

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 was a great week at HCDE! I take this opportunity to personally thank each of you for your support at this week's Board Meeting as you passed the HCDE proposed tax rate for the 2016-2017 year. For the second year in a row, you approved a tax rate below the effective tax rate. This year, the effective tax rate was calculated at 0.0053. We proposed, and you approved, a tax rate of 0.0052. This speaks to HCDE's firm commitment to responsible fiscal stewardship as well as to our collective approach to financial management. Thank you again for your support as we continue to offer even better value, opportunity, and service to our member school districts and to the taxpayers and citizens of Harris County and beyond.

In addition to this week's Board Meeting, I had very productive follow-up discussions with members of the statewide Recovery High Schools professional group. As I anticipate the implementation of this much needed program in Harris County, I continue to garner additional data inputs as I plan to execute this new educational unit within HCDE. I am excited that we will be able to equalize educational opportunities for students suffering from substance abuse addictions, in an effort to afford them a more promising future. Because the quality of the program far outweighs the size of the program, my goal is to begin with a reasonable number of students and equip the program with the most qualified professionals to serve this very unique special population. I will continue to apprise you as we move forward through these continued information gathering processes and initial plans. I look forward to presenting you with a full-scale operational plan in the coming weeks for your consideration and approval.

As mentioned in the last issue of **The Connector**, yesterday, I participated in yet another TABSE Superintendent's Think Tank Session. As always, I take advantage of the opportunity to impart knowledge onto aspiring superintendents during these sessions, and to also participate in the Superintendent Share Fair as we, education executives from all areas of the state of Texas, discuss pertinent issues facing public education. This week's TABSE Superintendent's Think Tank Session includes a news and information sharing segment—Good News From Across the State, an Early Childhood discussion, as well as a legislative session, and the Superintendent's Share Fair. As usual, TABSE is running nearly concurrent with the TASA/TASB meeting which begins today and runs through the weekend. I will be participating in both events through Sunday. These are excellent opportunities for not only increasing HCDE's visibility, but also for

networking and continued professional growth.

In the area of teaching and learning this week, we focused on student achievement with lead4ward: CS1: Connecting Standards to Informed Decision-Making, Helping Kids Win the Race to Success By Using Digital Tools to Support Delayed Learners, Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Matter and Energy, an English/Language Arts Leadership Meeting, DBQ Project in the area of Social Studies, a Math Leadership Meeting, Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Matter and Energy, Earth Science on Mars, lead4ward Planning and Instruction: Creating Student-Centered Classrooms, Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Cell Structure and Function, Reading Strategies for Goal-Directed Instruction, Literacy Collaborative: 10 Things Every Writer Needs to Know, and the Safety+Skill Building+Fun=Pep Rally workshop! We also focused on keeping students in school in an effort to divert the pipeline to prison trend with Restorative Discipline Practices, a recent and valuable philosophy currently being encouraged by education think tanks across the United States and implemented into urban schools. We empowered school districts with several grant initiatives including the Quest for Grants Training Series: It Takes Planning to Save the World, Diversify Your Funding through Government Grants, and Accessing U.S. Census Data. Finally, we hosted informative sessions for school district administrators with the Back to School Legal Digest, School Finance Council, and Tax Update for School Districts. We continue to help students achieve as we empower all layers of professionals within public education in Harris County.

On Monday of next week, HCDE will host its regularly scheduled IMPACT Meeting. I will be traveling to Austin late Monday to attend my UIL Executive Board Meeting on Tuesday. I will return to Houston Tuesday night at the conclusion of the UIL Meeting. Also, I am pleased to announce that I was recently appointed to the Board of Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM), thus I will attend my first meeting with that Board since my appointment. As previously mentioned in **The Connector**, NAM was formed in 1983 by 10 Covenant Congregations who agreed to set aside theological differences, and pool resources in a manner to better serve community needs. HCDE already has several community partnerships with this organization and my commitment to this entity is an organic one.

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

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Adult Education Workforce Students Construct Little Houses to Make Big Literacy Impact



Adult Education students enrolled in workforce development classes are giving back to children in the community by helping to assemble and paint “little libraries” which could make a big literacy impact.

The community service project with the Houston Public Library is called “Groomed for Literacy” and provides “little libraries” constructed and painted by students who are gaining workforce skills while studying for their GEDs. The 60 little boxes feature a barber shop storefront complete with red-white-and-blue barber poles, supplies donated by the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation and the Little Free Library organization. The boxes filled with books will be delivered to barber shops in targeted areas with low-literacy, low-income youth who have low access to quality books.

“We are excited about representing Harris County Department of Education through the Houston Public Library literacy program called Groomed for Literacy,” said Eduardo Honold, director of Harris County Department of Education’s Adult Education. “Our students are excited to

help with the literacy effort as they realize the importance of promoting reading to area youth.”

Adult Education workforce student Joshua Doyle is enrolled in a construction class this fall and volunteered to assist with the project. In 10th grade, the 25-year old dropped out of high school. He believes helping youngsters to be able to pick up a book is a good thing.



“There are other things to do besides get into trouble—like educating your mind,” he said. “It’s a project for us to work together to help the next generation.”

Houston Public Libraries located near the barber shops will replenish and service the little houses filled with books. Service areas include Fifth Ward, Third Ward, East Little York, Independence Heights, Clinton Park, Sharpstown, Gulfgate, Hobby, and several dozen additional neighborhoods.

For more information about workforce development GED or ESL classes offered through Harris County Department of Education Adult Education, visit www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation . For volunteer or collaborative initiatives with HCDE Adult Education, contact Angela Johnson, ajohnson@hcde-texas.org.

Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Exhibits Expand to Expand with MATCH



Scholastic Art & Writing Awards gains a new arts venue to showcase teen art and writing entries for the 2017 regional awards. Center for Grants Development announced a reception will be held at the Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston, or MATCH, through a new collaboration. Grants staffers Joyce Akins and Dr. Vida Avery have been meeting with local art venues in an effort to expand exhibits from teen artists and writers. Exhibit dates will be announced soon.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

School-Based Therapy Services Hosts National Trainer DeCoste to Help Students Struggling with Writing



Occupational therapist and national speaker Dr. Denise DeCoste provided two days of professional development for HCDE occupational therapy practitioners on September 15- 16. DeCoste trained therapists in administration of the DeCoste Writing Protocol, an assessment tool developed to help school teams identify efficient and effective methods for struggling writers to express themselves. The tool was developed using Universal Design for Learning principles and can

be used with students of all ages, with or without disabilities.



Research and Evaluation Institute Collaborates with Head Start with Surveys, Reports on Programs



The Research and Evaluation Institute collaborated with Head Start on several research projects, including the Head Start REAL SuperMENTors Read program, a male mentoring

program which introduces positive male role models who read regularly to Head Start classes. The report provides the positive results of surveys given to parents, teachers and mentor volunteers.

Research and Evaluation also reviewed major findings of Head Start's Triennial Community Assessment. The reports cover three years of services and are being used in program planning and evaluation. The Community Assessment report follows the Head Start Performance Standards and includes information on community and Head Start and Early Head Start family characteristic, community assets, health and nutrition status, children with disabilities, family strengths and needs, and community resources.

Teaching and Learning Center's Lisa Felske Receives Susan Vaughan Foundation Grant



Lisa Felske, science curriculum director for the Teacher and Learning Center, recently received a \$5,000 grant from the Susan Vaughan Foundation to support a new project, Weather Applications to Teach Environmental Resilience (WATER). The project will teach students GIS technology to help strengthen community resilience in the face of extreme weather events.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

CASE for Kids Spotlight



Throughout the county, CASE for Kids reports that afterschool programs are getting back into full swing. Galena Park ISD's MacArthur Elementary welcomed back students to the Texas ACE, 21st CCLC, Cycle 8 afterschool program, a federally funded program that serves 120 students. CASE for Kids recently held a Building Community Workshop based on content developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, Forum for Youth Investment, and High Scope Foundation. Participants discovered interactive ways to build an emotionally and physically safe space for youth.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

300 InfraGard Members Discuss Cybersecurity During Meeting Hosted by HCDE



Cybersecurity was the topic of the most recent InfraGard meeting held at HCDE September 21. Approximately 300 attendees participated, including FBI staff and private sector business and technology employees, along with representatives from educator institutions and local law

enforcement agencies. InfraGard is a partnership between the FBI and the private sector dedicated to sharing information and intelligence to present hostile acts against the United States. Three meetings have been hosted by HCDE in the past year. HCDE leaders from both Technology and Business Service are active in the organization.



Technology Director Arthur Vu and Network Analyst John Kracht represent HCDE at the InfraGard meeting.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Harris County Department of Education Hosts Free Editorial Cartoon Workshop for Students



Harris County Department of Education will host a free editorial cartoon workshop for students presented by the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and sponsored by The Herb Block Foundation on October 18 from 4 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. at 6300 Irvington Blvd.

During the free workshop with professional cartoonist Isaiah Broussard, students will participate in hands-on instruction exploring the unique art of editorial cartooning and the various ways to make commentary on contemporary issues that matter to them.

Isaiah Broussard will also share his personal experience developing his artistic career, and students will learn how they can submit their work to the prestigious Scholastic Art & Writing Awards to receive potential recognition, exhibition, publication, and scholarships.

For more information or to register for the free editorial cartoon workshop, visit <https://goo.gl/rtfP8o>.

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

SEPTEMBER 19, 2016

lead4ward: CSI: Connecting Standards to Informed Decision-Making

Help Kids Win the Race to Success By Using Digital Tools to Support Delayed Learners

SEPTEMBER 20, 2016

Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Matter and Energy

ELA Leadership Meeting

DBQ Project - Social Studies Full Day Introductory

HCDE Math Leadership Meeting

Restorative Discipline Practices - Session I

Quest for Grants Training Series: It Takes Planning to Save the World!

Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Matter and Energy

SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

Quest for Grants Training Series Webinar - Diversify Your Funding Through Government Grants!

Earth Science on Mars

lead4ward Planning Instruction: Creating Student-Centered Classrooms

SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Cell Structure and Function

Reading Strategies for Goal-Directed Instruction

Quest for Grants Training Series: Accessing U.S. Census Data

Quest for Grants Training Series: Accessing U.S. Census Data

SEPTEMBER 23, 2016

School Finance Council

HCDE Literacy Collaborative: 10 Things Every Writer Needs to Know

Safety+ Skill Building+ Fun= Prep Rally!

Tax Update for School Districts

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Management of Fiscal Function

In keeping with the Board's goals for me to:

- Oversee a budget development process that results in recommendations based on Department priorities and available resources;
- Oversee budget implementation in a way that ensures appropriate expenditure of budgeted funds and provides for clear and timely reports;
- Ensure the Department's investment strategies, risk management activities, and purchasing practices are sound, cost-efficient, and consistent with policy and law;
- Implement and oversee a planning process that results in goals, targets, or priorities for major areas of operations; and
- Monitor effectiveness of operations against appropriate benchmarks.

adoption of, a tax rate below the effective tax rate.

Last year, during my first year as Superintendent, the administration proposed a tax rate of 0.005422, a rate below last year's effective tax rate of 0.005567. This week, the administration proposed, and the Board approved the adoption of, a tax rate of 0.005200, another rate below the effective tax rate of 0.005301. (As you know, the effective tax rate is calculated per \$100 assessed property valuation.)

By the administration proposing– for two consecutive years– and the Board approving for adoption, a tax rate below the effective tax rate, I am meeting the Board's expectations of me to

- **Serve as a conservative financial leader;**
- **Look for ways to improve programs and services without greater expenditures, and with concern for cutting expenses and costs to public schools for service without sacrifice to high quality services; and**
- **Recommend the annual budget to maximize resources, and manage the budget while exercising prudent judgment.**

These actions exemplify my systemic leadership approach and commitment to sound public stewardship and financial transparency to the citizenry of Harris County.

HCDE BOARD

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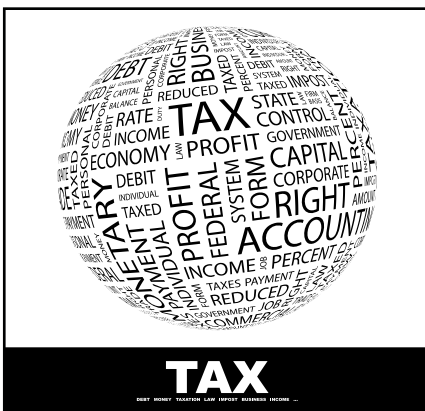
UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

October Board Meeting

October 18, 2016

1:00 p.m.

Room 400



This week, and for the second time under my leadership as County School Superintendent, the administration proposed, and the Board approved the

