



## Media Inquiries:

**Sonya Cole-Hamilton**

*Chief Communications Officer*

(972) 218-1433 office • (972) 358-7227 cell

[SonyaHamilton@LancasterISD.org](mailto:SonyaHamilton@LancasterISD.org)

[www.LancasterISD.org](http://www.LancasterISD.org)

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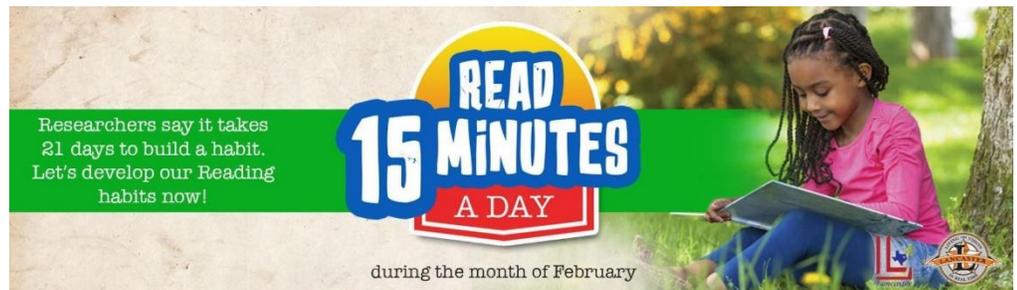
## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2, 2018

### Lancaster ISD Kicks Off Month-Long Reading Challenge

**Lancaster, TX/Lancaster ISD** – February 1 was World Read Aloud Day and served as the launch date of the inaugural February Lancaster ISD Reading Challenge. All members of the community are encouraged to join students and staff by taking the online pledge to allocate 15 minutes each day to reading this month.

The criteria of the challenge encourages reading together as a family, reading before bed time, participating in read-aloud activities with family and/or friends, visiting the City of Lancaster Veterans Memorial Library or your local library to check out a new book.



Lancaster ISD Executive Director of School Improvement and Bilingual Education and Reading Challenge Coordinator, Dr. Tonia Howard believes that this challenge will help lead to great outcomes for children at home and at school.

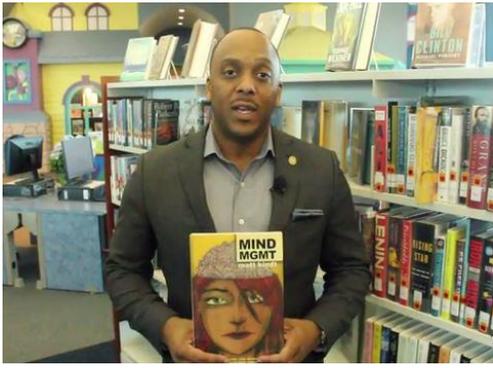
“The short-term goal is to encourage our students to read, encourage adults to read with children and to model or develop life-long reading habits, Dr. Howard said. “We want our students to develop the love of reading and not just to read for a grade or an assignment.”

District leaders were excited when the mayor of Lancaster, Hon. Marcus E. Knight, agreed to help promote the month of reading and recorded a video which is posted at [www.LancasterISD.org](http://www.LancasterISD.org).

“It’s only 15 minutes a day and you get the opportunity to learn about so many new and exciting things happening in this world,” he said.

Throughout the month, students and staff will continue their regular use of reading plans during their academic day, but will also experience increased programming centered on literacy and specifically reading.

Dr. Howard shared that many of the campuses will host read-alouds throughout the challenge and that guest readers are scheduled throughout the month to read to students. The district will also highlight the campus that receives the most pledges for the Reading Challenge. In addition, the city’s public library, The Lancaster Veterans Memorial Library will host a book sale.



Although February is the shortest month and has only 28 days, according to noted Professor Maxwell Maltz, a renowned doctor and author of *Psycho-Cybernetics*, it takes a minimum of 21 days to form a new habit. Therefore, within this month, there is still enough time to encourage the love for the library and to promote a sustainable focus on literacy that continues after the events conclude.

Dr. Howard added, “There are so many benefits to reading – improved vocabulary, free entertainment, improved focus and concentration, improved writing skills, develop knowledge and reduces stress.”

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a division of the U.S. Department of Education, children who are read to frequently, especially at home, enjoy a substantial advantage over children who are not afforded this opportunity. The U.S. Department of Education also found that, generally, the more students read for fun on their own time, the higher their reading scores.

“It takes all of us working together to change the mindset for some of our students who don’t like to read,” Dr. Howard said. “We need to figure out why and how we can help them to change their thinking about reading so that they are college and career ready. It takes all of us working together to make that happen.”

Dr. Howard and her team have launched this challenge to help create a new awareness within the city in alignment with the Village 2020 Plan help to bolster a community shift.

“We want to encourage students, parents and our community to get actively involved in reading and writing. There are many cities throughout the country that are involved in community wide events and literacy is a great area of focus to get everyone involved in and supporting because our community benefits from the outcome,” she said.

Lancaster ISD Early Childhood Specialist Dr. Angie Knight understands the necessity of a strong focus on literacy even for children who may be too young to read alone and encourages parents to read to their children as early and as often as they can.

“Children’s vocabulary utilization at age 3 is a strong predictor of language skill and reading comprehension at age 9-10. Furthermore, vocabulary usage in first grade can predict more than 30% of 11th-grade reading comprehension,” she said. “If students are read to as little as 20 minutes per day 5 times per week; they are being exposed to 100 minutes of reading per week, 400 minutes of reading per month, 3,600 minutes in one school year, and approximately 21,732 minutes by the end of fifth grade.”

Knight continued.

“Early and consistent exposure to books from an early age will fuel a love and passion for reading that will ultimately propel children toward success in school and beyond.”

Lancaster ISD invites the community to accept the February Lancaster ISD Reading Challenge. Go to the district website today at [www.LancasterISD.org](http://www.LancasterISD.org) and click on the Reading Banner to take the pledge today.

*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.*