

Of Note...

It's official: the academic year is over.

During the last two weeks, we joined several of our schools in celebrating student success with their end-of-year activities. At Fortis Academy, we joined parents and community partners in celebrating students' continued recovery and cheered their success in staying sober. I was struck by the comments of the mother of one of our students. Not so much because of what she said (as she only said four words), but because the depth of emotion that was visible on her face and in her shaky voice was so powerful. Her silence spoke volumes and underscored how impactful this program is not only on the lives of students, but on their families as well. At AB West we celebrated several seniors who are graduating with their home school districts as well as students moving on from the elementary and middle school programs. It is a joy to watch the faces of these students and their families celebrate their accomplishments. I am proud of the impact HCDE has on our communities and I was touched by these celebrations of student success!

I started off the week with my Executive Leadership Team meeting, followed by our monthly Leadership gathering on Tuesday. Thank you to those of you who joined us Wednesday for the Feasibility Committee and discussion about a new Coolwood Head Start facility. I look forward to continuing this discussion in the coming months.

The remainder of my week was filled with internal meetings, agenda review and planning for next school year.

Next week we transition to our Summer Flex Schedule. Beginning Monday, June 10 and ending Friday, August 16, staff has the option of working four 10-hour workdays. During this time, our business hours are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. The main building is closed on Fridays, but staff who choose to continue to work an eight-hour day can work on Fridays at our North Post Oak location. School districts and government entities commonly use this practice during the summer months to conserve resources.

Next week we will also gather for your first budget workshop on Wednesday, June 12 at 10 a.m. You should have received your budget book in anticipation of this meeting. During the workshop you will hear from Dr. Amezcua about projected revenues and our expenditure plan for the coming school year and have the opportunity to ask questions about our financial model and budget. I look forward to this discussion and working with you to ensure HCDE has a balanced budget that meets the needs of our students, staff and client districts.

I hope you enjoy the recap of our celebrations and other activities in this issue of **The Connector**. Have a relaxing weekend.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

HCDE Board Meeting—Wednesday, June 19, 2019



WEEK OF JUNE 3, 2019

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Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Fortis Academy Celebrates First Year as Recovery School



Students and staff at Fortis Academy came together at the end of the school year to celebrate students on their road to recovery

and their academic accomplishments.

Two students were recognized for completing their course work and graduating from their home campuses at the end of May. Another student was recognized for being sober for five months into sobriety.

Harris County Department of Education Superintendent James Colbert spoke to those in attendance about how his vision of Fortis Academy came about.

“Society is built around punishing people and somewhere we need to stop this cycle and start helping,” he said.



There are people and their families begging for help to get away from addiction, he said. School districts, teachers, counselors and principals want to help someone, but punishment is the only answer.

Fortis Academy is symbolic in a sense that it’s trying to change that paradigm and look at things through a different lens, Colbert noted.

“I have a vision to go big by having more than one Fortis Academy campus to spark and inspire others to do exactly

what we are doing in Harris County,” Colbert said. “Maybe we can even inspire others outside of Texas.”

HCDE is positioned uniquely to help because of all the wraparound services it can offer to the community.



“We will think of it and don’t care what the obstacles are because we are going to try it and find a way to pull it off,” Colbert said.

Colbert said he is extremely proud of principal Anthony Moten and his staff, the parents who let them help their children, and students—especially those who sought out shelter and found it at Fortis Academy.

One parent spoke about her daughter going through a lot of changes after starting at Fortis Academy, but they were for the better. The mother never thought she would see her daughter transform in a positive way.

Fortis Academy Principal Anthony Moten marveled at the significance of a Fortis student’s pledge to remain sober. Research shows because of environment or friends the risk of relapse is higher when students must return to their pretreatment schools.

“Think about the commitment these young people are trying to make for the rest of their lives at 16 or 17 years old,” Moten said. “I’m so very proud of our kids and honored to be your principal, because you are doing something that a lot of people wouldn’t attempt to do.”

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Graduation Recognition at ABS West Recognizes Small, Large Milestones

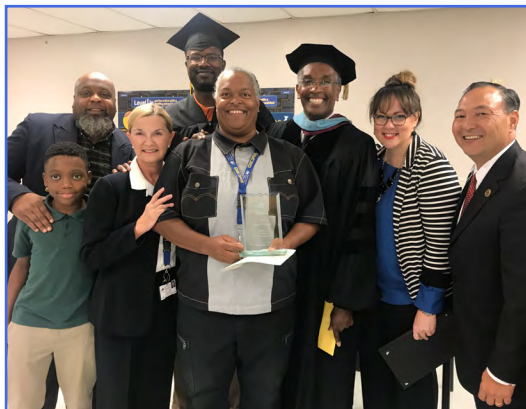


Academic and Behavior School West held “Graduation Recognition” on June 5 with 29 students being recognized for

their achievements. Twelve students graduated from high school and will go on to job training programs and career opportunities. Other students celebrated their promotions to middle and high school.

Achievements, both small and large, are emotional milestones at ABS West, a school for students with behavioral challenges and intellectual disabilities. Assistant Superintendent Jonathan Parker thanked faculty, staff and parents for contributing to the students’ success.

A special presentation was given to teacher and coach Tamara Powers, an 18-year employee at



ABS West. She thanked her students for giving her almost two decades of personal growth.

“We learn so much from them every day,” she said, accepting a special plaque from principal Victor Keys.

Senior Andrew Isadore wants to train in the Job Corps so he can work and make money. He aspires to be a car salesman and later attend school to become an engineer.

“The school has helped him with his behavior and his attitude towards life and towards helping him achieve his goals,” said his mother Kim Isadore.

“His whole attitude and behavior has changed for the best, and I’m happy they have helped him here,” she said.

Students ended the afternoon with hugs, tears and graduation cupcakes. A celebratory “Celebrate Good Times” dance provided closure after the turning of the tassels.



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Head Start Employees Treated to Self-Care Symposium



To end the school year, employees with Head Start took part in a self-care symposium involving relaxation and healthier living habits. More than 270 employees attended the symposium May 29 to participate in activities such as yoga, meditation, a full-body workout, massages, dancing and meal planning.



NEXT WEEK'S EVENTS

JUNE 10, 2019

Alternative Teacher Certification Information Webinar

Instructional Technology Leadership Group

JUNE 11, 2019

TEXES BTLPT Exam (#190) Test Prep

National Incident Management System (NIMS) ICS 100,200,700,800 (2 Day Training)

Capturing Kids' Hearts: Building Relationships with Students and Colleagues

JUNE 13 2019

Is Your Summer Booked? Author Pam Allyn: "Every Child a Super Reader"

School Finance Council

Make Them Think: Argumentation in Elementary School Science

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

32 Harris County Teens Travel to Carnegie Hall for Scholastic Art & Writing Medals



Thirty-two teen writers and artists from Harris County Department of Education's Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Regional Affiliate program traveled to New York City to Carnegie Hall June 5-7 to gain national Gold Medals as young writers and artists. Their prestigious, artistic endeavors were selected from 340,000 national entries in 2019.

Teen artist Taylor Powers of Cy-Fair ISD and writer Divot Walia of Pearland ISD each earned \$10,000 national scholarships as two of 20 recipients national recipients.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recognizes student achievement for grades 7-12 in the visual and literary arts in 29 categories, including editorial cartoon, poetry, graphic design, fashion, science fiction, video game design and more. The Awards offers opportunities for creative teens to earn recognition, exhibition, publication and scholarships.



"This experience for students at Carnegie Hall in NYC is indescribable, and having the opportunity to be recognized for their creativity and talent at the highest level is monumental in these students' lives," said Andrea Segraves, coordinator for HCDE's Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

Gold Medalists attending the ceremony:

Writing:

Theijja Balasubramanian, Klein Oak High School, Klein ISD; Lilliana Cadet, Fairmont Junior High School, Deer

Park ISD; Sophie Caldwell, Noelle Alexander, Oliver, Adonai Ross, Indrani Maitra and Jack Trent, St. John's School; Riya Keswani, TH Rogers Middle School, Houston ISD; Emily Lara, Cypress Falls High School, Cy-Fair ISD; Kahani Malhotra, Village School; Yuan Malubay, Krimmel Intermediate School, Klein ISD; Sierra Ondo, Presbyterian School; Zoe Price, Kinkaid School; Hallie Thomson, Langham Creek High School, Cy-Fair ISD; Eliana Veeningen, Veritas Christian Academy; Divjot Walia, Glenda Dawson High, Pearland ISD; Trina Zhang, Killough Middle School, Alief ISD

Art:

Mary Ayers, Episcopal High School; Axel Maldonado and Mario Barron, Sam Rayburn High, Pasadena ISD; Evieh'biJan Nia Braddy, Nimitz High, Aldine ISD; Rachel Chang, Cypress Ridge High, Cy-Fair ISD; Sophia Early, Stratford High, Spring Branch ISD; Sophia Fu, Pearland Junior High West, Pearland ISD; Colby Gregory, Cypress Woods High, Cy-Fair ISD;; Hattie Meehan, St. Agnes Academy;; Chloe Pertuit, Clear Falls High, Clear Creek ISD; Taylor Powers, Cypress Woods High School, Cy-Fair ISD; Austin Reppert, Episcopal High; Jordan Smith, Carver High, Aldine ISD

The regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards begins the 2020 awards in the fall of 2019. For more information about judging, sponsoring or entering, go to www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic-awards .



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Partnership Project Provides \$550,000 to Fund Houston-Area Afterschool During 2019-2020 School Year



Local afterschool funding for approximately 1,500 students is being provided for the upcoming 2019-2020 school year through \$550,787 in afterschool funding supplied through the Partnership Project.

The Partnership Project

is a 20-year-old program founded by Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, which fills afterschool funding gaps through a unique collaborative between local, state and federal partners.

Partnership Project is a collaboration between HCDE's CASE for Kids, the Houston-Galveston Area Council, the Texas Workforce Commission and local afterschool sites. All parties contribute funding.

Services will be provided from Oct. 1, 2019 through Aug. 31, 2020 to 25 afterschool sites located in schools throughout Harris County. Awards range from \$10,000 to \$30,000. Districts include Alief, Houston, Pasadena and Sheldon independent school districts and charter schools the Academy of Accelerated Learning Chimney Rock and Belfort.

"The Partnership Project allows us to expand our reach to local families and education communities we serve during times when public school budgets are lean and federal funding for afterschool has lessened," said CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers.

CASE for Kids supplies resources, training and funding for students in afterschool programs in schools,

childcare families and community centers. In 2017-2018, CASE for Kids served 14,627 students and supported 2,814 educators.



The goal of Partnership Project is to provide supplemental funding to comprehensive afterschool programs for disadvantaged students ages 4-12, or children with disabilities up to age 19. The program promotes social and emotional learning skills and increases support for academic programs which promote math and reading.

The Partnership Project fills funding gaps with a variety of resources, including the CASE for Kids lending library which provides curricula,

educational games, sporting equipment and STEM-based materials like robotics kits. Afterschool vendors affiliated with CASE for Kids specialize in academic focus areas that highlight math and language and social and emotional learning.

For more information, including specific schools and award amounts, visit <https://bit.ly/2XIPd5z>.



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Principal Certification Academy at HCDE Affords Flexibility, Support



Principal Academy students and staff

Educator Anae Ntasin juggled school, a full-time teaching job and a large family this year as she attended the Principal Certification Academy at Harris County Department of Education. The Spring Independent School District biology teacher is on track to complete the program and take the principal certification exam by the end of the year.

Ntasin and 14 of her fellow classmates recently met to share their research action plans for tackling school issues. The trifold presentations included an oral report which was graded by program coordinator Chaney Ledet, curriculum and compliance officer for HCDE's Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Division.

Ledet reminds students that collaboration in the school community is key to being a great school leader. As coordinator for the Principal Academy, she believes the success of the program is attributed to the program's hallmarks: flexibility and support.

"We have a 99 percent pass rate on the principal and teacher certification exams," said Lidia Zatopek, director of ECA. "While passing the test is a major focus, we also make sure that we help support students throughout the beginning years of their careers as school leaders."

The Principal Certification Academy is a hybrid program that includes an onsite monthly Saturday seminar, online

assignments and plenty of one-on-one support, including mentors. As a rolling cohort, the program allows students to enter classes at any time during the semester. A boot camp helps candidates prepare for the actual exam and to gain experiences by shadowing a principal. Tuition is reasonable, and payment plans are available. To enroll, candidates must have a master's degree or be enrolled in the final semester of graduate school.

Jason Hill, a second-grade teacher at Frost Elementary in Houston ISD, passed his principal exam through the program and is propelled by the self-assurance he gained.

"This program has given me the confidence to actually be an instructional leader," he said. "Not knowing everything a principal does left me skeptical, but now I'm learning about skills I need to have, and I believe I can be a successful school leader."

Dora Garcia is a high school counselor in Deer Park Independent School District. She joined the program to learn about the administrative aspect of being a principal. As a counselor, she already knows how important emotional stability is for student success.



Dora Garcia, principal candidate from Deer Park ISD

"This program has helped me tremendously, preparing me to be hands-on with the budget and everything that goes on behind the scenes," she said. "As a principal, you must employ equity with your employees, including everybody and equipping them with the necessary resources."

For more information about the principal program, go to <https://hcde-texas.org/teach-and-lead/principal-certification/>.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Instructional Management:

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me to:

- **Overseeing annual planning for increased student learning and conducting periodic assessments of the effectivity of the planning process.**
- **Ensuring that goals and objects form the basis of curricular decision-making and instruction and communicating expectations for student achievement.**
- **Establishing effective mechanisms for communication to and from staff in instructional evaluation, planning and decision-making**



Last week and this week we celebrated the successes of students at both Fortis Academy and Academic and Behavior School Center West with end-of-year recognition ceremonies.

At Fortis Academy, two students graduated from their home campuses. Moreover, all our students at Fortis were successful as they continue to recover from addiction and progress emotionally and academically.

At ABS West, we had 12 high school graduates and 17 additional students who were promoted to middle or high school. Students there are learning to be successful both socially and

academically with the goal for most to return to their home districts.



We also celebrate the successes of several dozen teen writers and artists who are being honored in New York City through the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. As regional sponsor of the Awards, HCDE supports the fine arts and works to encourage critical thinking skills with area youth. As leaner school district budgets cut fine arts opportunities for students, we can offer this exceptional program as a free service to our local districts.

By HCDE serving these populations of students, I am working to meet the Board's expectations for HCDE to identify the learning needs of 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 for student potential.

HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

June Board Meeting

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

