

THE CONNECTOR

A weekly publication of Harris County Department of Education for the HCDE Board of Trustees

WEEK OF MARCH 8, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 23

PULLING TOGETHER

TOP STORIES

Sheffield Head Start Center Finds Temporary Home p.2



The Center for Safe and Secure Schools Hosts First-ever Equity Symposium p.3



Aldine ISD Recognized for Partnership with Center for Safe and Secure Schools p.4



Of Note...



HCDE made a splash in the last week both locally and nationally with an inaugural Equity Symposium, a new interim website, presentations to a partnering school district and presence on a national foundation.

Last Friday, I virtually welcomed more than 100 educators from around the region to our first ever Equity Symposium, hosted by HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools. During this seminar, a panel of six local and national experts discussed implied bias in the classroom and how it often dovetails with school discipline. Discussions noted that this type of mindset and behavior can have long-term impacts on a student's success. This work will continue with an Equity Bootcamp in July.

If you visited our website anytime after 2 p.m. yesterday, you may have noticed that HCDE's site has changed. We had to switch to a new site as the vendor who developed our previous site went out of business and left the website without critical backend maintenance. This made it incredibly slow to load and prone to go down at any time. The new site is hosted by Blackboard, a national leader in educational digital services, and is very stable and easy to use. We hope to launch a custom site at the beginning of the school year. The Center for Safe and Secure Schools presented an Award of Appreciation to the Aldine ISD board of education this week, further solidifying HCDE's continued collaboration with the district. We started these presentations a few years ago and they have proven an excellent way to not only show our partner districts how much we appreciate them, but a method that gives the board and administration context to the services HCDE provides. We plan to continue with these types of presentations this year and next.

Lastly, I am proud to announce that I have been named as an advisory board member for the Cameron Champ Foundation. If you do not know, Cameron Champ is a young African American professional golfer who I have followed for a few years. A while back I was able to meet up with his father when the PGA was in Houston and last week he asked me to join Cameron's foundation. I am proud to represent education on the foundation, which is committed to unlocking the potential of children in underserved and underrepresented communities. This is a perfect partner for HCDE as many of our services have the same goal. I am excited for the opportunity to work with this foundation to support local students.

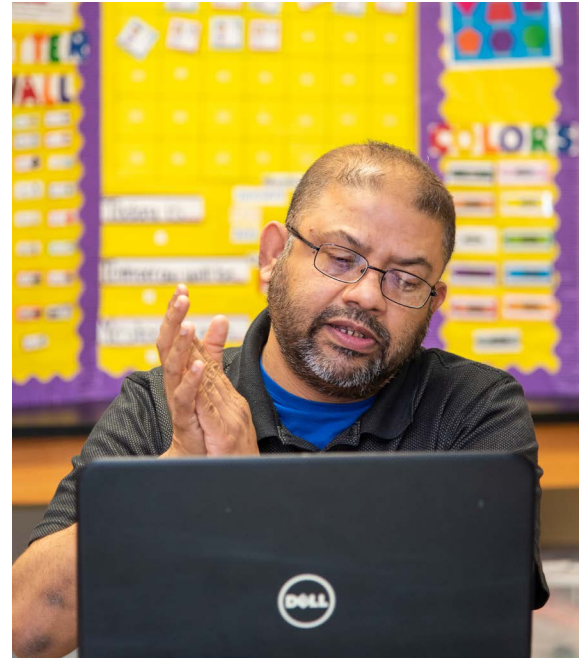
I started the week with ELT followed by standing meetings throughout the next few days. On Thursday, I filmed a quick video for staff, marking the one-year anniversary of the COVID shutdown. I am proud of how HCDE performed during the quarantine and the strength of our programs in the wake of the pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis forced change in how we do things in HCDE and that flexibility has served us well as we continue to evolve and change to meet the needs of our clients in and around the greater Houston region.

We are off for Spring Break next week. I plan to get in as many rounds of golf as possible and I hope you get to enjoy the outdoors as well. The Connector will resume on March 26. Have a great weekend.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

The Learning Never Stops



Sheffield Head Start Center teachers have found a temporary home at the HCDE Science Center where they continue to work with their students. Winter Storm Uri caused severe damage to the Sheffield Center, displacing the staff until May.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools Hosts First-ever Equity Symposium to Address Implicit Bias in School Discipline

Equity for area public school students was the focus of HCDE's first-ever "Pulling Together – Equity Symposium" last week coordinated by the Center for Safe and Secure Schools (CSSS) as a continuation of efforts in Houston and Harris County to address implicit bias in school discipline.

Six local and national experts on equity and unconscious biases held sessions during the symposium. They led over 160 virtual attendees in discussions about how to maintain high expectations for students of color; develop, implement, and deal with the pitfalls of implementing equity policies; bolster awareness of implicit biases; rethink school culture and decriminalize school discipline, and move forward with restorative practices.

"We know that implicit biases contribute to the inequitable outcomes that exist in our school districts," said Cierra Nickerson, Climate and Culture Specialist for the CSSS, who led the event. "We have to do the work [inside ourselves] before we do the work [with our students]. The more we are aware of our own biases, the better we're able to look at school policies and see what needs to change in order to serve students better. Equity is a blanket that covers the entire school community, and we have to eat the elephant one bite at a time."

These experts were key players in Houston's Citywide Implicit Bias Effort for School Discipline Reform, a series of workgroup sessions to develop actionable policy and practice recommendations for school discipline reform. Nine recommendations were presented to area school districts on what they should do to continue working towards equitable school environments, which are often influenced by external factors.

"Our teachers and students were impacted by last summer's Black Lives Matter protests when we had all of these different racially-driven society issues that were taking place in our country," said Nickerson. "When things happen in society, it directly impacts what happens inside of our school buildings. We have to address it in our schools as well to make sure we are supporting our community and their social and emotional needs."

HARRIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PULLING TOGETHER - EQUITY SYMPOSIUM
Friday, March 5, 2021 9 A.M. - 4 P.M. CST
WELCOME AND OPENING AT 9 A.M.

DR. LATONYA GOFFNEY
Superintendent, Aldine ISD
9:30 a.m.

JANINE HOKE
Director, Professional Growth and Improvement, Alief ISD
10:30 a.m.

DR. BRYANT MARKS
Founder, National Training Institute on Race & Equity
12 p.m.

DR. DEVON HORTON
Superintendent, Evanston/Skokie School District, IL
1 p.m.

CAMI ANDERSON
Founder and Managing Partner, ThirdWay Solutions
2 p.m.

PAUL FORBES
Antibias & Diversity Consultant
3 p.m.

We're social! Follow us on Twitter @CSSS_hcde @ HCDEtx
#EQUITY #HCDEIMPACT #PULLINGTOGETHER

Among the speakers were Dr. Bryant Marks, the Founder and Chief Equity Officer of the National Training Institute on Race and Equity, a key player in the Obama Administration's development of My Brother's Keeper (MBK) and 21st Century Policing programs; Paul Forbes, the Executive Director of Educational Equity in the Anti-Bias and Diversity in the Office of Equity & Access for the New York City Department of Education; and Dr. LaTonya Goffney, Aldine ISD Superintendent.

As with other HCDE events, which have transitioned to a virtual setting, the symposium offered educators from across the county the opportunity to participate. School leaders and educators from as close as Houston ISD and Katy ISD and as far away as Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New York attended.

The CSSS will continue addressing implicit bias in school settings this summer when it hosts a three-day equity boot camp on school discipline.

IN THE NEWS

hcde-texas.org Moves to a New Home

As part of our continuing efforts to better serve the greater HCDE community, this week we moved www.hcde-texas.org to a new more robust content management system, Blackboard, that will provide an improved user experience and allow divisions greater flexibility to share their work with the public.



Websites are ongoing, ever changing projects. This move is a soft launch. All of the content from the previous platform has been migrated and the site has a different look and feel. Over the coming weeks, we will be updating design and content to ensure the best user experience possible. The site should also load much faster than our previous platform.

Aldine ISD Recognized for Partnership with The Center for Safe and Secure Schools



Julia Andrews from the Center for Safe and Secure Schools presents the Aldine ISD Board of Trustees with a recognition for their continued partnership in providing safe and secure learning environments for students. During the 2019-2020 school year, HCDE served 436 students and 1,679 Aldine ISD educators through services like CASE for Kids, school-based therapy services, and educator certification and professional advancement.

Message from the Superintendent



ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

Superintendent Objective B: Organizational Morale

- Celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges excellence.

Superintendent Objective D: Community Relations

- Works with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.

HCDE continued to expand its national reach when, last Friday, the Center for Safe and Secure Schools hosted their first-ever equity symposium to address implicit bias in school discipline. Six experts in the field led over 160 virtual participants in discussions about policies, awareness, and cultural changes. School leaders from across the area and as far away as Illinois, Pennsylvania and New York were part of the discussion.



The learning never stops at HCDE. After losing their classrooms to Winter Storm Uri, the staff of the Sheffield Head Start Center have relocated to the Science Center and are delivering personalized instruction to their students remotely. Keeping a connection with their students is critical to their continued development.



As part of our continuing efforts to better serve the greater HCDE community, this week we moved www.hcde-texas.org to a new more robust content management system, Blackboard, that will provide an improved user experience and allow divisions greater flexibility to share their work with the public. The site will continue to evolve as we develop more innovative and interactive elements.



Finally, this week marks one year since the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world. I shared my gratitude for all perseverance of all HCDE employees and the high level of work they continue to produce un such challenging circumstances.

HCDE BOARD
Board President
Eric Dick

Vice President
Danny Norris

Board Members
David W. Brown
Richard Cantu
Erica Davis
Andrea Duhon
Amy Hinojosa

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 15-19
Spring Break