



SUPERINTENDENT MILLARD HOUSE II 100-DAY REPORT

Dear HISD Community,

After 100 days as superintendent of HISD, I want to share what we have collectively accomplished, what I've heard and learned from engaging with the community, and what we will focus on immediately and over the years to come to make HISD a district that provides all its students with an exceptional education.

I joined HISD knowing that while many amazing things are happening in the district, there are areas where we can and must do better for our students and families. As a former athlete, I have an inherent desire to want to win, and that desire holds true in my current role. I want to work with the HISD team – parents, staff, and community – to ensure that our students win by receiving the academic and social and emotional supports that they need to thrive and become college and career ready.

Over the last three months, I have focused my efforts on understanding the current state of the district and what the community desires us to become through a wide range of listening and learning activities. In addition, I have also worked with my team to take immediate action on critical items such as student safety, learning loss, and student engagement.

This report will begin by highlighting what we have already been able to accomplish as a team. It will then summarize what I have heard and learned about the district through deep engagement with students, parents, staff, and the community. Lastly, it will highlight the critical district priorities I have developed through such engagement that will serve as the cornerstone for all our efforts moving forward.

Listening and learning was just the first step on the path to an exciting future ahead for HISD. I am committed to transparency and being accessible every step of the way. I look forward to working with the community and Team HISD over the next few months to develop a five-year strategic plan that I will share publicly by March 2022. The plan will outline the bold and innovative actions that we will take to significantly improve outcomes and expand opportunities for our students.

We would also like to hear from you. A survey will be available on our website at HoustonISD.org/100DayReport where you can share your feedback.

The challenges we face are real, but the opportunities ahead are extraordinary. I look forward to everything we will accomplish together.

Sincerely,

MILLARD HOUSE II,
HISD SUPERINTENDENT



WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED

Despite the many challenges brought on by the pandemic, I am proud to have worked with our community and staff to make great strides for our students and families. I'd like to share some of the major things we've been able to accomplish as a team over the past few months:

- **We safely opened all our schools and brought back over 190,000 students for in-person instruction while maintaining one of the lowest rates of active COVID-19 cases in the state (0.21%).** We did this by working over the summer with local and national medical experts to revamp and significantly improve our district's safety plan, and by training and supporting our principals and campus staff.
- **We developed and launched virtual learning options for over 23,000 students who have compromised immune systems or who have had to quarantine.** This has meant that these students have not had to miss out on a moment of instruction.
- **We started the school year with more certified teachers in classrooms than even before the pandemic, despite a local and national teacher shortage.** We did this by deploying more than 250 central office members with teacher certifications to campuses to ensure that students had access to quality instruction.
- **We developed and implemented a student re-engagement plan that has resulted in over 18,000 students enrolling in the district since the first day of school.** We knocked on doors, held phone banks, sent mailings, and partnered with community organizations to find and re-engage missing students.
- **We have utilized federal COVID relief funds (ESSER) in ways that support student safety, learning, and well-being.** This has included expanding tutorials across all schools, investing in additional counselors and wraparound specialists, and providing additional supports to students with the greatest needs.
- **We have begun the process of transitioning to a new appraisal system that will provide teachers and principals with more support and opportunities for growth.** This will help increase the capacity of our educators and have a direct positive impact on student learning.
- **We have enlisted the support of philanthropy and some of the nation's top experts to help us effectively plan and improve as a school system.** These experts are helping us evaluate and improve areas such as curriculum, special education, family engagement, human resources, finance, and more.
- **We have assembled one of the nation's most talented and diverse district executive leadership teams.** This will enable us to carry out the work that needs to happen for our students to thrive.



WHAT I HAVE HEARD AND LEARNED

During my first 100 days as superintendent, I sought as many opportunities as possible to hear from the community and learn about the current state and future aspirations for the district. I did this by visiting dozens of campuses across Houston's many diverse communities to see firsthand the opportunities and challenges that our students, families, and staff are facing. I participated in focus groups and meetings with students, parents, teachers, and administrators to understand their experiences and hopes for the district. I also hosted 16 town halls across the city to get candid feedback regarding what is going well in the district and what needs to be improved. In addition, I met with community leaders spanning multiple sectors, including government, business, religion, and nonprofit, to hear their perspectives. Here are the main things I heard and learned from this broad engagement with the community:



- **Parents, students, and the community highly prioritize and desire caring, effective, and engaging educators and support staff.** The need to develop, recruit, and retain effective teachers, principals, and support staff was often cited as the most important thing we should focus on as a school district.
- **There is a widespread desire and imperative to strengthen teaching and learning at all schools.** The quality of teaching and learning varies greatly across the district, and differences in curriculum, testing, and classroom instruction are leading to inequitable academic outcomes, especially for children who attend more than one HISD campus during their school career.
- **The community is very proud and supportive of its highly acclaimed schools and magnet programs, but there is a desire and a need for more high-performing schools and specialty programs, especially in underserved communities.** Many parents and students expressed that while the district has very high-performing schools and specialty programs, there are areas throughout the city where they do not exist and where the only options that exist are chronically low-performing campuses.
- **The district offers a wide portfolio of services and resources for students, but these are not always equitably distributed across schools.** Student and family experience is very different across campuses and neighborhoods. This includes fundamental services like facilities, libraries, social and mental health services, fine arts education, extracurriculars, and access to advanced coursework.
- **Many families who have children with exceptional needs are frustrated that the district has not lived up to its promise and obligation of providing their children with the services and supports necessary for them to thrive academically.** Students with exceptional needs, including students with disabilities and English-language learners, are not realizing their full academic potential.

Some of the stories I heard from parents and students were uplifting and inspiring, while others were heartbreaking and difficult to hear. What I heard consistently and across the board, however, was a desire and a charge for us to do better for all HISD students and families.

SUPERINTENDENT PRIORITIES



As the district's leader, I am excited to announce the following five district priorities that will guide and shape our decisions, allocation of resources, and actions moving forward. These priorities are a direct reflection and response to what I've learned and heard from our students, parents, staff, and community.

- 1. Cultivating World-Class Talent at all Levels** - We will implement an ambitious, comprehensive strategy to recruit, develop, and retain effective and caring teachers, principals, and support staff.
- 2. Providing Equitable Opportunities and Resources at Every School** - We will ensure that every school provides a quality family and student core experience that supports the development of the whole child.
- 3. Promoting High-Quality Teaching and Learning** - We will provide engaging and rigorous curriculum and instruction that bolsters academic performance.
- 4. Ensuring Great Schools and Programs in Every Community** - We will accelerate student performance through bold, innovative actions at persistently underperforming schools.
- 5. Delivering Effective Services and Supports to Students with Exceptional Needs** - We will implement high-quality systems and services that increase achievement for students with specialized needs, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

I am confident that by focusing on these priorities as a community, we will become a better school district that provides its students and families with the outstanding educational opportunities that they need and deserve.

LOOKING AHEAD



I look forward to continuing to collaborate with the community and with my team to develop a strategic plan that I will share publicly by March 2022. This plan will provide us with a blueprint for the next five years and will outline the major actions we will take to advance each of the district's priorities.

We can't do this work alone. It truly takes a village. I am confident, however, that **as a community we can, and will, succeed.**

HoustonISD.org/100DayReport

