

From the office of JAMES COLBERT, JR. – SUPERINTENDENT

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## OF NOTE

I returned to the office yesterday after having attended two conferences in Austin, Texas. Last Tuesday through Friday, I attended the Association of Recovery Schools (ARS) Conference. It was an enlightening experience, hosted by a group of specialized professionals who are committed to ensuring that students in recovery have access to education services. This is a unique group of educators meeting a unique need across the country.

Upon completion of the ARS Conference, I attended the 2016 Summer University of Texas/Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) Conference co-hosted by the UT College of Education. This annual conference of education executives was worthwhile and informational. It gave me an excellent opportunity to network with my colleagues from across the state and continue to represent to HCDE in the community that supports public education.

This week, however, at HCDE, we continued to create value, deliver opportunity, and provide service to the educators across Harris County. In the area of advancing teaching and learning by training the trainer, we hosted and facilitated the following trainings and workshops. We began the week with A Close Look at STAAR and EOC Stems to Help Struggling Learners. Tuesday, we hosted Interactive Student Notebook: Secondary Grades 6-12 and English as a Second Language ESL, TExES #154 Supplemental One-Day Mini Academy. On Wednesday, we facilitated Formative Assessment in Social Studies Using Web/Digital Tools and we ended the week with Differentiated Instruction for grades Kindergarten through 5.

Today, I had another productive and successful meeting with a Harris County superintendent. I engage in these ongoing meetings as we continue to shore up relationships between the Department and Harris County school districts and other entities across the city, county, and state.

Next week, the Department will be closed on Monday for the 4th of July holiday. We will reopen Tuesday, July 5. Please know that HCDE will also be open for business next Friday, July 8, 2016, due to the holiday at the beginning of next week.

Also, please be reminded that the July Board Meeting will be held Tuesday, July 26, the last Tuesday of the month, instead of the usual third Tuesday of the month. As mentioned in last week's issue of **The Connector**, the Senate Education Committee has set a hearing date in relation to its Interim Study of the Department. It is set for Wednesday, August 3, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. in Austin, Texas. I will keep you apprised of additional details as information becomes available.

In closing, thank you for your continued support of Harris County Department of Education. I appreciate your service. I hope you have a relaxing 4th of July holiday and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Teaching and Learning Center Hosts Interactive Student Notebook Workshop



The Teaching and Learning Center hosted the Interactive Student Notebook workshop last week with presenter Dawn Vinas. During this workshop, elementary teachers learned the purpose, framework, and components of the Interactive Student Notebook. Interactive notebooks are used for class notes and other activities where students are asked to express their own ideas and process the information presented in class.



### CASE for Kids Hosts Student Performances at Hobby Center

From dancing and drumming to puppeteering and stage combat, local talent took center stage on Thursday, June 23, at a big venue in downtown Houston. HCDE's afterschool division, CASE for Kids, hosted performances by more than 100 area students for Kids' Day at the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts – an event culminating after weeks of preparation.

Students in elementary through high school from Alief, Aldine, Sheldon, Waller, Pasadena, Galena Park, and YES Prep West Charter partnered with nonprofit arts organizations and individual artists to put on a series of foot-stomping, jaw-dropping and at times, death-defying performances.



Houston City Councilman Jerry Davis helped kick off the evening's performances by sharing support from Mayor Sylvester Turner and other councilmembers.

"We understand it's a huge ordeal to work and raise kids," Davis said to the 138 parents in the audience, many of whom traveled from the far corners of Harris County. "Thanks to parents for making the investment," he added.

Councilmember Jerry Davis at Kids' Day Hobby Center with CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers

Kids' Day at Hobby Center gave students an opportunity to show off what they learned after working with professional artists in their afterschool programs. Artistic mediums included puppetry, dance, capoeira, music, photography, and theater.



Stage combat artist Leraldo Anzaldúa worked with students from Galena High School



Puppet Pizzazz artist Greg Ruhe works with students from Kujawa Elementary



Kruse Elementary students take cues from instructor Sam Dinkins III of Dinky Drum Co.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



**Student Spotlight: Former Head Start Student DaDreion Edwards Receives Foundation for Learning through Head Start**  
DaDreion Edwards will begin his junior year at North Shore Senior High School in Galena Park ISD in August. The honor student with a magnetic personality began his educational experience in the Head Start program, where he gained a foundation for his success.

When Edwards' mother Jennifer learned she was pregnant at 15 years old, her family and community stepped up to make sure both Jennifer and her son would prosper. The principal at North Shore Senior High helped set Edwards up in the Early Head Start program at Coolwood. His grandparents, Clarence and Tammara Edwards, raised him while his mother completed high school and went on to earn her bachelor's degree at Stephen F. Austin University. She later received her master's degree in math.

Seeing the benefits of the Early Head Start program, Edwards' grandparents placed him in Head Start at Coolwood where he attended from 2002-2004. During this time, his teacher Patricia Kuskos cultivated his early love for learning.

"From the moment we first met Patricia Kuskos she welcomed DaDreion with open arms and we knew he was in good hands," said Grandmother Tammara Edwards. "The love she showed him was simply amazing."

Currently the Head Start education and special services coordinator, Kuskos remembers Edwards as an inquisitive 3-year-old who was eager to learn.

"Through Head Start, DaDreion gained the foundational skills necessary to easily transition into elementary school," said Kuskos. "He learned how to be persistent and how important it was to communicate your needs in order for them to be met."

Twelve years later, Edwards is now a well-rounded teen who excels academically and is involved in many extracurricular activities. He is vice president of FFA at North Shore Senior High, part of the 2015 6A Division I State Champion Football team, shines on the track field, and stays involved in his church.

"As a teacher, it makes me proud to know I had an opportunity to build foundational skills that DaDreion will use for the rest of his life," said Kuskos. "DaDreion definitely loves to learn, has high expectations and a good work ethic. I can't wait to see what the future holds for this upstanding young man."

Edwards' family attributes his success to his positivity and motivation, as well as the skills gained in Head Start.

"The community and Head Start staff really came together to help DaDreion prosper," said Tammara Edwards. "We're thankful for that and so proud of his success."

Edwards hopes to attend Louisiana State University in the future and study criminal justice and maritime transportation, where he will continue to achieve and utilize the foundational skills gained through Head Start.

### Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

*Trainings hosted at HCDE this week*

#### **JUNE 27, 2016**

A Close Look at STAAR and EOC Stems to Help Struggling Learners

#### **JUNE 28, 2016**

Interactive Student Notebook: Secondary Grades 6-12

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

#### **JUNE 29, 2016**

Formative Assessment in Social Studies Using Web/Digital Tools

#### **JUNE 30, 2016**

Differentiated Instruction (K-5)

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



### Food for Thought: CASE for Kids Afterschool Students Gain Life Lessons from Volunteering at Food Bank

When several students threw their sandwiches away days in succession in their summer enrichment program, it was food for thought for their afterschool coordinators. The students and some of their parents volunteered at the Houston Food Bank on June 27. The goal of the event was to raise awareness about the hunger plight which many Houstonians face each day and to educate the youth about helping the needy.

“We decided that we could change a negative into a positive by bringing students together with their parents to give back to people who are homeless or needy,” said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, director for the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, a division of Harris County Department of Education.

Students are enrolled in summer enrichment programs. Schools participating include Frances Elementary, Aldine ISD; Spring Forest Middle School, Spring Branch ISD; Sharpstown International, Houston ISD; and South Houston Elementary, Pasadena ISD. About 100 students and 35 parents volunteered at the Houston Food Bank, 535 Portwall Street in Houston, Texas.



Spring Forest Middle School student Yazmeen Abdullah, 14, says she has seen classmates throw away their uneaten lunches and calls them out on it.

“I’m the kind of person who doesn’t like to waste food,” she said. “I say ‘if you don’t want it, give it to someone else.’”

Abdullah has eight brothers and sisters so she knows that food on the table is a good thing in a large family.

Melodie Douglas-Jones is the afterschool coordinator for Spring Forest Middle School, a Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) 21st Century afterschool program. She says Abdullah has been in the afterschool program for three years and she sees the benefits of teens like Abdullah volunteering at places like the Houston Food Bank. She has seen the rising freshman grow into a responsible teenager.

“Afterschool gives Yazmeen some time to discover new things, and it also gives her a safe environment to be in after the school day,” Douglas-Jones said.

For more information about CASE for Kids, go to [www.afterschoolzone.org](http://www.afterschoolzone.org).

CASE for Kids, a division of Harris County Department of Education, provides resources, trainings and funding for students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities and community centers throughout Harris County. Students are enrolled in CASE for Kids programs through Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) 21st Century, administered by the Texas Education Agency.

### Adult Education Staff Meets with Area School District Leaders to Determine Needs for Adult Learners

Adult Education Director Eduardo Honold, along with managers Kay Vaccaro and May O’ Brien, met with district representatives in Klein and Alief to talk about developing new integrated education and training opportunities for adult learners in the district. The district and HCDE are currently determining the training programs which are in the greatest demand for parents and staff. The goal is to help underprepared adults get on a path to family-sustaining careers and to also provide English classes.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

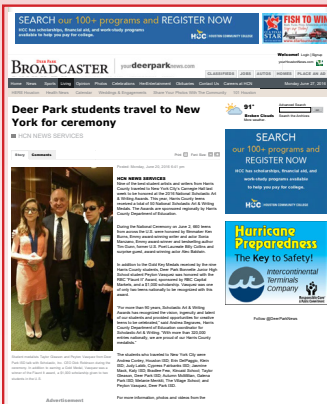
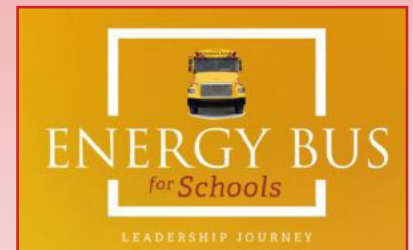


### CASE for Kids Food Bank Event Featured on KTRK Channel 13 Houston Live

The CASE for Kids "Food for Thought" Houston Food Bank event held June 27 was promoted through a four-minute, Houston Live segment on KTRK Channel 13 by reporter Christine Dobbyn. The calculated Nielsen rating system publicity value of those combined segments is \$22,450. View the two segments in their entirety on our HCDE YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/UJCah2v8C7Q>

### Energy Bus for Schools Leadership Tour Visits HCDE July 28

The Energy Bus for Schools - Leadership Tour is coming to HCDE on July 28 from 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. The Energy Bus for Schools aims to inspire and develop leaders who positively impact schools, communities, and the world. As part of the experience, educators will leave with ideas and strategies to improve school culture, build a positive staff, and develop positive student leaders. Register and find more information at <http://energybusschools.com/events.php>.



### Scholastic Art & Writing Winners Featured in Deer Park Broadcaster

The Deer Park ISD students who recently traveled to New York City to be honored at the National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards were featured in the Deer Park Broadcaster last week. The article celebrated Deer Park ISD students Taylor Gleason and Peyton Vasquez and mentioned HCDE as the regional sponsor for the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Read the full article at <http://goo.gl/isRIEf>.

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# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Community Relations

In keeping 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; and to
- Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.

This week, the CASE division hosted a life-changing event for students who completed a service project by volunteering at the Houston Food Bank. The idea came about after these same students threw away sandwiches during their summer enrichment program. After observation of this on more than one occasion, CASE coordinators thought, what better way to help the students understand the importance of not wasting food and that thousands of people in our city go to bed and wake up starving for a wholesome meal, than to expose them to the Houston Food Bank.



This story was pitched to local media through a press release and was ultimately covered on local news during a live segment as a lead human interest story. The story, covered on Channel 13, can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/UJCah2v8C7Q>. The story garnered great visibility in the community and showed HCDE in a great light.

**By having the media cover this worthwhile community-oriented service event, I am achieving the Board's goal of me to**

- **Communicate the accomplishments of the Department through varied formats;**
- **Maintain visibility and involvement in the community; and**
- **Work with other community organizations in a coordinated way.**

## HCDE BOARD

*Board President*  
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*Vice President*  
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*Position 7, At Large*

Diane Trautman  
*Position 3, At Large*

Michael Wolfe  
*Position 5, At Large*

## UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

**July Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday, July 26, 2016**  
1:00 p.m.  
ROOM 400

**Senate Education Committee Hearing**  
**Wednesday, August 3, 2016**  
3:00 p.m.  
Capitol Extension  
Room E1.028  
Austin, Texas

