

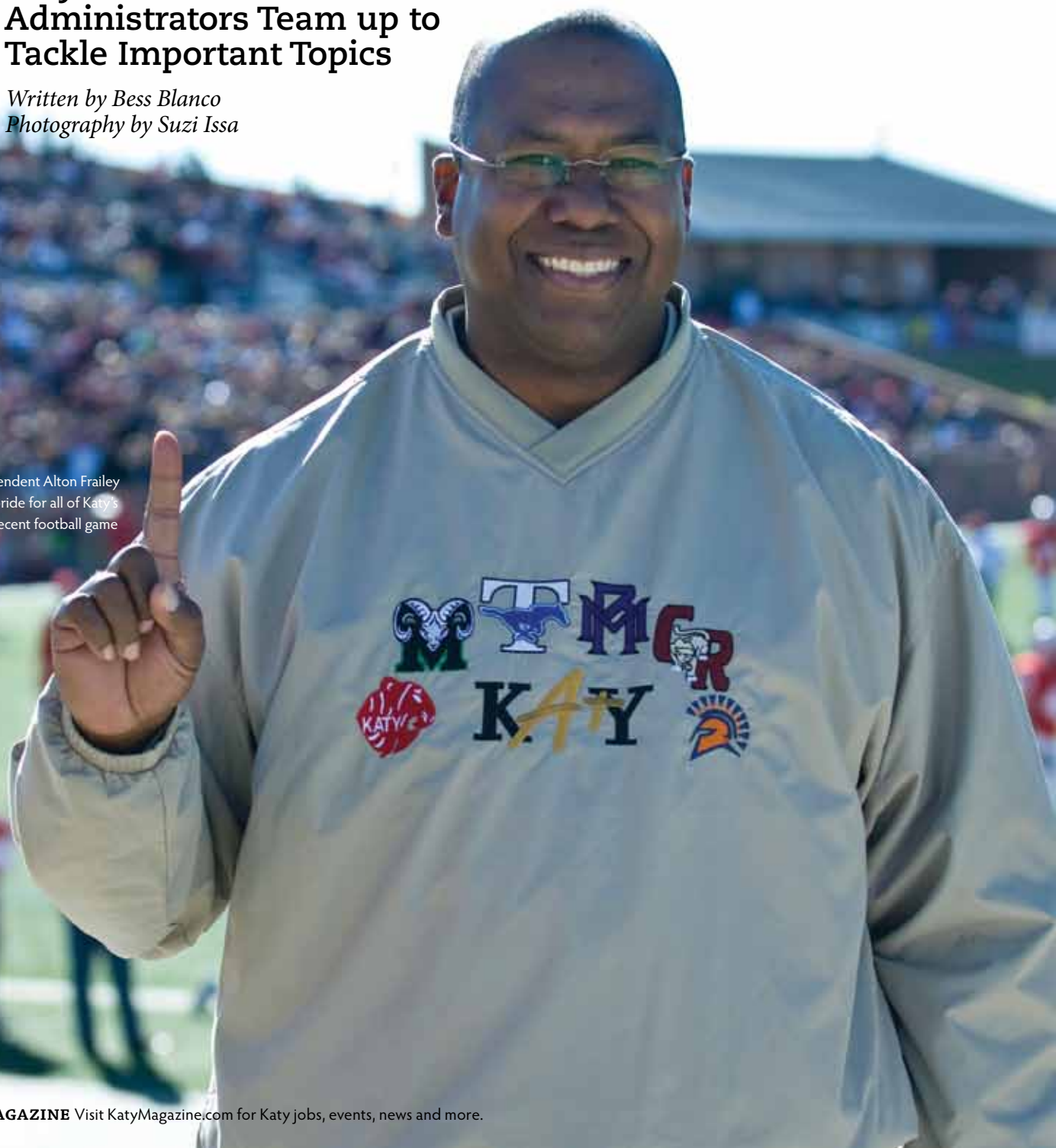
The Superintendent's **Student Roundtable**

**Katy ISD Students and
Administrators Team up to
Tackle Important Topics**

Written by Bess Blanco

Photography by Suzi Issa

Katy ISD Superintendent Alton Frailey shows his school pride for all of Katy's high schools at a recent football game





Katy students Missy Meyer, Tyler Moffett, Stephanie Gonzalez, Brandon Villarreal, Alexandra Gould, Leah Duffield, Taylor Weigand, Kevin Falls, and Patric Allen



Maha Husseini shares her ideas during a roundtable meeting

Nicole Vazquez, a junior at Morton Ranch High School, loves being the class president for many reasons. She enjoys helping out with the prom planning committee and the leadership opportunities she finds in the position. Mostly, though, she enjoys representing her school and peers at the Katy ISD student roundtable meetings with Superintendent Alton Frailey. Vazquez, along with other class presidents and student newspaper editors, is among the select achievers who make up the student voice at the meetings, held every six weeks.

Reaching out to Students

The high school campuses each take turns hosting the meetings, and the students, along with select faculty and staff, gather to bring important issues to Frailey's attention. This is a responsibility Vazquez takes very seriously. "I feel like I'm actually doing something more than just fundraising and preparing for prom," she says. "Our [student] input affects not only ourselves, but also future students, like my brother." She especially feels privileged to be a voice for her peers at the school, as they propose new topics to her. "Since they know I do roundtable, they give me actual feedback and ideas on actual issues they are having," she shares.

Frailey agrees with her about the importance of the regular meetings in Katy ISD. "The purpose for the roundtable is to foster a relationship with student leaders through the discussion of ideas,

sharing opinions, and providing suggestions about important topics facing today's students to district leadership," he says. "The goal is to gain further insight into the student and school community and to gather ideas to construct a better learning environment for students to create their future."

The roundtable, developed more than 10 years ago, began during Dr. Leonard Merrell's tenure as Katy ISD superintendent. It was founded on the ideals of increasing student engagement and contribution to the district's administration processes, and those values continue to be important today. "The dialogue from the roundtable identifies areas the district can improve upon to raise the quality of operations and communicate more effectively," Frailey explains. "It promotes leadership and creates awareness through the student body of the influence they have on their own education."

Formulating Ideas for the Future

As insight is gained from Katy students, Frailey uses that knowledge to improve school environments, policies, and communications. "Every discussion is extremely important," he shares. "The students have covered topics ranging from curriculum and attendance boundaries to school bonds and the academic calendar. Conversations of the roundtable provide the district with a foundation to establish better communications. It identifies student ideas and concerns that are pertinent to education and



Superintendent Alton Frailey and student Patric Allen



Katy students John Liner, Jonathan Alvarado, Ethan Sedelmeier, Coleman Selfridge, Maha Husseini, and Florencia Tome

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Kevin Falls, Superintendent Alton Frailey, Stephanie Gonzalez, and Taylor Weigand

presents an environment for district administrators to make greater connections regarding decision making that ultimately impacts students.” Students like Vazquez are aware of the difference they can make, and she in particular takes great pride in that. Her own goals for the future are affected in great part by her role at the roundtable discussions. “I [enjoy] public and motivational speaking, and I want to be a public speaker and major in communications,” she says. “Roundtable has been inspiring to me, and the leadership conference has really influenced my career choice.”

Vazquez mentions that the meetings are also valuable dinner table conversations for her at home with her brother and parents. “After every meeting, I talk with them about what was accomplished,” she says. “Then they are feeling involved, and they get to offer feedback. The parents can be more ‘in the know’ because of roundtable.” She enjoys being able to see the decision making process unfold with thoughtful conversations about topics of importance to Katy ISD. “I know that these changes take time to happen,” she shares. “It’s still important to do, though, for the kids coming after us.”

Bringing Katy Closer Together

The roundtable discussions do much to bring unity to Katy ISD school campuses, as well. The KatyOne initiative was founded based on conversations from the student roundtable. “Students communicated that even with the competitiveness there is a camaraderie that runs deep through the students in our schools that make us one Katy community,” says Frailey. “They wanted it noted that at the end of the day, they are all from the same hometown, Katy. This inspiration about how students and campuses reach across attendance boundaries to support each other led to establishing KatyOne.”

As Katy students and staff all work to accomplish unity in the district, they have already accomplished the main goal of the student roundtable. “This opportunity provides students even greater chances to participate through speaking and listening to their peers, while engaging in critical thinking and problem solving that builds life-long skills,” says Frailey. “Overall, the format encourages participation and fosters trust through active listening and non-confrontational conversations, which makes the interaction worthwhile for everyone.” **KM**

BESS BLANCO loved learning about the student roundtable and appreciates all of Katy ISD’s wonderful programs.

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10 Fast Facts About the Student Roundtable



1. Formed more than 10 years ago.
2. Developed by Dr. Leonard Merrell.
3. Now includes an annual leadership conference.
4. KatyOne initiative was founded based on conversations from the roundtable.
5. Recent conversations have included issues like bullying and online student interactions.
6. Meets every six weeks.
7. All six high schools participate, and they take turns hosting meetings.
8. Students who are invited to participate are usually class presidents and school newspaper editors.
9. One of the things Katy ISD Superintendent Alton Frailey most looks forward to.
10. Promotes unity between high school campuses.

Katy roundtable students (back row) James Yang, Miguel Chavez, Sarah Thiele, Brandon Coleman, (front row) Klarissa Fitzpatrick, Rebeca Trejo, Katherine Owen, Anne Steele, and Jane Weber





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