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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 15, 2017

### Lancaster High School Student Wins International Space Settlement Design Competition

**Lancaster, TX/Lancaster ISD** – The Lancaster Independent School District is proud to announce that Lancaster High School student Jada Murray is the first district student to win the International Space Settlement Design Competition. Murray, along with her team of international peers from China, England, Australia, and India participated in this competition at the Kennedy Space Center in Titusville, Florida.

The competition employs students to collaborate and develop a comprehensive international space community models and it is a culminating contest in a series of local, state and regional events. Several students attended the state competition, but Murray was the only Lancaster ISD student in the international contest this year.

“I felt so honored to be chosen to represent Lancaster in the competition and I was proud to know that I had contributed to the winning project,” Murray said. “This opportunity was more than just competing in a competition. I had the chance to work and socialize with other students from all different cultures. The opportunity has given me a new perspective on how I see people from around the world and is experience that I will never forget.”

Murray and her team’s company was named “Grumbo,” and they received a contract to create a space settlement on the planet Venus that could adequately provide for humans, while taking into account the multitude of different obstacles and factors.

“In the Humans Department where I worked, I helped in designing futuristic inventions and housings for our humans, along with coming up with ways to provide for our humans,” Murray said. “Our settlement was made of thousands of domes to serve as housing for 10,000 people and 500 refugees, along with recreational and essential areas for supporting our settlement. Our design addressed all the problems of security, waste, shelter, and survival in the harsh Venus environment.”

Murray believe that her team’s thoroughness and the critical eye to account for the gaps in their design idea was the key to their win.

While this experience was a learning simulation, for Murray the rewards were very real and left a lasting impression aside from the medals and certificates.





“The intangible rewards were the opportunity to travel and make friends from all over the world whom I still keep in touch with,” she said. “I have better leadership skills and I grasp concepts quicker than I did before and interpret them in a new way. We have always been pushed to think beyond the surface in school and my experience has further proved how to put those skills to use. Essentially, I have discovered a new way of thinking.”

Lancaster ISD Science Campus Support member, Kenya Wilson agrees with Murray that these experiences outlast the time of competition.

“Experiences like the International Space Settlement Design Challenge promotes STEM confidence for all students in Lancaster ISD. When one student representative leads this type of stride, the district experiences exponential growth in STEM culture,” Wilson said. “Jada has been one of the top performing students in her grade level for many years. The NASA experience complimented her academic success, enhanced her

communication, critical thinking, creativity and collaboration abilities. These 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills will equip Jada to experience the self-sustaining success that drives our district’s vision.”

Murray, who wants to major in biology and eventually become a surgeon, said that the NASA competition increased her desire to fulfill this dream.

“The scientific field has been my desired career path since the sixth grade as science has always been a subject that brought out deeper thinking and curiosity in me,” she said. “During my college years, I have a desire to participate in a study abroad program. If I was not dead set on participating before, I am now determined to travel and see all the different people in the world.”

Lancaster ISD staff believe that parent support is a compliment to the student’s ability to access choices and opportunities. Murray has had the opportunity to experience her current success with her biggest cheerleader, her mother, Debbie Robinson.

“I was blown away by the level of thinking, the ideas as well as the level of engagement that the students had with these engineering tasks. I was so impressed that Jada was right at home among these top scholars from all over the world,” Robinson said. “My daughter proved that it doesn’t matter where you come from or what you look like, it is true that you can do anything. As the only African American and as a girl, Jada’s presence was just inspiring. Not only did she go, but she shined.”

The NASA competition is part of the legacy of student STEM engagement opportunities that Lancaster ISD has participated in since 2012. During this 6-year tenure, students have participated each year. A Lancaster ISD student was selected for the International team twice, but this is the first time a district student has returned with a win.

Robinson, who is also an educator, was amazed to see the students in action as they competed.

“It just shows that advanced teaching and learning are abounding here in Lancaster. If you have the drive and are willing to work hard, the sky is the limit and this district will do whatever possible to help you go as far as you wish. I credit Lancaster ISD for the exposure and experiences that prepared her for such a monumental opportunity.”

*The Lancaster Independent School District serves more than 7,000 pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students in 11 schools. Our vision is that all students achieve self-sustaining success and leave a lasting legacy. And our mission, in collaboration with parents and communities, is to ignite learning that translates into sustainable success for all students in an ever-changing society.*