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**SECOND YEAR OF \$1.3 MILLION HOUSTON MATHEMATICS INITIATIVE  
KICKS OFF WITH MORE SCHOOLS, MORE MATHEMATICS SPECIALISTS**

***HISD, ExxonMobil and Houston Annenberg Challenge improve mathematics education in Houston***

HOUSTON (October 9, 2001)- - The Houston Independent School District (HISD), ExxonMobil and The Houston Annenberg Challenge today announced the expansion of their \$1.3 million, three-year K-5 Mathematics Initiative. The collaboration places mathematics specialists in Houston Southwest District schools to help elementary school teachers and administrators improve their understanding and instruction of mathematics in the classroom.

During the 2000-2001 school year, eight HISD elementary schools and five math specialists participated in the program. Results from the first year, based on the Stanford 9 achievement test, suggest that student achievement in mathematics at project schools is improving. Now in its second year, the initiative is expanding to include five more schools, 10 additional mathematics specialists, and a new "Parents as Partners" outreach program inviting greater parent and community involvement in mathematics.

The announcement was made during a morning ceremony at Red Elementary, one of the eight original elementary schools participating in the program. Key educators and contributors took part in the ceremony, including Dr. Kaye Stripling, superintendent, HISD; Edward F. Ahnert, president, ExxonMobil Foundation; Linda Clarke, executive director, The Houston Annenberg Challenge; and Mary Jane Gomez, principal, Rodriguez Elementary and K-5 Mathematics Initiative Community Advisory Board member.

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of \$1.3 Million Math Initiative Kicks Off Add one

“We look forward to the second year of the K-5 Mathematics Initiative and hope to continue to draw support for mathematics education improvement from teachers, parents and community members,” said Dr. Stripling. “When our students enter the workforce, they will need math and science skills much different from those we employ today. Thanks to our friends at ExxonMobil and The Houston Annenberg Challenge, HISD students will be a step ahead in meeting higher expectations from a society increasingly dependent on mathematics.”

The goal of the K-5 Mathematics Initiative is to improve student achievement in mathematics by strengthening teachers’ knowledge of mathematics and instructional methods. Mathematics specialists provide leadership and expertise in mathematics to teachers, administrators and parents. They collaborate with elementary teachers in the design and implementation of team teaching practices, in-depth professional education for their teacher colleagues, and high-quality approaches to math instruction for all children.

"ExxonMobil continues its firm commitment to mathematics education because we believe it is imperative that our children have a solid foundation in mathematics, conceptual thinking and problem solving in order to be successful in the workplace, in personal finance and as a well-informed citizen,” said Mr. Ahnert. “We understand the importance of investing in our teachers and their professional development in order to strengthen mathematics education in this county. The first year’s results of Houston’s K-5 Mathematics Initiative have been very encouraging, and we look forward to seeing the long-term benefits in the years to come.”

During the first year, mathematics specialists worked side by side in the classroom with Houston elementary school teachers. Specialists also participated in an intensive study of mathematics and in children’s understanding of mathematics, working with Dr. Virginia Bastable from Mt. Holyoke College. In addition, the Houston schools began a collaboration with another ExxonMobil K-5 Mathematics Specialist project in Boston, Mass. Specialists and project directors created an Annenberg Critical Friends Group, a research-based model for professional development. They organized Family Math Nights, where family members and children worked together on projects to make everyone more aware of the mathematics skills being stressed in the classroom.

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of \$1.3 Million Math Initiative Kicks Off Add two

“With programs like this joint initiative, we can begin to bridge the gap we see in science and mathematics education between American students and their international counterparts,” said Ms. Clarke. “Now that we are providing different options for teachers and students in the classroom, we can see that hands-on, interactive activities are what stimulate our children to embrace mathematics and excel in the subject. We must continue to pursue new and well-researched approaches to teaching in order to prepare our students for a world demanding a higher level of understanding in technology, science and a variety of other industries.”

Plans for new components of Houston’s K-5 Mathematics Initiative include cooperation with The Children’s Museum of Houston along with a new exhibit, ExxonMobil Math Path and Magnificent Math Moments. This exhibit was funded through a \$300,000 grant from ExxonMobil Foundation and introduces 120 hands-on math exploration activities. Through a series of field trips, children and families from Houston’s K-5 Mathematics Initiative will have an opportunity to explore mathematics outside of the classroom.

“Parents as Partners,” another new component, focuses on building knowledge and involvement by family and community members in elementary mathematics. Through this program, Houston families and community members are invited to attend two public awareness sessions by Dr. Ruth Parker, a nationally-recognized mathematics educator and advocate of building a knowledgeable public about school mathematics.

The K-5 Mathematics Initiative Community Advisory Board is another new development that brings together 12 community leaders in order to support the children, mathematics specialists, teachers and administrators involved in the K-5 Mathematics Initiative. A few responsibilities of the Community Advisory Board include educating Houston parents and the community about the work and the impact of mathematics specialists in the schools; building a network of public advocacy for reform-oriented mathematics across HISD; sponsoring the Mathematics Distinguished Speakers series for the community; and encouraging other partnerships in the Houston area to further the improvement of mathematics education throughout HISD.

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of \$1.3 Million Math Initiative Kicks Off Add three

During the first year, the math specialist project targeted third graders in the following elementary schools located in the Southwest District of HISD: Anderson, Argyle, Elrod, Foerster, Fondren, Halpin, Milne, and Red. This year, elementary schools joining the program include Shearn, Sutton, Tinsley, Rodriguez and Benavidez. HISD is reallocating resources to fund the expansion. Although the project is limited to HISD's Southwest District for the next two years, a mathematics specialist network has been created and extended to involve educators in the Alief ISD and Fort Bend ISD.

This collaboration is co-directed by Susan O'Boyle, K-5 Mathematics Initiative project director at HISD, and Lance Menster, program coordinator at Houston Annenberg Challenge. Dr. Jean Moon, ExxonMobil Foundation advisor for K-16 education programs, is technical advisor for overall project development.

Funding for the three-year project includes: \$621,000 and additional in-kind donations from HISD; \$500,000 from ExxonMobil Foundation, the largest grant in the 13-year history of the ExxonMobil K-5 Mathematics Specialist Program; and \$237,000 from The Houston Annenberg Challenge. HISD will provide all funding once the project becomes self-sustaining.

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