

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's hard to believe that a month has lapsed since Hurricane Harvey. Many districts that sustained damage have successfully settled into a new sense of normalcy. This event is accurately likened to a marathon, not a sprint; thus, the road to recovery will be a long one for many of the school districts and taxpayers in Harris County. The Department continues to offer its assistance to affected school districts and other entities whenever possible and as appropriate.

I began my week with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team, along with my other regularly scheduled meetings. Also on Monday, HCDE hosted the regularly scheduled IMPACT meeting. The meeting was well attended with board representatives from HCDE, as well as from the following Harris County School Districts: Humble, Pasadena, Spring, Spring Branch. The discussions of the day were surrounded by the Impact of Harvey and the high points of the Special Session of the legislature. The meeting was informative and engaging. I was pleased with the attendance and level of interest of the attendees.

After the IMPACT meeting, I was involved in a meeting regarding the Fortis Academy Development Plan. I am pleased with the progress being made to that end.

I spent Tuesday and Wednesday in Austin where I visited University High School, a recovery school powered by the University of Texas. Accompanying me on that visit were Jonathan Parker, Anthony Mays, and Dr. Anthony Moten. At the completion of the site visit, I returned to Houston, while the trio traveled to Laredo to visit, yet, another leading recovery school.

Upon my return to the office, I attended a lunch meeting with representatives from the United Way. It is essential that HCDE remain visible within both the faith-based and community-based communities.

This week, in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following trainings and workshops: DBQ Project-Social Studies;

Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association; Guided Reading Success—Training and Differentiation, Grades 3-6; Diversify Your Funding Through Government Grants; Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar; Workstation Make and Take for Counting and Composing and Decomposing Numbers with Objects and Pictures for Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten; Scholastic Art and Writing Awards Second Annual District Affiliate Leadership Conference; and HCDE Math Leadership Meeting.

As briefly mentioned in a previous issue of The Connector, the Fortis Academy Groundbreaking has been rescheduled to Wednesday, October 18, 2017 from 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Looking ahead into next week, as usual, I will begin the week with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team on Monday, followed by a Leadership Team Meeting the next day. As you are already aware, I support the Head Start division's SuperMENTor program. I consistently encourage each male HCDE trustee to become involved in this important program within the lives of some of our youngest learners. This academic year's volunteer kickoff is a Meet and Greet to be held next Wednesday. I look forward to meeting our newest SuperMENTors.

For the remainder of next week, I will be in Dallas attending the TASA/TASB convention. TASA/TASB conferences are an opportune time for me to connect with my colleagues from all parts of the state and bring even more visibility to HCDE and the services we provide.

In closing, thank you for your service to HCDE and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. Have a relaxing weekend.

Upcoming Events:

Wednesday, October 18, 2017
Board Meeting

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



Teaching and Learning Center Hosts Variety of Workshops for Area Educators

This week, HCDE's Teaching and Learning Center hosted multiple professional development opportunities for Harris County educators. From the Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association to Guided Reading Success, teachers from school districts in the surrounding area gained innovative and effective strategies for the classroom. For more upcoming workshops, visit <https://goo.gl/3009LI>.



HCDE hosts teachers from Harris County schools for information meeting for Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

HCDE hosted the 2017-2018 Scholastic Art & Writing affiliate planning meeting at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center on Sept. 28. Thirty-five art and writing teachers from 20 Harris County school districts were represented. Several districts are new this year, including Stafford and New Caney. Dates from submittals and judging were shared, along with inspirational stories from the teachers. Last year, 50 of the 1,000 national medal winners came from Harris County. As HCDE expects several thousand submittals this year, a call goes out to recruit professional artists and writers to judge student works. Learn more at www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic or www.artandwriting.org.

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

SEPTEMBER 26, 2017
DBQ Project - Social Studies

SEPTEMBER 27, 2017
Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association

Guided Reading Success-Training and Differentiation - Grades 3-6

Diversify Your Funding Through Government Grants!

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar

SEPTEMBER 28, 2017
Workstation Make and Take for Counting and Composing and Decomposing Numbers with Objects and Pictures for PK/K

Scholastic Art and Writing Awards Second Annual District Affiliate Leadership Conference

SEPTEMBER 29, 2017
HCDE Math Leadership Meeting



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Three journalists Honored by HCDE, TASB for Public Education Reporting with 2017 Media Honor Roll

Three Houston journalists are being honored through the 2017 Media Honor Roll Award issued by the Texas Association of School Boards on behalf of Harris County Department of Education in August. The journalists are Christine Dobbyn, reporter for KTRK-TV, Channel 13; Fabian Gutierrez, assignments editor for KTMD-TV Telemundo 47; and Danica Smithwick, reporter for Community Impact Newspapers.

“These three talented journalists tackle the challenges facing public education and herald the successes of our million-plus students and teachers in greater Harris County through a humanistic approach,” said Harris County School Superintendent James Colbert. “We appreciate their service to public education and their accurate approach and judgment in sharing public education news.”

KTRK-TV reporter Christine Dobbyn is recognized for her story on afterschool students from the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, who volunteered alongside their parents at the Houston Food Bank in an effort to expose the teens to the problem of hunger in their community. The story may be viewed through the following YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJCah2v8C7Q>



KTMD-TV assignments editor Fabian Gutierrez is honored for supporting HCDE Head Start and Adult Education programs throughout the year, helping get the word out about free education opportunities to the public. One story Fabian assigned was creatively angled at recruiting adult education construction workforce students: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlzoyEDDNUO>

Honoree Danica Smithwick, reporter for Community Impact Newspaper, provided a comprehensive article about Harris County Department of Education and the services it provides to Harris County school districts and citizens. Her article is available on the newspaper’s website: <https://communityimpact.com/houston/cy-fair/at-the-capitol/2017/04/05/sen-bettencourt-targets-county-departments-of-education/> .



In addition to receiving plaques from HCDE and TASB, the association also recognizes these three honorees on its website: <https://goo.gl/ZcedHe> .

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

93 Academic and Behavior School West Students Gain Backpacks, Supplies from HISD Hurricane Relief

Student Tyrique Mayfield was one of 93 students at Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior School West who received a backpack Sept. 27 at a school assembly, courtesy of Houston Independent School District. Mayfield shared a handshake and smiled as he was handed the grey-and-black pack full of school supplies.

HISD Office of Special Education Services Program Specialist LaVora Wright attended the assembly and greeted the HISD students who are enrolled in AB West through contracted services. The backpacks and supplies were generously donated by numerous community public school supporters.

The 15 HISD students enrolled at AB West received extra supplies in their backpacks, but all students were given backpacks due to the tremendous outpouring of contributions donated through Hurricane Relief Day hosted by HISD.

AB School West parent Janet McCall from Fort Bend is a foster mom to three children. She also is responsible for her disabled husband. The McCall family lost their home and all their possessions during Hurricane Harvey. She received donations of clothes for AB West student La'Quesha through the assembly.

"There are days when you are really down and need to see the compassionate side of people," McCall said. "We appreciate the kindness and this heartfelt way people show compassion."

Through the assembly, four AB West teachers displaced by Harvey were also given donations from AB West staff and community.

"We are a family here at AB West, and helping those who are displaced and lost so much was the right thing to do," AB West principal Victor Keys said.

To view photos from the event, go to <http://hcdetexas.photoshelter.com/gallery/ABW-Backpacks/G0000jQj69QCLflk/C00000cq75eZ9lcU> and enter password hcde1889 .



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

HCDE Head Start Centers Receive School Supplies from Houston-Based Plantgistix



On Monday, September 25, Harris County Department of Education Head Start students at the Fifth Ward, Pugh, Dogan, Coolwood, San Jacinto and Sheffield centers received more than \$10,000 worth of

backpacks and school supplies donated by Houston-based business Plantgistix.

The Plantgistix Community Outreach Committee, consisting of Darryl Dastous, Felesia Taylor, Tiffani Speller and Scott Skrabanek, delivered the backpacks on September 25 to the Sheffield Head Start Center located at 14300 Wallisville Rd. Plantgistix also donated \$100 to each of the 24 classrooms for additional materials and supplies.

The committee members, along with Plantgistix CEO Marc Levine, understand the importance of early learning and the impact these supplies can make for students. The backpacks, containing essential classroom items such as colored markers, crayons, glue sticks and folders, fill a need for many families affected by Hurricane Harvey.

“I believe everyone deserves an opportunity to grow,” said Levine. “We at Plantgistix are honored to be able to help meet the needs of others.”

A recent survey conducted by the HCDE Head Start division showed nearly 70 families at the six centers receiving the donation experienced some sort of damage to their homes or cars. Many other families saw an impact on their financial situation as a result of the storm.



“This donation from Plantgistix is even more necessary for the success of our students in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey,” said HCDE Head Start Senior Director Venetia Peacock. “We’re thankful to our community partners for filling a vital need in the Head Start community.”

HCDE is currently recruiting students for all 15 Head Start centers located in northeast Harris County. For information about enrollment or locations, call (713) 672-9343 or visit www.hcde-texas.org/headstart. For more information on Plantgistix, visit www.plantgistix.com.

HCDE Hosts First HASPRA Meeting of 2017-2018



On Friday, September 22, HCDE hosted more than 40 school public relations professionals from the Houston area for the year’s first Houston Area School Public Relations Association (HASPRA) meeting. Monthly HASPRA meetings allow school PR professionals to meet and share communications strategies, tips for overcoming shared challenges and more.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Autism Summit Featured in Houston Chronicle

The Autism Summit was recently highlighted in the Houston Chronicle. The Summit will be held Oct. 4-5 at 6300 Irvington and features noted author and consultant Carol Gray on Friday, October 4. View the article: http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/4929/houstonchronicle_092517.pdf

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



AB School West Students Celebrate Constitution Day, Hispanic Heritage Month

Students and staff at Academic and Behavior School West recently celebrated Constitution Day on September 15 and Hispanic Heritage Month on September 21.

For the Constitution Day celebration, students learned about the signing and formation of the Constitution in Philadelphia by 39 individuals in 1787.

For the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration, students shared important educational information with their peers and staff. They also celebrated one of the many cultures that contributes to America's rich and diverse society.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Community Relations

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me to

- **Work with other community and governmental entities and educational organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way**

HCDE was recently highlighted in the Houston Chronicle regarding the Autism Summit. HCDE is hosting the event October 4-5 that will include noted author and consultant Carol Gray. This event will also highlight post-Harvey use of the Social Story technique as a Social Stories workshop is part of the Summit.



parents, professionals, and people with autism spectrum disorder. Stories typically prepare those on the spectrum for everyday situations, but in recent years, their scope has broadened to address tragedies, including the recent hurricane.

HCDE's Autism Summit is a two-day workshop to assist children with autism spectrum disorders. Registration is \$150 for both days and includes lunch.

By HCDE hosting the Autism Summit, it is serving as a beacon for an ever-increasing population of parents, educators, and others interested in learning more about autism spectrum disorders. In doing so, I am working to meet the Board's goal for me to communicate the needs and accomplishments of the Department in a variety of formats, through communication with the media, community, school districts, and other forums. It is essential that HCDE continues such efforts through good and challenging times within the community.



The Social Story is described as a learning tool used worldwide to support the meaningful exchange of information among

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, October 18, 2017

- Board Meeting

