



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harris County Department of Education announces teens for 2018 Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Jan. 25, 2018 - Teen awardees for the 2018 Harris County Department of Education Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are announced as a record 6,225 Harris County entries are judged in the prestigious competition. Recipients join the ranks with iconic writers and artists Sylvia Plath, Robert Redford, Truman Capote, Andy Warhol and Richard Avedon, who all earned awards as Scholastic Art & Writing awards as teens.

View the awards: <https://goo.gl/1eDk9f>

Twenty-one school districts, two charter schools and 16 private schools are represented as students earn Gold Key, Silver Key and honorable mention awards. Gold Key recipients advance to national judging to be considered for Gold and Silver Medals which are announced in March and awarded in June through a ceremony at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, founded in 1923, provides young artists and writers in grades 7-12 with the opportunity to showcase their work as it identifies and documents their outstanding achievements. The competition's mission is to bring outstanding visual art and writing created by teens to a national audience by showcasing the work and encouraging creative and career development.

Students submitted their work through the 531 teachers who support and participate in HCDE's regional competition. Several hundred volunteer art and writing professionals judge the submittals.

"We are grateful for the supporters of Scholastic Art & Writing in Harris County—from the community supporters who offer space to showcase art and writing to the companies who offer student scholarships to the hundreds of judges who volunteer their time," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "There is a deep well of artistic talent represented, and we are proud to host, showcase and support this iconic program."

The following area school districts are represented: Aldine, Alief, Alvin, Clear Creek, Crosby, Cy-Fair, Deer Park, Friendswood, Galena Park, Goose Creek, Houston, Huffman, Humble, Katy, Klein, New Caney, Pasadena, Pearland, Spring Branch, Spring and Tomball. Charter schools include KIPP Academy and YES Prep.

Private school students with awards include: Calvin Nelms, Annunciation Orthodox, Concordia Lutheran, Duchesne Academy, Emery Weiner, Episcopal High, Houston Christian High, Incarnate Word, Kinkaid School, Presbyterian School, River Oaks Baptist, St. Agnes Academy, St. Thomas High, St. John's, Tenney School and the Village School. Several private art school and home school students are also represented.

Harris County students earned 1,696 Gold Key, Silver Key and honorable mention awards. Through the art categories, students gain 321 Gold Keys, 423 Silver Keys, and 374 honorable mentions. In the writing categories, students earn 95 Gold Keys, 143 Silver Keys, and 340 honorable mentions.

Ten students earned recognition through the American Voices and American Vision awards. These 10 awards are judged nationally through Scholastic Art & Writing in New York City for American Voices/American Visions Medals. One in each art and writing category will be selected and announced in March.

American Visions (art) awardees: Kara Alker, Cypress Woods High School, Cy-Fair ISD; Lillian Hogan, Kingwood Park High School, Humble ISD; Amy Vaclavik, Taylor High School, Katy ISD; Christina Zhou, Tompkins High School, Katy ISD; and Emilio Recio, Rayburn High School, Pasadena ISD

American Voices (writing) awardees: Emma Bennett, High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Houston ISD; Cora Wen, Carnegie Vanguard High School, Houston ISD; William Sharpe, Krimmel Intermediate School, Klein ISD; Noah Rubinson, Kinkaid School; and Sophia Sutter, St. Agnes Academy

For more information about HCDE's regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and opportunities to sponsor, judge and enter the competition, go to www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic .

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3 HCDE Communications Professionals Earn Awards through 2018 Lone Star Awards

Three Communications and Creative Services professionals gained awards in the 2018 Lone Star Awards through the Houston Press Club. Daniel Villarreal was named first-place winner in "Public Relations Corporate Video" category for his video: "[HCDE Tax Rate](#)." Villarreal also earned third place for a video entry called "[Mayor GoPublic Message](#)."

Lindsey Sanders, Communications and Creative Services coordinator, gained a second-place award in the category "Print Photography" for her photo at the Academic and Behavior Schools Chess Tournament entitled: Focus. Carol Vaughn, Communications and Creative Services manager, earned a third-place award in the "Public Relations Feature" category for a feature story about a [Highpoint East student](#). View the full list of winners: <http://houstonpressclubonline.org/here-are-the-winners-of-the-2018-lone-star-awards/> .

Photo: "Focus" by staff member Lindsey Sanders.

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Media Honor Roll inductees for 2018 (and their support acknowledgements):

Houston Style Magazine managing editor **Jo-Carolyn Goode** (preschool services through Head Start); **River Oaks Examiner** reporter **Rebecca Hazen** (GED classes through Adult Education); **Telemundo 47 KTMD** reporter **Antonio Hernandez** (preschool services through Head Start and English classes through Adult Education); **Channel 13 KTRK** reporter **Samica Knight** (afterschool through CASE for Kids); **African American News** publisher **Roy Douglas Malonson** (afterschool through CASE for Kids and preschool programs via Head Start); **Channel 11 KHOU** assistant news director **Wiley Post** (teacher professional development through Teaching and Learning Center); **Channel 39 KIAH** reporter **Mike Rosenhouse** (afterschool programs through CASE for Kids); and **Channel 2 KPRC** special projects producer **Debbie Strauss** (for supporting at-risk student services through Schools division).

The program is sponsored by the Texas Association of School Boards, a nonprofit which serves local Texas school districts and represents 5.3 million public school students. Honorees receive a framed certificate, and their names appear in the TASB website at www.tasb.org.

“As we provide education support services to school districts and taxpayers in Harris County, these journalists help us spread the word about programs that help at-risk students, adult learners, afterschool programs, professional development for teachers and other support services,” said James Colbert Jr., county school superintendent.

“We appreciate their professionalism as they gather and share education news and their dedication to presenting news in a fair, accurate and balanced manner.”

View photos of presentations to Media Honor Roll 2018 journalists (as they are delivered) through SmugMug: <https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/Communication/Media-Honor-Roll-2018/>.

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16 Students from HCDE Regional Awards Travel to NYC for Scholastic Art & Writing National Medals

June 12, 2018 - Sixteen students from Harris County Department of Education's Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Regional Affiliate program traveled to New York City to Carnegie Hall to gain national awards as Gold Medalists on June 7.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recognizes student achievement for grades 7-12 in the visual and literary arts in 29 categories, including editorial cartoon, poetry, graphic design, fashion, science fiction, video game design and more. The Awards offers opportunities for creative teens to earn recognition, exhibition, publication and scholarships and signifies to parents, teachers, the community and colleges that a student is an accomplished artist or writer.

Gold Medalists attending the ceremony were:

Alexis Cazares, Melissa Sosa and Emilio Recio of Pasadena Independent School District; Hetian Duan, Houston Christian High School; Walter Hammann, Clear Creek ISD; Gracin Nguyen, Pearland ISD; Olivia Pierce and Kaitlyn Sheroke, Katy ISD; Emma Bennett, Houston Independent School District; Alexis DePinho, St. John's School; Esha Garg and Shadidhar Pinninti, The Village School; Amabel Letrung, Klein ISD; David Liang, William Miner and Cg Marinelli of The Kinkaid School.

Each year celebrities attend the ceremony through surprise appearances. This year, American actor, singer and DJ Ansel Elgort was a star attraction. Elgort starred in the horror film Carrie and will star in the upcoming movie The Goldfinch. Other star guests at the celebration included children's author R.L. Stein of Goosebumps and author Marc Brown of the Arthur series.

Students and teachers traveling to Carnegie Hall ceremonies and celebrations throughout the week called the experience unforgettable.

"Students use their art to tell their stories and remind us that a bright future awaits our world because they will lead it," said Pasadena ISD's Sam Rayburn High School Principal Vanessa Reyes. "I am filled with hope."

"I felt like getting to visit Carnegie Hall was a very unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said student Shasi Pinninti, The Village School.

“The Scholastic ceremony was an incredible, life-changing experience that made me love the city,” said student Emilio Recio, Pasadena ISD. “It was an exciting and accelerating adventure I will never forget.”

“It was wonderful to hear from R.L. Stine and Marc Brown about their experiences and their struggles in the real world, and it inspired me to (hopefully) one day write a novel,” said Esha Garg, student from The Village School.

HCDE Scholastic Art & Writing coordinator Andrea Segraves provided leadership this year as Affiliate Advisory council member. The committee is a working committee which provides communication between members of over 100 affiliate networks, the board and the national staff.

The regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards begins the 2019 awards in the fall of 2018. For more information about judging, sponsoring or entering, go to www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic .

Photo: Children's author Marc Brown (Arthur series) poses with Pasadena ISD student Emilio Recio after a surprise appearance at Carnegie Hall during the ceremony.

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Record 61 National Scholastic Art & Writing Medals Awarded to Area Teens after Regional Advancement with Harris County Department of Education

March 22, 2018 - Harris County student artists and writers in grades 7-12 earned a record-breaking 61 national Scholastic Art & Writing Medals through awards announced by the New York nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers on March 13. The student art and prose entries advanced from a regional competition sponsored by Harris County Department of Education.

Sharing the national limelight are students from Alief, Clear Creek, Galena Park, Houston, Pasadena, Klein, Katy, Cy-Fair, Deer Park, Pearland, Tomball, Spring and Spring Branch independent school districts. Private school recipients are from Episcopal High School, Houston Christian High School, St. John's School, The Village School, St. Thomas High School, River Oaks Baptist School and The Kinkaid School.

The Awards, founded in 1923, allow creative teen artists and writers to earn recognition, exhibition, publication and scholarships. View the list of the 61 Silver and Gold Harris County Medalists: <http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/5232/national-medalists.pdf>.

Specialty Gold Medal awards went to two Houston-area teens. Emilio Recio from Sam Rayburn High School in Pasadena Independent School District earned the best-in-class, prestigious American Visions award while Emma Bennett from the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Houston ISD gained the American Voices award.

National medalists from Harris County increased from 59 in 2017 to a record 61 in 2018. Twenty Gold Medals and 41 Silver Medals were awarded. A record-breaking 346,000 works of art and writing were submitted for judging this year.

Gold Medalists are invited to a national ceremony at Carnegie Hall on June 7, 2018 where they are recognized among more than 2,800 teens throughout the nation. That evening, the Statue of Liberty is lit in gold in recognition of the celebration.

Area celebrations and exhibits have been hosted throughout Houston to celebrate the artists, including exhibits at Texas Art Supply and The Galleria. Gold and Silver Key art from students in grades 7-8 is displayed from March 27 to April 1 at the Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston, 3400 Main St., Houston, Texas.

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“Scholastic Art & Writing is important because it allows teens to express themselves creatively and compete through writing and art genres,” said Harris County School Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. “In addition to the prestige of the Awards, students have scholarship opportunities for college. As regional sponsor, we are supporting fine arts initiatives in Harris County schools and celebrate the teachers and volunteer judges, along with the community supporters who provide venues for artist ceremonies and receptions.”

For more information about how to enter, judge or sponsor the Awards in Harris County, go to www.hcde-texas.org/Scholastic .

About Scholastic Art & Writing: Founded in 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the nation’s longest-running, most prestigious educational initiative supporting student achievement in the visual and literary arts. Through the Awards, students receive opportunities for recognition, exhibition, publication and scholarships. Past winners include celebrated artists and writers such as Robert Redford, Andy Warhol, Truman Capote, John Lithgow, Joyce Carol Oates and Sylvia Plath. More at www.artandwriting.org .

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900-plus Student Robotic Contenders Compete at Agriculture-themed Ecobot Challenge April 21

April 19, 2018 - Robotics is paired with agriculture history as 96 teams of students test their skills and knowledge at the 10th All-Earth Ecobot Challenge set for Saturday, April 21 from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at Kashmere High School, 6900 Wileyvale Rd.

The event for 900-plus students in grades 4-8 is hosted by the Education Foundation of Harris County and Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids. With a tradition of supporting science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM studies, the event is supported by CenterPoint Energy, Best Buy Foundation, Quality Feed & Garden Company, Consumer Energy Education Foundation, Houston Independent School District and Women's Energy Network (WEN) Houston. Morning sessions begin at 8 a.m. and afternoon sessions start at 1 p.m. Teams rotate to compete in robotics judging with Mindstorm Legos kits. Many of the teams prepare for the event through their afterschool programs.

Trends in agriculture-based technology provide opportunity for teams to test their knowledge from agriculture eras in the mid-1970s to 2018. Points are wagered based on questions and answers.

Volunteers from area industries provide demonstrations in the Eco-Genius Lab which supplies real-world examples of STEM labs and career opportunities. Some organizations sponsoring demonstrations include WEN Houston (robot coding) and Quality Feed & Garden Co. (gardening).

"Robotics has fast become a popular hobby for students, and CASE for Kids hosts and supports this STEM curriculum and event because of the critical thinking skills it promotes along with team-building and problem solving," said Lisa-Thompson Caruthers, CASE for Kids director. "Teams are formed from diverse areas of the city and include students from afterschool programs, home school organizations, boys' and girls' clubs and more."
School districts sending teams to the competition include Aldine, Alief, Cleveland, Cy-Fair, Galena Park, Houston, Huffman, Humble, Klein, LaPorte, New Caney, Pasadena, Pearland, Spring, Spring Branch and Stafford.

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For more information about the event, go www.ecobotchallenge.com .

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Harris County Department of Education Releases Comprehensive 2020-2021 Calendar for 25 School Districts

Key dates for the 2020-2021 school year for all 25 school districts in Harris County are available through the Harris County Department of Education comprehensive school district calendar.

Due to COVID-19, dates may be subject to change throughout the year, district to district. Actual calendars from each district may be downloaded by clicking on the district name in the calendar.

Many districts begin virtually or are adopting a hybrid model of in-person and virtual learning. Check with each district for details.

View the calendar for the 25 school districts through the following link:

(HCDE provides the compilation of district calendars as a public service. We are not responsible for changes in district calendars. Please consult your local school district for additional details concerning holidays/staff work days, etc.)



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A bicycle, determination propel ESL student forward to earn her GED

At 58, Silvia Cruz rides her bike everywhere she goes and finds it liberating. She promised herself when she moved to America in 2015 that she would improve her health and learn everything she could about her new country.

On May 19, Cruz rode that bike 12 miles to her own GED graduation at Harris County Department of Education in northeast Houston. She made it just in time to grab her gown, get her photo taken and walk the stage.

The same bike delivered her to ESL and GED classes nine miles each way at the Memorial Assistance Ministries, one of 50-plus community locations where Harris County Department of Education holds adult education and workforce classes.

Before she moved to Houston to join her husband, she suffered a debilitating accident. While climbing onto a bus in her hometown in Mexico in 2013, someone pushed her. She spent the next month unconscious in the hospital. Upon release, she created her own rehab program and learned to use her limbs again. Finally, she learned to ride her bike.

Since the accident, Cruz never stopped propelling forward.

“I want to better my life,” she said. “I don’t want to be ignorant.”

Sometimes she feels frustrated that she can’t speak English quicker, that it takes her longer to translate the words. However, she remembers how far she has come since the fall that sent her tumbling into darkness.

“I want to learn more because I know I can help somebody else with their problems and encourage other people to continue with their lives.”

Rosie Coleman, Cruz’s HCDE GED teacher, said she admired her student’s diligence and her desire to help other classmates.

“She expressed her goal to become a psychologist in the United States,” Coleman said.

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Even though that goal will lead to another long ride, Coleman is convinced her student can reach her destination.

HCDE provides free adult education classes in 65 community locations throughout Harris and Liberty counties. Classes include English as a second language, GED preparation and workforce development. Partnerships with churches and community centers allow adult learners to go back to school in their own communities. Neighborhoods include inner-city Houston, Cy-Fair, Goose Creek, Hardin, Klein, Liberty, Cleveland, Pasadena, Baytown, Galena Park, Spring Branch and Katy. For ESL, GED or workforce classes, go to <http://www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation> or call 713-692-6216.

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Academic and Behavior School Staff Know the Importance of CPR Training

[Note: November is CPR Awareness Month. This article relates a true story about how knowing CPR saved a life.]

Nov. 29, 2018 - Many people don't think they will ever have to use cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), but having the training will help save someone's life.

Just ask the staff at Academic and Behavior Schools West when they had to put their skills to use after a fellow teacher collapsed from a heart attack.

Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior Schools specialize in educational services for students with emotional and academic special needs.

June 7 started out as any other day for life skills teacher Karen Weiskopf by going to work for a teacher workday before summer break.

"I felt fine just like any other day and had just signed in at the front office around 8 a.m.," Weiskopf said. Principal Victor Keys was passing through the front office to go to the counselor's office, but stopped to talk to Weiskopf. After their conversation, he went back to his office then proceeded to go to the counselor's office.

"As I was going to the counselor's office, I saw Mrs. Weiskopf beneath the desk in the front," Keys said. "I called for the nurse to get help."

AB West nurse Barbara Hurd was just down the hall and heard Keys yelling nurse when he usually calls her Mrs. Hurd.

"I ran over and that's when I saw Mrs. Weiskopf on the floor," Hurd said. "She started experiencing strained breathing then stopped breathing and told Dr. Keys that we needed to start CPR."

Keith Oliphant, who is currently the principal at AB East but was the assistant principal at the time, was in his office when he heard the commotion.

"Mr. Oliphant is the type of person that will finish what he is doing before getting up," Weiskopf said. "That day, he heard his mother say 'move,' so he did."

Keys gave her rescue breathing while Hurd and Oliphant performed chest compressions with help from the Automated External Defibrillator (AED).

Weiskopf had stopped breathing for about 10 minutes then a pulse was found.

"We just knew that we wanted her to stay with us and did everything we could to help her," Hurd said.

EMS was called and transported Weiskopf, along with assistant principal Gaylynn Sanders, to the hospital for treatment.

“The EMS and doctors told me that they were very impressed with what they did and how fast acted because they did everything right,” Sanders said. “I couldn’t wait to come back to tell everyone because we do participate in CPR trainings.”

The staff at AB West trains every year on CPR and believes it is an important skill to have because you never know who will be in need.

It saves lives, they all said.

“Take a class anywhere because nine times out of 10 it could be a loved one and you will need to respond,” Keys said.

Weiskopf is now retired and doing well after having a triple bypass five days after the heart attack.

Photo: (Left to Right) Barbara Hurd, Victor Keys, Karen Weiskopf and Gaylynn Sanders

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carol Vaughn
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Afterschool Eases Stress for Families Hard-hit by Harvey through CASE for Kids City Connections

March 6, 2018 - Schools hard-hit by Hurricane Harvey are benefiting from additional city funding earmarked for afterschool or out-of-school time through a program called CASE for Kids City Connections. The program is administered by Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids.

Houston City Council District B represented by Jerry Davis and District E represented by Dave Martin awarded \$25,000 and \$85,000 respectively to area nonprofits to serve hurricane-battered schools like Kingwood High School. Kingwood High, which closed for the school year, shares space with neighboring Summer Creek High School and now benefits from \$30,000 for afterschool services from CASE for Kids which are provided by the Humble ISD Education Foundation.

Houston City Council voted for \$550,000 in funding to be issued to nonprofits in the 11 Houston City Council Districts A-K during school year 2017-2018. The first round of funding was announced in October and will be used through April 27. Each award ranged from \$4,000-\$10,000.

Because several council districts did not award all of the initial \$45,000 funding, they were allowed to solicit additional grantees through a request for proposal due by Nov. 7 and awarded in December.

Houston City Council Member Dave Martin awarded \$85,000 to four nonprofits which will serve five schools in flooded areas through May 25. Martin increased his district's overall grant budget for City Connections, dipping into his district funding to pay the balance. Council Member and Houston Vice Mayor Pro-Tem Jerry Davis awarded \$25,000 to two organizations to serve two schools.

"We saw and still see a great need for services in schools where families were devastated by Hurricane Harvey," said CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers. "Many of these children suffer from great emotional distress. These

afterschool programs provide a layer of care that are helping families along the road to recovery.”

For more information about City Connections, view the October 2017 press release:
http://hcde-texas.org/media-page/2016/2016_1013_case-city-connections/

For additional information about nonprofits and schools awarded grants in District B and E, view this link:
<http://www.afterschoolzone.org/users/0002/docs/City%20Connections/2017-2018%20Round%20Award%20List.pdf>

About the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids:

As an afterschool intermediary, CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings and funding for students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities and community centers. As a branch of Harris County Department of Education, the division was founded in 1999 with a goal to keep kids safe, help working families and improve academic achievement.

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We've Got Your Back! Backpack Safety Tips for Students

Those books in your children's backpacks are important, but practice caution as students take to the hallways and travel home carrying heavy loads.

Carie Crabb, Harris County Department of Education School-Based Therapy Services senior director and occupational therapist, urges parents to consider several factors in consideration of their child's back health.

Backpack safety tips:

- Choose the right size backpack: A small student needs a small backpack.
- The backpack should fit snugly, with the backpack bottom at or slight below the waistline.
- Load the heaviest items closest to the child's back.
- Observe the 10 percent rule: A 50-pound student should only carry five pounds.
- Know the rules regarding backpacks at your child's school. Some only allow clear packs for safety reasons.

Awareness about the potential strain of backpacks is a back-to-school initiative from Harris County Department of Education's School-Based Therapy Services division in collaboration with the American Occupational Therapy Association.

HCDE physical, occupational and music therapists work with children in school settings through partnerships with school districts in greater Harris County. For more information, go to www.hcde-texas.org/therapyservices .



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carol Vaughn
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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Back-to-School Story Ideas 2018-2019:

Call Carol Vaughn, 281-660-9205 for interviews with education experts from Harris County Department of Education.

School Safety: How safe is my child's school? Parents are apprehensive about school security as the school year begins. What should you know about school safety audits and state law? How can schools empower both students and staff to better communicate as to alleviate problems before they occur? **Ecomet Burley, director, Center for Safe and Secure Schools**

Digital Learning: Online learning is a different learning environment. As more students turn to online learning, how do we prepare them to be good digital citizens? Get best practices and learn about distracters for online learning. Also, discuss how to keep your kids safe from cybercrime and bullying. **David McGeary, curriculum director for Digital Education and Innovation**

Afterschool--How it Makes Your Child Well-Rounded and Benefits the Family: With schools leaning heavily on testing, how do you help your child pursue hobbies and explore career options? Afterschool is the great stabilizer for families, plus it keeps children safe and helps deter juvenile crime. Find out more from **Dr. Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, director for the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids.**

Homework Resources: Don't Let Homework Get You Down! How can I help my child with resources he/she needs to be successful with homework? What are some good habits and resources? **Frances Watson-Hester, senior director, Teaching and Learning Center**

Behavior Problems/ADHD and Learning Disabilities: How can you best work with your child's teacher to make sure your child is successful in the classroom? Also, what is a school behavior specialist and what do they do in the school setting? **Brenda Arteaga, Teaching and Learning Center or Anthony Mays, senior director, Schools division**

Backpacks: What are the tips for helping prevent back injury? What about new school rules about clear backpacks, etc.? **Carie Crabb, senior director, School-Based Therapy Services**

Students with Disabilities: Special education committee meetings are mandatory in school. How do you prepare for that meeting with your school if you are the parent? **Brenda Arteaga, special populations director, Teaching and Learning Center and Anthony Mays, senior director for Schools division.**

Additional specialists are available to speak on back-to-school topics ranging from preschool issues to adult literacy/workforce readiness.

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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Ballard Named Technology Director at Harris County Department of Education

Aug. 31, 2018 - Technology leader Lowell Ballard has been named the new director of Technology Support Services at Harris County Department of Education.

With more than 25 years of technology experience, Ballard's strengths include information technology (IT) strategy, IT security/disaster recovery and business intelligence. The Spring, Texas resident most recently served as the chief information officer at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin, where he coordinated university-wide IT initiatives in a high-growth environment.

Ballard holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Virginia Tech and a master's degree in information systems from George Mason University. He is also a certified Information Systems Security Professional and holds a number of additional leadership and management certifications.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Early Childhood Winter Conference gets earlier – Jan. 27 event to include track for teachers of children from birth to age 3

Special education, bilingual teaching, and social emotional learning among session topics at annual event hosted by HCDE

Jan. 9, 2018 - Early childhood educators throughout Texas will learn from national speakers and fellow educators at the 32nd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference hosted by Harris County Department of Education. The conference, which typically draws more than 1,000 attendees, will take place on Jan. 27 from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Kingdom Builders' Center, 6011 W. Orem Dr. in Houston, Texas.

The keynote speaker is international presenter Becky Bailey, founder of Conscious Discipline, a whole-school solution for social-emotional learning and self-regulation. The bilingual keynote speaker is Gilberto Soto, musical motivator, guitar aficionado and music professor at Texas A&M International University.

Traditionally the conference served teachers of grades pre-k through second grade, but this year a new birth-to-age 3 learning track benefits teachers of the earliest learners.

“One of the challenges we face as early childhood educators is finding high-quality conferences,” said Maria Del Socorro, principal at Farias Early Childhood Center in Houston Independent School District. “This conference is perfect for the type of early childhood educator who really wants to grow in his or her profession. We know we greatly benefit from national speakers at conferences, but we also have teacher (presenters) because we know that teachers learn from other teachers.”

Session topics include:

- special education
- bilingual education
- social emotional learning (SEL) strategies
- how to empower parents in the community
- disability-related needs and inclusion
- behavior and classroom management

-more-

Attendees will also have the opportunity to network and experiment with new research-based strategies.

For more information about the conference, go to www.hcde-texas.org/ECWC. Register for the conference at www.hcde-texas.org/register (search by date). Cost is \$110 before Jan. 27 and \$135 at check-in.

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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Bates Collision Centers Provides 'Keys to a Brighter Future' by Giving Away 2 Vehicles to HCDE Mothers

Head Start single moms to unwrap cars after receiving Responsible Parenting award

Dec. 5, 2018 - After months without reliable transportation while juggling work and a family as a single-parent household, Harris County Department of Education Head Start single moms Sheena Gulley and Parishellia Banks are receiving a special gift from Bates Collision Centers: the gift of transportation.

In its 20th year, HCDE Head Start's partnership with Bates Collision Centers is giving away cars No. 35 and 36 to two moms who will be recognized with the Responsible Parenting Award. Owners Lee and Leila Bates have made this annual giveaway a priority because they recognize the sacrifices parents often make in order to provide for their children.

Banks and Gulley were nominated by Head Start Center managers. Bates employees donate time to work on the cars and help fill them with gifts, and other community members and businesses donate gas, insurance and materials needed to rehab the cars.

Leila Bates, co-owner of Bates Collision Centers, says both she and her husband Lee are proud of their employees who continue to supply time and resources to families they have yet to meet.

"Wow, it's hard to believe that our tradition of gifting transportation to hardworking, deserving families in need is 20 years old," said Lee Bates. "Even though this program is all about giving to others, there's no doubt that we are the ones that receive the biggest gift, the gift of helping others."

"It's our favorite day of the year, when we get to see the smiles on the families' faces as they tear off the bright red wrapping paper to find their shiny 'new' car inside," said Leila Bates. "It's especially fun to hear the giggles of the kiddos as they open the trunk to find it loaded with gifts with their names on them. It's a 20-year-old Christmas tradition that gets all of our staff involved in the spirit of giving."

HCDE Superintendent James Colbert Jr. said this about the lasting, community partnership: "Generous community members like the Bates, their employees and supporters set the bar for community service. These cars transform families, and we are thankful for 20 years of commitment and giving from the Bates."

About Sheena Gulley, HCDE Head Start Fifth Ward Center, recipient of the 35th rehabbed car:

Sheena Gulley is a single mother of two sons Marcus, 13, and Jay'Me, 2, and two daughters Zyriah, 8,

and Myriah, 4. Gulley relies on Metro and Uber to get to and from work. She is unable to spend much time with her children or attend their school activities because of no transportation and work schedule. She will soon begin taking online GED classes with HCDE, which are free and offers flexible learning opportunities for busy adults.

About Parishellia Banks, HCDE Head Start Baytown, recipient of the 36th rehabbed car:

Parishellia Banks is currently raising her niece's two-year-old son, Jayce, after she passed away during childbirth. Banks relies on family and friends to take her and her great nephew to work and school. She also suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure and finds it difficult to make doctor appointments because of no transportation.

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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CASE Debate Teens Compete with Argument, Confidence

Nov. 1, 2018 - The first CASE Debates tournament held this school year with 100 Harris County students had all the makings of a rival football game, minus the helmets.

Instead of jerseys, the 50 debate teams were outfitted with ties, dress shoes, pressed shirts, sharp wit and organized arguments.

For a second year, the debate program funded through Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids) is paired with the successful Houston Urban Debate League (HUDL) model, a nonprofit organization which promotes academic and advocacy skills among urban teens through debate.

For the past 10 years, HUDL grew its student numbers throughout Houston inner city schools to 1,000. CASE for Kids teams recruited its 200 team members from the other 24 Harris County school districts like Alief, Spring and Galena Park. Competition is heightened as up to 40 schools vie for the top honors at competitions.

Enter CASE Debates team member Maegan Madison Ford, 16, a junior at Spring Early College Academy, a college-focused charter school in the Spring Independent School District.

Debate fuels her confidence as a public speaker. She plans to use her new objective thinking skills and organized rhetoric when she becomes a biomedical engineer. Besides, it's her extracurricular, she says, brandishing a confident smile.

"At Early College, we don't have sports teams or band, so I would consider debate my band or sport," she said. "This is our competition, and this is what we want to win."

HUDL board chair Heather Hatfield says another benefit of debate is that it gives youth a voice and encourages teens to pay attention to the world around them. She also points out the statistic that most debaters go on to college.

County School Superintendent James Colbert Jr. credits the HCDE Board of Trustees for seeing the value of the program and providing start-up funding to support its expansion into the other 24 Harris County school districts. The CASE Debates program is easy to promote to the 10,000-plus students served through CASE for Kids as an established afterschool curriculum.

“Our number of student enthusiasts continue to grow, and we see the value of a competitive, academic program that builds confidence among our inner-city youth,” Colbert said.

“It’s good for the kids,” said Enrique Solis, the debate coach at the Spring Early College campus. “It speaks to the skills our students will need in college like public speaking, working in teams, being persuasive and writing concisely.”

Student and debate captain Da’vion Javonte March likes to argue and talk about controversial subjects in the controlled environment debate offers. The sophomore is already working on an associate degree and plans to become an anesthesiologist as a long-term career goal. He’s concerned today about the decisions he’s making for the betterment of his team.

As the Spring ISD team readies for round two in the tournament, they take time to rally together for a photo with their coach.

Brimming with confidence and camaraderie, this team of 12 is ready to go out and challenge the world as creative, confident, critical thinkers.

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About Good News You Can Use: “Good News You Can Use” showcases the partnerships between Harris County Department of Education and school districts and organizations.

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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Harris County Students Attend Houston Urban Debate League Summer Institute through CASE Debates

Thirty-four CASE Debates students joined other young debaters at the Houston Urban Debate League (HUDL) Summer Institute last week to develop their public speaking skills and learn more about the theory of debate. The CASE Debates students represented seven schools, three districts and two charter schools in Harris County.

In their first year at the week-long institute, CASE Debates students chose between three different types of labs: the General Lab, where students learned about research and the fundamentals of debate, or the more advanced World Schools and Policy Debate labs which teach students how to construct arguments and counter plans.

CASE Debates is a program which pairs a successful, established debate model created by HUDL with the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, HCDE's afterschool intermediary.

"Debate provides students with critical thinking, research and public speaking skills," says CASE for Kids Project Coordinator Toni Candis. "They also learn how to collaborate well with others and engage in civil discourse, while also gaining useful tools that can be used in preparation of college and career."

Among this year's attendees was promising young debater Queen Eche. The Kerr High School junior has been participating in debate since her freshman year and can speak at an impressive 220 words per minute, a debate technique that takes skill and many hours of practice.

Eche and her partner participate in Policy Debate and joined the CASE Debates program in 2017 to gain more opportunities to attend tournaments in the area. Eche plans on carrying her debate skills to college and eventually use them as a criminal justice attorney.

For more information about CASE Debates, call 713-696-1331 or visit www.afterschoolzone.org.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carol Vaughn
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HCDE's CASE Debates prompts critical thinking, constructive argument among teens in Harris County schools

View photos: <https://goo.gl/KUT4NK> (password is hcde1889)

Jan. 31, 2018 - High school seniors Diego Colindres and Syed Fatmi both joined CASE Debates for the appeal of crafting an argument with their peers. Colindres' debate format in a team of five called "World Schools" is impromptu. Fatmi's style with one teammate is formal and defined as "Policy" debate.

Teen debate in Houston is blossoming through a new project called "CASE Debates" which pairs a successful, established debate model created by the Houston Urban Debate League, or HUDL, with Harris County Department of Education's afterschool intermediary which serves 9,000 youth in Harris County, the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids.

"Having debate as an activity is an access point where multiple campuses have the same interest, allowing us to bring together teens from multiple districts under one content area," said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, CASE for Kids director. "Kids can see the real-world application for personal development, and there is appeal because it's competitive."

Fatmi, from Kerr High School in Alief ISD, likes to explore his debate topic, digging deeper into researching climate change. His "Policy" debate style is a well-established, traditional style which is research-based and allows students to specialize in a single subject throughout the year. Colindres, from charter school Yes Prep North Central in Aldine, likes to argue in the moment through "World Schools" debate style, grabbing his research topic 30 minutes before the debate and using the dictionary, almanac and thesaurus to map his positioning.

HUDL coordinator Andy Stubbs is deft in listing the positives of both styles of debate for youth adults.

"The core skill set is that it's interdisciplinary," Stubbs said. "Learning how to research comes in handy in classes like science and social studies. One of the things we teach is that a good argument is structured, whether it be in writing or speaking."

The CASE Debates program is funded through HCDE and provides debate services, including three seminars, for students in 10 high schools in greater Harris County. Previously, HUDL was

serving campuses in HISD only, so spreading the program is literally spreading the fervor for debate.

“Debate sparks and nurtures critical thinking while also helping students improve communication skills,” said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. “We are building relationships across school districts in Harris County, allowing youth to converse and compete and educators to build partnerships.”

Teachers like Yes Prep North Central English instructor Alison Kilfoyle say debate is the tool they are using to equip their students for college as it makes use of organization, research and oratory skills.

“I happened to reach out to HCDE CASE for Kids when this came up,” said Kilfoyle, who teaches gifted students. “My kids had been asking for debate for years, and it really aligns with where they are headed.”

CASE Debates is supported by several members of AmeriCorps VISTA, professionals who commit to volunteering for a year of service to specific projects. Members focus on building organizational, administrative and financial capacity for the organization they serve.

A CASE Debates tournament held Jan. 20 at Taylor High School in Alief ISD will be followed by a tournament at Elsie High School in Alief ISD on Feb. 3. A third finalist tournament will be held in downtown Houston on Feb. 24.

For more information about CASE Debates, call 713-696-1331 or go to www.afterschoolzone.org.

Photo: Students from Taylor High School in Alief ISD strategize before a debate tournament held at their school Jan. 20.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CASE for Kids Awarded \$1.5 Million in Federal Funding for 2018-2019 to Serve 10 Schools with Comprehensive Afterschool Programs

July 26, 2018 - The Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, has been awarded \$1.5 million in federal grants to fund afterschool programs through the Texas Education Agency for the 2018-2019 school year. The 10 schools receiving the funding through CASE for Kids are located within two area school districts and four charter school organizations.

Schools include Galena Park ISD's North Shore, Tice and Williamson elementary schools and Sheldon ISD's C.E. King High School, C.E. King Middle School and Royalwood Elementary School. Charter schools include Baker Ripley Promise Community School, Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA) George I. Sanchez High School, Raul Yzaguirre Schools for Success Houston STEM & Early College High School and Southwest Schools Southwest Bissonnet Elementary.

The grant period for the federally-funded, 21st Century Community Learning Center grants is from Aug. 1, 2018 to July 31, 2019.

The Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, provides resources, training and afterschool services for over 9,000 students in greater Harris County.

In Texas, the program regulated by TEA called Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, or Texas ACE operates before and after school sites, as well as summer enrichment. Sites provide students in grades K-12 with opportunities to access academic enrichment, tutorial services and a broad range of additional programs and enrichment activities. These can include physical fitness, nutrition, science, the arts, internships and dual credit.

The federal grants make the locally-based CASE for Kids eligible for two additional years of afterschool funding contingent upon available funds and performance. This is the 10th cohort of grants TEA has awarded since the federal program's beginnings in 2002, and CASE for Kids has gained and managed funding through all 10 cycles.

"More than ever, children need safe places to go and enriching activities to get involved in," said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, CASE for Kids director. "We remain committed to Houston-area families as an out-of-school time leader."

-more-

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CASE for Kids employee Izaguirre gives back to youth after benefiting from rodeo scholarship

March 9, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids Program Coordinator Adrian Izaguirre believes in giving back what you take, an attitude that keeps him busy. As a Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo scholarship recipient, the Houston ISD Chavez High School alumni graduated debt free from the University of North Texas in 2016 with the help of a four-year scholarship.

During the day, Izaguirre helps facilitates grants to nonprofits which provide afterschool programs for at-risk, urban youth. Called CASE for Kids City Connections, the city of Houston afterschool funding spreads to youth throughout 11 Houston City Council districts.

As a division of Harris County Department of Education, the afterschool intermediary called CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings and funding for students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities and community centers. The goal is to keep kids safe, help working families, provide enriching activities and improve academic achievement.

After hours, Izaguirre serves on two rodeo committees as a volunteer: The Alumni Task Force which recruits scholarship recipients as rodeo volunteers and the Go Tejano Committee, a rodeo committee which fundraises for scholarships for Hispanic youth. The group hosts a food booth during the length of the rodeo, a mariachi competition and a golf tournament.

Izaguirre is all about preserving culture. The south Houston resident likes volunteering for the rodeo because it brings people together for the common goal of preserving the Texas western culture.

“In doing so, we’re embracing that (western and Hispanic) culture and keeping it alive while also helping through an education aspect with youth,” he said.

“I believe the most rewarding part is passing the torch along as one of the students needing help to one of the volunteers giving back,” said Izaguirre.

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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Danielle Clark Appointed Chief Communications Officer at Harris County Department of Education

Sept. 6, 2018 - Strategic communicator Danielle Clark has been appointed chief communications officer for Harris County Department of Education. In her new position, Clark will lead both communications, client engagement and technology planning and implementation.

HCDE provides education services to 25 Harris County school districts and taxpayers with services which include special schools, afterschool, school-based therapy services, adult education and Head Start.

Clark most recently served as executive director of communications for the Pourdre School District in Fort Collins, Co. She is an accredited public relations (APR) professional with 19 years in urban, suburban and rural county educational settings. In her current county role as chief communicator, she looks forward to continued success in building community relations with school districts and Harris County residents who look to HCDE for education services.

A recognized and award-winning school public relations leader, Clark held leadership roles in three National School Public Relations Association state chapters and was named one of four top front-runners in the country in 2017.

The Klein resident earned a Bachelor of Arts in broadcast journalism from the University of Southern California and worked in television and newspaper markets in California before pursuing a career in school public relations. She completed master's degree coursework in education at the University of Tennessee.

Clark and her husband have two daughters attending Klein public schools. She volunteers through organizations which include the American Heart Association, the March of Dimes and Go Public Gulf Coast, an education group which promotes area public schools.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carol Vaughn
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Complimentary School Safety Event Set for June 6 at HCDE Provides Topics to Promote Security

May 11, 2018 - Attend the School Safety Institute on June 6 from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington, Houston, Texas to gain strategies to change your school climate and strengthen security. The free event features Gaye Lange, director for Restorative Practices for the Texas Education Agency; Sasha McLean, executive director of Archway Academy, a recovery school; and Eloise Sepeda, a Restorative Justice trainer.

Breakout sessions include the following topics: active shooter response, mental health first aid for educators, cyber security, threat assessment, dropout prevention awareness, social and emotional learning and panel discussions with area chiefs of police.

“Restorative Practices is introduced in this institute as a way for schools to change the school climate, which is a big step towards improving school safety and open communication,” said Ecomet Burley, director for HCDE’s Center for Safe and Secure Schools, host of the institute.

Complimentary breakfast and lunch are included with registration. The first 50 registrants receive a \$50 discount on upcoming June 26 workshop “What are Restorative Practices?”

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) credits will be issued to commissioned law enforcement and continuing education units will be given to educators.

Register in advance to attend the free event at www.hcde-texas.org/register (search for workshop number 11962 or date). View the flier: <http://bit.ly/2G6yObK> .

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Danielle Bartz Appointed Chief of Staff for Harris County Department of Education

July 23, 2018 - Policy strategist Danielle Bartz has been appointed as chief of staff for Harris County Department of Education. The leadership position supports and advises the HCDE superintendent and the Department's services.

The East Texas native and Eastwood-area resident most recently served as director of the City of Houston Boards and Commissions. Her experience with state, county and local government affairs is bolstered by expertise in both project management and development.

Bartz earned a master's degree in public affairs and a bachelor's degree in government and Spanish from the University of Texas. She is a former Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar, a TEDx speaker and she volunteers with the Texas Bluebonnet Girls State program, a government and citizenship camp for teenage girls.

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Early Childhood Winter Conference gets earlier – Jan. 27 event to include track for teachers of children from birth to age 3

Special education, bilingual teaching, and social emotional learning among session topics at annual event hosted by HCDE

Jan. 9, 2018 - Early childhood educators throughout Texas will learn from national speakers and fellow educators at the 32nd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference hosted by Harris County Department of Education. The conference, which typically draws more than 1,000 attendees, will take place on Jan. 27 from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Kingdom Builders' Center, 6011 W. Orem Dr. in Houston, Texas.

The keynote speaker is international presenter Becky Bailey, founder of Conscious Discipline, a whole-school solution for social-emotional learning and self-regulation. The bilingual keynote speaker is Gilberto Soto, musical motivator, guitar aficionado and music professor at Texas A&M International University.

Traditionally the conference served teachers of grades pre-k through second grade, but this year a new birth-to-age 3 learning track benefits teachers of the earliest learners.

“One of the challenges we face as early childhood educators is finding high-quality conferences,” said Maria Del Socorro, principal at Farias Early Childhood Center in Houston Independent School District. “This conference is perfect for the type of early childhood educator who really wants to grow in his or her profession. We know we greatly benefit from national speakers at conferences, but we also have teacher (presenters) because we know that teachers learn from other teachers.”

Session topics include:

- special education
- bilingual education
- social emotional learning (SEL) strategies
- how to empower parents in the community
- disability-related needs and inclusion
- behavior and classroom management

-more-

Attendees will also have the opportunity to network and experiment with new research-based strategies.

For more information about the conference, go to www.hcde-texas.org/ECWC. Register for the conference at www.hcde-texas.org/register (search by date). Cost is \$110 before Jan. 27 and \$135 at check-in.

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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2019 Early Childhood Conference Features Emmy STEM Star Steve Spangler

Aug. 17, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education's Teaching and Learning Center hosts the 33rd annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference on Jan. 26, 2019 at the Kingdom Builder's Center. This year's keynote speaker is television celebrity Steve Spangler with "The Science of Creating Amazing Experiences aka Best Day Ever." This best-selling author, Emmy Award-winning speaker and Ellen DeGeneres Show regular creates experiments that get everybody excited about science.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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Emotional narrative on Harvey earns Kinkaid student HCDE regional ‘best-in-class’ award from Scholastic Art & Writing

Feb. 22, 2018 - With Harvey floodwaters invading his home, teen Noah Rubinson had 10 minutes to collect the things most important to him.

His written reflections during that short time span earned the Kinkaid High sophomore a distinguished award from Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Regional Affiliate Harris County Department of Education.

As an American Voices nominee, he and four other students judged out of 2,000-plus writing entries receive a best-in-class award for writing. One will receive the national American Voices Medal judged by a panel of jurors in New York City. Rubinson also earned a regional Gold Key from local affiliate HCDE, making him eligible for an additional national medal.

His English teacher Jennifer Kehler saw promise right away in her student’s class assignment, a personal narrative. It was the first writing homework for flood-shocked students as they returned to the refuge of their school community post-Harvey.

“It was a way to work through what had happened, to understand what is important in those types of situations,” Kehler said. “Students were asked to write a narrative after reading a Tim O’Brien novel of survival called ‘The Things They Carried.’”

Rubinson, 16, wrote about the items he reached for after his father announced an abrupt, early-morning evacuation of their condo-home situated in zip code 77024. The Memorial-area neighborhood experienced controlled flooding two days after the hurricane flood waters had receded. The murky water began rising downstairs on Aug. 30, 2018, just as the Rubinsons thought they had escaped Harvey’s wrath.

“I watched as the art I made in kindergarten – art that had been stuck onto my refrigerator since we moved in – floated away,” he wrote. “This was not a nightmare. Nightmares are scary; this was terrifying.”

Interrupting his thoughts on material items was a call to action to help a sister with developmental delays who suffers from debilitating seizures. Undoubtedly she would depend on her brother’s calm demeanor to guide her from harm’s way.

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“My sister and I are extremely close, best friends,” he said. “My dad said, ‘you need to help with Ella.’ At that point the water chest-high on me would have been up to her neck.”

A friend with a boat helped the Rubinsons to dry ground less than a few blocks away. But they would not return to their home. Like many other Houston-Harvey families, they opted for new housing.

The experience still seems surreal to Rubinson, and the American Voices award was just as unexpected. His work will be recognized regionally by Harris County Department of Education as students, teachers and family attend an awards ceremony on March 20 at the Ballroom at Bayou Place, 500 Texas, Houston, Texas.

As regional affiliate, HCDE is responsible for judging the awards through volunteer writing professionals. Community partners like the Women in the Visual and Literary Arts and Texas Art Supply provide local scholarships. Gold Key and American Voices nominees like Rubinson advance to national judging through the Alliance of Young Artists & Writers team in New York City for additional awards and scholarships announced in mid-March.

Like any proud parent, Mom Kim posted her son’s story and award announcement through social media. People reading the story were touched to tears by the teen’s maturity and attachment to the immaterial things in life.

“When put up against family, against the most important people in the world, the people that can never be replaced, nothing else matters,” he wrote. “I could move past my phone and my wallet and my keys, past the photos and the art. I could never move past my family.”

The teen writer says the award is for everyone in Houston who weathered the storm of the century.

“It’s a tribute to everyone who experienced the tragedy of Harvey,” Rubinson said. “It belongs to all of us.”

View the Scholastic receptions press release: <https://goo.gl/uStGjo>
Read Noah Rubinson’s personal narrative “The Important Things”: <http://bit.ly/2GB0kyP>
Learn more about 2018 Scholastic Art & Writing Regional Affiliate Harris County Department of Education recipients : www.hcde-texas.org/Scholastic .

Photo: Noah Rubinson stands on a bench to demonstrate the depth of the Harvey floodwaters outside his home. The murky water rose to the top of his head.

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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Events/stories at Harris County Department of Education: Holidays and Post-Holiday, 12/07/18-1/26/19

Please call Carol Vaughn, 281-660-9205, cvaughn@hcde-texas.org or Jeri Martinez, 281-748-1623, jmartinez@hcde-texas.org for details about each holiday or post-holiday event.

Friday, Dec. 7: (10:20-11 a.m. for first marketplace round and 12-12:50 p.m. for second) Kids Day Entrepreneurship - A winter wonderland marketplace with the hustle/bustle of Wall Street.

Handmade goods created in afterschool programs by students enrolled in CASE for Kids programs; kids gain business commerce and entrepreneurship skills in lively, timed marketplace. Awards given for various categories. **Big picture:** Afterschool is not just about babysitting. Programs like these give students exposure to careers and hobbies they can't access during the school day. Address: 6005 Westview at HCDE's North Post Oak Building.

Wednesday, Dec. 12: 10 a.m., Bates Collision Channelview Responsible Parenting Award 20th Anniversary: HCDE Head Start mom Sheena Gulley. She is a single mother who is raising four children without a benefit of a car. She depends on public transportation or walks. She works graveyard shifts at Walmart. She wants to be involved in her children's school activities, but transportation often grounds her. Currently she is working on getting her GED. **Big picture:** Bates employees have taken on this service project on each year for the past 20 years, working after hours rehabbing a car and getting it ready during a time of year that is hectic already. Head Start is a federal program that focuses on the entire family and provides services to help the entire family. Address: 15532 East Freeway, Channelview, Texas

Thursday, Dec. 12: 10 a.m., Bates Collision Baytown Responsible Parenting Award 20th Anniversary: Car giveaway set for HCDE Head Start's Parishellia Banks of Baytown. Banks works at Let's Learn Academy. She is currently raising her deceased niece's child; her niece died in childbirth. Address: 3219 N. Main St., Baytown, Texas

Thursday, Dec. 13: 11 a.m., Adult Education National Honor Society: Adult students who overcome hardships to go back to school tell their stories, ESL, GED and workforce training students. **Big picture:** See how workforce-driven education works within the adult education landscape. Students are learning English, gaining GEDs and accessing jobs and careers at the same time. Address: 6300 Irvington, Houston, Texas

Saturday, Jan. 26: 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Early Childhood Winter Conference: 1,000 early childhood educators attend for professional development with Steve Spangler, science guru who performs dazzling science experiments onstage, as well as 100 breakout sessions for educators. **Big picture:** What is the future of full-day, pre-k education in Texas? Talk to educators who are passionate and pragmatic about making it happen. Address: Kingdom Builders' Center, 6011 W. Orem, Houston, Texas

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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Fight Summer Slide: Summer Learning Day with CASE for Kids, Precinct 1 Reinforces Purposeful Learning

Photos: <https://bit.ly/2uAoDZu> (password hcde1889)

Aniyah Johnson, 8, thinks summer learning is cool because it beats staying at home. During Summer Learning Day, a national advocacy day to support keeping kids learning, safe and healthy, she measured the buoyancy in beach sands, tracked her heart rate and had fun splashing in the water. Fun stuff, she says.

The Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, provides resources, training and afterschool services for over 9,000 students in greater Harris County. CASE for Kids hosted “Let’s Have a Beach Blast with Summer Learning Day” with the Harris County Precinct 1 summer enrichment program. Approximately 125 children participated.

“Today we talk about kids learning through the summer because we don’t want kids losing any of their academic knowledge during summer,” said CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers. “We’re engaging kids in purposeful learning while they are doing fun and exciting activities using their academic skill sets.”

Nutty Scientist of Houston, a CASE for Kids Select Provider who supplies fun, science education to afterschool sites, was on hand helping kids to explore properties of sand. Another activity was tracking heart rates while Zumba dancing. Kids also tried yoga to relax and tested their creativity through some art projects.

“I believe summer programs are important because you get to connect to new people and have new bonds while also enjoying a safe environment,” said Christopher Mosley, 13, who attends Yes Prep Fifth Ward during the school year.

“I’m learning new things this summer like teamwork and communication—things I can use later in life,” he said.

Education research shows that students can lose two to three months of academic skills in the summer. Caruthers says teachers spend a lot of time reteaching and getting kids back on track because of the lapse in skills use.

The National Summer Learning Association, which promotes the nationwide awareness day, says kids can gain weight twice as fast due to inactivity during the summer when they’re out of school.

“You can find great resources at libraries to help with academic support,” said Caruthers. “Zoos and museums are other good options that offer free or discounted activities.”

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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First-year Teacher Nguyen Finds Career Niche through HCDE's Teacher Alternative Certification Program

April 17, 2018 - First-year teacher Christopher Nguyen sees himself as a guide for the next generation after his own struggles growing up without much life direction.

Post-college, he moved from one job to the next: nanny, librarian, martial arts instructor and cook. Once he decided to teach, Nguyen researched alternative teacher certification programs and chose Harris County Department of Education's Teacher Alternative Certification Program.

HCDE's educator preparation program provides a personalized training experience for aspiring teachers as qualified college graduates enter the program and spend seven to 10 months in pre-service training taking teacher preparation courses. The next 12 months are spent teaching and taking additional coursework. Veteran teachers model and mentor the new teachers with small group instruction which is hallmark to the teacher-prep program.

"In talking to fellow teachers, I have realized that the HCDE program had better prepared me for my school year because of their hands-on methods and excellent and experience staff," Nguyen said.

For six years, the program has recorded a 100 percent pass rate for students completing the courses and taking the certification exams, said Lidia Zatopek, director for HCDE's Educator Certification and Professional Advancement. Assistance is provided in securing teaching assignments in elementary or secondary education classrooms.

Nguyen found his first-year assignment at Worthing High School, a predominantly African-American, low-socioeconomic, Title 1 school which is being monitored by the Texas Education Agency for low performance. Many of his students came into his physics class reading at a fourth-grade level. In one year he's watched them grow academically and emotionally.

Houston Independent School District Assistant Principal Ashley Britton points to Nguyen's energy and passion as part of the reason students in his classroom have seen phenomenal growth, moving from 20 to 70 percent proficiency for subject-area benchmarks.

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“He incorporates a lot of writing and reading into the classroom,” she said. “He makes kids think outside the box and gets buy-in from them.”

The first-year physics teacher works determinably at a fast pace, moving with laser-focus from one student to the next in the eight stations he created to study electric force. They work with everyday household items like PVC pipe, balloons, straws and water. Comprehension of theories and hypotheses must be shared in everyday terms.

“I try my best to model it to real-world cases that will be supported by the student’s own background knowledge,” he said. “In that way, I hope the lesson sticks.

“Being able to observe their growth is very rewarding.”

The novice teacher doesn’t mind giving up lunch hours and planning periods for tutoring or leaving campus late after teaching extracurricular martial arts classes.

In fact, it’s hardly registered that Nguyen has earned the nomination of “Teacher of the Year” at Worthing High. He is also a nominee for the Texas Alternative Certification Association Intern of the Year.

Still, the 28-year old realizes he’s taken on a challenging tour of duty.

“By throwing myself into the fire, I (thought I) would hopefully be able to become a better teacher,” he said.

Student Darius Hines, 16, never much liked science before his teacher came to Worthing. These days he looks forward to coming to physics class.

“We have a really good connection with him,” Hines said. “He’s just a great teacher.” HCDE is recruiting teachers for its Teacher Alternative Certification Program. For more information, go to www.hcde-texas.org/teacherprep , call 713-696-1348 or email hcdeacp@hcde-texas.org

Photo: First-year teacher Christopher Nguyen works with student Darius Hines in his physics class at Worthing High School. Nguyen gained his college degree and is now working on his certification through Harris County Department of Education’s Teacher Alternative Certification Program. For information about the program, go to www.hcde-texas.org/teacherprep .

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Former Head Start Center Manager Honored through Family's Book Donation

Enoud Bennett, beloved former center manager at Harris County Department of Education's Channelview Head Start Center, is remembered as a leader with a heart for children and literacy.

Bennett died in June 2017, leaving behind a legacy of service and promoting early literacy. As the year anniversary of Bennett's passing approached, Bennett's mother, Ruby, and two sisters, Beverly and Rose, began brainstorming ways to carry on her legacy. They reached out to friends, family and Bennett's church to collect books, resulting in more than 500 books to gift to Head Start students.

"We're donating these books in honor of Enoud," said Beverly Bennett at the Channelview center, where friends and family gathered to remember Bennett. "She loved to give back and she loved kids."

Bennett dedicated more than 30 years to the Head Start organization, working at the Compton, Humble, Barrett Station, Fifth Ward and Channelview locations. Bennett's passion for education and desire to make a difference in her community touched the lives of students and staff alike.

Hattie Weston, family services provider at the Channelview center, fondly remembers Bennett's lively interactions with the children at the center.

"She loved teaching children and she wouldn't just read to them, she would make the books come alive," said Weston. "She told students books would take them everywhere."

Through this donation, each student at the Compton, Humble, Barrett Station, Fifth Ward and Channelview locations will receive books to take home and build their home libraries.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Free Skilled Medical Classes at Harris County Department of Education Supply Building-Block Approach to Medical Careers

June 25, 2018 - Before enrolling in free GED and medical classes at Harris County Department of Education, student Deysi Gonzalez admits to watching too much TV in her free time.

“I saw a sign that said free GED classes, so I enrolled,” she said.

Within the month, she earned her GED. Twelve weeks later, she became a certified nursing assistant, or CNA, and began working in a nursing home. In a matter of six months, she will increase her hourly earnings by getting her phlebotomist certification, the profession of drawing and collecting blood samples from patients. She also plans to take the EKG class at HCDE. The resulting hourly salary range will be from \$17-\$21, plus benefits.

Through a series of workforce training classes at HCDE’s Adult Education, Gonzalez is growing her medical skills and earning capabilities. The programs made available through HCDE and the Texas Workforce Commission allow students to gain academic and workforce skills at the same time.

In phlebotomy classes, adult basic education teacher Rochelle Bell supports the academic end, providing help with math and language skills and assisting students with memorization and review methodologies.

Phlebotomy teacher Netta Trahan brings 30 years of drawing blood to the classroom. She provides the clinical expertise to students.

Sticking someone with a needle was a tough go the first time for student Jennifer Ortiz. With no pun intended, Ortiz “stuck with it” and earned the reputation as the no. 1 phlebotomist in her class. Her goal is to work in a hospital setting.

The class provides techniques to blood drawing, equipment preparation and instruction on customer service techniques that help make patients comfortable. During the first day of class, students get hands-on experience by drawing blood from one another.

“If you face fear and get it out of the way, you can be a beast,” said Trahan of allaying her students’ fears.

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Bell believes the building-block approach to gaining medical skills like drawing blood or performing an EKG makes sense.

“In today’s world, everybody is not made for college, so it gives students a chance to test out things,” she said. “You get hands-on training, and it’s paid for.”

For information about phlebotomy or other medical workforce, GED or English as a second language classes at Harris County Department of Education, go to www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation or call 713-692-6216.

About Harris County Department of Education: HCDE provides special education, therapy services, early education, adult education and after-school programming. Services are funded by government grants, fees and a local property tax rate of \$.005195. For every dollar in local property tax collected, HCDE provides \$4.40 in services to the 25 Harris County school districts. HCDE also operates four campuses for students with profound special education needs and adjudicated youth who require a low student-teacher ratio and highly structured environment. One-hundred percent of students served on HCDE campuses are at-risk. The organization is governed by an elected board of seven trustees and has 1,060 employees and 33 facilities, including 15 Head Start centers. More info at www.hcde-texas.org.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Game of Chess Teaches Life Skills to Students with Behavior Disorders: Tourney set for March 28

*(Catch up with Jake Carley and his classmates as Harris County Department of Education Academic and Behavior Schools host the 2nd Annual Chess Tournament **Wednesday, March 28 from 10-11:30 a.m. at 6300 Irvington, Blvd., Houston, Texas.** Call HCDE Communications at 281-660-9205 for information about interview opportunities and coverage.)*

The game of chess is the one extracurricular activity that sits well with teenager Jake Carley. In fact, the shiny trophy he recently won at a state tournament is the first he's ever received.

The 13-year-old attends Academic and Behavior School East, one of two Harris County Department of Education schools which provides enriching, supportive learning for students with intellectual, development and behavioral disorders. Jake is diagnosed with depression and Asperger's, a milder autism spectrum disorder. He is highly intelligent and enjoys sharing what he learns during his school day with his family.

Mom Brandy Carley says his temper flared and stress levels rose when Jake tried sports like football and baseball. Chess makes him feel confident.

"I'm proud, very proud," she said. "I always knew from an early age that he was socially different from other children, but I am proud of who he is."

HCDE's special schools work with students with disabilities in a highly-structured environment with low student-to-teacher ratios of eight to one through individualized academic and behavior plans. Chess is introduced to students as an extracurricular activity during the school day and is offered through nonprofit Perfect TeamPlay, Inc.

Benefits of chess pair well with students attending the two AB campuses in east and west Houston. Increased attention span, improved social conduct, enhanced self-esteem and better classroom behavior are a few examples.

AB West Principal Victor Keys notes that students practice following directions and accepting consequences and criticism, qualities which are important in the real world.

Losing at anything was always an issue with Brandy's son before he discovered chess, she explained. The game teaches him patience and gives him a sense of peace his mother sees as a sign of growth.

"We've noticed the skills our students gained through chess—time, attention, patience and strategy—have transferred into the classroom and throughout the school community," said AB East Principal Mindy Robertson.

Mom Carley confirms the positives.

"I'm glad he found something he is successful at," she said. "He's found his place."

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harris County Department of Education announces teens for 2018 Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Jan. 25, 2018 - Teen awardees for the 2018 Harris County Department of Education Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are announced as a record 6,225 Harris County entries are judged in the prestigious competition. Recipients join the ranks with iconic writers and artists Sylvia Plath, Robert Redford, Truman Capote, Andy Warhol and Richard Avedon, who all earned awards as Scholastic Art & Writing awards as teens.

View the awards: <https://goo.gl/1eDk9f>

Twenty-one school districts, two charter schools and 16 private schools are represented as students earn Gold Key, Silver Key and honorable mention awards. Gold Key recipients advance to national judging to be considered for Gold and Silver Medals which are announced in March and awarded in June through a ceremony at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, founded in 1923, provides young artists and writers in grades 7-12 with the opportunity to showcase their work as it identifies and documents their outstanding achievements. The competition's mission is to bring outstanding visual art and writing created by teens to a national audience by showcasing the work and encouraging creative and career development.

Students submitted their work through the 531 teachers who support and participate in HCDE's regional competition. Several hundred volunteer art and writing professionals judge the submittals.

"We are grateful for the supporters of Scholastic Art & Writing in Harris County—from the community supporters who offer space to showcase art and writing to the companies who offer student scholarships to the hundreds of judges who volunteer their time," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "There is a deep well of artistic talent represented, and we are proud to host, showcase and support this iconic program."

The following area school districts are represented: Aldine, Alief, Alvin, Clear Creek, Crosby, Cy-Fair, Deer Park, Friendswood, Galena Park, Goose Creek, Houston, Huffman, Humble, Katy, Klein, New Caney, Pasadena, Pearland, Spring Branch, Spring and Tomball. Charter schools include KIPP Academy and YES Prep.

Private school students with awards include: Calvin Nelms, Annunciation Orthodox, Concordia Lutheran, Duchesne Academy, Emery Weiner, Episcopal High, Houston Christian High, Incarnate Word, Kinkaid School, Presbyterian School, River Oaks Baptist, St. Agnes Academy, St. Thomas High, St. John's, Tenney School and the Village School. Several private art school and home school students are also represented.

Harris County students earned 1,696 Gold Key, Silver Key and honorable mention awards. Through the art categories, students gain 321 Gold Keys, 423 Silver Keys, and 374 honorable mentions. In the writing categories, students earn 95 Gold Keys, 143 Silver Keys, and 340 honorable mentions.

Ten students earned recognition through the American Voices and American Vision awards. These 10 awards are judged nationally through Scholastic Art & Writing in New York City for American Voices/American Visions Medals. One in each art and writing category will be selected and announced in March.

American Visions (art) awardees: Kara Alker, Cypress Woods High School, Cy-Fair ISD; Lillian Hogan, Kingwood Park High School, Humble ISD; Amy Vaclavik, Taylor High School, Katy ISD; Christina Zhou, Tompkins High School, Katy ISD; and Emilio Recio, Rayburn High School, Pasadena ISD

American Voices (writing) awardees: Emma Bennett, High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Houston ISD; Cora Wen, Carnegie Vanguard High School, Houston ISD; William Sharpe, Krimmel Intermediate School, Klein ISD; Noah Rubinson, Kinkaid School; and Sophia Sutter, St. Agnes Academy

For more information about HCDE's regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and opportunities to sponsor, judge and enter the competition, go to www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic .

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harris County Students Attend Houston Urban Debate League Summer Institute through CASE Debates

Aug. 5, 2018 - Thirty-four CASE Debates students joined other young debaters at the Houston Urban Debate League (HUDL) Summer Institute last week to develop their public speaking skills and learn more about the theory of debate. The CASE Debates students represented seven schools, three districts and two charter schools in Harris County.

In their first year at the week-long institute, CASE Debates students chose between three different types of labs: the General Lab, where students learned about research and the fundamentals of debate, or the more advanced World Schools and Policy Debate labs which teach students how to construct arguments and counter plans.

CASE Debates is a program which pairs a successful, established debate model created by HUDL with the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, HCDE's afterschool intermediary.

"Debate provides students with critical thinking, research and public speaking skills," says CASE for Kids Project Coordinator Toni Candis. "They also learn how to collaborate well with others and engage in civil discourse, while also gaining useful tools that can be used in preparation of college and career."

Among this year's attendees was promising young debater Queen Eche. The Kerr High School junior has been participating in debate since her freshman year and can speak at an impressive 220 words per minute, a debate technique that takes skill and many hours of practice.

Eche and her partner participate in Policy Debate and joined the CASE Debates program in 2017 to gain more opportunities to attend tournaments in the area. Eche plans on carrying her debate skills to college and eventually use them as a criminal justice attorney.

For more information about CASE Debates, call 713-696-1331 or visit www.afterschoolzone.org.

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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HCDE Board Adopts Lower Tax Rate in Move to Conserve Tax Dollars

Sept. 20, 2018 - In a move to continue its fiscal accountability, Harris County Department of Education's Board of Trustees voted for a fourth consecutive year to adopt a tax rate below the effective tax rate.

HCDE trustees adopted the proposed rate of \$.005190 in a vote of six to one. The rate is significantly lower than the 2018 effective tax rate of \$0.005279 and lower than last year's (2017) tax rate of \$.005195.

"We continue to be below the effective tax rate," said HCDE Board President Louis D. Evans III. "We are going to go back and take a look at everything to make sure there is no waste. We will make sure that we can still provide our current services, expand the number of students that need to be served, and still represent the taxpayers."

With an average Harris County residence valued at \$169,843 in August 2018, the adopted rate of \$.005190 per \$100 assessed property value will mean the average homeowner will pay \$8.81, less than \$9 a year for HCDE services.

Services from HCDE benefit school districts and the community at large and include adult education, special schools, school-based therapy services and afterschool programming.

About Harris County Department of Education: HCDE provides special education, therapy services, early education, adult education and after-school programming. Services are funded by government grants, fees and a local property tax of less than \$9 per homeowner. For every dollar in local property tax collected, HCDE provides \$4.70 in services to the 25 Harris County school districts. We operate four campuses for students with profound special education needs and adjudicated or recovering youth who require a low, student-teacher ratio and highly structured environment. One-hundred percent of students served on HCDE campuses are at-risk. We are governed by an elected board of seven trustees and have 1,076 employees and 33 facilities, including 15 Head Start centers. More info at www.hcde-texas.org .

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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HCDE Board Lowers Property Tax Rate as ‘Good Stewards for Taxpayers’

Sept. 18, 2019 – With the welfare of taxpayers in mind, Harris County Department of Education’s Board of Trustees voted for a fifth consecutive year to adopt a tax rate below the effective tax rate.

Fiscal accountability continues to be on the minds of board members as HCDE trustees adopted the tax rate of \$0.0050 in a vote of five to two. The rate is significantly lower than the 2019 effective tax rate of \$0.005030 and the proposed tax rate of \$0.005029.

The 2018-2019 tax rate was \$.005190 per \$100 assessed property value.

“HCDE continues to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars for the citizens of Harris County,” said James Colbert Jr., Harris County school superintendent.

For a home valued at \$150,000, the adopted rate of \$0.0050 means the taxpayer will pay HCDE \$7.50. For home valued at \$250,000, the tax bill will be \$12.50.

Services from HCDE benefit school districts and the community at large, providing wraparound services which include adult education, special schools, school-based therapy services, Head Start and afterschool programming.

About Harris County Department of Education: HCDE is a unique, educational hybrid serving school districts, governmental agencies, nonprofits and the public in the third-largest county in the U.S. HCDE annually serves a quarter-million students and educators through schools for students with profound special needs; the largest adult education program in Texas; Head Start early childhood education; school-based therapy services; and afterschool programs. Educator professional development and certification, school safety, records management, and a purchasing cooperative are also provided. #SeeTheImpact at www.hcde-texas.org.

HCDE Celebrates School Board Recognition Month

Harris County Department of Education joins school districts across the state in January to thank the HCDE Board of Trustees for their commitment and contributions to the students of Harris County. This year's campaign is "Helping Kids Soar to Success."

"Our board members serve countless hours working to enhance education in Harris County," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "We thank them for providing vision and leadership for the Department."

The Board of Trustees will be honored at a reception before the Jan. 24 board meeting. Board members to be honored include Louis Evans, president; Eric Dick, vice president; Erica Lee Carter, trustee; George Moore, trustee; Don Sumners, trustee; Diane Trautman, trustee; and Michael Wolfe, trustee.

Each January, the Texas Association of School Boards organizes the School Board Recognition Month campaign to focus on the crucial role an elected board of trustees plays in our communities and schools. For more information, visit <https://goo.gl/ZfKLss>.



HCDE MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

What: HCDE Celebrates Week of the Young Child with Head Start Center Tour

In celebration of the Week of the Young Child, Head Start invites media to tour a Head Start centers this week to view our classroom activities and hands-on learning with 3-4 year olds.

Who: Visit classrooms of children ages 3-5 as they go through their daily learning routines through our open house.

When: 10-11 a.m., Thursday, April 19

Where: Harris County Department of Education Head Start Center at Fonwood Elementary, 9709 Mesa Dr., Houston, Texas 77078

Why: Head Start is currently recruiting students and staff at all of its 15 centers in northeast Houston. For more information about registration, go to www.hcde-texas.org/headstart or call 713-672-9343

Media contact: Contact Carol Vaughn, Communications and Creative Services manager at 281-660-9205 or Lindsey Sanders, communications coordinator at 903-563-1649.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HCDE Center's Services Evolve with School Districts' Safety Needs

View video: https://youtu.be/86Xtft-dB_8

School safety and security remain a concern as school districts deal with issues like school shootings, cyberbullying, discipline and emergency management planning. Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools continues to evolve and seek innovative ways to build safer and more secure learning environments for area school districts in greater Harris County.

Currently, the Center for Safe and Secure Schools focuses on four areas of services: school culture and climate, emergency management planning, safe schools plans and facility audits, and member benefits.

Ecomet Burley, director of the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, says the Center's newest service area called Restorative Discipline provides alternative discipline methods versus the traditional, expulsionary or punitive systems. He took time this month to answer several questions about the Center, which was founded in 1999 at the request of area school superintendents to advance safe and secure school environments. Learn more about the Center at www.safeandsecureschools.org.

Why is it important to have an organization like the Center for Safe and Secure Schools available to school districts?

We support school districts' efforts to have safe teaching and learning environments. We can become experts in this area because of our specialization and laser-focused scope of work around safety and security in the educational environment. Our staff has literally walked in the shoes of educators and understands the day-to-day challenges. We can design programs and trainings to fit the needs of educators who are in the "trenches" because we've been there and understand those challenges.

How can school districts assure parents that districts are doing a good job with school security?

Districts can assure parents that they are doing a good job with school security by communicating with parents throughout the year about what they are doing to keep their child's

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school safe. Parent meetings, e-newsletters and social media can be used to communicate real-time information before, during and after an emergency. Parents appreciate being informed about things that may impact their child's safety at school.

What about teachers? Are they stressed out about school safety?

Educators are very concerned about school safety these days. With the recent high profile active shooter events, school safety and security has come to the forefront. Policymakers, students, parents, educators and the public are intensely focused on this issue right now.

What about the issue of educators being armed in the classroom?

On the issue of arming educators in schools, this evokes a lot of strong emotions. Personally, I think that we must be careful with that idea, and it needs to be discussed and vetted well. In some rural districts it might make sense because of the amount of time it takes for first responders to get to the site, whereas here in the inner or suburban cities many of our schools have armed, commissioned officers on campus. The response time is typically three minutes or less. Ultimately, I think it is a local district decision that needs to be discussed and looked at in the context of what is best for our district and our situation.

How have services evolved throughout the years to help districts? What do you think the biggest challenge is now for districts in terms of school safety?

The most urgent challenge in terms of school safety for educators and policy makers today is how do we protect our students from those who would come into our schools to hurt and kill students due to mental health issues or other reasons? How do we better protect our students while they are at school? Additionally, educators understand that the "whole child" must be educated. Social and emotional health for students has emerged as an issue that educators must address. They need to receive training to deal with some of the issues students bring to the school house today.

We respond to the emerging issues in education such as the concern over the number of black and Hispanic students being expelled, suspended or assigned to alternative education facilities. We are responding to this issue with training in Restorative Discipline, which provides educators with skills to develop positive, healthy relationships with students. Educators explore alternative ways to hold students accountable for inappropriate behavior versus relying on exclusionary practices to correct inappropriate behavior.

How can Restorative Discipline help prevent acts of aggression in a school? Why is it needed today, and what does it look like when it's put into action in a school community?

Restorative Discipline can help prevent acts of aggression through its intentional focus on building healthy, positive relationships. It teaches educators how to create "safe spaces" for students to have a voice and platform to talk about issues that may be affecting them at home or at school. The "circle process" creates connectivity and discussion between students and teachers and students-to-students. Moreover, it creates a support system and avenue to resolve conflicts, repair harm to relationships and teach social skills that are critical to peace-making and safe school learning/teaching environments.

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However, there is a mind shift that is required, and that is a part of our school staff and student training.

What is an Emergency Operations Plan, or EOP? How does it affect the school community?

All Texas public schools are required by statute to have these plans in place and updated annually or as often as needed. An EOP forms the foundation for a good, effective, school safety plan. The EOP should outline a district or school's plan to prevent, mitigate, respond and recover from an emergency event. EOPs proactively provide guidance for staff, students, and administrators in event an emergency occurs. The entire school community should be aware of the plan and review it to use in the event of emergency.

For more information about the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, call 713-696-2127 or email eburley@hcde-texas.org .

About the Center for Safe and Secure Schools: The Center was established in 1999 at the request of school superintendents to advance safe and secure environments for learning and teaching. We partner with federal, state and local entities to take the lead in the development of increased safety and security strategies, standards and best practices for K-16 school environments for both students and educators. The Center continually seeks new and innovative opportunities to build safer and more secure learning environments, www.hcde-texas.org.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HCDE commended for superior online financial transparency from Texas Comptroller

Jan. 24, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education has received three commendations from the Texas Comptroller for its commitment to easy, online access to HCDE financial data. The transparency awards were announced at the HCDE Board of Trustees Public Hearing on Jan. 24 regarding findings of the HCDE Annual Financial Management Report.

The recognitions are part of the department's ongoing efforts to provide open and honest communication with Harris County taxpayers and other community stakeholders through online, financial transparency processes.

"Our board and administration believe that in order to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, we must provide an open, unfiltered window into our organization," said Board President Louis Evans. "Financial transparency is just one example of this."

According to a report from the Texas Comptroller Office, HCDE is one of two of the 1,350 "special districts" throughout the state to earn three fiscal "Transparency Stars" commendation awards.

Specifically, the awards from Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar commend HCDE for transparency in the areas of debt obligation, contracts and procurement, and traditional finances. Those goals are achieved through HCDE's website on a visually enhanced financial transparency page at www.hcde-texas.org/transparency. The page offers visual and narrative detail on finances, including outstanding debt obligations; spending and revenue information; and accountability and transparency for contracting activities.

The Texas Comptroller Office launched its program called "Transparency Stars" in March 2016 to recognize cities, counties, school districts and special-purpose districts which make important strides toward greater government transparency. After achieving a base level of transparency, districts can apply to gain accreditation for five additional areas. HCDE achieved all of those applicable transparency categories.

Also Wednesday, Whitley Penn shared the results of the 2016-2017 Annual Financial Audit of HCDE. The department received the highest possible rating of "unmodified opinion" of HCDE's financial statements.

For more information about HCDE's financial management, visit www.hcde-texas.org/transparency .

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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HCDE Communications Staff Earns 4 National School Public Relations Awards in 2018 Competition

Harris County Department of Education's Communications and Creative Services division has received four National School Public Relations Association 2018 (NSPRA) Publications and Digital Media Awards.

NSPRA judged 1,061 public relations entries this year and provided 648 awards. A selection of those awards will be on display at the national conference in Anaheim, California in July.

HCDE awards are as follows:

- Award of Merit for Excellence in Writing: Hurricane Harvey Photos Earn Scholastic Art & Writing Award (story by Lindsey Sanders, Communications and Creative Services coordinator)
 - Award of Merit for Harris County Department of Education News Blog (Communications and Creative Services staff members Carol Vaughn, Lindsey Sanders, Daniel Villarreal and Dave Einsele)
 - Honorable Mention for video Houston Mayor Turner GoPublic Message (Communications and Creative Services videographer Daniel Villarreal)
 - Honorable Mention for video HCDE/Bates Collision Centers Car Giveaway (Communications and Creative Services videographer Daniel Villarreal)
- Publications and Electronic Digital Awards provide recognition for district and school communication efforts in print, digital, video, audio, websites and more. NSPRA is recognized as the leader in school communication and has provided the awards for more than 50 years.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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HCDE Communicators honored with 12 public relations awards from 2018 Texas School Public Relations Association Annual Conference

Feb. 22, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education communicators earned 12 awards for outstanding education communications from the Texas School Public Relations Association. Communications and Creative Services and Client Development staff received the awards at the 56th Annual Texas School Public Relations Association Conference in Frisco, Texas on Feb. 21, 2018.

This year, 1,331 entries were judged through categories including photography, writing, video, advertisements, social media, brochures and posters. Categories of entries are divided based on merit, including Bronze Star, Silver Star, and Gold Star. Judges reviewed highest-scoring Gold Star winners and selected Best of Category awards.

One Best of Category award was awarded for specialty/novelty writing to Carol Vaughn, Communications and Creative Services, for a Highpoint School East article entitled: Turning Anger to Success.

In addition, communicators gained five Gold Star awards for the following entries:

- Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, Teaching and Learning division, poster, Angela Hider
- Head Start Student Receives School Supplies, Head Start division, photography, Lindsey Sanders
- Turning from Anger to Success, Schools division, specialty/novelty writing, Carol Vaughn
- Lead Now! Educator Certification and Professional Advancement, advertisement, Dave Einsel, Carol Vaughn and Maya Livingston
- Choice Partners, Choice Partners Cooperative, brochure, Juan Lopez

Five Silver Stars and one Bronze Star were awarded:

- Head Start Annual Report, Head Start division, Lindsey Sanders and Angela Hider
- Thriving vs. Surviving Article, Schools division, Lindsey Sanders
- Bates Custom Collision Video, Head Start division, Daniel Villarreal
- Hub Superintendent Message, Administration division, Daniel Villarreal
- HCDE Classrooms Video Promotion, Schools division, Daniel Villarreal
- Aging Workforce Article, Adult Education, (Bronze Star), Carol Vaughn

The Texas School Public Relations Association is a nonprofit, professional organization dedicated to promoting public schools through effective communications. With more than 900

members, TSPRA is comprised primarily of public information and communications professionals who serve the public school districts and education organizations of Texas. Membership also includes superintendents, administrators, principals, web/technology/electronic media and graphic professionals, education foundation executive directors and their boards, association executive directors, school consultants, vendors, and others who support public education in the state. TSPRA is a chapter of the National School Public Relations Association.

Photo: Members of the Harris County Department of Education communicators team attend the Texas School Public Relations Association Conference 2018 where the team earned 13 awards for work which benefits Harris County students and educators

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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HCDE Head Start Employee Kwarteng Serves Families through Nutrition Education

March 27, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education Head Start employee Shonika Kwarteng is dedicated to serving Harris County families enrolled in the Head Start program through nutrition education. As the nutrition services manager, Kwarteng oversees all nutrition functions in the program and helps families develop and maintain healthy eating habits.

Free nutrition and health services are among the benefits provided to families of children enrolled in the HCDE Head Start program. While Kwarteng ensures children receive nutritiously adequate meals at the centers, she also works with Head Start performance standards to make sure children are screened, nutritional risks are handled and that children with food allergies and dietary needs are accommodated.

“Many of the services we offer Head Start families come through nutrition education,” said Kwarteng. “However, if a family identifies a need, we meet with them and complete a nutrition assessment—similar to what they would get in an outpatient setting.”

Kwarteng and her team also work with Head Start Education and Special Services to incorporate nutrition and healthy lifestyle topics into the curriculum. Students learn about healthy foods in the classroom and how healthy eating benefits their bodies.

The annual Head Start Food Science Fair is one example of adding nutrition into the curriculum. For a project each year, students select a fruit or vegetable and work with their families to create a healthy dish to be judged at the month’s Parent Policy Council Meeting.

“An additional layer to nutrition education is that our children are eating those foods in the classroom,” said Kwarteng. “Our goal is to show children a wide variety of nutritious foods and teach them the benefits of healthy eating from a young age. Hopefully they will build on that foundation in the future.”

March is National Nutrition Month, a nutrition education and information campaign created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. For more information, visit <https://goo.gl/xGzfyS>.

For information on HCDE Head Start services, visit www.hcde-texas.org/headstart.

About Harris County Department of Education: HCDE provides special education, therapy services, early education, adult education and after-school programming. Services are funded by government grants, fees and a local property tax rate of \$.005195. For every dollar in local property tax collected, HCDE provides \$4.40 in services to the 25 Harris County school districts. HCDE also operates four campuses for students with profound special education needs and adjudicated youth who require a low student-teacher ratio and highly structured environment. One-hundred percent of students served on HCDE campuses are at-risk. The organization is governed by an elected board of seven trustees and has 1,060 employees and 33 facilities, including 15 Head Start centers. More info at <http://www.hcde-texas.org> .



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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cvaughn@hcde-texas.org
281-660-9205

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Carol Vaughn
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cvaughn@hcde-texas.org
281-660-9205

Harris County Department of Education Head Start Hosts Job Interview Fair June 14

June 4, 2018- Harris County Department of Education is hosting a job interview fair to recruit teachers, teaching assistants, family service providers and other staff members to join any of its 15 locations throughout northeast Harris County. The recruitment event will be held Thursday, June 14, 2018, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 6300 Irvington Blvd.

Qualifications for Head Start Teaching Assistant, Early Head Start Teacher and Head Start Teacher include experience working with young children and an interest in early childhood education. Those who hold child development associate (CDA) degrees are strongly encouraged to apply. Interested candidates may call 713-696-2177 or email HSeducation@hcde-texas.org.

HCDE Head Start provides services to facilities in Barrett Station, Baytown, Channelview, Compton, Coolwood, Dogan, Fifth Ward, Fonwood, Humble, J.D. Walker, La Porte, Pugh, San Jacinto, Sheffield and Tidwell. Head Start ensures future success for students both academically and socially and provides comprehensive health, education, nutrition and financial services to the families.

Find more information on positions available and qualifications. Visit www.hcde-texas.org/HeadStart for general information about HCDE Head Start and locations.

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Harris County Department of Education Head Start Hosts Interview Fair Jan. 27

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



Media Contact:

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HCDE Head Start Now Hiring

Sept. 24, 2018 - Have an interest in working with infants to 5-year-olds?

Harris County Department of Education Head Start and Early Head Start programs are looking for energetic and nurturing professionals to join their staff.

Qualifications for Head Start teaching assistant, Early Head Start teacher and Head Start teacher include experience working with young children and an interest in early childhood education. Those who hold Child Development Associate (CDA) degrees are strongly encouraged to apply.

HCDE employees have advantages with a competitive salary, great benefits, work schedules matching school districts, all major holidays, free professional development, and teacher retirement and social security.

HCDE Head Start provides family services to communities including Barrett Station, Baytown, Channelview, Compton, Coolwood, Dogan, Fifth Ward, Fonwood, Humble, J.D. Walker, La Porte, Pugh, San Jacinto, Sheffield and Tidwell. Head Start ensures future success for students both academically and socially and provides comprehensive health, education, nutrition and financial services to the families.

For more information on available positions and qualifications or to apply, visit www.hcde-texas.org. Make sure to upload resume, transcripts and/or degree or certifications, along with application. Upon receipt of all information, HCDE will contact individuals to schedule an interview.

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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HCDE Head Start Recruits Students for Immediate Openings in 4 Communities

Sept. 17, 2018 - Four Harris County Department of Education Head Start centers (Baytown, Humble, La Porte and Tidwell) are recruiting students ages 3-5 for preschool for the 2018-19 school year. In addition, Early Head Start services to children 6 weeks to 3 years of age are available at the Baytown Head Start Center.

Head Start ensures future success for students both academically and socially and provides comprehensive health, education, nutrition and financial services to the families. Healthy meals and snacks are provided for students during the day.

Parent involvement opportunities are provided along with service referrals to meet family needs. Family engagement activities are hallmark to the program.

Eligible children are those from low-income families and with disabilities between ages 3-5. Applicants should present the following at registration:

- Proof of age - child's state birth certificate, state birth facts or passport
- Proof of address - lease contract, current utility bill, state ID, benefits letter or paycheck stub
- Proof of income - current tax form (W-2 or 1040), 12 months of check stubs, child support payment record, verification of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Supplemental Security Income

The centers are located at 1725 N. Pruet St. in Baytown, 130 Atascocita Rd. in Humble, 927 South 1st St. in La Porte and 8302 John Ralston Rd. in Houston (Tidwell). The Baytown Early Head Start center is located at 1319 N. Pruet St.

Other openings may become available at the 15 centers HCDE operates in northeast Houston. For more information about registration, call 713-672-9343 or visit www.hcde-texas.org/headstart.

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Digital Citizenship, Safety Highlighted at Harris County Department of Education Cybersecurity Conference

As technology continues to grow and change, how can school districts ensure students are safe and responsible users? Harris County Department of Education's Cybersecurity in Education Conference on March 27 highlights digital citizenship and online safety during a day-long experience with experts in the cybersecurity field. The conference will be held at 6300 Irvington Blvd. from 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

The conference's keynote speaker, Jim Morrison with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), will discuss social media and computer safety in the 21st century. Students are increasingly using social media daily, but these sites can also be used by criminals to victimize people. Participants will learn to identify these threats during his session.

Educators, instructional technology teachers, administrators and police officers will also benefit from digital citizenship sessions on keeping student information confidential, appropriate use of social media, increasing students' digital literacy skills and awareness of digital footprints, and modeling positive online interactions.

Other workshop topics include data privacy and protection and developing cybersecurity programs in the K-12 curriculum. Find more information and register at www.hcde-texas.org/cybersecurity.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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903-563-1649

Harris County Department of Education Head Start hosts interview fair Jan. 27

Jan. 22, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education Head Start is hosting an interview fair to recruit teachers, teaching assistants, family service providers and other staff members to join any of its 15 locations spread throughout northeast Harris County. The recruitment event will be held Saturday, Jan. 27, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the 100 rooms at 6300 Irvington Blvd.

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Harris County Department of Education names 2018 Teacher of the Year
Teacher of the Year finalists recognized during first ever recognition ceremony

Harris County Department of Education named Highpoint East teacher JoAnna Lee as the 2018 Teacher of the Year at a special recognition ceremony on May 15. Lee was selected from three Teacher of the Year finalists from HCDE's schools and will receive \$1,000 donated by online learning company Edgenuity.

In its inaugural year, the HCDE Teacher of the Year program recognizes teaching excellence from its Academic and Behavior and Highpoint East campuses. This year's finalists for Teacher of the Year were Gabrielle Gore Gardner, Academic and Behavior School East; Suzanne Boyd, Academic and Behavior School West; and JoAnna Lee, Highpoint School East. All three finalists were honored at the ceremony surrounded by family, friends and HCDE administrators.

"JoAnna Lee's dedication to serving at-risk students goes beyond classroom instruction," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "HCDE is blessed by her leadership and ability to compassionately meet her students' needs."

Lee is a veteran English teacher who nurtures a love of writing and literature in her students. As an experienced educator in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), she works with teachers new to the DAEP setting to share her experience and passion for teaching at-risk students.

HCDE's Highpoint School East is a campus for troubled youth in grades 6-12 that offers a safe and highly-structured learning environment, with a low student-to-teacher ratio. Students come to Highpoint on a contract basis through their home school district with the goal of returning to and graduating from their home-district high school.

Read more about Lee's experience and passion for helping at-risk students at <https://bit.ly/2L11kPL>. Find more information about HCDE's schools at www.hcde-texas.org/schools.

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



Media Contact:

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Email: cvaughn@hcde-texas.org

HCDE Secures Federal Grant for \$480,233 to Support School Violence Prevention, Student Mental Health

Oct. 22, 2018 - A \$480,233 federal grant will propel a three-year, layered approach to school violence prevention and mental health training in Harris County schools through Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools. The two strands of training empower both students and school staff to help them prevent or prepare for school violence like the shooting in Santa Fe, Texas.

The U.S. Department of Justice grant award, called Student, Teacher and Officers Prevention (STOP) School Violence Prevention and Mental Health Training program enables adult trainings in active shooter scenarios, threat assessment, the Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate (ALICE) programs and Youth Mental Health First Aid. The program provides training for two staff members from each of the 25 Harris County school districts, twice a year.

A second strand of the grant trains 9,500 students during its first year of implementation in Harris County school districts. In 2018-2019, 13 intermediate and middle school campuses are included: 10 from Pasadena and three from La Porte independent school districts. During school years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, an additional 17 schools are added.

"Students gain training in crisis intervention, restorative discipline, bullying prevention and Rachel's Challenge, a program focused on anti-bullying," said Ecomet Burley, director for the Center for Safe and Secure Schools. "We also incorporated information gleaned from Gov. Greg Abbott's School and Firearm Safety Plan."

Burley said this past summer, center officials invited teachers and school personnel and officials from the 25 districts to learn about the grant opportunity. Pasadena and La Porte signed up for year one of the grant.

HCDE's Center for Grants Development secured the three-year grant. Within the application, research showed that of 1.8 million youth in Houston/Harris County, 32 percent of local middle and high school students feel unsafe going to and leaving from school. According to Texas Education Agency databases, 1,168 assaults were reported on campuses across Houston/Harris County during the 2016-2017 school year, along with 136 weapons found.

The Center for Safe and Secure Schools plans a menu of school safety workshops for the public throughout the year, including the Human Trafficking Summit on Nov. 13 with Children at Risk. For more information, go to www.hcde-texas.org/register.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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HCDE Short: CASE for Kids Coordinator Chavez Helps Provide Water Well to Children in Guatemala

April 3, 2018 - Jacqueline Chavez works each day to connect Houston children in afterschool programs with enriching activities in the fine arts, sports and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) through the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids. During Spring Break 2018, the program coordinator reached beyond the familiar to supply basic needs to impoverished children in Guatemala through a volunteer project.

Through a nonprofit called Living Water International, Chavez joined a team to drill a shallow water well in the village of San Benito, a community of 60. While there, she and a team of volunteers provided basic hygiene education training to children and their parents.

The Katy resident says the trip allowed her to connect with people around the world and begin to understand the challenges and needs of communities different from our own.

“This experience was very personal for me because I was able to teach the kids and families different skills that are not usually taught in the classroom,” she said. “About 30 men, women and children gathered every afternoon to learn about hygiene and sanitation. It reminded me of the important work we do at Harris County Department of Education through CASE for Kids as we work to serve families.”

Through CASE for Kids, Chavez is able to invest in youth while working towards the well-being of the community, she said. The essence of her trip can be summed up through this affirmation quoted from the nonprofit she serves: “It’s hard to know which lives are changed more—those ‘serving’ or those ‘being served’.”

About the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids:

As an afterschool intermediary, CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings and funding for students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities and community centers. As a branch of Harris County Department of Education, the division was founded in 1999 with a goal to keep kids safe, help working families and improve academic achievement: www.afterschoolzone.org .

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HCDE MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HCDE Head Start End-of-Year Carnival at J.D. Walker Baytown Celebrates Successes

What: Celebration carnival for students at Harris County Department of Education's J.D. Walker Head Start Center with games, magician and activities

Who: Students ages 3-5 and their families who are enrolled in J.D. Walker Head Start

When: 9-10 a.m. on Thursday, May 24, 2018

Where: Harris County Department of Education J.D. Walker Head Start Center, 7613-A Wade Road, Baytown, Texas, 77521

Etc.: HCDE Head Start operates 15 centers located throughout northeast Houston, including J.D. Walker in Baytown and the Baytown Head Start/Early Head Start centers, 1319 N. Pruett St. Children of income-eligible families and children with special needs are served through the program. Services are free of charge. Currently Head Start is recruiting children at each site for the 2018-2019 school year. For more information on registration please call 713-672-9343 or go to www.hcde-texas.org/headstart .

Media contact: Contact Carol Vaughn, 281-660-9205



HCDE MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Head Start End-of-Year Carnival Celebrates Successes, Recruits Families for 2018-2019

What: Celebration carnival for students at Harris County Department of Education's J.D. Walker Head Start Center with games, activities and information for families interested in services for 2018-2019.

Who: Students ages 3-5 enrolled in J.D. Walker Head Start

When: 9-10 a.m. on Thursday, May 24, 2018

Where: Harris County Department of Education J.D. Walker Head Start Center, 7613-A Wade Road, Baytown, Texas, 77521

Etc.: HCDE Head Start operates 15 centers located throughout northeast Houston, including J.D. Walker in Baytown and the Baytown Head Start/Early Head Start centers, 1319 N. Pruett St. Children of income-eligible families and children with special needs are served through the program. Currently Head Start is recruiting children at each site for the 2018-2019 school year. For more information on registration please call **713-672-9343** or go to www.hcde-texas.org/headstart .

Media contact: Contact Carol Vaughn, 281-660-9205

About HCDE Head Start/ Early Head Start: Harris County Department of Education provides education and comprehensive services to over 1,300 income eligible infants to 5 and their families. Our goal is school readiness, and we want to make sure that our children are prepared to enter into kindergarten. HCDE Head Start provides services to families by developing relationships with social service agencies, local businesses, universities and other community entities. The program gives families a foundation for developing healthy futures and successful lives.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Carol Vaughn
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Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference equips professionals, caregivers of children with challenging behaviors

April 11, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education Head Start is hosting the 4th annual Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference on May 4 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. at 6300 Irvington Blvd. Cost of the workshop is only \$10 and includes lunch and free parking through a grant-funded initiative from the Hogg Foundation.

The conference is open to early childhood educators, families, members of the Head Start community and others who work with children with challenging behaviors. The focus of the event is to provide participants with tools for working with children with challenging behaviors and increase public awareness of mental health issues among children and adults.

Conference funder the [Hogg Foundation](#) advances recovery and wellness in Texas by funding mental health services, policy analysis, research and public education.

To register for the conference, visit <http://bit.ly/2JiP906> .

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Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference equips professionals, caregivers of children with challenging behaviors

Harris County Department of Education Head Start is hosting the 4th annual Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference on May 4 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. at 6300 Irvington Blvd. Cost of the workshop is only \$10 and includes lunch and free parking through a grant-funded initiative from the Hogg Foundation.

The conference is open to early childhood educators, families, members of the Head Start community and others who work with children with challenging behaviors. The focus of the event is to provide participants with tools for working with children with challenging behaviors and increase public awareness of mental health issues among children and adults.

Conference funder the [Hogg Foundation](#) advances recovery and wellness in Texas by funding mental health services, policy analysis, research and public education.

To register for the conference, visit <https://bit.ly/2JiP906>.

PRESS RELEASE

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Human Trafficking Summit Gathers Educators to Design Solutions Nov. 13

Nov. 7, 2018 - Human trafficking seems like a foreign concept to many families, but veteran teacher Linette Caroselli provides a cautionary tale of how it happened to her own 19-year-old daughter.

The Arizona mother shares her daughter's story of physical abuse, psychological terror, manipulation, rape and sex trafficking at the Human Trafficking Summit on Nov. 13, from 8:30 a.m.-2:45 p.m. at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington, Houston, Texas.

The event hosted by Children At Risk and HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools (CSSS) is \$20 for adults and \$5 for students. Breakfast and lunch are included, and parking is free. Register at <https://t.co/lwh9XOXv91>.

"The purpose of the Human Trafficking Summit is to focus on the problem of human trafficking together and find multi-pronged solutions to end it," said Ecomet Burley, director for the CSSS.

Presenters include Christina Crenshaw, professor from Baylor University who researches human trafficking prevention education and serves on several state anti-trafficking taskforces. Restorative practices expert Eloise Sepeda talks about helping to heal survivors of violence and exploitation. Christopher Greeley of Texas Children's Hospital speaks about child abuse and neglect. HCDE speakers David McGeary and Lynnice Hockaday talk about digital bullying.

Children At Risk attorney Caroline Roberts shares the following statistics about human trafficking:

- 35,000 Texas children attend school within 1,000 feet of a suspected illegal massage business.
- 900,000 children attend school within a mile of a suspected front for human trafficking.
- 78,996 minor and youth sex trafficking victims were reported in Texas.
- 1 in 5 endangered runaways reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children in 2015 were likely sex trafficking victims.
- 75 percent of likely victims were in the care of social services or foster care when they ran.
- Abuse, neglect, interaction with Foster Care or the Juvenile Justice System and substance abuse are risk factors for human trafficking.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kids' Day at Hobby Performances 2018 Provide Opportunity for Student Voice Event photos: <https://bit.ly/2KtLJet> (password hcde1889)

June 28, 2018 - In the aftermath of devastation from Hurricane Harvey and grief from the Santa Fe shootings, the June 21, 2018 Kids' Day at Hobby Center performances reflected part of a healing process. Mixed with cultural celebrations of traditional Mexican and Brazilian dance and African drumming, the voice of youth opinion, fear and hope was evident in the performing arts productions.

Led by local performing artists and influenced by the youth enrolled in summer programs, Kids' Day at Hobby Center gives students enrolled in summer enrichment programs the opportunity to express themselves through dance, theatre, puppetry, song and visual arts. The Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, has provided the enrichment opportunity each summer for the past 10 years through various partnerships, including Hobby Center for the Performing arts.

"I like theatre because it allows me to express myself," said Stafford High School student Jaylah Allen, who performed in a production written by the students with assistance from Ensemble Theatre performing artist Anthony Glover.

Glover says theatre is a healthy outlet for youth because they can talk about life through theatre. Teens talk and act out things they are going through and broach subjects like bullying, suicide and violence.

"It also allows me to prepare for speeches and presentations that will help me in the future," said Allen, a college-bound eleventh grader.

The event gives students the chance to learn from the local professional artists and perform on the iconic stage in downtown Houston. Students worked with the local performing artists like puppeteer Greg Ruhe, hip hop artist Chris Cortez, drummer Sam Dinkins and visual artist Monica Foote.

Students are enrolled in elementary, middle and high school summer programs through CASE for Kids. CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings and funding for afterschool programs, serving students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities and community centers throughout Harris County.

-more-

The schools included Best and Smith elementary schools and Albright Middle School in Alief; Bammel Middle School in Spring; Garrett Elementary School in Sheldon, Stafford High School in Stafford, Clear Creek Intermediate in Clear Creek, and Francis Elementary in Aldine. Charter school Academy of Accelerated Learning also participates. Fine arts vendors working with CASE for Kids in the summer program include MECA, Ondi Love, Brazilian Arts, Dinky Drum, Savannah Blue, Artist Boat, Puppet Pizzazz, Houston Healthy Hip Hop and Ensemble Theatre. Students participating in Kids' Day at Hobby Center are enrolled in CASE for Kids summer programs through the Texas Education Agency's Afterschool Centers on Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center and the Partnership Project. Partnership Project is a collaboration between HCDE, the Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC), the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and awarded sites. HCDE commits local funds to supplement comprehensive afterschool programming.

For more about CASE for Kids or Kids' Day at Hobby, go to www.afterschoolzone.org.

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Keith Oliphant Named New Principal at Academic and Behavior School East

Veteran educator Keith Oliphant has been named the new principal of Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior School East.

With more than 20 years of teaching experience, Oliphant has taught in Alief, Fort Bend and Houston independent school districts. He most recently served as the assistant principal at HCDE's Academic and Behavior School West.

Throughout his career, the Sugar Land resident has served as a teacher, teacher mentor, educational consultant and assistant principal and specializes in crisis prevention, special education and instructional leadership. He holds a master's degree in educational leadership from Prairie View A&M and a bachelor's degree in sociology from Sam Houston State University.

Oliphant is an active member of the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), Texas High School Coaches Association (THSCA) and The American Red Cross.

HCDE's Academic and Behavior schools provide an enriching and supportive learning environment for students ages 5-22 with intellectual, developmental and behavioral disorders. For more information, visit www.hcde-texas.org.



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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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Kindergarten Students Learn Chemistry Through Children's Literature

View video: <https://youtu.be/TLEPO96CMfg>

Dec. 3, 2018 - When you think of kindergarten classes, you picture kids playing with building blocks and coloring. However, kindergarten students at Franz Elementary in Katy Independent School District are learning chemistry through children's literature. This curriculum was made possible from Harris County Department of Education Teaching and Learning Center's Science Fiction: Teaching Chemistry with Children's Literature workshop.

HCDE Curriculum Director of Science Lisa Felske taught the course for many years, but it is now offered online for busy educators who can work at their own pace like Katy ISD Title 1 Science Facilitator Tammy Matthews.

"In searching for trainings to go to better myself this year, I searched the HCDE website and found that they were offering several online courses," Matthews said. "Of course, with our busy schedules I thought great, this would be perfect for me to do."

The title of the workshop seemed intriguing to her because she wanted to better the science curriculum in her district.

"I am trying to grow my rigor in the lower elementary in science courses as well as the upper elementary," Matthews said. "In looking into it, I just felt like it was a great fit for me especially being online."

This course covers topics in chemistry like metals, nonmetals, dissolving, properties of matter and soil chemistry. Children's books used in the course are "Zack's Alligator," "Two Bad Ants," "Gregory the Terrible Eater" and "Diary of a Worm."

Franz Elementary kindergarten bilingual teacher Patricia Muskus went through the same workshop about eight years ago and has been using "Zack's Alligator" in her classroom.

"I liked it so much because it is more orientated towards kindergartners, so I brought it back to my team and have been doing the lesson every year," Muskus said. "We did the measurement portion of the lesson, but this year added the sections of weight and absorption."

Students enjoyed the fact that there's an alligator named Bridget in the story. Each classroom has their very own Bridget to water and see how she grows.

“It’s truly engaging because we’re learning vocabulary, changes and measurements, which is a very wide range of learning,” Muskus said. “It takes about two weeks for this lesson because we’re observing the changes in size of Bridget the Alligator and recording them in a journal.”

Currently, Franz Elementary is the only school in Katy ISD using the program but Matthews will be sharing the curriculum with teachers at other Katy schools.

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Photo: Franz Elementary teacher Patricia Muskus introduces chemistry through children’s literature book: “Zack’s Alligator.”

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Legacy of Literacy Day event on Feb. 24 features free, family-friendly activities

Feb. 19, 2018 - Families are invited to the Legacy of Literacy Day event on Saturday, Feb. 24 from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at 6402 Market St. for free books, games and prizes, arts and crafts, face painting and more. Harris County Department of Education Head Start, the Assistance League of Houston and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services host the event. View the event flyer: http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/5199/headstart_legacyofliteracy.pdf .

HCDE Head Start is currently recruiting students and their families for services at 15 Head Start/Early Head Start locations in northeast Harris County. Learn more at <http://www.hcde-texas.org/headstart> .

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Longtime HCDE supporter Bates Collision Centers ‘fuels smiles’ by giving away two vehicles to Harvey survivors
Head Start parent, employee to unwrap cars after receiving Responsible Parenting awards

Dec. 12, 2017 – After losing their cars during Hurricane Harvey and enduring daily transportation challenges, Harris County Department of Education Head Start employee Bahiyyah Rashed and parent Vanessa Zuniga are receiving a special gift from Bates Collision Centers: the gift of transportation.

In its 19th year, HCDE Head Start’s partnership with Bates Collision Centers is giving away cars No. 33 and 34 to two moms who will be recognized with the Responsible Parenting Award. Owners Lee and Leila Bates have made this annual giveaway a priority because they recognize the sacrifices parents often make in order to provide for their children.

“We’re fueling brighter futures,” said Lee Bates, president of Bates Collision Centers. “Responsible parenting is so important and it’s a big job in every family. But it becomes even harder when all the pieces aren’t in place, like transportation.”

Rashed and Zuniga were nominated by Head Start Center managers. Bates employees donate time to work on the cars and help fill them with gifts, and other community members and businesses donate gas, insurance and materials needed to rehab the cars.

Leila Bates, vice president, says both she and Lee are proud of their employees who continue to supply time and resources to families they have yet to meet.

HCDE Head Start Senior Director Venetia Peacock believes the partnership is particularly important this year as parents face transportation issues post-Harvey.

“We continue to be thankful for our partnership with Bates Collision Centers,” said Peacock. “These cars make a difference in the lives of families who are already committed to making the world a better place for their children.”

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About Bahiyah Rashed, HCDE Head Start Tidwell Center, recipient of the 33rd rehabbed car:

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Bahiyah Rashed is a valued teacher at Tidwell Head Start, single mother of two sons Deon, 10 and Daveon, 9, and guardian to niece Kelsi, 7. Since losing her vehicle during Hurricane Harvey, Rashed has been sharing a vehicle with her mother. While the car has been a blessing, it has occasional mechanical issues and can be unreliable while trying to attend school, work and many extracurricular activities.

About Vanessa Zuniga, HCDE Head Start Pugh Center, recipient of the 34th rehabbed car:

Vanessa Zuniga is the single parent of Nathan, 4, and employed full-time. Zuniga lost her vehicle during Hurricane Harvey and shares rides with friends and family. She begins her day early and waits for extended times to be picked up from work. She also relies on family members for Nathan's school rides.

Lowell Ballard Named Technology Director at Harris County Department of Education

Technology leader Lowell Ballard has been named the new director of Technology Support Services at Harris County Department of Education.

With more than 25 years of technology experience, Ballard's strengths include IT strategy, IT security/disaster recovery and business intelligence. He most recently served as the chief information officer at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin, where he coordinated university-wide IT initiatives in a high-growth environment.

Ballard holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Virginia Tech and a master's degree in information systems from George Mason University. He is also a certified Information Systems Security Professional and holds a number of additional leadership and management certifications.

PRESS RELEASE

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Students, Nutrition Directors Activate their Taste-Buds for HCDE Choice Partners Annual Child Nutrition and Product Expo Oct. 11

Oct. 8, 2018 - Students and school nutrition staff activate their taste-buds in preparation for the Child Nutrition and Product Expo on Oct. 11 from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. through Harris County Department of Education's Choice Partners Cooperative. The "Lights! Camera! Nutrition!" retro, Hollywood-themed event features 140 food and product vendors at the Humble Civic Center, 8233 Will Clayton Parkway in Humble, Texas.

About 250 nutrition directors and representatives from school districts, charters and community colleges participate in the expo. They bring an estimated 150 students along to taste-test their products which may eventually make their way into the Choice Partners purchasing cooperative. Students and directors grade the vendors' offerings.

Foods trending this year include the following:

- Hand-held, food-truck type items and culturally-influenced foods with distinctive spices for flavoring. MCI Los Cabos introduces three flavors of a handmade, one-fisted, foil-wrapped, taqueria-style burrito for authentic look and taste. Rich Products provides a new whole-grain flatbread for making banh mi street tacos or gyro sandwiches.
- Clean-label items with no artificial colors or flavors, free of nitrites/nitrates, gluten, MSG, hormones or steroids and void of the top eight allergens.
- Jennie-O Turkey Store delivers an all-natural line, which includes a turkey burger and turkey coins, pre-sliced and fully cooked.

"As the school nutrition directors evaluate nutritional value and their students' opinions, Choice Partners gathers information needed to plan for future food contract purchases for school districts," said Trisha Jensen, assistant director of Choice Partners.

Food is purchased annually by school districts in the Harris County area for more than 85 million student lunches through contracts available through HCDE Choice Partners cooperative. Choice Partners purchasing cooperative offers quality, legal procurement and contract solutions to meet government purchasing requirements. For more information about Choice Partners and the buying power through the co-op, go to www.hcde-texas.org.

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HCDE MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Mental Health Resources for Young Children Focus
of 'Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference' May 4**
Resources Centered on Trauma, Grief, Violence, Relaxation

What: Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference provides strategies to improve children's mental health during Mental Health Awareness Month.

15 workshop strands cover topics ranging from to post-Harvey trauma training to active shooter training to incorporating yoga and mindfulness to domestic violence and child abuse/neglect. Keynote speaker is Dr. Jinneh Dyson, acclaimed author of *Success Beyond Stress* and mental health advocate.

Who: Early childhood educators, parents of young children are attending along with mental health experts. Sponsored by Harris County Department of Education Head Start and the HOGG Foundation for Mental Health.

When: 9-11 a.m., Friday, May 4

Where: Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington Blvd., Houston, Texas 77022

Media contacts: Contact Carol Vaughn, 281-660-9205 and Lindsey Sanders, 903-563-1649



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Music Motivation Drives School-Based Therapy Services Partnership with Cypress-Fairbanks

Nov. 26, 2018 - Music is the great motivator, and HCDE music therapist Ann Petty has used her music therapy training to benefit students in the classroom for 25 years, with 15 exclusively in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD.

She begins the day with Bella, 6, a wide-eyed, jubilant child at Hairgrove Elementary working with Petty in her life skills classroom. Bella repeats phrases and works on looking in the direction of the speaker. Later, she sings and plays the tambourine and drum.

Petty travels to three-to-five Cy-Fair ISD campuses a day and works with both students and their teachers, implementing activities that will support academics, social skills and communication. She also uses neurological principles for improving communication, psycho-social and cognitive skills. Students may be getting a song strategy for counting nickels or learning an algebraic formula. Another who has attention-deficit disorder works through a music routine so that he can participate in a classroom session for up to 20 minutes.

"When I see that he is able to fulfill that goal, I know that is progress," Petty said. Like her counterparts who practice physical and occupational therapy, Petty must evaluate students. She will support Individualized Education Program goals and objectives prepared for students with special needs. Her responsibilities include documenting progress and collaborating with other therapists, teachers and paraprofessionals.

A music therapist holds a bachelor's degree or higher from a college or university approved by the American Music Therapy Association. Upon graduating, a music therapist is eligible to sit for the board certification exam granted by the Certification Board of Music Therapy.

HCDE has five, full-time and three, part-time music therapists working within contracted school districts. There are over 150 physical and occupational therapy providers within the HCDE division. Therapists work on school campuses to provide 53 percent of special education therapy services provided to the students in our 25 Harris County school districts.

Cypress-Fairbanks has contracted with HCDE School-Based Therapy Services for 40 years. "School districts consider us their one-stop-shop for supplying their district with a highly-qualified therapists," said Carie Crabb, senior director of HCDE's School-Based Therapy Services. "We recruit therapists, manage and train them to help students with functional tasks and academic success within the school environment so they can work, play and participate among their peers.

-more-

Petty enjoys collaborating with staff in Cy-Fair and appreciates the resources and support she gets within the HCDE and Cy-Fair partnership.

“We’re always problem-solving and figuring things out together,” she said.

Bella sings the spider song. She learns directions like up and down and is sharing the names of other insects in the spider’s ecosystem. As a reward, she may play the rhythm sticks but must use her social skills.

“I’d like the sticks please,” she says demurely. “I’m ready.”

The music stops after a half-hour. Petty packs up her portable classroom for her next client. Bella’s teacher begins to reinforce what the little girl has just learned. Hugs and salutations go around the classroom from the music therapist named Ms. Petty, the music-maker.

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-more-

Petty enjoys collaborating with staff in Cy-Fair and appreciates the resources and support she gets within the HCDE and Cy-Fair partnership.

“We’re always problem-solving and figuring things out together,” she said.

Bella sings the spider song. She learns directions like up and down and is sharing the names of other insects in the spider’s ecosystem. As a reward, she may play the rhythm sticks but must use her social skills.

“I’d like the sticks please,” she says demurely. “I’m ready.”

The music stops after a half-hour. Petty packs up her portable classroom for her next client. Bella’s teacher begins to reinforce what the little girl has just learned. Hugs and salutations go around the classroom from the music therapist named Ms. Petty, the music-maker.

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About Good News You Can Use: “Good News You Can Use” showcases the partnerships between Harris County Department of Education and school districts and organizations.

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



Media Contact:

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HCDE Recognizes Cybersecurity Safety Month with 4 Student Data Safety Tips

Oct. 1, 2018 - October is designated as Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Harris County Department of Education Digital Education Director David McGearry provides four tips to help keep students and their data safe when working online.

1. Be aware of who has access to your devices or who may be able to see your screen when you are online.

There is a saying amongst hackers: "If I can get physical access to your device, then I can own it." Whether you're watching a video on YouTube or logging in to a laptop while waiting for the bus, try to stay aware of the access that others may have to your devices or the content on your screens.

2. Treat your data like you would treat your most prized possession.

You would never leave your phone or gaming system out on your porch overnight, so don't do the same with your personal data. Before you use a new online service (whether at home or at school), be sure to read the "terms of service" or the "privacy policies," and share them with your parents. This information can usually be found at the bottom of a site's main page (or the settings of a phone app) and spells out what data is being used by the app and how it is handled.

3. Use strong and unique passwords for all the services that you use. Where possible, have more than one way to authenticate your accounts.

We've all done it. We create a simple, easy-to-remember password for Instagram or Gmail. Then we use that password for a lot of different things. Before too long, we're using the same password to access Steam library as we do to access our grades. The best policy for passwords: Make them random. Include numbers, letters and special characters. Use a unique password for every major account you have.

4. If you see something, say something.

Students: If a person or online app is suspicious, it never hurts to report your suspicion to parents or another trusted adult. If you receive a message from a stranger on social media, don't respond. Show the message to your parents or a teacher. If you can't find someone right away, screenshot the message. Don't ever give away access to your personal information or personal photos.

For more Information: <https://www.dhs.gov/national-cyber-security-awareness-month>

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Older Learners Honored at HCDE Share Stories of Struggle, Success

Dec. 11, 2018 - Older learners share stories about learning English, gaining new careers and balancing adult responsibility as they are honored on Thursday, Dec. 13 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington. The 32 adults are inducted into the National Adult Education Honor Society as outstanding learners who go above-and-beyond to better themselves and help and inspire others.

- Nanny from Mexico gets three medical certifications through free GED and workforce education programs at HCDE, allowing her to make up to \$20 an hour once she earns her GED.
- Former doctor and immigrant from Venezuela who is taking English as a second language (ESL) classes talks about moving from saving lives in the hospital emergency room in his homeland to earning minimum wage as a restaurant employee as he learns English.
- Venezuela native progresses through English as a second language classes and works her way up from dishwasher to service manager to general manager of Chipotle Restaurant. Her employer sings her praises in a letter of commendation for the honor society award.
- Mother who finishes raising her high-achieving children gets her turn to go back to school to prove to her children that she can get her GED.
- City utility laborer working through the havoc of Harvey gets passed up for a promotion because of his lack of education--decides he can do better by getting his GED.

It's not grades that distinguish the 32 adult learners. Life journeys, academic perseverance and acts of kindness helped the honorees make the short list for induction.

"Some of the biggest fans of our students who are being celebrated include their teachers, family and fellow students," said Stephanie Ross, HCDE Adult Education director. "We are eager to share their stories and celebrate their successes."

Students come from 35 Harris County Department of Education Adult Education learning sites throughout Harris and Liberty counties and are enrolled in GED, English as a second language and workforce classes that include construction and medical professions. Students are nominated by their teachers who recognize them as leaders who make an impact in their communities and by helping their classmates.

Induction into the National Adult Honor Society brings recognition and written recommendations for future employment and education advancement. Each student gains a pin and certificate.

HCDE provides free classes and other educational services to approximately 10,000 adult learners each year, ranging from teenagers to senior citizens. Classes are held in 35 community locations such as schools, churches or community centers. Communities include Alief, Baytown, Channelview, Cy-Fair, Deer Park, Galena Park, Goose Creek, Katy, Klein, Pasadena, Sheldon, Spring Branch and Liberty.

For more information about upcoming HCDE Adult Education classes which are offered in collaboration with the Texas Workforce Commission, go to www.hcde-texas.org/adult-education/ or call 713-692-6216.

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Keith Oliphant Named New Principal at Academic and Behavior School East

Veteran educator Keith Oliphant has been named the new principal of Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior School East.

With more than 20 years of teaching experience, Oliphant has taught in Alief, Fort Bend and Houston independent school districts. He most recently served as the assistant principal at HCDE's Academic and Behavior School West.

Throughout his career, the Sugar Land resident has served as a teacher, teacher mentor, educational consultant and assistant principal and specializes in crisis prevention, special education and instructional leadership. He holds a master's degree in educational leadership from Prairie View A&M and a bachelor's degree in sociology from Sam Houston State University.



Oliphant is an active member of the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), Texas High School Coaches Association (THSCA) and The American Red Cross.

HCDE's Academic and Behavior schools provide an enriching and supportive learning environment for students ages 5-22 with intellectual, developmental and behavioral disorders. For more information, visit www.hcde-texas.org.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carol Vaughn
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HCDE hosts celebrations to honor teen Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recipients *Select art to be displayed in month-long exhibit at The Galleria*

Feb. 14, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education hosts events to highlight the talents of more than 1,600 local teens who earned Scholastic Art & Writing Gold and Silver Key Awards. New this year, 261 Gold Key recipients in grades 9-12 will have their artwork on display at The Galleria from Feb. 28-March 22, 2018. As the Affiliate Partner, Scholastic Art & Writing Awards of Harris County Department of Education showcase art and writing from Harris County students in grades 7-12 in public, private and home schools. In addition to the artist ceremonies, Gold and Silver Key art will be on display for public viewing in multiple venues across Houston.

"We are excited to showcase the talent from Harris County teens through our new partnership with The Galleria, a venue visited by both Houstonians and international shoppers," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "The Galleria hosts more than 30 million visitors annually, and this heightened visibility of our student artwork is exciting, welcoming news as we continue to support and grow our regional Scholastic Art & Writing entries, judges and sponsors."

The Regional Scholastic Art & Writing exhibit at The Galleria, 5085 Westheimer, Houston, Texas, will be located on level 1 outside of Saks Fifth Avenue for public viewing during normal operating hours. Hours are Monday-Saturday from 10 a.m.-9 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

"Community is a cornerstone of our philosophy at The Galleria," said The Galleria Director of Marketing Chris Lane. "We are thrilled to celebrate the achievements of these local students and display their masterpieces for all our visitors to enjoy."

Silver Key artwork from 9-12 students will be on display from March 1-21 at Texas Art Supply, 2001 Montrose Blvd., Houston, Texas, 77006, 713- 526-5221. Gold and Silver Key recipients in grades 7-8 will have their artwork displayed from March 27-April 1 at the Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston (MATCH), 3400 Main St., Houston, Texas, 77002, 713-325-5370.

Here is the list of ceremonies planned throughout March:

Artist Ceremony at Ballroom at Bayou Place, March 20 for 9-12 grade students. Students receive Gold and Silver Key Awards at the Ballroom at Bayou Place, 500 Texas St. Houston, Texas 77002. Gold and Silver Key Writing: 5 – 6:30 p.m. Gold and Silver Key Art: 7 – 8 p.m.

Artist Ceremony at Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston, (MATCH), March 28 for 7-8 grade students. Students receive Gold and Silver Key Awards at MATCH, 3400 Main Street Houston, Texas 77022. Silver Key Art and Writing: 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Gold Key Art and Writing: 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

For the complete list of Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recipients and for more details, go to www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic .

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About Scholastic Art & Writing: Founded in 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the nation's longest-running, most prestigious educational initiative supporting student achievement in the visual and literary arts and are sponsored by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, located in New York City. The program has an impressive legacy of being the first to acknowledge creative talent and is today's largest source of scholarships for creative teens. The Awards alumni include: Andy Warhol, Truman Capote, Richard Avedon, Sylvia Plath, Charles White, Kay WalkingStick, Ken Burns, John Baldessari, Mozelle Thompson, Joyce Carol Oates, Hughie Lee-Smith, Robert Redford, Zac Posen, and Lena Dunham. www.artandwriting.org .

About The Galleria: More than 30 million visitors each year seek the dynamic, comprehensive, fine shopping environment uniquely offered by The Galleria, Texas' largest shopping center and one of the nation's top ten largest shopping domains. Spanning 2.4 million square feet of space, housing 400 fine stores and restaurants, two high-rise hotels, and three office towers, The Galleria is Houston's most popular retail and tourist destination, meeting every budget, style and taste.

About Simon: Simon is a global leader in the ownership of premier shopping, dining, entertainment and mixed-use destinations and an S&P 100 company (Simon Property Group, NYSE: SPG). Our properties across North America, Europe, and Asia provide community gathering places for millions of people every day and generate billions in annual sales. For more information, visit simon.com .



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carol Vaughn
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Promising Practices for Priority Schools Leadership Summit at HCDE on Feb. 6 targets turnaround schools

Feb. 2, 2018 - School leaders and experts on turnaround schools gather to strategize for “Promising Practices for Priority Schools” on Feb. 13 from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington, Houston, Texas.

Focus on priority schools are Texas schools which are targeted for low graduation rates and low achievement in reading and math.

“There is a fierce urgency of now to change the trajectory of schools that serve students of color and from poverty,” said Deirdre Williams, officer for Harris County Department of Education’s Educator Certification and Professional Advancement. “This summit will be a safe space for leaders in turnaround schools to share their challenges and to gain insight into addressing those challenges.”

The summit is headlined by national presenter, social-justice authority and author Laurence “Larry” Payne, host of the voice of Dialogue Houston. A panel of school turnaround thought leaders lead discussions on change. A breakout session focuses on instructional leadership.

Moderator for the summit is Deirdre Williams, an HCDE leader credited for her school turnaround work and expertise in developing systems to improve schools. Kelly Brown, associate professor of educational leadership at Lamar University presents on cultural competence, social justice and leading for equity and facilitates the panel discussion.

Turnaround experts include Tory Hill, superintendent of Sweeney Independent School District; Tangela Hughes-Beston, principal at Youens Elementary, Alief ISD; Nicole Moore, chief school officer-south area, Houston ISD; Christopher Pichon, senior director for school administration, Galena Park ISD; and Valerie Vogt, chief academic officer, Lamar Consolidated ISD.

Breakout sessions include RTI, formative assessments, effective turnaround leadership, data-enhanced PLCs, supporting new teachers, and power standards.

Early bird registration for \$75 is available until Feb. 6, with a cost of \$150 thereafter. To register, go to www.hcde-texas.org/register (workshop number 11759). For information, email LeadNow@hcde-texas.org.

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MEDIA ALERT

For Immediate Release



Rehabbed cars from Bates Collision Centers serve as 'keys to a brighter future' for HCDE single Head Start moms

What: Without reliable transportation, life is challenging as mothers juggle work and a family in a single-parent household. Car keys are a tool to help make a brighter future possible. Harris County Department of Education Head Start parent Sheena Gulley and employee Parishellia Banks receive rehabbed cars from Bates Collision Centers for their responsible parenting.

In its 20th year, Bates Collision Centers is gifting cars number 35 and 36 to two deserving parents as a part of their ongoing partnership with HCDE Head Start. Owners Lee and Leila Bates have been dedicated to the cause because they know about the sacrifices of being responsible parents.

The year, model and make of the two cars remain a surprise, which will be revealed through the unveiling and gifting of the cars. Bates employees donate time to work on the cars and help fill them with gifts. Community businesses/members donate gas, insurance and materials needed to rehab the cars.

When/Where: **Sheena Gulley** receives her car on **Dec. 12** from 10-11 a.m. at Bates Collision Center North Channel location, 15532 I-10 East, in Channelview, Texas.

Parishellia Banks receives her car on **Dec. 13** from 10-11 a.m. at the Bates Collision Center Baytown location, 3219 N. Main, in Baytown, Texas.

Who: **About Sheena Gulley, HCDE Head Start Fifth Ward Center, recipient of the 35th rehabbed car:** Sheena Gulley is a single mother of two sons and two daughters. Gulley relies on Metro and Uber to get to and from work. She is unable to spend much time with her children or attend their school activities because of her work schedule and no transportation. She will soon begin taking online GED classes with HCDE, which are free and offers flexible learning opportunities for busy adults.

About Parishellia Banks, HCDE Head Start Baytown, recipient of the 36th rehabbed car: Parishellia Banks is currently raising her niece's two-year-old son after she passed away during childbirth. Banks has to rely on family and friends to take her and her great nephew to work and school. She also suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure and finds it difficult to make doctor appointments because of no transportation.

Media contact: Contact Carol Vaughn, communications manager at 281-660-9205 or Jeri Martinez, communications coordinator at 281-748-1623.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carol Vaughn
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Restorative Discipline Trains School Communities with Goal to Reverse School-to-Prison Pipeline *HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools Brings Positive Change to School Cultures*

Feb. 12, 2018 - Recovering from the fallout of school crimes like cyber-bullying or assault is a fragile process within the school community. Punitive actions like suspensions and expulsions are the norm. Now a new tool called "Restorative Discipline" crafted for a new generation of teachers and students is being introduced to local school districts through Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools. The goal is to repair the harm and to foster regret, understanding and acceptance between the aggressor and victim in a process called "circles."

"Our goal is to stop the school-to-prison pipeline," said HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools director Ecomet Burley. "We are confident that all school communities have this power when they have the right tools."

Restorative Discipline is spreading throughout Harris County schools by a team of trained, tenured educators who are equipped with decades of classroom experience as both teachers and school leaders.

School culture and climate specialist Janice Owolabi brings 12 years of experience as a student intervention and engagement expert from Lamar Consolidated School District. She used a corporate career in computer technology to help children excel in math and science as a teacher. Specialist Julia Andrews is a former 15-year teacher and assistant principal in Houston Independent School District who holds a master's in education.

The Restorative Discipline model involves relationship-building, bringing the school community together to talk about problems or injustices. Sometimes the act is a violation of trust or act of disrespect. Within the circle are members committed to finding understanding and resolution: students, teachers, administrators, counselors, parents and even community members.

"The system is overwhelmed—educators, students and parents are overwhelmed—and why," said Owolabi. "From our perspective, student achievement and operations are the two things people are looking at, but a school community has such deeper culture than that.

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“Teachers are dealing with emotional issues like Hurricane Harvey, so how do you get to the learning? It’s the relationship piece that seems to be missing these days.”

Through Restorative Discipline, staff goes through training as a team to develop relationships and create values the school community wants to achieve such as respect, trust or honesty.

Within the circle, everyone has a voice, but no one is pointing fingers, according to Andrews.

“But we are here to repair the harm which has happened,” she said. “And the goal is to have a whole-school approach to implement it.”

Currently Bammel Middle School in Spring Independent School District School is using Restorative Discipline with training from the Center for Safe and Secure School team. Research will be collected about numbers of discipline referrals at the end of the school year. The research is being analyzed by the Research and Evaluation Institute at HCDE. Although preliminary research supports success of the Restorative Discipline model, proponents are confident the research will convert more believers.

“Repairing the harm is what it’s all about,” said Andrews. “You build community first and make the community aware of the circle process. When it’s needed, it’s not foreign to anyone.”

A Restorative Discipline Summit is planned for March 29 at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington. The idea behind the summit is join school staff with mental health and school psychologists to provide resources.

“We will also introduce Restorative Discipline and what it could look like in your classroom or school,” said Andrews.

Register for or get more information about the Restorative Discipline Summit at www.hcde-texas.org/register. For more information about the Center for Safe and Secure Schools initiatives and trainings, call 713-696-2127.

Photo: School culture/climate specialists with the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, a division of HCDE: (left) Janice Owolabi and Julia Andrews

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Rich Vela Named Executive Director of Facilities at Harris County Department of Education

Rich Vela has been named the new executive director of Facilities Support Services at Harris County Department of Education.

Vela most recently served as assistant superintendent of ancillary services in Tomball Independent School District, where he supervised facilities, maintenance and operations and more, and developed training options and improvement plans for department operations.

Throughout his career, Vela has served as director of risk management, controller, district accountant and purchasing agent and is a certified school risk manager. He holds a master's degree in management from Texas A&M Commerce and a bachelor's degree in business from Sam Houston State University.

Vela is an active member of the Texas Association of Latin Administrators and Superintendents, the Texas Association of School Officials and is an advisory committee member for Crime Stoppers.

Facilities Support Services supports HCDE by maintaining and improving campuses, offices and other learning and working environments. To learn more, visit www.hcde-texas.org.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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HCDE hosts celebrations to honor teen Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recipients
Select art to be displayed in month-long exhibit at The Galleria

Feb. 14, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education hosts events to highlight the talents of more than 1,600 local teens who earned Scholastic Art & Writing Gold and Silver Key Awards. New this year, 261 Gold Key recipients in grades 9-12 will have their artwork on display at The Galleria from Feb. 28-March 22, 2018. As the Affiliate Partner, Scholastic Art & Writing Awards of Harris County Department of Education showcase art and writing from Harris County students in grades 7-12 in public, private and home schools. In addition to the artist ceremonies, Gold and Silver Key art will be on display for public viewing in multiple venues across Houston.

“We are excited to showcase the talent from Harris County teens through our new partnership with The Galleria, a venue visited by both Houstonians and international shoppers,” said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. “The Galleria hosts more than 30 million visitors annually, and this heightened visibility of our student artwork is exciting, welcoming news as we continue to support and grow our regional Scholastic Art & Writing entries, judges and sponsors.”

The Regional Scholastic Art & Writing exhibit at The Galleria, 5085 Westheimer, Houston, Texas, will be located on level 1 outside of Saks Fifth Avenue for public viewing during normal operating hours. Hours are Monday-Saturday from 10 a.m.-9 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

“Community is a cornerstone of our philosophy at The Galleria,” said The Galleria Director of Marketing Chris Lane. “We are thrilled to celebrate the achievements of these local students and display their masterpieces for all our visitors to enjoy.”

Silver Key artwork from 9-12 students will be on display from March 1-21 at Texas Art Supply, 2001 Montrose Blvd., Houston, Texas, 77006, 713- 526-5221. Gold and Silver Key recipients in grades 7-8 will have their artwork displayed from March 27-April 1 at the Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston (MATCH), 3400 Main St., Houston, Texas, 77002, 713-325-5370.

Here is the list of ceremonies planned throughout March:

Artist Ceremony at Ballroom at Bayou Place, March 20 for 9-12 grade students. Students receive Gold and Silver Key Awards at the Ballroom at Bayou Place, 500 Texas St. Houston, Texas 77002. Gold and Silver Key Writing: 5 – 6:30 p.m. Gold and Silver Key Art: 7 – 8 p.m.

Artist Ceremony at Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston, (MATCH), March 28 for 7-8 grade students. Students receive Gold and Silver Key Awards at MATCH, 3400 Main Street Houston, Texas 77022. Silver Key Art and Writing: 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Gold Key Art and Writing: 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

For the complete list of Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recipients and for more details, go to www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic.

About Harris County Department of Education: HCDE provides special education, therapy services, early education, adult education and after-school programming. Services are funded by government grants, fees and a local property tax rate of \$.005195. For every dollar in local property tax collected, HCDE provides \$4.40 in services to the 25 Harris County school districts. HCDE also operates four campuses for students with profound special education needs and adjudicated youth who require a low student-teacher ratio and highly structured environment. One-hundred percent of students served on HCDE campuses are at-risk. The organization is governed by an elected board of seven trustees and has 1,060 employees and 33 facilities, including 15 Head Start centers. More info at www.hcde-texas.org.

About Scholastic Art & Writing: Founded in 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the nation's longest-running, most prestigious educational initiative supporting student achievement in the visual and literary arts and are sponsored by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, located in New York City. The program has an impressive legacy of being the first to acknowledge creative talent and is today's largest source of scholarships for creative teens. The Awards alumni include: Andy Warhol, Truman Capote, Richard Avedon, Sylvia Plath, Charles White, Kay WalkingStick, Ken Burns, John Baldessari, Mozelle Thompson, Joyce Carol Oates, Hughie Lee-Smith, Robert Redford, Zac Posen, and Lena Dunham. www.artandwriting.org.

About The Galleria: More than 30 million visitors each year seek the dynamic, comprehensive, fine shopping environment uniquely offered by The Galleria, Texas' largest shopping center and one of the nation's top ten largest shopping domains. Spanning 2.4 million square feet of space, housing 400 fine stores and restaurants, two high-rise hotels, and three office towers, The Galleria is Houston's most popular retail and tourist destination, meeting every budget, style and taste.

About Simon: Simon is a global leader in the ownership of premier shopping, dining, entertainment and mixed-use destinations and an S&P 100 company (Simon Property Group, NYSE: SPG). Our properties across North America, Europe, and Asia provide community gathering places for millions of people every day and generate billions in annual sales. For more information, visit simon.com.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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School Safety Issues, Services Evolve with Changing Times for HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools

May 30, 2018 - School safety and security issues remain a concern as school districts deal with issues like school shootings, cyberbullying, discipline and emergency management planning. Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools continues to evolve and seek innovative ways to support school districts' efforts to maintain safe and secure learning environments.

Currently the Center for Safe and Secure Schools focuses on four areas of services: school culture and climate, emergency management planning, safe schools plans and facility audits, and member benefits.

Ecomet Burley, director of the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, says the Center's newest service area called Restorative Discipline Practices provide alternative discipline methods versus the traditional, exclusionary or punitive systems. He took time this month to answer several questions about the Center, which was founded in 1999 at the request of area school superintendents to advance safe and secure school environments. Learn more about the Center at www.safeandsecureschools.org.

Why is it important to have an organization like yours available to school districts?

We support school districts' efforts to have safe teaching and learning environments. We are experts in this area because of our specialization and laser-focused scope of work around safety and security in the educational environment. Our staff has literally walked in the shoes of educators and understands the day-to-day challenges. We can design programs and trainings to fit the needs of educators who are in the "trenches" because we've been there and understand those challenges.

How can school districts assure parents that districts are doing a good job with school security?

Districts can assure parents that they are doing a good job with school security by communicating with parents throughout the year about what they are doing to keep their child's school safe. Parent meetings, e-newsletters and social media can be used to communicate real-time information before, during and after an emergency. Parents appreciate being informed about things that may impact their child's safety at school.

What about teachers? Are they stressed out about school safety?

Educators are very concerned about school safety these days. With the recent high profile active shooter events, school safety and security has come to the forefront. Policymakers, students, parents, educators and the public are intensely focused on this issue right now.

How and why do you conduct a “school safety audit?”

The Texas Education Code §37.108 says: “At least once every three years, each school district shall conduct a safety and security audit of the district’s facilities. To the extent possible, a district shall follow safety and security audit procedures developed by the Texas School Safety Center or a comparable public or private entity”.

In completing a safety audit, Center for Safe and Secure Schools specialists look for multiple assessment areas. What are visitor sign-in procedures? Are exterior doors locked? Intruder assessment: Can the audit team enter the building without coming through the front door?

Additional items on the safety checklist:

- * On-file school safety plan
- * Evacuation routes posted
- * Staff on alert for visitors without a visitor badge
- * Student/Staff ID badges
- * Do students travel with hall passes?
- * Unlocked classroom doors/unsecure empty classrooms/closets
- * Surveillance cameras
- * School safety officers on campus
- * How often are they conducting lockdown/fire/intruder/inclement weather drills?
- * School exterior: How secure is it? Gated/cameras?
- * Can the emergency responders view the doors from the street to know where to go when there is an emergency? Are the school doors numbered to assist first responders to get to the emergency quickly?

What about the issue of educators being armed in the classroom?

On the issue of arming educators in schools, this evokes a lot of strong emotions. Personally, I think that we must be careful with that idea, and it needs to be discussed and vetted well. In some rural districts it might make sense because of the amount of time it takes for first responders to get to the site, whereas here in the inner or suburban cities many of our schools have armed, commissioned officers on campus. The response time is typically three minutes or less. Ultimately, I think it is a local district decision that needs to be discussed and looked at in the context of what is best for a district and its situation.

How have your services evolved throughout the years to help districts? What do you think the biggest challenge is now for districts in terms of school safety?

The most urgent challenge in terms of school safety for educators and policy makers today is how do we protect our students from those who would come into our schools to hurt and kill students due to mental health issues or other reasons? How do we better protect our students while they are at school? Additionally, educators understand that the “whole child” must be educated. Social and emotional health for students has emerged as an issue that educators

must address. They need to receive training to deal with some of the issues students bring to the school house today.

We respond to the emerging issues in education such as the concern over the number of black and Hispanic students being expelled, suspended or assigned to alternative education facilities. We are responding to this issue with training in Restorative Discipline Practices, which provide educators with skills to develop positive, healthy relationships with students. Educators explore alternative ways to hold students accountable for inappropriate behavior versus relying on exclusionary practices to correct inappropriate behavior.

How can Restorative Discipline help prevent acts of aggression in a school? Why is it needed today, and what does it look like when it's put into action in a school community?

Restorative Discipline can help prevent acts of aggression through its intentional focus on building healthy, positive relationships. It teaches educators how to create "safe spaces" for students to have a voice and platform to talk about issues that may be affecting them at home or at school. The "circle process" creates connectivity and discussion between students and teachers and students-to-students. Moreover, it creates a support system and avenue to resolve conflicts, repair harm to relationships and teach social skills that are critical to peace-making and safe school learning/teaching environments. However, there is a mind shift that is required, and that is a part of our school staff and student training.

What is an Emergency Operations Plan, or EOP? How does it affect the school community?

All Texas public schools are required by statute to have these plans in place and updated annually or as often as needed. An EOP forms the foundation for a good, effective, school safety plan. The EOP should outline a district or school's plan to prevent, mitigate, respond and recover from an emergency event. EOPs proactively provide guidance for staff, students, and administrators in event an emergency occurs. The entire school community should be aware of the plan and review it to use in the event of emergency.

For more information about the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, call 713-696-2127 or email eburley@hcde-texas.org .

About the Center for Safe and Secure Schools: Harris County Department of Education: The Center was established in 1999 at the request of school superintendents to advance safe and secure environments for learning and teaching. We partner with federal, state and local entities to take the lead in the development of increased safety and security strategies, standards and best practices for K-16 school environments for both students and educators. The Center continually seeks new and innovative opportunities to build safer and more secure learning environments, www.hcde-texas.org.

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including 15 Head Start centers. More info at <http://www.hcde-texas.org> .

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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School Threat Assessment Training' Galvanizes Campuses Through Safety Strategies on Jan. 22

Jan. 10, 2019 - Demands for threat management trainings increased in the aftermath of the active shooter tragedy in Santa Fe, Texas. On Sept. 27 from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Target Restoration Services and Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools present "School Threat Assessment Training: Creating a Safe Environment for Students." Sigma Threat Management Associates--a company providing experts in behavioral threat assessment, threat management and violence prevention--leads the training.

The workshop held at 6300 Irvington Blvd. has limited seating and will begin with lessons learned from Santa Fe High School via a panel of first responders from Texas City Emergency Management and Texas City Independent School District leaders.

"Districts need tools to work through threat scenarios," said Center for Safe and Secure Schools Director Ecomet Burley. "This workshop provides practice by working through threat scenarios. Educators walk away with the know-how to develop a case management plan for their district/campus through an expert whose threat assessment best practices are depended on by national security agencies and major media outlets."

Sigma consultants train clients how to build and operate threat assessment teams and programs, helping them develop their own ability to assess and manage threatening situations in accordance with best practices. SIGMA experts have assessed and managed thousands of threats in their careers in federal, state, and local law enforcement, education, criminal justice, mental health, and the law. The company's threat assessment work is referenced in U.S. national standards and federal guides and has helped define best practices in behavioral threat assessment violence prevention.

During the presentation, Sigma experts discuss how to identify and investigate potential campus threats and demonstrate how to build an effective threat assessment management program.

Cost for the training is \$35 and includes breakfast and snacks courtesy of Sprouts and lunch provided by Target Restoration Services. To register, go to www.hcde-texas.org and enter workshop number 12201 or date. Parking is free. The workshop is conveniently located in a central area of Houston. Texas Commission on Law Enforcement credits are available for attendees.

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



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What's in it for You? Harris County Department of Education's New Website Launches Oct. 31

Oct. 30, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education launches its new website and engages you with a vibrant and responsive design, informational graphics and maps, custom photos, engaging videos, timely news features and upcoming events. The website was designed with the user in mind, helping you find information about HCDE services and programs easily through color-coded blocks labeling.

Testimonials allow education customers to decide which services can help you, be it a teacher certification program, a Head Start preschool program for your child or information about how HCDE is funded.

“Our new website is based on user experience, designed for the public so visitors can easily find out about HCDE whether you're a parent, student, teacher, school district, teacher or taxpayer,” said County School Superintendent James Colbert Jr. “We are about what's in it for you.”

Other features of our site include the following:

- A vibrant color palette matched with HCDE programs and individual logos
- Mobile-friendly navigation
- Word Press platform for dependability
- Search-engine optimized and friendly
- Information-rich pages with facts at your fingertips

View our YouTube video for snapshots of our new site:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YEL42xqLdM>

See you at our live launch on Oct. 31. See what's in it for you: www.hcde-texas.org .

About Harris County Department of Education: HCDE provides special education, therapy services, early education, adult education and after-school programming. Services are funded by government grants, fees and a local property tax of less than \$9 per homeowner. For every dollar in local property tax collected, HCDE provides \$4.70 in services to the 25 Harris County school districts. We operate four campuses for students with profound special education needs and adjudicated or recovering youth who require a low, student-teacher ratio and highly structured environment. One-hundred percent of students served on HCDE campuses are at-risk. We are governed by an elected board of seven trustees and have 1,076 employees and 33 facilities, including 15 Head Start centers. More info at www.hcde-texas.org .

HCDE Head Start Employee Kwarteng Serves Families Through Nutrition Education

Harris County Department of Education Head Start employee Shonika Kwarteng is dedicated to serving Harris County families enrolled in the Head Start program through nutrition education. As the nutrition services manager, Kwarteng oversees all nutrition functions in the program and helps families develop and maintain healthy eating habits.

Free nutrition and health services are among the benefits provided to families of children enrolled in the HCDE Head Start program. While Kwarteng ensures children receive nutritiously adequate meals at the centers, she also works with Head Start performance standards to make sure children are screened, nutritional risks are handled and that children with food allergies and dietary needs are accommodated.

“Many of the services we offer Head Start families come through nutrition education,” said Kwarteng. “However, if a family identifies a need, we meet with them and complete a nutrition assessment--similar to what they would get in an outpatient setting.”

Kwarteng and her team also work with Head Start Education and Special Services to incorporate nutrition and healthy lifestyle topics into the curriculum. Students learn about healthy foods in the classroom and how healthy eating benefits their bodies.

The annual Head Start Food Science Fair is one example of adding nutrition into the curriculum. For a project each year, students select a fruit or vegetable and work with their families to create a healthy dish to be judged at the month’s Parent Policy Council Meeting.

“An additional layer to nutrition education is that our children are eating those foods in the classroom,” said Kwarteng. “Our goal is to show children a wide variety of nutritious foods and teach them the benefits of healthy eating from a young age. Hopefully they will build on that foundation in the future.”

March is National Nutrition Month, a nutrition education and information campaign created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. For more information, visit <https://goo.gl/xGzfyS>.

For information on HCDE Head Start services, visit www.hcde-texas.org/headstart.

St. Agnes student earns HCDE Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Award for Harvey photograph

A week after the waters of Hurricane Harvey receded last August, Hattie Meehan walked into her family home, camera in hand, to document the damage done by 22 inches of water.

What started as a photography class assignment from teacher Terry Suprean became part of Meehan's healing process and a way to work through a difficult situation. The photograph taken also earned the St. Agnes junior a Gold Key award from Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Regional Affiliate Harris County Department of Education.

When Harvey hit on Aug. 27, Meehan and her family woke at 5 a.m. to water rapidly approaching the doorstep of their Meyerland home. By 11 a.m., they had 22 inches of water in their house and were collecting necessary belongings and preparing to leave. Meehan and her family waded through the chest-high water outside with their belongings in a large Tupperware container to find dry land in a nearby Randall's parking lot. Twelve hours later, at 5 p.m., the family was rescued by Meehan's grandfather and taken to Cypress, Texas, where they stayed until the water receded.

After a week, the family began tearing out the walls of their damaged home. That's when Meehan was inspired to take the photo that earned her the Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Award. The top half of the photo features teal walls and a white chandelier hanging from the ceiling, the last remnant of the childhood room Meehan shared with her sister. The bottom half shows the exposed pipes and frame of the house, almost as if it were a different photo. It depicts the difficult emotions Meehan experienced while walking through her home and the surreal situation she and her family were in.

"As I walked around what was once my fully functioning house of 12 years, I wanted to capture what Hurricane Harvey had done to the place of safety and comfort in my life," said Meehan. "The strict division between the flooded wall and the top wall appealed to me because the entire upper part of our one-story house was absolutely fine, while the other half was destroyed."

Like schools across Houston, many students at St. Agnes Academy were affected by Hurricane Harvey. Teacher Terry Suprean found students in his class chose to use photography as a coping mechanism.

"Hattie was one of the first to adopt this practice and she went on to develop an entire series based on the effects of the storm on her home and life," said Suprean. "I hope that the photography series helped her in as many ways as possible."

Meehan was recognized along with other Harris County teens at an awards ceremony on March 20 at the Ballroom at Bayou Place. Her award-winning photo, "Flooded Away," was also on display at The Galleria in March as part of the 9-12 grade Scholastic Art & Writing art exhibit.

"These art exhibits are an opportunity for our students to share their stories through their art," said Andrea Segraves, regional coordinator for the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. "Hattie's photograph is personal for so many people in the Houston community, and they can relate to her through her art."

While honored by the Scholastic Gold Key award and regional recognition, Meehan says she took away something more from her experience with Harvey. She saw firsthand that a sense of normalcy can be uprooted in a matter of minutes, but she also saw how her school and community came together to

create a support system for her family. She believes people's lives are shaped by experiences like Harvey, but it's how people respond to those experiences that defines their character.

"I chose to deal with my Harvey experience through photography and utilized this creative outlet to work through my situation," said Meehan. "As an artist I now have a definite vision of how I want to proceed and what I want to continue to capture – the character that defines every single person."

For more information about HCDE's regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and opportunities to sponsor, judge and enter the competition, visit www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic.



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Storybooks Come to Life Through Special Bond Between Girl Scout and HCDE Occupational Therapist Assistant

June 13, 2018 - Girl Scout and West University teen Katie Crabb grew up with a love for reading and can't imagine living in a world without books. Harris County Department of Education occupational therapy assistant Mary Canada works with children with severe auditory, visual and cognitive disabilities and always looks for ways to allow her students to experience the joy of the printed page.

Together, an unlikely friendship formed as Crabb was looking for a Gold Award project to serve the community and Canada had an idea of how to bring books alive to children with severe learning issues.

Crabb, a 17-year old from Carnegie Vanguard School in Houston Independent School District, finessed 20 "books in a bag," packaged storybooks complete with auditory and sensory devices which help low-functioning students experience learning through touch, hearing and even smell.

Canada thought of creating the book bags after seeing the idea online from a speech language pathologist in the United Kingdom. Canada reported phenomenal success using the book bag in her classroom. Behaviors changed. Nonreactive children began to respond. The book bags had a decidedly positive effect.

A thrifty, resourceful and imaginative Crabb finds the books on sale and buys most of the objects that fill the bags from the dollar store. A carwash funded most of her purchases.

The book Little Red Hen weaves a tale of the virtues of hard work through plastic farm animals, two plastic eggs, a bread pan with beater and bowl. Goodnight Moon provides a tiny mouse that jingles along with a big moon that lights up. Many of the books have aromatic qualities that help children experience stories through smell.

"It's a community effort, really," said Canada, a 24-year HCDE occupational therapy assistant from Cypress, Texas who retires this year.

Canada hangs the bags on a clothes rack created by her husband so that occupational therapists who work in Cy-Fair ISD can check them out and use them in the classroom.

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Objects are sterilized after each use. Together, Canada and Crabb's books number over 30. Plans include housing some of the books at Harris County Department of Education so they may be used by HCDE therapists in the 24 school districts and charter schools which Therapy Services serves.

HCDE provides school-based physical and occupational therapy to approximately 7,500 students in school districts throughout greater Harris County. The 160 therapists work with students and collaborate with teachers and others so that students with disabilities can be successful in the school environment.

The book bags are fast-becoming part of the success story and will now travel from district to district as needed.

"I really wanted to do this project because I always loved reading," said Crabb. "I was always stuck in my able-bodied world, so now I want to impact these kids' lives in a positive way." For more information about HCDE's School-Based Therapy Services, visit www.hcde-texas.org/therapyservices.

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Student Safety and Discipline Institute June 6 Provides Venue for Educators, School Officers to Plan, Share Ideas for School Safety

Photos: <https://bit.ly/2M7y76A> (password is hcde1889)

June 7, 2018 - School safety planning attracted more than 200 educators and law enforcement officials as the Center for Safe and Secure Schools hosted the Student Safety and Discipline Institute on June 6 at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington, Houston, Texas.

Keynote and breakout sessions tackled topics such as active shooter training, suicide prevention, student mental health, drug prevention and violence, cybersecurity and social media monitoring and school safety. The free event featured Gaye Lang, who specializes in Restorative Practices as an adjunct professor for Texas Southern University; Sasha McLean, executive director of Archway Academy, a recovery school; and Eloise Sepeda, a Restorative Justice trainer.

Superintendent James Colbert Jr. provided the welcome and applauded attendees for taking a community approach to solving school safety issues.

“I appreciate your fearlessness and your ability to step forward rather than stepping back,” Colbert told the crowd.

McLean, whose school resides in inner-city Houston, took action by sharing her basic active shooter presentation which included roleplay on swarming, a crowd approach to deterring an active shooter, with power in numbers.

“Ninety-nine percent of the time, it’s one person acting alone,” said McLean. “If I have a weapon, the first thing you want to get your hand on is the shooter’s arms. The goal is to contain the firearm.”

“If you can’t run and have no other choice, I want you to protect yourself. It’s important for you to visualize what that would be like.”

Closing the presentation, a panel discussion provided opportunity for information sharing as Yates High School student Zachary Steward moderated a discussion between superintendents and school law enforcement leaders, including retired police chief Alan Bragg; LaTonya

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Goffney, Aldine ISD superintendent; H.D. Chambers, Alief ISD superintendent; Victor Mitchell, police chief at Spring ISD; Brian Allen, director of safety and security, Galena Park ISD; and Ecomet Burley, director of the Center for Safe and Secure Schools.

“Harris County Department of Education’s Center for Safe and Secure Schools continues to evolve and seek innovative ways to support school districts’ efforts to maintain safe and secure learning environments,” said Ecomet Burley, director for the Center for Safe and Secure Schools.

“We’re looking at a lot of different topics today like cybersecurity, restorative discipline practices and how to recognize students who are troubled in order to proactively get out in front of these problems.”

Currently the Center for Safe and Secure Schools focuses on four areas of services: school culture and climate, emergency management planning, safe schools plans and facility audits, and member benefits.

The center’s newest service area called Restorative Discipline Practices provides alternative discipline methods versus the traditional, exclusionary or punitive systems. Restorative practices works to promote positive school climates.

For more information about the Center for Safe and Secure Schools and its upcoming events, following the center’s Facebook page: @HCDECSSS .

About the Center for Safe and Secure Schools: Harris County Department of Education: The Center was established in 1999 at the request of school superintendents to advance safe and secure environments for learning and teaching. We partner with federal, state and local entities to take the lead in the development of increased safety and security strategies, standards and best practices for K-16 school environments for both students and educators. The Center continually seeks new and innovative opportunities to build safer and more secure learning environments, www.hcde-texas.org.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lindsey Sanders
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Lights, Cameras, Action: Students from 9 schools perform at CASE for Kids' Day at Hobby Center June 21

What: Kids' Day at Hobby Center with CASE for Kids students from 9 schools performing with local professional artists.

When: Thursday, June 21, 2:30 p.m. dress rehearsal performance

Who: Children enrolled in CASE for Kids summer programs in Alief, Aldine, Spring, Clear Creek, Sheldon, Stafford and Academy of Accelerated Learning Charter School

Where: 800 Bagby St., Hobby Center

Etc: Call Carol Vaughn for media opportunities, 281-660-9205

It's curtain call as students enrolled in summer programs through the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, hit the big stage for Kids' Day at Hobby Center June 21 at 800 Bagby St. The event begins at 2:30 p.m. for the practice dress rehearsal and the performance for families of students starts at 6:30 p.m.

Dancing, singing, drama and drumming instruction are provided to students through afterschool vendors working for CASE for Kids. The event gives students the chance to learn from local professional artists and perform on the iconic stage in downtown Houston.

Students are enrolled in elementary, middle and high school summer programs through CASE for Kids. CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings and funding for afterschool programs, serving students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities and community centers throughout Harris County.

The schools include Best and Smith elementary schools and Albright Middle School in Alief; Bammel Middle School in Spring; Garrett Elementary School in Sheldon, Stafford High School in Stafford, Clear Creek Intermediate in Clear Creek, and Francis Elementary in Aldine. Charter school Academy of Accelerated Learning also participates.

Fine arts vendors working with CASE for Kids in the summer program include MECA, Ondi Love, Brazilian Arts, Dinky Drum, Savannah Blue, Artist Boat, Puppet Pizzazz, Houston Healthy Hip Hop and Ensemble Theatre.

"Hobby Center is a state-of-the art facility, and the staff there allows our students to experience the working theatre and also experience the glitz that accompanies theater and performance," said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, CASE for Kids director. "This long-standing, fine arts, summer

program helps bring attention to the importance fine arts plays in shaping a well-rounded individual, giving kids exposure to experiences with music, theatre, art and dance,” said Caruthers.

Students participating in Kids’ Day at Hobby Center are enrolled in CASE for Kids summer programs through the Texas Education Agency’s Afterschool Centers on Education’s 21st Century Community Learning Center and the Partnership Project. Partnership Project is a collaboration between HCDE, the Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC), the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and awarded sites. HCDE commits local funds to supplement comprehensive afterschool programming.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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281-660-9205

‘Tackling A-F: Equity for All’ set for Feb. 9 at HCDE to Feature National Presenters

Jan. 30, 2018 - “Tackling A-F: Equity for All” addresses diversity in the classroom and the strategies which can be used to bridge learning styles and culture. The workshop set for Feb. 9, 2018 from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington, features national speakers Roger Cleveland and Rosalinda Mercado. The Neuhaus Center for Education also provides a presentation on dyslexia.

Cleveland is known as a moderator and presenter at over 45 conferences. He is called upon for his work in diversity, instructional equity, cultural competency, closing achievement gaps, learning styles, transforming school culture and school improvement planning. His presentation is titled: “The Road to Proficiency is Not a One-Way Street: Equity for All.”

Mercado is an expert in social-emotional awareness, the competencies which humans need to understand the emotions of others, including empathy, organizational awareness and service orientation. Her presentation called “The 8 Essentials of High-Performing Teams with Self and Team Awareness” calls for a heightened self-awareness and awareness of others.

Additional speakers will provide breakout sessions on topics such as dyslexia, English language learner technology, independent reading/writing, students with limited education, restorative justice, and special education issues. Presenters include Carol Salva, Seidlitz Education; Krystal Gokey, licensed specialist in school psychology; Uyen Nguyen, educational diagnostician; Mary Yarus and Tracy Weeden, Neuhaus Education Center; Marisela Rodriguez; Vivian Pratts; and representatives from the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, HCDE.

In understanding that diversity and inclusion are different, the institute’s objectives are to applaud diversity, support culturally responsive leadership, leverage difference, be reflective, provide researched best practices in teaching, open opportunity doors, and close gaps for all students.

Cost for the institute is \$125. Seating is limited. Register for the institute at www.hcde-texas.org/register (workshop number 11635). Call 713-696-8223 for more information.

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Add one

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HCDE MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

What: Teacher of the Year for Harris County Department of Education Schools is announced and celebrated after all nominees are recognized.

Who: Three Teacher of the Year finalists come together for the big announcement. The winner receives \$1,000 donated by Edgenuity, an online learning company.

The three finalists for Teacher of the Year are Gabrielle Gore Gardner, Academic and Behavior School East; Suzanne Boyd, Academic and Behavior School West; and JoAnna Lee, Highpoint School East.

When: 6-7 p.m. Tuesday, May 15, 2018

Where: Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington Blvd. (Conference Center), Houston, Texas 77022

Etc.: Academic and Behavior Schools are schools for students 5-22 with emotional and intellectual disabilities. Highpoint School is for adjudicated or expelled students. School districts contract with HCDE for services. All HCDE schools have low student-to-teacher ratios.

Media contacts: Contact Carol Vaughn, 281-660-9205





HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carol Vaughn
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281-660-9205

Teacher of the Year Finalist: Positive Life Skills Teacher Gabrielle Gardner Takes the High Road

May 10, 2018 - Life skills teacher Gabrielle Gardner knows that each of her students can learn. Much like a tailor alters clothes, it's her job to provide differentiated instruction modified to fit to each of her student's needs.

Challenge is part of an everyday routine for this 11-year teacher at Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior School East, a small campus near Gulfgate Mall with 350 students with emotional and intellectual challenges. Students ages 5-22 travel here from their home district on a contractual basis and thrive in a nurturing, specialized environment, with one teacher and an aide for every eight students.

Gardner teaches skills which can be generalized outside of the school. Through positive behavior management and support, Boy's Town curriculum and applied behavior analysis, she reinforces her lessons. Students learn to vote in a mock presidential election. They plant a vegetable garden and learn the parts of plants. By turning a vocational lab into a pizza parlor for the day, social skills are reinforced.

Principal Mindy Robertson calls Gardner passionate and faithful. This year she is Teacher of the Year for her campus, one of four special schools provided by HCDE.

"She has been instrumental in growing our vocational program for students in the life skills program and takes a leadership role in supporting new teachers with special education case load management," Robertson said.

Classroom learning solutions are important for Gardner. Though seemingly simple, the results are life-changing. There was the student who had a pattern of screaming and running across the classroom while biting his hand. Perplexed and worried about the repetitive behavior, Gardner worked to find answers and found that the boy wanted water. Once the behavior was erased and he learned sign language to request water, he was able to return to his home campus.

Another student who is a high-functioning student did not want to participate in vocational activities this year. He would sit with his head down, disengaged from his classmates, using profanity and refusing to work. Once she introduced cooking, he came out of his shell. Now he's in charge of the oven and assists others with cooking activities

“It takes a special type of person to work with special needs populations with behavioral disabilities,” she said. “You can’t take the student’s behavior personally. Every day is a new day.”

In Gardner’s world, all her teacher colleagues are superheros. In that sphere, she spiritedly calls herself superwoman. Her personal super-power superlatives are positivity, dedication and the desire to improve the lives of those around her.

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Harris County Department of Education names 2018 Teacher of the Year

Teacher of the Year finalists recognized during first ever recognition ceremony
Harris County Department of Education named Highpoint East teacher JoAnna Lee as the 2018 Teacher of the Year at a special recognition ceremony on May 15. Lee was selected from three Teacher of the Year finalists from HCDE's schools and will receive \$1,000 donated by online learning company Edgenuity.

In its inaugural year, the HCDE Teacher of the Year program recognizes teaching excellence from its Academic and Behavior and Highpoint East campuses. This year's finalists for Teacher of the Year were Gabrielle Gore Gardner, Academic and Behavior School East; Suzanne Boyd, Academic and Behavior School West; and JoAnna Lee, Highpoint School East. All three finalists were honored at the ceremony surrounded by family, friends and HCDE administrators.

"JoAnna Lee's dedication to serving at-risk students goes beyond classroom instruction," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "HCDE is blessed by her leadership and ability to compassionately meet her students' needs."

Lee is a veteran English teacher who nurtures a love of writing and literature in her students. As an experienced educator in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), she works with teachers new to the DAEP setting to share her experience and passion for teaching at-risk students.

HCDE's Highpoint School East is a campus for troubled youth in grades 6-12 that offers a safe and highly-structured learning environment, with a low student-to-teacher ratio. Students come to Highpoint on a contract basis through their home school district with the goal of returning to and graduating from their home-district high school.

Read more about Lee's experience and passion for helping at-risk students at <http://bit.ly/2L11kPL> . Find more information about HCDE's schools at www.hcde-texas.org/schools .

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Harris County Department of Education names 2018 Teacher of the Year *Teacher of the Year finalists recognized during first-ever recognition ceremony*

May 16, 2018 - Harris County Department of Education named Highpoint East teacher JoAnna Lee as the 2018 Teacher of the Year at a special recognition ceremony on May 15. Lee was selected from three Teacher of the Year finalists from HCDE's schools and will receive \$1,000 donated by online learning company Edgenuity.

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Photo: Harris County Department of Education Highpoint East teacher JoAnna Lee holds her plaque after being named HCDE "Teacher of the Year." Lee teaches at-risk, high school students at a HCDE school for expelled or adjudicated youth.

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HCDE PRESS RELEASE

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Teacher of the Year Finalist: Special Education Teacher Suzanne Boyd Uses Past Experience to Reach Students

May 10, 2018 - Suzanne Boyd knew from a young age she wanted to be a teacher, but her experience in law enforcement led her to special education. In her second year as a special education teacher at Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior School West, Boyd brings a unique perspective to her job.

Boyd began working for the Houston ISD Police Department in 1989 as a campus officer, where she interacted with students daily and often resolved conflicts and concerns. During her tenure, she developed a passion for working with students with social and emotional issues and wanted to reach them before they were placed into the criminal justice system.

Her law enforcement experience combined with two degrees in psychology helped Boyd realize there are many mental and emotional disturbances that mirror criminal intent.

"It became my passion to help high-risk students with learning and emotional challenges reach their full potential," said Boyd. "I felt I could be a role model and advocate for students with special needs."

HCDE's Academic and Behavior Schools provide an enriching and supportive environment for students with intellectual, developmental and behavioral challenges. Area school districts contract with the two schools that provide specialized instruction to prepare students ages 5-21 to return to their home districts.

AB School West Principal Victor Keys says Boyd is the greatest advocate for her students and has experienced the highest success rate at the school in sending students back to their home campuses. She was also selected as the campus' 2018 Teacher of the Year.

Boyd's greatest joy as a teacher is watching her students grow and show progress despite personal and physical challenges. Her classroom is differentiated, so each student works on their own level, at their own pace. Boyd rises to this challenge by providing alternative approaches to learning and presenting material in a variety of ways so each student can learn as deeply as possible.

Boyd also combines her differentiated instruction with social skills development so her students are empowered socially and intellectually. She encourages them daily to respect others and explore learning in creative ways.

“I want to make an impact on young minds and help students believe they can learn, overcome challenges and accomplish any dream if they work hard enough,” said Boyd. “I also hope to inspire my students to become role models in their communities.”

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Teacher of the Year: Veteran Teacher JoAnna Lee Shares Knowledge, Passion for At-Risk Students

Highpoint East English teacher JoAnna Lee goes beyond developing her students' love of literature and writing. As a veteran teacher in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) setting, Lee is passionate about helping a population of students that often falls between the cracks in the general education system.

Highpoint is a campus for troubled youth in grades 6-12 that offers a safe and highly-structured learning environment, with a low, 15-to-1 student to teacher ratio. Students come to Highpoint on a contract basis through their home school district with the goal of returning to and graduating from their home-district high school.

While teaching special education in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, Lee became familiar with Harris County Department of Education's Highpoint School East. Three years ago, Lee sought out a job teaching at Highpoint East to work exclusively with adjudicated or expelled youth.

Effective and supportive teachers are a critical factor contributing to student achievement, but DAEP campuses often have high teacher turnover. Lee has made it her goal to work with teachers in this setting and share her experience and passion for teaching at-risk students. She also hopes to help at-risk populations understand the importance of graduating and pass on her love for reading and writing.

"Most at-risk students have experienced some type of trauma, abuse or neglect by loved ones," said Lee. "They need educators who are proficient and compassionate to meet their educational needs and break the shell of their defiant behavior."

For Lee, this involves differentiating English lessons to meet the differences in abilities, interests and learning styles of her students. She uses the Love and Logic approach to encourage her students to own and solve their problems, an important skill in the real world. She also works to gain their trust and help them realize the importance of education for their future.

Moving forward, Lee hopes to share the knowledge she's gained from her 10-year teaching career with a new generation of teachers by becoming a college professor for pre-service educators. She is currently working on her doctorate in ethical leadership.

"Above all else, JoAnna possesses a passion for teaching," says Highpoint East Principal Marion Cooksey. "I've witnessed her growth as a leader as she consistently shares her knowledge and experience with her peers."

Lee serves on the Campus Improvement Committee at Highpoint East and mentors teachers new to the DAEP setting. The goal is to ensure that each student is successful while being served by HCDE.

"Every person has the right to an education," says Lee. "Our schools serve the community by ensuring each student, no matter their past behavior or mistakes, can learn and grow."

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



Media Contact:

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Email: cvaughn@hcde-texas.org

Teen Artists, Writers in Harris County Urged to Enter Scholastic Art & Writing Awards 2019

Sept. 12, 2018 - Students in grades 7-12 in Harris County may submit their art and writing entries through their teachers and schools beginning Sept. 12-Dec. 3. Seventeen art categories range from painting to video game design and 11 writing genres vary from poetry to short stories.

Harris County Department of Education is one of approximately 100 regional affiliates in the country for the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. HCDE supports the Awards through judging, ceremonies, receptions and sponsorships. Notable Awards winners of the past include alumni Stephen King, Zac Posen, Lena Dunham, John Updike, Truman Capote and many more.

"Last year we received 6,225 Harris County student entries from 531 teachers in public and private schools during a time when our students and teachers were recovering from Hurricane Harvey," said Andrea Segraves. "Enthusiasm and support for the program continue to grow."

Segraves, HCDE Scholastic Art & Writing Awards coordinator, believes this year will be a record-breaking year for entries, anticipating the need for extra volunteer judges who are art and writing professionals. Scholastic Art & Writing Regional Affiliate Harris County Department of Education also relies heavily on sponsors to support Houston receptions and travel scholarships for students to attend national ceremonies in New York City in June. To volunteer for judging or to sponsor, email asegraves@hcde-texas.org with contact information.

Awardees are announced in late December for art and early January for writing. Art and writing regional awardees' work will be showcased through gallery venues at Texas Art Supply and Spring Street Studios in February. Ceremonies are planned at the Ballroom at Bayou Center on March 27.

Details about entering, including art and writing categories and rules, may be found through the national Scholastic Art & Writing Awards website: <https://www.artandwriting.org/affiliate/TX001A/> .

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HCDE MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Unconventional Graduation 2018: 80 GED Graduates Share Stories at Harris County Department of Education Ceremony

What: 80 GED graduates open doors to new possibilities as they gain their certificates through Harris County Department of Education's Adult Education program. Graduates range in age from 17-60.

Who: Valedictorian is a Megan Remus, 32, a mother who returned to GED classes to further her career under teacher Ronalee Martinez. Remus is currently attending a medical assistant program at Lee College in Baytown while attending classes at HCDE's Baytown Learning Center. Her goal is to become a registered nurse.

Salutatorian is Betul Bolat, 22. She dropped out of high school after her family moved to Turkey. After returning to the United States, she enrolled in GED classes at the Irvington Learning Center with teachers Maria Kirtland and Grant Winston. She aspires to attend Lone Star College and graduate from University of Houston Downtown with a communications degree.

GED grad Rudis Elias from El Salvador began taking classes at the Spring Branch Family Development Center in 2013 with teacher Josefina Javier. After completing 800 hours of instruction, he progressed through English as a second language (ESL) classes into GED classes. He earned his GED this semester and will enroll in trade school.

When: 11 a.m.-noon, Saturday, May 19, 2018 (Arrive as early as 9:30 a.m. for advance interviews.)

Where: Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington Blvd. (Conference Center), Houston, Texas 77022

Etc.: Multiple student stories available with both English/Spanish speakers.

Media contacts: Contact Carol Vaughn, 281-660-9205



HCDE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Unconventional Graduation 2018: 80 GED Graduates Open Doors to Possibilities at Harris County Department of Education Ceremony

May 19, 2018 – Eighty GED graduates are opening doors to new possibilities as they celebrate their accomplishments in gaining their GEDs through Harris County Department of Education’s adult learner graduation on May 19, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at 6300 Irvington.

The unconventional graduation 2018 promotes the successes of students who learn or relearn tasks like solving algebraic equations and organizing persuasive essays. While many use their GEDs as a stepping stone to high education or a better job, others want the equivalency diploma to prove they can do it.

“Many of our students are now joining our workforce training classes in combination with English as a second language or GED classes,” said Angela Johnson, program manager for workforce development, Harris County Department of Education Adult Education. “Through our workforce development partnership, students are finding employment while they are attaining academic skills.”

HCDE provides free adult education classes in 65 community locations throughout Harris and Liberty counties. Partnerships with churches and community centers allow adult learners to go back to school in their own communities. Neighborhoods include inner-city Houston, Cy-Fair, Goose Creek, Hardin, Klein, Liberty, Cleveland, Pasadena, Baytown, Galena Park, Spring Branch and Katy. For ESL, GED or workforce classes, go to www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation.

3 GED members of the Class of 2018 from Harris County Department of Education:

Valedictorian is Megan Remus, 32. Remus is a mother who strives to serve as a positive role model for her daughter, 5. She returned to GED classes to further her career. Remus is currently attending a medical assistant program at Lee College in Baytown while attending classes at HCDE’s Baytown Learning Center. Her goal is to become a registered nurse. (Teacher is Ronalee Martinez.)

Salutatorian is Betul Bolat, 22. She dropped out of high school after her family moved to Turkey. After returning to the United States, she enrolled in GED classes at the Irvington Learning Center. She aspires to attend Lone Star College and graduate from University of Houston Downtown with a communications degree. (Teachers are Maria Kirtland and Grant Winston.)

Rudis Elias is an El Salvador immigrant. Five years ago, he moved to the United States and knew he must learn English. He began taking entry-level English as a second language classes at the Spring Branch Family Development Center in 2013. He has completed 800 hours of instruction, progressing through English as a second language (ESL) classes into GED classes. He earned his GED this semester and will enroll in trade school. (Teacher is Josefina Javier.)

About Harris County Department of Education: HCDE provides special education, therapy services, early education, adult education and after-school programming. Services are funded by government grants, fees and a local property tax rate of \$.005195. For every dollar in local property tax collected, HCDE provides \$4.40 in services to the 25 Harris County school districts. HCDE also operates four campuses for students with profound special education needs and adjudicated youth who require a low student-teacher ratio and highly structured environment. One-hundred percent of students served on HCDE campuses are at-risk. The organization is governed by an elected board of seven trustees and has 1,060 employees and 33 facilities, including 15 Head Start centers. More info at <http://www.hcde-texas.org> .