

The CONNECTOR

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for the HCDE Board of Trustees



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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

We got off to a great start during the first week of school on our HCDE campuses. Our schools are running like well-oiled machines, and have implemented improvements and efficiencies both inside and outside of the classroom. All of our member school districts, with the exception of a few, are also off to a running start. We look forward to a successful academic year as we help the students of Harris County achieve.

Pertinent to the current academic year, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has released its policies related to cameras in the classrooms and our staff is already working to implement our procedures related to the new regulations. Our principals met with our counsel this week, who detailed the processes related to how HCDE will be in compliance with this new mandate as it relates to parents' rights to request the surveillance of students in special education settings. I will continue to keep you apprised of this process as we move forward.

I am pleased to report that HCDE continues to excel in the area of financial transparency. For the past several years, HCDE has been recognized extensively by numerous qualifying entities including the Texas State Comptroller's Office, the Association of School Business Officers International (ASBO), and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for its ongoing initiatives to achieve public financial transparency. The latest two awards bestowed upon HCDE are from the latter two national and international financial associations. Both of these prestigious Certificate of Excellence awards in Financial Reporting are for fiscal year 2015 for meeting and exceeding the program's high standards for financial reporting and accountability as represented in the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). Both associations have rigorous standards and I am pleased that HCDE continues to excel by achieving such high levels of public financial transparency by well-regarded associations as these. The Business Services division is to be commended for these achievements. (Additional details may be

found on the last page of this issue of **The Connector**.)

On Wednesday of this week, we celebrated the retirement of Jim Schul, Chief Information Officer. As you know, Mr. Schul has been with the Department for 13 years and has been instrumental in the upgrading of numerous technologies within the HCDE system. We wish Jim the best as he moves into the next phase of his life. See page 6 for scenes from the retirement celebration held in honor of Jim Schul.

Yesterday, I met with representatives within the vocational training and Adult Education population regarding vocational training opportunities. As previously mentioned in other issues of **The Connector**, our goal is to not only equip our students with GED and adult basic education skills, but to also improve their long-term quality of life by introducing them to both traditional and non-traditional pathways to success—and especially in various vocations. We have realized exceptional trends by introducing female members of this population to the pipefitting and construction vocational paths. We look to expand these horizons and realize even greater successes.

In the area of teaching and learning this week, we hosted our HCDE Principal Certification Academy Information Meeting as we continue to recruit educators who exemplify the attributes and express an interest in matriculating this program. The Business Services division hosted its regular School Finance Council event, and the Department also hosted a Charter School Roundtable. HCDE will continue to offer value, opportunity, and service to the educators, parents, taxpayers, and students of Harris County as we help students achieve.

In closing, I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and I hope you have great weekend. HCDE is off to a phenomenal year of achievement.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Bus Safety Tips Issued by HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools



Bus safety is a back-to-school topic worthy of family discussion at the beginning of the year, says Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools Director Ecomet Burley.

Children ages 5-7 are most at-risk for school bus related accidents, according to the National

Highway Transportation and Safety Administration. That agency also says that statistics show school buses are almost eight times safer for travel to school than a car.

Burley said there are things parents can do to reduce risk of bus injuries. These include "bus etiquette":

- **Talk to your kids about bus safety and respect.** Ridership is a privilege. It can be taken away due to bad behavior, so check with your school district about established guidelines. Refer to the policy as "school bus behavior policy" and go over it with your child.
- **Dress appropriately** for the weather. Many buses are not air-conditioned.
- **Be at the bus stop at least 5 minutes before the bus is set to arrive.** Tardiness can lead to mistakes in safety measures. Examples might be running in front of the bus, running back to find something left on the bus, bending to pick something up which might have dropped when coming off the bus.
- **Children ages 5-7 should have supervision at all times when catching the bus.**
- Kids should follow the five giant step rule: Be five

giant steps back from where the bus actually stops until it comes to a complete stop and driver opens the door.

- **Backpacks/bags need to be fully closed and sized appropriately** for the child to prevent safety hazards such as dragging straps.
- **Stay seated at all times when riding the bus.** Teach your child to stay in the seat until the bus comes to a stop at your child's destination.
- **Show appreciation to the bus driver.** Remind your kids to say thank you when they get off. Kindness and good manners go a long way.
- **Railroad crossings require drivers to stop,** to open the door, and to make sure the coast is clear. Teach your kids to be extra quiet during these times.
- **Go over your child's bus routine.** Describe the location and street where he/she should get off. For younger kids, write down their name, bus number, bus stop and where you may be reached and put it inside their backpack. Help your children memorize your cell (putting it to song can help).
- **Keep your hands to yourself at all times.** Respect each rider's personal space.
- **Bullying should never be tolerated.** Talk to your child about bullying on the bus. Read your district's school bus behavior policy to understand who you should report bullying to. It may be the driver, teacher, principal or someone else.

About HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools:

Developed at the request of local superintendents in the spring of 1999 to advance safe and secure environments for learning and teaching, the Center for Safe and Secure Schools is a leader in the development of increased safety and security strategies in school environments for students and educators. Learn more at www.safeandsecureschools.org. For more information or assistance with registration, call 713-696-0771.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Back-to-School Education Experts Weigh In with Local TV/Radio Stations



Teaching and Learning Center Special Populations Director Darlene Breaux talks to Fox co-anchors Rita Garcia and Tom Zizka

Back-to-school experts weighed in on topics ranging from afterschool to mental health first aid to cybersecurity for students as CASE for Kids and the Teaching and Learning Center were called upon at Fox 26 and KTRH 740

Innovation David McGeary also talked to KTRH 740 AM about cybersecurity and the latest technology trends. Finally, Head Start Family Services Coordinator Marisol Montalvo was interviewed by Univision's Grace Olivares in a lengthy interview about our Head Start/Early Head Start services.



Teaching and Learning Center Manager of Innovation David McGeary talks to a KTRH 740 AM reporter Cliff Sanders about digital devices and cybersecurity in classrooms.

AM to help prepare the public for the school year. CASE for Kids Director Dr. Lisa Thompson-Caruthers talked about how to select an afterschool program for your child while Teaching and Learning Center Special Populations Director Darlene Breaux discussed mental health awareness for children. Teaching and Learning Center Manager of



CASE for Kids Director Dr. Lisa Thompson-Caruthers with Fox 26 co-anchors Melissa Wilson and Tom Zizka



Head Start Family Services Coordinator Marisol Montalvo talks with Grace Olivares from Univision 45 about Head Start services as part of recruitment for families for the 2016-2017 school year.

View and hear all segments here:

Afterschool:

https://youtu.be/EJ9_LnisIRA

Mental Health:

<https://youtu.be/2BZFjVpT1ZU>

Cybersecurity:

http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/4211/ktrh740_082216.pdf

Head Start:

<https://youtu.be/qynu-nv-OMI>

HCDE Staff Spotlight: Jaime Martinez, Business Services



Now in his fourth month working with budgets, investments, and tax rates as the budget and business analyst for Business Services, Jaime Martinez's passion for numbers and accounting expertise is evident.

Martinez has an accounting background and received his CPA from Colombia, South America and MBA from the University of St. Thomas in Houston. Before joining HCDE, Martinez worked as an auditor for

Arthur Andersen & Co. and has 17 years of experience in the oil and gas industry. He has also worked in the manufacturing and healthcare sectors.

In his free time, Martinez spends time with his family and stays active through fitness classes, golf, and tennis. He is also a leader in his church and has written two books, "A Guide to Ethical Codes of Conduct in Society" and "La Libertad de Saber."

Martinez states that he enjoys working for HCDE because it gives him the opportunity to use his expertise to bring solutions in education to children and adults in the Houston area.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Schools Division Holds Staff Development Training with Mark McLeod



Schools division staff attended a half-day development training last week featuring presenter Mark McLeod. McLeod is a former teacher, coach, assistant principal, and principal who is focused on improving student achievement with quality instruction.

In addition to discussions on classroom management, effective instruction, and student motivation, HCDE teachers and administrators worked on adding strategies to their “teaching toolbox.”

Choice Partners Co-op to Host 2016 School Nutrition Expo October 6



School district nutrition experts who purchase food products for their districts through HCDE’s

Choice Partners co-op will evaluate food products being considered for their school cafeterias through the 2016 School Nutrition Expo themed “Nutrition Go.” The event, set for October 6, will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Humble Civic Center in Humble, Texas.

Students will be on hand to taste-test, and lend their own opinions through surveys about the groceries that include dairy products, bread, produce, and other food products. Students attend from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Vendors use the festive, fall event to showcase their food through decorated booths featuring buffet-style samples. Popular items for students taste-testing include ice cream, pizza, chicken nuggets, cookies, and multicultural cuisine from Asia, Cuba, and other faraway destinations.

Choice Partners co-op takes the feedback from both students and nutrition directors and considers it to plan for procurement of future food contracts. The cooperative provides legal, competitively awarded contracts for groceries, dairy products, bread, produce, and other food products. Contracts provide purchasing solutions for school food service and cafeteria food.

Recently the United States Department of Agriculture finalized a rule requiring any food advertised before or during the school day to meet Smart Snacks nutrition guidelines. The ruling has generally eliminated junk food from being sold at school.

Choice Partners vendors are complying with the new, Smart Snack standards by providing USDA approved ice cream products, beverages, and more. Those products will be highlighted at the expo.

Through Choice Partners cooperative contracts, food is purchased annually by Harris County school districts to supply approximately 85 million student school lunches.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Human Resources Offers “The Indispensable Assistant” Workshop for Staff



Human Resources offered “The Indispensable Assistant” workshop this week to provide HCDE support staff with proven techniques for becoming more productive, more valuable, and more effective administrative professionals. The workshop, presented by SkillPath

Seminars, included learning objectives such as how to organize and control multiple projects and priorities, even when reporting to multiple bosses; keeping the office running smoothly when the boss is away; how to delegate effectively; communicating assertively to get the help and resources needed to get the job done; and common sense ways to turn stress into positive energy.

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

AUGUST 24, 2016

HCDE Principal Certification
Academy Information Meeting

AUGUST 25, 2016

School Finance Council

AUGUST 26, 2016

Charter Roundtable

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

CASE for Kids Hosts 2016 Afterschool Providers Fair



Afterschool providers showcase their services and products at the CASE for Kids 2016 Afterschool

Providers Fair on September 28 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at 6005 Westview. The free event gives afterschool professionals the opportunity to network and shop the fair with approved afterschool and summer providers.

Commodities and services can include educational materials or vendors who provide services like robotics or karate. The fair also gives attendees networking opportunities. Free door prizes will also be given out through drawings. For more information, go to www.afterschoolzone.org or access the event flier: <http://hcde-texas.org/media/4212/providers-fair-2016.pdf>. RSVP to attend at caseforkids@hcde-texas.org.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Scenes from Jim Schul's Retirement Celebration



Systemic Achievement

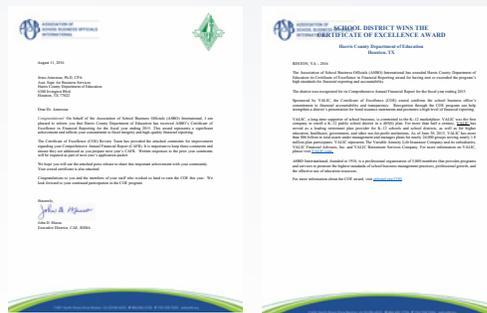
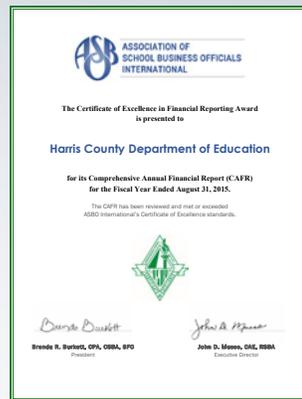
...with purposeful intent

Management of Administration, Fiscal, and Facilities Function

In accordance with the Board's expectations of me to

- Oversee a budget development process that results in recommendations based on Department priorities and available resources;
- Oversee budget implementation in a way that ensures appropriate expenditure of budgeted funds and provides for clear and timely budget reports;
- Ensure the Department investment strategies, risk management activities, and purchasing practices are sound, cost-efficient, and consistent with policy and law;
- Implement and oversee a planning process that results in goals, targets, or priorities for major areas of operations; and
- Monitor effectiveness of operations against appropriate benchmarks;

acknowledgements of ongoing efforts to achieve excellence in financial reporting.



Harris County Department of Education's Business Services division received two awards from national and international financial associations in recognition of its ongoing initiatives to achieve public financial transparency.

The awards come from the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). Harris County Department of Education Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Jesus Amezcua says the awards bestowed by both organizations are welcome

By achieving these awards, I am working towards meeting the Board's expectations to ensure financial transparency, serve as a conservative financial leader, look for ways to improve programs and services without greater expenditures and with concern for cutting expenses and costs to public schools for service without sacrifice to high quality services, and recommend the annual budget to maximize resources and manage the budget while exercising prudent judgment. The documents which have been recognized for excellence in reporting, clearly outline our efforts and accomplishments toward the aforementioned expectations.

HCDE BOARD

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Diane Trautman
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Michael Wolfe
Position 5, At Large

UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

September Board Meeting
September 20, 2016
1:00 p.m.
Room 400

