

# *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...*

It's been a busy week at HCDE, and one filled with change for our Board. Let me start by welcoming the newest members of the HCDE Board of Trustees—Mr. Don Sumners and Mr. Michael Wolfe—to the HCDE family. These new trustees come to the Board with public sector expertise, and a genuine desire to forward education for all learners in Harris County. I welcome their leadership, and I remain excited about what's next to come as we continue to advance teaching and learning. I also take this opportunity to introduce **The Connector** to Trustees Sumners and Wolfe. This newsletter is my weekly publication produced specifically for the Board. In an effort to reinforce your connection to the greater organization, this newsletter provides you with timely news and information as it relates to the programs and services of HCDE.

I also congratulate Trustee Kay Smith for having been elected as our new Board Vice President. I know she will rise to the challenge and continue to do great things. Likewise, I thank Trustee Diane Trautman for her leadership as our past Vice President, and I thank her for her continued service to the Department. I commend both trustees for exercising their distinguished leadership abilities on our Board.

This weekend, I will be traveling to Austin to the annual Mid-Winter Conference which takes place next week. I will be joined by several members of the Executive Leadership Team. I will continue my professional development by participating in a Superintendents' Think Tank Session on Tuesday, as well as attending other conference sessions throughout the event. I will return to the office on Wednesday.

On Monday, we expect the state auditors to begin their audit of HCDE. Dr. Jesus Amezcua and I participated in a telephone conference with staff from the state auditor's office. From a preliminary perspective, one of the state audit representatives commended us on the controls and transparency that we already have in place. She commented on the ease in locating the many reports we make available to the public on our website. Those tools have already proved useful to her team. We embrace this opportunity to display our best practices in the area of financial management and we look forward to a positive outcome.

In closing and as Board Appreciation Week comes to an end, I want to thank each of you again for your undying service to HCDE. I recognize the significance of your commitment to public education. We couldn't do what we do without your leadership and support.

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# PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

## Early childhood conference aims to rejuvenate, invigorate, inspire teachers through children's author, entertainer Eric Litwin on January 31

Early childhood education teachers get a day to rejuvenate, access their inner child, and gain new teaching ideas during the 29th Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference on January 31. The daylong event held at the Kingdom Builders' Center, 6011 West Orem in south Houston through Harris County Department of Education, features 90-plus workshop options for early childhood educators. Specialization workshops focus on subjects such as behavior management, math, science, literacy, technology, bilingual and dual language education, technology, art, and music.



Keynote speaker is award-winning author Eric Litwin, who inspires audiences with creative classroom techniques through his guitar, harmonica, voice, and prose. "Mr. Eric" is author to a series of childhood best-sellers featuring the first four "Pete the Cat" books.



Keynote speaker for bilingual education teachers is veteran early childhood educator and presenter Mike Longoria who presents: "Singing, Moving and Learning."

The conference is a longtime tradition which attracts generations of early education learners. Along with networking, the conference features an extensive vendor fair with instructional materials and educational toys.

"Each year we look for innovative and popular presenters, and our program continues to be one of the best early childhood conferences in Texas," said Debra Anderson, Harris County Department of Education early childhood curriculum director. The conference is named after Raymond T. Garcia, an ardent early childhood supporter and former longtime board of trustee president at HCDE.

Onsite registration is \$125. For more information or to register for the conference, go to [www.hcde-texas.org/ECWinterConf](http://www.hcde-texas.org/ECWinterConf).

## HCDE Leads in Math

Teachers attending **Math Manipulatives to Teach the New TEKS** workshop on January 22 benefited from our hands-on math workshop by learning how to use three types of manipulative to teach the new TEKS. Thirty teachers attended the training.



Teachers Rebecca Self and Mary Fife of Katy ISD work on an activity for their students using unifix cubes.

## ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING by training the trainer

### Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

- 01.19** | Online Instructor's Training - Part II
- 01.20** | English as a Second Language ESL TEXES #154 Supplemental One-Day Mini Academy
- 1.21** | HCDE Principal Certification Academy Information Meeting
- 01.21** | The Quest for Grants Training Series Webinar - So You Want Me to Write a Grant
- 01.22** | Using Manipulatives to Teach the New TEKS: Focus on Cuisenaire Rods/Unifix Cubes/ and Pattern Blocks
- 01.23** | Bilingual Target Language Proficiency Test (BTLPT) Spanish
- 01.23** | What Does Customer Service Look Like in After-School Programs?

## HARRIS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT



Aldine ISD presents the 56th annual Aldine ISD Livestock Show and Country Fair. The show will be held Feb. 2-6 at the M.O. Campbell Educational Center. For more information, click on the link, <http://www.aldine.k12.tx.us/cms/rise/main.cfm?siteID=65>

# PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

## Energy City of the Future 2050 recruits teams of students to compete for scholarships in forward-thinking competition

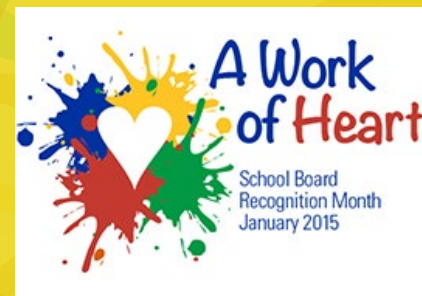


Teams of students grades 6-12 are being recruited for Energy City of the Future 2050. The competition provides a learning experience for Houston-area middle and high school students to explore Houston and its energy industry. A competitive event is scheduled throughout the day on Saturday, February 21 at the University of Houston Bauer College of Business with scholarship opportunities for winning teams.



Organizing and coordinating Energy City is CASE for Kids. Teachers gain stipends for participating, and students compete for scholarships. The competition is funded by the Education Foundation of Harris County. Sponsorships are provided from the Consumer Energy Alliance, University of Houston, the Finance Association at Bauer, GDF SUEZ, Sequent Energy Management and Williams Company. For information about creating a team or volunteering, go to <http://www.energycityofthefuture.com>.

## SCENES FROM BOARD APPRECIATION 2015



# CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

## Special Schools sends artistic appreciation notes to the Board of Trustees

All four Special Schools division campuses sent artistic notes of appreciation to our HCDE Trustees during our Board Appreciation Month celebration.



## Goings-on in Special Schools

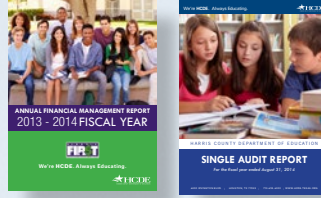
The Special Schools division is developing the 2015-2016 school calendar to be approved by the Executive Leadership Team. The schools operate under a six-week grading cycle. School will begin August 24, 2015.

The ABC West Newsletter is now featured on the HCDE Portal. View the ABC West Fall News.



## Financial Reporting for FY2013-2014

This week, HCDE's Business Services division released both the Annual Financial Management Report and Single Audit Report. HCDE received an unmodified opinion from the external auditors on the financial statements as of August 31, 2014. This means that the financial statements are free from material misstatements and can be relied on by its users. The total increase in the fund balance for the year was \$1.8M, which was an 8% increase from last year. Also, HCDE had no findings or questioned costs, and received an unmodified opinion on its grants and single audit report.



# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

## Familiar Faces in the News...

AmeriCorps members worked on a beautification and inspirational service project on Martin Luther King Day, January 19, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Workshop Houston, a nonprofit which empowers teens. Donning their blue CASE AmeriCorps t-shirts, about 20 members of CASE for Kids spruced up the building which houses Workshop Houston, the community center for teens. Members cleaned the building and its grounds and also create inspirational signs for the teens who attend programs at the center. The project was featured on KTRK Channel 13's Hometown Live: <http://youtu.be/pNY0yiG-1aA>



## Harris County Department of Education Featured in TASA Insight Magazine

See the following link for a story called **The Formula for Telling your Story** which is featured in TASA Insight for January-February from HCDE Communications and Public Information. HCDE's own Carol Vaughn examines the ABCs of telling your story with HCDE divisions as example: <http://issuu.com/tasanet/docs/winter14?e=11039933/10843547>



## HCDE Trains KIPP Charter School Staff

HCDE's Business Services division, the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, and Sarah Langlois partnered to provide school finance and legal training to KIPP Charter School. Training included the review of the Texas Public Information Act, contract concerns related to charters, Charter Finance 101 and financial indicators, Emergency Operation Plans, and School Safety Audit Protocols.



- 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

MR. MICHAEL WOLFE AND MR. DON SUMNERS  
SEATED AS HCDE'S NEWEST TRUSTEES



## 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*

## BOARD APPRECIATION 2015



The Harris County Department of Education Trustees were honored by HCDE employees and community supporters at a reception and also during the HCDE January Board Meeting. School Board Appreciation Month is a campaign organized by the Texas Association of School Boards to honor local school board members. This year's campaign is called "A Work of Heart." After the cake-and-punch reception led by HCDE County School Superintendent James Colbert, Jr., board members received framed certificates during the board meeting. **Photo** (left to right, front to back): James Colbert, Jr., county school superintendent; Angie Chesnut, president; Don Sumners, incoming trustee; Kay Smith, vice president; Marvin Morris, trustee; Howard Jefferson, outgoing trustee; Debra Kerner, outgoing trustee; Diane Trautman, trustee; Michael Wolfe, incoming trustee; and Erica Lee Carter, trustee.

## Upcoming Board Events:

**February 24, 2015**  
**1:00 p.m.**  
HCDE Board Meeting

***No March Board Meeting***