

# The CONNECTOR

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



WEEK OF DECEMBER 5, 2016

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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

It's hard to believe that we're already approaching the end of the first semester of this academic year. I began the week with my regularly scheduled Executive Leadership Team Meeting, and as I mentioned in the last issue of **The Connector**, HCDE also hosted its IMPACT meeting this past Monday with Harris County school district board members. The meeting was productive and based on feedback from those in attendance, it was suggested that we have our next few meetings on a campus within the various school districts represented by the group, effective with our next meeting. It is an excellent forum for school board representatives from the 25 Harris County school districts to brain-share and forward public education from the governance perspective.

Monday evening, I traveled to Austin to attend a UIL Meeting to fulfill my responsibilities as a member of the UIL Executive Committee. As I go about the business of UIL, this platform also serves as another effective avenue to bring visibility to HCDE. The meeting took place Tuesday and I returned to Houston Tuesday evening. Upon my return to the city, I spent Wednesday continuing my obligation to the American Leadership Forum (ALF). I spent Thursday morning participating in the SuperMentor Reading Program—where I am a volunteer through our Head Start division.

Today, I conducted Board Walks with incoming Trustees George Moore and Eric Dick. We first attended holiday festivities on our campuses (AB-East and High Point-East) where our students showcased their talents and abilities in observation of the Christmas season. Events featuring student performances such as these are always rewarding, as all of our students are working hard to achieve their full potential. The level of parental involvement and interest from the home districts of our students is positively overwhelming. It is unique to witness our students' abilities to facilitate successful activities as a result of the undying commitment of our campus administrators, faculty, and staff. Our Board Walk ended at our North Post Oak location. I trust that both gentlemen found these visits informative and enlightening.

This week in the area of teaching and learning, we hosted the following trainings, meetings, and workshops as we continue to provide value, opportunity, and service to educators, business leaders, and students in Harris County: Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Organisms and Environments; Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Organisms

and Environments; Model Drawing for Grades 2-5; Restorative Discipline Practices- Session III; Model Drawings for Grades 6-8; Reading Strategies for Struggling and English Language Learners; Reading Aloud to Pre-Kindergarten English and Dual Language Learners; Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association Meeting; STAAR/EOC Close-Up RC1 History; Characteristics of the Universe; HCDE Math Leadership Meeting; Workstation Make and Take for Classifying, Sorting, Identifying, and Creating Shapes and Objects in Geometry for Grades 1 and 2; Attendance Officers' Share Session; Workstation Make and Take for Classifying, Sorting, Identifying, and Creating Shapes and Objects in Geometry for Grades Pre-k and kindergarten; Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar; Build Your Bookshelf Series: Using Young Adult Literature to Grow Reluctant Readers; and Understanding Fiscal Responsibility.

Please be reminded that the December Board Meeting will be held next Tuesday, December 13, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.—the second Tuesday of the month, instead of the third Tuesday, due to the upcoming Christmas Break. A meeting of the PFC will be held at 12:00 noon, immediately prior to the Board Meeting.

Next week is a big week at HCDE. Our Head Start division is gearing up for its annual Bates Car Give-Away, hosted by Bates Custom and Collision. Each year, this company gives away two cars, at as many events, to deserving parents within our Head Start program. Also next week, and as mentioned in the last issue of **The Connector**, the Department is hosting its annual holiday receptions for staff at both the Irvington and North Post Oak locations of HCDE. The receptions will take place December 14 (Irvington) and December 15 (North Post Oak). Both receptions will be held from 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Looking ahead, please note that the Department will be closed for Winter Break starting Wednesday, December 21, 2016, and will return to normal operating hours on Tuesday, January 3, 2017.

Thanks again for your service to HCDE and I look forward to seeing you at next week's Board Meeting. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. Have a relaxing weekend.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Adult Learners, Leaders Inducted into Adult Education National Honor Society 'It's never too late to learn'



Going back to school as an adult requires grit and determination. Factors like age, health, children, and work often affect the journey. Twenty-four students share stories of strife and success as they are inducted by Harris County Department of Education into the Adult Education National Honor Society.

The event was held Wednesday, Dec. 7 from 10-11 a.m. at 6300 Irvington. It was an emotional hour filled with pride and gratitude as student leaders were commended by their teachers.

One inspiration was a student from Galena Park who overcame drug problems and suffered from low self-esteem. Another 84-year-old student from Mexico dropped out of school in fourth grade to work to feed his family before attending HCDE's learning center in Pasadena. A third Alief-area mother of five suffered domestic abuse but is determined to get an education to raise her boys.

The National Adult Education Honor Society recognizes adult learners who excel as leaders and overcome difficult circumstances to pursue adult learning successes. Inductees also visibly improve their lives and others' through learning.

Students are nominated for induction into the honor society by their teachers and live in neighborhoods throughout greater Harris County. Students are given positive recommendations for employment and educational advancement recommendations as a result of the inductions. They receive a pin and certificate at the ceremony. GED graduates receive a gold honor cord to wear during commencement to recognize the honor.

"Our adult students are dedicated and eager to learn when they come into our classes," said HCDE Adult Education Director Eduardo Honold. "There are so many success stories, but these students are recognized as leaders among their peers."

With a 30-year track record, HCDE Adult Education provides classes to adult learners with a goal to "learn to earn," including adult basic literacy and math skills, GED, English as a second language, and vocational training. Classes are held in 35 community locations throughout Harris and Liberty counties. Communities include Baytown, Alief, Channelview, Cy-Fair, Deer Park, Galena Park, Goose Creek, Katy, Klein, Pasadena, Sheldon, Spring Branch, and Liberty. Corporations also benefit from HCDE services provided to English language learning employees aimed at improving productivity and safety in the workplace.



**The following students were inducted into the National Adult Education Honor Society at HCDE in 2016:** Nancy Aguilar, Victoria Andrade, Maria Arias, Carolina Bustos, Eva Castillo, Marina Cebrian, Adela de la Cruz, Maria Dominguez, Joshua Doyle, Salvador Escobedo, Veronica Espinola, Astrid Gamarra, LaShanda Glass, Adolfo Gomez, Norge Gomez, Kelsey Hess, Jucelin M. Linares, Marlon Maitland, Yuri Mandujano, Maria D. Marcial-Gallardo, Job Neasbitt, James Quinn, Daniel Rodriguez, and Shawnetta Talton.

**Salvador Escobedo, 84, Pasadena, (teacher Evelyn Steptoe):** When Salvador Escobedo first walked through the doors



of HCDE Adult Education's Sunset location, he had a fourth grade education and knew very little English. Now, due to remarkable attendance and dedication, Salvador reads and writes English very well and is teacher Evelyn Steptoe's nominee for the National Honor Society Outstanding Learner award.

In his native Mexico, Salvador was not able to finish his studies because he had to work to help support his family. That teamwork spirit carried over into his GED and English as

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Adult Learners, Leaders Inducted into Adult Education National Honor Society *(continued from page 2)*

a second language (ESL) classrooms, according to Steptoe.

“Salvador has been a mentor to many of the students in the GED classroom,” Steptoe said. “He loves working in groups.”

Formerly a TV repairman, Salvador is looking into new career paths and is even considering enrolling in college to advance his options.

#### **Josh Doyle, 26, Irvington Learning Center, (teacher Brigett Bentley):**

Josh Doyle is an HCDE Adult Education student who broke the mold and excelled in his construction class. Before enrolling at HCDE’s 6311 Irvington location, Josh was a high school dropout from a family that did not produce many male role models; most men he knew were not successful, and some were incarcerated.

His teacher, Brigett T. Bentley, nominated Josh for the National Honor Society Outstanding Learner award because he not only showed extra dedication and zeal for learning but also shared his time with struggling classmates.

“Josh came to class daily with a sense of purpose, vigor, and appetite to learn,” said Bentley. “He encouraged other students to have an open mind and saw them as team members rather than as individuals.”

Now that he has completed his six-week course, the Galena Park resident is applying to jobs and looking forward to making his family proud.

#### **LaShonda Glass, 32, Alief, (teacher Barbara Booker):**

As a mother of five boys, LaShonda Glass strives to lead by example and demonstrate the importance of education. Glass has overcome mountainous obstacles to get to where she is today, including homelessness, but her determination and resilience allowed her to persevere.

“I’m very determined and know that with a better education, life has so much more to offer,” said Glass.

Glass possesses natural leadership abilities in her current job as an office manager, as well as in the classroom. Her GED teacher Barbara Booker says Glass is always willing to assist other students in class.

“She grasps the concepts quickly and is willing to share what she learns with others.”

Glass dreams of one day owning her own company and says that dream, along with her five boys, keeps her motivated and positive.

### **ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER**

*Trainings hosted at HCDE this week*

#### **DECEMBER 6, 2016**

Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Organisms and Environments

Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Organisms and Environments

Model Drawing for Grades 2-5

Restorative Discipline Practices - Session III

Model Drawing for Grades 6-8

Reading Strategies for Struggling and English Language Learners

Reading Aloud to Pre-Kindergarten English and Dual Language Learners

#### **DECEMBER 7 2016**

Houston Science Educators’ Leadership Association

STAAR/EOC Close-Up-RC1-History

Characteristics of the Universe

HCDE Math Leadership Meeting

#### **DECEMBER 8, 2016**

Workstation Make and Take for Classifying, Sorting, Identifying, and Creating Shapes and Objects in Geometry for Grades 1 and 2

Attendance Officers’ Share Session

Workstation Make and Take for Classifying, Sorting, Identifying, and Creating Shapes and Objects in Geometry for Grades PK/K

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar

#### **DECEMBER 9, 2016**

Build Your Bookshelf Series: Using Young Adult Literature to Grow Reluctant Readers

Understanding Fiscal Responsibility

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### CASE for Kids News

#### City Connections Funding



As part of its City Connections program, HCDE's afterschool division, CASE for Kids, awarded a total of \$57,100 in additional funding to support a variety of out-of-school time programs in Houston City Council Districts A, B, E and F. These most recent

grant awards, ranging from \$4,100 to \$10,000 each, are in addition to the \$550,000 that CASE for Kids awarded to nonprofit organizations in each of the 11 Houston City Council districts in October.

Out of the 19 organizations that applied on November 7, seven were awarded funding that will go towards providing diverse activities for youth outside of regular school day hours. Activities include fine arts, academic enrichment, college exploration, and fitness classes.

CASE for Kids has worked with city council members and the city of Houston for three years as administrator and coordinator of the City Connections program. Last year, an estimated 7,938 children were served through the program.

#### Tamalada Party

CASE for Kids Texas ACE 21 Century afterschool programs at South Houston Elementary and South Houston Intermediate are hosting a Tamalada Party on Friday, December 16. The day's festivities will kick off with the making of tamales from 9 a.m. to noon at South Houston Elementary, 900 Main St. in Houston. Sharing of community resources and games will take place in the afternoon until 4 p.m. and will



be followed by a celebration and dinner lasting until 6 p.m. Those interested in participating should text the message @tamalada to the number 81010.

#### Two AmeriCorps VISTA members join the team



CASE for Kids welcomes two new AmeriCorps VISTA members to the team. Natasha Howard, the School Readiness VISTA, attended Clark Atlanta University and has previously served as an afterschool program director. Passionate about change, Natasha comes to CASE for

Kids to continue her journey "changing the world, one child at a time."

Angel Hillsman, the Community Engagement VISTA, attended Texas Southern University, earning a B.S. in health studies and an M.S. in health education. She recently worked with Houston ISD in underserved communities by teaching, tutoring, and providing students with extra-curriculum activities.

As AmeriCorps VISTA members, both ladies will be dedicating a year of their lives to assist CASE for Kids in connecting resources and community partnerships to further meet the needs of the students in the afterschool community across Harris County.

#### Kelly Village Partnership site gives thanks

The CASE for Kids Partnership afterschool program at Solutions for Better Living, Kelly Village Apartments, hosted a Thanksgiving Celebration for staff and families. Staff prepared an entire Thanksgiving feast for more than 40 kids and parents in the community. The celebration included food, family, games, and a movie, and students were able to share what they were thankful for.



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Scenes from Superintendent Colbert “SuperMentoring” Humble Head Start Students



Superintendent Colbert regularly reads to students at the Humble Head Start Center. Yesterday, he gifted each student with a new pair of gloves in correlation to the book featured during this week’s reading.



### 100 Attendance Officers from Houston, Humble ISDs Attend Truancy Presentation

Attendance officers from Houston and Humble ISDs attended the “Truancy Presentations from a District’s Perspective,” a presentation from both school districts. The event was held December 8 from 10 a.m. to noon and hosted by the Center for Safe and Secure Schools. The meetings give attendance officers the opportunity to network and share issues and solutions.



New legislation information is also routinely shared.



### Human Resources Hosts Hot Chocolate Social at NPO, Irvington

Human Resources hosted a hot chocolate social event at North Post Oak and Irvington on December 6 and 7. With chilly, wet weather as the order of the day, employees took a break to enjoy a hot, sweet treat as well as the camaraderie.



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



### Adult Education Students Donate Toys to Needy Children in HCDE Head Start Programs

A half dozen HCDE Adult Education classes participated in the Time for Toys drive to benefit Head Start children. The students rallied to donate toys and held a competition to see which class could bring in the most donations. In total, the students donated over 300 toys to the toy drive.



### KPRC Interviews Center for Safe and Secure Schools Director Ecomet Burley on Cyberbullying

KPRC reporter Andy Ceroda provided insight for parents and educators on cyberbullying following a series of area student incidents. Center for Safe and Secure Schools Director Ecomet Burley provided the expert interview for the segment, giving tips for parents and students. View the story: <https://youtu.be/qrIV3qqxMvQ>

### ECPA Aspiring Teachers Spend Time in Urban High School Classrooms

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement teacher candidates visited several secondary campuses in early December as part of their field experience. The students went to Houston ISD's Challenge Early College High School and Furr High School for field experiences. ECPA manager Jonnett Miniell accompanied the aspiring math and science teachers to observe two days with master teachers. The experiences are important to teacher candidates as they lend authentic urban classroom experiences with students.



### Center for Grants Development News

Center for Grants Development conducted a webinar on The Grant Budget: It's Not Just About the Math. Attendees included the Children's Museum of Houston, Galena Park ISD, Spring Branch ISD, and the Wesley Community Center.

Grants staffers Joyce Akins and Dr. Vida Avery met with the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs to explore collaborations with the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards program.

Director Gayla Rawlinson-Maynard and associate Kristal Johnson prepared a list of future grant funding opportunities through research for 25 Harris County School district grant contacts and 45 charter school contacts.



Houston area High School student artwork displayed at City Hall Underground Gallery for Mayor Turner's Art Scholarship Program.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Live to Give: Bates Collision Centers Staff Gift Two Cars to HCDE Head Start Moms



Employees at Bates Collision Centers continue a community tradition of “living to give” as two rehabbed cars are donated to needy Harris County Department of Education Head Start moms on December 14 and 15.

The model and make of the two cars remain a surprise which will be revealed through the unwrapping and gifting of the cars. Cars are traditionally filled with gifts and

community members donate gas, insurance, and materials needed to rehab the cars. The two mothers are the recipients of the Responsible Parenting Awards.

On December 14, from 10-11 a.m., Galena Park area mother Ashley Henderson and daughter Kaysin, 3, get their car at Bates Collision Center North Channel, 15532 I-10 East, Channelview, Texas. Kaysin attends Head Start Center Fifth Ward.

On December 15, from 10-11 a.m., Baytown area mother Selena Elias and daughter Camila, 3, get their car at Bates Collision Center Baytown, 3219 N. Main, Baytown, Texas. Camila attends Head Start Baytown.

### HCDE Head Start Children Benefit from Houston CPA Society’s Massive Goody Bag Assembly, Distribution December 9



The 46th Annual Santa Houston CPA Goody Bag Stuffing Campaign is providing 7,600 extra stocking stuffers for children enrolled in Head Start Centers throughout Harris County. The bags filled with apples, books, dental

kits, and healthy snacks will be assembled by an army of volunteers on Dec. 9 from 8:30-10:30 a.m. At 11:30 a.m., Houston CPA volunteers, plus Santa, visit Harris County Department of Education’s Pugh Head Start Center located at 1042 Henke in northeast Houston to make the holiday delivery and read to 3-5 year olds at the center.

Partners in the program are the Houston CPA Society, South Texas Dental, ABC Dental, The Ripley House and the U.S. Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston. At Harris County Department of Education, 1,200 students benefit from the donations.

The Houston CPA Society has 8,000 members who represent 13 area counties surrounding Houston, according

to Jennifer Poff, the organization’s executive director. The event is a signature event for the organization.

As the executive director of The Houston CPA Society, I believe it is important for me to help lead the charge in our community service endeavors with Santa CPAs being one of our signature events. Plus, who doesn’t get excited when you see a child get a gift and meet Santa during the Christmas holiday season.

Head Start programs are federally funded and provide educational services for low-income families of preschool children, including those with disabilities.

“HCDE Head Start is thankful for these community members for providing these extras for our families during the holidays,” said Venetia Peacock, HCDE Head Start senior director.

For more information about Head Start, visit [www.hcde-texas.org](http://www.hcde-texas.org).

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



### Educators Gain Reading Strategies for Struggling Learners

Area middle and high school reading, English, and ESL teachers attended the “Reading Strategies for Struggling and English Language Learners” workshop this week to develop framework designed for students who are reading below grade level. This workshop included strategies to engage older readers with topics that are compelling for teen readers at their independent reading level. Teachers also learned to increase students’ experiences with text and literature while deepening reading skills, strategies, and academic vocabulary needed for STAAR and the EOC.

# Opportunity

## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

### Gary Job Corps Presents Education, Career Opportunities at Highpoint School North



Representatives from the Gary Job Corps Center in San Marcos visited students at HCDE’s Highpoint School North last week to inform them of the free education and training programs they offer to help young adults earn a GED, learn a career, and find and keep good jobs. The education, career technical training, and job placement Job Corps offers helps young adults

meet the needs of a changing employment market.

The Gary Job Corps Center offers more than 18 career technical training opportunities ranging from health occupations to business technology related professions. Other career training opportunities include construction, manufacturing, and correctional and security officer training.

For more information on the Gary Job Corps program, visit <http://gary.jobcorps.gov/home.aspx>.



### AB West Students Honored for Perfect Attendance, Honor Roll

Students at AB School West are recognized with certificates for perfect attendance and the honor roll for the second six weeks.

# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Organizational Morale

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

- Create an open and positive environment for sharing resources and exchanging ideas to improve organizational climate;
- Seek systematically to improve the climate by obtaining and utilizing feedback from employees of the Department;
- Model and support responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas;
- Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge excellence;
- Ensure fair and equitable management practices;
- Demonstrate skill in anticipating, managing, and resolving conflict; and
- Demonstrate quality management through delegation of authority, team-building, consensus development, leadership development, and self-management

This week, the Human Resources division hosted Hot Chocolate Socials at both the Irvington and North Post Oak locations of HCDE. Employees had an opportunity to take a break and enjoy a hot treat and the company of other staff as the weather in the city changed from unseasonably warm temperatures to drastically cooler temperatures.

Next week, the division is hosting its annual Holiday Receptions at both locations. The receptions will take place December 14 (Irvington) and December 15 (North Post Oak). Receptions will be held from 2:00-3:00 p.m. on both days.

Through these activities, I am working towards achieving the Board's goal for me to ensure that every person is treated with dignity and respect as I create an environment that is positive, and consistently ensuring a healthy organizational climate.



## HCDE BOARD

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Diane Trautman  
**Position 3, At Large**

Michael Wolfe  
**Position 5, At Large**

## UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

**December Board Meeting**  
**December 13, 2016**  
1:00 p.m.  
Room 400

