

New Principal - Mading Elementary

Mrs. Nicole Haskins has been selected as the principal of Mading Elementary School. Mrs. Haskins is currently serving as the assistant principal of John Marshall Middle School. Mrs. Haskins began her educational career in HISD, as an elementary teacher and later with the Sacramento City Unified School District as a district administrator.

Mrs. Haskins holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She earned a master's degree in educational administration from Texas Southern University and is currently completing a doctor of educational administration degree from Texas Southern University.

New Principal – Jefferson ES

Ms. Siomara Saenz-Phillips has been selected to serve as the next principal at Jefferson ES. She began her educational career as a high school Government teacher in McAllen ISD as well as a middle school ELA teacher. Mrs. Saenz-Phillips has worked for Community Education Partners (CEP) as an Education Specialist and a Learning Community Instructional Leader. In HISD, she taught at Gregory Lincoln Education Center and served as an Assistant Principal at Scarborough Elementary and Neff Elementary. For the last six years she has been the Principal at Southmayd Elementary. Collaborating with the teachers and her community, she has led Southmayd to Exemplary status and received the highest ratings under the new state accountability system in 2013. Southmayd ES has been used as a demonstration site for educational best practices.

Mrs. Saenz-Phillips holds a bachelor's degree in Government from the University of Texas – Pan American. She earned a master's degree in Education Administration and Supervision as a Title III Fellow in the Urban Principals Program at the University of Houston and has begun her doctoral studies at the University of Houston.

New Principal – Patterson Elementary School

Mr. Juan Gonzales has been selected as the new principal of Patterson Elementary School. Mr. Gonzales is currently completing his thirteenth year as the principal of Briscoe Elementary School where the school was recognized as a high performing campus under the state's previous accountability system. He began his educational career in HISD as a bilingual teacher at Sutton Elementary and served as an Assistant Principal at Edison Middle School.

Mr. Gonzales holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a Masters of Education from the University of Houston. Please help me welcome Mr. Gonzales as the new principal at Patterson Elementary.

New Principal – Garden Villas Elementary

Ms. Meron Tekle has been selected to serve as principal of Garden Villas Elementary. Ms. Tekle is currently serving as Dean of Students at YES Prep North Forest. Ms. Tekle started her educational career at YES Prep North Central where she taught 6th grade Math, Science, and Math Intervention. She was then recruited and served as the founding teacher and administrator to North Forest ISD's YES Prep partnership school where she taught Math and led as grade level chair.

Ms. Tekle holds a B.S. in Biology from St. John's University, a MBA from Rice University, and was part of the fourth cohort of the innovative Rice Educational Entrepreneurship program.

New Principal – Fondren Elementary

Mr. Michael Walker has been selected to return as principal for Fondren Elementary. Mr. Walker has been a principal in HISD since 2006. He has received several awards including the HEB Elementary principal of the Year Award. He joined HISD in 2006 after a successful career as an administrator in Hempstead and Spring Branch I.S.D. He started his teaching career in Dallas.

Mr. Walker has a B.S. in Political Sciences from Florida A & M University and his Masters in Educational Administration from Texas A & M. He is currently pursuing his Doctorate in Educational Administration through Walden University.

New Principal – Petterson Elementary School

Ms. Lysette Cooper has been selected as the new principal for Peterson Elementary. Ms. Lysette Cooper began her journey as an educator in 2000 working as a third grade reading teacher with the Clear Creek Independent School District. For the past ten years, she has been a part of Team HISD. Ms. Cooper began her career with HISD as a fifth grade ESL and GT teacher at Milne Elementary. She was promoted to Instructional Coordinator and served in that position for approximately four years before she was promoted to serve as the Assistant Principal at Milne. Her expertise as an instructional leader and serving ELL students will certainly prove beneficial as she moves into the Petersen principalship.

Ms. Cooper received her bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Houston and also holds a Master's Degree in Education Leadership.

New Principal - Neff Elementary

Ms. Amanda Wingard has been selected as the next principal of Neff Elementary. Ms. Wingard started her career in HISD as an elementary teacher in 2003 at Neff Elementary. She has served as instructional coordinator and assistant principal at Neff. Ms. Wingard is a proud alumnus of H.I.S.D. and attended Neff Elementary, Sharpstown Middle School, and graduated from Sharpstown High School. She is excited to continue serving the students and community in this area.

Ms. Wingard earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M University and her masters of arts in teaching from the University of Houston Downtown. She received her principal certification through the Principal Academy for Collaborative Engagement through H.I.S.D.'s certification program.

New Principal - Southmayd Elementary

Ms. Sandra Cisneros has been selected as the next principal of Southmayd Elementary. Ms. Cisneros became a member of Team HISD in 2005 when she began her teaching career at Moreno Elementary. In 2010 Ms. Cisneros has served as Instructional Specialist for Bonner Elementary and was named their assistant principal in 2012.

Ms. Cisneros earned her Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Houston and her Masters Degree in Educational Administration from Sam Houston State University.

New Principal - Briscoe Elementary

Mr. Franklin Cahuasqui has been selected as the next principal of Briscoe Elementary. His teaching career started at Sequin Elementary in the 2005 as a 5th grade bilingual ACP teacher. As a teacher, he was in the top 10% in the district whose students made the highest gains on standardize tests. For the past two years he has served as an assistant principal at Hartman

Middle School, where he led the development of the first Magnet School of Health and Medical Science in HISD.

Mr. Cahuasqui holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Houston and a Masters' degree in Educational Administration from Sam Houston State University.

New Principal - Stevens Elementary

Mrs. Jennifer Barrientez has been selected as the new principal of Stevens Elementary School. Mrs. Barrientez is currently serving as the Elementary Mathematics Curriculum Director for Harmony Public Schools. Prior to this position, she served as Principal of Meador Elementary School in Willis ISD. She previously served as Assistant Principal of The Rusk School in HISD. She began her educational career 11 years ago, as a classroom teacher in Coldspring-Oakhurst CISD.

Mrs. Barrientez holds a Bachelors of Science from the Sam Houston State University. She earned a Masters of Educational Administration from Sam Houston State University.

New Principal – Burnet Elementary

Ms. Ana Cantu has been selected as the new principal of Burnet Elementary School. Ms. Cantu currently serves as the Assistant Principal at Petersen Elementary. She began her educational career 21 years ago with the Department of Defense Early Childhood Department, as a teacher. Her past positions also include GT Specialist, Bilingual Coordinator, and Title 1 Coordinator in Clear Creek ISD.

Ms. Cantu holds a Bachelor of Science from Texas A&M- Kingsville and earned her Master's in Educational Administration from Lamar University.

New Principal - Hilliard Elementary

Dr. Mokysha Benford has been selected as the new principal of Hilliard Elementary School. Dr. Benford is currently serving as an Assistant Principal at Forest Brook Middle School. Prior to this position, she served as Dean of Accountability and as a Title 1 Instructional Coach. She began her educational career 15 years ago, as a classroom teacher in La Marque I.S.D.

Dr. Benford holds a Bachelors of Arts and English from the University of Texas. She earned a Masters of Education, Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Houston and a Doctor of Education, Curriculum and Instruction Degree from Texas Southern University.

New Principal – Sherman Elementary

Mr. Benjamin Hernandez has been selected as the new principal of Sherman Elementary School. Mr. Hernandez began his education career in Houston ISD as a bilingual kindergarten teacher in 2002 at Lantrip Elementary School. After 9 years as a kindergarten and 5th grade teacher, he moved out of the classroom and into the role of Teacher Development Specialist for the Apollo Elementary Schools. Following his work as a TDS, Mr. Hernandez served in district leadership positions including project manager for the EdPlan formative assessment system and academic program manager for TIF 3 and TIF 4 federal grants. Additionally, Mr. Hernandez is an inaugural member of Bill and Melinda Gates Teacher Advisory Committee.

Mr. Hernandez is a native Houstonian and earned both his Bachelor of Business Administration and Master of Educational Administration and Supervision from the University of Houston.

New Principal – Black Middle School

Mr. Paolo Castagnoli has been selected as the new principal of Black Middle School. Mr. Castagnoli is currently serving as Dean of Students at East Early College High School. He has been with HISD for the last nine years working both as a teacher and assistant principal at Scarborough High School. Prior to coming to HISD, Mr. Castagnoli taught social studies for six years at the YES Prep Southeast campus where he also served as Department Chair.

Mr. Castagnoli holds a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in education both from the University of Houston.

New Principal- Fonville Middle School

Ms. Iris Reyes has been selected as the new Principal of Fonville Middle School. Ms. Reyes was currently serving as Associate Principal of Revere Middle School under Lead Principal Hafedh Azaiez. She also served as Dean of Students at Revere for the past four years. Ms. Reyes began her career with HISD as an Elementary Bilingual and ESL teacher. She also worked as an HISD-ACP certification trainer.

Ms. Reyes holds a Bachelor's of Science degree from Texas Christian University in Ft. Worth and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Houston. She received her Principal Certificate from the University of Houston-Victoria.

New Principal – Sam Houston MSTC High School

Mr. Rupak Gandhi has been selected as Principal of Sam Houston MSTC High School succeeding Ms. Crump, who will be moving to another position in HISD after six years of strong leadership at Sam Houston. Mr. Gandhi is currently serving as the Principal of Neff Elementary School. Prior to this position, he served as an Assistant Principal at Lee High School. Mr. Gandhi began his educational career eight years ago as a special education resource teacher at Coop Elementary as a Teach for America Corps Member.

Mr. Gandhi holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Texas A&M University. He earned a master's degree in special education from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona.

New Principal - Middle College High School at HCC Gulfton

Ms. Diana Del Pilar has been selected to serve as the principal of Middle College High School at the HCC Gulfton campus, a school partnering the Houston Independent School District with Houston Community College focused on serving students who are in danger of dropping out of school or who have already dropped out. Ms. Del Pilar has served as the principal of Helms Elementary School in HISD for the last four years. She was previously in Spring Branch ISD for six years and served as assistant principal and school improvement specialist for English and Spanish Language Arts. She served Aldine ISD for fifteen years as a bilingual instructional specialist, bilingual teacher, and teacher assistant. She is the proud mother of three daughters and has dedicated her life to serving at-risk children in education, the community, and church ministry. Ms. Del Pillar has been a featured speaker and panelist organizations such as the Harris County Department of Education and the Center for Houston's Future. She is a Mexican born Houstonian and has earned a B.A. from Sam Houston State University where she graduated Suma Cum Laude and an M.Ed. from the University of St. Thomas.

New Principal - Middle College High School at HCC Felix Fraga

Angelica Vega has been selected to serve as the principal of the Middle College at Houston Community College Felix Fraga. Ms. Vega is currently serving Middle School leadership teams as a Performance and Continuous Manager in the Office of School Support. Prior to this position, she served as a Dean of Students at East Early College High School. Ms. Vega began her career fourteen years ago, 9 of which she was a Math Teacher at Stevenson Middle School.

Ms. Vega holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics from Texas A&M University-College Station. She earned an Ed.M. in School Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

New SS0 – Elementary School Office 2

Dr. Phillip Hickman has been selected as a new School Support Officer for Elementary School Office 2. Dr. Hickman has recently been Assistant Superintendent of School Support Services in Houston Independent School District. His previous experience includes Assistant Superintendent/Director in Kansas City Missouri, Principal of Forest Park I.E. in Joliet, Illinois and Principal at J.W. Gates Elementary School in Aurora, Illinois. He has also been an assistant principal, dean, counselor and school psychologist.

Dr. Hickman holds a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Missouri-Columbia a Masters of Arts in Education and an Educational Specialist Degree in School Psychology from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He later went on to receive his masters in educational administration from Southern Illinois University in Evansville. He completed his studies at Saint Louis University and received an Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership and his Doctorate of Education in Superintendency.

New School Support Officer - Elementary School Office 2

Ms. Diana Gibson-Johnson has been selected to serve as a School Support Officer for Elementary School Office Area 2. She is a product of Houston ISD schools and began her professional career in Houston ISD as a teacher at Harvard Elementary School. She has experience as an Assistant Principal at Tijerina Elementary School, Principal at R. P. Harris Elementary School, Clinton Park Elementary, and most recently Windsor Village Elementary. Additionally, she served as Executive Principal and Lead Principal. Under her leadership at R. P. Harris and Windsor Village Elementary, the campuses achieved the State's highest rating.

Ms. Gibson-Johnson attended Texas Southern University where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Education degree in Educational Administration

New School Support Officer - Elementary School Office 3

Originally from Indianapolis, IN, Erick served seven years in the United States Marine Corps before beginning his career in education. For 16 years in the Chicago Public School he has served students as a teacher, New Leaders resident principal, contract principal, and deputy chief of schools. As the deputy chief for a network of 21 elementary schools and six high schools, Erick is responsible for coaching, providing professional development, and evaluating school administrators. Erick's work has also been focused on cultivating school leadership, improving teacher practice, and establishing productive community relationships that foster great schools that are sustainable and improve student success.

Erick earned his undergraduate degree in elementary education from Purdue University, his master's from Loyola University Chicago, and a doctorate in education leadership from National Louis University.

New School Support Officer - High Schools Office

Esther Omogbehin is a veteran administrator with a remarkable success record in improving schools: elementary, middle, and high schools. She has traveled extensively assisting with schools in Ghana and Nigeria and has held several leadership roles as a presenter and implementer. Dr. Omogbehin joined San Diego Unified in 1994 as a classroom teacher and has held a number of positions: Staff Developer, Literacy Administrator, Beginning Teacher Support Provider, Vice-Principal, Principal, and Lead Principal. She continues to be a mentor for aspiring leaders and teachers.

Dr. Omogbehin holds a Bachelor and a Master's in English Language Arts, a Master in Multicultural Education, and recently a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from San Diego State University.