

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

I begin this issue of **The Connector** by thanking those of you who were able to attend Monday's Board Walk to the Academic and Behavior School-West (AB-West) campus and to the alternative locations being considered for the construction of a new facility. I always find Board Walks to be very informative for Board Members as you go about the work of advancing HCDE's programs and services. I believe this week's Board Walk served its purpose as it relates to gaining a full understanding of the current and future needs of the AB-West campus as we increase capacity at that location.

On Tuesday, the May Board Meeting was held and, as always, thank you for your service to HCDE. I appreciate your support on all of the initiatives you approved that will allow HCDE to continue to help students achieve. As you know, the next meeting of the Board will take place on June 21, 2016.

Also this week, I attended the Teen Summit at Highpoint School-East. This event focused on developing leadership qualities in teens, and it included a wide variety of topics such as dressing for success and effective leadership models for teens, just to name a couple. The event was effective in demonstrating model and responsible behavior and the students were fully engaged. Activities such as the Teen Summit assist our students in realizing their full capacity. Hats off to the Highpoint School-East administration and faculty for facilitating such an eye-opening experience for our students.

Today, the CASE division is hosting Kids Day at HP. The event brings nine teams to the competition at the HP headquarters in north Houston. The students will participate in robotic challenges using Lego kits and features both traditional and charter elementary and middle schools. This experience advances student interest in technology and associated STEM endeavors in our efforts to continue to mend the digital divide.

I am pleased to announce that our Adult Education division will proudly host its graduation for 77 GED students tomorrow, May 21, 2016 at 11:00 a.m. While not all students participate in the ceremony, the division is celebrating a total number of 131 students who passed the GED. The graduation ceremony will be held at the 6300 Irvington location. Three of this year's graduates are featured on page 2. This year's graduation marks a significant increase over last year. This time last year, the division had a total of 54 graduates. This increase is due to changes in the scoring process of the GED exam. Previous changes, which were much more stringent, had adversely impacted GED rates nationwide. HCDE proudly congratulates all 131 GED graduates.

The Research and Evaluation division has launched its annual Client Satisfaction survey to HCDE staff. As a result, our employees are participating in this annual survey, providing feedback on their use and experiences with HCDE's internal service providing divisions. Since divisions depend on the survey to see how they might improve their services, employees are strongly encouraged to participate in this valuable opportunity. The survey was disseminated to all of HCDE's 1000 plus employees.

In the arena of advancing teaching and learning, this week, we hosted a variety of training sessions. We began the week with a Focus on Citizenship and Government for grades five through high school. We also hosted an English/Language Arts Leadership Meeting as well as a workshop to assist client school district personnel with the management of grant budgets. We delved into Planning to Save the World as well as Dispositions for Effective Education Leaders. We also hosted the Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association Meeting and we continued to raise the bar in the area of science through the workshop, Literacy Strategies in Science. Our final session for the week was Coding 101. HCDE continues to serve as a leader across Harris County and beyond in the area of teaching and learning.

In closing and as always, thank you for your service to HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**, and I hope you have a relaxing weekend.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

3 HCDE Adult Education GED graduates hope to motivate others: 'If we can do it, so can you'

Going back to school later in life involves overcoming the fear factor. A father-daughter duo makes a pact to go back to school and support each other. A mother whose first language is Spanish makes a promise to her 6-year-old daughter to finish school. Three 2016 GED grads from HCDE share their stories in hopes they can motivate others.

"If I can do it, so can you" is their unified message. The trio joins 77 classmates on May 21 from 11 a.m. to noon at HCDE, 6300 Irvington Blvd., for the Class of 2016 GED Graduation.

Valedictorian Carmen Guandique, 36, native of El Salvador (Pasadena resident):

Nine months ago Carmen Guandique mustered the nerve to enroll in a GED class with HCDE at a community center in Pasadena.

"My first language was Spanish, so it was challenging," she said. At first she considered her age a disadvantage, but she knew she must get her GED to be an example for her daughter.

Carmen will wait until her 2-year-old son is in preschool. Then she plans to go on to college and maybe pursue a medical profession.

Father Glen Pitts, 47, and step-daughter Kristen Lightbody, 20 (Baytown residents):

Glen Pitts has worked since he was 14-years old. He kept saying that he would return to school someday. Someday he would take some time off and get his GED. Last year his health deteriorated. The pipe machinist had back problems, and arthritis set in.

"I never finished high school but kept saying I would do it later," he said. "Well, later finally came."

Glen and his step daughter Kristen made a plan to go back and get their GEDs together. She needed to advance for her future. Without change, he said he wasn't going to have a future. Her biggest fear was English. His greatest fear was math. After taking a GED class together, they took the tests they feared and passed.

"We were supporting each other and working together," said Lightbody. "It was a great bonding experience. Today they are both enrolled in Lee College. He is working towards a four-year degree in logistics. She will become a nurse."

Getting my GED makes me realize I'm not done," said Pitts. "For your future and your education, the GED is everything. It provided me with the first stepping stone. I can now get back into the "workforce and support my family."



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



Annual Client Satisfaction Survey Distributed to HCDE Staff

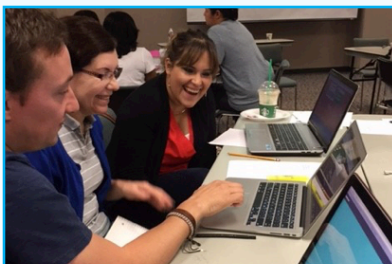
HCDE employees are participating in the Annual Client Satisfaction Survey through the Research and Evaluation Institute. The survey distributed to HCDE's 1,000-plus employees allows employees the opportunity to collect feedback on their use of support services provided by HCDE internal support divisions. Divisions include Business Services, Communication, Center for Grants Development, Facilities, Human Resources, Purchasing, Technology, and the Research and Evaluation Institute. The survey was endorsed by Superintendent James Colbert.

Since divisions depend on the survey to see how they might improve their services, employees are strongly encouraged to participate. This year employees are allowed to enter a drawing for a local restaurant gift card by providing evaluations. Approximately 343 employees have participated halfway through the campaign.



TLC Math Director Answers Calls from HISD's Tinsley Elementary to Offer Curriculum Assistance

Teaching and Learning Center Math Curriculum Director Nicole Shanahan presented at HISD's Tinsley Elementary School as the school is soliciting help for improving curriculum and instruction and parent involvement. Tinsley has been an "improvement required campus" in HISD since 2013 and has seen multiple principal and teacher turnovers the past five years. Shanahan offered up services from TLC to leaders, as well as assistance in implementing new curriculum initiatives.



Educator Certification Teachers Complete Differentiated Learning Course

Twenty-six first-year teachers completed a semester course called Differentiated Learning. The course gives new teachers experience in differentiated instruction in their classrooms, depending on whether their students are gifted-and-talented or have learning challenges. Through the class, students get immediate feedback from peers and instructors on delivered lessons. They also share their students' challenges and brainstorm about instructional solutions. Currently first-year teachers in the program

service students from 16 public, charter and private school districts, including Cy-Fair, Houston, Fort Bend, Lamar, Spring Branch, Alief, Spring, Aldine, Beaumont, Galena Park, Conroe, Humble, and more.



Summer classes begin for aspiring teachers

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement also began its annual Summer Curriculum Institute. The seven-week institute offers daily evening and Saturday courses for the program's pre-service and first-year teachers. Upon completion of courses ranging from ethics to foundations in teacher to lesson planning, the teacher candidates earn 95 contact hours of coursework towards their teacher certification requirements.

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



Highpoint School East Students Attend Teen Summit

Approximately 135 students participated in a half-day Teen Summit at HCDE's Highpoint School-East this week. The summit focused on leadership and included topics such as dressing for success and effective leadership models for teens. County Schools Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. also attended the summit as the keynote speaker and encouraged students to work hard for a successful future.



AB School West Celebrates Nurses Day

Academic and Behavior School West celebrated National School Nurse Day last week with a flower delivery to nurse Barbara Hurd. #BetterHealthBetterLearning

Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

MAY 17, 2016

Focus on Citizenship and Government for Grades 5-8

ELA Leadership Meeting

Focus on Citizenship and Government for High School

MAY 18, 2016

The Grant Budget! It's Not Just About the Math!

It Takes Planning to Save the World!

Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association

Dispositions for Effective Education Leaders

MAY 19, 2016

Raising the Bar: Literacy Strategies in Science

Coding 101



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



City Council Members Boykins, Martin Deliver Big Checks to Nonprofits through CASE for Kids Photo Op

Houston City Council members Dwight Boykins, District D, and Dave Martin, District E, delivered “big checks” to nonprofit afterschool providers in their council districts through a photo opportunity staged by CASE for Kids on May 16.

CASE for Kids invited each of the 11 council members to participate in the photo opportunity at City Hall’s Legacy Room.

Photo: Houston City Council Member Dwight Boykins, District D, delivers a “big check” for \$15,000 to the Grace Learning Academy. Bishop E.L. Usher accepts the check signed by CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers on May 16 through City Connections, city of Houston funding for afterschool. City Connections is a safety and crime fighting collaborative which provides for out-of-school funding for enrichment for youth. Funds are administered through the CASE for Kids, a division of Harris County Department of Education. City Connections supports nonprofit organizations that address the need for youth services outside of the school day in each of the 11 council districts. Programs take place in schools, community centers and faith-based organizations in the council district. In spring 2016, \$464,550 was earmarked for the program, with funding ranging from \$2,000 to \$18,000 in each council district.



Harris County teens compete in Energy City of the Future 2050

On May 14, 10 teams of teens from the Awty International School, The Village School, Duchesne Academy and Beckendorff Junior High in Katy ISD competed in Energy City of the Future 2050 at HCDE. The challenge, hosted by the Education Foundation of Harris County, involves scaled models of the city of Houston in the year 2050; public service announcements about why Houston is a great place to live; and presentations about careers in the futuristic city.

Team Neptunia from The Village School scored the most points in the middle school division and The Village High School scored the most in the high school division. Cash prizes upwards to \$1,700 will be awarded by the Consumer Energy Alliance in October 2016 at Houston’s Energy Day Festival. To view photos from the event, visit <https://goo.gl/4VTu2X>.



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Early Head Start Teachers Recruited through Billboards Donated by Clear Channel

Head Start will work with Clear Channel to promote Early Head Start teacher recruitment. Clear Channel is donating the space and a discounted rate for several billboards in the Baytown area to HCDE Head Start. Head Start funds the printed messaging created by HCDE Communication staff.



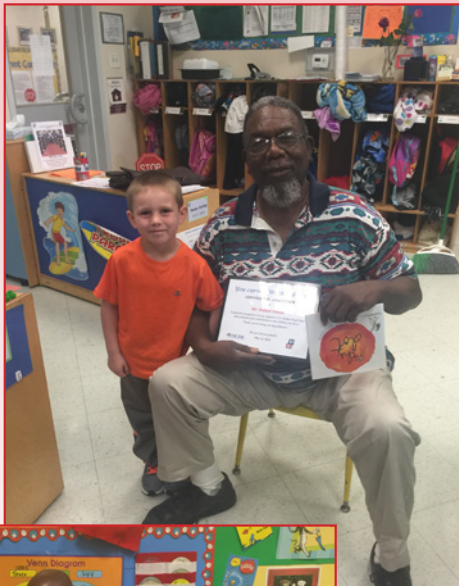
DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT:



Huffman ISD presents its Summer Library Extravaganza. Join in for fun activities and check out books every Monday in June from 10 a.m.-noon at Copeland Elementary. Details: <http://www.huffmanisd.net/apps/news/article/572823>

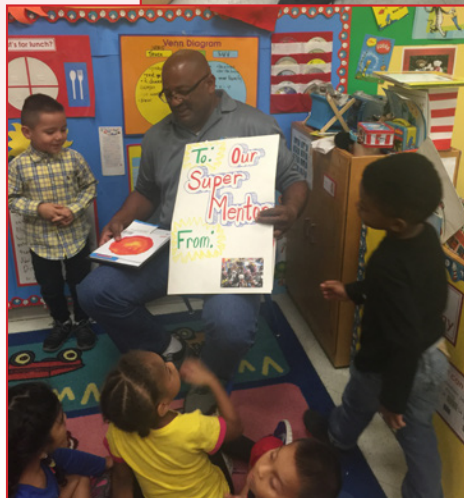
Head Start Celebrates SuperMENTors through End-of-Year Celebrations

SuperMENTors, men who volunteer to read to Head Start students, were recognized and celebrated in all the Head Start centers where they volunteer on May 12. Celebrations included certificates and hugs from the students. SuperMENTors Read is a volunteer program which provides male mentors for young children who may not have a male role model in the household.



The program is built on four principles:

- 1) Reading is fun;
- 2) Joint reading positively impacts a child learning to read;
- 3) Literacy knowledge and skills lay the foundation for reading and writing; and
- 4) Community engagement matters.



Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Community Relations

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 community



This week, I had the opportunity to attend the Highpoint-East Teen Summit event and tomorrow, I will have the opportunity to address HCDE's Adult Education GED graduates at the commencement event. In doing so, I am functioning as the primary ambassador for the Department through presenting a positive and professional image. I am maintaining visibility and involvement in the community with ISD superintendents and other community leaders.

In doing so, I am meeting the Board's goals of me to communicate the needs and accomplishments of the Department in a variety of formats through various community events, school districts, political arenas, and public meetings. I represent HCDE by attendance at events and I make myself available to speak professionally. I make presentations to all audiences in all arenas. I listen and take into

account differing viewpoints of various constituencies using good judgment to discern the best decision and action for the Department.



HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

June Board Meeting

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

1:00 p.m.

ROOM 400

