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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

It's been an exciting week at HCDE as we gear up for the 2017-2018 academic year. Some Harris County school districts are back in session and it is evident within our divisions, programs, and services. Our campuses are wrapping up professional development sessions ready to employ advances in the teaching and learning process. The opening of school is definitely in the air!

I began the week delivering a welcome to School-Based Therapy Services employees during the annual meeting of that division. Our School-Based Therapy Services division delivers service to thousands of students in Harris County who would otherwise not have their needs efficiently met. This division is essential to many of the school districts within our county, both large and small.

I also met with the Executive Leadership Team on Monday, as usual, as we prepare for the start of the new year. We are ensuring that all areas are equipped to excel and that our reach across Harris County, and beyond, is maximized through our varied and necessary offerings.

As you are aware, both the PFC and Board Audit committee meetings were held this past Wednesday, prior to our regularly-scheduled August Board Meeting. Thanks to each of you for your support of HCDE and all of its endeavors. I am pleased that our recovery school now has a name—Fortis Academy. I am confident that the students of this innovative program will, indeed, live up to its name. (Latin for strong; brave; courageous).

On Wednesday, I continued forwarding our work towards Fortis Academy. We are shaping the curriculum, preparing the physical plant, training staff, and also looking forward to the September 12 ground-breaking event. (Details related to this event are forthcoming.)

I continue to prepare for next week's Annual Staff Meeting to be held Thursday, August 24, at 10:00 a.m. The event will be held at Kingdom Builders Center, located at 6011 West Orem Drive, Houston (77085). Board Members are invited to attend and those in attendance will be recognized. Reserved seating is available for the Board.

Earlier today, I attended the Houston Recovery Initiatives Meeting where I served as the keynote speaker. I discussed the pathway by which HCDE's Fortis Academy was established. This group is very beneficial to members of the Schools division and me as we prepare to open the county's first school focused wholly on assisting students in recovery from substance addictions. These meetings are informative and help guide the direction of our program as we focus on implementing initiatives that have proven to be successful and effective in other existing programs.

Later today, I will attend the Human Resources Social as this division continues its efforts to enhance employee morale. This is especially important as we embark upon the new academic year.

Looking ahead into next week, we will bid farewell to the Director of Research and Evaluation, Dr. Jeannette Truxillo, at her retirement reception on Monday. We appreciate the years of dedication and exceptional service Dr. Truxillo has exhibited during her tenure at HCDE. Later that day, I will be placing the finishing touches on the Annual Staff Meeting event and will participate in a run-through at the Kingdom Builders' Center.

Next Wednesday, I will again address members of the School-Based Therapy Services division followed by the Annual Staff Meeting the next day. I plan to end the week with campus visits to our HCDE schools.

Again, 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:

Thursday, August 24, 2017

- Annual Staff Meeting

Tuesday, September 19, 2017 at 1:00 p.m.

- Board Meeting

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Anthony Mays Selected as Senior Director over HCDE's Four Specialized Campuses



Anthony Mays, a 15-year education leader in middle and high schools in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Pflugerville independent school districts, recently started his new position as senior director of Harris County Department of

Education's Schools division.

The four specialized HCDE schools he will lead serve more than 25 school districts in the Harris County area. Districts contract with HCDE as the Department supplies specialized environments and low student-to-teacher ratios to educate students in grades K-12 with unique needs.

Mays moves to Houston after serving as principal at Emmett J. Conrad High School in the Dallas Independent School District. His strong instructional leadership as principal is complimented by extensive experience as a special education educator. He gained his Bachelor of Arts from Huston-Tillotson College, a Master of Education from Texas State

University, and is currently earning his doctorate degree from Tarleton State University.

His experience with special populations students will provide valuable guidance as HCDE opens the first public recovery high school in Harris County this school year. As a goal-oriented leader, he will use his collaboration expertise to strengthen the instructional focus at all four specialized HCDE schools and to build on momentum for community support.

"I'm also eager to work with the HCDE team on developing our recovery high school for students with challenges with addictions," he said. "The opioid epidemic and other drug abuse among teens is a problem that HCDE is poised to impact here in Harris County."

The Tomball resident is a member of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators, Texas Association of Secondary School Principals, and is listed in Who's Who Among America's Teachers. He is married and has three children who attend public school.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

HCDE Center for Grants Development Hosts Fall Training Series



Beginning Aug. 23, 2017, Harris County Department of Education's Center for Grants Development will begin their Quest for Grants Fall Training Series. The

first of seven seminars, Grant Writing Best Practices is an online seminar on Aug. 23 from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

The Best Practices seminar will cover habits of successful grant specialists, mistakes inexperienced proposal writers often make, budget considerations, general proposal writing tips, and more.

Tips such as avoiding organizational jargon will help grant

writers create best practices for their organizations and increase their number of successful grant applications.

"In most cases, we don't know the background and the expertise of the person reviewing our proposals," said Gayla Rawlinson-Maynard, Center for Grants Development director. "Because of this, it's best to write in layperson terms, avoiding acronyms and jargon."

All seminars are \$25 for in-county attendees and \$45 for attendees coming from outside Harris County. View a schedule of the upcoming fall seminars here:

<http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/4830/grants-flyer-training-schedule.pdf>.

Longtime Education Leader Breaux to Head HCDE Research and Evaluation Institute



Current Harris County Department of Education Special Populations Director Darlene Breaux will head the Research and Evaluation Institute as its new director. Breaux joined HCDE in 2016 to oversee continuing professional learning opportunities for teachers

who educate students served through special population programs.

"Being the director of special populations has allowed me to work closely with many of the 25 school districts which HCDE serves," Breaux said. "Having this relationship allowed me to better understand district needs and how the Research and Evaluation Institute can provide information and resources that are supported by research."

One of her goals as leader is to deliver small, educator friendly highlights and summaries of current research

being published through her division.

Breaux, a resident of Alief, is a national trainer, former principal, and special services coordinator who has 20 years of service in education. She holds a bachelor's degree from Texas Southern University with teacher certifications in ESL and special education. She also earned a master's in educational management with principal certification from the University of Houston Clear Lake. She is currently earning her doctorate degree in instructional leadership from Abilene Christian University.

She is a member of Kappa Delta Pi National Honor Society and is active in the Alief community as a board member for the Alief YMCA. In addition, she is the former special services coordinator in Alief Independent School District.

Breaux is married and has three children.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Whole Foods Market Donates Rakes to Academic and Behavior School Garden Projects



Last week, Whole Foods Market and the Whole Kids Foundation donated 20 rakes to Academic and Behavior schools East and West for their garden projects.

This contribution is in addition to the \$2,000 previously received from the Whole Kids Foundation. Sharvon Pipkins, CGD development coordinator, prepared the original proposal to acquire the \$2,000 grant award.

Cory Woods, store manager of the Whole Foods Market Voss location and Emily Hernandez, marketing and community relations for Whole Foods Market, met with staff from HCDE AB schools and the Center for Grants Development to donate the rakes.

Annual Staff Set for August 24 at Kingdom Builders' Center



“Service is the Key” is this year’s Annual Staff theme as over 1,000 employees from Harris County Department of Education’s 21 divisions attend the Annual Staff Meeting 2017-2018 on August 24, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Kingdom Builders’ Center, 6011 W. Orem Dr.

Employees check-in for registration at 9 a.m. and are served a continental breakfast along with coffee. The program begins at 10 a.m. with service awards followed by a presentation with HCDE

Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. The event ends around noon.

The social media hashtag for the event this year is #HCDEserves. The Department will continue to use the hashtag throughout the year to share our story of service.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Schools Division Professional Development Day Facilitated by Teaching and Learning Center



More than 150 Schools division staff attended the annual professional development day at HCDE this week. Staff were greeted by new Senior Director for Schools

Anthony Mays, discussed a variety of topics including recent legal updates and policies, and participated in breakout sessions facilitated by the HCDE Teaching and Learning Center. Staff attended breakout sessions for math, science, technology, reading, and language arts, and more.

As part of the development training, Schools division staff also heard from renowned presenter Mark McLeod. McLeod is a former teacher, coach, assistant principal, and principal who is focused on improving student achievement with quality instruction.



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

CASE for Kids Site Featured on Fox 26 for Summer Watershed Project



CASE for Kids was featured on Fox 26 News earlier this month as part of a summer out-of-school time initiative with CASE for Kids afterschool vendor Artist Boat. The nonprofit provider created a science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) watershed project with middle school students. The summer program included students from Clear Creek Intermediate School 21st Century Learning Centers, a federally funded afterschool program provided through the Texas Afterschool Centers on Education and HCDE's CASE for Kids. View story: <http://www.fox26houston.com/news/local-news/273410852-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 monitors staff development for effectiveness; and
- Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration



This week, more than 150 Schools division staff participated in a professional development day facilitated by HCDE's Teaching and Learning Center. The training session included breakout sessions in the areas of math, science, technology, reading, language arts, and more. The group also heard from renowned presenter Mark McLeod, former teacher, coach, assistant principal, and principal whose focus is primarily



on improving student achievement through quality instruction.

Anthony Mays, the new senior director of the Schools division had an opportunity to greet the entire division for the first time and discussed a variety of topics, including recent legal updates and policies, and also participated in the various workshop breakout sessions.

By HCDE's Schools division taking advantage of both our in-house professional development program as well as presenting renowned education speaker, Mark McLeod, we are ensuring that all students attending HCDE schools are the by-products of cutting edge techniques that advance teaching and learning by offering high quality professional development to our own campus staff members.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

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- Annual Staff Meeting

Tuesday, September 19, 2017

- Board Meeting

