

LANCASTER ISD

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Nomination Statement for Dr. A. K. Perera - Josephine E. Hill Superintendent Award – NABSE

Dear Nomination Committee,

Dr. A. K. Perera exemplifies the qualities recognized by the Josephine E. Hill Superintendent Award through her visionary leadership, unwavering commitment to equity, and focus on student and professional success. Under her leadership, Lancaster Independent School District (LISD), where 87% of students are economically disadvantaged, has achieved a remarkable 100% graduation rate for four consecutive years. This extraordinary achievement reflects Dr. Perera's ability to create equitable opportunities, implement wraparound supports, and ensure every student has access to the resources, guidance, and encouragement needed to complete their education.

Maintaining a perfect graduation rate in a district facing significant economic and social challenges is a direct result of Dr. Perera's student-centered approach. LISD has implemented comprehensive supports, including targeted academic interventions, social-emotional learning programs, mentorship initiatives, and community partnerships that remove barriers to student success.

Equity:

Dr. Perera has consistently organized and facilitated networks to ensure equitable access and opportunities for women and people of color in education. She founded the Sister Superintendents group, a groundbreaking initiative designed to support minority women in superintendent roles. The inaugural Sister Superintendents Conclave in Jamaica in 2025, She has provided a strategic platform for networking, guidance, and professional growth. Through this initiative, Dr. Perera is dismantling systemic barriers that have historically limited access to high-level educational leadership, creating pathways for minority women to connect, collaborate, and amplify their voices.

Courageous Leadership in Social Justice:

Dr. Perera exemplifies courageous leadership in addressing social justice issues for children and adults with persistence and clarity of vision. She was recognized as the 2024 recipient of the Open Up Resources Excellence in Equity Leadership Award, honoring her work advancing equity in classrooms at both the district and national levels. Additionally, she received the ElevateHER Award from Elevate K12, highlighting her commitment to elevating women in education. Her strategic engagement with stakeholders has driven transformative changes, ensuring all students—especially those from historically marginalized communities—have access to high-quality education. Through initiatives such as expanding STEM into a comprehensive STEAM program (science, technology, engineering, arts, math, service, teaching, entrepreneurship, athletics, and manufacturing), Dr. Perera ensures that students gain the knowledge and skills needed for future success.

Wraparound Services and Student Supports:

Dr. Perera's commitment to the whole child is evident in the district's innovative wraparound services:

- WEBO Market: A partnership with Texas Health Resources providing free, healthy food to students and staff, addressing food insecurity and supporting student learning.

- Social-Emotional Learning Dogs: Trained wellness dogs, such as Angel, help students manage stress, improve mental health, and build resilience.
- STEM/STEAM Expansion: LISD was the first K-12 STEM district in Texas, supported by a \$4.8 million grant from the Texas Instruments Foundation, renewed in Spring 2025 to continue and expand these programs. Students now benefit from integrated, hands-on STEM/STEAM learning opportunities that prepare them for high-demand careers.
- Experiential Learning: Initiatives like the Culinary Arts food truck provide students with real-world experiences, fostering career readiness beyond traditional classroom instruction.

Support and Mentorship:

Dr. Perera is deeply committed to leadership development through coaching, mentoring, modeling, and networking. She has been a trusted mentor superintendent with NABSE for years, providing guidance and support to current and aspiring educational leaders. She is also an active mentor with AASA, TABSE, and New Era Superintendents, cultivating a culture of continuous growth and empowering those she mentors to become mentors themselves.

Innovation for Equity and Excellence:

Dr. Perera promotes innovative structures to achieve both equity and academic excellence. She has implemented programs and systems that break down barriers, foster inclusivity, and ensure high academic standards for all students. Through culturally responsive teaching practices, STEM/STEAM integration, and holistic support services, she ensures students from historically underserved communities have equitable opportunities to succeed.

Mentorship and Advancement:

Dr. Perera generously shares her knowledge, skills, and resources to elevate women and people of color in education. Within Lancaster ISD, she has intentionally built a cabinet of highly qualified individuals, many of whom are women, actively modeling equity in leadership. Beyond the district, she facilitates pathways for professional growth through her national mentoring work, helping women and people of color advance in education while addressing achievement gaps for students.

Through her strategic vision, innovative initiatives, and unwavering advocacy, Dr. A. K. Perera has transformed Lancaster ISD into a model of equity, excellence, and student-centered leadership. She embodies the values of the Josephine E. Hill Superintendent Award, making her an exemplary nominee.

Thank you,



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