



In this issue...

- 3** *Confident HCDE Principal Academy Grad Castilleja to Lead HISD School HCDE Recruits Educators for 2017-2018 Principal Academy*
- 3** *Head Start Celebrates Retirement of Humble Center Manager*
- 5** *HCDE Business Services Receives GFOA Certificate of Achievement*

FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

I began this week with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team, followed by a meeting with the Leadership Team this past Tuesday. Also this week, I continued my individual quarterly meetings with members of the HCDE Board. I look forward to continuing the dialogue with each of you as we work as a team of eight to advance the core mission of HCDE.

Last week, I attended the Education Foundation Board Meeting. The meeting was productive and filled with ideas and possibilities as to how we can work in concert with each other as we forward teaching and learning throughout Harris County.

On Wednesday of this week, I attended Commissioner Jack Morman's Superintendent's Luncheon. It provided yet another platform to bring awareness to the Department. It also served as a networking opportunity with my colleagues from the Harris County school districts.

Today, KPRC interviewed me related to the opioid crisis within our city and how HCDE's Recovery School will have a positive impact on students struggling with various addictions. The interview is part of a much more in-depth special to be televised on Channel 2, regarding this ongoing and emerging problem within the community.

Looking ahead into next week, please be reminded that we are hosting Monday's IMPACT Meeting and Dr. Guy Sconzo is facilitating it. All Board Members are invited to attend. Please apprise Karla Cantu of your plans to attend.

Also, this week ends the Summer Flex Schedule for HCDE staff. The Department will resume its regular schedule of 8:00 a.m.-

4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday on next Monday, August 8. We realize significant savings as a result of the flex schedule we employ during the summer months.

Please be reminded that the next meeting of the HCDE Board will take place Wednesday, August 16 at 1:00 p.m. A Public Facilities Corporation (PFC) Meeting will be held at 11:30 a.m., immediately followed by a 12:30 Audit Committee Meeting. The regularly scheduled August Board Meeting takes place immediately following the Audit Committee Meeting.

As mentioned in previous issues of **The Connector**, this year's Annual Staff Meeting will be held Wednesday, August 24, at the Kingdom Builders' Center. Employees will arrive at 9:00 a.m. for registration, with the event starting at 10:00. This year's theme, **Service is the Key**, will remind employees of the importance of providing excellent service to the educators, students, and other stakeholders within our community. I look forward to this annual event to motivate and rejuvenate our staff. All Board Members are invited to attend.

As always, thanks for your service to HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**, and I hope you have a relaxing weekend.

Upcoming Events:

Wednesday, August 16, 2017 at 1:00 p.m.

- Board Meeting

Thursday, August 24, 2017

- Annual Staff Meeting

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Leadership Series Lineup includes Popular lead4ward Workshops and National Presenters



November presenter Jennifer Serravallo

A lineup of presenters for the popular Leadership Speaker Series is available through HCDE's Teaching and Learning Center for 2017-2018. The series references "big names and topics you can't miss" beginning October 4 with "Intentional Intervention," presented by Stephanie Zelenak, lead4ward.

National presenter Tony Frontier presents on October 12 with "Making Teachers Better Not Bitter: Balancing Evaluation, Supervision and Reflection."

November 6 brings lead4ward "learning Mash Up," with content-specific sessions. Jennifer Serravallo, writing expert and strategist visits January 18, with "Writing Strategies for Goal-Directed Instruction."

The final series presentation is February 28 with Stephanie Zelenak, lead4ward "Rockin' Review."

Participants may register at www.hcde-texas.org/register by date or presenter name.

Access the Leadership Series flier: <http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/4789/2017-2018-speaker-series-flyer.pdf>

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

JULY 31, 2017

Science Fiction: Teaching Chemistry with Children's Literature - (6 hours G/T credit)

Science Fiction: Teaching Physics with Children's Literature - (6 hours G/T credit)

AUGUST 1, 2017

Workstation Make and Take for Counting and Composing and Decomposing Numbers with Objects and Pictures for PK/K

Workstation Make and Take for Counting and Composing and Decomposing Numbers with Objects and Pictures for Grades 1 and 2

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar

ELA: Engaging and Motivating the EOC Retesters

AUGUST 2, 2017

Workstation Make and Take Comparing Numbers for Grades 1 and 2

Workstation Make and Take Comparing Numbers for Pre-K and Kindergarten

AUGUST 3, 2017

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

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

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Confident HCDE Principal Academy Grad Castilleja to Lead HISD School as HCDE Recruits Educators for 2017-2018 Principal Academy



Harris County Department of Education Principal Academy graduate Georgina Castilleja meets with incoming sixth graders at Clifton Middle School in Houston ISD, where she is principal for the upcoming 2017-2018 school year.

Principal Georgina Castilleja personifies a model school leader as she confidently crunches numbers in her office with a colleague. Within the hour, she cordially greets incoming Clifton Middle School sixth graders during their orientation. The graduate from Harris County Department of Education's Principal Certification Academy hit the ground running this July preparing for her first year as leader of the Houston ISD middle school. Meanwhile at HCDE, leaders of the principal academy are busy preparing for a new class of fall recruits.

A recommendation from a friend last year led Castilleja to enroll in the HCDE program that prepares teachers to become school leaders. The hybrid program is both onsite and online as principal candidates meet once a month on weekends, combined with self-paced online assignments.

To date, all students completing the program and taking the principal certification exam passed the test. Personalized leadership coaching and mentorship is delivered by a handful of educators who have a history of successful school leadership. Each alumni class is small, with customized attention.

"We do more than just help our students pass the principal certification test," said Lidia Zatopek, director of the Educator Certification and Professional Advancement at HCDE. "We want to set our future school leaders up to succeed so that they create conditions that support teaching and learning which lead to high-performing schools."

Castilleja immersed herself into education in an entry-level position as a school office clerk 17 years ago. She worked while going to college to become a reading and language arts teacher and then an ESL teacher.

"I thought I'd be a teacher for the rest of my life, and in a way I feel that is still the case," she said. "However, I felt my influence would have greater impact outside of the classroom.

Maybe not greater (than a teacher), as the most significant influence is within the classroom, but perhaps a wider-reaching impact as I come into contact with more stakeholders," Castilleja said.

She says the HCDE leadership program forced her to step out of her comfort zone and explore different areas of school leadership, waters she had not tread before.

During the past year the bilingual educator was assistant principal at Sharpstown High School on probationary status as she completed the HCDE Principal Academy.

Leadership advancement coaches at HCDE, including veteran administrators Deirdre Sharkey Williams and Chaney Ledet, helped Castilleja along the way. During the year, Castilleja said she and fellow students benefited from guest panel principals who shared their experiences.

"One of those principals in the guest panel has now become a great mentor to me, and our first connection was on a Saturday at HCDE," Castilleja said.

As the 17-year educator now prepares to lead her school of 800-plus students by example, she envisions and prepares Clifton to be a welcoming environment for all stakeholders—the students, teachers, parents, and volunteers.

"I would like for people to say I work hard," she said, thinking on how she wants to be remembered. But I would also like them to say that as a coach, I built them up and helped them grow."

HCDE Principal Academy leader Zatopek beams as she recalls the growth she has seen in Castilleja, always a teacher but now a leader of her new community as principal.

"We'll always be here for her, anytime she needs it," said Zatopek.

For information about joining the "Lead Now" fall class of 2017 HCDE Principal Academy Cohort beginning Sept. 9, go to www.hcde-texas.org/leadnow or email hcdeacp@hcde-texas.org.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

CASE for Kids Offers Tips for Finding Quality Afterschool Programs



As the first day of school approaches, parents are searching for quality afterschool programs for their children to keep them learning and engaged after

the school day ends. Harris County offers a wide variety of options for afterschool care ranging from tutoring and sports activities to comprehensive afterschool programs.

Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, director of Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids), offers five tips to help families find a program that meets their needs:

- 1. Safety and Emergency Procedures:** Ask about the safety and emergency procedures in place. The program should be able to provide answers about any type of situation.
- 2. Staff-to-Student Ratio:** The staff-to-student ratio and maximum group size of an afterschool program can determine how much individual attention and supervision a child receives.
- 3. Staff Training:** When searching for an afterschool program, ask about staff training and if they regularly attend professional development workshops. Research shows that well-trained staff interact better with students.
- 4. Activities that Promote Learning:** Children are more likely to develop skills if the program offers a variety of academic and recreational classes. Look for afterschool programs that participate in activities that promote learning.

- 5. Student Progress:** Ask how the program assesses student progress to stay informed.

CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings, and funding for afterschool programs, serving approximately 13,000 students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities, and community centers throughout Harris County.

When families think about afterschool programs, many focus on programs specifically for elementary students while their parents are working. Caruthers emphasizes the importance of keeping students in middle and high school engaged in meaningful activities as well.

This year, a joint project between CASE for Kids and the Houston Urban Debate League (HUDL) will serve 300 high school students in afterschool programs at 20 schools in Harris County. The program, CASE Debates, will provide three in-depth seminars for youth and coaches along with three debate tournaments throughout the school year.

"We want to help families find a program that supplements the education students receive during the school day and extends that learning and excitement into afterschool programs," said Thompson-Caruthers.

For more information on CASE for Kids and afterschool resources, visit www.afterschoolzone.org.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Free Distance Education Classes in ESL, GED Offered through Harris County Department of Education



Adult English-as-a-second language and GED students in Harris County may enroll in self-paced, online learning classes through Harris County Department of Education beginning this fall. Classes are free on a first-come, first-served basis through an adult learner program called Distance First.

at home or any place with an Internet connection. We take away the stress of travel but at the same time deliver a quality program with technical and academic support.”

Pre-testing and assessment determines the entry level in subjects for each student. Technology training includes instruction on how to operate software. Group activities help students build time management skills. An experienced technical assistance team helps throughout the program.

A Saturday orientation which includes pre-testing and registration is required to enroll in the program. Dates to enroll in one of the orientation classes are August 12, September 9, October 14, and December 2 from 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. at 626 Lindale, Houston, Texas, 77022.

“Distance First classes are presented by online instructors and support staff and offer fundamental skills training that is tailored to their needs, as well as ample technical and academic support,” said Eduardo Honold, director of Adult Education at HCDE.

“Adult learners constantly juggle responsibilities that include families, jobs, and other obligations,” said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. “By providing a self-paced program, students can access GED or ESL lessons

Students may also enroll in traditional classroom ESL, GED, or workforce classes this fall. For more information about all learning opportunities and locations, go to www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation or call 713-692-6216.

Value

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS



HCDE Business Services Receives GFOA Certificate of Achievement

The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting has been awarded to Harris County Department of Education’s Business Services division by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA). HCDE received this award based on the 2016 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment. The CAFR was judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a constructive “spirit of full disclosure” to clearly communicate its financial story.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Professional Growth and Development

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

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

HCDE's Educator Certification and Professional Advancement (ECPA) division continues to serve as a trailblazer in the alternative certification arena. The division has realized numerous successes in preparing professionals for educational leadership.

The most recent example is HCDE's Principal Academy Graduate Georgina Castilleja. Over the past year, this bilingual



educator was assistant principal at Sharpstown High School on probationary status as she completed the HCDE Principal Academy.

During this 2017-18 academic year, Castilleja will serve as principal

of Clifton Middle School. This 17-year educator now prepares to lead her school of 800-plus students by example. She envisions her school to be a welcoming environment for all stakeholders—students, teachers, parents, and volunteers.

HCDE Principal Academy leader Zatopek is very proud of the growth she's always witnessed with Castilleja as a teacher, but now as a leader of her new community as principal.

I applaud the work of the ECPA division and continue to wish them great success.

By HCDE's ECPA division consistently offering quality professional development, I am striving to meet the Board's goal of ensuring that not only are HCDE's staff exposed to quality professional development in an effort to stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration, but I am also ensuring the same for educators and professionals in education across Harris County. In doing so, HCDE is making a tremendous impact by serving Harris County at all levels of public education.

HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, August 16, 2017

- Board Meeting

Thursday, August 24, 2017

- Annual Staff Meeting

