

The CONNECTOR

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

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

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As we enter the month of October, we closed out the month of September running at full speed. We began this week on the heels of a successful CASE for Kids Out-of-School Conference which concluded last Saturday. The two-day conference gathered leading out-of-school time and expanded learning professionals in one location for a two-day journey that sparked deep conversations surrounding meeting the needs of students once the school day is over. It was an excellent event that was well-attended and showcased the strong partnerships we have with service providers who offer quality out-of-school programming.

I spent most of this week in Austin attending two conferences. The Texas Association of Black School Educators (TABSE) Conference organizers asked me to participate in a Superintendent's Think Tank session with education executives and leaders from all over the state of Texas. The TABSE Conference took place Wednesday and Thursday, and was immediately followed by the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA)/Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) Conference. TASA/TASB runs today through the weekend. This weekend, I will also attend the Texas Academic Decathlon Meeting (where I serve as the Treasurer)—which runs concurrently with TASA/TASB. This week has been and the weekend will be filled with numerous professional development and networking opportunities.

As I usually do on a weekly basis, I met with my Executive Leadership Team earlier this week prior to heading to Austin. The team remains laser-beam focused on improving program quality and efficiency in operations at all levels. Our synergy allows us to continue to create value, deliver opportunity, and provide service to our stakeholders across Harris County.

Meanwhile, our programs continue to fulfill our mission in meeting the needs of our clients through more innovative professional development opportunities. To that end, an emphasis was placed on science this week through several workshops including Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS) for teachers of Gifted and Talented students. We also hosted Argumentation in the Science Classroom and Cracking Up: Plate Tectonics and the Structure of the Earth. Probably most significantly, we hosted a preparation course for the Science Reasoning Exam entitled, "Experience! Experiment! Excite!" Other workshops held this week were educator-based in the areas of instruction and communication, while our Adult Education division hosted a citizenship preparation workshop.

I am pleased to inform you that an article appeared in the Bellaire, River Oaks, and West University Examiner that brought, to the forefront, the action you took during the last Board Meeting. The article discusses how your vote saved taxpayers money by lowering the tax rate and collecting no more tax revenue. This article highlighted your exceptional stewardship on behalf of Harris County taxpayers.

In closing, please know that I will return to the office Monday. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and I hope you have relaxing weekend. Thanks for your service to HCDE.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Frances Watson-Hester to Lead Teaching and Learning Center at HCDE as Senior Director

Frances Watson-Hester is the new senior director for the Teaching and Learning Center, a division of Harris County Department of Education.

Watson-Hester graduated from Grambling State University. She received a master's degree in counseling and administration from Texas Southern University. She is currently completing a doctorate in educational leadership at Prairie View A&M University.

The 24-year educator served most recently as a middle school principal in Lamar Consolidated Independent School District. She began her career in Fort Bend Independent School District where she held leadership roles as assistant principal, coordinator for Partners in Education, middle school counselor and elementary teacher. She and her husband Gary and two boys reside in Fort Bend.

The goal of the Teaching and Learning Center is to ensure high-quality service and professional learning for Harris County schools and other stakeholders. In addition Watson-Hester said she plans to facilitate leadership programs for educators at annual events, conferences and other community-related events.



Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

SEPTEMBER 29 TRAININGS

Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Matter: Solids, Liquids and Gases/Secret Formulas [6hrs GT credit]

SEPTEMBER 30 TRAINING

Argumentation in the Science Classroom

OCTOBER 1 TRAININGS

Building a Comprehensive School Wide Discipline Management Plan that Really Works!

Cracking Up: Plate Tectonics and the Structure of the Earth

OCTOBER 3 TRAININGS

ABE Syllabus

TEAMS for Teachers

TEAMS for Teachers

Confident Communication Skills

Contextualized Instruction

Write from the Start

Prepare for Science Reasoning Exam: Experience! Experiment! Excite!

Citizenship Preparation

Center for Safe and Secure Schools Debuts Newsletter: The Guardian

The Center for Safe and Secure Schools launched its first newsletter called "The Guardian: Dispatches from HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools"



provides safe school tips for districts and showcases upcoming workshops. The inaugural issue also introduces Ecomet Burley, director of the Center. Read the Guardian: <http://www.hcde-texas.org/users/0221/docs/The%20Guardian%201.1%20PDF.pdf>

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



Hip-Hop Dance Group and Author are Attractions at CASE for Kids Conference

"Hip Hop Houston," an afterschool provider, performed at the CASE for Kids Out-of-School Time Conference last week at the Westin Houston, Memorial City, 945 Gessner Road. The 3rd annual, two-day event gathered leading out-of-school time and expanded learning professionals and was sponsored by CASE for Kids. The event luncheon was keynoted by Dr. Eddie M. Connor, Jr., bestselling author of five books and founder of Boys 2 Books, which provides mentorship to boys and young men via literacy, leadership, and life skills enrichment. Workshops were held both days and provided training for school and faith-based afterschool programs as well as child care centers. Photos are available through <http://hcdetx.smugmug.com/CASE/2015-State-of-Afterschool> (password hcde1889.)



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Popcorn Social Hosted by Human Resources

HCDE employees gathered for popcorn on September 25 in an effort to socialize and fortify. The internal event was hosted by Human Resources and encourages networking between divisions and supports general employee camaraderie.



Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

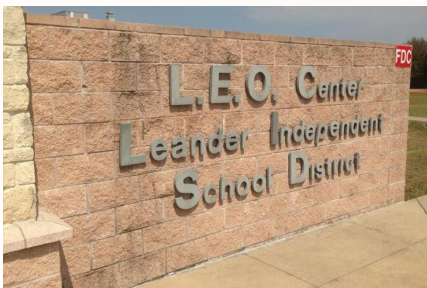
Academic and Behavior School-West Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

The Academic and Behavior School-West recently celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month. This year's theme for the celebration marked the 20th anniversary of Selena's death. Norma Lopez shared for students and faculty to observe, her collection of Selena memorabilia. Ms. Lopez stated that Selena was one of her favorite celebrities and that she had an opportunity to meet her several times after concerts. Lopez provided a summary of music, movies, and other information about the late music icon. During the celebration, there was an opportunity to listen to Selena's music and enjoy a delicious Hispanic meal.



HCDE Schools Division Team Members Visit Leander ISD

On Thursday October 1, 2015 Jonathan Parker and Dr. Dee Mattox-Hall conducted a site visit of Leander ISD's Extended Opportunity Center which houses the district's Disciplinary Alternative Education Program. The LEO Center, as it is referred to, received commendation from the Texas Association for Alternative Education. HCDE's Schools division officials met with the campus administrators and discussed best practices and the components of an effective disciplinary alternative program.



School District Highlight: Katy ISD

Katy ISD's Office of Counseling and Psychological Services presents the 2015 College and Career Night on Wednesday, October 7, 2015, from 6-8 p.m. at the Leonard E. Merrell Center. Details:

<http://www.katyisd.org/dept/counseling/Pages/default.aspx>



Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Instructional Management

In an effort to meet the Board's expectations of me to ensure sound instructional management as I

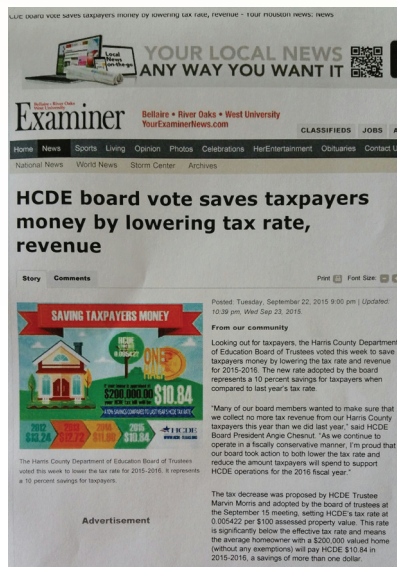
- establish effective mechanisms for communication to and from staff in instructional evaluation, planning, and decision-making;
- ensure that goals and objectives form the basis of curricular decision-making and instruction, and communicates expectations for student achievement; and to
- ensure that appropriate data are used in developing recommendations and making decisions regarding the instructional program and resources,



I have made adjustments in the calendar by which the Research Evaluation Institute provides data in the areas of client satisfaction, service delivery, and other related accountability constructs. **In doing so, we now have more data points, in advance, to meet the Board's expectation of me to investigate best practices for student achievement, and to utilize effective practices that maximize achievement of student potential within HCDE schools.**

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

In an effort to meet the element of performance that requires me to establish and maintain a program of public relations to keep the public well-informed of the activities of the Department, and thereby affecting a wholesome and cooperative working relationship between HCDE and the community, the HCDE Board was highlighted in the Bellaire, River Oaks, and West University Examiner in an article that focused on your vote to save taxpayers money by lowering the tax rate and revenue gained from taxes. **This contributes to meeting the Board's expectation of me to function as a primary ambassador for the Department and presenting a positive, professional image of the Department in all venues—community, political, educational, business, and Board.**



HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

OCTOBER 20, 2015
October Board Meeting
1:00 p.m.

