

Board Recognition
August 26, 2025

Denton ISD Middle School Students Recognized at 2025 TAEA Region 11 Junior VASE

Middle School art students from across Denton ISD earned top honors at the 2025 Texas Art Education Association (TAEA) Region 11 Junior Visual Arts Scholastic Event (Jr. VASE), held on May 3, 2025. The annual event celebrates outstanding student achievement in the visual arts, providing a competitive platform based on students' artistic technique, skill level, and formal interviews about their work.

Denton ISD students earned a total of 43 top scores (known as Rating 4), signifying excellence in visual arts. Of those entries, eight artworks by six students were selected for the prestigious Platinum Award, which is reserved for the top 10% of Rating 4 entries across the region. The Platinum Medal represents the highest recognition available to middle school art students in Texas.

The 2025 Platinum Award recipients from Denton ISD are:

- **Morgann DeNight**, 9th grade, Guyer High School (formerly Harpool Middle School)
- **Lyla Ramsey**, 9th grade, Guyer High School (formerly Harpool Middle School)
- Pruthav Saralaya, 9th grade, Guyer High School (formerly Harpool Middle School)
- **Owen Wright**, 8th grade, Harpool Middle School
- **Olivia Sparks**, 7th grade, Harpool Middle School
- **Josie Wiley**, 9th grade, Ryan High School (formerly Strickland Middle School)

These student artists represent Harpool and Strickland middle schools and were guided by dedicated art teachers **Brett Moore (Harpool MS)**, **Carol Lytle (Harpool MS)**, and **John Thompson (Strickland MS)**.

The Jr. VASE experience is a valuable opportunity for student artists to demonstrate creativity, technical growth, and personal expression—hallmarks of Denton ISD's commitment to fostering the arts at all grade levels.

Harpool Middle School Named 2024–2026 National PTA School of Excellence

Harpool Middle School has been recognized as a 2024–2026 National PTA School of Excellence, one of only 330 PTAs and schools nationwide to earn this distinction. The National PTA’s program celebrates strong family-school partnerships that enhance the educational experience and environment for every child.

The journey to this honor began with a shared commitment by Harpool’s PTA and school leadership to strengthen family-school partnerships. Guided by community input, the PTA developed goals and an action plan, participating in training and collaboration throughout the 2024–2025 school year.

Two areas of focus—*Share Power* and *Collaborate with the Community*—led to initiatives such as Career Day, Longhorn Day, and Coffee Talks with the Principal, which created opportunities for families and community members to connect with the campus. Additionally, the PTA created a Family and Community Engagement Chair position to expand outreach, increase volunteer opportunities, and promote consistent communication with parents.

This recognition underscores Harpool’s success in fostering meaningful connections among families, staff, and the community—an achievement that reflects Denton ISD’s commitment to supporting every student’s success.

The Harpool 24-25 board consisted of the following:

- Aimee Jones - *President* - Aimee Jones
- Tobie Beck - *Vice President*
- Cynthia Holsclaw-Francis - *School of Excellence chair*
- Laurie Pillow
- Lauren Franklin
- Lauren Heath
- Ashley Burns
- Krissy Tarwater
- Cortney Exby
- Terra Smith
- Kristy Martinez
- Gina Paul

Sam Houston Elementary Named 2024–2026 National PTA School of Excellence

Sam Houston Elementary has been recognized as a 2024–2026 National PTA School of Excellence, one of only 330 PTAs and schools nationwide to earn this distinction. The National PTA’s program honors strong family-school partnerships that improve the educational experience and environment for every child.

The recognition resulted from a joint effort by the PTA and school leadership to strengthen family-school partnerships. Guided by community input, the PTA developed goals aligned with National PTA standards and participated in training and collaboration throughout the 2024–2025 school year.

Two focus areas—*Welcoming All Families* and *Communicating Effectively*—led to impactful initiatives. To welcome families, the campus launched its first-ever Multicultural Night, where 14 families hosted 17 booths highlighting food, music, crafts, and traditions. The event drew more than 200 attendees and was praised as one of the school’s most inclusive celebrations. To enhance communication, the PTA expanded Spanish-language outreach with district support and a Ready, Tech, Go! grant, while ensuring regular updates through email and principal newsletters.

These efforts expanded participation, created new opportunities for connection, and set a model for inclusive engagement. Moving forward, the PTA plans to grow Multicultural Night, expand multilingual communication, and strengthen partnerships with staff and community groups. This recognition underscores Sam Houston Elementary’s commitment to family engagement—key to Denton ISD’s mission of supporting student success.

The Sam Houston 24-25 Board consisted of the following:

- Natalie Saville – *President*
- DeCole Cody – *VP of Fundraising*
- Melanie Edwards – *VP of Programs*
- Alexa Stevens
- Alyssa Moore
- Rachel Bradford
- Stephanie Kessler
- Anthony Brown
- Taylor Brakefield
- Rowan Robb
- Meredith McClanahan