

The CONNECTOR

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



WEEK OF OCTOBER 10, 2016

VOLUME 3/ISSUE 9



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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

This week was a very productive one at HCDE. This past Monday was a student holiday in most Harris County school districts. It was also a student holiday on HCDE campuses.

I began the week visiting the Academic and Behavior School campuses during professional development sessions related to the recent implementation of cameras on special education campuses. While there, I also had an opportunity to observe Principals' Month by recognizing the principals at both campuses through a special presentation. I will recognize the Highpoint campus principals next week with similar recognitions.

On Tuesday, I traveled to McKinney, Texas—near Dallas—to visit the Serenity High School campuses. I spent both Tuesday and Wednesday making site visits to the campuses within the Serenity system. The Serenity schools are recovery high schools for students struggling with substance abuse. I remain on a fact-finding mission as it relates to this specialty school environment as I consider proposing to offer this service to the students in Harris County who are also battling addiction issues.

Yesterday, I spent the day fulfilling my American Leadership Forum (ALF) monthly commitment as we reviewed the findings of the most recent Houston Area Survey results during a joint ALF session. The all-day meeting was informative, and obviously replete with valuable information related to the demographics of our city.

Today, I attended the ALF Second Friday Breakfast where the topic was The Next Legislative Session. The speakers were Senator Sylvia Garcia and State Representative Jim Murphy. They presented dialogue as they see the agenda and priorities of the fast-approaching legislative session. The discussion was

moderated by Lisa Malosky of Malosky Productions. Also, today, I presented at an AROSC event where I spoke on my vision for students recovering from substance abuse issues in Harris County.

This week, in the area of teaching and learning, we focused on classroom instruction, digital learning, standardized test preparation (especially focused on science), and literacy through the following workshops and training sessions: Logic Models for Program Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Effectiveness, Building Conceptual Understanding in Grades 3 and 4, STAAR Accommodations for your Special Population Students: What Does It Look Like in the Classroom, and STAAR: A Closer Look at Organisms and Environments (science) for Grades 5 and 8, Test Prep Series for TEXES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam for both ELAR and all content areas, and TABE, BEST Literacy, and Best Plus. We also delved into Shades of Learning: Culturally Inclusive Afterschool Programming, and we hosted an Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar as well as the October School Finance Council Meeting.

On Monday, as previously mentioned, I will be visiting the Highpoint Schools to recognize the principals on both campuses. I will also continue my regular meetings with school superintendents within Harris County.

In closing, please be reminded that the regularly scheduled October Board Meeting is next Tuesday, October 18, 2016, at 1:00 p.m. The Policy Committee will meet immediately prior to that meeting at 12:00 noon.

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

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

\$550,000 in City of Houston Funding Benefits Houston Families through CASE for Kids City Connections



Afterschool gets a boost in the city of Houston thanks to \$550,000 in Houston City Council funding earmarked for a collaborative called CASE for Kids City Connections. The partnership with the city of Houston and the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, provides \$45,000

in funding for nonprofit organizations in each of the 11 Houston City Council districts A-K.

CASE for Kids has worked with city council members and the city of Houston for three years as administrator and coordinator of the City Connections program. Last year, an estimated 7,938 children were served through the program.

Funding begins October 31 through March 31 for the organizations selected as afterschool providers. Grant awards range from \$4,000-\$10,000. Several council districts will reissue a request for proposal due by November 7 for additional funding opportunities in Houston City Council Districts A, B, E, and F.

As an afterschool intermediary, CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings, and funding for students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities, and community centers. As a branch of Harris County Department of Education, the division was founded in 1999 with a goal to keep kids safe, help working families, and improve academic achievement.

“The need for safe and secure places for our Houston children to go before and after school gets more critical each year as families’ work demands increase and federal funding for afterschool disappears,” said CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers. “Houston leadership is in touch with its families and communities and realizes

that children need enriching activities and safe havens during out-of-school time. There are a wealth of worthy organizations who are stepping up to provide quality programs.”

In addition to organizations providing afterschool activities for youth, the funded organizations may also use grant funding from the city to improve afterschool program quality.

CASE for Kids will provide resources for quality support via afterschool trainings and lend items from its library to the organizations. Curriculum and equipment such as academic materials, sports equipment and literacy kits can be checked out, free of charge.

A total of 105 City Connections applications were received for the 2016-2017 school year. Organizations will provide a variety of activities for youth after school, including fine arts, academic enrichment, college exploration, and fitness classes.

For details about the organizations gaining City Connections funding, go to www.afterschoolzone.org. To find out about additional funding opportunities in city council districts A, B, E, and F, email caseconnections@hcde-texas.org.

About the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids or CASE for Kids: CASE for Kids, formerly the Cooperative for After-School Enrichment, was launched by Harris County Department of Education in 1999. CASE for Kids is an after-school intermediary which leverages community resources and strengthens the capacity of the out-of-school time field. Services benefit approximately 12,000 kids in greater Harris County. CASE for Kids programs happen before and after school, on weekends and during the summer. Go to www.afterschoolzone.org for information.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Veteran Communicator Helen Spencer to Lead as HCDE Chief Information Officer



Helen Spencer is the new chief information officer at Harris County Department of Education. For the past five years, Spencer served as chief of staff and chief communications officer at Houston Independent School District, overseeing multi-platform communications, business partnerships and family and community engagement initiatives.

As CIO, Spencer is committed to raising public awareness about the important role HCDE plays in preparing the region's children to contribute to Harris County's prosperity, and in equipping adults with the skills they need to support their families. Technology is integral in achieving those outcomes, she said.

"The story of Harris County Department of Education is directly tied to the story of our community," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "We are excited to have Ms. Spencer leading our work to engage all of Harris County in a vital conversation about how we continue evolving to meet the demands of our strong and diverse economy."

Harris County Department of Education provides resources and services to students, teachers and school districts throughout Harris County, the third largest county in the nation. As the county school district, HCDE supports learners of all ages with:

- Head Start early childhood education
- Afterschool care
- Teacher professional development and certification
- Adult GED programs
- Adult English-as-a-second-language classes

"HCDE provides critical resources to thousands of Houston-area students at a time when school districts face shrinking

budgets and burgeoning challenges," Spencer said. "Every conversation about strengthening public schools and nurturing the whole child should include the Harris County Department of Education."

Spencer began her career in newspaper journalism while studying at Texas A&M University, serving as editor in chief of The Battalion student newspaper. She later served as news editor for the Houston Chronicle.

"In my career as news editor at the Houston Chronicle, my duties included making daily decisions about the stories that we shared with readers," she said. "This experience taught me to always be thinking about the stakeholders we serve and the information they need to make the best decisions for themselves, their families and communities," Spencer said.

Spencer is active in the National School Public Relations Association and is a frequent presenter on subjects including multimedia story-telling, social media and public information campaigns.

She is married to HISD Press Secretary Jason Spencer, and they have four children who all attend public schools: Grace, Kelly, Joe and James. The couple share a passion for communications and supporting public education, she said. She also actively volunteers in the homeless ministry for a local church.

Joining HCDE is a greater calling, Spencer says, because expectations of students attending public schools in Harris County have never been higher.

"We expect every child, regardless of their background, to graduate prepared to contribute to our community," Spencer said. "HCDE is uniquely positioned to support this important work at every age level. I am honored to have this opportunity to work with a dedicated team led by a superintendent and elected board who are unified in a desire to keep Harris County strong."

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Center for Safe and Secure Schools Begins School Safety Audits

The Center for Safe and Secure Schools dispatched auditing teams to Beaumont and Round Rock independent school districts this week. The safety auditing teams will use a state-of-the-art Emergency Response Information Portal (ERIP) system to audit five areas that assess school safety and security. To date, the Center has been asked to audit 10 school districts during the 2016-2017 school year.



Choice Partners Annual Vendor Exhibit to be held in New Location

Government employees with responsibility for purchasing are invited to attend the Choice Partners cooperative Annual Vendor Exhibit from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., November 4, 2016, at the Norris Conference Center at Houston City Centre. Nearly 80 vendors plan to showcase their products and services to more than 250 people from school districts, colleges, universities, counties, municipalities, nonprofits, and other governmental entities.

Texas purchasing laws are stringent, so many government entities rely on cooperatives such as HCDE's Choice Partners to award contracts that can be shared between governments. Choice Partners processes were validated last year by the State Auditor's Office after the agency's six-month, comprehensive audit of HCDE. The rigorous assessment confirmed HCDE Choice Partners' position as a standard-bearer in legal compliance.



For more information about Choice Partners, go to <http://www.choicepartners.org/choice-partners-annual-exhibit>.

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

OCTOBER 10, 2016

Logic Models for Program Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Effectiveness

Online Instructor's Training - Part III

OCTOBER 11, 2016

STAAR Accommodations for your Special Population Students: What Does It Look Like in the Classroom?

Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Organisms and Environments

Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Organisms and Environments

Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291) - ELAR Sessions ONLY

Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291)-All Content Areas

OCTOBER 12, 2016

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar

Building Conceptual Understanding in Grades 3 and 4

OCTOBER 14, 2016

School Finance Council

Shades of Learning: Culturally Inclusive Afterschool Programming

OCTOBER 15, 2016

BEST Literacy

BEST PLUS

TABE

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

HCDE Employees Support Breast Cancer Awareness Month

In support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, HCDE Human Resources is hosting “themed Fridays.” The awareness raising campaign allows employees to participate in themes for dress each Friday.



AB West School Principal Victor Keys and staff are dressed up to “strike out” breast cancer with baseball attire.

October 14
“Sock Out” Breast Cancer
(Wear crazy socks.)

October 21
“Ready, Set, Go Pink”
(Wear pink from head to toe.)

October 28
Say “Peace Out” to Breast Cancer
(Wear tie-dye t-shirts and peace signs.)

ECPA Principal Academy Hosts Practitioner Panel Series for Aspiring Leaders



On October 8, ECPA’s Principal Certification Academy (ECPA) hosted a practitioner panel of Houston area campus leaders to share their experiences and wisdom with the aspiring leaders in the principal cohort.

Three Houston ISD principals, Kristy Love (Codwell Elementary), Lynette Hookfin (Sugargrove Middle School), and Traci Lightfoot (Bruce Elementary) joined the panel to discuss this month’s topic, “The Principal’s Role in Successful Schools: Cultivating Positive School Culture.”

During the panel discussion moderated by Dr. Chaney Ledet, ECPA’s curriculum and compliance officer, principals were asked to share their experiences with creating norms, rules, and behaviors based on high standards that support teachers and students. Practitioner Panel Series is a monthly event imbedded in the Principal Certification Academy seminars that explores the skills and knowledge aspiring leaders need in order to be successful in urban schools.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Deirdre Sharkey Named Keynote Speaker at SRI 2017 Winter Conference in Colorado



ECPA Leadership Advancement Officer Deirdre Sharkey was invited to be a keynote speaker at the upcoming School Reform Initiative (SRI) Annual 2017 Winter Conference in Colorado. SRI is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to create transformational learning communities fiercely committed to educational equity and excellence. The conference offers hundreds of professional educators the opportunity to engage as adult learners in the grounded, deeply relational types of learning experiences they offer their students every day.

Andres Garcia Presents on School Discipline Rates across Harris County School Districts



At the monthly Education and Enrichment division-wide meeting on October 4, Research and Evaluation's Andres Garcia shared information on suspension rates across Harris County school districts, disaggregated by subpopulation groups (race and ethnicity, special education, economically disadvantaged, etc.). A School Discipline study group led by the Research and Evaluation Institute is forming among the members to develop a research agenda that will explore the factors and solutions for promoting more equitable school climates in the schools.

Lights On Afterschool Pep Rally Celebrates, Raises Awareness for Afterschool



Greater Houston rallies for afterschool during the Lights On Afterschool! national celebration for afterschool time on October 20, 2016 from 1:30-2 p.m. at the Houston Texans YMCA,

5202 Griggs Road, Houston, Texas.

Mayor Sylvester Turner supports the cause as keynote, and several youth give their testimonials about how afterschool has influenced their lives. The event is hosted by the Greater Houston Lights On Alliance and is staged to be a high-energy event complete with cheerleaders and ceremonial fanfare.

"Afterschool is a basic need for a majority of Harris County families, and we recognize and celebrate it," said Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers. "The city of Houston is an ongoing supporter of afterschool, and we're thankful for that support."

City leaders support afterschool by investing funding in each council district to support programs provided by nonprofits. This school year, City Council invested \$550,000 into programs.

Members of the Greater Houston Lights On Alliance include the YMCA, the City of Houston, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater

Houston, South East Texas After-School Association (SETAA), United Way of Greater Houston, Houston Independent School District, HCDE's CASE for Kids, Harris County Precinct 2, the After-school Achievement Program, and the Houston Parks & Recreation Department.

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About the Center for Afterschool, Summer and

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View invite: <http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/4290/lights-on-2016-invitation.pdf>

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Students Taste, Provide Feedback on Potential Cafeteria Food at 2016 Nutrition Expo



Students from area school districts attended the 2016 Choice Partners Nutrition Expo last week to taste a variety of nutritious foods and provide feedback to their nutrition directors. This annual event provides taste-testing opportunities for students whose school districts are members of the Choice Partners purchasing cooperative.

This year's theme, "Nutrition Go," encouraged students to gather coins at designated "nutrition stop" booths for prizes at the festive event.

Among the students who attended this year's event was Adrian De Jesus, a Katy ISD student part of the Miller Career and Technology Culinary Arts program. De Jesus enjoyed his first experience at the Expo and embraced the opportunity to provide student input.

"In addition to trying a variety of new foods, I'm able to represent Katy ISD students and help choose the food served in our district," said De Jesus.

Galena Park ISD 8th-grader Alondra Cardenas also attended the Expo for the first time. Cardenas' counselor selected her as one of a few students to attend the Expo and provide feedback on the food. Cardenas said she was excited to have a part in choosing the cafeteria food in her district for the upcoming year.

As the school nutrition directors evaluate quality, nutritional value, and student tastes, Choice Partners gathers information needed to plan for future food contract purchases for school districts. Food is purchased annually by school districts in the Harris County area for more than 85 million student lunches through contracts available through HCDE Choice Partners cooperative.



The 2016 Nutrition Expo was covered by various news outlets including the Humble Observer, Houston Style Magazine, and Telemundo. Watch the Telemundo story on the HCDE YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/m3SiSXfap0o>. Photos from the event are available at <https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/ChoicePartners/2016-Nutrition-Expo/>.

HCDE Leaders Featured in Houston Family Magazine Online



HCDE leaders Assistant Superintendent for Education and Enrichment Dr. Kimberly McLeod, Assistant Superintendent for Academic Support Services Jonathan Parker, and Special Populations Director Darlene Breaux are featured education specialists in several Houston Family Magazine online feature stories written by HCDE's Communication staff. Read the stories called Thriving and Surviving in Secondary School: Get Students Involved and Mental Health First-Aid: Building Resilient Children.

http://hcde-texas.org/media/4288/houstonfamily_101016.pdf
http://hcde-texas.org/media/4287/houstonfamily_101316.pdf

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Educators Combine Map Reading and Young Adult Literature during Cross-Curricular Workshop

Area educators combined map reading with a love of young adult literature last week at the cross-curricular workshop titled “YA & Maps: A Cross-Curricular Journey.” Educators learned to use maps in books to create stronger skills in both social studies and science, and devise ways to help readers connect to the different tools authors use to engage their senses. Participants also left the workshop with four books to use in their classrooms: *Six of Crows* by Leigh Bardugo; *Snow Like Ashes* by Sara Raasch; *We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart; and *City of a Thousand Dolls* by Miriam Forster.

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

HCDE Celebrates National Principals Month



HCDE joins schools and districts across the nation this month to celebrate National Principals Month and share with the Harris County community all the great things our principals do. Each of the four HCDE principals, Marion Cooksey, Victor Keys, David Oquin, and Mindy Robertson, will be recognized throughout the month and at the October board meeting with a certificate and special video presentation.

(Photo taken during last year's observation of Principals' Month)

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Special Needs Student Finds Her Place at Academic and Behavior School West



Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior Schools provide trusted, enriching, and supportive learning for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities. With low student-to-teacher ratios, many Harris County students receive the support they need to reach their goals. This is certainly the case for 18-year-old Angelica Garcia.

Garcia suffers from auditory, visual, and orthopedic impairments and has attended various school districts, including the Texas State School for the Blind, to find a place that meets her needs. After being dismissed from the School for the Blind due to behavior issues, she was sent back to Houston where parents Rolando and Yoahanka enrolled her in Harris County Department of Education's AB School West through a contract with a local school district. Garcia has been at AB School West since February 2016 and her family has already seen tremendous progress.

"I'm very proud of Angelica," said Mother Yoahanka. "She is visibly happier since attending AB School West and looks forward to going to school every day."

Described by her teachers and therapists as friendly, determined, and independent, Garcia is thriving in her new school environment. She recently received the perfect attendance award and is currently on the honor roll. Her

family has also mentioned she is calmer and happier outside of school.

At AB School West, Garcia works daily with special education teacher Anderson Thompson III and blind/deaf intervener Gloria See. Working as a team, Thompson handles most of Garcia's instruction, while See serves as Garcia's eyes and ears to connect Garcia to the classroom and her peers. See also has a special connection with Garcia and has been working with her on and off since she was 5 years old.

Thompson and See use direct instruction with Garcia, a teaching approach that is skills-oriented and teacher-directed. This approach emphasizes the use of small-group, face-to-face instruction by teachers using carefully articulated lessons in which cognitive skills are broken down into small units.

This kind of specialized instruction and care in the classroom creates an enriching learning environment for Garcia, as well as the 83 other students who attend AB School West.

"The atmosphere of the school creates opportunities for student success," explains Thompson. "Because we work with smaller groups of students, we can engage them and provide them with the attention they need. They feel a sense of accomplishment here."

For more information on HCDE's Academic and Behavior Schools, visit www.hcde-texas.org/schools.

Value

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS



HCDE Hosts Workshop at Lone Star College

On October 13, 2016, the Business Services division hosted a workshop with Lone Star College representatives to review EDGAR requirements. In attendance were Associate Vice Chancellor for Accounting Diane Novak, Director of Purchasing William Dodd, Executive Director for Research Development and Administration Elizabeth Thompson (former HCDE Adult Education employee), and Senior Procurement Manager Cynthia Bright.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Organizational Morale

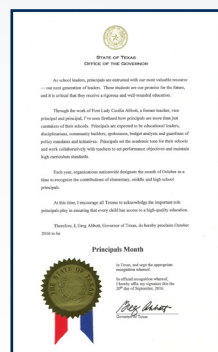
In keeping with the Board's goal for me to

- Create an open and positive environment for sharing resources and exchanging ideas to improve organizational climate;
- Seek systematically to improve the climate by obtaining and utilizing feedback from employees of the Department;
- Model and support responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas;
- **Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge excellence;**
- Ensure fair and equitable management practices;
- Demonstrate skill in anticipating, managing, and resolving conflict; and
- Demonstrate quality management through delegation of authority, team-building, consensus development, leadership development, and self-management

The month of October marks Principals' Month in the state of Texas. In recognition of the outstanding work and ongoing dedication of the



principals of HCDE's schools, I visited both Academic and Behavior Schools this past Monday and recognized the principals of both campuses—Ms. Mindy Robertson and Dr. Victor Keys. Monday, October 17, I will



be visiting our Highpoint Schools to recognize principals Marion Cooksey and David O'Quin.

All four of our campus principals will be recognized during Tuesday's regularly

scheduled October Board Meeting where they will be presented with copies of the official state proclamation observing the occasion.

By recognizing our principals, I am working towards achieving the Board's expectations of me to treat every person with respect and dignity, therefore recognizing accomplishments when appropriate.

HCDE BOARD

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Michael Wolfe
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UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

October Board Meeting
October 18, 2016
1:00 p.m.
Room 400

