

The CONNECTOR

A weekly publication of Harris County Department of Education
for the HCDE Board of Trustees



WEEK OF FEBRUARY 26, 2018

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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

First off, thank you for support at this week's committee meetings and regularly scheduled Board Meeting. A great deal was accomplished, and I am appreciative of your dedication and commitment to the learners of Harris County through your role as trustees of the Department.

As mentioned in this week's Board Meeting, I enjoyed a successful TABSE Conference at the end of last week and through the weekend. HCDE played a major role in this endeavor. As I usually do, I facilitated yet another provocative session with aspiring school executives. This annual conference always serves a vehicle to increase the Department's visibility, and this year was no exception—especially with Assistant Superintendent Kimberly McLeod serving as the organization's president. Hats off for a job well done!

My week was productive, beginning with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team. We are in the throes of budget season, as you are already aware. Budget managers submitted their proposed budgets to the Business Services division last Friday. Soon, we will begin the methodical process of holding annual budget hearings for each division and program within the Department. At the executive level, discussions are being held each week during ELT regarding how we will continue to ensure our conservative business approaches as we work to be exceptional stewards of taxpayer dollars.

On Tuesday of this week, I continued my quarterly sessions with members of the Board. I can't reiterate enough how beneficial this is to both my growth and to the growth of the organization. It is important that we revisit the trajectory of the Department and that I keep my finger on the pulse of your expectations. We run a fluid organization that must evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of our client school districts and it is imperative that we function as a team of eight.

Of course, our regularly scheduled February Board Meeting was held this past Wednesday, immediately after both Development and Policy Committee meetings. Both committee meetings were informative and productive, and the February Board Meeting was timely, given our fast-approaching Spring Break season. Thank you for your attendance at the respective meetings.

Yesterday, I visited Fortis Academy as we continue to populate the enrollment of this innovative campus setting. Fortis Academy will

serve as a trailblazer for districts across the state of Texas as society continues to struggle with the opioid epidemic and other substances in which our youth often find themselves addicted. We look forward to meeting the needs of all learners in Harris County and this is certainly one more viable avenue to that end. I am excited about the possibilities and positive life stories that will arise out of this program.

Today, I held my standing meetings with staff and I am especially interested in being updated on the Academic and Behavior School-West (AB-West) construction schematic design. I can only imagine how the morale of both the students and staff of this campus will increase once the construction of their new facility is underway. They are long overdue for a state-of-the-art facility and I appreciate your support in helping to make that a reality.

This week, in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following workshops: Teachers, WRITE; Online Instructors' Training, Part I; Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association; Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Eggs. Egg. Everywhere/ Ladybugs; and HCDE Math Leadership Meeting. HCDE continues to serve as a leader in the teaching and learning process in Harris County and beyond.

Looking ahead into next week, as usual, I will begin with a meeting of the ELT followed by a meeting with Trustees Moore and Lee Carter to discuss ways to retain teachers within our Head Start division—a definite priority for this division which serves the eastern quadrant of our county. As expressed in this week's Board Meeting, consistency in the classroom is important to young children and I appreciate the Board's interest in working towards a solution to this matter. Finally, I always look forward to continuing my volunteer opportunity within our Head Start division. That said, I will resume my role as a SuperMENTor next Thursday, reading to some of your youngest learners.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS:

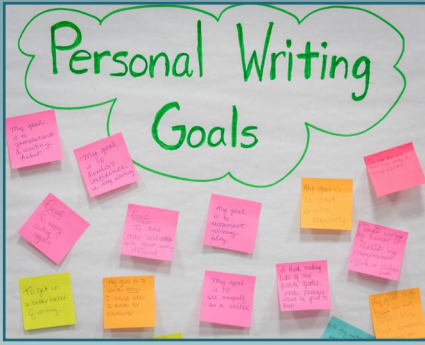
Wednesday, April 18, 2018

- Board Meeting

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Writers in Schools-Houston Hosts 2-Day Workshop with HCDE to Train Area ELA Teachers



Secondary English language arts teachers became students of writing as they participated in “Teachers, Write!” at HCDE on Feb. 26-27. The Writers in the Schools-Houston initiative was a two-day workshop which immersed secondary ELA teachers in the craft of writing, with the goal for the instructors to become better writing teachers.

Teachers left with a portfolio of work in all writing genres, including memoirs and poetry. Kelly Tummy, ELA curriculum director for HCDE, said the teachers will share their personal reflections with their students.



“Oftentimes writing teachers are so immersed in curriculum writing that they don’t get to share their own creative initiatives and experiences with their students,” said Tummy.



WITS is a nonprofit formed over 30 years ago to engage children in the pleasure and power of reading and writing. WITS founders saw an opportunity to capitalize on the writing talent in the University of Houston’s Creative Writing Program

and in the diverse Houston community, to provide a valuable service to area schools.

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

FEBRUARY 26 2018

Teachers, WRITE!

Online Instructor’s Training - Part I

FEBRUARY 28, 2018

Houston Science Educators’ Leadership Association

MARCH 1, 2018

Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Eggs, Eggs, Everywhere/Ladybugs (6 hours G/T update)

HCDE Math Leadership Meeting



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Area Science Teachers Learn to ‘Chart with the Chicks’



HCDE’s Teaching and Learning Center hosted the “Chart Chicks” this week for area science teachers. Chart Chicks provides professional development sessions to train and facilitate teachers in the implementation of interactive anchor charts and other activities. These strategies

help teachers build student success through high levels of engagement.

During this week’s workshop, teachers gained strategies to engage elementary students using interactive charts and content walls. Emphasis was placed on building academic vocabulary in science.



Center for Safe and Secure Staff Expand Restorative Practices Work into Columbia Brazoria ISD



Staff from the Center for Safe and Secure Schools are beginning to work with Columbia Brazoria Independent School District in four elementary schools and one junior high to

assist their behavior specialists on campus with restorative practices, de-escalation strategies and classroom management strategies. In addition, they assist students who have experienced trauma associated with events like Hurricane Harvey. Julia Andrews and Janice Owolabi are coaching and modeling as they work with students in small groups every Monday for the remainder of the school year.

HCDE Conference Addresses Cybersecurity in K-12 Curriculum



As technology changes, it’s important for school districts to include cybersecurity in the K-12 curriculum. According to Education Week, less than one-fourth of high school

seniors say they’ve taken a computer science course, especially a specialized class focused on cybersecurity and data protection.

and administrators will learn more about developing programs and curricula to keep up with rapidly changing technologies. Participants will join experts in the cybersecurity field to discuss challenges and gain resources for curricula and professional development for teachers.

Other topics featured at the conference are “hackenomics,” data privacy and protection, and digital citizenship. Find more information and register at www.hcde-texas.org/cybersecurity.

At HCDE’s Cybersecurity in Education Conference on March 27, educators, instructional technology teachers

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

CASE Debates Students Participate in City Wide Debate Tournament at Federal Courthouse



In a final event for the CASE Debates 2017-2018 program, Harris County Department of Education's CASE Debates finalists competed in the Houston Urban Debate League City Championship Day on Saturday, Feb. 24, 2018. The tournament was held at the Bob Casey Federal Courthouse from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The competition

consisted of two divisions for Policy Debate, a more formalized debate process and Worlds Debate, a more impromptu platform. CASE Debates students competed with Houston ISD students who are part of the HUDL program.

After four rounds of debating, two teams from CASE Debates qualified to move on to national and international tournaments. Trevion Thompson and Jay'den Kannedy

from Alief Independent School District's Taylor High School placed second in the Policy division. The team qualified to move on to compete in the Urban Debate National Championship which will take place at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Both students also receive \$750 for college scholarships. Amechi Obodoechina, Isaiah Mogaji, Brian Okereke and Divine Ezeokwonna from Alief ISD's Kerr High School placed as semifinalists in the Worlds division. The team will move on to compete in the Bluebonnet World Schools Tournament at Kingwood High School, which hosts Worlds debaters from across the world.

"We are proud of the progress of the students in our program and happy that we can expand debate opportunities to students across Harris County through our new collaborative with HUDL called CASE Debates," said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, CASE for Kids director.

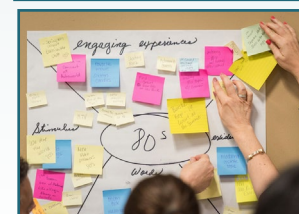
Students had the opportunity to be greeted and hear a welcome presentation from mentor Judge Marvin Isgur, a United States Bankruptcy Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

Rockin' Review through lead4ward Attracts 200 Education Leaders



Two-hundred teachers from multiple districts attended the HCDE Teaching and Learning Center's lead4ward Rockin' Review this week. The leadership training covered STAAR testing areas ranging from reading, science, social studies, math and writing. The workshop was led

by lead4ward presenter Stephanie Zelenak and hosted by TLC Director Andrea Segraves.



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Head Start Families Celebrate at Legacy of Literacy Event



Families in northeast Harris County gathered at the Denver Harbor Multi-Service Center on Saturday, Feb. 24 to play games, read books and celebrate the Legacy of Literacy Day hosted by Harris County Department

of Education Head Start, the Assistance League of Houston and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services.

At the inaugural event promoting literacy, children played games for prizes, created arts and crafts and even left with books to build their home libraries. The Assistance League of Houston collected 745 books from various locations and those that were not taken home were donated to Area I Head Start centers.



Through the event, HCDE Head Start Senior Director Venetia Peacock hoped children would understand that they can have fun and learn simultaneously. At each activity station, children were invited to pick a book they would like to take home and families participated in story sessions each half-hour.



“The purpose of the event was to support our commitment to further literacy with our youngest learners and their families,” said Assistance League of Houston President Marilyn Brooks. “Because of the close and cordial relationship we have with Head Start, we knew it would be a natural progression to partner with them to implement this new outreach program.”

In addition to promoting literacy, the event also aimed to recruit families for HCDE Head Start, currently taking applications for the 2018-2019 school year at all 15 centers in northeast Harris County. For more information or to enroll, visit www.hcde-texas.org/headstart.

Center for Safe and Secure Schools Hosts Restorative Discipline Summit



School districts can learn to change the conversation, practices and culture of student discipline by attending the Restorative Discipline Summit at Harris County

Department of Education on March 29. Hosted by the

Center for Safe and Secure Schools, the summit offers a full day of information powered by dynamic keynote speakers and trainers.

Restorative Practices helps schools prevent students from becoming behavior statistics. It also helps stop the school-to-prison pipeline, keeps students from falling through the cracks and decreases dropout rates.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

HCDE Collaborates with Career Readiness Youth Symposium as Outreach Initiative with Texas Alliance of Black School Educators



Career Readiness for area public school youth was part of an initiative last week coordinated by the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators, HCDE's Teaching and

Learning Center, Houston Community College and Syren Music Group.

The event was part of a youth outreach project through the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators Conference held in Houston last week.



Multiple schools participated in the event, and Assistant Superintendent Kimberly McLeod provided a career presentation for the students.

The symposium included panel discussions with student peer groups and professionals on college and career readiness. A scavenger hunt and lunch were included in the day's events.



HCDE Head Start to Host 'Healthy Minds Healthy Families' Conference



Harris County Department of Education Head Start, along with the Hogg Foundation, is planning for the Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference which will be held Friday, May 4, 2018

from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 6300 Irvington Blvd.

The Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference is open to early childhood educators, Head Start staff, the families we serve and the community-at-large. The division expects approximately 200 attendees.

The conference provides participants with tools for parents, educators and other professionals working with children with challenging behaviors. The goal is to increase public awareness of mental health issues among children and adults.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Professional Growth and Development

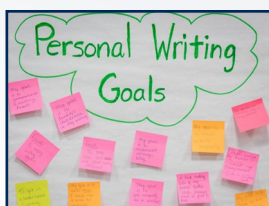
In accordance with the Board's expectations of me to:

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



Last week, HCDE, in conjunction with TABSE, spearheaded a successful TABSE Conference for educators from across the state of Texas. Hundreds of executive educators were in attendance, along with others aspiring to that level.

Additionally, the Department continued to serve as a catalyst in the realm of teaching and learning by hosting a plethora of innovative workshops



to advance our goal to ensure top notch professional development that will benefit learners of all ages within Harris County.



To that end, we hosted an excellent 2-Day Workshop with Writers in Schools-



Houston (also known as WITS) to train area English/ Language Arts Teachers. WITS is a non-profit formed over 30 years ago to engage children in the pleasure and power of reading and writing. Its founder saw an opportunity to capitalize on the writing talent in the University of Houston's Creative Writing Program and in the diverse Houston community, to provide a valuable service to area schools.

By HCDE's taking advantage of both our in-house professional development and partnering with prestigious entities such as WITS, along with playing such an integral role within TABSE, we are ensuring that students across both the state and county are the by-products of cutting edge techniques that advance teaching and learning.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

- Board Meeting

