

THE CONNECTOR

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

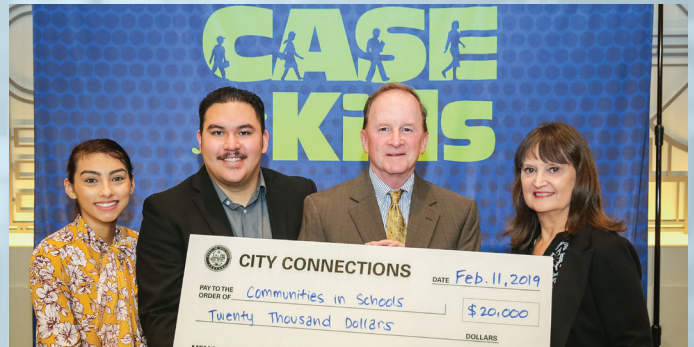
WEEK OF June 14, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 36

MOVING FORWARD

TOP STORIES

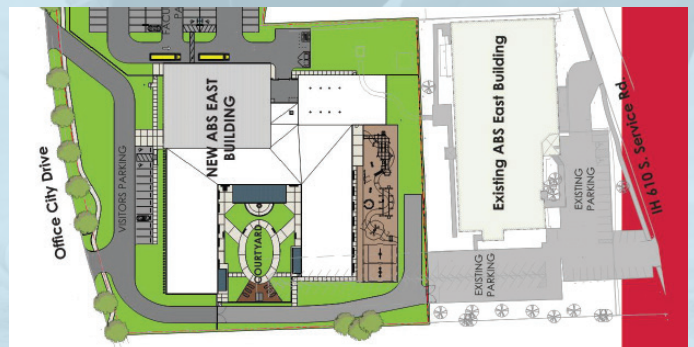
**CASE for Kids
Coordinator Gives Back**
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Taking Shape**
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**ABS East Construction
Moves Forward**
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Of Note...



At HCDE, we pride ourselves on providing outstanding value to our client districts and the students we serve. We do this through affordable services with what we call “a notable value-add.”

This week, AB West took its value-add to the next level, launching robotics activities through CASE's Ecobot program. Students who participate in Ecobot at AB West this summer will engage with robots from conception to construction to execution at a culminating tournament in July. This type of program affords students the opportunity to participate in an activity that, like other activities at our schools including chess and equine therapy, requires focus, a calm demeanor and commitment. These are skills our students will use every day in their future lives and I am proud that HCDE can be the catalyst for this accomplishment. I am proud of the innovative way our AB schools support our students with special needs and look forward to observing the Ecobot tournament next month.

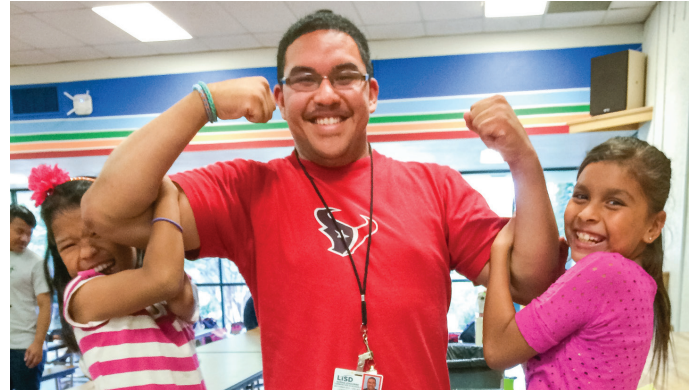
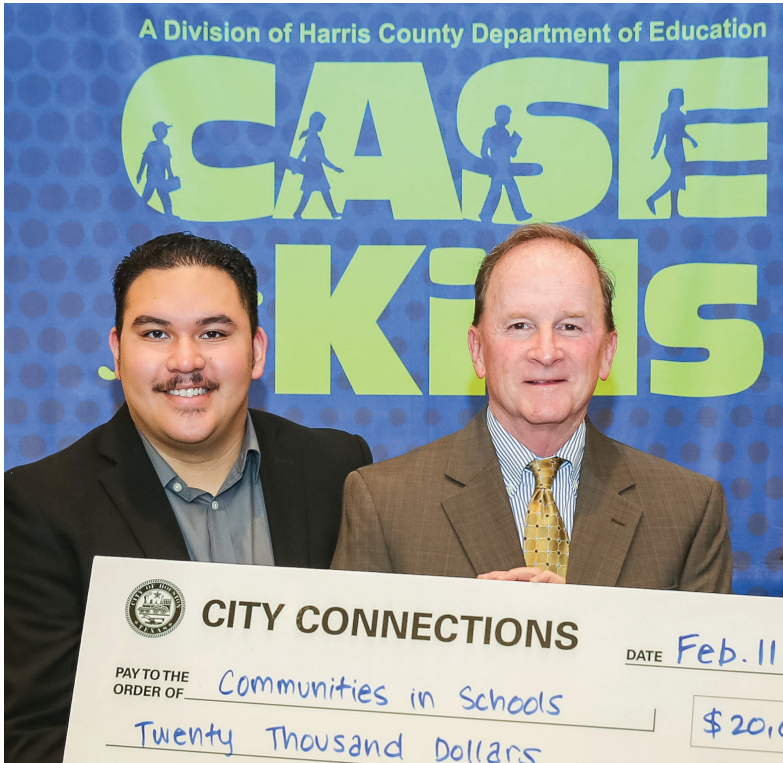
I started the week with ELT and internal meetings. On Tuesday, I met with several staff members before joining local African American superintendents in a retirement dinner for Fort Bend ISD Superintendent Dr. Charles Dupre. Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner joined the group and it was great to have lively discussions about education and leadership before wishing Dr. Dupre well with the next chapter in his life. On Wednesday, I attended the PFC meeting and the governmental relations committee meeting before our regular board meeting. Thank you for the robust conversations in these meetings and for your input and feedback on the business of HCDE.

Today I led professional development for our campus principals discussing the essential elements of being a successful leader in education. I appreciate the opportunity to share the lessons I have learned throughout my career and provide words of wisdom to our campus leaders. My goal is to provide our principals with a solid framework with which to support their staff and take their schools to the next level. I also listened to Ms. Truitt give a lunchtime talk for more than 60 staff members about staying organized and how to get things done efficiently. This discussion related to a LinkedIn Learning video on time management, which is part of our on-demand professional development training for staff.

The heat is definitely on in Houston this week, so be sure to stay cool. Have a relaxing weekend.

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

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



CASE for Kids Coordinator Izaguirre takes, then gives back through afterschool

Afterschool activities became the change agent for a timid, young boy named Adrian Izaguirre, who grew up in a low socioeconomic neighborhood in southeast Houston.

The 27-year-old is a program coordinator for City Connections at the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids). Izaguirre helps facilitate grants in 11 Houston City Council districts to nonprofits that provide afterschool programs for at-risk, urban youth.

A jovial Izaguirre wears a natural smile as he works with people from all walks of life. He navigates complicated contracts with ease. He uses his people

skills to network with elected officials and a bounty of nonprofit afterschool service providers.

No one today would call Izaguirre reluctant or bashful but rather fluid, lively and resourceful.

“I was a shy kid, but when I reached high school, I grew out of it a bit,” he said. “I was asked to share my afterschool experiences, and it helped me create a voice for myself which I carried on from high school to college to my current career.”

Still, it is afterschool which has been the constant in his life since second grade as he stayed after for tutorials. In middle school, he was diagnosed with adolescent

type 1 diabetes. Through afterschool, he learned healthy eating habits and found sports.

By high school, he was enlisted as a CASE Ambassador through a high school afterschool program, which built leadership skills at Chavez High School in Houston ISD.

When CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers met Izaguirre, he was the featured youth speaker at a national conference, the Afterschool Alliance Breakfast of Champions in Washington, D.C.

“He was a confident young man who was interested in serving as an advocate for afterschool and sharing his

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

experiences while honing his voice and making a difference in the world,” she recalled.

Izaguirre earned a scholarship to the University of North Texas in Denton and majored in radio/TV. He remained attached to afterschool endeavors and was named an innovative afterschool mover and shaker in the “30 Under 30” awards through the National Afterschool Association.

Once he graduated, he was recruited for the CASE for Kids City Connections job.

“He is civic-minded and great for City Connections,” Thompson-Caruthers said. “He makes sure both sides are being supported, from the elected city officials to supporting the nonprofit clients receiving the funds.”

As the challenges of the pandemic ensued, Izaguirre helped afterschool service providers transform their in-person programs into virtual offerings and communicated the opportunities throughout the council districts.

Manager Mary Glover recalls how Izaguirre helped approximately 70 service providers post their links and lessons online so that children and their families could get the resources they needed.

“This provided immediate online learning to the thousands of children registered in the City Connections programs,” she said.

A few months shy of his fifth anniversary with HCDE and CASE

5 ADRIAN FACTS



1 Dating Iris Lopez for five years



2 Proud “dog dad” to six chihuahua-mix breeds.



3 Since 2017, has attended all the post-season Astros games, including the World Series.



4 Serves on the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Alumni Committee



5 Volunteers as promotions coordinator for the Go Tejano Rodeo Committee

for Kids, Izaguirre is taking on a new challenge as he accepts a job at NALEO Education Fund. NALEO provides national leadership on key issues that affect Latino participation in the political process, including immigration and naturalization, voting rights, election reform, the Census, and the appointment of qualified Latinos to top executive and judicial positions. From helping his constituents with issues ranging from voting rights to naturalization to health issues, Izaguirre knows his experience with CASE for Kids and afterschool has served him well.

“I learned how to create great relationships with community and local government, which is not always an easy task,” he said. “You have to knock on doors and make them your friends.”

What he will miss most about his job at CASE for Kids are the kids. From theater performances to rocket launches to homework tutorials, the kids made it worthwhile, he insists.

“I believe a lot in afterschool because it helps kids expand their horizons,” he said. “I lived it. I know it works because it worked for my classmates and me.” ■

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

First-ever Ecobot Challenge hosted by ABS West taking shape

Harris County Department of Education is gearing up for the first-ever Ecobot Challenge Robotic Competition hosted by Academic and Behavioral School West in collaboration with CASE for Kids.

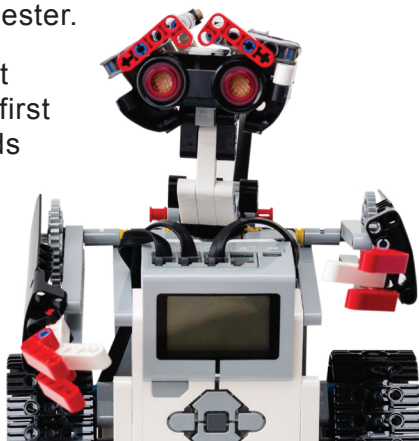
The challenge, which began this week, will offer approximately 47 students with intellectual, developmental and behavioral disorders, autism spectrum disorder, and other significant health impairments enrolled at ABS West the opportunity to build, code, and learn to maneuver Lego Mindstorms EV3 robot kits.

Students from the fourth grade to age 22 will participate in seven teams, which will compete against one another in the culminating Ecobot Challenge Day at ABS West at 12:30 p.m. on July 15.

Over the next month, the students will work on the robots while following a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) curriculum. For each lesson they complete, the teams are awarded points.

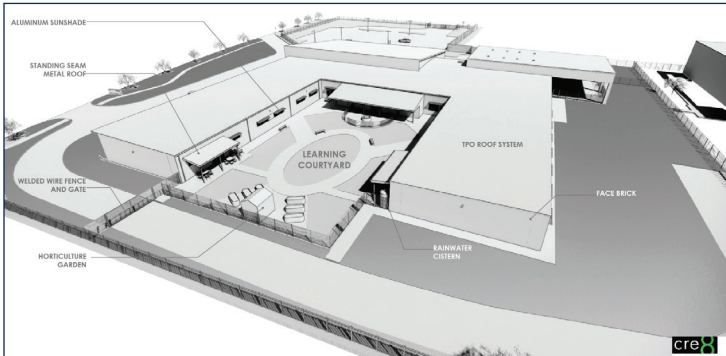
Historically, the Ecobot Challenge is held during the school year for student teams from Harris County school districts. The students, who attend traditional public schools and do not have special needs, work on their robots throughout the school year leading up to a Challenge Day during the spring semester.

This summer's Ecobot Challenge will be the first time that special needs students enrolled at ABS West will have the opportunity to participate in the popular STEM-focused competition. ■



PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS



Construction of new ABS East building moves forward

Construction LTD has been selected as the winning bidder of the competitive sealed proposal for the construction of ABS East, as approved during this week's board meeting.

During construction, students and staff will remain in the existing ABS East building while the new facility is built on the field of the school's property.



The City of Houston is currently reviewing building permits while arrangements are being made for the groundbreaking ceremony.

The school, modeled after ABS West, will feature a unique color palette, 11 life skills classrooms, 12 AB classrooms, and a forest-themed sensory room. In all, the school will be able to accommodate 184 students.



A unique feature of the ABS East campus is the detention pond, as required by city code, which will remediate flooding issues.

"The detention pond will be underneath the parking lot. This is huge," said HCDE's Director of Construction, Joe Carreon. "This is going to be the first project for HCDE with an underground detention pond, which will allow us to use more of the property for parking and playgrounds."

Construction is expected to begin this summer. ■

SUPERINTENDENT'S DINNER TO HONOR DR. CHARLES DUPRE'S RETIREMENT

Great night out with local superintendents and Mayor Turner. We hope to welcome new HISD superintendent Millard House to our TABSE group in early July. ■



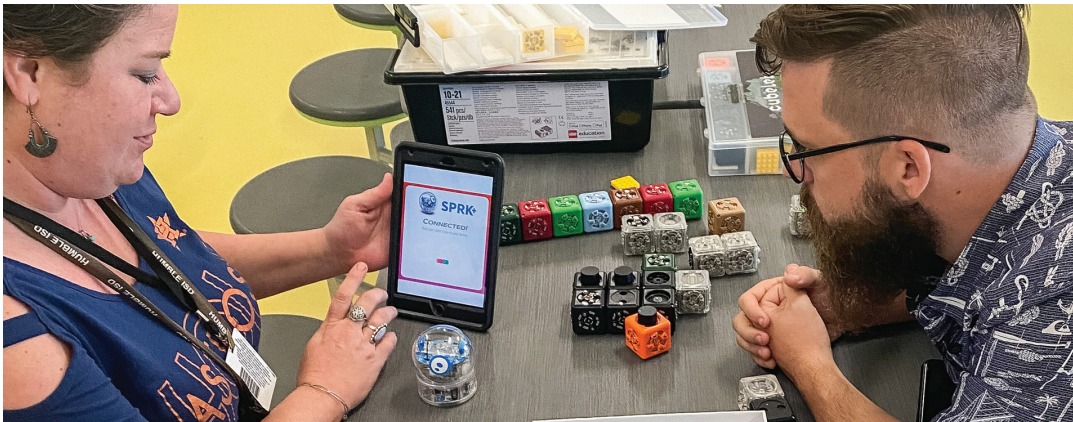
SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week the following Board expectations were met:

Superintendent Objective E: Instructional Management

- Ensures that goals and objectives form the basis of curricular decision making and instruction and communicates expectations for student achievement.



Last week, teachers from ABS West underwent training in preparation for the first-ever Ecobot Challenge Robotic Competition hosted by Academic and Behavioral School West in collaboration with CASE for Kids. This summer's Ecobot Challenge will be the first time that special needs students enrolled at ABS West will have the opportunity to participate in the popular STEM-focused competition. We are delighted that our students have been afforded this opportunity and are eager to see their creativity shine through during this hands-on challenge.

With the approval of the contract with Construction LTD during this week's board meeting, ABS East is now ready for the next phase in the construction of their new building. Our Facilities division is addressing the City of Houston's final comments on the plan while arrangements are being made for the groundbreaking ceremony. I firmly believe that the new ABS East facility, like the ABS West campus, will offer our students an environment to receive the very best care and academic support.

Finally, we are preparing to say farewell to a special young man on our team. Adrian Izaguirre, a program coordinator for City Connections with CASE for Kids, started his journey with HCDE as a student enrolled in a CASE for Kids afterschool program. His passion for serving as an advocate for afterschool enrichment led him to pursue a career in civic service, eventually finding his way back to HCDE as an employee. He now prepares for his next step with a role at NALEO Education Fund. Izaguirre is a shining example of the importance of CASE for Kids and how afterschool programs can change a student's life.

By utilizing effective practices that maximize the achievement of student potential within HCDE schools, I am meeting the expectation to ensure that student's learning goals are met or exceeded.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

June 14 - July 15

Ecobot Challenge
Robotic Competition

July 21

Board Meeting