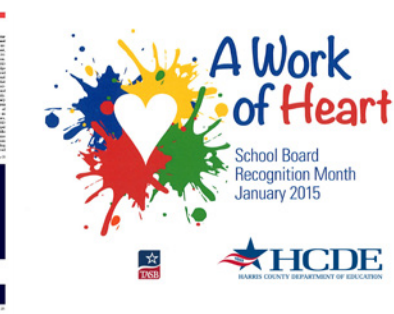
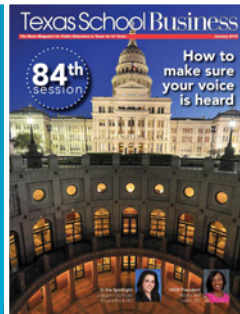
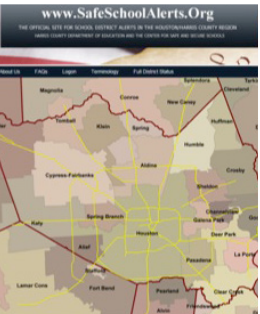


The Connector

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 remind you that next week, we will welcome our two new Board Members. Both Mr. Don Sumners and Mr. Michael Wolfe are being sworn in as Harris County Department of Education Trustees. I look forward to getting to know and working with both of them.

This week, I had the opportunity to meet with Superintendents Guy Sconzo (Humble ISD), H.D. Chambers (Alief ISD), and Wanda Bamberg (Aldine ISD). We discussed the format and prospective topics of the Superintendents' Group Think sessions. I am now in the process of refining and formalizing the process and nurturing the project to fruition. Additional details will be forthcoming on its progress.

As you are already aware, the 84th session of the Texas Legislature is officially underway. We have our fingers on the pulse of legislative developments affecting not only HCDE, but also public education across the state. To that end, I will be traveling to Austin next weekend to meet with our political liaisons (on Saturday, January 24, 2015). Those meetings will be immediately followed by the annual Texas Association of School Administrators Mid-Winter Conference which takes place January 25-28.

I also bring to your attention that the Education Foundation's Ecobot Challenge Day takes place tomorrow at the Baylor College of Medicine Academy at Ryan. It will be held from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The venue is located at 2610 Elgin in Houston (77004).

On a business note, Dr. Jesus Amezcua has included information in this week's **Connector** regarding the upcoming state audit of HCDE. Please know that I look forward to a positive outcome and I am confident that our transparent systems will illustrate our efficiency. I anticipate this process elevating HCDE's image in the state public sector.

In closing, this month is unique in that we will be honoring you—our distinguished Board of Trustees—at our January Board Meeting. Remember, this month's meeting will be held on Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. A reception in your honor will take place immediately before the meeting at noon in the HCDE Conference Center, located on the 5th floor of the parking garage. In anticipation of that day of recognition, I genuinely thank you in advance for all you do for HCDE and for the children of Harris County. I look forward to seeing you next Thursday!

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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Head Start to Host Healthy Minds and Healthy Families Conference



Mental health and wellness will be the focus of the Healthy Minds and Healthy Families conference at HCDE May 1. Hosted by Head Start through grant funding via the Hogg Foundation, the conference will feature workshops for **Head Start** parents and staff. The conference is planned during Mental Health and Wellness Month.

A planning committee is currently at work determining topics and presenters. Emphasis will be placed on addressing challenging behaviors of children through positive guidance. More information about the conference will be provided as presenters are confirmed.

CASE for Kids AmeriCorps Members Partner with Head Start



CASE for Kids AmeriCorps members are visiting four Head Start centers this spring, beginning at 9:30 in the morning on each date. Members will read to children in the classrooms and distribute books donated by READ for Houston. A science experiment with “space goo” is also planned at each visit.

Jan. 23: Channelview Head Start

Feb. 20: Compton Head Start

March 6: San Jacinto Head Start

April 17: Sheffield Head Start

Alternative Certification’s Prospective Principals Undergo Safety Training

The **Business** Office and the **Center for Safe and Secure Schools** conducted training for 26 prospective principals as part of the Principal Certification Program on Sunday Jan 11, 2015. The session included the review of Emergency Operation Plans (SAFE PLANS – ERIP Tool), School Safety Audits, School Alerts, and the requirements of Chapter 37 of the Education Code. Participants also reviewed and were part of a mock safety audit of the Irvington location. Presenters included Steve Cathey, Bonnie Rivera, and Dr. Jesus Amezcua.



ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING by training the trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

01.14 | Moon Mania: Lunar Phases and Tides

01.15 | STAAR: Leading Relevant Review

01.15 | Attendance Officer’s Share Session

01.16 | Librarian Leadership Meeting

01.16 | School Finance Council

01.16 | Project WET Educator Workshop

HARRIS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT



Humble ISD offers its students the opportunity to apply for the prestigious International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. The deadline for application to the IB program is January 30, 2015. For more information check out this link, <http://www.humbleisd.net/Page/20012>

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Lead4ward Workshop Draws Teams of Educators Near and Far

About 150 school administrators and teachers attended the lead4ward STAAR: Leading Relevant Review workshop at **HCDE** January 15 led by Dr. Ervin Knezek, founder of lead4ward. Teams were formed to tackle the challenges of the STAAR assessment system with the goal to enhance performance for accountability. Photo: Team members Dr. Sally LaRue, Karol Smith and Gina Taylor of Teague ISD (155 miles north of Houston) strategize with Dr. Robin Perez from Humble ISD.



Moon Mania

During Wednesday's "Moon Mania" workshop, science educators gained an understanding of how the sun interacts with the moon and their effect on the tides. This hands-on session led by The Lunar and Planetary Institute's Christine Shupla helped explain the concept of the lunar cycle, which is often difficult for students to understand.



CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Special Schools in Full Gear

This week we are gearing up for contract talks with client districts and for recruiting new client districts. **Special Schools** Division currently serves 24 school districts. Several out-of-county districts are requesting the quality services and educational pathways of our Academic and Behavior Centers.

Teachers and staff are training for STAAR testing. Every student will be tested during the second semester.

Students are getting acclimated into their second semester courses. At the Highpoint campuses, a Social Skills Workshop was held for girls to build self-worth as well as a goal-setting session for all students. The Academic and Behavior Centers celebrated the three weeks honor roll and perfect attendance.



HIGHPOINT SCHOOLS

SAVING STRATEGIES

On Tuesday of this week, Human Resources partnered with Smart Financial and offered the workshop Saving Strategies to HCDE employees. A second session is set for January 22 at 9 a.m.

Among the topics discussed were knowing your credit score; saving money; opening/closing credit card accounts; and creating a budget. Workshop host James Hall urged attendees to get informed about their personal credit score by getting a free credit report at www.annualcreditreport.com

CASE CITY CONNECTIONS GRANT PRESENTATIONS

Four City Council presentations have been scheduled over the next two weeks: three with Houston City Council Member Richard Nguyen and one with Council Member Brenda Stardig. The first with Nguyen is a presentation during Alief ISD's Board of Trustees Meeting on Tuesday, January 20 at 6:30 p.m. at the Administration Building (4250 Cook Road). The second one is with Stardig at Spring Branch ISD Spring Woods High School, 2045 Gessner, on Wednesday, January 28, 2015 at 3 p.m. The third one with Nguyen will be held at Martin Elementary on Thursday, January 29, 2015, from 4:30-5:30 p.m. The final one with Nguyen will be at Miller Intermediate on Friday, January 30, 2015, from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Although the presentations are scheduled to last an hour, they will likely last less than a half-hour once the Council Member arrives.

HCDE to Undergo State Audit

The State Auditor's Office will be auditing **HCDE** to ensure that controls are in place for grants and contracts, and that it complies with applicable policies, procedures, rules, and state laws. The review will take place from January through May 2015, and the report is expected in August 2015.



Grant and contract information will be provided by our various divisions so that the auditors are able to conduct a risk assessment of HCDE internal controls. The audit will be conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. HCDE is audited annually by an independent auditor and/or grantor agencies; thus, it is expected that this audit will be similar to previous audits. Our staff is poised to provide all necessary information and has directed some of the auditors to our transparency webpage which includes much of the information being sought. Ongoing status updates will be provided to the Superintendent and the Board as we progress through the process.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Familiar Faces in the News...

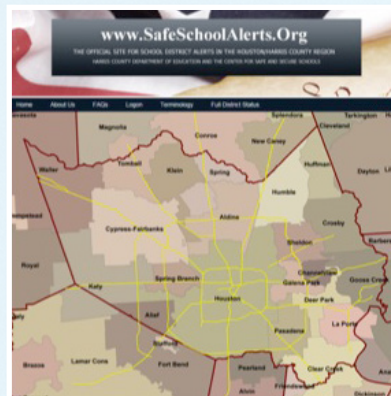
In the current issue of Texas School Business magazine, Ms. Brenda Mullins (Director of Curriculum and Compliance Services for the **Special Schools** division) and I are featured in the Who's News section. Visit <http://issuu.com/tasanet/docs/tsb-january15?e=11039933/10843911> to view the complete issue.



School Alerts Software Upgrade Coming to 25 Schools Districts

The Center for Safe and Secure Schools

continues to work on the School Alerts Program Update. A feedback session was conducted with member districts on Wednesday of last week. The Witt O'Brien team displayed system features and development of the project will continue. It is expected to be upgraded and go live by summer 2015.



- 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

BOARD SPOTLIGHT



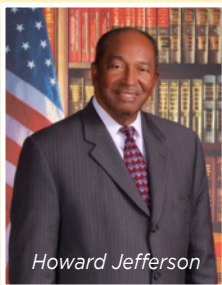
Angie Chesnut
Board President



Diane Trautman
Board Vice-President



Erica Lee Carter



Howard Jefferson



Debra Kerner

January is School Board Recognition Month

Theme: A Work of Heart!

We honor you
Thursday, January 22
at noon, Conference Center

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!



Marvin W. Morris



Kay Smith

Thank you, Trustee Debra Kerner and Trustee Howard Jefferson, for your support for HCDE programs, students and staff over the years. You are crusaders for public education, and you will be missed!

TRUSTEES ON THE MOVE!

HERO AND FRIEND,
KAY SMITH HOSTS
DINESH D'SOUZA



Kay Smith

Complimentary
TEACHER APPRECIATION
RED CARPET EVENT
JANUARY 16, 2015
RED CARPET EVENT 6:00 PM
MOVIE BEGINS PROMPTLY
AT 7:00 PM
HCDE CONFERENCE CENTER
HCDE ADMINISTRATION
RONALD W. REAGAN BUILDING
6300 IRVINGTON BLVD.
HOUSTON, TX 77022
HOSTED BY
Hero & Friend
RSVP NUMBER IN YOUR
PARTY TO
INFO@HEROANDFRIEND.ORG

In honor of your Dedication to
Excellence in Education
Enjoy the Movie
"America"
And Visit with the Internationally recognized
Writer, Author, Producer
Dinesh D'Souza

Invite a teacher to join you
Teach a student

AMERICA
IMAGINE THE WORLD WITHOUT HER

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:

Regularly Scheduled Board Meeting

Thursday, January 22, 2015
1 p.m. | 4th Floor
(Board Appreciation
reception begins at noon,
Conference Center)

**Welcome Mr. Don Sumners
and Mr. Michael Wolfe,
incoming trustees!**



Don Sumners



Michael Wolfe