



WEEK OF MAY 20, 2019

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Of Note...

Such valuable life lessons are learned from the strategic game of chess. Our students at both Academic and Behavior School East and West are involved in chess classes, which have the obvious benefits of reinforcing math skills and spurring critical thinking. Once a year I look forward to the ABS West and East Chess Tournament because I see the confidence, pride, discipline, respect and patience it builds within our students. Many of our students, especially those with autism spectrum disorder, aren't adept at team sports, but they excel in the game of chess.

The game of chess can easily be transferred to life experiences. Chess is an excellent exercise that students can use to develop decision-making skills. Analyzing the outcomes that might take place from possible moves can give students the ability to choose the best one. On May 22, at the tournament, I kept with tradition and played a student match. My opponent, 14, was a young man from ABS East named Michael Carley. He is a second-year chess player who loves the game. In fact, his chess abilities provided the opportunity for him to compete at the National Junior High Championships this year. Even though I lost the match, I so enjoyed learning from this young man.

This week continues to be busy. On Monday I met with the Executive Leadership Team and attended a flurry of other internal meetings. On Thursday, we cut the ceremonial ribbon with City of Baytown Mayor Brandon Capetillo and opened our new Baytown Head Start/Early Head Start Center. The 20,000-square-foot center will serve 180 students—140 Head Start and 40 Early Head Start. Of course, the 3- to 4-year-old students were the stars as they showed off their memory skills and vocal talents. It was good to greet existing community partners and meet with new city and county supporters of early childhood education.

On Friday we travel to Fortis Academy for a culinary lesson: the crawfish boil. The students are preparing an end-of-semester meal to celebrate their successes, and we look forward to sharing in the rewards!

Next week, staff and students are off for Memorial Day. I meet with ELT on Tuesday and have multiple internal and external meetings planned. On Thursday, I hope you will join us for the Fortis Academy Awards Ceremony from 1:30-3 p.m. at the school. Friday I will be working at NPO and hosting several division meetings.

I hope that you enjoy a reflective Memorial Day holiday with your families and friends while we remember and honor the men and women who died while serving in our U.S. military. I look forward to connecting with you next week.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Fortis Academy Awards Ceremony—Thursday, May 30, 2019, 1:30-3 p.m., 11902 Spears Road
HCDE Board Meeting—Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

ABS West Construction Update: Rain, Dirt, Detention Pond and More!



Construction on Academic and Behavior School West is progressing after we broke ground on March 26, 2019 in advance of the official groundbreaking on April 3. Rain delayed construction for several days in May with no major setbacks.

To date, about 13,000-cubic-yards of “select fill” have been delivered to the site. The fill will be used to raise the school’s building pad above the flood plain.

Currently the detention pond is being excavated, and that dirt is being used to grade the site.

Here are some construction highlights:

- 90 percent of the storm sewer is complete.
- 75 percent of the sanitary sewer is complete
- 80 percent of the earthwork is complete.

Looking ahead for a four-week schedule, here’s the to-do list:

- Dirt is being delivered.
- Piers are being drilled for the building base.
- Underground plumbing and electrical are being installed along with grade beams.

We’ll look forward to giving timely updates along the way to report progress at ABS West!

View our gallery of time-lapse photos chronicling our progress:

<https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/CASE/Academic-and-Behavior-Center-West-Construction-2018-19> (password is hcde1889)

NEXT WEEK'S EVENTS

MAY 29, 2019

Meal Planning: Lunch & Learn (Employee Health Fitness Month)

MAY 30, 2019

STAAR Academy-Building Social Studies Literacy in Middle School and High School



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Games of Drones: CASE for Kids Teens Contest Space at All-Earth Ecobot Challenge



Steady hands, calculated moves and calm behaviors prevailed at the 2019 All-Earth Ecobot Challenge drone competition as teams of 80 teens contended for titles May 17 at Space Center Houston.

The competition hosted by Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE

for Kids, supplied a full day of challenges, including broken parts and drained batteries.

"It builds teamwork and makes students more responsible," said Christyna Ferrell, lead science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) teacher at Yellowstone Academy, a state charter school.



Ferrell, a baby boomer, said drones didn't even exist when she was growing up. Today, drones deliver the promise of engineering and IT careers. Drones are becoming staples in business, medical and technology industries.



HCDE Superintendent James Colbert Jr. joined volunteers and sponsors from Workshop Houston, Spindletop Charities, CenterPoint Energy, Wood and the Education Foundation of Harris County. Curiosity was an initial reason the HCDE superintendent observed and met with students at the competition. He soon became impressed by the programming, coding and piloting challenges the teens surmounted.

"These students are engaged in thinking outside of the box, and these are the very skills they need to cultivate as young adults," said Colbert.

Houston Independent School District Holland Middle School student Precious Hunter believes being a female drone pilot will give her opportunities she might not normally get, like being able to go to places like the Space Center Houston at NASA.

"It also allows me to look into careers in STEM, and I like that opportunity," Hunter said.

CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers said the drone competition is in its inaugural year as the 2019 Ecobot Challenge split challenge vehicles this year. Younger elementary students worked with Mindstorm Lego kits in robotics while the middle school students moved to drones.

"The dynamics and capabilities of drones is expanding, and we thought it would be beneficial for teens to explore drones and the careers made possible by using geographic information systems," said Thompson-Caruthers.



Specific programming challenges were required for the competition. Team drones were timed to race through obstacles as they demonstrated piloting skills. An EcoGenius lab allowed for leisure learning and introduced games and software supplied by CASE for Kids' Sharing Multiple Afterschool Resources and Technology Zone, or SMART Zone, free resources available to students through their afterschool providers.

Five Winners of the 2019 All-Earth Ecobot Drone Challenge:

1. Westchester Academy for International Studies (district charter), Spring Branch ISD
2. Mindstormer Robotics Homeschool Team
3. Yellowstone Academy, YCP Flyers Team, state charter school
4. Spring Forest Middle School, Game of Drones, Spring Branch ISD
5. Spring Oak Middle School, Purple Alliance, Spring Branch ISD

CASE for Kids is an afterschool intermediary which provides resources, training and afterschool services for over 14,000 students and 2,800 teachers in greater Harris County. All-Earth Ecobot Challenge is the largest event hosted by CASE for Kids and allows students from greater Harris County to compete through STEM challenges. More info at www.hcde-texas.org.

View event photos: <https://bit.ly/2QhmrRe> (password hcde1889)

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Class of 2019 GED Grads Reinforced by Messages Promoting Lifelong Learning



Words of motivation, tears of joy and the sound of laughter were highlights of Harris County Department of Education's Adult Education Graduation 2019 on May 18.

Commencement speaker Mike Temple, director for Gulf Coast Workforce Board, encouraged the 65 graduates with three pieces of advice: Be curious, always learn and look for the good jobs.

"Do what you like to do and want to do, but remember you always have to learn," he said.

Temple pointed to jobs in medicine, technology and education as being in demand positions in the employment sector. Before leaving the stage, he urged the grads to be proud, happy and have fun.

New teacher Emmanuel Nieves-Aviles from the HCDE Baytown Learning Center handed out the diplomas and later talked about his own struggles learning English as a native Spanish speaker. The instructor provides classes in Spanish for GED students who are also learning English while studying for the GED. Many of his students have degrees and are professionals in their native countries but must start over when they come to America.

"I try to be a teacher but also a friend," he said.

Handshakes and congratulations were delivered collectively by Temple and HCDE Board of Trustees President Josh Flynn;



board members Danyahel Norris and Richard Cantu, HCDE Superintendent James Colbert Jr., assistant superintendents Kimberly McLeod and Jonathan Parker, and Adult Education director Stephanie Ross.

Valedictorian Allison Poindexter, 18, is a homeschool student who went back to get her GED in order to attend her college of choice. She gave words of inspiration and urged her fellow classmates to never give up their dreams.



"My speech was to remind people that they have a purpose and that they are loved and to tell people they have a future and will do great things with it," she said.

Many of the students are continuing to attend workforce classes in the medical and construction fields offered through HCDE and Gulf Coast Workforce. For more information, go to www.hcde-texas.org/adult-education.



View photos from graduation (password hcde1889): <https://bit.ly/2EiMMtm> and <https://bit.ly/2M6x8au>



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

2 Academic and Behavior Schools Vie for Chess Title in Annual Tournament



Academic and Behavior School West and East students met May 22 for the 3rd annual Chess Tournament at Irvington. The tournament featured six rounds of double-elimination chess and culminated with an awards ceremony. Instruction in the chess program is provided by PerfectTeamplay, founded by James Hudson.

outside the school day. Hudson says students also benefit from these lessons of the game: discipline, time management, critical thinking skills and respect.

The winner of this year's trophy in the rivalry competition went to ABS West, a first-time champion.



Superintendent James Colbert Jr., in keeping with tradition, dropped in for a round of chess with student Michael Carley, who recently earned the right to compete in the National Junior High Championships in Grapevine, Texas. Confident in his moves, Carley gained the upper hand in the round with Colbert.



Hudson incorporates math skills into his chess instruction at both schools. Many students participate in chess tournaments



Baytown Early Head Start/Head Start Officially Opens New Location Under One Roof



Harris County Department of Education Head Start celebrated the opening of its new 20,000-square-foot facility on about 3 acres in Baytown with a ribbon cutting. The facility will house Early Head Start and Head Start under one roof.

HCDE Board of Trustees were joined by Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. and other HCDE administrators along with City of Baytown Mayor Brandon Capetillo. Baytown Head Start students performed songs for those in attendance. Parents and community members were also guests.

Special features of the Head Start center include: seven Head Start classrooms, five Early Head Start classroom, a training room, offices and two playgrounds – one for Head Start and another for Early Head Start. The facility has a capacity of 180 students – 140 Head Start students and 40 Early Head Start students. About 45 staff members will be assigned to this location, including Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships staff.

The facility opens this summer to Early Head Start students and welcomes Head Start students this fall.

This build-to-suit lease project was funded by KQC Investors, LLC and took two years to complete.

HCDE Head Start is an educational program providing students and their families with the skills they need to be ready for the demands of school. For more about Head Start, visit: www.hcde-texas.org/head-start/.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Instructional Management

To meet the Board's expectations of me as it relates to this element of performance to:

- Establish effective mechanisms for communication to and from staff in instructional evaluation, planning, and decision making;
- Oversee annual training for increased student learning and conduct periodic assessments of the effectiveness of the planning process;
- Ensure that goals and objectives form the basis of curricular decision making and instruction, and communicate expectations for student achievement;
- Ensure that appropriate data are used in developing recommendations and making decisions regarding the instructional program and resources;
- Establish a system for regular evaluation of instructional programs to meet student instructional needs and to attain desired student achievement



On Wednesday, we hosted the third annual Chess Tournament for ABS West and East students. The tournament is a culminating event for demonstrating the critical thinking and math skills these students have attained through a year of

chess instruction and application. Chess provides thinking “outside-the-box” and supplies our students with skills they need to become productive citizens and successful students. This established curriculum develops higher-level learning and has become a part of our curricula landscape.



Last week, we also turned the tassels for adult learners who gained their GEDs. So many of our adult students juggle home, school and work to meet their goals. It is an inspiration to see them on graduation day. The experience instills what an excellent job our teachers are doing to meeting and exceeding our students' instructional needs.

By serving these populations of students and doing so successfully, I am working to meet the Board's expectations for HCDE to identify the learning needs of the students and develop a process that ensures that each student's learning goals are met or exceeded; investigate best practices for student achievement; and utilize effective practices that maximize achievement of student potential.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Josh Flynn

Vice President

George Moore

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

June Board Meeting

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

