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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

I began this week with a meeting with my Executive Leadership Team. The meeting was productive and serves as an ongoing opportunity for discussions to improve the inner workings of the Department.

I attended a training session this past Tuesday, hosted by the Human Resources division, on the topic of Harassment and Workplace Discrimination. Mandatory for managers, directors, principals, and executive level staff, the workshop was very informative. Sarah Langlois, of Rogers Morris & Grover, conducted the comprehensive training.

On Wednesday, HCDE was the subject of a positive editorial from the editorial Board of the Houston Chronicle newspaper. The article very well depicted how HCDE services school districts—offering unique services while saving districts money. This was excellent visibility for the Department and provided a great summation of HCDE's role in education in Harris County.

Serving as the primary ambassador for HCDE, I continue my regular discussions with Harris County area superintendents and other leaders to ensure that the needs of the learners of Harris County are being met.

Yesterday, Houston City Council Members networked with afterschool providers through a CASE for Kids City Connections event. Council Members Robert Gallegos, Jerry Davis, Dave Martin, Karla Cisneros, and Brenda Stardig were in attendance as CASE for Kids representatives presented checks to the council members' respective district's afterschool providers. This is another perfect example of HCDE working to meet the needs of students within the city-at-large.

The Texas Alliance of Black School Educators (TABSE) is holding its annual conference in Houston this week. It began yesterday and runs through the weekend. I am scheduled to attend part of this annual event. Conferences, such as this one, allow me an opportunity to further increase HCDE's reach and expand our visibility among education executives.

This week in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following trainings and workshops: Digital Leadership and The Power of Personal Learning Networks; Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Organisms and Environments; Restorative Discipline Practice Sessions 2&3; Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291)- Math Sessions Only; Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Earth and Space; Rap and Read; Quest for Grants Training Series Webinar—So You Want Me to Write a Grant!; Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association; Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar; Strategies and Solutions for Educating Young Male Students; lead4ward: Rockin' Review for Math (3-EOC); U.S. History EOC Success: Primary Sources and New Reading Strategies; and the Spring Symposium.

Please be reminded that the February Board Meeting will be held Tuesday, February 28, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. I look forward to seeing you there. As always, thank you for your service to HCDE and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. Have a relaxing weekend.

Upcoming Event:

Board Meeting

Tuesday, February 28, 2017 at 9:00 a.m.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Eric Sheninger, Digital Leadership Expert, Shares Tools for Better Engagement



It's no wonder that many of today's educators have pushed to bring more technology into the classroom. Students want it, and the potential for learning seems limitless.

Limitless, yes, but not guaranteed, said Eric Sheninger, senior fellow and thought leader on digital leadership with the International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE). As part of The Teaching and Learning Center's Leadership Series on February 20, Sheninger coached attendees on the strategies and behaviors that must accompany technology-based teaching – and warned of the ways that iPads in the classroom can go wrong, fast.

"If we can't show evidence of growth, we're wasting our time," Sheninger said. "Show me the evidence."

Sheninger said he hears plenty about "blended learning" and "1 to 1" rollouts, but many educators spearheading these initiatives are often shocked to find that the impact on test results is minimal. School boards and other stakeholders naturally want to see evidence that

investments in technology are working, and when educators can't provide it, opportunities get missed.

"Show me data. Show me examples of student work aligned to assessments," Sheninger said.

Sheninger introduced a number of inexpensive, web-based tools that can aid learning, such as Mentimeter, a real-time surveying tool that can go beyond the traditional "raise your hand" method. Another is TodaysMeet. But tools are only as powerful as those using them, Sheninger explained. They don't, in and of themselves, guarantee learning.



According to Sheninger, among the key concepts behind better digital leadership are voice, choice, and advocacy (see his blog for elaboration). These concepts are important not just for administrators leading a group of teachers, but for anyone who seeks to model appropriate behavior and empower others to reach their goals. They work in the classroom, as well.

Center for Safe Schools Hosts Restorative Discipline Practices



HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools hosted a "Restorative Discipline Practices" workshop on February 21. Sherwynn Patton, founder of Austin-based Life Anew, discussed

with a group of about 15 attendees ways to implement a restorative justice program on their campuses. Attendees included a wide range of professionals concerned with school discipline, including counselors, school resource officers, and administrators.

"We cannot put a book in their hands until they know how much we care," Patton said to the group gathered around in the type of circle that forms the basis of restorative discipline.

The practice is an alternative to outdated, less effective "punitive" modes of discipline that tend to lead to increased suspension rates among minority students and those with disabilities.

"The most important piece is that those in the circle feel what they have to say matters," Patton said, "even if they choose to be silent."

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

HCDE Communicators Present at Texas School Public Relations Association Conference, Team Earns 26 Competition Awards



Sanders, Villarreal, Hider, Vaughn and Perez

Communications and Creative Services staff presented to 100 attendees at the Texas School Public Relations Association Conference with a presentation entitled: Maximize Your Message. Staff presenting included Carol Vaughn, Joe Perez, Lindsey Sanders, Angela Hider, and Daniel Villarreal. Perez also provided a roundtable discussion called "Facebook Live."

Communications and Creative Services and Client Engagement gained 26 awards at the conference for their HCDE deliverables ranging from newsletters to annual reports to video to photography to writing.

Two "best of" category awards were given to the team for "The Hub" internal newsletter and "The Connector" HCDE Board of Trustees internal news.



HCDE's Area I Head Start to Host Conference

3RD ANNUAL Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference
MAY 5, 2017 | 9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

WHAT: Tools for parents, educators and other professionals working with children with challenging behaviors. Goal is to increase public awareness of mental health issues among children and adults.

WHERE: Harris County Department of Education | 6300 Irvington Blvd. (Conference Center)

WHO BENEFITS? Teachers, parents, caretakers, early childhood educators, members of Head Start community

COST: \$10 (includes lunch) **CHILDCARE:** Available upon request

REGISTER: Beginning January 2017 at www.hcde-texas.org/register (search by date)

TRAINING TRACKS: Parents and caregivers, Teachers and other professionals, Spanish interpreter available in each session

ADDITIONAL INFO: Taiwan Reinford, 713-696-2170, treinford@hcde-texas.org

Hogg Foundation for Mental Health | Head Start | Harris County Education

HCDE's Area I Head Start division, along with the Hogg Foundation, is planning for the Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference which will be held Friday, May 5, 2017, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The event will take place at the Irvington location of HCDE.

The Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference is open to early childhood educators, Head Start staff, the families we serve, and the community-at-large. The division expects 200-300 attendees.

The conference provides participants with tools for parents, educators, and other professionals working with children with challenging behaviors. The goal is to increase public awareness of mental health issues among children and adults.



Educators Learn Academic Moves to Prepare Students for College and Beyond

Barry Gilmore, coauthor of Academic Moves for College and Career Readiness, led a workshop on February 17 for teachers, grades 6-12, focused on 15 skills every student needs to achieve. During the workshop, teachers brainstormed classroom activities to get students thinking at high levels and prepare them for college and beyond.



ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

FEBRUARY 20, 2017

Digital Leadership and The Power of Personal Learning Networks

FEBRUARY 21, 2017

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

Restorative Discipline Practice Session 2&3

Test Prep Series for TExES Core

Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291) - MATH Sessions ONLY

Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Earth and Space

FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Rap and Read

Quest for Grants Training Series Webinar - So You Want Me to Write a Grant!

Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar

FEBRUARY 23, 2017

Strategies and Solutions for Educating Young Male Students

lead4ward: Rockin' Review for Math (3-EOC)

U.S. History EOC Success: Primary Sources and New Reading Strategies

FEBRUARY 24, 2017

Spring Symposium

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

10 Teen Artists, Writers Earn 'Best of Class' for Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Hosted by Harris County Department of Education

Ten of the 8,748 art and writing entries submitted by students in grades 7-12 in Harris County have earned the "best in class" designation through Harris County Department of Education's regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. The 10 were named 2017 "American Voices & American Visions Nominees."

The 10 nominees include:

Art: American Visions art nominees:

Chimi Abuede, Elsie High School, Alief ISD, mixed media entry called "A Book of Chile"; Alexis Cazares, Sam Rayburn High School, Pasadena Independent School District, painting entry called "Close Shave"; Vittorio Covarrubi, Strake Jesuit College

Preparatory, drawing and illustration entry called "The Heart of Houston"; Citlali Francisco, Kleb Intermediate, Klein ISD, drawing and illustration entry called "Color Me"; and Nia Pereda, Bondy Intermediate, Pasadena ISD, mixed media entry called "Bursting at the Seams."



Writing: American Voices writing nominees: Tiffany Ajumobi, The Kinkaid School, writing portfolio; Mary Ann Hurtado, Klein Collins High School, Klein ISD, humor entry called "From Sea to Shining Sea"; Sophia Li, St. John's School, personal essay entry called "The Tainted"; Jillian Romero, Doerre Intermediate School, Klein ISD, flash fiction entry called "When They Fell"; and Julia Smith, St. John's School, short story entry called "The Bird."

The students are honored through \$250 scholarships provided by Texas Art Supply, a longtime regional supporter of Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, said

Andrea Segraves, coordinator for HCDE's regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Their work advances to be judged in New York City along with the regional winners in other cities throughout the nation. Ten will be chosen later this spring to be the national awardees who will be recognized at Carnegie Hall.



"We are extremely proud of our Harris County teen artists and writers who took part in the 2017 regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards," said Harris County School Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "We also thank the judges who took time to serve Harris County youth."

To see a list of the 1,839 students who earned Gold, Silver, and Honorable Mention Awards this year, go to: <http://www.hcde-texas.org/how-we-help-students/scholastic-art-writing-awards/scholastic-art-writing-awardees/>

View the list of receptions and ceremonies being hosted at fine arts venues that include Spring Street Studios, Texas Art Supply, the Alley Theatre, and MATCH: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A2fAHj4pSLW67S2ct05Kli9ezsN8S2YIF9IX6ukmrXg/edit>

About Scholastic Art & Writing: Founded in 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the nation's longest-running, most prestigious educational initiative supporting student achievement in the visual and literary arts. The program has an impressive legacy of being the first to acknowledge creative talent and is today's largest source of scholarships for creative teens.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Houston City Council Members Network with Afterschool Providers through CASE for Kids City Connections Event February 23

Five Houston city council members attended a networking session February 23 with the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, to present checks to afterschool providers that were selected for funding within their respective districts. The council members included Robert Gallegos, District I; Jerry Davis, District B; Dave Martin, District E; Karla Cisneros, District H; and Brenda Stardig, District A.

The ceremony provided a photo session for the council members to meet organizations within their districts that provided afterschool programs through \$550,000 in city of Houston funding administered through CASE for Kids. The awards dispersed to the afterschool providers ranged from \$4,000-\$10,000 to be used from October 31, 2016 through April 30, 2017.



Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Small Class Size at Special School Broadens Student's Future



In a classroom at HCDE's Academic and Behavior School West, Camden Cotlar is one of about six students quietly working under the supervision of two teachers. His wavy red hair is nearly all that makes Camden stand out physically from his

classmates, each of whom remains focused on an activity or computer-based test. Then, Camden raises his hand.

He waits to be called on.

"Ms. Jones, there's a possibility of a virus on this computer," Camden says aloud.

While the five-syllable "possibility" may seem advanced for the typical ABS West fifth-grader, it's also a word that tellingly points to Camden's unique situation. ABS West, with its specially trained staff and small class sizes, has made room for possibility in Camden's life. According to his mother, Cheri Cotlar, that wasn't always the case.

"He is very bright, very gifted – but also very challenging," Cotlar said, explaining that while Camden has had a string of

good conduct in recent months, he has a history of difficult behavior.

According to ABS West Principal Dr. Victor Keys, Camden has the handicapping condition of emotionally disabled. His behavior, which included aggression toward both peers and adults and wandering out of classrooms at previous public and charter schools, used to lead to a number of parent phone calls. Cotlar, a nurse by profession, said it interrupted her work life and kept her on a part-time schedule.

Now, thanks to the friendly and capable staff at ABS West, Cotlar feels that her son is finally getting the specialized education suitable to his learning style. She credits the environment at ABS West for helping Camden both in and out of the classroom.

"I love it so much because of the communication between teachers and parents," she says. "Everybody knows everybody, and they're interested in how the student responds at home."

"That just doesn't happen at bigger schools," she adds.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Professional Development

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me as it relates to these elements of performance:

- Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration; and
- Ensure that appropriate staff development is available and monitor staff development for effectiveness.



Facilitated by Sarah Langlois, the session was informative, interactive, and comprehensive—covering a vast array of scenarios and content related to various forms of harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

By ensuring that HCDE employees receive professional development, such as the mandatory session offered this week, I am working towards meeting the Board's goals of me to assess any new and effective development tools available, and determine applicability to staff, and in this case, minimizing the Department's exposure to risk associated with the topics covered during the workshop by educating employees.



This week, the Human Resources division sponsored a mandatory training session for all levels of management at HCDE including directors, managers, principals, center managers, and all executive level personnel. The focus of the training was Harassment and Workplace Discrimination.

HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENT:

Board Meeting

Tuesday, February 28, 2017
at 9:00 a.m.

