

# The CONNECTOR

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



WEEK OF MARCH 18, 2018

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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

HCDE resumed normal business hours this week after the Spring Break holiday week, March 12-17. We, along with our client districts, resumed operations as we wind down yet another academic year.

It's been a productive week at HCDE. I began the week meeting with the Executive Leadership Team. The meeting was productive as we move forward with our budget planning processes. As mentioned last week, division and program budget meetings will begin Friday, April 13, 2018.

Also Tuesday, I attended a meeting with Moak, Casey and Associates School Finance and Accountability Experts. The meeting was very informative and the Moak, Casey and Associates/HCDE annual summary, discussed and presented in the meeting, accurately encapsulates HCDE and its benefits to the Harris County community.

I continued my volunteerism efforts with the Head Start division as a SuperMENTor, reading to some of our Head Start students on Wednesday. Again, I find this experience to be a very rewarding one, and I encourage the male members of our board to become involved in this very worthwhile program. Later that day, I continued my quarterly meetings with members of the Board.

I also met with staff to discuss the status of the Academic and Behavior School-West campus new construction. I am pleased with the progress thus far, as planned.

This week, in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following trainings and workshops: Online Instructor's Training, Part II; CASE for Kids- OST Learning Community; School Finance Council; What Do You Mean? Building Better

Questioning Strategies into Instruction. We continue to serve as leaders in the "train the trainer" model in public education.

Looking ahead into next week, I will begin the week, as usual, meeting with the ELT. Later Monday, I have a meeting with the superintendent of Alief ISD. I continually reach out to our client district superintendents to ensure that the Department is evolving to meet the needs of all learners.

Please be reminded of next Tuesday's Special Board Committee Meeting related to legal counsel.

I am looking forward to participating in our 2nd Chess Tournament within the Schools division to be held next Wednesday. Last year, I was challenged by some of our student chess players and I look forward to that experience again.

On Thursday, I will continue my obligations to the Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM) Board at a regularly scheduled meeting, and I look forward to meeting with the President of the University of Houston Downtown, Juan Munoz.

Also, be reminded that next Friday, the Department will be closed in observation of the Good Friday holiday. The Department will resume normal operating hours on Monday, April 2, 2018.

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

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Wednesday, April 18, 2018**

- Board Meeting

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

CASE for Kids Celestine Honored as Next Generation of Afterschool Leaders by National Association



Chasidy Celestine commits her professional life to serving afterschool youth through the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids. Recently she and 29 other national up-and-coming, young afterschool leaders under age 30 were named the association's "Next Generation of Afterschool Leaders 2018." Read her story as she's featured in the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) weekly e-newsletter. <http://goo.gl/UYqSRu>

### ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

**MARCH 19, 2018**

Online Instructor's Training - Part II

**MARCH 21, 2018**

CASE for Kids-OST Learning Community

**MARCH 22, 2018**

Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Aquatic/Terrarium Habitats (6 hours G/T update)

**MARCH 23, 2018**

School Finance Council

What Do You Mean? Building Better Questioning Strategies into Instruction

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Record 61 National Scholastic Art & Writing Medals Awarded to Area Teens after Regional Advancement with Harris County Department of Education



Harris County student artists and writers in grades 7-12 earned a record-breaking 61 national Scholastic Art & Writing Medals through awards announced by the New York nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers on March 13. The student art and prose entries advanced from a regional competition sponsored by Harris County Department of Education.

Sharing the national limelight are students from Alief, Clear Creek, Galena Park, Houston, Pasadena, Klein, Katy, Cy-Fair, Deer Park, Pearland, Tomball, Spring and Spring Branch independent school districts. Private school recipients are from Episcopal High School, Houston Christian High School, St. John's School, The Village School, St. Thomas High School, River Oaks Baptist School and The Kinkaid School.

The Awards, founded in 1923, allow creative teen artists and writers to earn recognition, exhibition, publication and scholarships. View the list of the 61 Silver and Gold Harris County Medalists: <http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/5232/national-medalists.pdf>.

Specialty Gold Medal awards went to two Houston-area teens. Emilio Recio from Sam Rayburn High School in Pasadena Independent School District earned the best-in-class, prestigious American Visions award while Emma Bennett from the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Houston ISD gained the American Voices award.



National medalists from Harris County increased from 59 in 2017 to a record 61 in 2018. Twenty Gold Medals and 41 Silver Medals were awarded. A record-breaking 346,000 works of art and writing were submitted for judging this year.

Gold Medalists are invited to a national ceremony at Carnegie Hall on June 7, 2018 where they are recognized among more than 2,800 teens throughout the nation. That evening, the Statue of Liberty is lit in gold in recognition of the celebration.

Area celebrations and exhibits have been hosted throughout Houston to celebrate the artists, including exhibits at Texas Art Supply and The Galleria. Gold and Silver Key art from students in grades 7-8 is displayed from March 27 to April 1 at the Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston, 3400 Main St., Houston, Texas.

“Scholastic Art & Writing is important because it allows teens to express themselves creatively and compete through writing and art genres,” said Harris County School Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. “In addition to the prestige of the Awards, students have scholarship opportunities for college. As regional sponsor, we are supporting fine arts initiatives in Harris County schools and celebrate the teachers and volunteer judges, along with the community supporters who provide venues for artist ceremonies and receptions.”

For more information about how to enter, judge or sponsor the Awards in Harris County, go to [www.hcde-texas.org/Scholastic](http://www.hcde-texas.org/Scholastic).

**About Scholastic Art & Writing:** Founded in 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the nation's longest-running, most prestigious educational initiative supporting student achievement in the visual and literary arts. Through the Awards, students receive opportunities for recognition, exhibition, publication and scholarships. Past winners include celebrated artists and writers such as Robert Redford, Andy Warhol, Truman Capote, John Lithgow, Joyce Carol Oates and Sylvia Plath. More at [www.artandwriting.org](http://www.artandwriting.org).

# Opportunity

## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

### Schools Nominate Three Teacher of Year Finalists



*Suzanna Boyd, AB School West*

We congratulate HCDE Teacher of the Year nominees Suzanna Boyd, AB School West; Gabrielle Gardner, AB School East; and Joanna Lee, Highpoint East. All three teachers were surprised in their classrooms with the announcements.

One of them will be named HCDE 2018

Teacher of the Year.

Bios and stories from each of the teachers are forthcoming through the Connector. The TOY nominations are a new practice for the Schools division.



*Gabrielle Gardner (third from left), AB School East*



*Joanna Lee, Highpoint East*

### AB East and West Teams Prepare for March 28 HCDE 2nd Annual Chess Tourney



upcoming school rivalry tournament.

As AB East student Jake Carley wins four of seven rounds in the North/Central Texas Scholastic Chess Championships during Spring Break, his eyes are now focused on an

9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. The tournament is the culminating event at both AB East and West as students gather for a friendly competition between their schools.

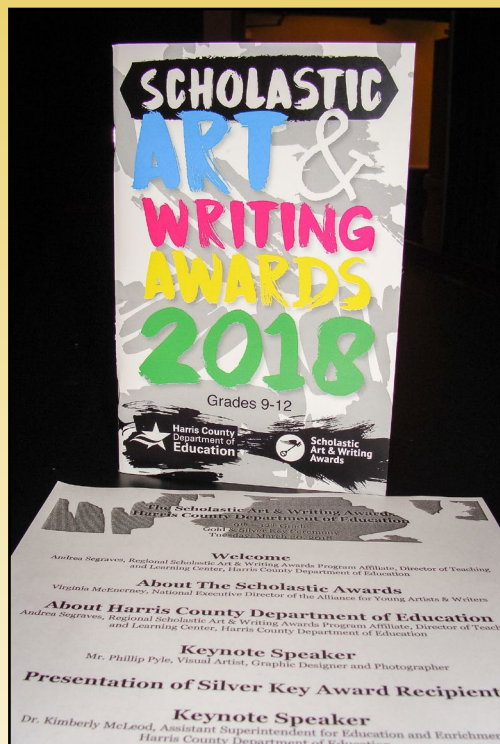
Last year, Superintendent Colbert dropped in to play a few rounds. This year the event promises to be both educational and competitive as students use their critical thinking skills to calculate their moves on the chess board.

The 2nd Annual HCDE Chess Tournament will be held at 6300 Irvington on March 28, from

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### 9-12 Grade Scholastic Art & Writing Teens Gather at Bayou Place Downtown for Awards Ceremony



Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recipients in grades 9-12 gathered at the Bayou Place downtown for an awards ceremony for Silver Key and Gold Key art and writing awards. The students received advice from an area writer and were welcomed by Dr. Kimberly McLeod and regional Scholastic Art & Writing coordinator Andrea Segraves. In addition to viewing an information video about HCDE, attendees heard from several award-winning teens. Each school district and private school gathered for a group photo at the event attended by several hundred supporters.



### Final Ecobot Challenge Practice Set for March 24 at HCDE



The All-Earth Ecobot Challenge final practice session will be held for Harris County students and teachers on March 24, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at 6300 Irvington. About 200 participants are expected. The event prepares students for the competition to be hosted by CASE for Kids and the Education Foundation of Harris County on April 21 at Kashmere High School, 6900 Wileyvale, Houston, Texas.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### St. Agnes Student Earns HCDE Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Award for Harvey Photograph



A week after the waters of Hurricane Harvey receded last August, Hattie Meehan walked into her family home, camera in hand, to document the damage done by 22 inches of water.

What started as a photography class assignment from teacher Terry Suprean became part of Meehan's healing process and a way to work through a difficult situation. The photograph taken also earned the St. Agnes junior a Gold Key award from Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Regional Affiliate Harris County Department of Education.

When Harvey hit on Aug. 27, Meehan and her family woke at 5 a.m. to water rapidly approaching the doorstep of their Meyerland home. By 11 a.m., they had 22 inches of water in their house and were collecting necessary belongings and preparing to leave. Meehan and her family waded through the chest-high water with their belongings in a large Tupperware container to find dry land in a nearby Randall's parking lot. Twelve hours later, at 5 p.m., the family was rescued by Meehan's grandfather and taken to Cypress, Texas, where they stayed until the water receded.

After a week, the family began tearing out the walls of their damaged home. That's when Meehan was inspired to take the photo that earned her the Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Award. The top half of the photo features teal walls and a white chandelier hanging from the ceiling, the last remnant of the childhood room Meehan shared with her sister. The bottom half shows the exposed pipes and frame of the house, almost as if it were a different photo. It depicts the difficult emotions Meehan experienced while

walking through her home and the surreal situation she and her family were in.

"As I walked around what was once my fully functioning house of 12 years, I wanted to capture what Hurricane Harvey had done to the place of safety and comfort in my life," said Meehan. "The strict division between the flooded wall and the top wall appealed to me because the entire upper part of our one-story house was absolutely fine, while the other half was destroyed."

Meehan was recognized along with other Harris County teens at an awards ceremony on March 20 at the Ballroom at Bayou Place. Her award-winning photo was also on display at The Galleria in March as part of the 9-12 grade Scholastic Art & Writing art exhibit.

While honored by the Scholastic Gold Key award and regional recognition, Meehan says she took away something more from her experience with Harvey. She saw firsthand that a sense of normalcy can be uprooted in a matter of minutes, but she also saw her school and community came together to create a support system for her family. She believes people's lives are shaped by experiences like Harvey, but it's how people respond to those experiences that defines their character.

"I chose to deal with my Harvey experience through photography and utilized this creative outlet to work through my situation," said Meehan. "As an artist I now have a definite vision of how I want to proceed and what I want to continue to capture – the character that defines every single person."

For more information about HCDE's regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and opportunities to sponsor, judge and enter the competition, visit [www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic](http://www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic).

# Systemic Achievement

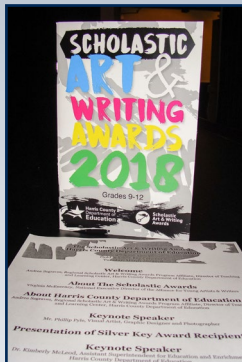
...with purposeful intent

## Community Relations

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me to

- Ensure that appropriate staff development is available and monitor staff development for effectiveness;
- Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration; and
- Work with other community and governmental entities and educational organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way

Because of HCDE's involvement with Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, a record 61 national Scholastic Art & Writing medals were awarded to area teens after regional advancement with HCDE.



HCDE is the regional sponsor of Scholastic Art and Writing for public and private schools. Harris County student artists and writers in grades 7-12 earned a record-breaking number of awards that were announced by the New York nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers on March



13. The student art and prose entries advanced from a regional competition sponsored by Harris County Department of Education.



Area celebrations and exhibits have been hosted throughout Houston to celebrate the artists, including exhibits at Texas Art Supply and The Galleria. Gold and Silver Key art from students in grades 7-8 is displayed from March 27 to April 1 at the Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston.



**By ensuring that HCDE continues to offer these kinds of opportunities to the community for the betterment of our future writers and learners, I am working to meet the expectations of the board to identify the needs of all students and develop a process that ensures each student's goals are met or exceeded and to investigate best practices for student achievement and utilize effective practices that maximize achievement of student potential within HCDE schools. Further, I am ensuring that HCDE maintains visibility and involvement in the community and by representing HCDE at attendance at such events.**

## HCDE BOARD

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*Position 4, Precinct 3*

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

- Board Meeting

