
INSPIRING FUTURES

SUMMER/FALL
2025



 HARMONY
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INSPIRING FUTURES

At Harmony Public Schools, we believe that every student carries the potential to lead, innovate and make a lasting impact in their communities and beyond. The stories in this edition of Inspiring Futures are a powerful reflection of that belief—filled with remarkable student accomplishments, groundbreaking campus initiatives and continued momentum toward a brighter, bolder future.

Among these inspiring stories you'll find profiles of our QuestBridge Match scholars. These outstanding seniors have earned full, four-year scholarships to some of the most prestigious universities in the country. Their academic achievements and personal determination represent the very best of what Harmony nurtures in every student.

Harmony also celebrates one Harmony School of Endeavor-Austin senior who was recently named among the nation's top student scientists, securing not only a national title but also scholarship funding and a cash prize that directly supports the HSE-Austin campus community. Stories like these remind us of the power of opportunity—and the strength of passion paired with purpose.

Innovation is thriving at Harmony's Houston North District, which recently received a \$233,225 grant to train students in civil engineering—an essential field for meeting Texas' growing infrastructure demands. The initiative supports a broader statewide effort to strengthen career and technical education by connecting students' interests to high-demand careers that are shaping the state's future.

Character development is equally central to our mission.

This year, Harmony is proud to announce that our North Texas Secondary District has been named the first District of Character in Harmony history. This recognition reflects the values we prioritize—integrity, empathy, perseverance—and how they are lived out daily in our schools.

Other highlights include Congressional Award Gold Medalists, a profile of the Harmony Science Academy-Laredo chess team that swept the competition at the TAMIU Chess Tournament, and the announcement of our 2024–25 valedictorians and salutatorians. Each of these milestones reflects hard work, heart and the unwavering support of Harmony educators, families and communities.

As we continue celebrating our 25th anniversary this year, we remain deeply grateful for the thousands of stories—like the ones featured in this issue—that have shaped Harmony's legacy over the past quarter century.

But our story isn't complete without yours.

Whether you're a student, graduate, parent, teacher, or community supporter, we invite you to share your Harmony journey with us. From memories and milestones to photos and videos, your stories bring our mission to life. [Visit **HarmonyTX.org/MyHarmonyStory** to add your voice to our celebration.](https://www.harmonytx.org/MyHarmonyStory)

While our anniversary marks a proud moment in our history, it's the achievements of our students today that continue to shape the future of education—and the next chapter of Harmony's story.

Harmony Public Schools is a 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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A Mark of Character

North Texas Earns High Honor Through Dedication *by Susan Campbell*

At Harmony Public Schools, character education is not just an initiative—it is a fundamental part of the district’s mission to develop ethical, responsible and engaged students.

This dedication was recently recognized when Harmony’s North Texas Secondary District was honored as a State District of Character by Character.org, a national organization that promotes the importance of character education in schools.

This prestigious recognition marks the first time a Harmony Public Schools district has earned this statewide distinction.

“We are incredibly proud of this achievement, which reflects the hard work and dedication of our students, educators and families,” said Harun Karan, superintendent of Harmony Public Schools-North Texas Secondary District. “Being named a National School District of Character and earning statewide recognition for more of our schools underscores our unwavering commitment to upholding the highest standards of character education and creating an environment where every student can thrive.”

Earning the State District of Character Designation

Harmony’s character education efforts are guided by Character.org’s 11 Principles of Character Education, which emphasize key values such as respect, responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness, caring and citizenship.

District Coordinator of Student Culture Stephen Webb led the district’s application efforts.

“These principles serve as a guide for our schools and district in cultivating a positive, ethical and supportive environment where students can thrive academically and personally,” Webb said.

“[This achievement] underscores our unwavering commitment to upholding the highest standards of character education...”

To receive this prestigious designation, a district must demonstrate a deep, systemic commitment to character development. One key requirement is that at least half of the district’s schools must be recognized as State Schools of Character. Harmony exceeded this



benchmark—at the time of the application, seven out of eight schools had already earned State School of Character recognition, with two campuses achieving national designation. As of January 2025, every campus in the district has been recognized as either a State or National School of Character.

Beyond meeting the numerical requirements, the district had to provide comprehensive evidence that the 11 Principles of Character Education were fully integrated into the school culture.

“The application process was rigorous,” Webb said. “We had to demonstrate that character education wasn’t just an afterthought but a foundational element woven into the fabric of our district’s culture. This included building detailed artifacts to support our written narratives.”

What Character Education Looks Like at Harmony

Harmony integrates character development into everyday learning and school life through a variety of approaches, including:

- **Curriculum integration:** Character education is embedded into daily lessons, reinforcing ethical values alongside academic instruction.
- **Schoolwide initiatives:** Schools organize service-learning projects, community events and leadership programs that provide students with real-world applications of character values.
- **Positive behavior recognition:** Programs like the Positive Behavior Award (PBA) highlight students demonstrating integrity, kindness and leadership.
- **Community involvement:** Harmony collaborates with parents, local organizations and civic groups to extend character education beyond the classroom, fostering a shared responsibility for student development.
- **Emphasis on core values:** Harmony’s character matters core value and education programs focus on cultivating key attributes, including determination and empathy. Students are inspired to set goals, work diligently and appreciate diverse perspectives, all of which contribute to personal growth and the development of a nurturing school community.

“We had to demonstrate that character education wasn’t just an afterthought but a foundational element woven into the fabric of our district’s culture.”

Leadership and a Districtwide Commitment

Webb emphasized that Harmony’s leadership has played a crucial role in supporting and sustaining character education efforts.

“Character education is embedded into our district’s strategic planning, ensuring that it is not treated as a separate initiative but as an integral part of our educational mission,” Webb said.

By involving all levels of leadership—administrators, teachers, students and families—Harmony has created a districtwide culture that prioritizes character development as much as academic success.

Statewide, 20 Harmony schools are designated as National Schools of Character, and 53 schools are designated as State Schools of Character.

With these designations, Harmony Public Schools continues to set a national example of how character-driven education can transform students, schools and communities for the better.





Paying it Forward

Harmony Alumni Share Insights with Current Students by Susan Campbell

As Harmony students navigate their academic journey, they often seek guidance on how to transform their current studies into a successful career. For students in specialized pathways, such as the medical field, this guidance becomes even more crucial.

One initiative gaining momentum across Harmony districts is the Alumni Panel—a gathering where former Harmony students return to share personal experiences, challenges and success stories.

For biomedical students at Harmony School of Innovation-Fort Worth (HSI-Fort Worth), one such Alumni Panel offered an invaluable opportunity to hear directly from those who have walked the same path and found success in their field.

At the Medical Pathway Alumni Panel, former students who pursued careers in medicine, nursing, biomedical engineering or other health-related fields returned to HSI-Fort Worth to offer advice and inspiration to current biomedical students. The panel was particularly beneficial for students in eighth through 11th grades, as they are in a critical stage of deciding their future educational and career paths.

“As students progress through their academic years, they often find themselves grappling with questions about what steps to take next and how to build a future in a competitive, demanding field,” said Servet Sayma, College and Career Success Coordinator for Harmony Public Schools-North Texas Secondary District. “That’s where alumni come in.”

For biomedical students, the Medical Pathway Alumni Panel provided more than motivational stories; it offered practical advice. The alumni spoke about the courses they found most valuable in high school and the decisions they made during college applications that led them to where they are today.

Some emphasized the importance of internships and hands-on experiences, which can give students a taste of real-world medical work long before they enter university or medical school. Others highlighted the significance of networking and making connections with professionals in the field.

Moreover, the panel addressed common questions that many students have but may be hesitant to ask. Questions such as “What is it really like to be a medical student?” “What are the most challenging aspects of medical school?” and “How do I stand out in the competitive field of medicine?” were answered with honesty and clarity. The alumni offered perspectives on the sacrifices required to succeed, as well as the rewards that come from working in health care.

Ultimately, Harmony Alumni Panels offer students a unique opportunity to learn from those who once stood in their shoes, gaining valuable insight, guidance and inspiration for their own academic and career paths. By sharing their experiences, alumni help students navigate the uncertainties of their future, offering both practical advice and reassurance that challenges are a natural part of growth.

Patel emphasized that challenges are to be expected.

“I want to open up about my journey, the lessons I learned and the strategies that helped... setbacks don’t define your future-how you respond to them does.”

Harmony Science Academy-Carrollton Class of 2021 alumna and current Texas Woman’s University nursing student Esha Patel participated in HSI-Fort Worth’s panel. Patel said she struggled during her freshman year of college and wanted to share her experience of overcoming setbacks and failure.

“Many people don’t talk about the emotional struggles that come with college—lack of confidence, self-doubt and the fear of failure—which can leave students feeling isolated,” Patel said. “I want to open up about my journey, the lessons I learned and the strategies that helped me make a comeback so others know that setbacks don’t define your future—how you respond to them does.”

“I hope students realize that everyone faces struggles, even those who seem to have everything figured out,” Patel said.

These events not only bridge the gap between students’ aspirations and the realities of college and the workforce but also reinforce an important message: success is not a straight path, but one shaped by resilience, perseverance and the willingness to learn from both triumphs and setbacks. Through these connections, students gain the confidence to embrace their journeys with determination, knowing they are not alone in their pursuit of a bright future.



Building Robots, **Building Futures**

The Inspiring Journey of HSI-El Paso's Robotics Team by Daniela Marquez

When most people think of robotics, images of gears, circuit boards and mechanical arms often come to mind. Yet this inspiring journey involves much more for one Harmony robotics team.

For the Tanzanite Tigers—the Harmony School of Innovation—El Paso VEX Robotics team—every challenge and breakthrough has been fueled by creativity, determination and a passion for innovation. As the only team representing the entire state of Texas at the CREATE U.S. Open Robotics Championship in Council Bluffs, Iowa last spring, they stepped onto the national stage with their eyes set on the prize.

The team's journey began in October 2024, competing in multiple local tournaments. Qualifying for the competition in Iowa was no easy task—every event required precision, creativity and resilience. Achieving this national milestone meant overcoming numerous obstacles, from coding the autonomous functions of their robot to managing time effectively and maintaining the engineering notebook—a crucial component of VEX Robotics competitions. With every obstacle, the Tanzanite Tigers grew stronger, ultimately earning their place at one of the most prestigious robotics competitions in the country.

As the countdown to Iowa continued, excitement built while the team focused on refining their robot's design, strengthening collaboration and perfecting their strategy.

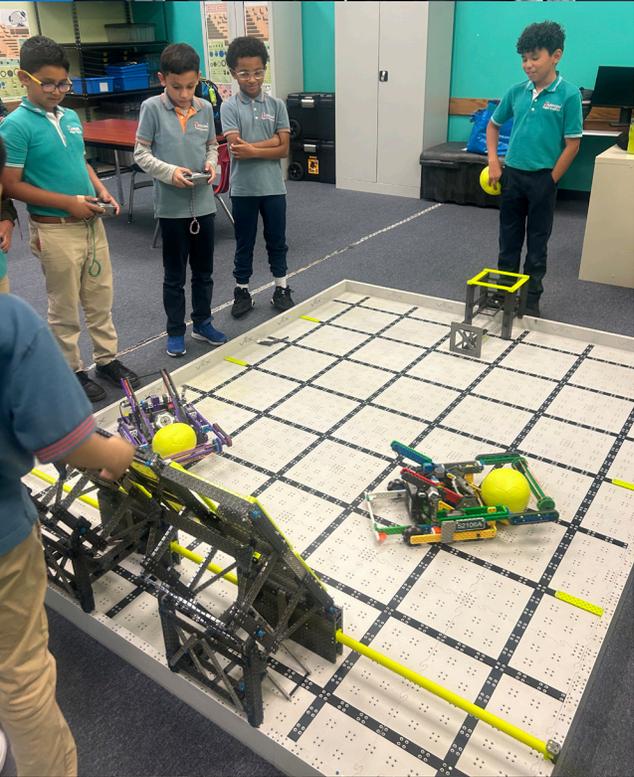
"The adrenaline rush of seeing their robot in action after months of hard work, the excitement of alliance selections, unexpected victories and intense matches is an experience like no other," said mentor Valerie Astorga-Moren.

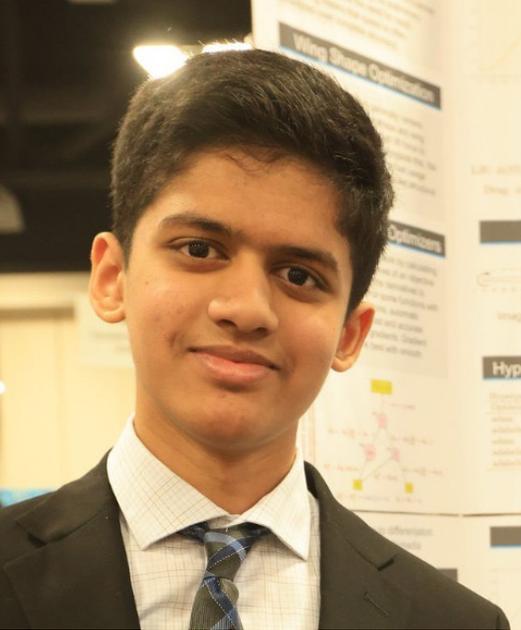
What makes this story remarkable isn't just the technical accomplishments—it's the bonds built and the skills cultivated along the way. VEX Robotics emphasizes growth in critical thinking, leadership and collaboration—qualities that will shape these students' futures in STEM and beyond.

"From engineering and programming to teamwork and leadership, these students have learned to analyze problems, debate solutions and make joint decisions under pressure," Astorga-Moreno said. "Their ability to stay composed during high-stakes matches has reinforced their confidence, preparing them for the future."

The Tanzanite Tigers returned from Iowa carrying with a well-engineered robot, invaluable experiences and lifelong lessons. Representing Texas on the national stage was a privilege they do not take lightly.

"Every robotics journey is unique, but one thing that stands out for our team is the sense of growth, camaraderie and discovery." Astorga-Moreno said. "It's not just about building robots; it's about building relationships and futures. Teammates become like family, supporting each other through challenges and celebrating victories together."





Recognized for Research

Austin Student Named a Top Young Scientist by Tracie Seed

The world of science has a new star among its ranks of innovators and STEM adventurers.

Harmony School of Endeavor student Umar M., 17, has been named one of the top student scientists in the United States in the Society for Science's Regeneron Science Talent Search. Umar's aerodynamic research stood out from a record-breaking pool of 2,471 applicants, the largest since 1967. His recognition among the top 300 competitors has set a new benchmark for aspiring young scientists.

Now in its 103rd year, the Society for Science has played a significant role in educating the public about scientific discoveries and identifying future leaders in STEM. Regeneron has sponsored the Regeneron Science Talent Search since 2017 as part of its commitment to STEM education and support for young scientists.

The Regeneron Science Talent Search is a prestigious platform that recognizes talented high school seniors who dedicate countless hours to original research, discovery and solutions. The competition celebrates the nation's brightest young scientists who develop creative answers to global challenges through groundbreaking examination and experimentation. Demonstrating their passion for scientific discovery, these students produced detailed reports comparable to a graduate-level thesis. Providing a national stage for students to present their findings and push the boundaries of conventional thinking, the competition seeks to reward innovation and dedication.

The top 300 scholars were chosen based on their outstanding research, leadership skills, commitment to academics and creativity in asking scientific questions. Scholars demonstrated these qualities by submitting original, independent research projects, essays and recommendations. The winning competitors hailed from 200 high schools in 33 states, China,

Hong Kong, Malaysia and Switzerland.

Umar's research, "SOAR: Automatically Differentiable Neural Network Aerodynamic Surrogate Models and Lifting-line Theory for Computationally Efficient Wing-shape Optimization," has the potential to revolutionize aerodynamics.

His research, which finds a faster way to design better wings, uses neural networks and lifting-line theory to predict how a wing's shape affects lift and drag. Developed by Ludwig Prandtl in 1918, lifting-line theory serves as a fundamental mathematical framework for evaluating the aerodynamic properties of finite wings. A finite wing has defined tips that create vortices, such as a bird's wing, a glider or an airplane. Building on two-dimensional airfoil theory, this method, which Umar studied in his research, helps explain how three-dimensional wings behave. It offers key insights into lift distribution, drag and wing shape effects, making it easier to model airflow and improve aerodynamic performance.

"This new method speeds up the whole process of optimizing wing shapes for improved performance," Umar said. "Taking this direction paves the way for more efficient and innovative aircraft designs in the future."

Because of his research, Umar won a \$2,000 scholarship for himself and an additional \$2,000 for Harmony School of Endeavor.

"We are incredibly proud of Umar for his outstanding achievement in scientific research. His dedication, scientific curiosity and diligent work have earned him this well-deserved scholarship and a prize that has brought great honor to our campus," Principal Aydin Yildirim said. "Umar's success is a testament to the power of perseverance and innovation, and we are excited to see all he will accomplish in the future."



Making All the Right Moves

Laredo Students Clean the Board in Chess Tournament by Megan Garrison

Students from Harmony School of Excellence–Laredo and Harmony Science Academy–Laredo demonstrated their strategic skills at the Texas A&M International University Chess Camp Tournament in Laredo, securing top honors in multiple categories.

The annual tournament, hosted by the ChessRock Texas A&M International University Chess Club, brings together students from across the region for five rounds of intense competition. Participants are challenged to apply advanced strategies, critical thinking and patience as they compete for individual and team titles.

This year, teams from Harmony’s South Texas District thrived, claiming first place in the middle school category, along with the middle school and high school grand champion titles.

For many Harmony students, chess is more than just a game. Chess serves as an educational tool that teaches valuable life skills, including problem-solving, concentration and decision-making under pressure. These are skills they regularly apply both inside and outside the classroom.

“Being part of the chess team has given me more confidence in myself and taught me how to use my skills to solve everyday challenges,” said Alejandro L., a student from Harmony Science Academy–Laredo. “Winning the competition as a team and earning first place was an incredible feeling. We’re proud to share this achievement together.”

With strong performances like this, Harmony continues to foster a culture of academic and extracurricular excellence. By encouraging participation in activities like chess, Harmony helps students develop leadership skills and a love of learning that will benefit them throughout their education and beyond.



“Being part of the chess team has given me more confidence in myself and taught me how to use my skills to solve everyday challenges.”



Investing in Tomorrow

Harmony Awarded Grant to Train Future Engineers *by Sally Magnuson*

In a forward-thinking move to develop Texas' next generation of skilled professionals, State of Texas recently announced \$15 million in Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grants to enhance career and technical education programs statewide. Among the 60 recipients, Harmony Public Schools–Houston North District secured a \$233,225 grant to train students in civil engineering—an industry critical to Texas' growing infrastructure needs.

The initiative, administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), is part of a broader push to align education with workforce demands. By providing schools with advanced equipment and cutting-edge training tools, the JET program prepares students for real-world careers that are in high demand and offer strong earning potential.

“As Texas' economy continues to grow, we must invest in our future workforce,” Gov. Greg Abbott said. “These career training grants help prepare students for high-demand, good-paying careers, ensuring they have opportunities that lead to a better job and a brighter future.”

For Harmony Houston North students, the funding will enhance the district's civil engineering pathway by integrating project-based learning and hands-on experiences using state-of-the-art equipment. Students will work directly with industry-standard technologies, benefit from mentorship by professionals, and graduate with the skills needed to pursue certifications, licensure or degrees in engineering.

structured and advanced environment,” Andrick said. “As someone who started a small business focused on irrigation and hardscaping, I've seen how engineering concepts can directly impact real-world projects. Being in this program gives me the opportunity to take that experience to the next level, learning alongside others who are also excited about designing and improving the world around us.”

Andrick, who plans to pursue a degree in civil engineering with a minor in business administration at Schreiner University, believes this program is the ideal stepping stone to his future.

“Access to state-of-the-art technology will prepare me for the future by giving me hands-on experience with the tools and processes used in today's engineering careers,” he added. “Whether it's growing my own business or branching into new areas like robotics or infrastructure, this program—along with my college education—gives me the foundation to innovate, lead, and make a meaningful impact through engineering.”

The grant supports Harmony's commitment to expanding career and technical education and ensuring every student has access to a clear career pathway. With an emphasis on experiential learning and technical skill-building, the program creates a strong foundation for both academic and professional success.

Recep Yilmaz, superintendent of Harmony's Houston North District, emphasized the broader impact of the grant.

“This opportunity brings industrial robots into our classrooms, allowing students to apply their skills in real-world settings.”

“I am proud to add the FANUC Robot Operator certificate to our Engineering Foundations program of study through the JET grant,” said Yilmaz Kahraman, district STEM GT/CTE coach. “This opportunity brings industrial robots into our classrooms, allowing students to apply their skills in real-world settings. Our CTE programs are designed to prepare students not just for college—but for successful careers.”

For students like Andrick D., a senior at Harmony School of Advancement, the program is a game-changer.

“What excites me most about being part of the engineering training program is the chance to apply my passion for building, problem-solving, and innovation in a more

“The Harmony Houston North district has significantly enhanced its civil engineering pathway by integrating project-based learning (PBL) and hands-on experiences using state-of-the-art equipment. This approach aligns with Harmony's commitment to providing students with deep, inquiry-based learning experiences that foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The incorporation of advanced equipment further enriches their learning, ensuring they are well-prepared for future careers in civil engineering,” said Yilmaz.

For Harmony Houston North students, this is more than just a program—it's a launchpad. With access to real-world tools and the guidance of dedicated educators, they're gaining more than knowledge. They're gaining momentum



A BRAND NEW STAGE

Actor Couple Lands the Perfect Role - Teaching Creative Arts at Harmony

by Emma Lewis

When Chase and Esmeralda Tucker first met as stage actors in Florida, it was their love of performance that initially helped build their storybook connection. Now, as a husband-and-wife teaching duo at Harmony Science Academy-Fort Worth, their love for both teaching and the creative arts continues to be a primary reason why their own story continues to be one that leads to “happily ever after.”

The Tuckers met in Orlando, Fla., where they both were beginning to showcase their talents as actors. Mrs. Tucker starred in many theater productions, including “The Addams Family”, “Sweeney Todd”, and “Matilda”. Meanwhile, Mr. Tucker performed at Disney World as Gaston, the iconic antagonist in “Beauty and the Beast.”

In 2023, their journey took them to Texas when Mr. Tucker took a job with a music performance company, and Mrs. Tucker accepted a performance opportunity at the Gaylord Texan Resort.

Though their passion for performing remained strong, the Tuckers realized they wanted to make a more lasting impact. They decided to explore teaching, with one unique condition—they wanted to teach at the same school, a challenge when both specialize in the fine arts. “Family members were telling us it was unrealistic and that it wasn’t going to happen,” Mr. Tucker said, but the couple stayed hopeful, believing that “everything happens for a reason.”

Fate intervened when the couple attended a job fair for educators and met Alan Burke, principal of HSA-Fort Worth. He asked if they were interested in teaching at the same school, and mentioned that both a music and an art teaching position were available. After applying and interviewing, the couple was thrilled when both were offered roles, allowing them to continue their personal and professional partnership in the world of education.

The Tuckers also took the initiative to create a theater club, and the response from students was overwhelming, with over 100 students auditioning for a spot in the club. Together, the Tuckers bring a fresh dynamic to the school, fostering a deeper appreciation for the arts within the STEM-focused campus.

When asked about the transition from performing to teaching, Mrs. Tucker reflected, “You just have to care,” emphasizing the importance of working with students. She also expressed gratitude for the school’s leadership team, stating, “Here, we’re supported.”

As Harmony Science Academy-Fort Worth Middle School continues to build its arts programs, the addition of these talented educators is a significant step toward creating a well-rounded and engaging learning environment for its students.

The Perfect Match

Harmony Public Schools celebrates the outstanding achievements of its 2025 QuestBridge Match Scholarship recipients. This prestigious scholarship is awarded to high-achieving, low-income students across the country, providing them with opportunities to attend top universities with full financial support. The dedication, perseverance, and hard work demonstrated by these students embody Harmony's core values of academic excellence, resilience and a commitment to success. This article spotlights the journeys of Harmony students who received the QuestBridge Match Scholarship, highlighting their determination and the bright futures that lie ahead as they pursue higher education.

North Texas

Victor S., a student at Harmony Science Academy-Dallas High, matched with Columbia University, earning a full, four-year scholarship to the prestigious institution.

"As a first-generation college student from an immigrant family, this opportunity means everything to me," Victor said. "It's a chance to honor my mother's sacrifices and make the most of the opportunities she worked so hard to give me. The diversity of people and the interdisciplinary research environment at Columbia will help me build meaningful connections, expand my knowledge, and shape my pursuit of becoming a health professional."

Victor earned two major honors this year. He was accepted into the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools' Rising Leaders Initiative as one of only 10 students across the nation in the 2024-25 class. He was also selected as a regional officer for HOSA-Future Health Professionals—the first Harmony student to receive this distinction.



Central Texas

Muammer Fatih K., a senior at Harmony Science Academy-Pflugerville, was awarded a full scholarship to Johns Hopkins University. Muammer plans to pursue a degree in computer science, continuing his passion for technology and innovation.

"I was shocked and so excited when I got my acceptance letter," Muammer said. "I actually really don't like the hot weather here, so I'm looking forward to being someplace cooler."

In addition to this accomplishment, he earned the Congressional Gold Medal for his dedication to community service, personal development and leadership.

After seven years at Harmony, Tensae L., also a senior at Harmony Science Academy-Pflugerville, discovered his acceptance to Columbia University during class free time.

"I was extremely excited to have the opportunity to go someplace known for its academic excellence," Tensae said. "After celebrating with my family, I admitted to them that I had already looked!"

Tensae, who also planned to study computer science, expressed a deep interest in quantum computing and its role in exploring theoretical models of the universe. At Columbia, he would join his brother, who was also a student there.



West Texas

Harmony Science Academy-El Paso celebrated the achievements of two seniors, Dayana L. and Thomas J., who were selected through QuestBridge's National College Match program.

Dayana matched with Emory University. Thomas matched with Princeton University.

"I feel incredibly grateful and excited for this opportunity," Lopez-Medina said.

Her mother, Martha, praised her hard work.

"She has always been committed, staying up late to complete her work, with her brother David encouraging her every step of the way," Martha said.

Thomas' mother, Tina, also shared her pride.

"Thomas likes to challenge himself, so I asked the administration to encourage him, and he took this opportunity and succeeded," she said.



Harmony Public Schools Celebrates QuestBridge Match Scholarship Recipients



Contributors: Susan Campbell, Megan Garrison, Candice Keutzer, Daniela Marquez, Megan Garrison, Tracie Seed, Ajdina Selimovic, Sally Magnuson

South Texas

Harmony's South Texas District recognized Beatriz C., a senior at Harmony Science Academy-San Antonio (HSA-San Antonio), who matched with Boston University.

Beatriz's achievement was a testament to her hard work, determination and academic excellence.

Since her first day as a sixth grader at HSA-San Antonio, she consistently demonstrated a commitment to her future and the values championed by Harmony Public Schools. Her dedication secured her a place at one of the nation's top universities.



Houston South/West

Harmony Public Schools' Houston South/West District celebrated eight QuestBridge matches for the 2024-25 school year. Six students matched from Harmony School of Innovation-Sugar Land (HSI-Sugar Land), one from Harmony School of Innovation-Katy (HSI-Katy), and one from Harmony Science Academy-Houston (HSA-Houston).

- Peace Okoh, from HSI-Katy, matched with the University of Notre Dame.
- Angel Castellon, from HSA-Houston, also matched with Notre Dame.

From HSI-Sugar Land:

- Joshua A. matched with Stanford University.
- Cristobal M. matched with the University of Notre Dame.
- Saad H. matched with Cornell University.
- Katherine F. matched with Brown University.
- Sheelsie C. matched with Washington University in St. Louis.
- Ryan V. matched with Rice University.

"To be matched by QuestBridge is the same as being accepted to one of the top 55 universities in the country with a full-ride scholarship," Cristobal said. "It's a huge relief to not have to worry about financial aid packages or college acceptances. Thanks to QuestBridge, I was accepted to my dream school early, and I don't have to worry about the cost."

The students noted that their pathway to becoming QuestBridge matches was paved through Harmony's wide array of college-level courses. Advanced Placement and dual credit courses at Harmony helped them decide which colleges to apply to through QuestBridge.

"Harmony significantly assisted me in my college journey by providing a wealth of resources," said Sheelsie, a senior at HSI-Sugar Land. "I had amazing teachers who supported me throughout this journey. Additionally, my counselor was instrumental, guiding me every step of the way and introducing me to the QuestBridge program."



Houston North

Harmony's Houston North District celebrated six QuestBridge matches for the 2024-25 school year.

- Sarah K., Harmony School of Discovery, matched with Johns Hopkins University.
- Gracie L., Harmony School of Advancement, matched with College of the Holy Cross.
- Brandon N., Harmony School of Advancement, matched with Boston College.
- Minsoo P., Harmony School of Advancement, matched with the University of Chicago.
- Michael R., Harmony School of Advancement, matched with Vanderbilt University.
- Jacqueline Sapon R., Harmony School of Discovery, matched with Stanford University.





Gold Standard

Pair of Students Shine Bright in Earning Congressional Honors *by Susan Campbell*

In Harmony’s North Texas district, two remarkable Harmony seniors have struck gold—literally.

Maya M. from Harmony Science Academy-Carrollton (HSA-Carrollton) and Shiza K. from Harmony School of Innovation-Dallas (HSI-Dallas) have earned the prestigious Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor for youth awarded by the U.S. Congress.

The award recognizes outstanding initiative, service and personal growth. Open to students ages 14 to 24, the program challenges young people to set and achieve goals in four key areas: volunteer service, personal development, physical fitness and exploration or expedition.

Maya M.: Rising Through Dedication, Growth and Impact

Maya has been a Harmony student since kindergarten, always eager to explore new experiences—whether picking up a new hobby, developing a skill or embracing leadership opportunities. “My motivation comes from wanting to make the most out of what I can,” she said.

Her journey to earning the Congressional Gold Medal began with inspiration from a mentor at HSA-Carrollton, Dean of Student Culture Tsega Abraha.

“Abraha shared the story of another student who pursued this award,” Maya said. “Always ready for a challenge, I decided to take on this goal myself, and after two years of dedication, achieving it is incredibly exciting.”

Balancing academics, extracurricular activities and the rigorous requirements of the award was initially daunting, but the program’s self-paced structure allowed Maya to embrace the experience. “Instead of dreading the process, I learned to enjoy it,” she said. “It became a fun opportunity rather than just another responsibility.”

Maya approached each of the Congressional Award program’s four areas with enthusiasm:

- **Volunteer service:** She dedicated her time to causes she felt connected to, including the North Texas Doberman Rescue, where she personally adopted two dogs. She also volunteered at a local hospital and through student council, where she serves as president.
- **Physical fitness:** She prioritized consistency in staying active, setting aside time for walks outdoors or on a treadmill multiple times a week.
- **Personal development:** To challenge herself, she set a goal of securing a job during her sophomore year. Nearly two years later, she continues to work at the same job, gaining valuable experience.
- **Expedition or exploration:** Choosing the virtual route, she explored different countries through cuisine and cultural research. By recreating traditional dishes, studying architecture and immersing herself in global pastimes, she broadened her understanding of diverse cultures.

Maya plans to continue her passion for learning and service in the medical field. “I have always been interested in health care and will be majoring in health care studies at the University of Texas at Dallas after graduation,” she said. Her journey through the Congressional Award process has strengthened her leadership and discipline and reinforced her commitment to personal growth—an achievement that will undoubtedly shape her future endeavors.



Shiza K.: A Journey of Perseverance, Leadership and Service

At HSI-Dallas, Shiza (right) has emerged as a leader in both academics and service. A passionate advocate for health care and community engagement, her journey began with an eagerness to help others—a calling she discovered during her nine years at Harmony. Inspired by the blend of art, empathy and medicine, she found her passion in nursing, a field where she could channel her creativity into making a meaningful impact.

“I’ve always loved helping people, and nursing allows me to combine my artistic side with my desire to serve others,” she said.

After graduation, she plans to pursue a career as a nurse practitioner or physician assistant, continuing her mission of compassionate care. Her path to the Congressional Award was not without challenges. Initially hesitant when her counselor recommended the program, Shiza feared the overwhelming expectations. However, driven by purpose, she embraced the opportunity, balancing academics, extracurricular activities and community service to complete the rigorous requirements.

“Earning the Gold Medal symbolizes so much more than just an accolade,” she said. “It represents a profound personal victory and a testament to my determination.”

Beyond the scope of academics, Shiza is deeply committed to women’s empowerment. She encourages young women to embrace challenges and overcome self-doubt.

“I hope to inspire other young women, especially those who might feel unsure of themselves, to take that first step toward their dreams,” she said. “Growth happens when you’re willing to embrace discomfort. It’s often the moments of uncertainty and challenge that shape us the most.”

“Growth happens when you’re willing to embrace discomfort.”

Throughout her journey toward the Congressional Award, Shiza frequently stayed after school to assist her Spanish teacher, Ms. Emily Loredo, with grading papers and preparing class materials. She credits Loredo’s mentorship as a key factor in her success, providing the guidance, encouragement and support that helped her grow both academically and personally.

“Those moments, though small at first, became pivotal for me,” Shiza said. “During those hours, she encouraged me to take on more opportunities, step out of my comfort zone and believe in my abilities. She has shaped my journey in ways I can’t fully put into words, and I am so grateful to have had the privilege of learning from her.”

As she moves forward in her academic and professional journey, Shiza’s story serves as an inspiration—a reminder that no dream is too big and no challenge too great. With perseverance, passion and the right support, anything is possible.



2025 *Valedictorians*

Citlali Rodriguez Salas
Harmony School of Excellence - Austin

Asiye Seyda Akin
Harmony Science Academy - Pflugerville

Jun Andrew Lee, Tanvi Lingala & Shakhzoda Mubinova
Harmony School of Endeavor - Austin

Hatice Kubra Cig
Harmony School of Innovation - Brownsville

Beatriz De Barros Cruz
Harmony Science Academy - San Antonio

Janelle Yalitzza Perez & Allison Samara Ontiveros
Harmony School of Excellence - Laredo

Diego Arquimedes Godoy Cisnero
Harmony Science Academy - El Paso

Valeria Escalante-Alvarez
Harmony School of Innovation - El Paso

Sarah Khatri
Harmony School of Discovery - Houston

Shivin Krishen Ganjoo
Harmony School of Advancement - Houston

Yahya Guvercin
Harmony Science Academy - Houston

Dhir Parekh
Harmony School of Innovation - Sugar Land

Nursel Eski
Harmony School of Innovation - Katy

Afifa Islam
Harmony Science Academy - Beaumont

Kenlys Joshua Curbeira
Harmony School of Ingenuity - Houston

Krithian Martinez
Harmony Virtual Academy

Victor Gael Soberanis
Harmony Science Academy - Dallas

Shiza Khan & Areeba Fatima
Harmony School of Innovation - Dallas

Midhun Reddy Vemireddy
Harmony School of Innovation - Garland

Jasmine Thananya Prasittipol
Harmony Science Academy - Carrollton

Tien Vo Ngoc
Harmony School of Excellence - Dallas

Charlie Nguyen, Ralph Leonard Yraola & Didem Demirkiran
Harmony School of Innovation - Fort Worth

Sumayyah Jilani
Harmony Science Academy - Euless

D'Errica Lorraine Foster
Harmony School of Innovation - Waco

"I will forever appreciate the relationships I formed here at Harmony with my fellow students and teachers."

Shakhzoda Mubinova, 2025 Valedictorian
Harmony School of Endeavor - Austin

2025 *Salutatorians*

Mariana Villegas-Acuna
Harmony School of Excellence - Austin

Ahmet Karabay
Harmony Science Academy - Pflugerville

Miranda Camacho
Harmony School of Innovation - Brownsville

Stephen Anthony Carter
Harmony Science Academy - San Antonio

Airamy Fabiola Vazquez
Harmony School of Excellence - Laredo

Braulio Alejandro Silva
Harmony Science Academy - El Paso

Aubrey Nevaeh Reyes
Harmony School of Innovation - El Paso

Huda Alsagban
Harmony School of Discovery - Houston

Cafer Kucukbasol
Harmony School of Advancement - Houston

Angel Castellon
Harmony Science Academy - Houston

Aysha Guvanchmyradova & Mohammad Rashid
Harmony School of Innovation - Sugar Land

Farizah Alam
Harmony School of Innovation - Katy

Layla Almufti
Harmony Science Academy - Beaumont

Kelly Stephanie Romero
Harmony School of Ingenuity - Houston

Nimco Mohamed
Harmony Virtual Academy

Christian Murad Kadir
Harmony Science Academy - Dallas

Hakan Ince
Harmony School of Innovation - Dallas

Victoria Alexa Galindo
Harmony School of Innovation - Garland

Maya Elizabeth Maliakal
Harmony Science Academy - Carrollton

Aisha Jallow
Harmony School of Excellence - Dallas

Sandra Saji Mathew
Harmony School of Innovation - Fort Worth

Kyagera Nampewo & Abdulrahman Hassan
Harmony Science Academy - Euless

Zayan H Lalani
Harmony School of Innovation - Waco

"This isn't just about grades, it's about how I have grown from my introverted 8th-grade quarantine self."

Aysha Guvanchmyradova, 2025 Salutatorian
Harmony School of Innovation - Sugar Land

HARMONY AT A GLANCE



Twenty-five 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. See how we'll be expanding even further within the next few years to create even more opportunities for students across Texas.



HPS STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN

RECENT AWARDS

 x 23
Best High Schools in America
(U.S. News & World Report, 2024)

 x 21
National School of Character
(Character.org, 2020-24)

 x 53
State School of Character
(Character.org, 2020-24)

 x 7
"A" Rating for
Financial Accountability
(Texas Education Agency, 2024)

STUDENT DATA

44,732
Students Enrolled PreK-12



SPED SERVICE RATE

10.5% Harmony	11.3% TX Avg.
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Economically Disadvantaged



67%

English Language Learners (ELL)



34%

College Acceptance Rate



94%

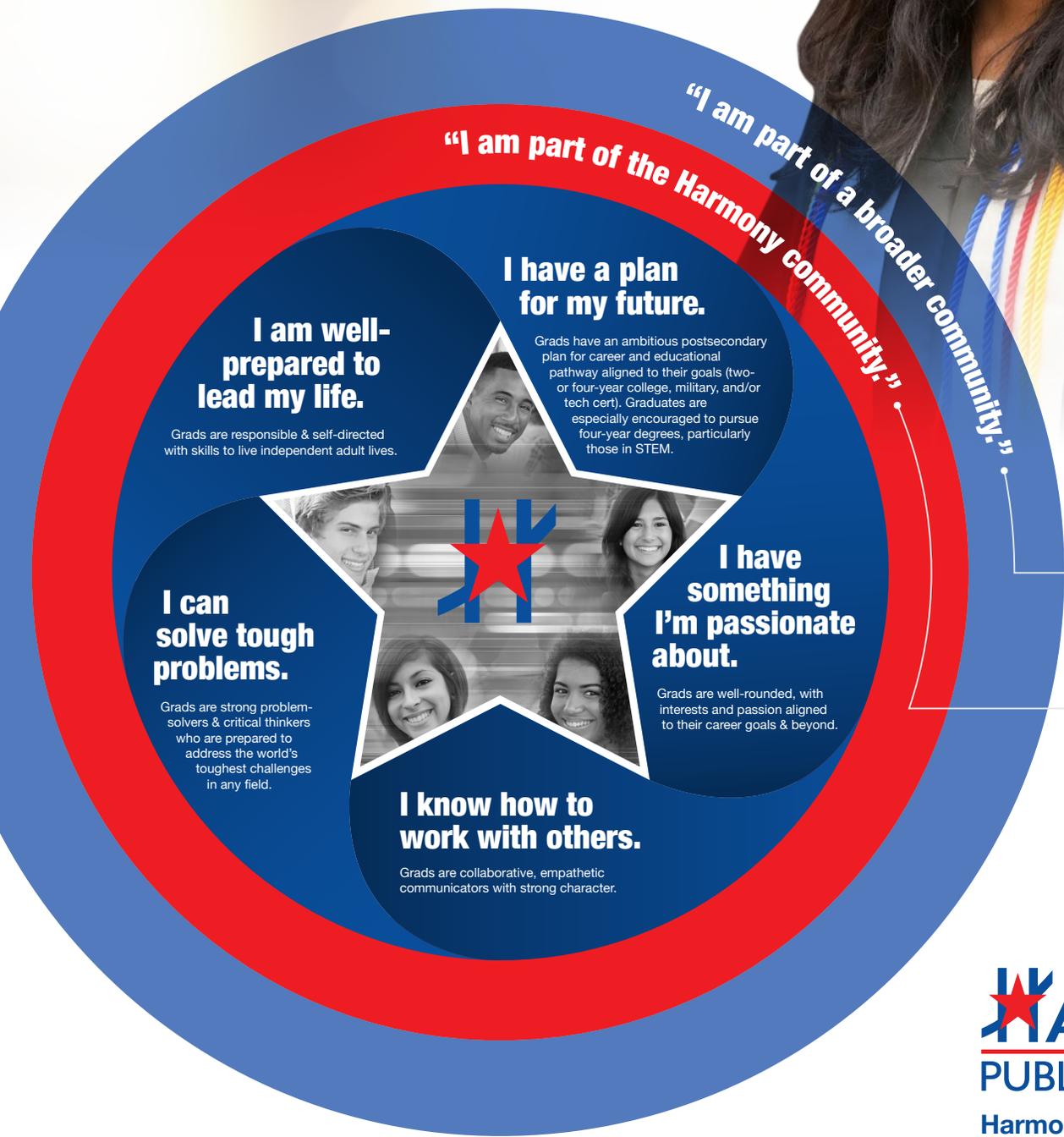
Graduation Rate



100%

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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