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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

I began this week as usual with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team. This meeting is always productive as this group comprises part of the core leadership within the Department. We are preparing for several major projects at once, while also bringing this academic year to a close.

I traveled to Austin early Tuesday morning for a hearing before members of the Texas House of Representatives Public Education Committee. I departed for Austin Monday night, and returned to Houston Tuesday after my testimony.

I am pleased to report that our Academic and Behavior Schools hosted its first-ever Chess Tournament for students on both campuses. (A photo taken at the tournament was featured on the front page of yesterday's City/State section in the Houston Chronicle.) The tournament was held in partnership with Perfect TEAMPLAY, Inc., a nonprofit organization that uses chess to mentor and motivate today's youth. I participated in the tournament and enjoyed every minute of the experience. It was rewarding to see our students compete in a game that both encourages and requires critical and strategic thinking. I look forward to our students participating in more activities like this.

Yesterday, I attended the SuperMENTor end-of-year event. It marked the culmination of the volunteerism efforts many parents, mentors, and other members of the Head Start community extended over the course of this past year. I am proud to have served as one of the SuperMENTor volunteers, and the end-of-year celebration was just as rewarding as the overall experience.

Also yesterday, candidates interviewed throughout the day for the position of principal of the recovery school campus. Assistant Superintendent Parker and I interviewed the finalists today

to select the candidate who will be presented to the Board for approval during Tuesday's Board Meeting.

Today, I attended the AROSC meeting—a group of recovery school professionals. This meeting is always enlightening and serves as significant source of information-sharing among leaders who are experts in this unique field of education. This meeting was very resourceful and serves as a great support to the Department.

Next week, I will be participating in the garden ground-breaking at the Academic and Behavior School East location. This project is one that both the campus and the Resource Development division have been looking forward to kicking off. This project will afford our students the opportunity to learn to build and maintain a garden, and hopefully reap the benefits of their labor as they also learn to employ healthy eating habits.

Please be reminded that the regularly scheduled May Board Meeting will be held Tuesday, May 16, at 9:00 a.m. A meeting of the PFC Board will take place at 8:30 a.m., immediately prior to the regular Board Meeting.

Although the school year is winding down, the Department hosted the following professional development opportunities to the educators and other professionals in Harris County: Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar and the Attendance Officers' Share Session.

In closing, I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. As always, thanks for your service to HCDE.

Upcoming Event:
Board Meeting
Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Highpoint North Students Celebrate Teachers on Social Media



Three students at Highpoint North gave special shout-outs to their teachers in honor of Teacher Appreciation Week. Timmothy, Alexzander, and Angela wrote thank-you cards for their teachers and posed with photos, which were shared with school districts on HCDE's Twitter and Facebook pages.

"Thank you for being a true definition of a teacher," wrote Alexzander, a Klein ISD student.

"Thank you for taking the time and making math easier," wrote Timmothy, also a Klein ISD student.

Angela wrote: "Thank you for taking the time to explain everything to me."

Tip for Teachers: Take Time to Decompress



Teaching can be, especially around this time of year, a taxing profession. Very few professions cycle like ours does each year, starting over with a new crop of clients each fall. Good advice for any teacher in May is to take care of yourself and do something on a weekend or a week night that has

nothing to do with school.

Houston has some of the best museums and arts opportunities for incredibly reasonable prices. Did you

know that the Museum of Fine Arts Houston is free on Thursdays, courtesy of a wonderful grant from Shell? Also, the Holocaust Museum is free every Thursday from 2 to 5 p.m., as well as the Buffalo Soldiers Museum from 1 to 5 p.m.

The Alley Theater has incredibly reasonable ticket prices, and Arthur Miller's "A View from the Bridge" is playing there through May 21. Take a night off from grading papers or setting up tomorrow's science experiment and feed your creative soul. Remember to enjoy yourself and take time to decompress. Summer is almost here.

Teaching and Learning Center Highlights Summer Workshops

HCDE's professional learning division, the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC), is partnering with Communications and Creative Services to promote their line of summer workshop offerings for teachers.

Teachers and other educators may join TLC this summer for a variety of professional learning opportunities in a wide range of content areas, including digital learning, English/language arts, leadership, math, science, social studies, special populations, and more.



Why? "Because professional learning keeps you cool!"

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Day’Zjah Pennywell Discovers Love for Learning through Head Start



Growing up, Day’Zjah Pennywell was always sociable, but mother Tamika Ward noticed her daughter thrive after enrolling her in Head Start in 1999. Like many parents, Ward enrolled

her daughter in the program so she could interact with other children her age and build an early foundation for education.

“I saw Head Start as a way for her to get ahead in learning,” explained Ward. “I felt like the earlier she started, the better it would be for her when she got to public school.”

Now a sophomore at Prairie View A&M on multiple athletic and academic scholarships, Pennywell continues to thrive in school, in part because of the early foundation she received in Head Start.

Head Start goes beyond providing children with academic and socialization skills they need before entering elementary school. Staff also work with families to provide financial, health, nutrition, and parenting skills, which was valuable to Ward as a young mother.

After leaving Head Start in 2001, Pennywell entered the Gifted and Talented program at her district, was

a straight “A” student, and participated in various school-related clubs and athletic activities for years. Most importantly, she developed a love for learning at an early age.

Ward still remembers Pennywell happily singing nursery rhymes as a child and never missing an opportunity to talk about what she learned in Head Start.

“She could also recognize colors, shapes, and numbers when we were out, and spoke a little Spanish because her teachers would teach in English and Spanish,” Ward remembers. “I thought that was amazing.”

When Pennywell finished a piece of work at Head Start that she was particularly proud of, Ward always made a point to display it in their home. This gave the whole family a chance to discuss the work together and was exciting for Pennywell as a young learner.

“It made me happy to see she was excited about learning,” Ward said.

Pennywell carried that excitement for learning with her throughout her school career. She is currently majoring in criminal justice with a minor in nutrition, and continues to utilize the foundational skills gained through Head Start.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Strife in Life: Adult Education Graduation Snapshot with Anselm Alexander

(Harris County Department of Education's GED Graduation 2017 is scheduled for May 20 at 11 a.m. at 6300 Irvington, Houston, Texas, 77022 in our conference center. This story is part of a series of interviews with our adult students called "Strife in Life." For class information, go to www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation.)



When approximately 100 adult learners don red robes to receive recognition at Harris County Department of Education's Adult Education graduation ceremony on May 20, Anselm Alexander, 58, will proudly be among them.

For Alexander, a native of Trinidad and Tobago (an island nation in the Caribbean), the event will be the emotional culmination of a year-long endeavor to earn his GED. Given that his educational goals have had to compete with working full-time and being a father of six, Alexander has not always had an easy time focusing on his studies.

"It's hard to work, go to school, and then you have to study at night," Alexander, a Baytown resident who immigrated to the U.S. three years ago, said. "You just can't go to school, go back home and go to bed."

Still, Alexander didn't view whether to pursue his GED as a tough choice.

"I decided to get my GED because I am an electrician,

but since being in the U.S. I've had problems getting a job," he said. "Some of the jobs I really wanted I didn't get it because they said you have to have a diploma or GED."

In addition to expanding his professional opportunities, Alexander said his elevated educational status comes with a new level of dignity.

"In life, one of the things I always wanted to be was an educated person," he said. "Having a GED, you can tell yourself, 'Hey, I am an educated person.'"

"I felt like a million bucks," Alexander said, when he learned that he had completed the requirements for the degree.

Alexander credits his HCDE Adult Education teachers, Ms. Kimberly Charles and Dr. Ericka Musa, for helping him along the way, repeating that they were "very helpful, very encouraging."

As far as next steps go, Alexander has already enrolled at Lee College in Baytown to start courses in the fall. He will be pursuing his dream of becoming an electrical engineer.

"Education is the key to open doors in this life," Alexander said, admitting that he's had to hold back some tears of joy since receiving the news that he's graduating in May.

"Tears came, they just didn't fall," he said, laughing.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Strife in Life: GED Graduation Promoted through Video

GED Graduation 2017 is being promoted through social media. HCDE is sharing the occasion with community, adult learners, and their families. View the video on You Tube:

<https://youtu.be/MuwuUvXGSSQ>

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

MAY 10, 2017

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar

MAY 11, 2017

Attendance Officers' Share Session



Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Academic and Behavior School Students Improve Critical Thinking, Self-Esteem through Chess Tournament



Students at Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior Schools participated in a Chess Tournament on Wednesday, May 10 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at 6300 Irving Blvd. The tournament was hosted

in partnership with Perfect TEAMPLAY Inc., a nonprofit organization that uses chess to mentor and motivate today's youth.

HCDE's Academic and Behavior Schools provide an enriching and supportive learning environment for students with intellectual, developmental, and behavioral disorders. Students who participated

in the tournament practiced critical thinking and strategy, as well as worked on social skills and learned to accept consequences and criticism. Since chess is a game that expands the mind, it can also improve overall behavior and increase attention span and self-esteem.



HCDE County School Superintendent James Colbert joined the tournament and played against AB School East student Gage Warner. To view photos from the tournament, visit <https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/Schools/AB-Schools-Chess-Tournament/>.

AB West on the Move During May



Students from AB West participated in a field trip and a cultural awareness activity this month. A field trip to the zoo provided opportunity for students to use their social skills learned through the Boys' Town curriculum. Students took a guided tour of the animals and were most impressed with the flamingos, leopards, and gorillas.

An assembly on Cinco de Mayo allowed students the opportunity to share reports about the Battle of Puebla on May 5.



Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Going Above and Beyond

This week's systemic achievement is focused on one of our programs going above and beyond and my support of that effort. It pertains to several elements of performance related to various goals established for me, in addition to others, including:

- Creating an open and positive environment for sharing resources and exchanging ideas to improve organizational climate;
- Modeling and supporting responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas;
- Celebrating accomplishments and acknowledging excellence; and
- Encouraging and supporting our staff and students through participation in a premiere campus event with our students.

This week, the administrators and campus staff of the Academic and Behavior Schools collaborated with Perfect TEAMPLAY, Inc., and hosted the first chess tournament for students of those two campuses. This event required the implementation of several leadership elements. In addition to serving as a quality activity that will further benefit our students, the event also allowed me yet another opportunity to spend time with staff as I competed against select students in the chess tournament.

By the Academic and Behavior Schools hosting this activity, I am ensuring that students have extracurricular activities that will assist them in decision-making, critical thinking, and strategy skills.

Through my participation, I am demonstrating the necessary support of the endeavor with both the faculty and the students.

Further, I am focusing on employee morale, encouraging staff professional development and growth, and taking a unique approach to enhance the teaching and learning experiences for the unique populations we serve at the Academic and Behavior School campuses.



... Houston Chronicle | HoustonChronicle.com and houston.com | Thursday, May 11, 2017 | A3

CITY | STATE

Mayor steps up boardinghouse oversight

City seeks to streamline permitting, inspection of multi-resident facilities

By **John Howard-Smith**

A field fix at an unregulated boarding house south of Houston that killed two people and hospitalized three others, Mayor Sylvester Turner said Wednesday. Turner said the city is working to streamline the permitting and inspection process for existing and new boardinghouses in the city.

Turner said a review of city records that compiles some are outdated and some are not used and will be used to look at ways, Turner said, after the City Council meeting Wednesday. "That is ongoing," he said.

A Chronicle investigation revealed that existing boardinghouses in Houston face little scrutiny from local or state governments, with safety inspectors for occupancy or building permits in different city records that compiles some are outdated and some are not used and will be used to look at ways, Turner said, after the City Council meeting Wednesday. "That is ongoing," he said.

The paper's investigation also found that the city's records at some of the local and regional security agencies are incomplete and that information sharing among different city departments is hampered because of antiquated record management systems.

City Council member Brenda Starling said the city needs to take a comprehensive approach to regulate existing boardinghouses.

"We need a streamlined process to support this kind of housing," said Starling, who chairs the council's Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee. "We should consider, especially with the changing nature of these people here."

Turner urged the city's Administration of Regulatory Affairs Department to review how the city regulates boardinghouses, which issue and provide services to those at more than 600 city or city-adjacent properties.

The city then requested the review to include cost proposals for the new and other multi-resident accommodations, especially

Mayor continues on A8

Checking out first chess tournament

Students in the Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior Schools participate in a chess tournament Wednesday in Houston. HCCED hosted the first tournament for students in the Academic and Behavior schools. These schools provide learning environments for students with intellectual, behavioral and developmental disorders.

Special session eyed as backlog worsens

Property tax reform flips in House with deadline looming

By Mike Ward

ALLIEN — With a much higher budget deficit than when last Legislature approved its revenue plan, lawmakers are expected to be looking for ways to raise revenue to help House bills move forward.

Lawmakers in both chambers said that if the property tax increase is not approved by the Legislature, they expect the state's revenue to decline and revenue to help House bills move forward.

For the first time, dozens of bills are expected to be introduced in the Legislature, with a special session now expected over the next few weeks.

HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENT:

Board Meeting
Tuesday, May 16, 2017

