

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...

I take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in this week's Board Training. We are a committed 'Team of Eight' and I look forward to us moving forward with the goals and ideals of Harris County Department of Education. I thank you for your engagement during this series of trainings and I commend you for the contributions you made to the process. Please be reminded that we, each, should consider own mission statement as it relates to the organization, and be prepared to share with the group at our next training on Wednesday, April 8th. Again, I thank you for your commitment to the betterment of HCDE.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to represent HCDE before the Houston Chronicle Editorial Board. We had an informative discussion with relevant dialogue regarding how HCDE meets the needs of our client school districts, and the students of Harris County. Should an editorial article arise as a result of that meeting, then I will apprise you accordingly. In my role as superintendent, I look forward to nurturing the relationship between HCDE and the Houston Chronicle—currently, the nation's largest daily newspaper.

On next Monday, I will be participating in a radio interview with Larry Payne, host of Interchange, a talk show aired on KCOH/1230AM. The interview will be in-studio live at 7:00 p.m. Also, next week, I will be interviewed for a segment of Dialogue Houston, a product of Houston Community College, on HCC TV—also hosted by Larry Payne. I will apprise you of the television air date once it is available.

Our budget season moves to the next phase next week as we begin meeting with directors of the various divisions and programs concerning their budgetary needs and projections for the next fiscal year. Meetings commence next week, and will continue into the first few weeks of April. I will continue to keep you informed as we progress through this process. I would like to remind you of upcoming pertinent dates. Good Friday is celebrated next week, April 3rd, and HCDE will be closed. The next board training session will take place on Tuesday, April 8th at 1:00 p.m., and finally, the April Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 21st at 1:00 p.m. I look forward to seeing you at both meetings.

In closing, have a great weekend and I hope you enjoy this issue of The Connector. Thank you for your service to HCDE.

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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Stafford MSD College and Career Center

Education, business, and community leaders (including a representative from HCDE) were on hand for a breakfast presentation and tour of Stafford MSD's College and Career Center. Stafford MSD's superintendent, Dr. Robert Bostic laid out his vision for the Career Center and announced partnerships with Texas Southern University and Houston Community College. Dr. John Rudley and Dr. Fena Garza were also on hand to give further details about dual credit and scholarship programs. After the presentation, student ambassadors gave quest a walking tour of the new College and Career Center facility.

39 Harris County Students Gain National Awards, Scholarships through Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Sponsored Regionally by HCDE

HCDE Scholastic Art & Writing Awards medalists will be well-represented in New York City this June as our Harris County students gained 39 medals through national judging. Medalists were announced March 16.

Sam Rayburn senior Vanessa Sosa earned national acclaim and a \$10,000 scholarship as one of eight art portfolio Gold Key Medalists chosen from a field of 1,000. Sosa earned two additional Gold Key Medals for her individual entries and a "best in grade" art distinction as a senior. She and her teacher Daniel Reyna gain \$500 and \$250 respectively for that award.

St. John's Upper School tenth grader Yuming Ren earned the award for "best in grade" from the thousands of entries from tenth graders nationally. She and her teacher Dan Havel earn \$500 and \$250 respectively.



Additional notable awards go to Jose Gutierrez, an eleventh grader from Davis High School in Aldine Independent School District. Writer Isabella draper of St. John's Upper School earns an American Vision Award for her personal essay entitled Defying Expiration.

National medalists represent the following districts: Aldine, Cypress Fairbanks, Deer Park, Houston, Huffman, Katy, Klein, Pasadena, Spring Branch and Tomball. Private schools earning medals are The Village School and St. John's Upper School.

(As a special note, we congratulate Linda Dixon, daughter of Kelly and Elvira Dixon. The Pasadena ISD Bondy Middle School student earned a Silver Medal for her mixed media piece dedicated to her father.)

43 Educators Attend Math Institute: Aligning the Pre-K Guidelines

Forty-three pre-k and kindergarten teachers and administrators attended the Math Institute: Aligning the Pre-K Guidelines to the New TEKS workshop at HCDE. Co-presenters were HCDE Director of Mathematics Curriculum Nicole Shanahan and math consultant Kristen Allen. The workshop featured 56 centers and eight small group instruction lessons along with 16 whole group lessons. Attendees were from Alief, Aldine, Fort Bend, Houston, Katy, Spring, and multiple private and charter schools.



ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING by training the trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

- 03.24** | English as a Second Language ESL TEXES #154 Supplemental One-Day Mini Academy
- 03.26** | Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Of Cabbages and Chemistry/Crime Lab Chemistry (6 hours G/T credit)
- 03.26** | Math Institute - Aligning the Pre-K Guidelines to the New TEKS (Gr Pre-K and K)
- 03.28** | Test Prep Workshop for TEXES Bilingual Education Supplemental Exam (#164)


Make Children a Part of Your Agenda!
Join Us and Be a Child Again...

Harris County Department of Education
Head Start Area I Center Tours:

Tuesday, 4/14

Thursday, 4/16

Schedule: 8:45 a.m.-9 a.m. Refreshments
9 a.m. Depart for Center; return by noon.

Location: 6300 Irvington, Houston, Texas 77022

Limited Space

RSVP by 4/8/15 at (713) 696-2188



PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Online Safety Program Funded by Digital Trust Foundation to Cirrus Learn at Cy-Fair ISD Helps Teachers Guide Students to Safely Navigate Online Learning

Cirrus Learn Online, a program launched through the technology division at Harris County Department of Education, gained a \$187,500 grant on March 25 through the Digital Trust Foundation to teach positive online citizenship behaviors. The grant targets middle school students engaged in an online learning management system in the Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District.



This train-the-trainer safety model equips teachers with effective strategies for online safety, privacy, and digital citizenship. Those skills are passed on to other teachers to spread the best practices in digital safety. The program trains 18 middle school teachers and two district-level staff. The training, which will directly affect approximately 3,000 students, is an essential asset in light of today's technology as it relates to students.

"We created digital lessons focused on safety, privacy and citizenship that will help these students as they access the Internet for their lessons," said David McGeary, manager of Cirrus Learn Online. Cirrus Learn was created two years ago by HCDE as a needs initiative for local K-12 school districts to help educate students and teachers on digital safety, citizenship, and privacy in online learning spaces.

Lessons focus on privacy issues, and particularly on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Students learn to develop "net etiquette" in the classroom by communicating professionally through email. Curriculum focuses on students learning the digital skills necessary to be productive in the "connected world" and strategies they can use to build a positive online presence.

Adult Education, Capital Idea Houston Featured on KCOH AM with Larry Payne

Adult Education's Angela Johnson was featured on KCOH AM with Larry Payne, in collaboration with Capital Idea Houston. The collaborative featured 10 weeks of integrated education and training classes held at HCDE. Students focused on skills necessary to gain entry level positions in construction-related industries and it also allowed students to continue working on earning their GEDs. Students showed significant gains in both career and academic curriculum. The classes boasted a 98 percent attendance rate.



CASE for Kids Gears Up for Mayor's Day of Recognition April 7

CASE for Kids AmeriCorps members are gearing up for the Mayor's Day of Recognition on April 7. The day recognizes the service of AmeriCorps members. CASE for Kids is working with local commissioner Mary Grace Landrum to plan for the special event. More to come soon!

Curriculum Director for Mathematics Shanahan Provides Feedback to SBOE for New Financial Math Course

HCDE's Nicole Shanahan, curriculum director for mathematics, is providing feedback on the standards and Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for the new "Financial Mathematics" high school course. The course has already been approved by the State Board of Education. The course builds financial literacy skills of high school students. Shanahan



is working with mathematics cohorts from the Texas Association for Supervisors of Mathematics and the Texas Council on Economic Education to review and recommend changes. She considers it an honor to be chosen as a mathematics instructional leader on the team which met at HCDE on March 25.

Head Start Gains \$5,000 Grant from Bank of Texas through Education Foundation of Harris County

Head Start gained a \$5,000 grant provided by the Bank of Texas through the Education Foundation of Harris County on March 6.

The donation will fund the Read Excel Achieve Lead SuperMENTors Read program, or REAL SuperMENTors Read.



CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Highpoint North Hosts College Day March 12

Highpoint North hosted college day from 8 a.m. to noon March 12 for its students which included sessions with school counselor Karen Fuller. Presenters included the University of Houston, Modern Barber College, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Marines, the U.S. Air Force, the Art Institute, cosmetology representatives and ITT Tech. Special thanks goes to science teacher Cheryl Sanders for organizing the event.



ABC West Students Attend Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo 2015 is one of the most anticipated field trips at ABC West. The opportunity to attend is based on behavior merits. This year the students had a great time but also benefited as faculty used the educational experience to examine birth cycles, and even the live delivery of animals such as chicks, goats, and horses. Farming practices allowed us to incorporate science concepts into the experience. Students experienced the excitement of bull-riding, pig-racing and mutton-busting.



BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

HCDE Budget Gains Distinguished Budget Award from GFOA

The Government Finance Officers Association presented the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award to HCDE's Assistant Superintendent of Finance Jesus Amezcua and his Business Services staff for the HCDE budget. In addition, the budget received "Special Performance Measures Recognition." The items judged were the policy document, financial plan, operations guide and communications device. The award was announced on March 4.



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
La Porte
New Caney
Pasadena
Pearland
Sheldon
Spring
Spring Branch
Stafford
Tomball
Waller

HARRIS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT



Galena Park ISD is proud to announce the new Career and Technical Education Early College High School (ECHS) located on the campus of San Jacinto College North! This innovative education option is not the same as a dual credit program. Students in an ECHS begin taking college level courses and earning college credits in the 9th grade. 8th graders interested in participating in the inaugural class should check out this link for more details, <http://www.galenaparkisd.com/echs.php>

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

New York Times Reporter Visited Adult Education English Language Civics Class

New York Times writer, professor and author David Kirp visited Harris County Department of Education Adult Education English language civics class this month while touring Neighborhood Centers. Kirp is writing an article about agency programs and collaborative partnerships that leverage resources to transform lives and communities. Our teacher, who is helping students prepare for the citizenship exam, is Diana Martinez (third to right). Kirp is featured (left back).



Can you Pass the STAAR Math Test? KHOU Story Uses Expertise of Instructional Support Services

Instructional Support Services Math Curriculum Director Nicole Shanahan was featured March 23 on KHOU Channel 11 news with education reporter Lauren Talarico. The story focused on Nicole's expertise in working with districts to train teachers for the new math essential skills. A fun twist sent the news crew out to a coffee shop to see if adults could pass the STAAR math test for third graders.



HCDE Represented at Cy-Fair COC Education Meeting

Winfred Adams (Communications and Public Information) attended Cy-Fair Chamber of Commerce's Education/Workforce Committee meeting. Featured speaker, Tom Pickford, chairman of CFISD Community Legislative Committee (CLC) and Karen Miller, member of CFISD CLC, gave a presentation on legislative issues facing education for the 84th legislative session.

Therapy Services Delivers Workshop for Region 20

At the request of Region 20 ESC in San Antonio, Jean Polichino, division director, presented a workshop on March 25 entitled, "Caseload to Workload: A Data-Driven Approach to Managing Therapy Services." The workshop provided rationale and methodologies for using a workload approach for student assignment and staff allocation to ensure effective and efficient service delivery of school-based occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy services. The audience included OTs, PTs, SLPs, and supervisors of therapy services from the San Antonio area.



Board Training

Tuesday, April 8, 2015

1:00 p.m.

HCDE BOARD

BOARD PRESIDENT
POSITION 2, PRECINCT 4
Angie Chesnut

BOARD VICE-PRESIDENT
POSITION 4, PRECINCT 3
Kay Smith

Erica Lee Carter
Position 6, Precinct 1

Marvin W. Morris
Position 1, Precinct 2

Don Sumners
Position 7, At Large

Diane Trautman
Position 3, At Large

Michael Wolfe
Position 5, At Large

Upcoming Board Events:

April Board Meeting
Tuesday, April 21, 2015
1:00 p.m.

Together
Everyone
Achieves
More

