and pigs.

"I have already seen this new facility begin to spark interest in students to go to college to study agriculture," Mendoza said. "Universities have very nice facilities and this facility in Harlingen resembles those high quality options you'll see at Texas A&M."

Some of the advantages of the new facility include a fly pest control



# “ This state of the art facility is a game changer for the students of Harlingen CISD. ”

**CHRISTOPHER ESPARZA**  
Harlingen High School South Senior

system to limit the number of insects that often carry diseases; climate control with four, 20-foot fans; exterior doors to easily open and close off areas to protect animals; concrete floors that provide a cleaner environment for students and animals; storage and restroom facilities for students; cameras to ensure the safety of animals and students; and a show arena for students to practice for competitions and shows.

The new facility will allow students to focus on learning and working with the animals, rather than the day-to-day cleaning and maintaining of pens, said Jacque Stevens, agriculture teacher at HHS.

“This is enormous for our students,” Stevens said. “Now our students can see the difference in the quality of the animal. They can focus on working with the animal to get it socialized and show ready.”

The Agriculture Project Center was funded by the \$98.6 million bond initiative approved by voters in May 2010. HCISD received an Instructional Facilities Allotment funding as part of that bond program, equaling about \$46.3 million in state funding to cover approximately half of the total bond. The bond program also funded the Dr. Abraham P. Cano Freshman Academy, the new

Memorial Middle School, renovations at Boggus Stadium, the Aquatic Center, the Performing Arts Center and renovations and facility upgrades at all HCISD schools.

“Our students deserve the best, and this is another example of the very best,” Superintendent Dr. Arturo Cavazos said. “We celebrate this beautiful facility, and we look for great things to come from our students, who are the benefactors of this state-of-the-art project center.”

For years, students from both high schools used a roofless, floorless facility down on Chester Park Road that presented several learning challenges. Now, the old facility is being re-purposed as a quarantine area for sick animals, while students can enjoy the larger, better-equipped learning space that the Agriculture Project Center offers.

“It’s exciting to have the new project center,” said Caitlyn Smith, Harlingen High School South sophomore and campus FFA President. “We’ve been looking forward to moving the animals in, and it will definitely help us this year to get our animals show ready.”

Heading into spring, students will be preparing for livestock shows as they move into and familiarize themselves with the new facility. Both high schools



## ABOVE

A student gets a head-start on his future as a member of the district's FFA program.

are sure to continue the strong tradition of collaboration and success as students enjoy the new learning space.

“This state of the art facility is a game changer for the students of Harlingen CISD,” said Jasmin Arreazola, FFA secretary and senior at HHS. ■

## AT LEFT

A FFA student gets her sheep show-ready in the district's new Agricultural Project Center.



# Global Classrooms for global success

In Fall 2012, HCISD launched Dual Language Academies at Ben Milam Elementary and Lee Means Elementary to give students the opportunity to simultaneously master both English and Spanish by fifth grade. This year, three additional academies have opened at Lamar, Sam Houston and Wilson elementary schools.

Kindergarten students crowded the floor and desks across Kelly Helbach's classroom at Wilson Elementary, hunching, bending and immersing in their notebooks as they worked on writing sentences. Labels on items throughout the classroom provided vocabulary for the item in English and Spanish, such as door and puerta for those who enter into this Dual Language classroom. The Word Wall and Pared de las Palabras in the back of the classroom gave students a collection of terms to use for their journals as they completed the assignment.

Helbach, a first year teacher from Wisconsin working in the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District through Teach for America, can relate to her class in a unique way because her passion for language and learning originated when she was in elementary school at a dual language program in Minnesota, she said.

"I remember being so excited about learning in Spanish when I was in second grade," Helbach said. "My passion for language kept growing from there. I

continued to study both languages. I majored in college in both languages. I was so excited for the opportunity here at Wilson to teach in a dual language program."

Teach for America is a national teacher corps of college graduates and professionals who commit to teach for two years and raise student achievement in public schools. This highly competitive program allows applicants to rate the regions they wish to work in as part of the program's job placement model. In rating the areas, Helbach said she rated the Rio Grande Valley the highest because she wanted an opportunity to help elementary students become bilingual.

HCISD currently features five elementary schools with Dual Language Academies – Ben Milam, Lamar, Lee Means, Sam Houston and Wilson. The program brings together native English speakers with native Spanish speakers to develop bilingualism and bi-literacy starting in pre-K or Kindergarten at the participating schools.

"I love the language aspect and the high rigor that comes from this program," Helbach said. "You're learning academic vocabulary in both languages, which is high-level thinking skills that challenges students in a unique way."

HCISD structured its Dual Language Academy program based on the Gómez & Gómez 50/50 Dual Language Enrichment Model, launching the program in 2012 with Milam and Means elementary schools. Students in dual language programs are more likely to develop a respect for culture and lan-

guage, score higher on standardized tests, display a higher tendency for academic achievement, develop better analytical skills and develop intellectual cognitive skills to compete in a global society, according to research from Gómez & Gómez.

In the classroom, students participate in a Language of the Day that includes using words outside of core content, such as the morning routing, bilingual centers, walking in the hall, lunch time and recess. Students learn each subject in a specific language, Helbach explained. Core content, language arts, math, science and social studies, do not follow Language of the Day. Language arts is taught in the student's native language until second grade when they begin learning in both languages. Math is always taught in English. Science and social studies are always taught in Spanish. Students also develop 21st century skills working in teams. In her classroom, student groups are generally made up of two native English speakers and one native Spanish speaker, allowing the students to work together.

"The model is about increasing the academic rigor so students are thinking at a higher level," Helbach said. "We want students to be creating and problem solving as opposed to being able to identify objects in two languages. That higher level thinking is what this program accomplishes."

*For more information on the HCISD Dual Language Academies, please visit <http://www.hcisd.org/duallanguageacademy>*

#### BELOW

A Dual Language classroom at Lamar Elementary School keeps the language of the day at the core of their reading lesson this fall.





## Dual Language ACADEMY

A dual language education provides students many benefits both academic and developmental. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association showcases a variety of advantages associated with the program.

### COGNITIVE BENEFITS

- A bilingual person develops creative thinking and an ability to think more flexibly.
- They possess better thinking skills
- Bilingual individuals are more sensitive to the needs of listeners, as compared to those who speak one language.
- Being bilingual has a positive effect on intellectual growth.

### CHARACTER ADVANTAGES

- Language builds a bond between people.
- Increases an individual's sense of self-esteem.
- Bilingual people have a better thinking capability.
- Bilingual individuals tend to show higher performance in examinations and tests as well.
- They find it easier to learn and speak more languages.

### EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

- Being bilingual adds to the expansion of one's knowledge and understanding.
- A bilingual person is presented with a wider choice of jobs in various fields.

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long-term academic and career goals.

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# STUDENT CONTENT

For our Moving Forward issue, our editorial team asked teachers to submit student artwork, essays and photographs that answered the question "What will classrooms look like in 20 years?" Some outstanding student work was submitted, and the editorial team made some tough decisions during the selection process. The team would like to thank all of the students and teachers for submitting their artwork for this issue.



**Larry Balt**  
5th Grade Dishman Elementary



**Joseph Alexander Quiroga**  
Harlingen High School South



**Carolina Berumen**  
Harlingen High School South



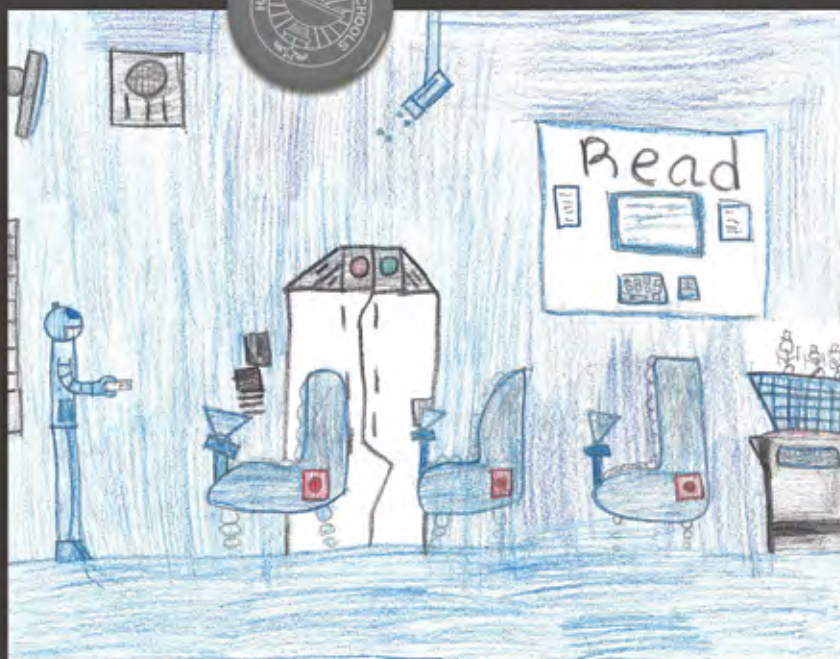
**Samuel Pedraza**  
Third Grade Long Elementary



**Jahdiel Navarro**  
Senior Harlingen High School South



**Benjamin Brown**  
Kindergarten Dishman Elementary



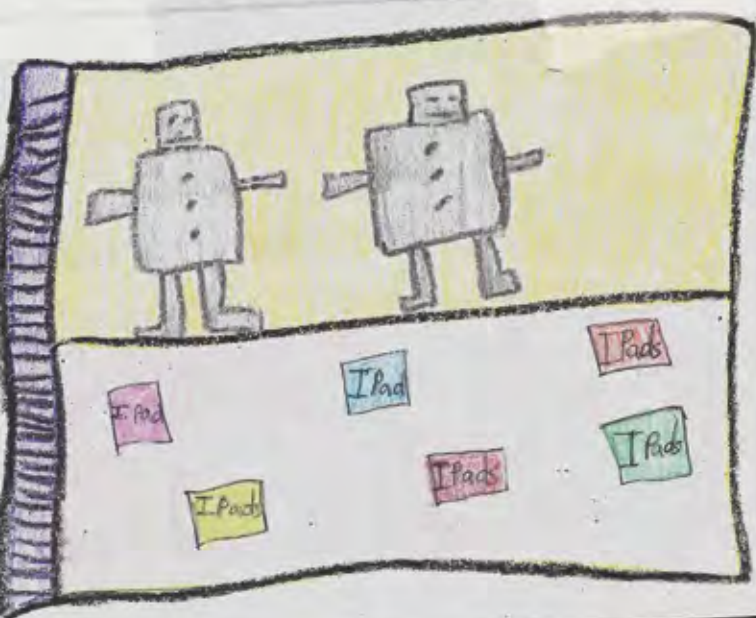




Samuel Pedraza  
Third Grade  
Long Elem.

What will classrooms look like  
in the next 20 years?

I think classrooms would look very  
different in 20 years. The  
classrooms would be two stories  
high or more. They will be very  
clean. They might even have robots  
as teachers. They will have a lot  
of iPads. There will be no paper  
around. There will be no books  
because they will all be on tablets.  
There will be lots of computer  
stuff instead of regular stuff.  
Robots or computers will have more  
control over our schools. That's  
what I think it will be like.



Benjamin Brown, Kinder, Dishman Elem.

in the next 20 years, classrooms  
will look like this with a  
robot teacher.





# HCISD *embraces school choice*



Harlingen CISD provides the following choices to families who live or work inside our boundaries:

If your family lives within the HCISD boundaries, you can now send your children to any elementary or middle school with available space.

If you work or own property within the boundaries of HCISD, your children can attend school in our district.

If you do not live in the district, but your children have attended private or public school within the HCISD boundaries for at least one year, your children can attend a school in HCISD.



Call (956) 430-9500 or visit [www.HCISD.org/experience](http://www.HCISD.org/experience) for more information