

The CONNECTOR

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



WEEK OF OCTOBER 31, 2016

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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

First off, let me begin by informing you that Houston has a new baby girl! Karla Cantu and her husband celebrate the birth of their daughter, Baby Marlen. She was born Tuesday morning. Both Ms. Cantu and baby are doing well, and I know you join me in wishing her the best. As previously mentioned, Melissa McGee is covering my office during Ms. Cantu's absence. Operations are underway as usual.

I began the week with my annual Executive Leadership Team Retreat. As a cohesive unit, we reviewed the Department's mission, goals, and motto, as we reflected over the past year. We also projected the trajectory of the current academic year. I assigned members of the team goals for each of their respective divisions and programs. It was a successful meeting and I believe the group left with a spirit of enthusiasm about the work yet to be done.

On Tuesday of this week, I began my quarterly meetings with members of the Board of Trustees. I personally thank each of you who were able to meet with me as I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you individually and review the work of the Department. I look forward to meeting with every member of the Board. As always, I appreciate your service to HCDE and I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedules to meet with me.

I continue to make my rounds to meet with the superintendents in the greater Harris County area. This week, I met with the superintendent of Fort Bend Independent School District. I am always pleased to meet with our client districts to ensure that the needs of their districts are being met at an exceptional level. I am happy to report that the meeting was successful.

In my effort to support volunteerism within our own programs, I have agreed to serve as a SuperMentor in our Area I Head Start program at the Humble Head Start Center location. I am excited about the opportunity to read to, and connect with, some of our youngest

learners. While I will visit the center this week, I will begin reading to the students next week.

HCDE will be hosting the AORS (Association of Recovery Schools) meeting next week. This group is committed to serving the needs of students in recovery in Harris County. This group of specialized educators is meeting an area of strong demand within the Harris County area and we openly support their efforts.

Next week, I will meet with my American Leadership Forum (ALF) group as part of my ongoing responsibility as a member of the class of 2016-2017. This remains an excellent opportunity for professional growth and development, as well as an ideal platform for HCDE to receive even more visibility.

In the area of teaching and learning this week, we hosted the following trainings and workshops: Strategies for an Effective Co-Teaching Program, Online Instructor's Training; Part I, EOC Expository: Examining and Planning with Readiness Standards for Grades 9 and 10; Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam; Social Studies only; Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Cell Structure and Function; Communicate, Collaborate, Captivate: Parent Engagement Strategies; and Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam, Science only. HCDE continues to provide value, opportunity, and service to Harris County educators in an effort to help students achieve.

In closing, please be reminded that Daylight Saving Time ends Sunday, November 6, at 2:00 a.m. and our regularly scheduled November Board Meeting will be held Tuesday, November 15, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.

Thanks again for your service to HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and I hope you have an enjoyable weekend.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Digital Learning Replicates Content for 150 Digital Courses for High School



Digital Learning, an arm of the Teaching and Learning Center, has replicated content to over 150 courses for every high school U.S. History and AP U.S. History course in Cy-Fair ISD. The project is an ongoing support of digital learning for several large school districts. Digital Education and Innovation also updated middle school math courses and AP U.S. History courses. The ongoing

support of course content replication and enrollments makes learning opportunities available to over 29,000 students and 12,300 faculty and staff members in Cy-Fair ISD. In other news from Digital Learning, employee David McGeary was recently honored with an invite to join the Texas K-12 CTO Council Professional Learning Subcommittee. The committee guides the development and dissemination of professional learning opportunities for K-12 technology leaders in the state.



Adult Education Students Complete Instrument Fitter Certification in Baytown

Nine Adult Education students attending classes in Baytown completed an instrument fitter certification which combined GED test prep classes. The certification helps grads look for jobs in the high-tech manufacturing and area refineries.

In other Adult Education news, director Dr. Eduardo Honold will be a part of a panel presentation at the 20th Annual Texas Workforce Commission Conference in Houston in December.

ECPA Attends State Conference for Texas Teacher Certification



Educator Certification and Professional Advancement staff attended and presented at the Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education in San Marcos this month. Staff Dr. Deirdre Sharkey and Jonette Edwards Miniell provided the presentation titled “Research and Lessons from the Field: Teacher Development through Critical Friendship Communities.”

Also attending the conference were staffers Dr. Chaney Ledet and Lidia Zatopek, director. Zatopek is currently the state organization’s board treasurer and has served on this year’s conference planning committee.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

The Hub October Issue Published

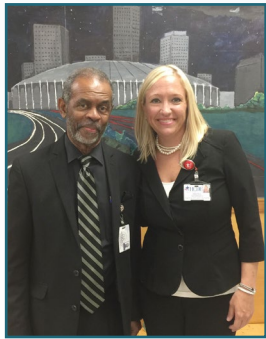
The October 2016 issue of the Hub, internal news for Harris County Department of Education employees, is now available. This issue we celebrate Principals Month, meet the new CIO Helen Spencer and recognize employees who supported the Autism Speaks fundraising walk. Beginning November 19, the Hub will be featured on the home page of the HCDE Portal.

View the Hub: http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/4323/thehub_issue-8_oct28_16.pdf



Research and Evaluation Institute Presents at American Evaluation Association Conference

Director Dr. Jeannette Truxillo and Alicia Gladney presented at the American Evaluation Association Conference October 28. The pair presented a poster using logic models they created called Engaging People in Making Decisions, Taking Action and Reflecting. The poster featured the logic model for Human Resources developed with Human Resources Executive Director Natasha Truitt. The poster was created with help from Client Engagement's graphic designer Juan Lopez.



Teaching and Learning Center's Segraves Collaborates with HISD to Increase Scholastic Interests

TLC Director Andrea Segraves will be working in tandem with HISD Director of Fine Arts Walter Smith to increase number of HISD students participating in Scholastic Art & Writing this year.



'Peace Out' to Breast Cancer

HCDE's Human Resources division wore tie-dyed shirts last week to say "Peace Out" to breast cancer! Throughout the month of October, employees have been participating in themed Fridays to support National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Former Student, Teacher Reconnect during HCDE New Employee Orientation



As we grow up, the teachers we remember most are those who went above and beyond to support and encourage us and provide a foundation for the future. For HCDE Facilities employee Juan Lira, the teacher who made a profound impact on his life is now also his colleague.

When Lira walked into his new employee orientation in September, he was surprised to find his former first-grade bilingual teacher, Dr. Chaney Williams Ledet, was also attending orientation as the new curriculum and compliance officer for HCDE's Educator Certification and Professional Advancement.

Ledet became a first-grade bilingual teacher at Richard Brock Elementary in 1989, after a year of working in the social service field. While teaching that class she met Lira, a young boy who grew up in a Spanish household with six other siblings.

Ledet became close to Lira as she helped him work through the difficulties of learning English. Although he struggled, she refused to let him fall behind and began working with him during recess and after school. She even took him on field trips to places like the rodeo and the zoo as a reward for good behavior and to promote learning outside of the classroom.

"She was a very loving person, and still is. She was motherly and always went beyond being just a teacher," said Lira. "I always enjoyed spending time with her."

Since her time at Brock Elementary, Ledet has served as an assistant principal, principal, bilingual supervisor, alternative certification supervisor and written a proposal for a language immersion charter school. However, she never forgot the impact Lira made on her in her early days of teaching.

"Words can't quite explain how it feels to see someone I cared for and worried about become successful," said Ledet. "Juan was a child that touched my heart and I'm so proud to see he's doing well."

Lira is now married with two children and has more than 10 years of air conditioning and electrical experience, but when he heard Ledet call his name at orientation, it was like he was back in that first-grade classroom learning from his beloved teacher.

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

OCTOBER 31, 2016

Strategies for an Effective Co-Teaching Program

Online Instructor's Training - Part I

NOVEMBER 1, 2016

Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Force, Motion and Energy

EOC Fiction: Examining and Planning with Readiness Standards (Grades 9-10)

Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Force, Motion and Energy

NOVEMBER 2, 2016

EOC Expository: Examining and Planning with Readiness Standards (Grades 9-10)

NOVEMBER 3, 2016

Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291) - SOCIAL STUDIES Sessions ONLY

Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Cell Structure and Function

NOVEMBER 4, 2016

Communicate, Collaborate, Captivate: Parent Engagement Strategies

NOVEMBER 5, 2016

Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291) - SCIENCE Sessions ONLY

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Three Harris County Teens Featured in Traveling Arts Show



Scholastic Art & Writing coordinator Andrea Segraves poses next to exhibition art and holds the iPad which showcases writing from three area teens.

Houston is the second of four national stops for the “Art.Write.Now. Tour” featuring the traveling exhibition of art and writing from teens across the nation. The Scholastic Art & Writing exhibit showcases 50 visual art

works as well as multiple writing selections from “The Best Teen Writing of 2016.”

Showcased in the tour are essays and short stories from three Houston writers who qualified for national acclaim through Harris County Department of Education’s Scholastic Art & Writing Regional Awards.

The exhibit open from November 1, 2016 through January 8, 2017 at the MFAH’s Kinder Foundation Education Center Gallery, 1001 Bissonet, features three Houston teen writers’ works.

- Peyton Vasquez, 13, of Bonnette Junior High School in Deer Park Independent School District, who wrote a personal essay called “The Floppy Arm,” a

situation backlash from his cancer treatments:

<http://www.artandwriting.org/media/294881/>

Vasquez also won a revered The RBC “Flaunt It” Award.

- Amy Dong, 17, from St. John’s School for her critical essay: “Hoping for Disaster”:

<http://www.artandwriting.org/media/250213/>.

- Melanie Menkiti, 14, The Village School, is introduced in the show with her short story called “The War”:

<http://www.artandwriting.org/media/295203/>.

The show arrived in Houston from Grand Rapids, Michigan and visits Bozeman, Montana and Jackson, Mississippi later this year. For information about MFAH hours and admission fees, visit:

<https://www.mfah.org/visit/hours-and-admissions/>.



MFAH wall features work from teen artists throughout the nation.

View article in Houston Style Magazine:

www.goo.gl/tfcuCy

Science Teachers Explore Force and Motion during Hands-on Workshop



Area science teachers attended the “Force and Motion” workshop at HCDE last week to explore and make real-world connections through hands-on, student-centered lessons on gravity, friction, air resistance, magnetism, tension and more. The workshop is designed so that teachers leave with an understanding of

Newton’s Laws of Motion and help their students engage in conducting their own explorations.

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Schools Host Red Ribbon Week Activities October 23-31



Highpoint School East staff wear red to stand against drug use.

Red Ribbon Week is a longstanding campaign to show solidarity against drug use. It began in Mexico City when drug traffickers murdered a DEA agent in 1985. Since then, red ribbons have represented a visible commitment for the creation of a drug-free America. National Red Ribbon Week is celebrated each year from October 23-31. The week also encourages themed dress to unify students and staff.

At Highpoint School East, Principal Marion Cooksey's staff took a stand by wearing red during the week and later promoted bullying prevention by wearing orange, the signature bullying-prevention color. Mental health counselors gave a presentation to students about the mental issues created by drugs.

Highpoint School North Principal David Oquin sponsored a poster competition for students. Staff wore red to show support, and students participated with crazy sock day and freeze out drugs day. Classroom discussions about drug abuse included student testimonies about how drugs had negatively affected their lives.



Highpoint School North poster contest winner Erica Ramirez poses with staff.

At AB School East, Texas State Trooper Terrion Rogers along with Mothers Against Drunk Drivers representative John Frazier were guest speakers to talk about the use of drugs with students. Principal Mindy Robertson said a classroom door decorating contest engaged students in the Red Ribbon Week activities.

At AB School West, staff dressed to "black out" drugs to show solidarity and wore sunglasses to be "too cool" for drugs. Principal Dr. Victor Keys said the school also sponsored an assembly.



Pumpkin contest at AB School East promotes teamwork.

Academic and Behavior Schools Enjoy Fall Festival Activities

Students and staff at HCDE's Academic and Behavior Schools enjoyed their annual Fall Festival events last week. Students at AB School East enjoyed games, treats and a pumpkin decorating contest judged by Schools Division Senior Director Dr. Dee Maddox-Hall, Assistant Superintendent Jonathan Parker and Brenda Mullins. AB School West participated in games, face painting, a costume contest and more. These annual events allow students to collaborate with one another, promote friendly competition and help everyone get into the fall spirit.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

**Organizational Improvement
Professional Growth and Development
Personnel Management
Management of Administrative, Fiscal, and Facilities Function**

In an effort to achieve the Board's expectations of me to

- Ensure that key planning activities within the Department are coordinated and consistent with Board policy and applicable law, and that goals and results are communicated as appropriate;
- Organize the central administration in a manner consistent with Department priorities and resources, and monitor administration organization at all levels for effectiveness and efficiency;
- Ensure that appropriate staff development is available and monitors staff development for effectiveness;
- Assign and define the duties of employees; and
- Monitor effectiveness of operations against appropriate benchmarks

Earlier this week, I hosted my annual Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Retreat where, among several topics, we discussed



the mission, motto, and goals of the Department; my goals for each of the divisions, as well as other matters related to the Department achieving excellence. It was a productive meeting that allowed for extensive brain-share.

By convening and facilitating this retreat of my ELT, I am working toward meeting the following elements of performance, as expected of me, by the Board:

- **Look for ways to improve programs and services without greater expenditures and with concern for cutting expenses and costs to public schools without sacrifice to high quality services;**
- **Establish a culture among staff so that all strive to achieve excellence and do not accept mediocre performance;**
- **Develop and implement a clear vision for the Department;**
- **Manage the day-to-day business ensuring that the objectives are achieved; and**
- **Ensure that staff are evaluated annually and informed of progress or needs for improvement and expectations.**

HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

November Board Meeting
November 15, 2016
1:00 p.m.
Room 400

