

The CONNECTOR

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



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

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OF NOTE

As you know, we started this week off with the rescheduled April Board Meeting. Thanks to all of you who attended. The Leadership Team met Tuesday, and our school and program divisions have begun discussions regarding close of school logistics in coordination with the client school districts. Amazingly enough, yesterday marked exactly four weeks from the end of this academic year. This year is quickly coming to a close.

On Wednesday, some members of my Executive Leadership Team and I attended the Mayor's State of the City Address, sponsored by the Greater Houston Partnership. There, Mayor Turner focused on his short and long term visions for the City of Houston. In light of recent and past flooding in the city, he announced a new Flood Czar. As it relates to disaster recovery, he introduced a new committee formed to deal with raising funds to that end. For youth, he encouraged businesses—large and small, alike—to hire summer youth in an effort to expose them to the strong work ethic and responsibility associated with becoming a responsible employee. In doing so, it will also assist you in households that are struggling financially, due to employment and other urban concerns. He also discussed his plans to address the financial woes facing the city. The event was a great networking opportunity and as a member of the Education Transition Sub-committee, I look forward to HCDE working in sync with both the city and the county to strengthen education in Houston and Harris County.

It's the time of year again that we host the annual Head Start Healthy Minds, Healthy Families Conference, in conjunction with the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. This conference is centered on ensuring that the mental needs of our Head Start students and families are identified and addressed as an empowerment tool to ensure that our Head Start Families are indeed healthy. Since May is Mental Health Awareness Month, it is the ideal time for Head Start to host this ongoing initiative. This conference is very beneficial to the Head Start Centers across the county. The conference takes place today from 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., in the HCDE Conference Center. We thank the Hogg Foundation for their continued support in this worthy endeavor.

To date, more than 70,000 educators have come through our Conference Center for various trainings and workshops to improve teaching and learning in Harris County. These numbers are quite impressive. It is indicative of HCDE's role in the county as we partner with our client districts to help students achieve.

Continuing those efforts, this week, we hosted an elementary STEM training for educators assigned to grades kindergarten through fifth. We also focused on client district grant acquisition as our Center for Grants Development hosted a Quest for Grants Training Series: Writing Composition and its Process. The division also facilitated a webinar entitled: So You Want Me to Write a Grant! This webinar is very timely as our client districts focus on proposal writing basics and improvement. HCDE continues to create value, deliver opportunity, and provide service to the educators and learners of Harris County.

This weekend, I will be attending an orientation retreat at Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas as part of my American Leadership Forum class series. Next week, I will be in Austin, starting Tuesday, participating in a Think Tank Session on behalf of TABSE.

Please expect Karla Cantu to contact you, individually, regarding participating in an upcoming Board Walk. This Board Walk will be focused on the Academic and Behavior West school. Information from Ms. Cantu will be forthcoming.

In closing, please be reminded that the May Board Meeting is fast-approaching. It will be held on Tuesday, May 17, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. Thank you for your continued service to HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**, and I hope you have a relaxing weekend.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



Above: CASE for Kids employee Toni Candis

HCDE Spotlight: Toni Candis, CASE for Kids, Called 'Exemplary Afterschool Professional'

In April, HCDE's CASE for Kids division celebrated the professionals who are at the heart of afterschool programs during the first ever "Afterschool Professionals Appreciation Week." In partnership with the National AfterSchool Association, CASE for Kids showed its support for the professionals who make positive differences in the lives of children.

One such professional is HCDE's very own Toni Candis, who serves as a program coordinator for CASE for Kids. Her role entails providing coaching and compliance support to Texas ACE, 21st Century Community Learning Centers within nine school districts.

"Being an afterschool professional means being the change you want to see in the world," said Candis. She added that it also means "embracing a myriad of professional disciplines," including teaching, childcare and various content areas that are explored in afterschool programs, whether it be tennis or robotics.

With her curiosity about diverse topics, talent for multitasking, and demonstrated passion for community engagement, Candis is an exemplary afterschool professional, said CASE for Kids Assistant Director Trina Finley.

Before joining HCDE, Candis worked in the Harris County Community Services Department, providing support for those engaged in community and economic development in the region. She holds degrees from Texas Southern University and the University of Houston.



Teaching and Learning Center Workshop Provides Teachers with Aquatic, Terrarium Habitats

Six teachers from the Ben Bowen Early Childhood Learning Center in Huffman ISD attended the HCDE Great Explorations in Math and Science workshop, "Aquatic Habitats/Terrarium Habitats" last week. The workshop provided teachers with aquatic and terrarium habitats they can set up and

observe in their own classrooms. These engaging life science activities allow students to observe the natural world and deepen their understanding of and connection to all living things.



Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

MAY 2, 2016

Elementary STEM with IEEE K-5

MAY 4, 2016

Quest for Grants Training Series: Writing Composition and Its Process

MAY 5, 2016

Quest for Grants Training Series Webinar - So You Want Me to Write a Grant!

MAY 6, 2016

2016 Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference

Basics of Grant Writing Workshop Provides Tools for Grant Proposals

Dr. Vida L. Avery, Resource Development Specialist with the Center for Grants Development, conducted The Basics of Grant Writing workshop on April 29. Attendees gained information needed to prepare a grant proposal. In addition, they learned the difference between public and private grants, writing tips and discussing the details of proposal components. Participants were from schools (public and charter), government entities and nonprofit organizations.

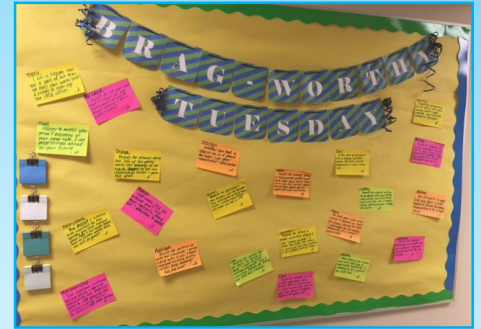
Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

HCDE Spotlight: Toni Candis, CASE for Kids, Called 'Exemplary Afterschool Professional'

CASE for Kids, along with the National AfterSchool Association, celebrated the professionals at the heart of afterschool programs during the first ever "Afterschool Professionals Appreciation Week" April 25-29, 2016. Afterschool professionals were acknowledged for making a difference in the life of a child by providing a safe, exciting and enriching environment for youth every day.

The CASE managers thanked their team for their hard work and dedication. While most of their work is behind-the-scenes, they do make a valuable contribution to the afterschool profession.



On April 27, Scoggins Elementary School held their spring culminating event. The students participated in the Fine Arts Department's performance of "America."

CASE for Kids recently released the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the 2016 - 2017 CASE Partnership Project Grant. Funds

will support afterschool programs that serve economically disadvantaged students ages 4 - 12, or up to the age of 19 with a documented disability. Interested applicants may go to www.afterschoolzone.org to download the complete application beginning May 2, 2016. An information session will be held in the CASE office at 6005 Westview Drive on May 11 from 9 a.m. - 11 a.m. For more information regarding the application, contact casepartnership@hcde-texas.org. All proposals must be received by 4 p.m. on May 19 or postmarked no later than May 16.

On April 29, CASE for Kids held an ENRICH After School Return on Investment Forum to discuss the new ENRICH Afterschool study. This study will update our financial investments and our social return on investment work. Dr. Leung from the University of Houston, who is helping CASE for Kids streamline data collection and ensure good impact formulas, spoke briefly at the forum.



Above: Intern of year candidate Casey Archield from Lamar Consolidated ISD

Nominees Videotaped for Texas Alternative Certification Association Intern of Year Award

Teacher Alternative Certification is nominating two of its interns this year for the Texas Alternative Certification Association (TACA) 2015-2016 Intern of the Year award. Communication videographers visited the schools of Casey Archield from Pink Elementary in Lamar Consolidated ISD and Joseph Senegal of Alief Middle School to get a videotaped lesson from both candidates. Results will be in later on this spring.

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

AB School West Students Engage, Learn through Garden Program



Students at Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior School (ABS) West are receiving engaging, hands-on learning through the newly implemented garden program on campus. The garden, funded by the Whole Kids Foundation Garden Grant, will use food and nutrition education to teach the importance of healthy lifestyles and create an engaging environment to learn and excel.

After weeks of rain, students joined ABS West Principal Dr. Victor Keys and Life Skills Teacher Clive Quarrie outside last week to begin planting the garden. With a master's degree in agriculture, Quarrie understands the importance of the garden and sees the benefits it will provide students.

"Most fruits and vegetables you buy now have chemicals on them. Along with the academic benefits the garden provides, it teaches our students to be self-sufficient and the importance of healthy eating," said Quarrie. "Our students can pick something fresh from the garden and they know exactly what they're eating."

In addition to food and nutrition education, the garden provides students with an abundance of learning opportunities. They will utilize math skills in analyzing garden data and measuring the growth rates of plants, and exercise fine and gross motor skills through digging and planting the garden. Teachers will also incorporate the garden into their lessons on ecosystems, photosynthesis, environmental sustainability and the scientific method.

"The engagement the students will receive from the garden program is invaluable," said Center for Grants Development Coordinator Sharvon Pipkins. "By growing fruits and vegetables, students will better understand where their food comes from and gain positive food attitudes."



Created in partnership with FoodCorps, the Whole Kids Foundation Garden Grant program provides \$2,000 grants to support edible educational gardens on school campuses. To learn more about the Whole Kids Foundation, visit <https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/>.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



All-Earth Ecobot Challenge Attracts 1,500 Area Students for Innovative Robotics Competition

The All-Earth Ecobot Challenge held on April 30 at the Humble Civic Center attracted approximately 1,500 area students for a day of innovative learning and complex problem solving. The Ecobot Challenge, judged by private sector business community CEOs and engineers, develops critical thinking skills and elevates student confidence in formulating solutions to simulated real-world missions.

Using autonomous robotics and computer technology, teams solve challenges in energy exploration, transportation, medical research and environmental sustainability. Additionally, students were able to visit the Eco-Genius Lab and participate in exciting, hands-on science projects ranging from genetics and DNA, to anatomy and virtual reality.

For more information on the All-Earth Ecobot Challenge, or to become a volunteer or judge, visit www.ecobotchallenge.com.



Community Health and Resources Forum held at HCDE May 4-5

The Community Health and Resources Forum was held at HCDE on May 4-5. The event hosted through HCDE Head Start educates social services professionals and agencies about benefits and services available via Texas agencies as well as community organizations through collaboration and networking.

Head Start service providers benefitted from the event as it helps them to assist Head Start families with community resources and programs.

The Zika virus was one of the topics discussed by Paul Grunenwald, communicable disease manager from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Grunenwald said the virus has been reported in 31 human cases in 2016 in Texas. Thirty are imported cases and one case occurred within the state, presumably through sexual transmission. Clinical signs of the virus are fever, rash, conjunctivitis, headache, body aches and nausea and vomiting.

Prevention recommendations, he said, include avoiding travel to Zika-affected countries and protection from mosquitos. Also, all travelers returning to Texas from areas affected by Zika should avoid mosquitos for three weeks following their return as the virus is spread repeatedly from humans to mosquitos to humans.



DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: Clear Creek ISD



Clear Creek ISD begins its enrollment for kindergartners for the 2016-2017 school year.

Details:
http://ccisd.net/parents/student_registration/kindergarten_enrollment_information/

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

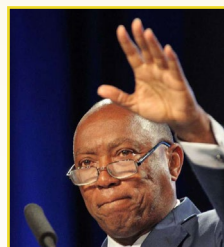
Community Relations Professional Growth and Development

In accordance with the Board's expectations of me to:

- 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;
- Work with governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way;
- Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration
- Model and support responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas; and



This week, I attended the Mayor's State of the City Address. This was an excellent outreach opportunity for the Department to receive visibility within the community. This is especially beneficial in my role as a member of the Mayor's Education Transition Team subcommittee.



Also, I am increasing my professional development perspective by participating in the American Leadership Forum (ALF) experience this weekend and over the next several months.

I am in the newest class of this long-standing distinguished organization. The ALF is a non-profit organization whose mission is to join and strengthen diverse leaders to serve the common good.

In addition, next week, I will be participating in a TABSE Superintendents' Think Tank. This, too, broadens my executive leadership perspective, while serving as an excellent opportunity to increase HCDE's visibility.

In doing so, I am forwarding the Board's expectations of me to:

- **Function as the primary ambassador for the Department;**
- **Communicate the needs and accomplishments of the Department;**
- **Listen and take into account differing viewpoints of various constituencies using good judgment to discern the best decision and action for the Department; and**
- **Assess any new and effective professional development tools available and determine their applicability to HCDE staff.**

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

May Board Meeting
Tuesday, May 17, 2016
1:00 p.m.
Room 400

