

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 been a productive week at HCDE. I began the week with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team. I spent the remainder of Monday traveling for a meeting of the UIL to fulfill my responsibilities as a member of its board during a meeting held the following day. Upon the conclusion of that meeting, I returned to Houston.

Upon my return, I had another rewarding opportunity to spend quality time reading to Head Start students through the division's SuperMENTor program. Again, I encourage the male members of our board to become involved in this worthwhile program. Later that day, I attended the Head Start managers' Lunch and Learn where managers within the division were recognized for their contributions. Events such as these also double in purpose and are informative, helping to ensure that our program remains compliant with the rules and regulations as set forth by the Department of Health and Human Services.

On Valentine's Day, our Human Resources division hosted a cake event to continue their efforts to improve employee morale. There was great enthusiasm on behalf of, and participation from, our staff.

Yesterday, I held agenda review in preparation for our regularly-scheduled February Board Meeting. I also attended the Houston Independent School District's State of the Schools Address event. I will close out this week with standing meetings with staff and I will also attend a budget training session in preparation for the next fiscal year.

This week, in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following trainings and workshops for educators and

other professionals in education: Argumentation Strategies for Middle School Science; Promising Practices for Priority Schools Summit: Driving STAAR Instructional Excellence; Using Manipulatives to Teach the TEKS (Grades 3-5); Using Manipulatives to Teach the TEKS (Grade K-2); Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Acid Rain and the Greenhouse Effect (GT update); Capturing Kids' Hearts; and Proportionality (Grades 6-8).

Looking ahead into next week, I will begin the week with a meeting of the ELT, followed by a meeting with Harris County area superintendents on Wednesday. I will be attending TABSE from Thursday through Sunday of next week—yet another opportunity for me to increase the Department's visibility.

I have also begun scheduling my quarterly meetings with each of you. It is important to me that I keep my finger on the pulse of your expectations; thus, if you have not yet heard from Karla or me, then you will be very soon.

Again, I appreciate your service to HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**, and I hope you have a relaxing weekend.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

- Board Meeting

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

CASE for Kids Debates Hosts Second Tournament: Kerr High Sweeps 1st Place



The second CASE Debates tournament took place on Saturday, Feb. 3, 2018 at Alief's Elsie High School. Students debated in two divisions – Policy and Worlds style topics. Ten schools participated, and a team from Kerr High School won first place in both divisions. Finalists qualifying will attend a final CASE Debates competition on Feb. 26 at the Bob Casey Federal Courthouse at 515 Rusk downtown.

On Feb. 7, CASE for Kids sponsored a workshop called Homework Help. This training focused on making homework help time effective by helping youth get organized, providing an atmosphere that helps youth focus on their work and building a supportive relationship with youth. These elements helped participants reconsider homework time as an opportunity to build relationships and nurture positive growth, beyond getting the work done.

In other CASE for Kids news, City Connections grant recipients met for a mid-term orientation on Feb. 8. The focus of the meeting was to discuss safety at program sites. Program leaders were able to provide feedback for how they recruit and retain students and improve the quality of their programs. Leaders also discussed the challenges they face to ensure a safe environment for students at their sites and beneficial policies and procedures that they practice.



HCDE Shows Heart with Valentine's Day Social

Human Resources hosted a Valentine's Day social for HCDE employees, complete with cake. HR is donating half of the proceeds from the cake sale to the American Heart Association to raise awareness for American Heart Month.

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

FEBRUARY 13, 2018
Argumentation Strategies for Middle School Science

Promising Practices for Priority Schools Summit: Driving STAAR Instructional Excellence

FEBRUARY 15, 2018
Using Manipulatives to Teach the TEKS (Grades 3-5)

Using Manipulatives to Teach the TEKS (Grades K-2)

Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Acid Rain and the Greenhouse Effect (6 hr GT update)

Capturing Kids Hearts

FEBRUARY 16, 2018
Proportionality (Grades 6-8)



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Promising Practices Leadership Summit Provides Help for Turnaround Schools



Panelist Valerie Vogt, chief academic officer, Lamar CISD; panelist Nicole Moore, chief school officer-south area, Houston ISD; panelist Tory Hill, superintendent, Sweeney ISD; (moderator) Kelly Brown, assistant professor, Lamar University; (conference coordinator) Deidre Sharkey Williams; panelist Tangela Hughes-Beston, principal, Alief ISD; and Christopher Pichon, senior director for school administration, Galena Park ISD.

Eighty school leaders and teachers attended the Promising Practices Leadership Summit held Feb. 13 at HCDE through Educator Certification and Professional Advancement division. The summit focused on “Priority”

“Flipping the RTI Pyramid on its Head” was a session to guide leaders on what to do when the majority of students in their schools need intense academic intervention and accelerated instruction and included Alief ISD math and reading interventionists, a school counselor and school improvement administrator.

Chaney Williams-Ledet from ECPA provided a session on “Data-Enhanced Decision Making,” and Houston ISD teacher development specialist Denise Carter presented on Maximizing New Teacher Performance to Support Struggling Students.

and “Focus” schools in Texas and problem-solving techniques to help those school leaders turn around the academics and school culture. Keynote Larry Payne opened and closed the conference with a call-to-action: “Learn, change, adapt or be doomed.”



Keynote speaker Larry Payne

Later on in the day, a “Promising Practices Through Leadership Panel” gave insight on what works and doesn’t, allowing for an open session for questions and answers and brainstorming among attendees.



Panelist Tangela Hughes-Beston



Head Start Center Managers Recognized at Appreciation Lunch

Each of the HCDE Head Start Center Managers were recognized during an appreciation lunch this week. In addition to a slideshow featuring scenes at each center, managers were presented with awards of appreciation during the “Lunch and Learn” event. This year’s theme was “Heart of a Champion” and celebrated the impact HCDE’s center managers have on students each day.

View photos from the event at <https://goo.gl/YwUD5S>.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Restorative Discipline Trains School Communities with Goal to Reverse School-to-Prison Pipeline: HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools Brings Positive Change to School Cultures



Recovering from the fallout of school crimes like cyber-bullying or assault is a fragile process within the school community. Punitive actions like suspensions and expulsions are the norm. Now a new tool called “Restorative

Discipline” crafted for a new generation of teachers and students is being introduced to local school districts through Harris County Department of Education’s Center for Safe and Secure Schools. The goal is to repair the harm and to foster regret, understanding and acceptance between the aggressor and victim in a process called “circles.”

“Our goal is to stop the school-to-prison pipeline,” said HCDE’s Center for Safe and Secure Schools director Ecomet Burley. “We are confident that all school communities have this power when they have the right tools.”

Restorative Discipline is spreading throughout Harris County schools by a team of trained, tenured educators who are equipped with decades of classroom experience as both teachers and school leaders.

School culture and climate specialist Janice Owolabi brings 12 years of experience as a student intervention and engagement expert from Lamar Consolidated School District. She used a corporate career in computer technology to help children excel in math and science as a teacher. Specialist Julia Andrews is a former 15-year teacher and assistant principal in Houston Independent School District who holds a master’s in education.

The Restorative Discipline model involves relationship-building, bringing the school community together to talk about problems or injustices. Sometimes the act is a violation of trust or act of disrespect. Within the circle are members committed to finding understanding and resolution: students, teachers, administrators, counselors, parents and even community members.

“The system is overwhelmed—educators, students and parents are overwhelmed—and why,” said Owolabi. “From our perspective, student achievement and operations are the

two things people are looking at, but a school community has such deeper culture than that.

“Teachers are dealing with emotional issues like Hurricane Harvey, so how do you get to the learning? It’s the relationship piece that seems to be missing these days.”

Through Restorative Discipline, staff goes through training as a team to develop relationships and create values the school community wants to achieve such as respect, trust or honesty.

Within the circle, everyone has a voice, but no one is pointing fingers, according to Andrews.

“But we are here to repair the harm which has happened,” she said. “And the goal is to have a whole-school approach to implement it.”

Currently, Bammel Middle School in Spring Independent School District is using Restorative Discipline with training from the Center for Safe and Secure Schools team. Research will be collected about numbers of discipline referrals at the end of the school year. The research is being analyzed by the Research and Evaluation Institute at HCDE. Although preliminary research supports success of the Restorative Discipline model, proponents are confident the research will convert more believers.

“Repairing the harm is what it’s all about,” said Andrews. “You build community first and make the community aware of the circle process. When it’s needed, it’s not foreign to anyone.”

A Restorative Discipline Summit is planned for March 29 at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington. The idea behind the summit is to join school staff with mental health and school psychologists to provide resources.

“We will also introduce Restorative Discipline and what it could look like in your classroom or school,” said Andrews.

Register for, or get more information about, the Restorative Discipline Summit at www.hcde-texas.org/register. For more information about the Center for Safe and Secure Schools initiatives and trainings, call 713-696-2127.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

HCDE Hosts Cybersecurity in Education Conference to Address Cybersecurity Threats to Schools



Harris County Department of Education's Teaching and Learning Center hosts the Cybersecurity in Education Conference on March 27 from 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. for districts interested in

providing safe and productive online experiences for students. Attendees will learn best practices and strategies and gain resources through expert, hands-on instruction led by the FBI, Infragard, local law enforcement, the TEA and other specialists in the field of cybersecurity.

Cybersecurity is a top concern for most K-12 institutions and school districts are becoming frequent targets for cyber-attacks. The conference features James Morrison of the FBI Cybersecurity Task Force as the keynote and offers breakout sessions and vendor presentations to help arm districts with the information and strategies needed to keep information safe.

Educators, instructional technology teachers, administrators, police officers and others can benefit from this conference focused on addressing the threats facing our schools. Participants choose between a variety of topics including an overview of K-12 cybersecurity and understanding the cyber threat landscape.

Participants that choose this workshop strand will discuss how ransomware and phishing attacks can result in a breach in student data, the urgency of having appropriate staff and resources to handle a security threat, and basic IT privacy training for administrators, teachers and students.

Other workshop strands include "hackenomics," digital citizenship and safety, hacker principles and curriculum, and data privacy and protection.

Find more information and register at www.hcde-texas.org/cybersecurity.

Balint Charities Donates Second Round of Books to HCDE Head Start Students



HCDE Head Start's new partnership with Balint Charities supplies students with books to build their home libraries and encourage an early love for reading. Steve Balint with Balint Charities delivered the second set of 1,300 brand new books

for students this week. The first set of books was delivered in December 2017.

"Reading is the foundation for everything in life," said Balint. "We hope this partnership helps kids develop a love for reading early on that leads to a love of knowledge and a brighter future."

Balint Charities is a nonprofit organization that seeks to strengthen school success by enriching young lives with reading and music. Find more information on how Balint Charities supports Harris County's earliest learners at www.balintcharities.org.



HCDE Hosts Legacy of Literacy Day Event

Harris County Department of Education Head Start, in partnership with the Assistance League of Houston and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services, presents Legacy of Literacy Day on Saturday, Feb. 24 from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

This free, family-friendly event will be held at the Denver Harbor Multi-Service Center at 6402 Market St. and will include face painting, free books, games and prizes, arts and crafts and more.

View the event flyer: http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/5199/headstart_legacyofliteracy.pdf

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Organizational Morale

In an effort to meet the expectations of this element of performance as it relates to the Board's goals for me to:

- Create an open and positive environment for sharing resources and exchanging ideas to improve organizational climate;
- Seek systemically to improve the climate by obtaining and utilizing feedback from employees of the Department; and
- Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge excellence



This week, the Head Start division hosted its Lunch and Learn where managers within the division were honored for their exceptional service. This was a worthwhile event and I was honored to participate in this significant recognition lunch for outstanding employees within the Head Start division.



Also this week, the Human Resources division hosted a Valentine's



Day Social which doubled as a community service project. The division sold cake slices and half of the proceeds were donated to the American Heart Association to raise awareness for American Heart Month.

By the Department hosting events such as this, I continue to work towards the Board's goal to:

- Ensure that every person is treated with respect and dignity;
- Implement effective management practices ensuring all policies are supported by the effective procedures;
- Direct administrators to accomplish the mission, goals, and objectives of the Department;
- Monitor progress, evaluate staff performance, and hold staff accountable as appropriate; and
- Effectively delegate authority with responsibility, and monitor staff to ensure that support programs and services are cost effective and are of high quality.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

- Board Meeting

