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# INSPIRING FUTURES

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SUMMER/FALL 2022



# INSPIRING FUTURES

## A Message From Our CEO



At Harmony, we take pride in the amount of growth we've experienced in such a relatively short amount of time.

In only a matter of a couple of decades, our system has grown from one small campus staffed by a handful of dedicated educators to now a nationally-recognized system of 58 campuses spanning the state of Texas.

Harmony hasn't just grown in size – we've also grown in service. Harmony now has full departments devoted to preparing our students for college and career success, supporting students' mental health and development needs, and also connecting them to cool clubs like rocketry and biomedicine.

But at Harmony, we never focus on growing just for growth's sake. The purpose of our growth at Harmony is always focused on improvement, and providing more services to scholars and communities across Texas.

That's why this issue of Inspiring Futures not only highlights some of our upcoming development plans for new campuses across Texas, but also tells the stories of how Harmony is helping students achieve their own personal growth.

From an El Paso student whose desire to help her grandmother during the pandemic led to a Congressional award, to an English teacher who is now helping students across the state earn college scholarships by playing video games, we hope this issue of Inspiring Futures will also inspire you in whatever growth opportunity lies ahead.

And as always, thank you for being a part of our Harmony community ... and for growing along with us.

Sincerely,

**Fatih Ay | CEO**  
**Harmony Public Schools**

*Harmony Public Schools is a tuition-free public charter school system providing a high-quality curriculum that places a heavy emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Our engaging, hands-on, project-based approach allows students to design, build, and experiment on projects that provide real-world solutions to prepare students for college success.*





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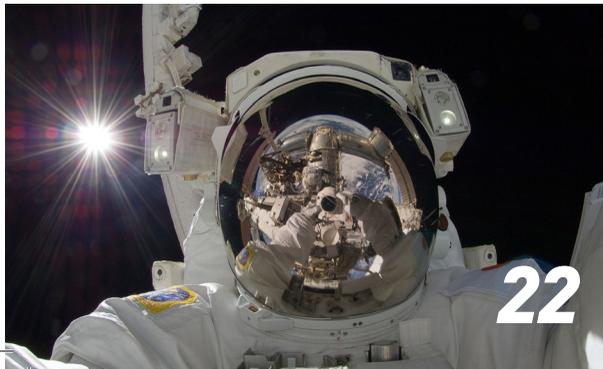
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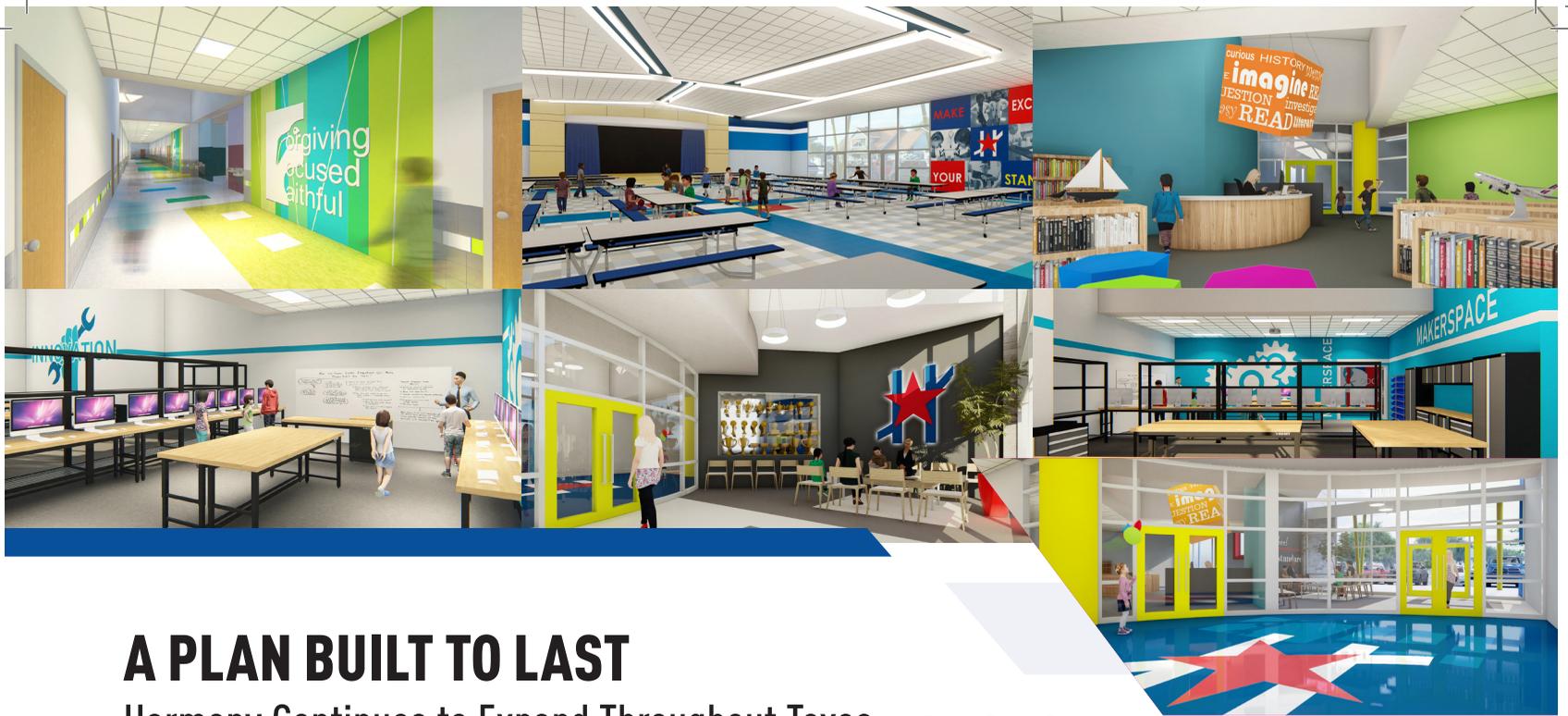
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## A PLAN BUILT TO LAST

### Harmony Continues to Expand Throughout Texas *by Evelin De La Rosa*

Harmony Public Schools continues to serve students with a high-quality education throughout the state of Texas. As the demand to serve students continues to grow, Harmony is expanding its seven regional districts with new, first-class facilities across the state.

Despite COVID-19 and unforeseen inclement weather events causing school district closures, the construction of these new campuses has not stopped. Harmony Public Schools has done everything to make sure campuses are ready to welcome their inaugural classes in Fall of 2022.

“We are facing challenges with COVID, inflation, and construction but we are working hard to be sure we are up and running for Fall 2022 and excited for all our new students,” said Edward Caglar, Executive Director of Expansion and Construction for Harmony Public Schools.

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*“When these schools are finally built, it will reflect all the staff and parent collaboration to make it all happen.”*

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According to Harmony’s 2025 Strategic Plan, a new campus or campus expansion will take place each year in each district. This fall, seven new facilities – including two brand new campuses – will open across the state with first-class facilities ready to educate new students. To ensure student and faculty needs were met, countless collaborations involving multiple departments, staff, teachers, students, and even parents were conducted in order to achieve the highest level of facility for each district.

“There’s a high demand for parents wanting to enroll their children in Harmony,” said Caglar. “We have many parents who have been on our waiting lists for years. These new campuses will open up opportunities for students who have been wanting to take on a STEM education.”

According to the Texas Education Agency, Harmony Public Schools outranked all other charter school systems in the state in 2020 with the most students on its waitlist. With these new campuses and expansions,

Harmony will be able to welcome students who have been wanting to be part of the Harmony family.

Each new campus will serve about 850 students from grades six through 12, or about 650 students from Pre-K through fifth, depending on how it is classified. The middle/high schools will have up to 40 total classrooms along with specialized rooms such as activity centers and makerspace labs, while the elementary campuses will have up to 28 classrooms along with specialized classrooms such as makerspace labs.

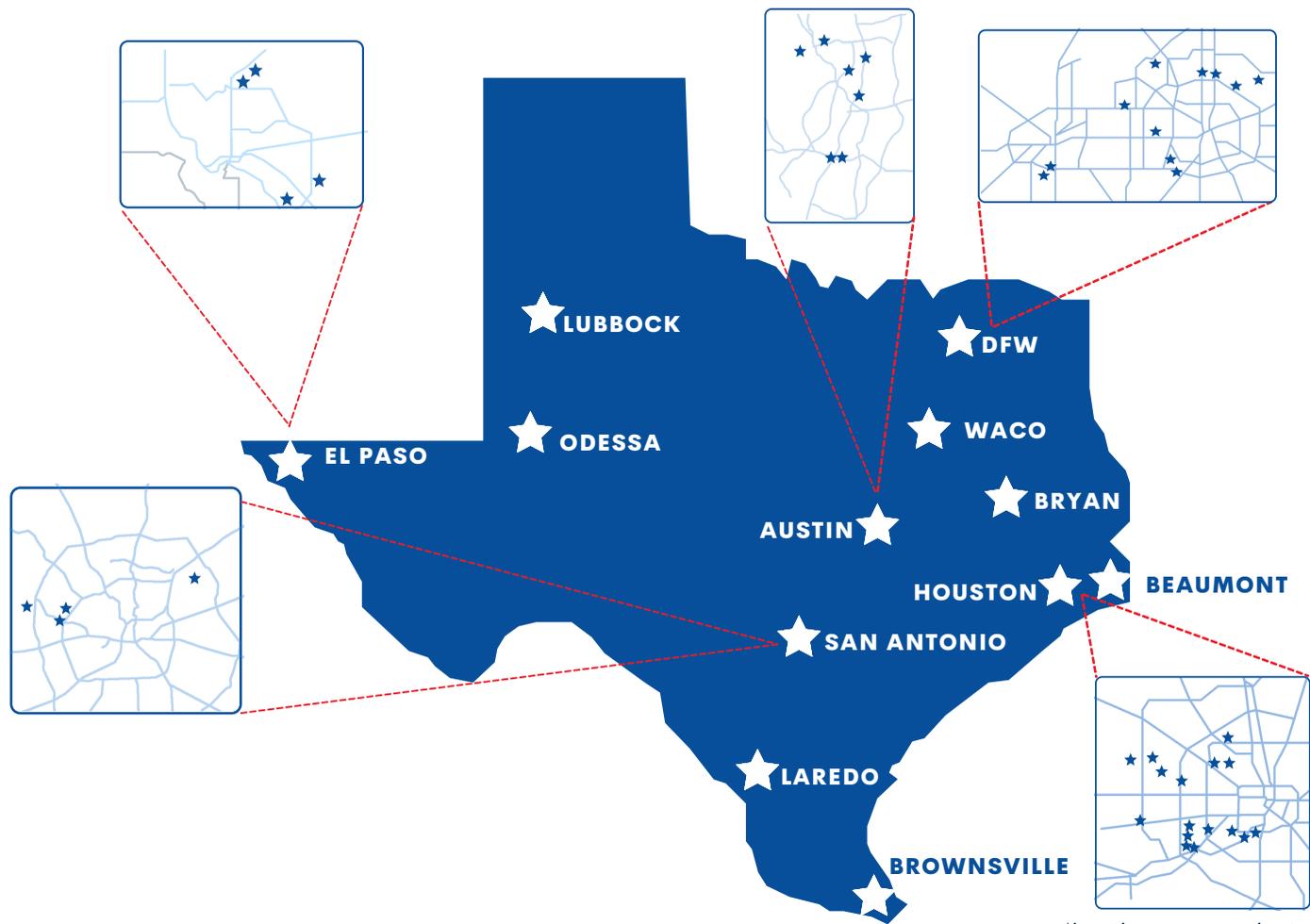
New campuses will have cafeterias with a stage, gymnasiums, administration areas, libraries and support spaces all to fit student needs. Campuses will also include running tracks, sports fields, student gardens, courtyards, and two covered play areas. All of these new amenities will improve student learning and involvement by improving their elementary, middle or high school experience through interactivity and accessibility of high-level facilities.

“When these schools are finally built, it will reflect all the staff and parent collaboration the made it all happen,” says Caglar.

As Harmony continues to grow, parents can look forward to their children having access to world-class facilities where they can learn, grow and prepare themselves for the future.

#### New Campus Additions and Expansions for Fall 2022

- Harmony School of Science - San Antonio South Texas District (New)
- Harmony School of Innovation - El Paso West Texas District (Expansion)
- Harmony School of Excellence - Katy Houston North District (New)
- Harmony School of Innovation - Sugar Land Houston South District (Expansion)
- Harmony School of Innovation - Katy Houston South District (Expansion)
- Harmony School of Excellence - Houston Houston North District (Expansion)



\*Locations are approximate.

## ✚ OUR TEXAS HOME ✚

**More than 20 years ago, Harmony Public Schools opened its first campus in Houston's historic Braeswood neighborhood. Since then, we've grown into one of the state's most trusted and recognized schools for college preparation, character education and STEM curriculum.**

Harmony School of Achievement-Houston  
 Harmony School of Advancement-Houston  
 Harmony School of Discovery-Houston  
 Harmony School of Endeavor-Austin  
 Harmony School of Endeavor-Houston  
 Harmony School of Enrichment-Houston  
 Harmony School of Excellence-Austin  
 Harmony School of Excellence-Dallas  
 Harmony School of Excellence-El Paso  
 Harmony School of Excellence-Houston  
 Harmony School of Excellence-Katy  
 Harmony School of Excellence-Laredo  
 Harmony School of Excellence-San Antonio  
 Harmony School of Excellence-Sugar Land  
 Harmony School of Exploration-Houston  
 Harmony School of Fine Arts & Technology-Houston  
 Harmony School of Ingenuity-Houston  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Austin  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Brownsville  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Dallas

Harmony School of Innovation-El Paso  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Eules  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Fort Worth  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Garland  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Grand Prairie  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Houston  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Katy  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Laredo  
 Harmony School of Innovation-San Antonio  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Sugar Land  
 Harmony School of Innovation-Waco  
 Harmony School of Science-Austin  
 Harmony School of Science-El Paso  
 Harmony School of Science-Houston  
 Harmony School of Science-San Antonio  
 Harmony School of Technology-Houston  
 Harmony Science Academy-Austin  
 Harmony Science Academy-Beaumont  
 Harmony Science Academy-Brownsville  
 Harmony Science Academy-Bryan

Harmony Science Academy-Carrollton  
 Harmony Science Academy-Carrollton  
 Harmony Science Academy-Cedar Park  
 Harmony Science Academy-Cypress  
 Harmony Science Academy-Dallas  
 Harmony Science Academy-El Paso  
 Harmony Science Academy-Eules  
 Harmony Science Academy-Fort Worth  
 Harmony Science Academy-Garland  
 Harmony Science Academy-Grand Prairie  
 Harmony Science Academy-Houston HS  
 Harmony Science Academy-Katy  
 Harmony Science Academy-Laredo  
 Harmony Science Academy-Lubbock  
 Harmony Science Academy-Odessa  
 Harmony Science Academy-Pflugerville  
 Harmony Science Academy-Plano  
 Harmony Science Academy-San Antonio  
 Harmony Science Academy-Sugar Land  
 Harmony Science Academy-Waco



# JOURNEY TO NATIONAL SCHOOL OF CHARACTER

Creating a Nationally Recognized Campus *by Susan Campbell*

When Harmony opened its doors in 2000, its founders knew they wanted to create a culture of character in the schools. Believing that the values a child demonstrates are just as important as the knowledge they possess, character classes were initiated a few times a week as its system of schools grew and strategic plans for the future were developed and implemented.

Fast-forward to 2020, when character education was taken to a new level by Harmony School of Innovation-Fort Worth. That year, the campus was named a National School of Character by Character.org, a nationwide education advocacy organization.

The rare honor, bestowed to fewer than 100 schools in the country every year, recognized HSI-Fort Worth for its multi-year effort to build a sustainable culture of character for its students, staff members and community members. Criteria for selection are based on Character.org's "11 Principles Framework for Schools: A Guide to Cultivating a Culture of Character," which includes providing students with opportunities for moral action, fostering shared leadership, and engaging families and communities as partners in the character-building effort.

It was a first for the Harmony Public Schools system – but not the last.

Since then, three other Harmony schools have been named National Schools of Character: Harmony Science Academy-Cedar Park, Harmony School of Science-Houston and Harmony School of Innovation-Houston. Nine other Harmony campuses also have been recognized as State Schools of Character – typically a precursor to national designation.

But how did HSI-Fort Worth achieve this first for Harmony?

"Having only one teacher teaching character education and moral values in the beginning was not so effective," said Mehmet Basoglu, former principal of HSI-Fort Worth and current Assistant Superintendent of Programs for Harmony's North Texas District. "We realized that character education should not be owned by the one or two teachers on campus who taught these classes."

As a solution, HSI-Fort Worth added an advisory class to its schedule for the 2015-2016 school year with the specific goal of giving character lessons.

"It really needed to be everyone's responsibility so that the entire campus was speaking the same language for character education and the expectations that came with it," said Alan Burke, former HSI-Fort Worth Dean of Academics and current District Instructional Support and Testing Coordinator for the North Texas District.

Encouraged by then North Texas Superintendent Fatih Ay – now CEO for Harmony Public Schools – the campus formed a committee and, in the summer of 2016, began drafting their campus values.

That's when HSI-Fort Worth really dove into their character education work. "We discussed what we wanted our campus values to look like, and what we wanted our students to succeed in," said Burke. And with the help of an Employability Rubric created by Burke, they decided on PRIDE.

PRIDE became an acronym for the habits and characteristics used to prepare students for success and excellence in middle school, high school and beyond.

**Professionalism:** Exhibits honesty, appropriate language and dress, and good manners.

**Respect:** Shows tolerance for different points of view and beliefs; shows regard for one's surroundings, things and others.

**Involvement:** Effective use of student planner and class time, participates in school activities, events and school culture; seeks out opportunities for growth.

**Determination:** Stays committed to personal and academic goals; persistent work ethic and character; shows enthusiasm and self-motivation.

**Excellence:** Strives for high levels of achievement and merit; makes a strong effort to obtain personal honors and awards; exhibits focus and self-discipline.

Staff and students would model and reinforce these values in every facet of campus life, which serves as the basis of the campus's collective success.

"Everytime we talk to a student about something, even if it is for running in the hallway, we ask – 'Do professionals run in the hallway?' – and in doing so, we tie it back to a core value and have that practice reinforced every day," said Burke. "It is emphasized in everything that we do."

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## *"Every time we talk to a student about something...we tie it back to a core value."*

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When the school applied for character designation in 2017-18, it received Honorable Mention. A little more character work, plus an in-person training visit by Character.org the following year earned the school a State School of Character designation in 2018-19.

The advisory class, featuring Student Success Conferences, and the student body buy-in helped in that success, according to Burke.

"During student success conferences, teachers and students would review and set goals for character and academic improvement," he said. "Through those slow steps, students are rating themselves, while seeing teachers in their corner, and students are buying in as part of the regular practice." Students who belonged to the Principal's Cabinet also played a big role by preparing a presentation on the school's core values and benefits of character education and sharing it during advisory classes.

"Students heard from their peers on why character is important," said Basoglu. "That changed students' perspectives."

Later, HSI-Fort Worth implemented a House System, which helped instill their core values and ramp up enthusiasm. House events like "Challenge Day" exemplified that.

"It was a really unique experience where 25 teachers and 100 students—who we called 'Change Champs'—came together from all different backgrounds to be in the same room for an entire day and strip down walls and barriers that still existed," said Jaci Chasteen, former HSI-Fort Worth Dean of Students and current North Texas District Principal Resident.

This event was key in helping HSI-Fort Worth ultimately go from being a State School of Character to a National School of Character in 2020.

"Right after Challenge Day, I saw students step forward and take responsibility for their school environment," said Basoglu. "The same students I would see in the discipline office were now at the front door entrance, greeting their peers as they came to school, high-fiving them."

HSI-Fort Worth will hold the National School of Character Designation until 2025, when they will have to re-submit an application.

"This entire experience cemented for me that if we create systems like this, where students want to be successful, staff want to go to work and everyone is striving for the same goal – excellence and success – then we can have the school that we all want to have," said Burke.

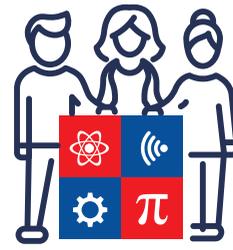
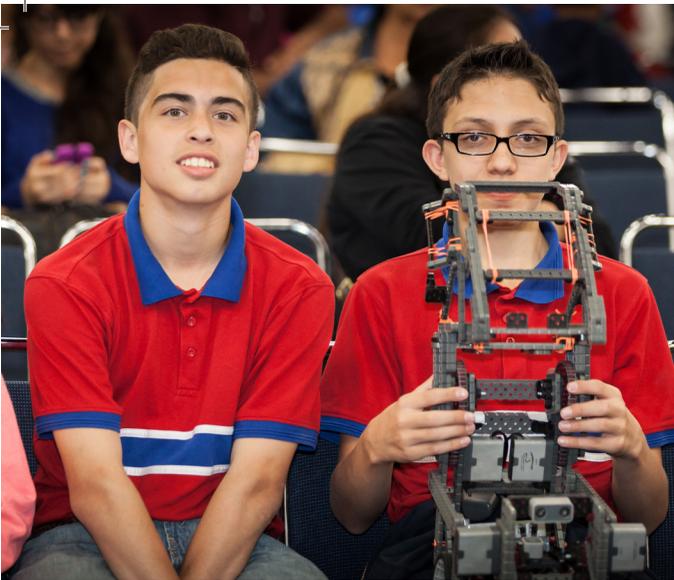
Many other Harmony schools now use similar models as they also work for their own School of Character recognition.

When asked what advice they would give other Harmony schools striving for national character designation, one word repeatedly came up.

"It has to be intentional," said Burke. "You have to structure your school with the explicit purpose that you're going to improve—always looking for areas to grow, and always doing it as a team," he said.

Though the school has set the character standard for others to follow, it definitely has not finished its journey.

"Character school is the start of the journey, not the end," said Burke. "Because from that moment on we are making a promise to the public that this is something we're going to continue to build on. There's always something additional to do. There's always something to build on. Whether it's new staff or other new challenges—there's always something you're going to have to incorporate into your day and continue with that vision."



# A STEM-ULATED FUTURE

by Lizette Garcia

## Harmony Aims to Close the Gap of STEM Representation in Hispanic Community

Throughout the state's history, Hispanic and Latino families have always played a key role in shaping the Lone Star State into a unique and diverse home for all Texans.

However, despite making up roughly 40 percent of the state's overall population (19 percent nationally), one area where historically Hispanic and Latino families have been unfortunately underrepresented is in the high-paying fields of STEM.

Nationally, only about 8 percent of STEM jobs are held by persons of Hispanic or Latino backgrounds, according to Pew Research, despite a dramatic overall increase in STEM jobs in Texas and elsewhere since 1990.

Harmony Public Schools' mission is to create opportunity for access to STEM fields for all of its students – including the 61 percent who identify as Hispanic or Latino – through a rigorous, STEM-focused curriculum that provides our graduates with a gateway to the careers of their dreams.

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***“No other school district in the state has this model, because at Harmony, STEM is what we do best”***

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At Harmony, 58 percent of Hispanic graduates choose STEM majors in college versus the national average of 19.8 percent and Texas average at 29 percent.

Harmony students are introduced to digital literacy and coding programs that are integrated in their studies. One example is Code Monkey, where students learn to manipulate movements of the main character in video games while sharpening their coding knowledge.

Harmony also introduces elementary students to text-based coding through the use of CoffeeScript and Python, programs that become second nature as students develop their technological skills.

“Our school districts are not only a pioneer in STEM but we also have created a model to teach science, technology, engineering and mathematics in our

elementary schools,” Harmony Curriculum Director Levent Sakar said. “It’s a model that no other school district in the state has and this is because at Harmony STEM is what we do best,” Sakar said.

Students in their high school years are introduced to engineering design, digital electronics, engineering science and computer integrated manufacturing, scientific research and design. The emphasis on these programs is important because Harmony believes that preparing its students during their preparatory years should be connected to what students will be doing in their high school years, creating a good basis in education that creates great opportunities and professionals.

Because of the HPS curriculum, many graduates have become certified in many technical careers such as HTML and CSS Programming, CSS Certification, and Software Developers and Cyber Security.

By their junior year, Harmony students are closing the gap, including 62 percent of Hispanic or Latino students who say they are looking forward to a future in STEM. This has not only given them an advantage over other students, but a more equitable representation in their communities and professions.



Hispanic or Latino  
Percentage  
of U.S. Population



Percentage of  
Hispanics or Latinos  
Working STEM Fields



Percentage of Hispanic or Latino Graduates  
Choosing STEM Majors



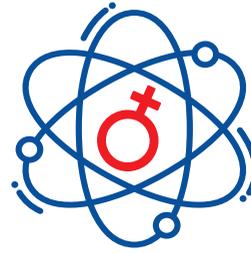
Harmony



Texas



U.S.



# GIRLS WHO STEM

## Harmony Aims to Close the Female

### STEM Representation Gap *by Sadan Gunonu*

As a Harmony employee and STEM graduate, Sadan Gunonu understood the impact a strong foundation in STEM could have on a person's life.

As a proud "girl dad", he encouraged his daughter Rabia early on to pursue a STEM career because of the prestige and high salary. However, he soon learned that pushing STEM based on those factors was not sufficient.

"I remember going to graduations for Computer Science at various universities, and most of the graduates were male." Gunonu said.

"After some quick research I saw that males have outnumbered females in most STEM fields for years."

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***"Our daughter graduated from a good college, and has been working in a top five IT company for three years."***

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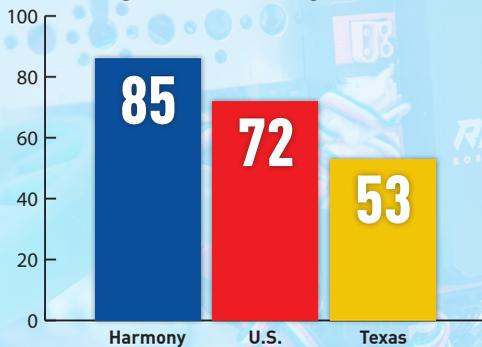
Existing research consistently shows that there is underrepresentation of females in STEM areas. A key explanation rests on students' attitudes towards an interest in STEM major careers. STEM course selection and participation in informal learning activities – such as after-school clubs like eSports – were found to be critical in students STEM major selection. However, the research showed that while male students were signing up for these classes and clubs out of self-interest, many female students needed extra encouragement to pursue their STEM interests due to a lack of historical representation.

Because of this, Gunonu did his research and chose Harmony for his daughter due to its STEM-focused mission and 100 percent college acceptance rate.

Not surprisingly, Harmony female students continue to choose STEM majors and careers at significantly higher rates than the state and national averages. In one study, female HPS students had a 30% higher college enrollment rate than other female Texas students, and 15% higher college enrollment rate than the U.S. average for female students. Female students at Harmony were also three times more likely than their Texas peers to choose STEM majors in college, and four times more likely than the U.S. average for female students.

"I can say we are happy [with Harmony]," Gunonu said, "because our daughter graduated from a good college, and has been working in a top five IT company for three years."

Percentage of Female College Enrollment



Percentage of Females Choosing STEM Majors





## GIRL CODE

### One Harmony Student's Observation Brings Resources to Seniors *by Delfina Glenn*

Harmony School of Science sixth grader Lisa Rondeau was home, recovering from leg surgery when she began working on an app to help her grandmother who was struggling during the pandemic.

Because of the many community support center closures and loss of community resources, finding information on services available for her was nearly impossible.

To help, Lisa began to develop an app that would assist individuals who needed help locating resources for health and community services.

My ADLE (My Activities in Daily Life & Emergencies) connects seniors and individuals with disabilities to vital community resources in El Paso, including food distribution, transportation, shelter, medical care, social events and emergency information. The app allows users to find all the resources they need in one place. Anyone with a mobile device – old or new – can access the app.

Lisa's mother knew the work her daughter was putting into the app could not go unnoticed. When she stumbled upon the Congressional App Challenge – a nationwide competition that encourages middle and high school students to learn how to code by creating their own applications – she and her daughter saw an opportunity to have Lisa's work recognized.

To their surprise, Lisa won the Congressional App Challenge, and was recognized during an online reception hosted by Congresswoman Veronica Escobar, U.S. Representative for Texas's 16th Congressional District.

"[Lisa] has demonstrated her talent and commitment to ensure El Paso's seniors have the information and support they need to cope and be resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic" Escobar said in recognizing Lisa's award. "I am amazed by Lisa and all of the talented coders in our community who have created innovative apps to deal with everyday problems."

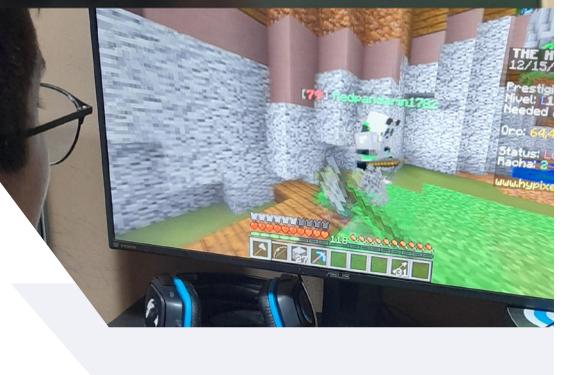
In addition to the reception, Lisa attended and presented at the prestigious national STEM student fair and demo day, #HouseofCode, in Washington D.C. that was held virtually in April 2022 due to the pandemic. The #HouseofCode is a new national science fair, where students display their apps in the U.S. Capitol Building while networking with representatives, and connecting with other coders from around the United States.

Lisa's interest in coding started at a very young age when her father taught her scratch coding for Raspberry Pi at age four. Since then, she has learned python, CSS, HTML and plans to learn Javascript.

Since joining Harmony School of Science-El Paso, Lisa has taken classes and participated in activities that enhance her tech application knowledge and helped develop her skills and grow her interest in the field.

With an award-winning app, code knowledge and a Harmony foundation, Lisa knows this is the only beginning. But with this foundation she will go into the future with a wealth of knowledge and the title of #girlswhocode.

For more information, visit [HarmonyTX.org/GirlCode](https://HarmonyTX.org/GirlCode) for a video demonstration of how Lisa's app works.



## ESPORTS IS A WIN

### Harmony Students Learn Teamwork and More Through Competitive Gaming Clubs

by Marcy Andrade

When video games first arrived in U.S. homes in the 1970s and '80s, many parents worried that they would be a distraction that interfered with their child's learning.

But now more than 40 years later, Harmony Public Schools has become a state and national leader in using video games to not only keep students engaged with learning, but connect them to a multitude of potential college and career options.

Esports, which stands for electronic sports, is competitive gameplay that takes gaming to another level. Esports was launched at Harmony by Albert Demarest, a high school English teacher at Harmony Science Academy-Pflugerville in 2016. At the time, it was a single-campus club, for which Demarest served as sponsor.

"Clubs and sports shut down (during the pandemic) and our kids were home. They were learning online and we all had a little more time than usual, so it became a good time to propose making it happen for others throughout Harmony," said Mr. Demarest.

Fast forward to 2022 and the rise of esports at Harmony has been a whirlwind for Demarest, along with Mehmet Emir, Harmony's Director of Virtual Learning and Engagement. The two worked diligently to write the policies to standardize and implement esports for Harmony students in elementary, middle and high school. Because of their work, today there are 40 campuses who have embraced the program.

Harmony Science Academy – Laredo is one campus going all-in on esports.

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***"I saw (gaming) as an opportunity to bring my knowledge and experience to this group of young minds and relate to them."***

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However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, other Harmony campuses soon turned to Demarest's model as a way to keep students connected with one another and with their academics while learning away from school.

The club is sponsored by Public Relations & Communications Coordinator Nicole Romanos and math teacher Pedro Alaniz Harmony Science Academy-Laredo. Romanos – highly organized and methodical – and Alaniz – a motivated gamer who knows the "language and who kids easily




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***“Esports programs are competitive,  
and colleges and universities offer competitive scholarships.”***

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relate to – make the perfect pair for the growing group of gamers in Laredo.

The two were initially surprised when they had more than 100 sixth, seventh and eighth graders show up to be part of the after-school club. Romanos said they hosted tournament-style elimination tryouts to whittle down the number. They ended up with a great group of 30, and recently gained national recognition when one of their eighth-grade students placed second in a national tournament.

“I love gaming, but I also saw (serving as a sponsor) as an opportunity to bring my knowledge and experience to this group of young minds and relate to them,” said Alaniz. “I see it as an opportunity to make non-math connections with kids – many who I don’t have for class – get to know them, share some strategy with them, have fun and allow them to increase their independence, too.”

From Pflugerville, Demarest said he has enjoyed being on the ground floor of the esports program for Harmony, and watching it flourish in places like Laredo and elsewhere. He also continues to see its potential for growth.

He is an advocate for the program because he truly sees the benefits that esports can provide to scholars.

Mr. Demarest was instrumental in forging a partnership with Concordia University in Austin. The university’s esports program contact and Demarest schedule friendly practice sessions, and organize scrimmage games that ultimately serve to sharpen their gaming skills, as well as to expose them to the institution. For some of the students, esports could be what helps them find their path to college at Concordia or elsewhere through scholarships and gaming-related coursework.

“We have some talented gamers throughout Harmony. We’ve had at least 10 gamers place in various tournaments and competitions over the last few years, so building relationships with universities is helpful in many ways,” Demarest said. “We hope to continue evolving our partnerships throughout the state as we did with Concordia. Esports programs are competitive and colleges and universities offer competitive scholarships, and it’s also a way to help build a bridge for our students to university life.”



# THE ARTS IN HARMONY



## More than Just a STEM-Based School, Harmony Creatively Excels *by Laura Edens*

As an art educator, Laura Edens takes her job very seriously. Teaching art is not just about coloring inside the lines, painting or drawing just for fun. She believes her purpose is much deeper than that. Art educators teach students how to think critically, solve problems and express their feelings in healthy ways. Art also helps students learn how to follow directions, trust a process, work through challenges and ultimately guide them to create something beautiful for others to appreciate.

Of the many aspects of art, one of her favorite things is bringing people together through creativity and expression. Throughout her nearly 12 years as a K-8 art teacher at Harmony School of Excellence-Houston and department head for Harmony's Houston North District, she feels blessed to have a platform that allowed her to unify people through art.

Edens began teaching at HSE in 2010. It didn't take long before she was ready to help Harmony grow the department across Houston. In 2013, Houston art teachers organized their first district art contest at Harmony's Central Office. The inaugural event was a huge success.

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***"No matter where you are from, what language you speak or what you believe, art always brings people together."***

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Over the years, the event has evolved into a spectacle that now includes musical performances, make-and-take art booths, event T-shirts and more than 200 art pieces created by K-12 students, local artists, current and past art teachers, and art aficionados acting as judges.

During the pandemic, the art festival even went virtual with "Coming Together Through Art," Harmony's first ever statewide virtual art contest.

"No matter where you are from, what language you speak or what you believe, art always brings people together," said Edens.

In addition to Harmony's annual art festival, Edens helped develop Harmony's framework for academic success in art. Working in collaboration with Harmony curriculum writer Carnita Thomas, and Harmony art teachers around the state such as Harmony Science Academy-Lubbock teacher Sarah Sabin, the Harmony Arts team together designed a full K-12 art curriculum to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed for the classroom and beyond.

"Teachers have a lot of passion for teaching and helping their students grow," Edens said. "When you meet a passionate art teacher, the possibilities are endless!"



## MORE THAN STEM

### Sports at Harmony Take Center Field

by Lizette Garcia

Harmony Public Schools is best known for being a STEM school.

At Harmony, though, being a well-rounded school helping shape well-rounded scholars means students have the chance to explore all of their interests. This is why HPS districts offer several sports programs for those students interested in participating in activities beyond the classroom.

During the 2021-22 school year, more than 3,300 HPS scholars participated in organized athletics at Harmony through through the UIL, state and national charter leagues, or other affiliated sports organizations.

Harmony students can choose from an array of sports programs including soccer, flag football, volleyball, cross country, basketball, track, cheerleading and many others. Students who participate in one of these sports have the opportunity to compete against other local charter school teams and will soon be able to compete at a statewide level.

Teofilo Martinez, Houston District Athletic Coach and Houston Charter Athletic League liaison member, expressed his enthusiasm for establishing teams and developing a program that makes HPS students eligible to compete at a state level.

“It’s a goal that could be accomplished as we are well prepared to take on that challenge.” he said.

Harmony works with knowledgeable professionals in its sports department like Martinez to help student athletes accomplish their goals both on the field and in the classroom.

Many Harmony athletes say participation gives them the necessary tools to overcome many challenges that have come their way professionally when determination is needed in their lives the most.

“Students who join a sports team develop physical skills, learn teamwork, have a healthier lifestyle, and improve their self-esteem,” Martinez said.

#### HPS ATHLETICS RECENT UPGRADES

- 2019 - New uniform purchases for MS, HS teams.
- 2020 - New stipend added for sports coaches.
- 2020 - Esports expanded statewide.
- 2021 - District athletic coaches named.
- 2022 - Team websites launched.
- 2022 - First competition football fields debut.



## PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

### Harmony Teams Up with Local Communities to Make a Difference *by Lisa Proffitt*

Harmony's Partners in Education program continues to bring new opportunities to campuses and students across the state. Check out how some of our partners made an impact at Harmony this past year.

#### Central Texas

When the pandemic began in March 2020, local community leaders and community organizations across the city of Austin and Travis County rallied together to see how they could help to lessen its impact upon the community. From setting up food distribution sites to organizing PPE donation sites, to creating socially distant and family-friendly drive-thru events, various community initiatives set their sights on addressing the many needs of Austin and Travis County families.

To better help communities throughout Travis County, Constable George Morales III, Travis County Sheriff's Department Precinct 4, reached out to his local community and created a band of dedicated and determined volunteers called the Travis County Mobile Vaccine Collaborative. Thanks to Constable Morales' determination to have vaccination clinics set up at every available location through Travis County, Harmony Public Schools - Central Texas was able to partner with the Travis County Mobile Vaccine Collaborative for the 2021-2022 school year and were able to host seven district-wide vaccination clinics at various campuses through the Austin area. Open to the entire community and completely free of charge, Harmony Central Texas was able to assist in vaccinating almost 1,000 community members. Under the direction of Constable Morales, the Travis County Mobile Vaccine Collaborative has shown that unwavering strength and unity can happen when the community bands together.

#### Houston South/Houston West

Small acts of kindness are the ones often remembered with the fondest memories. With that idea in mind, Harmony School of Excellence - Sugar

Land partnered with The Houston Food Bank to provide a much-needed resource to Harmony's community. The Houston Food Bank Pantry service provides bi-weekly food supplies for anyone who needs extra support, while students learn the value of community service and take pleasure in helping distribute resources. In addition to students, parents, district counselors and additional Harmony staff lent their time in helping with unpacking, distribution, and loading food supplies into cars for people unable to do so themselves. The program aims to feed at least 150 families. So far, with Harmony's help, the bank has been averaging about 94 families biweekly, translating to more than 250 individuals.

#### Houston North

The Women's Fund is an organization that serves at-risk adolescent girls and underserved women that live in the Greater Houston area by providing free health education information and different resources. For the past five years, The Women's Fund has been an active HPS community partner. Every year, they have provided the programs "What About Me?" and "Girl + 1 Get Healthy" at the Harmony School of Discovery campus. Now, it is expanding to other Houston North district schools. Middle and high school female students have participated in the 10-week program "What About Me?," where they learn about various health topics such as goal setting, stress and coping, decision-making, nutrition, self-esteem, positive thinking and more. The "Girl + 1 Get Healthy" workshop is designed to cover seven dimensions of health and wellness, including healthy eating, shopping on a budget, balancing work and home, exploring career options, CPR and financial wellness classes.

#### North Texas

Harmony Public Schools - North Texas district learned first-hand the value of this joining of forces when they partnered with Girls Inc. of Metropolitan Dallas in 2021. Girls Inc., is a nonprofit organization that encourages all



girls to be “Strong, Smart, and Bold” through direct service and advocacy. There were 48 enthusiastic and bold female students in grades 4-8 that took part in the GIG program, which was divided into two sections allowing for girls to be with similar age groups. Girls Inc. provided passionate facilitators, session activities and educational content in an afterschool setting on campus for five weeks and offered girls a safe space to explore body image and self confidence issues, cyberbullying, personal branding and online reputation management as part of a media literacy program.

### South Texas

Students from Harmony Science Academy and Harmony School of Excellence in Laredo visited virtually with Bexar County Court 2 Judge Grace Uzomba from San Antonio to talk about the court system and showcase the various careers in County Courts. Judge Uzomba had each staff member explain their role in the court system and then facilitated role playing with the students. The sessions were informative and even led to a new partnership with the San Antonio Police and a Harmony campus in the Alamo City. When the SAPD had an old robot to donate, Officer Alonzo Hardin of the SAPD immediately thought of Harmony Science Academy-San Antonio’s robotics students. The robot had been used in training demonstrations and was no longer functioning properly. Officer Hardin knew students involved in robotics at HSA would have fun working on the robot to refurbish it and make the necessary alterations to get it up and running. The robot was delivered this spring and students are actively working on modifications to it as part of their class work.

### West Texas

Joseph Mattingly, a Propulsion Test Engineer working on the BE-3U upper stage engine, worked at Blue Origin’s West Texas Launch Site near Van Horn doing development testing of rocket engines, as well as supporting flight operations for New Shepard. Joseph met with students in the Harmony Schools’ Rocketry Club to talk about Blue Origin, space, engineering, space travel, and future technologies. Nearly two dozen participants had the opportunity to ask Joseph questions. Joseph shared Jeff Bezos’ belief that our vision was not one that we alone could accomplish and showed how the students’ interests, which ranged from engineering to astrobiology, would all be key parts in making this vision a reality.

Students also had the opportunity to interact with Josef Reinke who serves as Director for Club for the Future, Blue Origin’s private foundation. His leadership ensures programs meet the Club’s mission to inspire K-12 students to pursue careers in STEM and help future generations to invent the future of life in space. As a self-proclaimed “dork” for all things tech and equity and opportunity, he’s dedicated his career to making STEM education accessible to all communities.

*If you’re interested in becoming a partner, we invite you to visit our website, [www.HarmonyTX.org/Community-Partners/](http://www.HarmonyTX.org/Community-Partners/), and sign-up today!*

## JOIN OUR GROWING TEAM



With new campuses come new opportunities to be a part of an expanding team. Harmony faculty and staff have the opportunity to develop personally and professionally while making an impact in the lives of students.

Email: [Jobs@HarmonyTX.org](mailto:Jobs@HarmonyTX.org)

**Apply Today at [HarmonyTX.org/careers](http://HarmonyTX.org/careers)**



## FILTERING SUCCESS

### Harmony Student Places in International Science Fair *by Evelin De La Rosa*

Students at Harmony Public Schools continue to win countless awards from many different U.S. and international science fairs each year. Aaditya Krishna Arun, a junior from Harmony School of Innovation - Sugar Land, who won first place in The Mostratec Virtual International Science and Technology Fair in Brazil, was one such student recognized for his hard work.

For his award-winning project, Arun researched the effects of excess fluoride on human health in groundwater – an interest gathered from a trip to his hometown in Southern India.

Residents from his community there use groundwater for basic daily needs, and lack access to proper water filtration.

Arun credits his mentors at Harmony for this accomplishment.

“I would like to genuinely thank Ms. Zadeh (GATE coordinator), Dr. Rustveld (Professor at Baylor), Mr. Centikaya (Project Director at HPS), and Ms. Faith (science teacher),” Arun said. They offered motivation, guidance, and support from my science project through the entire application process.”

This was not Arun’s first awarded science project. In addition to Mostratec, he won many others including first place from the Houston Medical Academy and Harris County Medical Association at the Science Engineering Fair of Houston and third place in the Medicine and Health Category at the Texas State Science Fair.

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***“I plan on making a difference in helping (kids) overcome obstacles.”***

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“This motivated me to develop an inexpensive biofilter to study the effects,” he said. “I discovered that excess fluoride affected pregnancy outcomes in women, specifically those in the Hispanic community.”

His goals are to implement community-wide methods to reduce fluoride in water, while bringing awareness to women about the harmful effects of excessive fluoride consumption, and to develop an affordable filter to reduce fluoride in water like the one he invented.

Arun was nominated to participate in the Mostratec 2021 after placing first in the Harmony Science and Engineering Fair in their Senior Division for Health and Medicine

With all these great accomplishments, Arun plans to continue entering more science competitions and dreams of being part of the Intel and Regeneron Science Fairs one day.

As for his future, he plans on attending medical school to become a doctor to help his community. In the meantime, he wants to volunteer in hospitals, serving underdeveloped countries.

“My goal is to become a physician that specializes in pediatric psychiatry. I understand the challenges that kids can go through, and I plan on making a difference in helping them overcome obstacles and be successful.”

# CHARTERS & PUBLIC ISD

## What's the Difference?

One of the questions Harmony hears most from families interested in applying is “what is the difference between a public charter school and an ISD school?”

Texas public charter schools have grown exponentially in the past 25 years, but we understand why many parents who grew up in a traditional independent school district setting themselves may still have questions.

That's OK. We've got the answers to all of your biggest questions.

### So, what exactly is a charter school?

A charter school is a public school, and in many ways very similar to a traditional ISD school:

- Charter schools are nonprofit entities and do not charge tuition or application fees.
- Charter schools accept every student who applies, as long as the student lives within its geographic boundaries and the school or grade level has not reached its enrollment capacity.
- Charter school students take the same core classes and state tests (ex. STAAR) as ISD students.
- Charter schools are held to strict standards of financial and academic accountability by the Texas Education Agency.
- Charter schools offer a full range of special services, including special education, English as a Second Language (ESL), Dyslexia, and 504.

However, what makes charter schools different is what makes us special. In a word, that difference is “choice.”

In 1995, the Texas State Legislature determined that even though there are many great schools in Texas, a one-size-fits-all approach to education wasn't working for all families. Each child is unique: some with special gifts, others with special challenges, and all with special dreams for their futures.

To help better serve every Texas student, the Texas public charter school system was created to allow independent, education-based nonprofit organizations called Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) to open and operate free public schools with the goal of providing additional choices in education for local Texas families.

At Harmony Public Schools, our focus is hands-on, project-based learning with an emphasis on STEM, college preparedness and character education.

### Who can attend a charter school?

As long as a student lives within the school's geographic boundaries, any child can attend a Texas public charter school. However, unlike traditional ISD schools where students usually must attend whichever nearby campus they are “zoned” to, public charter school boundaries are generally very large. These large geographic boundaries are another way Texas public charter schools offer Texas families a choice, and are unique from traditional ISDs. For example, rather than sending their child to an ISD campus near their home address, a parent may prefer for their child to attend one near a grandparent's home, or a campus with a higher TEA accountability rating than their neighborhood ISD school.

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*What makes charter schools different is what makes us special. In a word, that difference is “choice.”*

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### How is a charter school funded?

As opposed to a traditional ISD school, which receives its funding primarily from taxes paid by homeowners each year along with additional funding from the state, charter schools receive their primary funding from the state, using no local tax dollars. Additionally, charters often receive public and private grants to fund many of their innovative academic programs. For example, in recent years Harmony has received grants of varying amounts from the U.S. Department of Education, the Texas Education Agency, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, and the Elon Musk Foundation, among others.

### Do charter schools offer the same types of programs and extracurricular activities as ISD schools?

Charter schools offer almost all of the same programs and extracurricular activities as ISD schools. At Harmony Public Schools, some of our most popular clubs are our groundbreaking esports teams, LEGO robotics, rocketry, computer coding and biomedicine. Our students also compete in a wide variety of sports.

### Looking for more info on charter schools?

The Texas Public Charter School Association is a great resource for finding out more about the Texas charter school movement, as well as charter options near you. Learn more at <https://txcharterschools.org>.

# VALEDICTORIANS *Class of 2022*



**Kavya Rathi**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Beaumont



**Paul Bijili**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Carrollton



**Mucteba Karaca**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Dallas



**Noah Agustin Villa**  
Harmony Science Academy  
El Paso



**Wafiqah Mariyam Zubair**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Eules



**Humna Yamin**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Houston High



**Jazhiel Segura-Monroy**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Pflugerville



**Kamil Yildirim**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Pflugerville



**Danya Sofia Martinez Villacana**  
Harmony Science Academy  
San Antonio



**Brianna Bhakta**  
Harmony School of Advancement  
Houston



**Francesca Andria Lictican Lugo**  
Harmony School of Discovery  
Houston



**Nancy Perdomo-Ceniceros**  
Harmony School of Excellence  
Austin



**Eldridge Joseph Holmes Pollard Jr.**  
Harmony School of Excellence  
Dallas



**Andrea Gallardo**  
Harmony School of Excellence  
Laredo



**Ethan Chandra**  
Harmony School of Endeavor  
Austin



**Esmeralda Gomez**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Brownsville



**Syed Sajjad**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Dallas



**Briana Lashae Fontenette**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
El Paso



**Ashar Khazi -Syed**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Fort Worth



**Bryan Ho**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Garland



**Muhammad-Ali Novruzov**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Katy



**Alan-Thuan Ngo**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Katy



**Anjali Agrawal**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Sugar Land



**Jacob Norris**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Waco



**Luis Fernando Ocampo**  
Harmony School of Ingenuity  
Houston

# SALUTATORIANS *Class of 2022*



**Noah Martin Carey**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Beaumont



**Ebubechukwu Ezennaya**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Carrollton



**Mariana Cano**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Dallas



**Kimberly Montes**  
Harmony Science Academy  
El Paso



**Ryne Tristan Sabinano Gonzales**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Euless



**Phu Tieu**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Euless



**Fareedah Ajisegiri**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Houston High



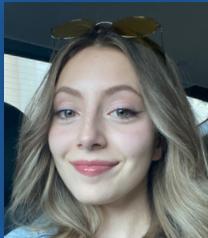
**Emin Koroglu**  
Harmony Science Academy  
Pflugerville



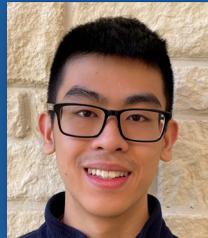
**Oluwaseun Olukoya**  
Harmony Science Academy  
San Antonio



**Mihika Patankar**  
Harmony School of Advancement  
Houston



**Anna Dobre**  
Harmony School of Advancement  
Houston



**Kevin Vu**  
Harmony School of Discovery  
Houston



**Jose Angel Calvillo Salinas**  
Harmony School of Excellence  
Austin



**Jason Okpetu**  
Harmony School of Excellence  
Dallas



**Ximena Vidal**  
Harmony School of Excellence  
Laredo



**Michael Duong**  
Harmony School of Endeavor  
Austin



**Aurelio Colunga**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Brownsville



**Alexander Bui**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Dallas



**Jasmine Marie Castillo**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
El Paso



**Suha Mohamedali Alidina**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Fort Worth



**Habibulla Ebadulla Ogly**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Garland



**Samuel Andres Caridad Romero**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Katy



**Hannah Santina**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Katy



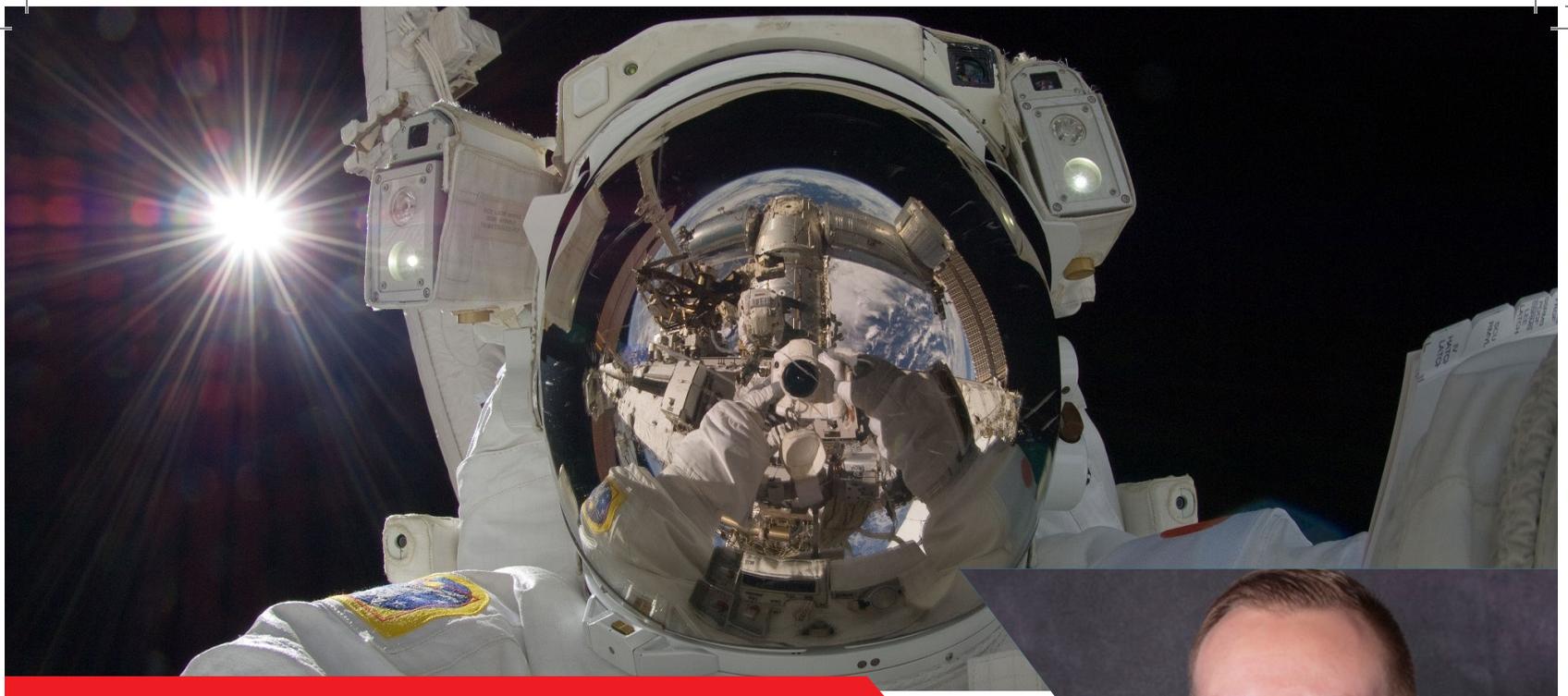
**Busra Dokmen**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Sugar Land



**Seren Helms**  
Harmony School of Innovation  
Waco



**Jimmy Tran**  
Harmony School of Ingenuity  
Houston



## REMOTELY OUTER SPACE

### Harmony Alum Helps Ideas Take Flight as Member of Boeing Space Team

by Sarah Dugas-Richard

Harmony students are given a platform to dream beyond this world. From day one, Harmony provides its students with a launchpad to college and the careers of their dreams by equipping them with the tools and other resources they'll need to succeed.

As Harmony's graduates go into their respective fields, they experience new challenges all while utilizing the skills acquired to further their futures. Ryan Demny, a 2013 graduate of Harmony School of Advancement is no stranger to translating classroom experience into hard work all while traveling into outer space from the comfort of his desk.

At Harmony, students have similar opportunities that allow students to discover firsthand how their projects can translate into not only their future careers, but in their present-day studies, as well, as they tackle projects inside and outside the classroom, competitions and extracurricular activities. With teams and activities such as robotics and esports, Harmony students interact locally and nationally with peers who share the same interests and challenges all while preparing for the future with hands-on experiences. "Harmony helped me succeed by preparing me to be both intuitive and a great communicator in my job role," Demny touted.

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***"Harmony helped me succeed by preparing me to be both intuitive and a great communicator in my job role."***

---

"Harmony did a monumental job at encouraging us to be curious while also being personable, putting us in excellent positions to solve problems" said Demny.

As a team member of the world renowned Boeing Company, Demny works to ensure that astronauts can effectively and efficiently perform all tasks aboard the International Space Station (ISS). The Space Exploration Engineer examines everything astronauts interact with while in orbit in order to improve functions.

The role allows Ryan to not only work with adjustments for gravity while in space, but a chance to improve equipment aboard the ISS including designs for Mars transports and the Orbital Reef commercial space station.

With his creativity and dedication, Demny was able to successfully work to deter the unwanted effects of gravity while allowing astronauts to complete their tasks, earning him the NASA Space Flight Awareness Trailblazer Award.

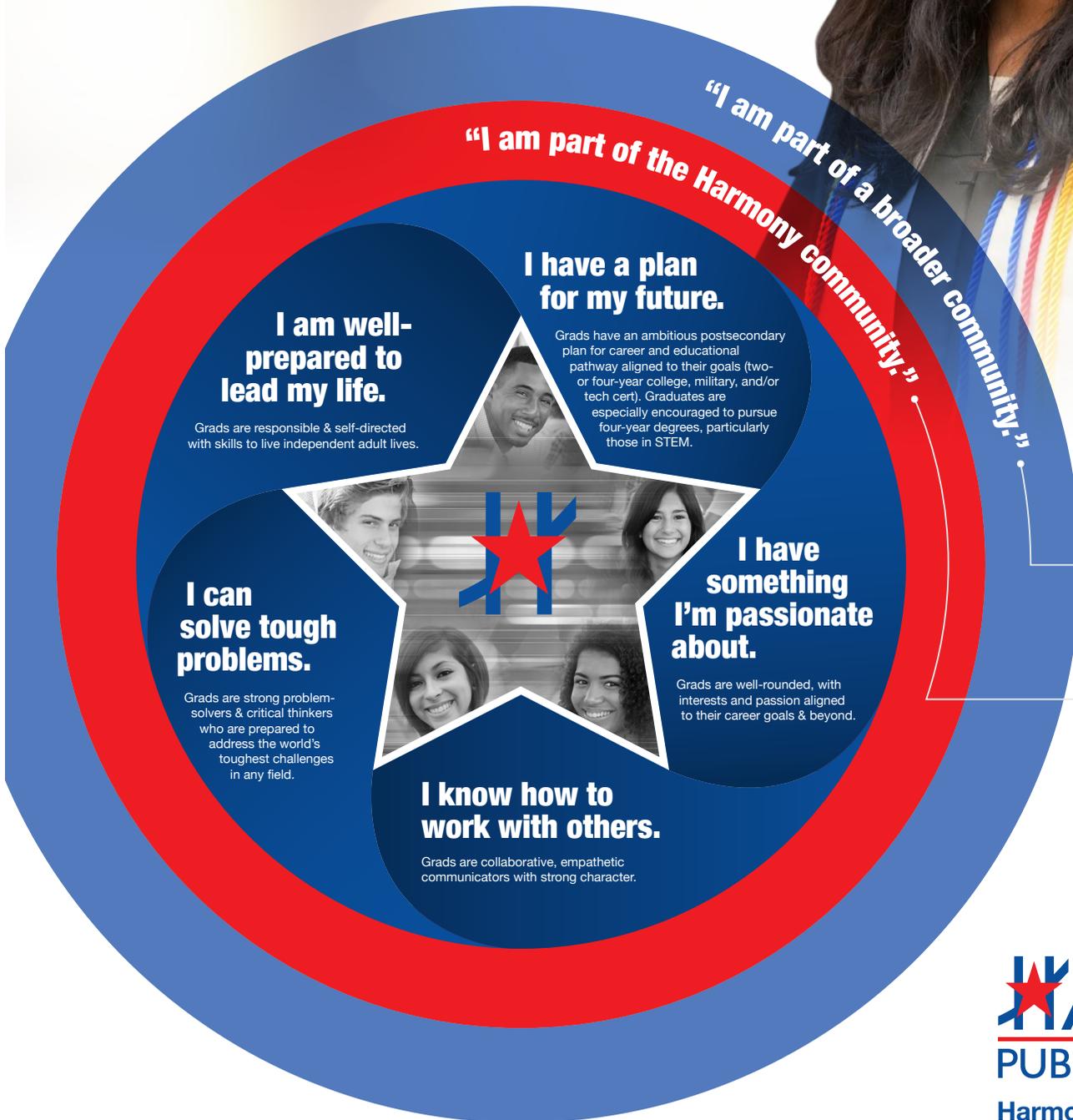
As one of four honorees, Ryan knows that without Harmony's solid STEM and character-based foundation he wouldn't have had the knowledge, and experience he has which contributed to his thriving career.

Demny looks forward to future challenges while rising to meet them through exploration, intuitiveness and a strong Harmony foundation.

| Harmony Public Schools

# Graduate Profile

| Our North Star



**I am well-prepared to lead my life.**

Grads are responsible & self-directed with skills to live independent adult lives.

**I have a plan for my future.**

Grads have an ambitious postsecondary plan for career and educational pathway aligned to their goals (two- or four-year college, military, and/or tech cert). Graduates are especially encouraged to pursue four-year degrees, particularly those in STEM.

**I can solve tough problems.**

Grads are strong problem-solvers & critical thinkers who are prepared to address the world's toughest challenges in any field.

**I have something I'm passionate about.**

Grads are well-rounded, with interests and passion aligned to their career goals & beyond.

**I know how to work with others.**

Grads are collaborative, empathetic communicators with strong character.

**"I am part of the Harmony community."**

**"I am part of a broader community."**

Grads understand themselves as part of - and are ready to contribute to - **their community, state, country, and world.**

Grads understand themselves as part of - and are ready to contribute to - **the HPS community.**





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