

Boston elementary students receive surprise scholarships



Pamela Vasquez hugged her son Diego Soto Vasquez as he received a scholarship at the ceremony.

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Several outstanding students of Boston's Harvard-Kent Elementary School were surprised with scholarships in a ceremony Friday.

This is the 12th year in a row that six students — two each from third, fourth, and fifth grade — have been awarded a \$1,000 college scholarship, said Jason Gallagher, the school's principal.

The scholarships come from the Harvard-Kent Leadership & Scholarship Partnership, a nonprofit founded to recognize some of the school's more exceptional students, said Gallagher.

In order to win the money, students first have to be nominated by their teachers for "positively embodying the values of the school" and "being a good leader and friend," said Gallagher.

He explained that the school doesn't tell the winners that they've won, but does inform the families. That way, when the students' names are called during the school's assembly, family members can come out from a back room and surprise them.

"We give them a big, fake 'Price is Right' check, and then the families come out for pictures. Sometimes the kids start to cry. Mom and Dad usually do," said Gallagher.

Alongside the six new winners, several past students were also present, there to collect checks, said Gallagher.

"We've been doing this for so long at this point that there are kids old enough to enter college and were here to collect their scholarships. The younger kids see them as role models," Gallagher said.

Gallagher said that the experience of giving out the scholarships has brought the students together.

"The noises they make when they hear that one of their friends won is just incredible," he said. "Are there some that wish they had won instead of someone else? Sure, but I'm proud to say the kids that are chosen just stand out. They're leaders and scholars and everyone can respect that."

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