



CSTEM Participation Yields Better Performance for East Region Students

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A challenge combining teamwork, technology, and turtles is helping students in HISD's East Region to increase their academic achievement—and East Region Executive Principal Patsy Cavazos is eager to share the good news.

Cavazos presented a report on the region's success during an October 14 reception hosted by CSTEM (Communications, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and sponsored by Shell and Schlumberger. The audience was composed of educators from throughout the Houston metro area, including superintendents, curriculum managers, and teachers from Houston, Fort Bend, and Alief ISDs, as well as a number of charter campuses. Administrators from Shell, Exxon-Mobil, Schlumberger, the Greater Houston Partnership, Rice University, the Texas Regional Collaborative for Excellence in Science Teaching, and other Houston area businesses were also present.

“The East Region has enjoyed an unprecedented increase in the number of high-performing schools (as identified by the State of Texas), with over 20 schools in the highest accountability rankings,” Cavazos told attendees. “We have also seen our ‘Commended’ levels increase, which indicates that more of our students are college- and career-ready. We believe our participation in STEM activities, along with our collaborative efforts with CSTEM, have contributed immeasurably to that success.”



On October 14, HISD's East Region Executive Principal Patsy Cavazos gave a speech to other Houston-area educators on how participation in the 2008 Shell Schlumberger Sea Turtle Challenge has helped improve her students' academic performance. Here, children from the Austin High School feeder pattern's Gallegos Elementary School plot strategy during the competition, which took place in May.

CSTEM, a nonprofit organization whose goal is to reduce achievement gaps between minority and non-minority students, sponsors a “Sea Turtle Robotics Challenge” annually in partnership with Shell Oil Company and Schlumberger. It involves many weeks of preparation and culminates in one project—the creation of a robot designed around some aspect of the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle's life cycle.

The competition is open to students in all grade levels, and last year the East Region had 13 campuses participating, including students in elementary, middle, and high schools.

Cavazos noted that the East Region's participation in CSTEM activities has “had an immediate and positive impact on our students in the schools that participated.

“CSTEM energized and excited the students and teachers, not only those committed to the teams but also their peers who watched in awe,” she said. “Teachers across grade levels and campuses began working together, sharing ideas and strategies as they prepared their students to compete. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Dr. Reagan Flowers (the founder and CEO of CSTEM Teacher and Student Support Services, Inc.) and CSTEM, so that our teachers and students continue to be challenged.”