

THE CONNECTOR

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

WEEK OF May 24, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 33

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

TOP STORIES

**Board Members
Visit HCDE Schools
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**Harris County, CASE for Kids
Award Funding for Summer
Youth Programs
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CASE for Kids
Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment

**Awareness Campaign Update
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Of Note...



I believe our classrooms are the heart of our organization. While all of our divisions are important and play a critical role in HCDE's ultimate success, it is at our schools and Head Start centers where the magic of education happens.

This is why I was happy to return to hosting Board Walks this week. Visiting a campus and seeing what is happening first-hand is an incredibly powerful way for a board member to get a feel for the organization, our mission and how we impact lives every day. There is simply no substitute for going into a school, walking around, talking to staff and seeing the interactions between student and teacher. Tuesday was a busy day as President Norris, Mr. Dick and Mr. Brown joined me in visiting our new AB West campus, Highpoint School and AB East. I look forward to doing more Board Walks in the fall and hope more board members can come enjoy this special peek into the heart of HCDE.



I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team and participated in internal meetings on Wednesday. On Thursday, I interviewed the finalists for the TLC Senior Director position. Today, I attended the Schools Division Annual Chess Competition. This is one of my favorite activities each year, as I am always amazed at the profound impact chess can have on a student from critical thinking to enhancement of social skills. This year we saw just how impressionable the sport can be as we honored Michael Carley, a former AB West student. Michael, who was first introduced to chess when he was a student at AB West before returning to his home district in Huffman, is a US Chess Federation coach, considered one of the best in Texas. And he is only 16! I sat down to play Michael at the tournament, as a rematch from our game a few years ago. Even though Michael beat me, despite my attempts to distract him with some razzle dazzle during the game, this was a proud moment for me, as I got to experience first-hand how HCDE changes lives.

Next week is the last week of school before summer break. Our school-based therapists ended their contract year today and our teachers and Head Start instructional staff are off for the summer after next Friday. Starting Monday, June 7, we run our summer flex hours, where staff have the option of working 10-hour days Monday through Thursday. The shortened week is a staff favorite and helps conserve energy costs, as all buildings are closed on Fridays except our NPO offices, which remain open for those employees who choose to continue their standard five-day workweek.

All HCDE offices and buildings will be closed Monday in honor of the Memorial Day Holiday. Have a great three-day weekend.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Collier".

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS



This week I had the pleasure of taking several board members on a tour of our school campuses. President Norris and Trustees Brown and Dick got to see first-hand some of the challenges and triumphs of our campuses.

We started the trip at the Highpoint high school, a bright and modern environment for teachers and students to work and learn. We then walked through the middle school building, a stark contrast with narrow halls, no windows and dim lighting. Thankfully we will be replacing that building as part of the new facilities construction project.

Next on the route was ABS East, where Principal Treviño-Jones showed us around their cafeteria, gymnasium and classrooms. We spent a good portion of the visit behind the building, looking over the field that will become home to the new campus and discussing the importance of our schools' services to area districts.

Finally, we drove across town to ABS West. Our newest campus opened last year but due to the pandemic, trustees had not been able to walk the halls and see up-close the features that make this building special. The sensory room was a hit with everyone and President Norris really enjoyed his zip line experience in the all-inclusive playground. ■



PROGRAM

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COUNTY CONNECTIONS YOUTH SUMMER INITIATIVE 2021



Harris County, CASE for Kids announce first-ever awardees of County Connections Youth Summer Initiative grant

This week, the first-ever County Connections Youth Summer Initiative grants were awarded to Harris County nonprofits hosting youth summer enrichment programs.

A total of 117 grant applications were received, and more than \$600,000 were awarded to over 40 organizations that will provide engaging summer activities to sites across the county.

The grant, a partnership between Harris County and the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids), a division of Harris County Department of Education, infuses funding ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 to nonprofits for programming they will offer from June 14 to Aug. 15.

Grant awardees will offer diverse activities for youth, including fine arts, academic enrichment, college exploration, and youth mentoring. They will also provide synchronous or asynchronous college and career readiness initiatives for older youth delivered virtually through the CASE for Kids LevelUp online learning platform.

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

Nonprofits from all four county precincts received grant funding. Nonprofits were allowed to apply for multiple grant awards based on the location where services will be provided. Grant funds will be used to purchase materials and supplies for activities, add programming opportunities, and reduce fees or offer scholarships to families.

To view the complete list of awardees, visit [hcde-texas.org/afterschoolzone/funding](https://www.hcde-texas.org/afterschoolzone/funding).

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

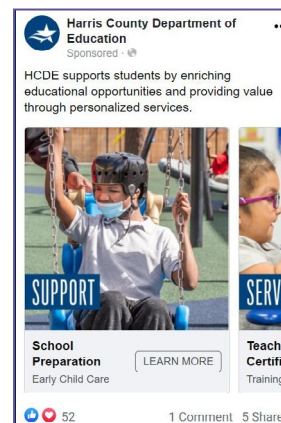
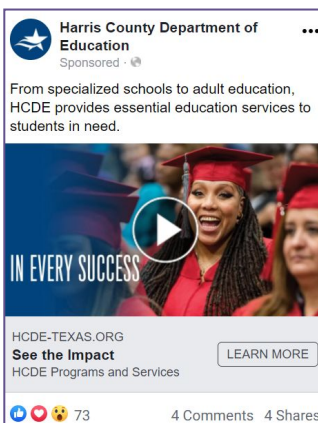
Awareness Campaign: April metrics

HCDE's awareness campaign, *See the Impact*, continues to make a successful impression upon our community. In April, the campaign garnered more than 17.3 million impressions across all channels, a 90.1% increase from the previous month.

This month marks the final run for the physical billboards and ABC 13 (KTRK) spots. The April billboards, located at I-15 North at W. Little York Road and FM 1960 at I-69 North in Humble, garnered over 4 million impressions. We also had the opportunity take advantage of a billboard sale last month, adding a board at I-10 and I-45 South, which will remain in place through the end of this month. From December 2020 to April 2021, the 5-second KTRK TV spots achieved a total of 13.2 million impressions.

Social media ads on Facebook garnered 437,000 impressions, a 27% increase year over year, and over 24,000 total video views. Google ads yielded over 701,000 impressions. Social media and Google ads will continue running through the end of June.

For the month of May, awareness campaign radio spots on Sunny 99.1 FM (KODA) and The Beat 93.7 FM (KQBT) have been paused in lieu of a teacher recruitment campaign for the Academic and Behavioral schools on social media. ■



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Kendra Jackson named new Purchasing Director for HCDE

Kendra Jackson is the new director of purchasing for Harris County Department of Education. She replaces Bill Monroe, who retired in January after five years of service.

“My vision for the Purchasing Department is to have a climate that will provide exceptional customer service to our Divisions by having efficient processes, creating value through strategic thinking, and delivering service that is keenly focused on the best interests of our partners and HCDE,” said Jackson.

Jackson has been with HCDE since October 2009 and has held various roles within the Purchasing Division, including assistant director.

With her support, HCDE received the Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) Award of Merit for Purchasing Operations 11 out of the past 12 years and the Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award from the National Procurement Institute the last four years.

The native Houstonian holds a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies degree from the University of Houston-Downtown. ■

SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

Superintendent Objective H: Board Relations

- Maintains a positive and professional working relationship with the board.



On Tuesday, President Norris and Trustees Brown and Dick joined me on a tour of several of our school facilities to meet students and staff and understand some of the challenges they face. I enjoyed being able to discuss why our schools are so important to Harris County while being on site to see the amazing work being done in the classroom. Because of the pandemic, this tour was the first time that trustees were able to visit the new ABS West campus since it opened last year.

The first-ever grant recipients of the County Connections Youth Summer Initiative, a partnership between Harris County and CASE for Kids, were announced this week. Nonprofits from across Harris County have taken advantage of the opportunity to fund youth summer enrichment programs that will run from June 14 to Aug 15. We are excited to partner with the county on this initiative, similar to our work with the City of Houston, and help youth engage in promising and productive summer activities.

HCDE continues to be noticed by the residents of Harris County, with our awareness campaign garnering more than 17 million impressions through billboards, TV spots, social media and Google ads. We are currently taking advantage of a billboard sale, adding a board strategically located near downtown. This has been a very effective campaign and I look forward to continuing to educate the county about the impact we have on students, educators and our communities.

Finally, as you may remember, during one of our last board meetings, I introduced you to the HCDE's new purchasing director, Kendra Jackson. I am excited to see how our purchasing systems are refined under her leadership. Kendra has been with the Department for 12 years and has been instrumental in garnering HCDE various awards and recognitions, including clean external audits.

By building a rapport with trustees and sharing timely information about what is happening on our campuses and within our divisions, I am meeting the expectation to maintain a positive and professional working relationship with the Board.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Danny Norris

1st Vice President

Richard Cantu

2nd Vice President

Andrea Duhon

Board Members

David W. Brown

Erica Davis

Eric Dick

Amy Hinojosa

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 2

Fortis Academy graduation
12 p.m.

June 2

ABS West graduation
1 p.m.

June 16

Board Meeting
1 p.m.