



Office of  
Community Relations

## North East Independent School District

8961 TESORO DRIVE - SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78217

**Contact:**

Chrissie Kolb  
210-407-0553  
210-262-5295 (cell)  
Heather Willden  
210-407-0040  
817-360-7807 (cell)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NEISD students recognized nationally**

*Five NEISD students nominated as Presidential Scholars, three advance*

**February 10, 2011** – Five NEISD students— Johnson High School’s Josh Taliaferro (musical theatre), MacArthur High School’s Teresa Valadez (academics), Madison High School’s Shivani Gaitonde (academics), and Reagan High School’s Kelsey Godfrey (spoken theatre) and Brooke Bowman (spoken theatre), all seniors—were named candidates for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program, one of the highest honors for high school students. Valadez, Gaitonde and Bowman all advanced to the next level in the program; as a result, Bowman will perform in New York, April 8 - 16. The program honors students who have demonstrated artistic excellence, outstanding academic achievement, leadership, citizenship, service and contribution to their community and school.

Academic recognition is based on students’ scoring exceptionally well on the SAT or the ACT. To be considered for the arts program honor, students must participate in the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts’ (NFAA) Arts Recognition and Talent Search (ARTS) competition. The NFAA nominates students for the Presidential Scholars Program and invites them to apply.

As arts candidates, Taliaferro, Godfrey and Bowman attended YoungArts Week in Miami to study various areas of fine arts. They not only trained in their own discipline, they also observed and learned more about the other disciplines covered at the camp. There were 1,500 theater arts students from across the U.S. who auditioned to attend, and only 23 received this opportunity—four were from Texas, three of which were from NEISD.

All academic and arts candidates submit essays, self-assessments, school reports and transcripts. A review committee evaluates candidates based on their academic achievement, personal characteristics, leadership and service activities, and the quality and content of their essay.

About 500 candidates reach the semifinalist level and are then reviewed by the White House Commission. In April, the commission will apply the same evaluation criteria as the review committee, and select up to 121 Academic Scholars and up to 20 Arts Scholars. Students chosen as scholars will receive an expense-paid trip to Washington, D. C. in June and a medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House, in commemoration of their achievements.

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program was created to recognize the nation's most distinguished high school graduating seniors. It was established in 1964 by executive order of the President, and in 1979 the program added an art component to recognize students with great talent in the visual, creative and performing arts. The NFAA is an organization that identifies and supports young artists and raises appreciation for the arts in society.

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About NEISD:

North East ISD has more than 70 schools and magnet programs with a fall 2010 enrollment of more than 66,000 students. NEISD employs more than 8,000 people. It is the second largest public school district in the San Antonio area and the eighth largest in the state. Under the Texas accountability system, 87 percent of NEISD schools are rated Exemplary or Recognized. The district earned Recognized for the third year in a row.

More information about NEISD can be found at [www.neisd.net](http://www.neisd.net).