

THE CONNECTOR

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

WEEK OF MARCH 1, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 22

GETTING BACK TO BUSINESS

TOP STORIES

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Of Note...



Well, it looks like Spring has finally sprung in Houston and we are in for some beautiful weather. After the last few weeks of cold and the recent arctic blast, I know everyone is looking forward to some warmth and time in the sun!

As you are aware, Governor Abbott has lifted all COVID-related restrictions, including the mask mandate, effective next week. HCDE follows guidelines set by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) when dealing with COVID protocols. Commissioner Morath announced on Wednesday that each district can make a local decision regarding the mask mandate. As such, I have decided that HCDE will continue with all current COVID safety protocols, including wearing masks when in our buildings.

I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team followed by internal meetings. On Monday afternoon I joined our facilities team and architects in reviewing the design plans for the Irvington building renovation. On Tuesday I received my second vaccine shot before I met with staff for various ongoing projects. On Wednesday I joined you for the board workshop and meeting. Thank you for the robust discussions and feedback. I look forward to continuing our conversation.

As I mentioned at the meeting, we have rescheduled the Board Retreat for Friday, March 12 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Houston Museum of Natural History. If you will recall, we will be taking individual photos and a group shot before we start the meeting. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. Details and instructions for parking are in the calendar invite as well as on the Save the Date card sent before the winter storm.

Today I welcomed educators from around the area to the Center for Safe and Secure Schools' Virtual Equity Forum before participating in several standing meetings with staff. Tomorrow, I am presenting at the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators' annual conference. My presentation targets those administrators who want to become a Superintendent in the next few years. This is one of three different presentations being offered as part of their Superintendent Pipeline. I have participated in these presentations for several years and I really enjoy helping the next wave of superintendents not only get the job, but become successful at it as well.

Have a fabulous weekend.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Collier". The signature is stylized and cursive.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

Budget Manager Training



Last Friday, managers from all divisions met to begin the process of establishing their FY 2022 budgets. Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Dr. Jesus Amezcua led the training with the help from Chief Accounting Officer Stephanie Barnett. Managers were introduced to the new budget dashboard and given insight into all of the forms and requirements for the process. Division budgets are due for review in April.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Grant Writer Uses the Power of the Pen to Propel HCDE Forward

Sharvon D. Pipkins Kamaya is the development coordinator for HCDE's Center for Grants Development, a position she has held since she was hired in 2009.

Her dedication to her work is so strong that she worked on a grant proposal right up until her due date, giving birth to her baby girl only hours later.

"HCDE was recently awarded more than \$4 million in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership and Early Head Start Expansion in grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a result of a proposal that I wrote," said Pipkins Kamaya. "My baby girl knew how important this grant was to me, so she waited until after I hit the 'submit' button to make her debut. She started making her way that night and was born the next day, September 22, 2020, which is also my birthday. What an awesome gift!"

For over 11 years, Pipkins Kamaya has been a key member of the Center for Grants Development, working to secure funding for nine HCDE divisions, surrounding school districts, and local nonprofits. For the Gretna, Louisiana native, grant writing is ingrained into her sense of community – though it wasn't always a clear path.

While attending Xavier University to pursue a degree in political science, Pipkins Kamaya planned on becoming an attorney in environmental law.

"My dad has been the president of our neighborhood watch association in Gretna since the beginning of time," Pipkins Kamaya said jokingly. "He would organize community cleanups in areas that needed it. I learned about how littering affects a community – its perception, how the people in that community feel about where they live, how other people treat that community, and how neighborhoods with this issue obtain funding to address the problem. That was a big thing that my dad instilled in me: waking up on Saturday mornings to go clean up the neighborhood and serve my community."

While learning about nonprofit fundraising through American Humanics (now called the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance) at Xavier, she earned the opportunity to intern for the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, a nonprofit that helps families living in neighborhoods near superfund sites. As an intern, she was tasked with writing a grant proposal for a cleanup project in one of the affected communities.

"We were awarded the grant, and it really sparked something in me. I thought, 'this is it!'" Pipkins Kamaya said. "I was no longer interested in sitting in a stuffy courtroom. I wanted to be in the office advocating for others through my grant writing. It was a no-brainer for me. I enjoyed writing and writing about issues



that could be addressed with proper funding really excited me. It still does. The feeling I get knowing that there are people who will benefit from my work is just amazing."

Pipkins Kamaya has been instrumental in growing the Center for Grants Development and is credited for securing the 2014 grant that started the first Early Head Start programs at HCDE.

"HCDE is very fortunate to have Sharvon as an employee," said Gayla Rawlinson Maynard, Director of the Center for Grants Development. "She is a shining light; someone who is dependable, loyal, and a self-starter. Sharvon works well with other people and has a fantastic ability to capture the clients' real needs. She's contributed to our ability to raise \$23 million during the first three months of the current fiscal year."

With the grant awarded to the Department in September to expand Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership and Early Head Start programs, HCDE will add 64 new traditional Early Head Start (EHS) slots at two of its Head Start campuses, Barrett Station and Humble.

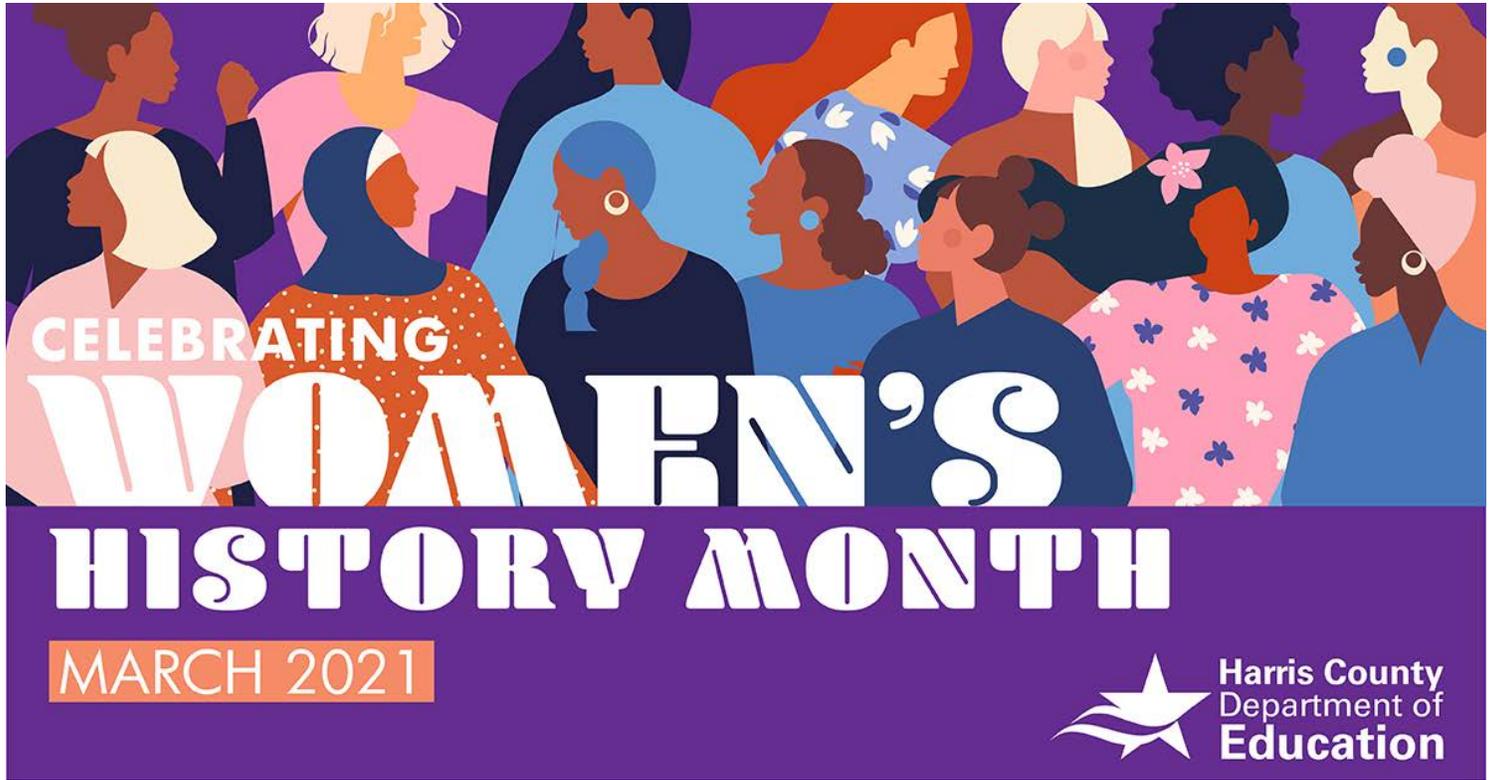
This expansion grant will also allow HCDE to collaborate with three local child care centers to offer comprehensive, high-quality services to 40 eligible infants and toddlers in Baytown, Deer Park, and Pasadena.

Pipkins Kamaya, who undoubtedly uses the power of the pen to serve others, "pays it forward" by sharing her passion. She offers grant writing workshops hosted by HCDE that are open to the public. To learn more about these workshops, contact Sharvon Pipkins Kamaya at 713-696-3106 or spipkins@hcde-texas.org.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

Women's History



March is Women's History Month. Tune into our social media channels throughout the month as we celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of women in Harris County.

March Board Presentations

Construction Services
Board Presentation
March 3, 2021

SEE THE IMPACT

Adult Education
Board Presentation
February 24, 2021

SEE THE IMPACT

IN THE NEWS



Vaccination Availability in Harris County

This week I received the second shot of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine. As the vaccine is becoming more widely available in Harris County, I encourage our staff and HCDE community to take advantage of vaccination opportunities.

Learn more about availability and registration at Harris County Public Health. To join the Harris County vaccine waitlist, visit vacstrac.hctx.net or call 832-927-8787.

To join the City of Houston vaccine waitlist, go to houstonemergency.org/covid-19-vaccines or call 832-393-4301.

Anyone else needing registration assistance can contact the Covid-19 call center at 832-393-4220.



Harris County
Public Health
Building a Healthy Community

Spring Leadership Cohort Series

Last weekend, the Teaching and Learning Center closed out the 2021 Spring Leadership Cohort Series with “A Call for Reality Pedagogy,” led by Dr. Chris Emdin.

The session focused on how to “connect academic content to what’s happening in the world that affects students” and “making sure that their lives and backgrounds are reflected in the curriculum and classroom conversations.”

Emdin, an Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology at Teachers College, Columbia University, is a much sought-after public speaker on a number of topics that include hip-hop education, STEM education, politics, race, class, diversity, and youth empowerment. He is also an advisor to numerous international organizations, school districts, and schools.

Harris County Department of Education

FEATURED SESSION

HCDE TLC LEADERSHIP COHORT SERIES

CHRIS EMDIN
PRINCIPAL, AUTHOR, SPEAKER

Package Deal for Principals and their teams
4 Sessions, \$175pp | 1 session \$75

LIMITED TIME OFFER

For more information, contact: Errica Dotson-Hooper | @ErricaDH | edotson-hooper@hcde-texas.org

SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

Superintendent Objective A: Management of Administrative, Fiscal, and Facilities Function

- Oversees a budget development process that results in recommendations based on Department priorities and available resources.
- Implements and oversees a planning process that results in goals, targets, or priorities for major areas of operations.

Superintendent Objective C: Personnel Management

- Encourages, oversees, and participates in staff recognition activities.

This week we spotlight the work of Sharvon D. Pipkins Kamaya, a member of our Grants Development team. Sharvon has been instrumental in growing the Center for Grants Development over the past 11 years and is credited for securing the 2014 grant that started the first Early Head Start programs at HCDE. Recently HCDE was awarded more than \$4 million in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership



and Early Head Start Expansion in grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a result of a proposal that she wrote last September. Her continued dedication to support helps make the work of HCDE possible.



Last Friday, budget managers from all divisions met for the initial training session for the FY 2022 budget. Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Dr. Jesus Amezcua introduced the new budget dashboard and Chief Accounting Officer of Stephanie Barnett gave everyone insight into the forms and requirements for the process.

The Teaching and learning Center closed out a very successful Spring 2021 Leadership Cohort Series with Dr. Chris Edmin, much sought-after public speaker on a number of topics that include hip-hop education, STEM education, politics, race, class, diversity, and youth empowerment.



Finally, March is Women's History Month and we will be highlighting the contributions of women in Harris County.

HCDE BOARD
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Eric Dick

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Danny Norris

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

UPCOMING EVENTS:

March 12
Board Retreat
Museum of Natural History
8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

March 15-19
Spring Break