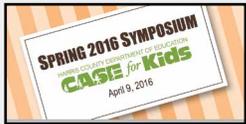


From the office of **JAMES COLBERT, JR. – SUPERINTENDENT**

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OF NOTE

While this week marks the beginning of a new month, we are also just about a week away from Spring Break. During our regularly scheduled Leadership Team Meeting this week, and consistent with the district administrators and campus principals across Harris County and surrounding counties, our Schools division reported being in sync with the rigors of the spring semester as they approach the close of another academic year. Just as our school districts are preparing for an array of spring testing, our Schools division personnel are keeping staff and students on track and ensuring comprehensive successes. Some of our campuses are anticipating an uptick in the intake of new students from our client districts, while having also assisted other students in reaching significant milestones as a result of our curriculum. Thus, our Highpoint administrators have had the opportunity to return students to their home district campuses— which is rewarding on numerous levels.

This week, I had the opportunity to visit one of the venues where a collection of Scholastic Art is on display. I went to the Archway Gallery and studied the display of a subset of award-winning student art. It was impressive to see such exceptional work of the students within Harris community. I encourage our students' art this month at any of the following locations: The Museum of Fine Art, Houston, Archway Gallery, and Texas Art Supply.

The Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) convened this week for its 70th Annual Conference. HCDE is well-represented at the event with staff from divisions such as the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, Facilities, Purchasing, and Choice Partners. HCDE also unveiled a large display at the conference, bringing to life the story of how we support our member districts by saving them money through creating value, delivering opportunity, and providing service.

Also this week, I am attending the Texas Association of Black School Educators (TABSE) Conference in Frisco, Texas. I traveled to Frisco yesterday to attend the conference which ends Sunday. While there, in addition to attending a plethora of professional development sessions, I am also participating in the Superintendents' Pipeline event, where I regularly serve as a mentor to campus and school district administrators who are aspiring to become superintendents. This conference provides me with yet another opportunity to bring HCDE to the forefront of the education landscape.

I am pleased to inform you of a timely training that HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools is taking the lead on hosting related to Restorative Justice. Next week, trainer and program director Sherwynn Patton will enlighten area educators on this hot topic in public education as he shares ways to implement this up and coming practice related to restoring discipline in academic settings. Patton works with the Texas Education Agency in conjunction with the Institute of Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue to train educators throughout the state on repairing broken bonds between students, or between students and teachers, in an effort to eliminate the pipeline to prison syndrome, which results from excessive suspensions or expulsions. We are excited to take the lead on these discussions with education leaders within and outside of Harris County. (See page 2 of this issue of **The Connector** for additional details.)

We continued to forward the teaching and learning process this week through a variety of training opportunities this week. We worked to *Advance Children's Social, Emotional, Physical, and Intellectual Development*, as well as assisted educators with *Understanding Student Performance Standards for Counselors*. In the area of science, we facilitated *Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Evolution and Classification*. HCDE is a leader in improving education in Harris County and in the greater metropolitan area.

In closing, please be reminded that there is no March Board Meeting. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and I hope you have a relaxing weekend.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Restorative Justice Training Held at HCDE Aimed at Replacing Punitive Justice for Troubled Teens in Schools

A new alternative to student discipline called “Restorative Justice” is aimed at helping schools prevent students from becoming products of the “school-to-prison pipeline.”

Trainer and program director Sherwynn Patton brings the program to the Center for Safe and Secure Schools at Harris County Department of Education, 6005 Westview Drive, on March 7-9 with an in-depth training and implementation session for educators. Patton partners with the Texas Education Agency and the Institute of Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue to train personnel in education service centers and schools throughout Texas.



Restorative Justice focuses on the needs of victims and offenders, as well as the school and community as a whole. A group discussion model, including talking and healing circles, seeks to repair broken bonds between students or between students and teachers.

Center for Safe and Secure Schools director Ecomet Burley says the sessions are in high demand because schools are looking for open-and-honest, permanent solutions to conflict instead of Band-Aid solutions which don't get to the heart of issues.

“When we use exclusionary practices like in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, it leads the student to wander the streets,” said Patton. “In many cases, these practices lead to jail time or criminal records. “Our goal is to build healthy relationships between students and teachers—ones in which teachers can teach and students and peers can learn.”

In addition to reforming discipline, Patton says restorative practices have been shown to reduce suspensions and improve attendance. The benefits for individuals are immeasurable as they learn how to resolve conflicts and improve their lives. Rather than being simply abandoned, at-risk students are given a chance to address the problems that caused them to misbehave in the first place.

To register for Restorative Justice training, go to <http://wms.hcde-texas.org> and search by workshop date or title. For more information about the workshop or the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, call 713-696-2127.

Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

FEBRUARY 29, 2016

Online Instructor's Training - Part III

MARCH 2, 2016

Advancing Children's Social, Emotional, Physical and Intellectual Development

Understanding Student Performance Standards for Counselors

MARCH 3, 2016

Operations Board Meeting

MARCH 4, 2016

Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Evolution and Classification



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



Spring 2016 Symposium Provides Saturday Workshop for Afterschool Professionals April 9 at HCDE

CASE for Kids provides a Saturday professional development workshop on April 9 from 9 a.m.-2:45 p.m. at HCDE Irvington to empower afterschool professionals. The training also encourages networking.

The workshop is part of the CASE for Kids Youth Program Quality Intervention. Tentative workshop offerings include Ask-Listen-Encourage, a session on improving communication with youth; Youth Voice, a workshop about getting buy-in from youth in out-of-school time programs; and Planning and Reflection, which addresses methods to promote youth engagement. Other sessions include Cooperative Learning as a means to foster youth leadership and community building, as well as Building Community, an interactive workshop. The goal is to allow providers to build expertise and skills that will translate into improved outcomes for students, families, staff and program.



Teaching and Learning Center Connects through Team-Building Exercise

During a team-building exercise on Monday, members of the Teaching and Learning Center divided into groups of two to construct an object from common household items. The first person from each group was given 10 minutes to write down, in detail, how to construct the object

and the second person had 10 minutes to follow their teammates' instructions for building their own object. The exercise was a creative way to develop communication skills and build trust between members of the division.



Save the Date: Graduation 2016 Set for May 21 for Adult Learners

Adult Education will host the 2016 GED graduation on Saturday, May 21 at 11 a.m. at 6300 Irvington Blvd. in the HCDE Conference Center.

Students who have gained their GEDs through Adult Education in the 2015-2016 school year are invited to participate. The graduates range in age from 16 to 65 and attend classes in community learning centers throughout the county. Their teachers are in attendance to congratulate the grads.

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



AB School West Celebrates Black History Month February 25

HCDE's AB School West celebrated Black History Month with its annual program on February 25. During the program, students and staff sang, read biographies, spoke about inventors, and learned more about the significance of the month.



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Click2Houston NEWS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT CONSUMER COMMUNITY TRAFFIC

NEWS Watch Live Local News Texas News U.S./World News Investigates Newsmakers Politics

90 teen artists celebrated at Harris County Department of Education showcases

Posted: 5:27 PM, February 26, 2016
Updated: 5:27 PM, February 26, 2016

124 124

Tomball ISD student Mary Campanas poses with her art teacher and Gold Key artwork titled "Introvert."

HOUSTON - Harris County Department of Education celebrated the talent of 90 teen artists and writers throughout the county at two Scholastic Art & Writing art receptions this week. Archway Gallery hosted a reception for artists and writers Feb. 25 and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston showcased artwork Feb. 20. Scholastic Art & Writing is a national competition hosted regionally by Harris County Department of Education.

KPRC Showcases Student Scholastic Art & Writing Work through Website, Social Media

Two receptions for Scholastic Art & Writing were showcased through an extensive KPRC photo gallery. The gallery features photos and descriptions of art and artists. See the gallery:

<http://fw.to/ixYvl2D>.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: Cy-Fair ISD



Cy-Fair ISD seeks mentors to work with students on academic and social development in elementary through high school. Training is provided.

Details:

<http://goo.gl/GnhP6R>

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



HCDE Communication and Client Engagement Staff Earn Nine State Awards from Texas School Public Relations Association

Harris County Department of Education Communication and Client Engagement earned nine awards at the 2015 Texas School Public Relations Association Star Awards competition. Awards were announced at the association's 54th annual conference near Austin, Texas.

Awards for HCDE staff include two Best of Category, two Gold Awards, three Silver Awards, and one Bronze Award. The association received 1,159 entries for 44 categories in communication, including website, newsletter, writing, annual report, and social media.

Best of Category and Gold Awards

- Computerized Presentation: "HCDE Infographic," featured through HCDE website and WhatIsHCDE.org, Louise Henry and Chelsea Hardy, (Best-of-Category and Gold)
- Published News or Feature: "The Formula for Telling Your Story," published in Texas Association of School Administrators Insight Magazine, Carol Vaughn, (Best-of-Category and Gold)

Silver Awards

- Internal Newsletter: Choice Partners "Leader's Choice" newsletter, published for Choice Partners members/contract partners, Louise Henry
- Brochure: "Come Learn with Us," printed for Head Start, Angela Hider and Carol Vaughn
- Annual Report: "Head Start Annual Report," published for Head Start, Angela Hider and Carol Vaughn
- E-Newsletter Internal: Choice Partners "Co-opportunities e-news," published for Choice Partners

Bronze Award

- Writing: "School Bell Blog: Bullying in Schools—Problems and Solutions," HCDE School Bell Blog, Carol Vaughn



Workshop Provides Communication Practices to Create Better Connections

On March 24, the Teaching and Learning Center is hosting a workshop that provides communication practices to better connect with others. The workshop titled *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect: What the Most Effective Leaders Do Differently*, will share five principles and practices that will help attendees become successful leaders and influence any outcome. Register for the workshop: <https://goo.gl/nJSSDN>

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Archway Gallery Hosts Scholastic Art & Writing Gold Key Artist Reception

Last week, Archway Gallery hosted a Scholastic Art & Writing artist reception to celebrate 28 regional Gold Key recipients. During the reception, 26 Gold Key artists were able to showcase their award-winning artwork and two Deer Park ISD Gold Key writing recipients, Samantha Sosas and Taylor Gleason, read their entries for fellow students, parents and community members. The artwork will be on display at 2305 Dunlavy St. until March 8.



Students earning Scholastic Art & Writing Gold Key Awards automatically advance to national judging in New York City. National winners may attend the ceremony in Carnegie Hall in New York City in June. For more information about the 2016 Harris County regional awardees, visit www.hcde-texas.org/scholasticartandwriting.

To view photos from the artist reception, visit <https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/Scholastic-Art-Writing/Artist-Reception-2015-Archway/>.



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Aldine ISD Senior Earns HCDE Scholastic Art & Writing Gold Key Award with First Art Entry



Above: Davis High School Art Teacher Marilyn Venne and senior José Cortés stand with his Scholastic Art & Writing Gold Key artwork, "Agua" at the artist reception on February 20.

Aldine Independent School District senior José Cortés discovered a love for art at a young age. His drawings began as simple doodles and stick figures. As he grew, his artistic ability and passion for drawing advanced. The shy artist's talent was apparent to family, friends and teachers, but his meticulousness and attention to detail stopped him from entering his artwork into competitions.

"I've drawn for a long time, but I never felt like my artwork was ready for contest," said Cortés. "I'm kind of a perfectionist, so I always wanted my art to be perfect before I entered it."

While in art class at Davis High School this year, Cortés' art teacher Marilyn Venne noticed a realistic drawing in his sketchbook and asked to see more work like it. She encouraged him to focus on his love for drawing rather than his mistakes and continued to uplift him throughout the process. With his teacher's support and a blue ballpoint pen, Cortés created his first contest piece, "Agua."

"Ms. Venne pushed me to show my heart in my drawings," said Cortés. "That really motivated me."

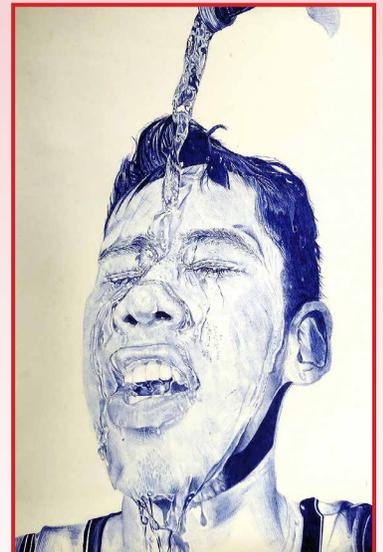
Shortly after the piece was entered, Cortés and Venne were ecstatic to learn that "Agua" was selected for the regional Scholastic Art & Writing Gold Key Award by Harris County Department of Education and advanced to be judged at the national level. Additionally, "Agua" was selected for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston artist reception and exhibit. Cortés, in attendance with his family, was honored at the reception on February 20, and his drawing will hang in the exhibit until March 31.

"It is absolutely wonderful to have José win the Gold Key award and be featured in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston exhibit," said Venne. "I saw his talent the first year I taught him, and I couldn't be happier for him."

"The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recognize the vision, ingenuity and talent of our students and provide opportunities for creative teens like José to be celebrated and gain exposure for their art," said Andrea Segraves, Harris County Department of Education coordinator for Scholastic Art & Writing. "This year, entries in the Awards grew by 40 percent. HCDE is recruiting professional artists and writers as judges for the 2016-2017 school year. Sponsors are also needed to host receptions and fund scholarships for students to travel to Carnegie Hall in New York City to gain their national awards."

All regional Scholastic Art & Writing Gold Key pieces advance to the national level to be judged, and winners will be invited to attend an awards reception at Carnegie Hall in New York. Cortés hopes to be among those invited to Carnegie Hall, but is proud to have been selected for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston exhibit. He plans to continue drawing in the future and is considering art school or a career in architecture.

For more information about the national Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, visit <http://www.artandwriting.org/>. To sponsor, enter or judge the regional awards, visit www.hcde-texas.org/scholasticartandwriting.



Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Personnel Management

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me to

- Ensure that the system for recruiting and selection results in personnel recommendations based on defined needs, goals, priorities, and candidate credentials and qualifications



The Human Resources division has actively engaged in the recruitment process in an effort to meet the needs of divisions to hire competent staff to ensure appropriate staffing levels within Department programs. Since December, the Human Resources division

has participated in 21 job fairs in the state of Texas. Specifically, in an effort to meet the growing needs of HCDE's Area I Head Start division, the Human Resources division, assisted staff within that division as they hosted a job fair especially to meet the needs of Head Start.



As a result of this effort, the Human Resources division is in the process of screening 25 individuals for a variety of positions within the Head Start division:

- Six (6) candidates for cook positions;
- Four (4) candidates for teaching assistant positions;
- Six (6) candidates for teaching positions
- One (1) candidate for a housekeeping position;
- Two (2) candidates for assistant center manager positions;
- Two (2) candidates for Early Head Start teaching positions; and
- Four (4) candidates for substitute teaching assistant positions.



In addition to these candidates, other candidates have been recruited, processed for employment, and hired, as a result of the recruitment and selection of capable candidates for employment with HCDE.

To that end, by executing a comprehensive recruitment process, this helps ensure that I achieve the overall Board's goals of me related to personnel management to

- **Establish a culture among the staff so that all strive to achieve excellence and do not accept mediocre performance;**
- **Ensure all supervisory staff administers personnel practices with consistency and fairness with respect for the individual;**
- **Monitor the salary grid to ensure equity in the compensation program;**
- **Ensure an effective backup plan is in place for all functional areas in the event of absence of personnel; and**
- **Conduct a review of jobs vs. performance plans to ensure parity.**

HCDE BOARD

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Position 3, At Large

Michael Wolfe
Position 5, At Large

UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

NO MARCH BOARD MEETING

