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Harmony Public Schools awarded \$8 million Education Innovation and Research grant from U.S. Department of Education for pioneering new, K-5 'LEAF to STEM' program

Harmony Public Schools – a recognized leader in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education – has been awarded an \$8 million Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement to pioneer a new, early-education STEM program for elementary students.

Dubbed "LEAF to STEM" (Launching Elementary Academic Foundations to STEM), the new program builds upon Harmony's proven, project-based learning STEM model for Grade 6-12 students by introducing similar curricula to students Grade K-5, and by creating a system of support and professional development for elementary school teachers.

"Research shows that children have an innate curiosity towards learning and discovering," Dr. Burak Yilmaz, Harmony's project director for LEAF to STEM, said. "This natural desire, inclination and love of learning in children is stronger at younger ages. Therefore, it is important to introduce STEM education at the elementary level rather than waiting until students are in middle or high school."

Recent studies have shown STEM workers earn 26 percent more than their fellow non-STEM workers. In Harmony's home state of Texas, those skilled workers are in dire need. A 2017 Forbes study ranked Texas as the No. 2 best state for business, but cited the state's low education rate as "one of the only things holding Texas back" in an increasingly STEM-focused economy.

Once implemented, Harmony Public Schools' LEAF to STEM system will become a model for other school systems nationwide via Harmony's Innovation Department, which currently designs curriculum, class materials and best practices for schools in Texas and seven other states.

Harmony was the only school system in Texas to receive an EIR grant for 2018.

About Harmony Public Schools

Harmony Public Schools are 56 high performing K-12 college preparatory charter schools throughout Texas. Harmony blends the highest standards and expectations, with a rigorous math- and science-centered curriculum and dedicated and engaged teachers and families to cultivate excellence and prepare students to succeed in college, careers and life. At Harmony Public Schools, we believe every child can succeed, and we are committed to helping them realize their full potential. To learn more about Harmony Public Schools and our 56 campuses across Texas, please visit: www.harmonytx.org, and follow us on Twitter at @HarmonyEdu and 'Like' us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/HarmonyTexas.

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