

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...

It has been a busy week at Harris County Department of Education. I began the week with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team. The Budget Committee and I also continued our budget hearings through Monday. Late Monday, I traveled to Austin to testify before the Texas Senate Education Committee.

Upon my return to the office, we continued our budget hearings. We will complete that process next week.

Due to the Spring Holiday, in observation of Good Friday, the Department will be closed tomorrow. We will resume regular business hours on Monday, April 17, 2017.

Please be reminded that the regularly scheduled Board Meeting will be held Tuesday, April 18, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. I look forward to seeing you at next week's Board Meeting.

It is always rewarding to report the successes of students on all of our campuses; however, the Academic and Behavior School environments are especially rewarding given the dynamics accompanying many of the students we serve on those campuses. I am pleased to report that the AB School West location held a graduation ceremony for an outstanding student at the end of last week. The student consistently grew academically and socially, while also exhibiting exceptional civic responsibilities. Successes such as this one illustrates the need for our programs and services.

This week in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following workshops and training sessions to educators of Harris County to improve teaching and learning for learners: Numeracy

Integration into Afterschool Activities; Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar; and Bilingual/ESL Leadership Group Meeting. HCDE continues to serve as a leader in its core mission to advance teaching and learning by equalizing education.

Today, I am fulfilling my responsibilities as a member of the 2016-17 class of the American Leadership Forum (ALF). I am moderating part of the day's activity entitled, The Powerful Question. The ALF experience is a valuable professional development and growth opportunity that continues to bring visibility to HCDE and the value we bring to Harris County schools.

As mentioned in the last issue of **The Connector**, next week, I will be joining other superintendents within Harris County for a professional development opportunity at the United States Army War College. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues as we continue to build upon our executive leadership skills. I will provide a full report of this experience to the Board upon my return.

In closing, I hope you have a great Easter weekend and as indicated, the Department will resume its normal operating hours Monday, April 17, 2017. I look forward to seeing you on the following day at the regularly scheduled April Board Meeting. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**.

Upcoming Event:
Board Meeting
Tuesday, April 18, 2017

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Kids' Day at Hobby Collaborative Set for June 22



CASE for Kids hosts Kids' Day at Hobby Center on June 22 at 6 p.m. with an evening performance from 150 students across Harris County. The evening introduces economically disadvantaged kids to a fine arts experience and a tour of the Hobby Center. Moreover, children actually perform on the Hobby Center stage as a culminating event after studying with professional fine arts performers throughout the month in their summer out-of-school-time programs. The students study acting, puppetry, dance, drumming, and art in their fine arts programs.

Center for Grants Development's Joyce Akins secured t-shirts for the students, courtesy of J. Harding & Co. Meals will also be provided, courtesy of Chick-fil-A .

Adult Education Director Presents at National Association of Workforce Boards Conference



Dr. Eduardo Honold, director of Adult Education, presented at the Forum 2017, the annual conference of the National Association of Workforce Boards held March 25-28. The Washington, D.C. conference highlighted the provision of employment, adult education, and rehabilitation services through the American Workforce Centers.

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

APRIL 11, 2017

Numeracy Integration into Afterschool Activities

APRIL 12, 2017

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar

APRIL 13, 2017

Bilingual/ESL Leadership Group Meeting



Opportunity

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rookie English Teacher Finds Fulfilling Niche with Pre-Teens through HCDE Teacher Alternative Certification Program



Rookie middle school teacher Jennifer Siger works with students she calls “inbetweeners.” The often misunderstood middle schoolers can be a challenge, she acknowledges, but they’re also a joy to be around.

The teacher-in-training enrolled in the Harris County Department of Education teacher alternative certification program gets plenty of support from teacher veterans who are her instructors. Siger began preparing for her new career through evening, weekend and online classes at HCDE last year and is already working as a teacher.

The HCDE educator preparation program provides a personalized training experience for aspiring teachers as qualified college graduates enter the program and spend seven to 10 months in pre-service training taking teacher preparation courses. The next 12 months are spent teaching. Small group instruction is hallmark to the program, with a range in classroom size of eight to 20 students in the teacher prep course.

Since 2011, the program has recorded a 100 percent pass rate for students completing the courses and taking the certification exams, said Lidia Zatopek, director for HCDE’s Educator Certification and Professional Advancement. Assistance is provided in securing teaching assignments in elementary or secondary education classrooms.

Siger chose English language arts and reading 4-8 as her teaching discipline and teaches sixth grade English language arts at Frank Black Middle School in the Houston Independent School District, a partner with HCDE in the program. Because of the brain changes teens undergo through puberty, the teacher prep program includes adolescent psychology and brain development discussions for teachers that aspire to teach these budding adolescents.

“They’re very unsure of themselves and make a lot of poor choices because of it,” said Siger, a mother of two from Klein. She enrolled in the HCDE alternative certification program to make the switch from private to public school teacher, a move which requires Texas Teacher Certification. “On the other hand, they are so ready and excited to learn about the world at large.

“They are starting to envision themselves as individuals and are hungry to explore the possibilities available to them.”

Along with teaching the writing, technology, hands-on activities and teamwork are prominent in her classroom. During a bottle-flipping persuasive writing exercise, student teams weigh the pros and cons of flipping water bottles which should land upright. It’s currently trending, but schools don’t like the menacing noise and mess that results in student grandstanding.

A video shows the principal giving his take on why he doesn’t like the practice. She hands out laptops for students to use to get their research to support the side they take. Collaboration is rampant. Siger watches for attention-deficit behaviors and redirects students to the assignment.

“One, two,” she says. “One, two, eyes on you,” the class choruses, returning to their lists of pros and cons.

Best teaching practices are at the heart of the alternative certification program at HCDE, Siger said. Keeping teens engaged in their studies means exploring what works and doesn’t.

“Most (teacher prep) programs would give you tools and say here, now go do it,” she explained. “HCDE helps its teachers every single step of the way. The facility and staff are top notch, and they are very invested in us. It’s cliché to say it’s a big family...but I know they care about me, and that’s important to me.”

Siger was inspired to enter the teaching profession by a teacher who made a difference in her life. She was a sixth grade English teacher and instilled a love for books.

While she doesn’t expect to make a difference in all her students’ lives, she knows she is making a difference with many. That’s good enough, she says.



“I smile all day at work,” Siger said. “These kids are truly a joy to be around.”

(Siger was recently nominated for the Texas Alternative Certification Association Intern of the Year Award. Winners will be determined by the association and announced next fall.)

(For information about the HCDE teacher alternative certification program, call 713-696-1348, email hcdeacp@hcde-texas.org or go to www.hcde-texas.org/teacherprep.)

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

OneStar State Newsletter Features Angel Hilsman, CASE for Kids VISTA Member



CASE for Kids AmeriCorps VISTA member Angel Hilsman is featured in the OneStar Foundation Newsletter this month. VISTA members work on projects that build the capacity of their organization.

OneStar Foundation is the Governor-designated National Service Commission in Texas and administers the AmeriCorps state grant program. OneStar Foundation connects partners and resources to build a stronger nonprofit sector in Texas.

Earlier this month, OneStar led the way to celebrate the fifth annual Mayor and County Day of Recognition for National Service to recognize the positive impact of national service in cities and counties.

HCDE celebrates Hilsman's story and her dedication to service at CASE for Kids for AmeriCorps VISTA.

View the newsletter: <https://t.e2ma.net/message/n3mfqc/vp5mwfb>

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



Academic and Behavior School West Holds Graduation Ceremony for Student Perry Franklin

Academic and Behavior School West held a graduation ceremony on April 7 for student Perry Franklin.

Throughout his time at AB West, Franklin has grown academically and socially, demonstrated maturity by helping his peers and volunteered at Lakewood Church, Pizza Hut, and Goodwill. Franklin's family attended the ceremony and thanked AB West for helping him become successful.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Area Teachers Examine STAAR ELA Expectations at HCDE Workshop

Area teachers worked collaboratively to examine STAAR ELA expectations and how to better communicate them to students last week at the Teaching and Learning Center STAAR workshop. Participants gained a stronger understanding of state ELA expectations and created instructional plans for making the assessment/instruction connection.

HCDE Hosts Center Tours for Week of the Young Child

HCDE Head Start will celebrate Week of the Young Child on April 24-28, 2017. This annual celebration places public attention on the needs of young children and their families and brings awareness of early childhood programs and services that meet those needs. In recognition of this celebration, HCDE will be conducting Head Start center tours at two locations.

Please consider joining one of the following tours:

Tuesday, April 25, 2017 – Baytown Early Head Start

Thursday, April 27, 2017 – Tidwell Head Start

Meeting Place/Schedule:

Lobby of 6300 Irvington

8:45 a.m. – 9 a.m. - Refreshments

9 a.m. – Depart for center

12 p.m. – Return to Irvington



Space is limited. RSVP at (713) 696-2188 or email arodriguez@hcde-texas.org.

CASE for Kids Presents All-Earth Ecobot Challenge on April 22, 29



The Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, presents All-Earth Ecobot Challenges on Saturday, April 22 for 6-8 grade students at the Berry Center and Saturday,

April 29 for 4-5 grade students at the Humble Civic Center. The All-Earth Ecobot Challenge is an innovative engineering competition that engages students in complex problem-

solving, while developing critical thinking skills and elevating students' confidence in formulating solutions for real-world issues.

On challenge days, students also have the opportunity to participate in the Eco-Genius Lab that includes hands-on science experiments and technology demonstrations. For more information, visit <http://www.ecobotchallenge.com>.



Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Instructional Management

In an effort to meet the Board's expectations of me as it relates to this element of performance to:

- Establish effective mechanisms for communication to and from staff in instructional evaluation, planning, and decision making;
- Oversee annual planning for increased student learning and conduct periodic assessments of the effectiveness of the planning process;
- Ensure that goals and objectives form the basis of curricular decision making and instruction and communicates expectations for student achievement;
- Ensure that appropriate data are used in developing recommendations and making decisions regarding the instructional program and resources; and
- Establish a system for regular evaluation of instructional programs to meet student instructional needs and to attain desired student achievement

HCDE's schools served as specialized environments focused on meeting the individual needs of our students. Our school settings are unique in that the successes of our students—both individually and collectively—are celebrated in an effort to encourage future successes and academic achievements. The students are part of our campuses because our school districts are unable to meet their unique needs.



A student at the Academic and Behavior School West recently celebrated overcoming great odds through his academic achievement. This past Friday, the campus held a graduation for student Perry Franklin. Joined by his family (see photo), Franklin can now look forward to continuing his path to success. Our campuses provide exceptional alternative pathways and this student took full advantage of our program along with the guidance of our trained staff.

As a result of student success stories such as this one, I am working to meet the Board's goal of me to oversee annual planning for increased student learning needs of students and develop a process that ensures each student's learning goals are met or exceeded. Further, I am ensuring that the feedback process is implemented to communicate effectively with the home ISD and parents, and investigating best practices for student achievement. I am also utilizing effective practices that maximize achievement of student potential within our schools.

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENT:

Board Meeting
Tuesday, April 18, 2017

