

THE CONNECTOR

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

WEEK OF April 19, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 28

HELPING THE WHOLE FAMILY

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Inject purple cows into your lesson plans.



"A purple cow is something remarkable. Something that's worth talking about. Worth noting. Exceptional. New. Interesting."
-Seth Godin

he wonders what would have happened if the cow that my son had seen the second

Of Note...



One of the hallmarks of our Head Start program is that we not only serve children, we support the entire family. Our Healthy Minds, Healthy Families conference is a cornerstone to this effort, providing parents and staff with resources and knowledge to ensure effective support for children both at home and in the classroom. This weeklong conference, held this past week, is designed to gear families up for being their child's first teacher while helping staff refine their craft and take it to the next level. This support for the whole child and his/her family is a service that sets our Head Start program apart from traditional PreK programming. I am proud of the innovative ideas that HCDE divisions initiate that support our students and families in unique ways. These types of individualized programs position HCDE as a leader in the educational community locally and on the state and national stages.

I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team and met with Jonathan Jeter and J. Christopher Anderson, with Triple 7 Ranch. Triple 7 Ranch is a Houston-based non-profit organization seeking to empower young men in the community through outreach in agricultural activities. A county commissioner referred Mr. Jeter and Mr. Anderson to me and I spent a couple hours talking about how HCDE supports students in unique ways.

On Tuesday, I fulfilled my duties to UIL via a virtual board meeting and participated in our staff wellness program through a biometric screening with Houston Methodist. On Wednesday, I attended the Education Foundation meeting on TEAMS as well as the PFC and government relations committees, prior to the regular board meeting. I appreciated the feedback and dialogue during the board meeting regarding providing clarity for board members on various topics of interest on the agenda. It is very valuable to myself and staff to understand your perspective so we can continue to provide you with the information you need to make informed decisions.

On Thursday, I met with staff on various internal projects including the 2021 annual staff meeting in August. This event, commonly referred to as Convocation, serves as the official kickoff to the school year for all staff. We typically hold it at a church in southwest Houston, but last year we held a virtual convocation due to the pandemic. This year we return to an in-person event, anticipating our entire staff to attend, emphasizing our safety protocols to keep staff safe. I will keep you posted on information regarding Convocation including date, time and location.

Friday saw me back at NPO meeting with staff on various initiatives including our capital improvement plan. Tonight, I am attending an Astros game with several other superintendents to welcome the new Crosby ISD superintendent, Paula Patterson. The rainy weather is supposed to leave the area today and give way to a beautiful spring weekend. I hope you get a chance to enjoy it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Collier". The signature is stylized and cursive.

PROGRAM

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Harris County, CASE for Kids partner to provide youth summer programs with area nonprofits

Families throughout Harris County will benefit from youth summer enrichment programs funded through a \$625,000 grant from Harris County and supported through a partnership with the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids), a division of Harris County Department of Education.

The grants provide opportunities for area nonprofits to supply comprehensive or short-term programs and camps, which may be hosted in-person or virtually from various locations, including schools, community centers, apartment complexes and churches.

Modeled after a similar program currently operating in the city, the County Connections Youth Summer Initiative infuses funding ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 to nonprofits for programming from June 14 to Aug. 15. Samples of services range from academic programming and sports activities to hobby exploration and college readiness initiatives. Funding will assist approximately 1,700-2,000 families of children in elementary through high school.

“Economic hardships brought on by the pandemic have left many families scrambling for summer programs for their children,” CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers said. “These programs assist economically disadvantaged families with low-cost or free programs while also allowing for high-quality, expanded learning opportunities to help support social-emotional health. We look forward to working with all the precincts in Harris County to supply safe, enriching summer programs to all county neighborhoods.”

All four county precincts will receive grant funding, and services should be customized to meet community needs in individual Harris County precincts. Nonprofits may apply for multiple grant awards, and nonprofit organizations do not need to be headquartered within the precinct they serve. Services should include resources or reduced costs for summer initiatives for families during pandemic conditions.

The application deadline is May 10 at 2 p.m. To access the request for proposal, go to www.afterschoolzone.org. Grants will be announced Wednesday, May 26, through the same website.

CASE for Kids is an afterschool intermediary founded through HCDE in 1999 which provides programs, services and resources for out-of-school time, including before and after school, weekend and summer enrichment.

Families may find organizations offering programs within their communities through their Harris County precinct after May 26. For precinct offices, go to <http://harriscountytexas.gov>. ■

COUNTY CONNECTIONS YOUTH SUMMER INITIATIVE 2021



PROGRAM

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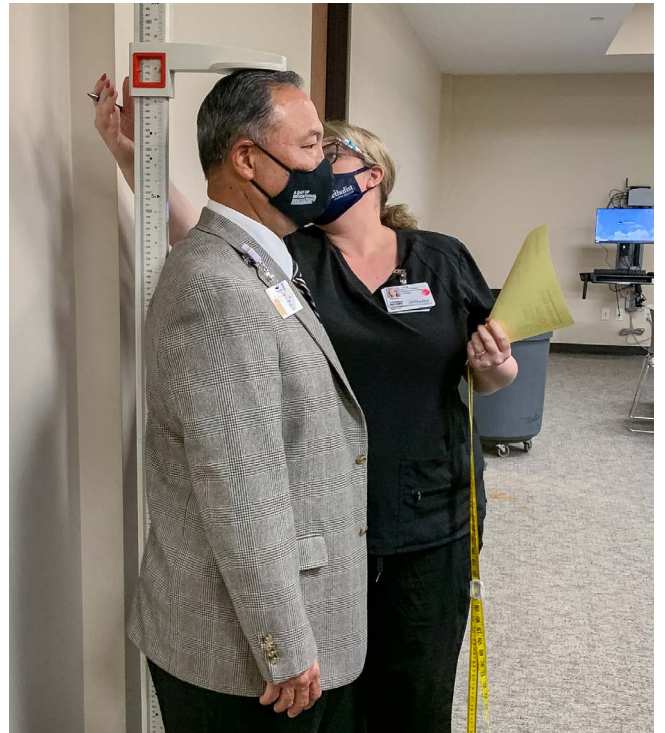


Human Resources hosts first series of free wellness screenings for HCDE personnel

Harris County Department of Education's Human Resources Division held its first series of free wellness screenings for employees this week as part of its new wellness program.

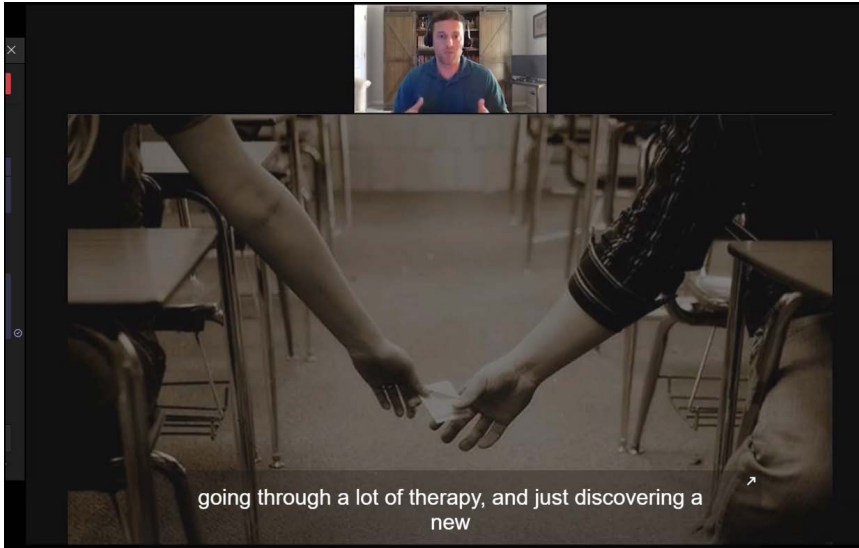
Nearly 100 employees from both the Irvington and North Post Oak locations took advantage of this event and received lipid, glucose, and blood pressure testing. Upon receiving their results, employees received wellness coaching based on their outcomes from Methodist Wellness Services staff.

The Department's wellness program continues May 11 with a "Cultivating Optimism" webinar. Personnel will learn about the mind-body benefits of having a positive attitude and how to cultivate more optimism. ■



PROGRAM

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The 4 Domains of Happiness

Career	Social
Financial	Physical & Emotional

I'm going to have to look at happiness as something plural and not something singular.

6th Annual Healthy Minds, Healthy Families held virtually this year

Over 200 parents and educators attended the 6th annual Healthy Minds, Healthy Families conference this week, which was held virtually.

"We offer trainings on subjects that our staff can use in the classroom, but also that families can use at home in their everyday life," said event organizer and HCDE Head Start Coordinator Chloe Nolasco. "Some of the trainings we offered this year are about mindfulness, releasing stress, releasing overwhelming feelings, mental health awareness, and stress management."

The conference was sponsored by the HOGG Foundation for Mental Health and Harris County Department of Education Head Start.

"We want to give our students and our families a head start," said event organizer and HCDE Head Start Coordinator Chloe Nolasco. "One of the main goals for Head Start is school readiness. Having them learn simple things like being in a classroom setting every day or even learning to self-control and manage their emotions will help them a lot more when they go to school. They will spend fewer days with separation anxiety, which is also a mental health topic addressed at the conference. We want to make sure that when kids get to school, they're not on a separate learning curve."

Sabrina Ransom, an HCDE Head Start education and special services clerk and former teacher who has attended the conference before, says she wanted to participate this year to learn new social and emotional techniques.

"We discover new skills to help kids learn stress relievers, relaxation and calming-down techniques," said Ransom. "Parents also get the opportunity to learn how to implement these techniques."

Last year, the conference was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"It was a quick turnaround to put this event together after having to postpone it, but we wanted to make sure we hosted this conference before the next school year so teachers have enough time to implement new strategies," said Nolasco.

Because of the unique circumstances created by the Covid-19 pandemic, HCDE's Head Start Division will offer another Healthy Minds, Healthy Families Conference in June, which will only be open to educators. ■

PROGRAM

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Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Watch the
**Regional Scholastic
Art & Writing Awards
Virtual Ceremony**

**Thursday, April 22
6:30 p.m.**



[YouTube.com/HCDETV](https://www.youtube.com/HCDETV)

HCDE hosts first virtual Regional Scholastic Art and Writing Awards ceremony

“Brilliant, talented, creative, gifted, skilled.” These are adjectives used by Harris County Department of Education’s Teaching and Learning Center Director Andrea Segraves to describe this year’s Regional Scholastic Art and Writing Awards honorees.

Over 2,500 Harris County students were recognized during HCDE’s Regional Scholastic Art and Writing Awards virtual ceremony Thursday evening. Thirty-two special awards were presented to students valued at a total of \$12,000 in prizes and scholarships, and Gold and Silver Key award recipients saw their names displayed on the screen as their families and friends looked on.

In March, 85 Harris County students were selected for National Medals after receiving regional Gold Key Awards.

A recording of HCDE’s 2021 Regional Scholastic Art and Writing Awards virtual ceremony can be viewed at [YouTube.com/HCDETV](https://www.youtube.com/HCDETV).

To view the Regional Gold and Silver Key Scholastic Art and Writing Award virtual exhibits, visit [hcde-texas.org/scholastic-awards](https://www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic-awards). ■

SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT... WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

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.



going through a lot of therapy, and just discovering a new

This week, more than 200 parents and educators of our youngest learners joined virtually for the 6th annual Healthy Minds, Healthy Families conference conducted by our Head Start division. Trainings offered during the conference addressed a variety of topics, including mental health awareness and stress management. There is an acute need for clear strategies to help our students and their families cope with the challenges of isolation and uncertainty due the pandemic. This conference, produced in partnership with the HOGG Foundation, helps us better support our families.

The Teaching and Learning Center held its annual Autism event, a two-day program focused on techniques to help students living with autism gain confidence and independence. The conference was kicked off by Nicholas Guillerman, who's mother was told he would never be able to take care of

himself. He is now a highly successful engineering teacher and robotics coach in Katy ISD. Our own JoAnna Lee also shared about the successes she has had with her students at ABS West.

Finally, I am excited for our partnership with Harris County to provide meaningful afterschool programs this summer through the County Connections initiative with CASE for Kids. The program will assist nearly 2000 families and students of all ages with academic programming, college readiness and other engaging activities. Filling the gaps to support students and their families is central to the mission of HCDE.

By continuing to partner with and highlight the work of organizations and individuals in the region, I am meeting the expectation to meet the needs of the students and the community we serve across Harris County and Texas.

HCDE BOARD

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Eric Dick

Vice President

Danny Norris

Board Members

David W. Brown

Richard Cantu

Erica Davis

Andrea Duhon

Amy Hinojosa

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 14

Young Women's Leadership Conference
May 14
9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

May 18

Board Meeting
1 p.m.