

Of Note...

It's hard to believe that in less than two weeks, both the Department and our client school districts will be preparing to close for Winter Break. The academic year is moving at a brisk pace and HCDE is doing its part in keeping programs and services moving forward.

This week began as usual, with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team (ELT), followed by my attendance at Commissioner's Court this past Tuesday. On Wednesday, the Human Resources division hosted a Cookies with Santa holiday event at the Irvington location, giving employees an opportunity to enjoy a hot cocoa break and cookies with Dr. Jesus Amezcua appearing as Santa Claus. The event was well-attended, and employees in attendance seemingly enjoyed the opportunity to connect.

I conducted Agenda Review yesterday, in preparation for the regularly-scheduled December Board Meeting. Today, I attended the Special Board Meeting regarding the Legal Services RFQ.

This week in the area of teaching and learning the Department hosted or facilitated the following trainings and workshops: Alternative Certification Program for Teachers: Information Session; Harris County Social Studies Leadership Team; HCDE Math Leadership Team: Ask, Listen and Encourage; School Finance Council; and STAAR Academy: Persuasive and Expository Essay Success Strategies.

Looking ahead into next week, I will be in traveling to Austin Sunday to attend the Region 13 Principals' Academy on Monday, where I will address the academy for the seventh consecutive year. This year's topic will be Leadership Juno. On Tuesday, I will continue my volunteerism efforts on behalf of Head Start. I will conduct New Board Member Orientations on both Wednesday and Thursday with two recently-elected trustees. Also, on those days, I will be attending the annual Bates Car Giveaway events in both Channelview (Wednesday) and Baytown (Thursday).

On Thursday, I will attend the Adult Education Honor Society Ceremony as well as the North Post Oak Holiday Reception. I will end the week with regularly-scheduled internal meetings as well as the Academic and Behavior School-East location's holiday program, which is always a treat.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Channelview Bates Custom Collision Car Giveaway—Wednesday, December 12, 2018 (10:00 a.m.), 15532 Interstate 10 East in Channelview

Baytown Bates Custom Collision Car Giveaway—Thursday, December 13, 2018 (10:00 a.m.), 3219 North Main Street in Baytown

Holiday Reception, North Post Oak—Thursday, December 13, 2018 (Noon-1pm)

Holiday Reception, Irvington—Wednesday, December 19, 2018 (Noon-1pm)

December Board Meeting—Wednesday, December 19, 2018



WEEK OF DECEMBER 3, 2018

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Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Cookies with Santa Held at Irvington with Surprise Saint Nick Appearance

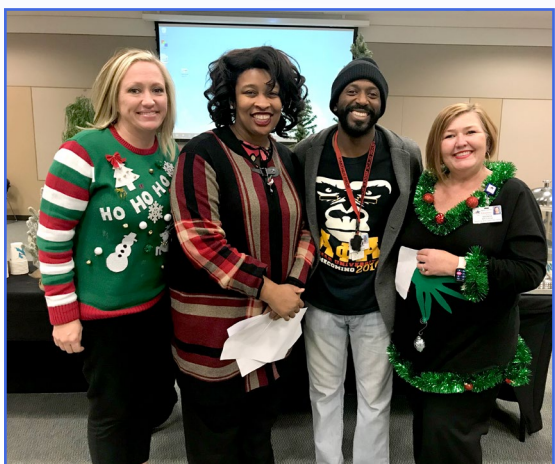


HCDE Irvington employees took a cocoa break and enjoyed “Cookies with Santa,” a networking event hosted by Human Resources on Dec. 5. Santa was non-other-than Dr. Jesus Amezcua, assistant superintendent of Business Services. Cocoa and cookies were on the menu. HR provided drawings with small prizes to attendees.



Teaching and Learning Hosts Ugly Sweater Social for Area Educators

The Teaching and Learning Center hosted the Ugly Sweater Social Dec. 5 as a networking event for area educators. The event held after hours featured free workshop prizes and cookies, coffee and punch.



ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

DECEMBER 3, 2018

Alternative Certification Program for Teachers - Information Session

DECEMBER 5, 2018

Harris County Social Studies Leadership Team

HCDE Math Leadership Meeting

DECEMBER 6, 2018

Ask, Listen and Encourage

DECEMBER 7, 2018

School Finance Council

STAAR Academy: Persuasive and Expository Essay Success Strategies



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

HCDE, Lamar Consolidated ISD Partner to Grow Positivity through Kindness Academy



Giselle Hernandez and Alyssa Perez, Navarro Middle School

Pre-teen Alyssa Perez, a bordering-on-shy, sixth grader who likes to play chess, discovered her voice in the Kindness Academy at Navarro Middle School in Lamar Consolidated Independent School District.

Her principal Stephanie McElroy believes what kids have to say is important, and staff must listen to help build a positive school community. Introduced to the school last year, the Kindness Academy is multi-faceted but thrives on the basic principle of spreading goodness, not bullying.

"I firmly believe when you focus on the positive traits in people, you will get positive actions in return," said McElroy. "When you focus on punitive measures, actions do not necessarily change."

Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools works as consultants with Navarro to provide resources for character education through a program called Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices strengthens relationships between individuals and promotes social connections within school communities.

School safety and security specialist Janice Owolabi meets with staff at Navarro for trainings on student behavior and de-escalation strategies. The student component focuses on building the momentum of "Acts of Random Kindness" or ARK.

"The Center for Safe and Secure Schools is excited to work with Navarro to promote safe, structured, nurturing environments for an anti-bullying culture," said Owolabi.

The low-income school is 75-80 percent Hispanic, and some of its 500 students come from foster care or group-home backgrounds. Research supports establishing community and respecting student voice to promote the social-emotional development of students.

Students and staff each belong to four houses. The goal is to build a family culture within each house. Students earn points for the positives: grades, acts of kindness, effort, campus participation and behavior.

"The houses serve as a team for the students and faculty," said McElroy. "We work to build a collective team spirit; uphold the character traits; and build a family culture within the houses."

Instead of focusing on anti-bullying education, the goal is to teach children to combat hatred in society.

"The best, most impactful way to do that is to teach children compassion, caring, courage and kindness," said McElroy.

Giselle Hernandez says the Kindness Academy taught her to reach out to others, like the new girl who had no one to talk to.

"Before, she was shy and scared of everyone because she thought they would be rude to her," Hernandez said. "Now she knows who she is and is learning to help others."

With the introduction of the Kindness Academy, students are not allowed to have cell phones on campus. The overall reaction has been positive, according to Hernandez.

"I saw other kids bullying using their devices," Hernandez said. "Now that they don't have them, there is no bullying, just positivity."

Kindness continues to spread at Navarro. Counselor Tanesha Crockett says the school is building a community of support for each other. A student steps into her office and she sets aside the mountain of paperwork to ask how the day is going.

That student is off to a house pep rally, one of four held during the year to promote a sense of community. The halls are filled with drumbeats, chants and students who have a collective sense of well-being.

"With public school days being filled with testing and accountability measures, kids often feel voiceless," Owolabi said. "Through Restorative Discipline, we are allowing our students to have a voice and be heard and not shut down."

Perez, 12, hangs out with her siblings and talk to her dogs when she's a little sad. Her empathy for others is deep because of the acts of random kindness mentality. She continues to grow her leadership skills in her school.

Hernandez is intent on cultivating her kind voice too. "I have become a leader because I don't want bullying to be a thing anymore," she said. "Kids need to have a voice so if something does happen to them, then they know what to say."

Videos: Two students at Navarro Middle School, Lamar Consolidated ISD, share their thoughts on Acts of Random Kindness: Alyssa Perez: <https://youtu.be/NB1H0TBvgz8> and Giselle Hernandez: <https://youtu.be/S9gXnJqMOME>

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Winter Wonderland Meets Wall Street: Kids' Day Entrepreneurship Set for Dec. 7



Wall Street joins forces with a winter wonderland at the Kids' Day Entrepreneurship hosted by Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids. The holiday marketplaces

to be held at 6005 Westview are set for Dec. 7 from 10-11 and noon-12:50 p.m. The two shifts of buying-and-selling frenzies allow students from elementary through high school the chance to showcase creative wares and services for the holidays.

Kids compete in timed commerce sessions with fake credit cards as they show off their business and marketing acumen. Prizes are given for schools with the most creative products, the largest product margin and savviest marketing campaigns. Each student gets the opportunity to be both buyer and seller as the markets change over.

Products include homemade soy candles, pet rocks, piñatas and ornaments, lighted mason jars, slime, bracelets and scrunchies, brunchies, snow globes, and

scented hand scrub.

The 120 students from elementary through high school participating are from the following districts: Spring, Clear Creek, Aldine, Galena Park, Humble, Pasadena, Sheldon. Charter schools Academy of Accelerated Learning, Inc. Southwest Charter and Promise Schools are participating as well.

CASE for Kids provides resources, training and afterschool services for over 9,000 students in greater Harris County. Training includes curriculum afterschool resources that allow students to explore careers.

"With this curriculum CASE for Kids has created, students experience the first-hand challenges and opportunities of operating a business in a free market economy," said CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers.



Ecobot Reveal Day Fuels Drone Competition



CASE for Kids held its 2019 Ecobot Reveal Day Middle School Competition on Dec. 1 at Workshop Houston. Teachers and students were invited to attend

the event to learn more about the upcoming Ecobot Challenge Day this spring.

CASE for Kids Program Coordinator Tracie Scales and Jaime Herrero, executive director of Workshop Houston, gave an overview of Ecobot. The upcoming middle school competition will focus on drones and

have a search-and-rescue component. Space Center Houston will be the location for the competition this year.

A drone demonstration was an industry expert who spoke to students about mechanical engineering opportunities and the business of building drones. A drone presentation allowed for student participation. Teachers and students left with information packets and enthusiasm about the 2019 Ecobot Challenge Day.



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Bates Collision Centers Provides 'Keys to a Brighter Future' by Giving Away Two Vehicles to HCDE Mothers



After months without reliable transportation while juggling work and a family as a single-parent household, Harris County Department

of Education Head Start single moms Sheena Gulley and Parishellia Banks are receiving a special gift from Bates Collision Centers: the gift of transportation.

In its 20th year, HCDE Head Start's partnership with Bates Collision Centers is giving away cars No. 35 and 36 to two moms who will be recognized with the Responsible Parenting Award. Owners Lee and Leila Bates have made this annual giveaway a priority because they recognize the sacrifices parents often make in order to provide for their children.

Banks and Gulley were nominated by Head Start Center managers. Bates employees donate time to work on the cars and help fill them with gifts, and other community members and businesses donate gas, insurance and materials needed to rehab the cars.

Leila Bates, co-owner of Bates Collision Centers, says both she and her husband Lee are proud of their employees who continue to supply time and resources to families they have yet to meet.

"During our 20th anniversary of gifting these cars to needy moms, we give special thanks to our employees who donate their free time to making

these rehabbed cars 'new,'" said Lee Bates. "We also deeply appreciate our community partners."

HCDE Superintendent James Colbert Jr. said this about the lasting, community partnership: "Generous community members like the Bates, their employees and supporters set the bar for community service. These cars transform families, and we are thankful for 20 years of commitment and giving from the Bates."

About Sheena Gulley, HCDE Head Start Fifth Ward Center, recipient of the 35th rehabbed car:

Sheena Gulley is a single mother of two sons Marcus, 13, and Jay'Me, 2, and two daughters Zyriah, 8, and Myriah, 4. Gulley relies on Metro and Uber to get to and from work. She is unable to spend much time with her children or attend their school activities because of no transportation and work schedule.



About Parishellia Banks, HCDE Head Start Baytown, recipient of the 36th rehabbed car:

Parishellia Banks is currently raising her niece's two-year-old son, Jayce, after she passed away during childbirth. Banks relies on family and friends to take her and her great nephew to work and school. She also suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure and finds it difficult to make doctor appointments because of no transportation.

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 Human Resources division invited employees at the Irvington location to take a cocoa break and enjoy Cookies with Santa. This was a networking event

with non-other-than Dr. Jesus Amezcua, assistant superintendent of Business Services, serving as Santa Claus.



Human Resources provided drawings with small prizes to attendees.



By the Department continuing to host events such as these, I am continuing to work towards the Board's goal to ensure that every person is treated with respect and dignity and that all administrators are motivated to accomplish the mission, goals, and objectives of the Department.

It further allows others within the Department to make a personal connection with many of the employees they may not otherwise meet.

HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

December Board Meeting
Wednesday, December 19, 2018

