

THE CONNECTOR

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

WEEK OF May 3, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 30

CELEBRATING TEACHERS

TOP STORIES

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Harris County Students**
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Of Note...



Not a lot of good can be said of the global pandemic our country weathered this past year. There were many challenges our staff, families and clients faced including restrictions on where they could go, who they could see and where they worked. But there were some positives that came out of this experience, not the least of which is that the country's appreciation for educators increased ten-fold. Nightly newscasts and newspapers were filled with stories of parents' frustration at spending all day with their kids trying to teach them and help them learn in the digital realm while simultaneously handling their own jobs at home. These are the tasks our teachers handle everyday with grace and outstanding results.

This week that gratitude is magnified with National Teacher Appreciation Week. During these five days, parents, businesses, educators and students come together to show teachers that their efforts are not in vain, that they make a huge difference in the lives of children and they positively impact our communities today and well into the future.

In HCDE, we tend to make a big deal of teacher appreciation. This year, our schools and Head Start campuses planned special activities for teachers. The Educator Certification and Advancement team honored first year teachers who graduated from their program and the communications team conducted a social media campaign to recognize many of our outstanding teachers. I am proud of the amazing work all our teachers do every day and the support HCDE provides to our families and students. When I hear of stories about how a teacher's work impacts a family, I know that I am in the right business.



I started the week with my ELT and several standing meetings. On Tuesday I met with the Leadership Team and continued my individual meetings with several Leadership Team members throughout the week. On Thursday I had my last SuperMENTor reading via TEAMS for the year and the students gave me a great Thank You note and danced for me! After this fun activity, I attended agenda review in preparation for the board meeting on May 19. Today, I ventured out to the campuses to attend several teacher appreciation lunches and let staff know how much we value their work.

Have a great weekend.

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

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



TLC Director driven to serve Harris County students

Andrea Segraves misses teaching in a classroom every day but continues to have a positive impact on students through her work.

Segraves is an educator with nearly 20 years of experience and currently serves as Harris County Department of Education's Director of Special Projects for the Teaching and Learning Center.

She is best recognized for being the organizer of two of the Department's most prominent projects, the annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference and the prestigious Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for the Greater Houston region. Segraves also oversees a national leadership speaker series and provides coaching and professional learning for school leaders across Harris County.

"I've always been really inspired by professional learning," said Segraves. "[Before coming to HCDE, I was a] principal at Clear Creek ISD [and was] an instructional leader for four years. I was deep in the work, and I was sure that I would retire as a principal, but an opportunity became available at HCDE where I would be able to lead at the next level, just as the leaders that came before me had tapped me on my

shoulder and said 'hey, you can do more, you can reach further.'"

The Oklahoma native, who has an identical twin sister and an older brother, wasn't a stranger to education.

"My mom was an educator for 38 years. It wasn't that she didn't encourage me to be a teacher. I just think that she knew the struggle of being an educator. [When my mom was a teacher,] I remember knowing when payday was because that's when our kitchen was restocked, and I remember her coming home tired every day and noticing the stress of the job on her. It was just kind of unspoken that she had wanted

Continued on pg. 3



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



something different for us, and so I was the only one of her three kids that chose to go into education.”

But Segraves’ plan wasn’t always to be a teacher. After her freshman year of college, she took a job as a counselor at a summer youth camp and found her calling to be a teacher. She realized she could connect with students easily and was encouraged by their parents to continue working with children.

“The things that shape you are when people see something in you that you don’t see,” said Segraves. “So that summer, I changed my degree path from dental hygiene to education because I just knew that that’s what I was called to do.”

When Segraves became a mother in 2008, she understood why her mother allowed her to decide her own path.

“Being a mom has absolutely helped me be a better educator. My son, Rodney, is my whole world and my whole heart,” she said. “I think it’s pretty interesting to know that I have a biracial child, and that brings another perspective to my life as a human, a mom, and an educator, especially in current times.”

When asked what she believes her mentors saw in her, Segraves says, “something I teach my son when I

look back on my career and my life is to be uncommon. Those are very simple words, but they are very powerful. I have a deep passion for the underdog.”

“I was chosen and born to be a mom and an educator. Having chosen a career path as a public servant, reaching the underdog, the one that is struggling the most, is my ultimate responsibility,” she said. “The greater the responsibility, the greater the reward – and that’s why I do this.” ■



PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

JOIN US FOR THIS VIRTUAL EVENT

MANUEL H. GALLEGOS 19TH ANNUAL YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



HCDE Hosts Annual Young Women's Leadership Conference

Harris County Department of Education will host the 19th annual Manuel H. Gallegos Young Women's Leadership Conference for the first time at 8:15 a.m. on Friday, May 14.

The conference, which will also be held virtually for the first time, is organized by HCDE Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, Dr. Jesús Amezcua and has historically taken place at Texas A&M International University in Laredo, Texas, for students from area school districts.

Under its new virtual format, young women in grades 9 through 12 from Harris County and the state will be able to participate regardless of their location.

Featured presenters include HCDE leaders Venetia Peacock, Senior Director of Head Start; Dr. Lisa Caruthers, Director of CASE for Kids; Danielle Bartz, Chief of Staff; and Celina Cereceres Miller from accounting firm Whitley Penn.

The conference aims to empower young girls to seek positions of leadership in professional environments. ■



PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS



Capital Improvement Program Update

AB East

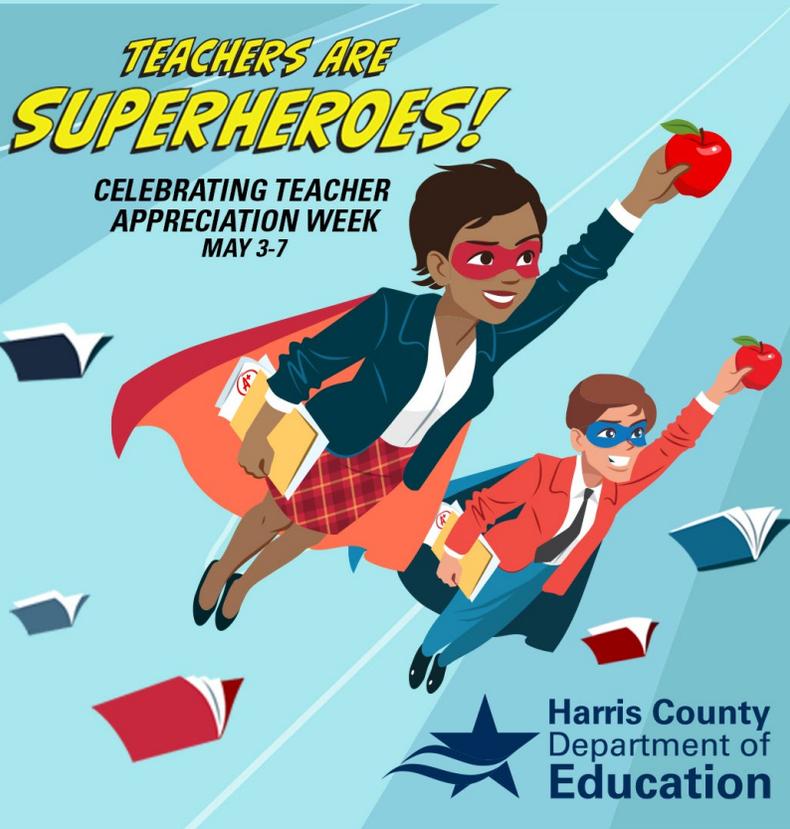
This week we had more than 30 participants in our pre-proposal conference concerning construction of the new AB East. This attendance shows great interest in the project and indicates we will have a solid pool of contractors to choose from.

Adult Ed, Highpoint School, Irvington Building

All three projects are in design development with the architects. The next step is construction documents, followed by pre-proposal conferences for contractors. We anticipate this conference to be sometime in the fall. ■



TEACHER APPRECIATION



This week was Teacher Appreciation Week, and Harris County Department of Education honored educators in various ways. The Educator Certification and Advancement (ECA) division celebrated its 2020-2021 cohort of 32 first-year teachers with social media posts featuring testimonials from each educator's field supervisor. These educators met the state requirement to be first-year teachers and are currently working in Harris County school districts on intern certificates while working to obtain their standard educator certificate. In addition, HCDE students recognized their teachers in a video tribute in which students thanked them for their dedication to their success. This video was published on the Department's YouTube channel, Hub, and social media platforms. ■



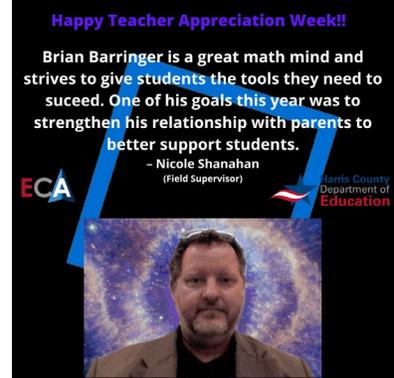
Happy Teacher Appreciation Week !!
ECA
 LAQISHA COLLINS HAS A PERSONALITY THAT IS PERFECT FOR TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS AND HER PASSION FOR TEACHING SPILLS INTO THE CLASSROOM! WHETHER IT IS 8 AM OR 3 PM SHE IS FULL OF LIFE, EXCITEMENT AND ENTHUSIASM!
 -ELLIE COLVIN (FIELD SUPERVISOR)
 Harris County Education



Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!!
ECA
 Wady Rahbani enjoys building strong relationships with all his Algebra 1 students. One fun fact about him – he is an awesome school soccer coach.
 - Nicole Shanahan (Field Supervisor)
 Harris County Education



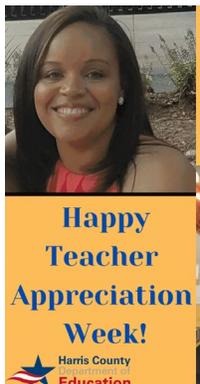
Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!
ECA
 Ms. Anigboro's kindness and patience towards students does not go unnoticed. And her positive attitude is contagious!
 -Shirley G. (Field Supervisor)
 Harris County Education



Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!!
 Brian Barringer is a great math mind and strives to give students the tools they need to succeed. One of his goals this year was to strengthen his relationship with parents to better support students.
 - Nicole Shanahan (Field Supervisor)
 Harris County Department of Education



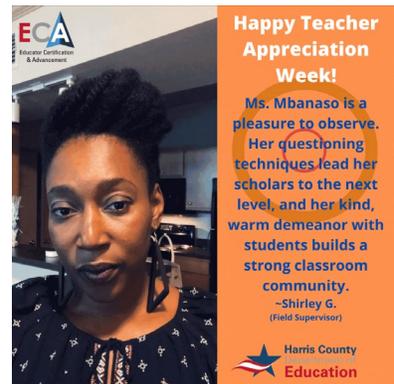
Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!
ECA
 Xin Zhao works to improve her students' engagement every day. As a kindergarten teacher, she is continually looking for new hands-on activities to incorporate into her lessons.
 -Nicole Shanahan (Field Supervisor)
 Harris County Department of Education



Congratulations Rookie of the YEAR!!
Stafford MSD Stafford Elementary School
Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!
 Harris County Education



Happy Teacher Appreciation Week !!
 This first year challenged Eunice Ramirez in ways she couldn't imagine, but she persevered! The key to accomplishing her goals was to develop a course of action and stick to it!
 -Ellie Colvin (Field Supervisor)
 Harris County Education



Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!
 Ms. Mbanaso is a pleasure to observe. Her questioning techniques lead her scholars to the next level, and her kind, warm demeanor with students builds a strong classroom community.
 -Shirley G. (Field Supervisor)
 Harris County Education

TEACHER APPRECIATION



Click Image to View HCDE Teacher Appreciation Video

SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week the following Board expectations were met:

Superintendent Objective C: Personnel Management

- Encourages, oversees, and participates in staff recognition activities



This week we recognize the outstanding work our teachers and staff do every day to ensure the highest level of success for the students we serve across Harris County.

May is National Teacher Appreciation Month and we have a packed schedule of activities to honor the tireless efforts of our teachers. Tuesday, we shared a special "Thank You" video from our students to our teachers in Head Start, our special schools and adult education. The message is a powerful one. It speaks to the difference a single teacher can make in the life of a student. I am exceedingly proud of the work they do with our students.

Later this month we will be announcing our Teacher of the Year, a celebration I look forward to every Spring.

Our teachers are not the only ones that have a profound impact on the students of Harris County. Andrea Segraves, our Teaching and Learning Center Director of Special Projects, has a long history of making a difference for students. As a principal in Clear Creek ISD, she found innovative and exciting ways to engage her students in learning. At HCDE, she leads two of our premier programs, the annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference and the Regional Scholastic Art and Writing Awards program.

ECWC typically brings more than 1,000 educators from across Texas together for an intensive day of professional development. This year, due to the pandemic, the conference was virtual and the reach was global. Educators from around the world signed up to learn new strategies for teaching young students.

HCDE has sponsored the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards since 1983. This year more than 8,000 works were submitted from students across the region. Coordinating the entry process, judging and celebration is a monumental task. Andrea has continually met the challenge, for which I am thankful.

By promoting the recognition of the great work of our staff, I am meeting the expectation to establish a culture of excellence at HCDE.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

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.