



WEEK OF JULY 22, 2019

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Of Note...

As we wrap up our hiring for the new school year, I am reminded that teaching is not just a job. It's a calling. One of our recent graduates from the alternative certification program put it wisely when she said, "Teaching is a responsibility and a vocation."

I am proud that the staff at HCDE understand and respect this philosophy and give so much of themselves to our students, client districts and customers every day. The annual staff meeting in August is our opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of the year as well as service milestones for staff, while also reconnecting with colleagues and gaining inspiration for the coming school year. I hope you will join us for the Convocation on August 23 at Kingdom Builders Center. Watch your email for an official save the date notice.

I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team and discussions about our upcoming retreat as well as conversation about the adopted budget. Thank you again for your support of our programs and staff with the budget last week. We have already heard how appreciative staff is of the increased contribution by HCDE for medical premiums and what a huge difference this makes in so many lives. In addition, the raises you approved for employees will also allow HCDE to remain competitive with our salaries as well as show appreciation to staff for the great work they do.

On Tuesday and Wednesday I held several internal meetings and also journeyed to the new AB West school to check on the progress. We will have another update for you on construction next week, but the building is coming along and they are preparing to install the huge beam for the gym next week. It's very exciting to see this dream for our students and staff transforming into reality!

Thursday was also packed with internal meetings including discussions about the convocation, our ELT retreat and new hires. I am out of the office for a few days next week, as a member of a national panel on recovery high schools at Ohio State. As I have said before, July and August are some of the busiest times of the year for a Superintendent.

Have a great weekend.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

HCDE Board Meeting—Wednesday, August 21, 2019

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Promise of Support, Mentors Convinces Award-Winning Teacher to Train with HCDE



Bilingual teacher Maria Camila Escobar Fuller doesn't mince words when she gives advice to aspiring teachers.

"Think twice about it," she said. "It is not just a job. Teaching is a responsibility and a vocation."

Post-college, Fuller was a behavior therapist for children with autism. When pursuing alternative certification programs to become a certified teacher, the college grad did extensive research and chose Harris County Department of Education. Reasons included a stellar customer service reputation; face-to-face classes combined with online offerings; and teacher support.

The native Spanish speaker from Columbia now teaches kindergartners at Love Elementary in the Houston Independent School District. She was recently honored as one of the top three winners of Texas Alternative Certification Association's Intern of the Year Award. She will be presented with a \$1,000 check and trophy at the Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education annual conference in Dallas in October. Fuller is also nominated for the National Association for Alternative Certification's 2020 Outstanding New Teacher Award to be announced in December.

The first-year teacher benefitted from veteran teacher mentors within HCDE's Educator Certification and Advancement Academy (ECA) Division. Ongoing professional networking and support are cornerstones of the program.

"Ms. Ellie, my field supervisor, literally adopted me and provided me feedback when I was desperate at

the beginning of the school year," Fuller said. "At first I felt like teaching was the most overwhelming thing I encountered and now I am at peace and really enjoy being with my students every day. (Now) I am starting to love teaching."



For 12 years, HCDE's teacher educator program has provided teacher training to college grads and second-career seekers. The ECA division also trains and prepares principals and superintendents for certification.

"For the past seven years, our program has reported a 99 percent pass rate for students completing course and taking the certification exams," said Lidia Zatopek, a veteran teacher and administrator who leads the program as division director.

Through the teacher prep program, Fuller gained theories of education which helped in laying a foundation for her career, especially as a bilingual educator. She said the veteran educators leading it delivered a treasure-trove of resources, including graphic organizers and templates.

"It's funny, but I use them every day during my (lesson) planning," said Fuller.

Still, it's the support, she said, which is the most asset of the teacher alternative certification program.

"I am genuinely grateful for the community I have in this program and the incredible role models," she said.

HCDE is recruiting teachers for its Teacher Alternative Certification Program. For more information, go to www.hcde-texas.org/teach-and-lead.

NEXT WEEK'S EVENTS

JULY 29, 2019

2019 Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Summer STEM Academy

JULY 30, 2019

HCDE Superintendent Certification Institute Information Webinar

AUGUST 1, 2019

Project WET Educator Workshop

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Grant Funds Summer Camp for Students Interested in Cybersecurity Careers



Thirty secondary education students learned about careers in cybersecurity this week through a weeklong cyber camp funded through the

National Science Foundation. The Teaching and Learning Center's Digital Education and Innovation Division facilitated the \$32,523 grant through a collaboration with the Center for Grants Development.

The iLearn GenCyber Student Camp allowed the students



to construct hardware and software models that represented best practices in network design and computer systems. Field experts provided information about careers.

The camp was a collaborated between TLC; InfraGard, a partnership between local FBI offices and private/public institutions; and Houston Community College Felix Fraga Campus.



HCDE Partners with Harris County Sheriff's Office for School Safety Forum 2019



Save the date for the School Safety Forum 2019 Oct. 15 at 6300 Irvington as the Center for Safe and Secure Schools partners

with the Harris County Sheriff's Office to help improve school security.

The workshop empowers students, teachers, parents and the community with tools needed to recognize, respond to and prevent acts of violence. Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez is the featured speaker.

Topics to be included:

- Emergency preparedness
- Vulnerabilities in schools
- Gang awareness
- Mental health awareness
- Threat Assessment Awareness and Actions
- School safety updates from the Texas Legislature

Cost for the forum is \$85, and breakfast and lunch are included. Register at <https://bit.ly/30QTPSP> .

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

ABS West Students Challenge Each Other with Drone Piloting



A fun, friendly competition flying a drone through an obstacle course is also being used as a learning opportunity for students at HCDE's Academic and Behavior School West this summer.

"It's more than just an activity, it's our program and we're really proud of it," said Keys. "It's their time to show off social skills they have learned over the summer."



As part of the extended school year (ESY) program, students work on social skills in teams. For the drone challenge project, they planned who was flying the drone; how it worked; and built teamworking skills like being patient; taking turns; and working in groups.

ABS West student Joshua Cyphers said he enjoyed the challenge, but it was hard.

"I liked that we were able to compete with each other and that there wasn't a time limit that knocked us out of the challenge," Cyphers said.

"We work on social skills all day along with reading and math," ABS West Principal Victor Keys said. "Our life skills students even came in to encourage them during the challenge."



This challenge also helps with the individualized education program (IEP) for each student as they are using reading and math skills. In order to operate the drone, they must know how to apply instructions in the manual and use math configurations to calculate durations of the battery for the competition.

Each year, the school does a different activity to help with students' social skills.

"They are putting their skills in action every day," Keys said.

CASE Debates Students Participate in Summer Camp at UH



Summer learning continues through CASE for Kids as more than 100 high school students from the CASE Debates program participated in the Houston Urban Debate League 2019 Summer Debate Institute held last week at the University of Houston.

Students stayed in dorms and learned from camp instructors who are trained in debate from the Association for Urban Debate Leagues, National Speech and Debate Association and the Tournament of Champions.

"The goal is to improve debate skills and learn from the pros while also networking with other students," said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, director for CASE for Kids.

The CASE Debates students will participate in Policy Debate and Worlds Debate through their high schools in the upcoming school year.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Instructional Management

In my goal to meet the elements of performance related to the Board's goals to

- **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; and**
- **Oversee annual planning for increased student learning and conducts periodic assessments of the effectiveness of the planning process.**

This summer we wrapped up our summer enrichment program at AB School West with our drone challenge.



The activity required students to obtain an understanding of instructions accompanying the drones and challenged them to apply higher-order thinking skills through maneuvering obstacle courses. The students also worked in teams to problem solve, a skill which is challenging for autistic students and students with behavioral challenges.

In addition, we offered 30 secondary students the opportunity to preview

careers in cybersecurity through a National Science Foundation Grant acquired for HCDE's Teaching and Learning Center's Digital Education and Innovations through the Center for Grants Development. The program offered this week was called the iLearn GenCyber Student Camp.

We also celebrate a graduate of our teacher alternative certification program through Educator



Certification and Advancement (ECA). Bilingual teacher Maria Camila Escobar Fuller was awarded \$1,000 and a plaque for being one of three teachers who won the Texas Alternative Certification Association's Intern of the Year Award. She also is being nominated for the National Association for Alternative Certification's 2020 Outstanding New Teacher Award to be announced in December.

By being involved in the instructional management of our programs, I am working to meet your goal of me to coordinate and identify learning needs of students and develop a process that ensures each student's learning goals are met or exceeded. I am also investigating best practices for student achievement and utilizing effective practices that maximize achievement of student potential within HCDE schools.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Josh Flynn

Vice President

George Moore

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

August Board Meeting

Wednesday, August 21, 2019

