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Houston Public Media Offers Resources for Learning at Home Programming Targeted to Student Needs Starts This Week

HOUSTON, March 23, 2020 – As the coronavirus pandemic has forced hundreds of thousands of Houston-area students out of class – a disruption that in some cases will last through the end of the academic year – Houston Public Media and PBS have revamped their schedules to provide programming that supports students from pre-kindergarten through high school.

The expanded programming will begin on the main HPM television channel, channel 8, at 8 a.m. Monday, March 23.

Lisa Trapani Shumate, associate vice president and general manager of Houston Public Media, said the schedule was revamped to meet the educational needs of students, with additional educational resources available [online](#).

Regular PBS KIDS programming will continue to air from 6-8 a.m. on TV 8 and throughout the day on channel 8.3, a secondary HPM channel available through both broadcast and cable. "A lot of parents rely on the regular programming for younger kids," Shumate said. "That won't be interrupted."

Parents can also [sign up](#) for a new PBS daily newsletter with additional ideas for learning activities.

"With schools across the country shifting to distance learning, PBS member stations are helping parents and educators provide meaningful learning experiences for millions of students," said Paula Kerger, PBS president and CEO. "As a national leader in education, Houston Public Media is once again demonstrating extraordinary commitment and creativity as they use digital and broadcast technologies to meet the educational needs of their community."

The programming could be especially crucial for families without internet service with the closure of Houston-area public libraries, which provide free access to Wi-Fi. Shumate notes that 98% of Houston area homes have a television, and about 25% have broadcast service only, without cable or satellite TV.

She said the effort goes beyond simply scheduling regular PBS programming to run during the day. Instead, programming targeted to the specific curriculum demands for various age groups will run at set times. Programming for students in grades 4 through 8, for example, will run from 8 a.m.-1 p.m., offering programs including NOVA, History Detectives and Breakthrough Ideas that Changed the World.

High school programming will air 1-6 p.m. with programs including Masterpiece Theater (literature) and Reconstruction After the Civil War (U.S. history). The full schedule is available [online](#).

“When you think of our programming, you may only think about children in preschool,” Shumate said. “This expanded lineup aligns with required subjects from elementary to high school.”

Houston Public Media, which is licensed through the University of Houston, offers news, information and entertainment programming over the airwaves, via cable and online, including the local Public Broadcasting Service affiliate, TV 8, and the local National Public Radio affiliate, News 88.7.

It has a combined weekly audience of more than 1.6 million, and Shumate said about 100,000 children tune in for PBS KIDS programming.

Courtney Lamm, chief development officer at Houston Public Media, said the shift in emphasis is a natural move for the station, which started on the UH campus in 1953 as the first public educational television station.

“Caregivers and teachers are looking for solutions that are free and accessible to everyone,” she said.

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About the University of Houston

The University of Houston is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter for excellence in undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the country, UH is a federally designated Hispanic- and Asian-American-Serving institution with enrollment of more than 46,000 students.

About Houston Public Media

Houston Public Media is a service of the University of Houston and supported with financial gifts from the community. Houston Public Media combines broadcast and digital assets to serve residents of Southeast Texas with trusted local news and entertainment, as well as national programming from NPR and PBS. With a combined weekly audience of more than 1.6 million, Houston Public Media is committed to delivering content that expands minds and possibilities with trusted information.