

# The CONNECTOR

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



VOLUME 2/ISSUE 25  
Week of March 22, 2016

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

## IN THIS ISSUE



Students Train for Construction Workforce, Practice Skills at 6311 Irvington Building  
pg. 2



Director Lidia Zatopek Represents HCDE on Houston Matters through Alternative Teacher Certification Program  
pg. 2



HISD 'Secondary Teacher of Year' Lopez Says HCDE Teacher Alternative Certification Helped Shape Career  
pg. 3



Whole Kids Foundation Grant of \$2,000 to Fund Veggie/ Fruit Garden at AB School West  
pg. 5



HCDE Promoted through Scripps National Spelling Bee via Houston Public Media Commercials  
pg. 6

## OF NOTE

The Department, along with the 25 Harris County school districts, resumed normal operations this week after having been closed March 14-18 for Spring Break. We are now closing in on the last nine weeks of the second semester of this academic year.

Last Tuesday, during Spring Break, I attended the mayor's Education Transition Team Meeting. I, along with other members of the committee, participated in a presentation to Mayor Sylvester Turner. The ultimate purpose of this committee is to bridge the gaps that exist in education between the city and the school districts that lie within the city of Houston in an effort to improve dropout rates, increase student achievement, and improve the short and long-term quality of life of students within the city. Through my work on this committee, I am assisting Mayor Turner's staff as they organize a meeting between the mayor and the superintendents of the school districts that are within the city limits of Houston. I will continue to keep you apprised of the work and progress of this important committee that will positively impact public education in our city.

On Wednesday of this week, I visited the Thomas A. Glazier Senior Education Center, located in Harris County Precinct 3. There, I met with the director of the center, Lisa Rice. Ms. Rice is responsible for the overall programming and operations of the center, which serves over 6,000 members of the Harris County senior community. The purpose of this meeting was to explore how HCDE and the Glazier Center might partner to better meet the needs of our combined constituents.

Also, this week, Dr. Bob Wimpleberg of All Kids Alliance, invited me to attend the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce luncheon as his guest. This proved to be an excellent networking opportunity. I met several influential members of the Hispanic business community which may prove to be beneficial to HCDE in the future.

Additionally, I met with Carol Little of Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM). This week's meeting was a follow-up from our first discussion a few months ago. We discussed possible collaborations from which both HCDE and NAM could reap benefit. I will keep you posted of future discussions to this end.

I am pleased to report that our Adult Education division is forwarding its goal to increase workforce development efforts. We recently held a recruiting session for a new Instrumentation Fitter/GED class at Lee College. At that time, representatives from our Adult Education division shared valuable information with 16 prospective students. Further, immediately prior to Spring Break, our Youth Demonstration grant participants visited HCDE's construction lab for a hands-on training opportunity. The participants, who are already progressing through on-the-job training with our partner, Building Specialties, Inc., applied learned skills as part of their NCCER Core Curriculum. Class. (See photo on page 4.) We are excited about the progress our Adult Education division is making, through partnering with industry, and offering such unique and life-changing opportunities to our adult learners.

As we near the end of the second semester of this academic year, we continue to empower Harris County school districts by creating value, delivering opportunity, and providing service. This week, we conducted a variety of training sessions to help improve student achievement. In the area of science, we hosted several Biology EOC options including, A Closer Look at the Mechanisms of Genetics, A Closer Look at Cell Structure and Function, and A Closer Look at Interdependence and Environmental Systems. As for Social Studies, we hosted Let's Make History: Using Web 2.0 Tools in the Social Studies Classroom as well as Intervention and Review Strategies for U.S. History, as it relates to STAAR. We also delved into English as a Second Language ESL, through a one-day mini academy. We returned to classroom fundamentals with Back to the Basics of Classroom Management, and we offered Homework Help, Vocabulary Development, and Everyone Communicates, Few Connect: What the Most Effective Leaders Do Differently. It was another productive week in the area of providing exceptional instructional support to educators across Harris County.

As you know, we are in the midst of our budget planning cycle for next fiscal year. We are beginning our individual division budget meetings as our directors and Executive Leadership Team members converge to continue the process of projecting budgetary needs for Fiscal Year 2016-17. I will continue to keep you informed as we continue this process which spans the overall Department.

In closing, please be reminded that the Department is closed tomorrow for the Good Friday/Spring Holiday. I wish each of you and your families a nice Easter weekend, and I hope you enjoy this 25th issue of Volume 2 of **The Connector**.

As always, thank you for your service to HCDE.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Students Train for Construction Workforce, Practice Skills at 6311 Irvington Building



About 20 Adult Education students trained at the trades training building at 6311 Irvington in early March. Students were working on construction skills with electric saws. The students continue to gain construction workforce training along with math instruction. News about the Texas Workforce Commission grant was recently

publicized in the Houston Defender Newspaper:

[http://hcde-texas.org/users/0221/docs/Press%20releasesNewFolder/HoustonDefender\\_030116.pdf](http://hcde-texas.org/users/0221/docs/Press%20releasesNewFolder/HoustonDefender_030116.pdf)



### Director Lidia Zatopek Represents HCDE on Houston Matters through Alternative Teacher Certification Program

Lidia Zatopek, director of Educator Certification and Professional Advancement, was featured on Houston Matters, a news program aired on KUHF FM. The segment focused on the viability of teacher alternative certification programs. Zatopek included alumni student Maxie Hollingsworth, who left a private sector job to become a second grade teacher at HISD. Hear the segment through the following link: <https://goo.gl/OhZmmu>



Above: Lidia Zatopek shown with segment participants

### Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

#### MARCH 21, 2016

Online Instructor's Training - Part I

#### MARCH 22, 2016

Biology EOC: A Closer Look at the Mechanisms of Genetics

Let's Make History: Using Web 2.0 Tools in the Social Studies Classroom

#### MARCH 23, 2016

Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Cell Structure and Function

Intervention and Review Strategies for U.S. History STAAR (8th Grade)

Homework Help - YPQ Methods

Vocabulary Development (6-8)

#### MARCH 24, 2016

Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Interdependence and Environmental Systems

English as a Second Language ESL TExES #154 Supplemental One-Day Mini Academy

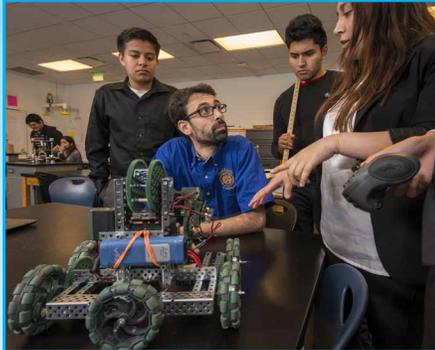
"Back to the Basics" Classroom Management

Everyone Communicates, Few Connect: What the Most Effective Leaders Do Differently

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### HISD 'Secondary Teacher of Year' Lopez Says HCDE Teacher Alternative Certification Helped Shape Career



Above: Vladimir Lopez (shown center)

Houston Independent School District "Secondary Teacher of the Year" Vladimir Lopez earned his title of distinction in the largest school district in Texas less than five years after entering the field of education.

The science, technology, engineering and math teacher believes the equation to becoming a good teacher is to believe in the power of education to change lives. That transformation began for him in 2010 when he joined the Harris County Department of Education Teacher Alternative Certification Program.

The Spain native who had earned a science degree in his country moved to the United States in 2010. Though he wanted to become a teacher, the American education system was foreign to him.

"I was guided all the way by the HCDE certification program," he said.

The HCDE Teacher Alternative Certification Program trains college-degreed candidates to become teachers and helps them gain their teacher certification to work in Texas public schools. Throughout the process they are paid teacher interns. Grant funding for tuition reimbursement is available.

Vladimir worked with veteran educators who lead the HCDE teaching program to gain teaching and classroom strategies and understand the Texas education system. Eventually he became a teacher at Madison High School in HISD. Later he moved to HISD's East Early College High School.

Throughout the process—even through his first years of teaching—he was supported by his HCDE teacher mentors.

Lidia G. Zatopek, director of HCDE's Educator Certification and Professional Advancement, said the courses Lopez took to become a teacher are done in a classroom and through online settings with instructors who are content and pedagogy experts. Next, teachers spend time observing classroom teachers.

Paid teacher internships begin as teachers become comfortable within the educator setting. The one-year internships are supported through field supervisors who assist the new teachers with content knowledge and instruction skills. Teachers who agree to teach as certified teachers in at-risk schools are eligible for scholarships for tuition reimbursement through a grant.

This story appeared in the Houston Community Newspaper's Bellaire/Memorial/West University edition:  
[http://hcde-texas.org/users/0221/docs/Press%20releasesNewFolder/Bellaire\\_RiverOaks\\_West%20Univ%20Examiner\\_032116.pdf](http://hcde-texas.org/users/0221/docs/Press%20releasesNewFolder/Bellaire_RiverOaks_West%20Univ%20Examiner_032116.pdf)

### Center for Safe and Secure Schools Presents Teen Truth: Difference Maker Summit



The Center for Safe and Secure Schools will host the Teen Truth: Difference Maker Summit on April 14 from 1 to 4 p.m. The Summit for counselors, principals, assistant principals, and other school personnel is dedicated to improving safety and strengthening campus culture. Attendees will watch student-made films that reveal what administrators don't see, develop a better understanding of the issues currently affecting schools, and engage in team-building activities that lead to tangible solutions. Find more information at <http://goo.gl/dp5rYv>.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### 2016 Spring Leadership Institute Helps Build Leadership through Series of Seminars

About 35 local education leaders attended the 2016 Spring Leadership Institute held March 22 at Irvington. Dr. Kelly Brown, professor and education consultant, provided a session called "Culturally Responsive Schools." The series of seminars helps educators to build leadership skills.



Above: Melissa Chalupsky of Alief ISD writes ideas while Karen Jacobs collaborates and colleague Pam Lowe listens in.



Above: Roxanna Bolton of Columbia-Brazoria ISD creates a to-do list during a brainstorming session with CBISD colleague Jennifer Kelly.

### Adult Education Workforce Development Update

As the Adult Education division continues to advance workforce development efforts, several steps have been made toward achieving its goals and objectives and assisting HCDE clients in doing the same.

- On March 10, HCDE's Adult Education division hosted a recruiting session at Lee College for prospective Instrumentation Fitter/GED students. At that time, 16 prospective students learned about career opportunities that could await them upon completion of training. They also received information regarding financial aid for the 150-hour certificate program. Classes will commence next month.
- San Jacinto College was the venue for approximately 50 HCDE Adult Education students from the Pasadena area who had the opportunity to tour facilities and attend presentations related to college readiness and financial aid.
- Youth Demonstration grant participants visited HCDE's construction lab Friday, March 11, for a hands-on construction training. The participants, who are training on-the-job with Building Specialties, Inc., applied the skills they have acquired, thus far, as a part of their NCCER Core Curriculum class.



Above: On-the-job trainers on site at HCDE's construction lab



### HCDE's ECPA Director Elected to Serve on CSOTTE Executive Board

Lidia Zatopek, director of HCDE's Educator Certification and Professional Advancement (ECPA) division, was elected to serve on the executive board of the Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education (CSOTTE). She will serve as the body's treasurer.

CSOTTE is a state non-profit organization dedicated to the continual support and refinement of preparation and development programs for certified school personnel in Texas.

# Opportunity

## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



Above: Juliet Stipeche,  
Director of Education,  
City of Houston

### Mayoral Cabinet Member Motivates HCDE Students

As a part of the "Character Education" program at the Highpoint North campus, Juliet Stipeche, Director of Education for the City of Houston, provided inspiration and motivation to a very attentive audience. Ms. Stipeche shared her story of growing up in Pecan Park, graduating valedictorian of her high school class, earning an academic scholarship to Rice University, earning a law degree from The University of Texas at Austin, and practicing law in Houston. She encouraged students to have the courage to ask questions and surround themselves with positive people.



### HCDE ABS West Awarded \$2,000 School Garden Grant from Whole Kids Foundation

Gardening is in the works for AB School West as it was recently awarded a \$2,000 School Garden Grant from Whole Kids Foundation through the Education Foundation of Harris County. The funds will be used for food and nutrition education at the school and provides for plants and tools for gardening. The goal of the program is to promote health literacy and healthy lifestyles for 50 students and families, along with school staff. By growing fruits and veggies, the students gain a better understanding of where their food comes from. They also gain positive food attitudes, says Dr. Victor Keys, AB School West principal.

# Awareness

## EMPLOYEE CONNECTIONS



### University of Houston Clear Lake Job Fair

The Human Resources division continued its recruitment efforts this week through its participation at the University of Houston Clear Lake Job Fair. To date, the division has attended 21 job fairs, and by the end of April, it will have represented HCDE at a total of 30, in its efforts to ensure that the system at HCDE for recruiting and selection results in personnel recommendations based on defined needs, goals, priorities, and candidate credentials/qualifications.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



### HCDE Promoted through Scripps National Spelling Bee via Houston Public Media Commercials

The Scripps National Spelling Bee—held locally by Houston Public Media, sponsored by HEB, and supported by HCDE—is slated for Saturday, April 2 at 2 p.m. HCDE is mentioned in these two PBS television commercials: <https://youtu.be/eO31uQYpGAE> and <https://youtu.be/0kitEF5wKNA>.

In addition, HCDE will be featured through three commercials created by Communication and Client Engagement beginning March 25, and running through April 16. In all, the commercials will run 25 times, so tune into Channel 8 to view them. Here is one of the commercials which features School-Based Therapy Services: <https://youtu.be/44KlryujlFs>.

### DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: Deer Park ISD



Deer Park ISD hosts the 14th Annual Cotton Watkins Memorial Golf Tournament Saturday, April 23, with proceeds to benefit the DPISD Employee Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Details:

<http://goo.gl/4dfFt7>



### HCDE Scholastic Art & Writing Gold Key Award Student, Teacher from Aldine Featured in Sunday Chronicle Zest

Aldine Student José Cortés and his teacher Marilyn Venue were featured in the Sunday, March 21 Houston Chronicle Zest section. The story focused on a student who had earned a Gold Key Award regionally with HCDE. It lists the HCDE website for future contestants, judges or sponsors. View the story:

[http://hcde-texas.org/users/0221/images/Press%20Release%20Photos/HoustonChronicle\\_Zest\\_031816.pdf](http://hcde-texas.org/users/0221/images/Press%20Release%20Photos/HoustonChronicle_Zest_031816.pdf)

# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Community Relations Instructional Management

In accordance with the Board's goals for me to:

- Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way;
- Ensure that appropriate data are used in developing recommendations and making decisions regarding the instructional program and resources; and
- Establish and maintain a program of public relations to keep the public well-informed of the activities of the Department, affecting a wholesome and cooperative working relationship between the Department and the community;



Through my efforts, as a member of the mayor's Education Transition Team Sub-Committee as well as through my meeting with the Harris County's Lisa Rice, director of the Thomas A. Glazier Senior Education Center in Precinct 3, I am forwarding the Board's expectations of me to:

- Function as the primary ambassador of the Department;
- Present a positive and professional image of myself and of the Department in all venues—community, political, educational, business, and Board;
- Maintain visibility and involvement in the community with ISD Superintendents, elected officials, and community leaders;
- Be open to their ideas and needs, listen and accept criticism, and be willing to seek advice and counsel when necessary;
- Determine the appropriate course of action to address issues;
- Communicate the needs and accomplishments of the Department in a variety of formats;
- Represent HCDE by attendance at events and speak professionally;
- Make professional presentations to all audiences in all arenas;
- Listen and take into account differing viewpoints of various constituencies using good judgment to discern the best decision and action for the Department; and to
- Investigate best practices for student achievement and utilize effective practices that maximize achievement of student potential within HCDE schools.



## HCDE BOARD

*Board President*  
Position 2, Precinct 4  
Angie Chesnut

*Vice President*  
Louis Evans, III  
Position 4, Precinct 3

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:

**BOARD MEETING**  
TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2016

