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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

It's been a great week at HCDE. I began the week with a productive meeting of with my Executive Leadership Team. I also had a great meeting with the superintendent of Alief ISD. Our relationship with that district dates back many years, and as we prepare to relocate our AB-West campus within that district, we are already fortifying this longstanding relationship between both entities and the respective administrations. We will continue to meet this district's needs, as well as the needs of the remaining school districts.

This past Tuesday, I met with trustees serving on HCDE's Special Committee for Legal Services' RFQ. The meeting was efficient, and I am hopeful that the members are pleased with the direction and the progress being made to that end.

Yesterday, HCDE's 2nd Annual Chess Tournament was held and it was an exciting one for our student participants. It was also exhilarating for me, as I challenged the tournament winner. Let's just say that I "let" him take home the gold. I am pleased that our campuses have begun this game of strategy and critical thinking. It was a successful event and it was a pleasure for me to spend a great deal of the day being a part of the action.

Today, I fulfilled my responsibility with the Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM) board. This body creates a plethora of opportunities for both the northern areas of Harris County as well as the clients of HCDE. This partnership has exponential benefits and I am proud to be part of the collaboration.

Later today, I will meet with President Juan Munoz, University of Houston Downtown. I look forward to this opportunity to network with an official within the higher education realm.

This week in teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following trainings and workshops: STAAR Academy Grade 5: A Closer Look at STAAR Reporting Categories; Cybersecurity in Education Conference; TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam; Restorative Discipline Summit: Changing the Conversation, Practices and Culture Around Student Discipline.

Looking ahead into next week, I will have my regularly scheduled meeting with ELT Monday, followed by the regularly scheduled IMPACT Meeting, a group comprised of board members from Harris County independent school districts. I will conduct Leadership Team Meeting on Tuesday, followed by Agenda Review Wednesday, in preparation of the regularly scheduled April Board Meeting.

Please be reminded that tomorrow is Good Friday and the Department will be closed in its observation. We will resume normal business hours on Monday.

Thanks for your continued service to and support of HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**, and I hope you have a relaxing Easter weekend.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**  
**Wednesday, April 18, 2018**

- Board Meeting

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### March CASE for Kids Meetings Provide Resources for Harris County Afterschool Providers



The CASE for Kids Learning Community Meeting brought together about 100 out-of-school time professionals to learn, problem-solve, and collaborate last week. The session centered on staffing issues, from recruitment techniques to professional development options and retention strategies.

Attendees were given the opportunity to network and share their projects and programs. They were also able to visit CASE for Kids' lending library – the SMART Zone.

In addition, afterschool providers benefited from another professional development workshop called Courageous Conversations. The workshop centered on the topic of racial disparity and disproportionality provided by education experts Shondra Rogers and Mia Williams. Rogers began the conversation by using a dot exercise in which she asked attendees to draw four lines connecting nine dots in a box. The objective of the exercise was to think and draw outside of the box. Attendees shared the many reasons that can keep people from thinking and acting outside of their acceptable norms, as well as ways to change such habits.



The workshop ended with Rogers and Williams sharing the Texas Model – a framework for equity – with attendees. The model consists of six connected components that can be used to transform any system into a more equitable one.

### **ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER**

**MARCH 26-27, 2018**

STAAR Academy Grade 5: A Closer Look at STAAR Reporting Categories

**MARCH 27, 2018**

Cybersecurity in Education Conference

**MARCH 28, 2018**

TEXES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam

**MARCH 29, 2018**

Restorative Discipline Summit: Changing the Conversation, Practices and Culture Around Student Discipline



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Educators Gather to Consider Restorative Discipline Practices During Summit on March 29



Several dozen attendees gathered for the Restorative Discipline Summit: Changing the Conversation, Practices and Culture Around Student Discipline hosted by the Center for Safe and

Secure Schools on March 28.

The workshop focused on a new alternative to student discipline called restorative practices. It is aimed at

preventing students from becoming statistics of the “school to prison pipeline.”

Often, students with repeat disciplinary problems slip through the “discipline gap” and become dropouts, increasing their chances of being incarcerated.

The restorative practices model is built around the school as a community model, with open discussions in circle time which result in students and staff talking out problems in the school community.

### Game of Chess Teaches Life Skills to Students with Behavior Disorders: Tourney set for March 28



The game of chess is the one extracurricular activity that sits well with teenager Jake Carley. In fact, the shiny trophy he recently won at a state tournament is the first he’s ever received.

The 13-year-old attends Academic and Behavior School East, one of two Harris County Department of Education schools which provides enriching, supportive learning for students with intellectual, development and behavioral disorders. Jake is diagnosed with depression and Asperger’s, a milder autism spectrum disorder. He is highly intelligent and enjoys sharing what he learns during his school day with his family.

Mom Brandy Carley says his temper flared and stress levels rose when Jake tried sports like football and baseball. Chess makes him feel confident.

“I’m proud, very proud,” she said. “I always knew from an early age that he was socially different from other children, but I am proud of who he is.”

HCDE’s special schools work with students with disabilities in a highly-structured environment with low student-to-teacher ratios of eight to one through individualized academic

and behavior plans. Chess is introduced to students as an extracurricular activity during the school day and is offered through nonprofit Perfect TeamPlay, Inc.

Benefits of chess pair well with students attending the two AB campuses in east and west Houston. Increased attention span, improved social conduct, enhanced self-esteem, and better classroom behavior are a few examples.

AB West Principal Victor Keys notes that students practice following directions and accepting consequences and criticism, qualities which are important in the real world.

Losing at anything was always an issue with Brandy’s son before he discovered chess, she explained. The game teaches him patience and gives him a sense of peace his mother sees as a sign of growth.

“We’ve noticed the skills our students gained through chess—time, attention, patience and strategy—have transferred into the classroom and throughout the school community,” said AB East Principal Mindy Robertson.

Mom Carley confirms the positives.

“I’m glad he found something he is successful at,” she said. “He’s found his place.”

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### School Districts Gain Strategies, Resources to Combat Cybersecurity Threats through HCDE Cybersecurity in Education Conference



This week, Harris County Department of Education's Teaching and Learning Center hosted 10 area school districts to discuss shared concerns over cybersecurity and the future of education in an increasingly digital world.

The Cybersecurity in Education Conference featured sessions from James Morrison of the FBI Cybersecurity Task Force, Mary Dickerson with University of Houston, Christopher Kar with Fort Bend ISD and more.

Cybersecurity is a top concern for most K-12 institutions and school districts are becoming frequent targets for

cyber-attacks. The conference aimed to arm districts with the information and strategies needed to keep student and staff information safe, and encourage digital citizenship and safety.



The average cyberbully starts at age 9. During James Morrison's session, he discussed ways to make students feel safe online and in the classroom. During the conference, attendees also gained easy-to-implement strategies to protect personal data and create identity management solutions.

View photos from the conference at <https://goo.gl/2o2Mh3>.

### HCDE Cybersecurity Conference Coverage by Univision 45 and Channel 13



Channel 45 Univision covered the Cybersecurity Conference on March 27. Employees David McGeary and Stephanie De Los Santos were interviewed. De Los Santos provided the Spanish interview

portion. View the footage from Univision: [https://youtu.be/jbl\\_AnhxJEc](https://youtu.be/jbl_AnhxJEc)

View video about cybersecurity with Teaching and Learning Center's David McGeary (created through Communications and Creative Services): <https://youtu.be/i-AF0oQ9srQ>

### Final Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Ceremony Held for Regional Winners, Grades 7-8



Students and families of Gold and Silver Key awardees through Scholastic Art & Writing gathered for an awards ceremony on March 28 at MATCH located in Midtown. Several hundred attendees came to both ceremonies to celebrate Silver Key art and writing recipients from 5:30-6:30 p.m. and Gold Key art and writing recipients from 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Groups of students were celebrated onstage as each district and private school was called for awards. This year over 6,000 entries were judged, a record number for Harris County Department of Education.



# Opportunity

## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

### 2nd Annual AB Schools Tournament Provides Opportunity for Critical Thinking, Social Skills



About two dozen students from AB East and West gathered for the rivalry 2nd Annual Chess Tournament on March 28 at Irvington. The afternoon gave students the opportunity to practice social skills along with critical thinking. An algebra think-tank session was included in the afternoon session.

Perfect TeamPlay, Inc. provides instruction for the extracurricular chess club. Principals Victor Keys and Mindy Robertson see student behavior and concentration result as students gain confidence with the game.

Superintendent James Colbert arrived to play several games with students, including a game with AB School East champion Julian Munoz, overall winner of the tournament. AB School



East claimed victory in the tournament for a second year in the bracket-play tournament.



*Overall winner: Julian Munoz, AB East*

1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners from each school: AB East- Julian Munoz, 1st place, Gage Warner, 2nd place, and Michael Carley, 3rd place. AB West- Morgan Day, 1st place, John Jacob Martinez, 2nd place, and Taylor Marki, 3rd place



*Photo: Students from AB West and East pose with Superintendent James Colbert and their principals.*



***View the photo gallery from the event:***

<https://hcdetexas.photoshelter.com/gallery/20180328-Chess/G0000tiUVIIVbD3k/C0000AEU2QfJ9M5g> password is hcde1889

# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Professional Development

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me as it relates to these elements of performance:

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



This week, the Academic and Behavior Schools hosted the 2nd Annual Chess Tournament.

Chess, a game of strategy and critical thinking, is an exceptional enhancement to the programs already in place on both of these campuses. The game boosts confidence of the competitors and encourages a deeper level of thinking before action.



The tournament was a success, and I was proud to be part of this year's event for the second consecutive year. Hats off to this year's winner and I look forward to participating in next year's tournament.

**By ensuring that HCDE employees receive appropriate professional development, activities and programs such as chess can be implemented into current curriculum planning. In doing so, I am working towards meeting the Board's goals of me to assess any new and effective development tools available, and determine its applicability to staff, and in this case, enhancing the exposure of our youth and expanding their horizons, encouraging them to soar to even higher heights.**

## HCDE BOARD

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Wednesday, April 18, 2018**

- Board Meeting

