

THE CONNECTOR

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

WEEK OF May 31, 2021

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FINISHING STRONG

TOP STORIES

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Of Note...



Most people think education grinds to a halt in the summer. And while that may be true for a traditional school, for me, this is my busiest time of the year. Beginning in June, we wrap up one school year and start planning for the next including minding all the details of our staff Convocation in August. June is also the hot hiring month in education, and we plan to take full advantage Houston's talent-rich pool of candidates. I typically participate in several final interviews for open Leadership Team positions in the summer and actively monitor our overall vacancy rate as HCDE seeks the best candidates for all positions.

Next week, more summer activity kicks off with our AB Schools transitioning to extended school year programming for our students with disabilities and support divisions using the time to enhance programs and projects. For example, during the summer, our facilities crews deep clean our Head Start centers and school campuses while also conducting routine inspections and maintenance on equipment and buildings. The Information Technology division uses the summer months to take stock of equipment and computer inventories and upgrade network infrastructure and software applications. And HR can be frantic during the summer, as staff handle not only two separate benefits open enrollment periods for 1100+ employees but process close to 100 new hires and prepare for returning staff orientation and Convocation. And the business office works on the budget all summer long, collaborating with HR on new pay rates and salary schedules while closing out the current fiscal year. It is never dull around HCDE in the summer!

I started the week on Tuesday with my ELT and monthly Leadership Team meeting and met with candidates for our two vacant principal positions. On Wednesday I met with representatives of a local non-profit organization called Girls Buy Houses Too to discuss potential partnerships before



holding several internal meetings. I also participated in agenda review in anticipation of the June 16 board meeting and then met with a couple mentees. Yesterday, I participated in the Sheldon ISD Education Foundation annual golf tournament, which our education foundation helped sponsor. Today, I met with several of you to interview candidates for the board secretary position. I am hopeful we will have a great person to support your work soon.

On Monday, we transition to our summer flex schedule with most employees working four 10-hour days. Starting Monday, our two administrative buildings will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The Irvington building will be closed on Fridays, but the NPO offices will remain open for any staff member who does not participate in the four-day work week.

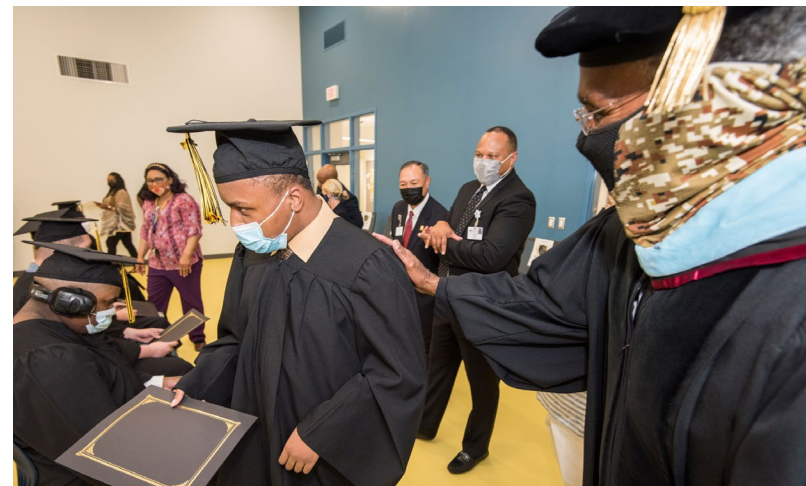
Have a great weekend.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS



HCDE SCHOOLS CELEBRATE 2021 GRADUATES



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Highpoint High School wins Chess Title in Annual Tournament

Students from Academic and Behavior School West and Highpoint High School met Friday, May 28, for the 4th annual Chess Tournament. Due to COVID-19, the tournament was not held last year.

This year's trophy went to Highpoint, a first-time champion. The tournament featured six rounds of double-elimination chess and culminated with an awards ceremony.

Principal Victor Keys introduced chess to his students several years ago after seeing the positive effects of the hobby. Chess offers benefits that can be applied to any situation in life; chess is a game that expands the mind and can also improve overall behavior and self-esteem.

Instruction in the chess program is provided by PerfectTeamply, founded by James Hudson.

"I am very proud of [all of] you. I'm so proud, it almost brings tears to my eyes," said Hudson. "Some people say you can't, but I'm seeing that you can. You can do and be anything you want to be."

Hudson incorporates math skills into his chess instruction at both schools. Many students participate in chess tournaments outside the school day. Hudson says students also benefit from learning discipline, time management, critical thinking skills, and respect. ■

PROGRAM

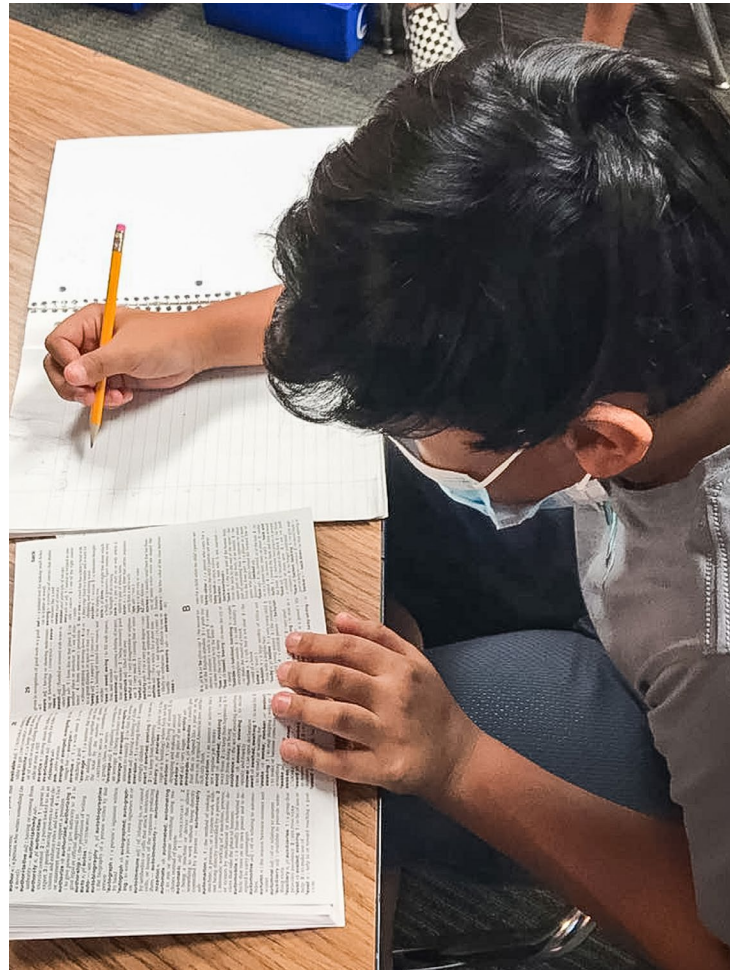
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La Porte Education Foundation receives Partners in Education Grant to purchase dictionaries for students

Approximately 1,600 La Porte Independent School District third, fourth and fifth graders will each receive a dictionary for the 2021-2022 school year thanks to an Education Foundation of Harris County Partners in Education Grant awarded to the La Porte Education Foundation.

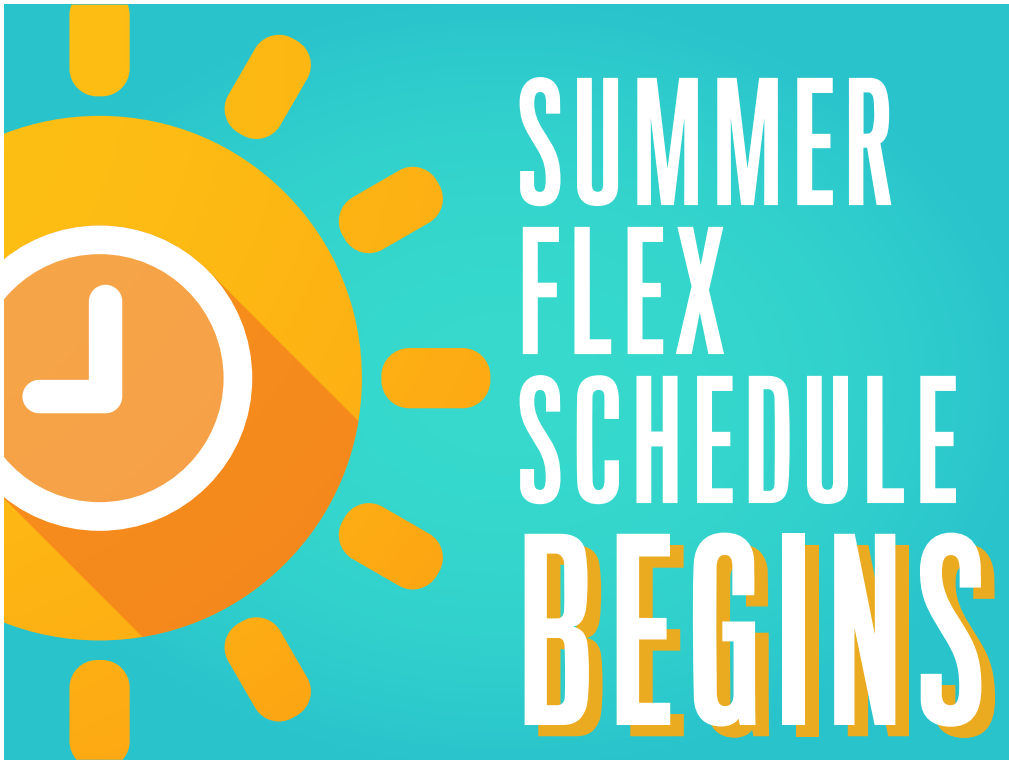
The grant of \$4,950 facilitated the purchase of 1,800 dictionaries, including 168 Webster's Spanish-English dictionaries, that will help students complete assignments at home. During distance learning, La Porte ISD educators discovered that students did not have the resources at home to complete assignments without using a mobile device, technology that many students are not able to access.

The books were provided by The Dictionary Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing dictionaries to students in the United States. ■



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Beginning **June 7**, HCDE will move to the Summer Flex work schedule.

During this time, the standard workweek will change to Monday-Thursday for 10-hours each day. The Irvington Building will be closed on Fridays. North Post Oak will be open normal business hours.

The Flex Schedule will be suspended for the week of July 5-9. Monday, July 5 is a holiday and staff will work normal schedules for the remainder of the week.

The Summer Flex Schedule will end **August 6**. ■

JOIN US FOR THE 2021 HARRIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CONVOCATION

AUGUST 20, 2021
9 A.M.

BERRY CENTER
8877 BARKER CYPRESS RD.
CYPRESS, TX 77433



SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

Superintendent Objective E: Instructional Management

- Establishes a system for regular evaluation of instructional programs to meet student instructional needs and to attain desired student achievement.



This week, ABS West and Fortis Academy celebrated graduation ceremonies for seniors. These graduation ceremonies show that our students are succeeding and are prepared to enter work programs or secure employment after attending HCDE schools. We are incredibly proud of this year's graduates for their determination in pushing forward despite the additional obstacles they faced during the past year.

The 4th annual Chess Tournament hosted by ABS West was held last Friday. For the first time, a student from Highpoint took home the trophy. More than twenty students demonstrated their strategic skills and sportsmanship during the event. We were excited to host this competition again this year since we could not do so in 2020 because of Covid-19.

Finally, La Porte ISD received 1,600 dictionaries through a Partners in Education grant awarded to the La Porte Education Foundation. Each third-, fourth- and fifth-grader in the district will receive a dictionary, including English-Spanish dictionaries for families whose first language is Spanish, allowing them to complete assignments from home when technology is not available. We are proud to continue our partnership with La Porte ISD through the Education Foundation of Harris County to support students' success, whether they learn virtually or in person.

By working with students' home school districts to ensure that students' learning goals are met or exceeded, I am meeting the expectation to meet student instructional needs, attain desired student achievement, and maximize student potential within HCDE schools.

HCDE BOARD

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2nd Vice President

Andrea Duhon

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David W. Brown

Erica Davis

Eric Dick

Amy Hinojosa

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 14 - July 15

Ecobot Challenge
Robotic Competition
with HCDE's AB West
School

June 15

Budget Workshop
9 a.m.

June 16

PFC Meeting
12 p.m.

June 16

Board Meeting
1 p.m.