

FOR THE WEEK OF
DECEMBER 1, 2014



The Connector

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

From the office of **JAMES COLBERT, JR. | SUPERINTENDENT**



Of Note...

First off, I am excited to launch **The Connector**—a weekly publication dedicated to informing you, the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) Board of Trustees, of the many events within the Department. My goal is to include valuable, timely, and newsworthy information each Friday (with few exceptions based on the Department's calendar). **The Connector** will give you an opportunity to realize the direct impact you have through your thoughtful decision-making as it relates to public education in Harris County. Moreover, I request that you pay special attention to the Board Spotlight page. I look forward to bringing to the forefront your interests and accomplishments in your communities. Each of you is a valuable asset to both HCDE and the community-at-large, and I want to leverage your visibility every opportunity I get!

Today marks the end of my first official week at HCDE. I am pleased to report that I am even more eager about leading HCDE to the apex of excellence than ever before. I am calibrating my expectations with the exceptional human capital we already have onboard. I am focused on establishing HCDE's vision.

I am also in the midst of preparing for our Special Call Board Meeting next Monday, December 8th at 6:00 p.m. At that time, I look forward to sharing my draft Preliminary Needs Assessment during our Executive Session. Next, our regularly scheduled Board Meeting will take place Tuesday, December 16th at its regularly scheduled time. On that day, we will also honor our two outgoing Board Members (Debra Kerner and Howard Jefferson) during a 12:00 noon reception, immediately preceding the Board Meeting. To that end, in an effort to expedite your receipt of the Board Agenda, you should expect to receive an electronic copy of the December Board Agenda by close of business today. A hard copy will be forthcoming next week by courier, as usual.

Thanks again for allowing me the opportunity to serve. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**—the first of many to come. There's nowhere for us to go but up! Get ready to soar.

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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Kids Day at Frost Bank Brings High Energy

This morning, the North Post Oak location of HCDE was transformed into a Holiday Marketplace, providing entrepreneurship opportunities for elementary-aged students.

The collaboration with Frost Bank, on behalf of CASE-facilitated by the Education Foundation of Harris County-afforded students from both non-profits and schools in Aldine, Alief, Houston, Pasadena, and Sheldon independent school districts, and several area charter schools, to take part in establishing bank accounts, and then buy goods and services in the marketplace. Students later switched roles, becoming marketing experts, as they sold goods in the marketplace.



Center for Safe and Secure Schools hosts Bullying Prevention, Gang Awareness, and Ebola Workshop



Two dynamic speakers, including Fabian Ramirez, addressed these critical topics for schools at a free workshop held November 21. The workshop was held during anti-bullying week to educate teachers and law enforcement about the harmful effects of bullying.

School Bell Blog

Communications and Public Information launched the HCDE School Bell Blog this academic year. Specialists from the **Instructional Support Services (ISS)** division discuss education topics of interest from curriculum specialists- including their challenges and successes. Our academic specialists include personal anecdotes and share helpful videos and links to resources. Topics of interest range from core subject content to school safety, educator certification and classroom management. Visit HCDE's School Bell Blog today at blog.hcde-texas.org!

Early Childhood Winter Conference Only Weeks Away

The **ISS** division is gearing up for its 29th Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference on January 31, 2015. This year's event will be held at the Kingdom Builders' Center, located at 6011 West Orem in south Houston.

The all day event features 90-plus workshop options for early childhood educators. Specialization workshops will focus on subjects such as behavior management, math, science, literacy, technology, bilingual and dual language education, technology, art, and music. Visit www.hcde-texas.org/ECWinterConf for more information.



Engaged attendees at 2014 ECWC



Former Trustee Ray Garcia Addresses Attendees at Conference Bearing his Name

ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING by training the trainer

HCDE-sponsored trainings this week:

- 12.3 | HCDE Math Assessment Writing Collaborative
- 12.3 | Houston Science Educator's Leadership Association
- 12.3 | The Best-Kept Secret to Classroom Discipline
- 12.3 | Scholastic Planning
- 12.5 | Meeting
- 12.4 | Developing Fraction Concepts from the Ground Up
- 12.4 | Topography and Satellite Images
- 12.5 | Social Studies Leadership Meeting
- 12.5 | Rocks from Space: Early Solar System Clues about Earth

ON THE DEVELOPMENT FRONT

The Center for Grants Development has submitted grant proposals to the following grantors:

- CVS Pharmacy
- IBM
- United Airlines
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Strake Foundation
- OneStar Foundation
- Bowne Foundation
- Head Start Continuation 2015
- HEB - Sponsorship
- Digital Trust Foundation

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Goings-on in Special Schools...

- HCDE's new Curriculum Director, Brenda Mullins, has completed a folder audit of special education students at each of the Highpoint campuses. Both campuses have begun to align all services with the specific indicators on the schedule of services.
- The division is gearing up for the end of the First Semester. Course exams begin the week of December 15th.
- The four campuses currently serve 21 Harris County school districts, 6 out-of-county school districts, and 3 major charter schools in Harris County. Both Galveston and Hitchcock ISDs are our newest clients. Districts are showing a 92% client satisfaction rate, mostly commenting on the quality of instruction and safety provided to students.

SAVE THE DATES!

Friday, December 12th at 12:30 p.m.

Christmas Play at ABC-East

Friday, December 19th from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Holiday potlucks at the Highpoint campuses



Academic & Behavior Center West hosts Thanksgiving Luncheon

ABC West held a special Thanksgiving feast for students and parents to enjoy on November 20, 2014.



BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Taking Care of Business...

The Business Services division recently launched the HCDE Analytics Dashboard for all internal divisions. Financial data can now be analyzed and accessed more efficiently by all divisions.

Business Services staff has also continued work on the Varnett School's Annual audit reconciliations and information for the external auditors as well as working with Northwest Preparatory Academy, having attended the TEA Conference Call to that end. Other projects include working with LaMarque ISD, having attended the TEA Conference Call regarding financial intervention of that district by HCDE.

New Contracts Awarded for Access through HCDE Choice Partners

New cooperative members:

- Beeville ISD
- Brazos Maternal and Child Health Clinic, Inc.
- City of Granbury
- Region 12 ESC
- City of Rosenberg
- Scurry County
- Taylor County
- Texas Retailers Association
- The Woodlands Township
- University of Dallas at Irving.

HCDE's Therapy Services: A True Leader in the Field

Therapy Services director Jean Polichino recently co-presented an all-day institute- **An Introduction to School-Based Occupational Therapy**. At the conference, HCDE Therapy Services staff also presented a two-hour session, **Introducing TxSpot**, to occupational therapy practitioners and professional students. Other HCDE Therapy Services managers attending the event promoted occupational therapy employment opportunities with HCDE.

The division also recently provided management consultation to Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy staff in Humble ISD. Topics included therapy service delivery for students with disabilities under Section 504, as well as a review of the district model for Physical Therapy services under IDEA, and also within a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework.

While the division has several other commitments on the horizon, Polichino also represented HCDE as she participated in a panel discussion for approximately 45 Masters of Occupational Therapy students at Texas Woman's University. There, she served as an expert resource in the question and answer session pertaining to the management of occupational therapy services for children.



HCDE Therapy Services director Co-Presents Local Occupational Therapy Services Conference

SHOW AND TELL

Gayla Rawlinson-Maynard, Director of HCDE's **Center for Grants Development**, recently facilitated **Diversify Your Funding With Government Grants**, a session at CenterPoint Energy's Power Tools for Non-Profits Conference at NRG Park. The session covered points ranging from factors to consider before applying to what prospective grantors want to know.



Jamie Salinas, **Technology Helpdesk Manager** for HCDE, recently presented at the Fusion

Conference in Washington DC. The Fusion Conference is a product of both the Helpdesk Institute and the Information Technology Service Management Forum (itSMF) organizations. It is the largest technology support conference of its kind on the globe. The HCDE representative's presentation was one of the few selected out of hundreds of speaker proposals submitted for consideration. **The Magic of Customer Service** shared techniques Salinas employs when providing exceptional helpdesk customer service to employees of HCDE.

SCENES...

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S WELCOME RECEPTION



TOP ROW (L-R) Team Colbert (Superintendent Colbert with son Isom and wife Angie) shown with Dr. and Mrs. Jim Scales



Aldine ISD's MacArthur High School's Jazz Ensemble



Superintendent Colbert and HCDE's Board of Trustees (As shown from left to right: Front row- Superintendent Colbert, Board President Angie Chesnut, Board Vice President Dianne Trautman, Trustee Erica Lee Carter, Trustee Debra Kerner, Trustee Kay Smith; Back row- Trustee Marvin Morris; Howard Jefferson not pictured)



Dianne Williams and Former U.S. Department of Education Secretary, Dr. Rod Paige, join HCDE Board of Trustees and other local officials at the Superintendent Colbert's reception hosted by the HCDE Board of Trustees

Lunch with the Faith-Based Community

CASE for Kids hosted a luncheon at Maggiano's Little Italy November 20, 2014 to introduce the faith-based community to the many ways afterschool programs support families and communities, and the resources that are available to them. This project was made possible by a contribution from Houston Endowment, Inc. to the Education Foundation of Harris County.



This week's Harris County School District Highlight:

Humble ISD offers dual-language opportunities to students through multiple elementary schools. The goal is second-language proficiency to help students become globally competitive.

Our 25 Harris County School Districts:

- Aldine
- Alief
- Channelview
- Clear Creek
- Crosby
- Cy-Fair
- Dayton
- Deer Park
- Galena Park
- Goose Creek
- Houston
- Huffman
- Humble
- Katy
- Klein
- LaPorte
- New Caney
- Pasadena
- Pearland
- Sheldon
- Spring
- Spring Branch
- Stafford
- Tomball
- Waller

GIVING BACK

HCDE participated in this week's Giving Tuesday campaign. We solicited our community to support education in Harris County. Giving Tuesday is a national movement dedicated to giving. It's similar to Black Friday and Cyber Monday, but it's a day for giving rather than shopping. Click the following URL to see the associated video: <http://youtu.be/ulxmsjcQKAQ>



In Partnership with the Star of Hope HCDE gives HOPE through NOTES!



HCDE staff offers hope through the Star of Hope's recent NOTES OF HOPE Campaign. Through a partnership between HCDE's **Human Resources** division and the Star of Hope, employees wrote encouraging words to the homeless to be shared during this continuous season of giving.



BOARD SPOTLIGHT



TRUSTEE ERICA LEE CARTER will be honored at the Houston/Harris County Retired Teachers Association's Annual Christmas Honors Luncheon, Saturday, December 13, 2014 at 11:00 a.m. The event will be held at the Power Center, located at 12401 South Post Oak in Houston, Texas.

Let's put our Trustees in the SPOTLIGHT!

All members of the **HCDE Board of Trustees** are encouraged to submit your highlights and tidbits to boardhighlights@hcde-texas.org. Let's get to know each other even better!

TRUSTEES ON THE MOVE! SCENES FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECEPTION



HCDE BOARD

BOARD PRESIDENT
POSITION 2, PRECINCT 4
Angie Chesnut

BOARD VICE-PRESIDENT
POSITION 3, AT LARGE
Diane Trautman

Erica Lee Carter
Position 6, Precinct 1

Howard Jefferson
Position 7, At Large

Debra Kerner
Position 5, At Large

Marvin W. Morris
Position 1, Precinct 2

Kay Smith
Position 4, Precinct 3

Upcoming Board Events:

Reception Honoring Outgoing Trustees

Tuesday, December 16, 2014
12:00 noon-1:00 p.m.

Plan to attend to bid Trustees Debra Kerner and Howard Jefferson farewell and to thank them for their service to HCDE.

Board Appreciation Reception and Welcoming of New Trustees

Thursday, January 22, 2015
12:00 noon-1:00 p.m.

Plan to attend as we honor you for your service and also welcome Trustees-elect Don Sumners and Michael Wolfe.