



Of Note...

For the majority of each year, we celebrate the achievements of students, our client districts and the customers we serve. But for one day in August, everything we do is about the staff whose hard work make HCDE the amazing organization it is.

I started the week with the Executive Leadership Team reviewing plans in preparation for the school year. Several days included internal meetings and staff-centered events, including welcoming hundreds of school-based therapists back to work and finalizing new hires for this year.

But much of my week was spent refining details for today's convocation, as hours of planning and brainstorming took shape this morning. Today, we celebrated the annual years of service for those employees who have been with HCDE for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and this year, 35 years! This is an astounding testament to the loyalty our employees feel to HCDE, our programs and the services we provide to the community.

As I mentioned last week, the energy in the room is palpable on convocation day, with nearly 1,000 people gathered to celebrate all HCDE stands for. Thank you to those of you who were able to attend. Every year we have a new theme and I hope you enjoyed the Realm of Possibility and were able to chat with employees and experience their enthusiasm first-hand!

I love to see how the different divisions show their unity through matching apparel and the spirit and camaraderie they exhibit when cheering on their colleagues, taking pictures at photo booths and catching up with old friends from past assignments.

While the video of the Realm of Possibility was fiction, the theme of teamwork and opportunity behind it is a core value in HCDE. I truly believe that when we come together and work toward the common goal of supporting children and those who serve them, the possibilities for HCDE are endless.

Thank you for your support of our programs which allows us to explore all the possibilities for educational services in Harris County. The work HCDE leads makes an impressive impact on so many lives. I am proud of what we accomplished this past year, and I am excited for what the future holds for HCDE, our programs and the clients we serve.

Next week we welcome students back to our schools and I plan to visit our campuses. I will also be starting my quarterly meetings with board members next week and I look forward to meeting with each of you.

Have a wonderful weekend.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

HCDE Board Meeting—Wednesday, September 18, 2019

WEEK OF AUGUST 19, 2019

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Annual Staff 2019 Inspires with Message ‘Realm of Possibility’



Annual Staff 2019 energized HCDE staff and provided inspiration for the upcoming year as Superintendent James Colbert, Board members, administration and staff came together at the Kingdom Builder’s Center on Aug. 23.

With a theme called the “Realm of Possibility,” the convocation supplied a synergy across all divisions demonstrated by the reactions of more than 900 HCDE employees who attended.

Employees enjoyed a continental breakfast complete with a “donut wall.” Staff-manned photo booths complete with themed props provided the opportunity for take-away memories before the attendees were ushered into the auditorium.

Many employees in HCDE’s service and support divisions, such as Technology’s Monica Garcia, were recognized for their service. Garcia, a 35-year HCDE employee, works at the Technology Helpdesk and is administrator for several programs such as travel management, which is used to reimburse employees for work-related mileage. In her position as helpdesk analyst, she also provides all the technology price quotes for hardware and software.

Other categories for years of service included 30-, 25-, 20-, 15-, 10- and 5-year awards. More

than 150 employees walked the stage to receive years of service awards.

Following the awards, Superintendent Colbert provided an inspiring presentation based on the theme “Realm of Possibility.”

“The past few years, the annual staff meeting has focused on how we find



and meet the blind spots in public education and serve our communities and clients,” said Colbert. “This innovative perspective has made me realize one thing: Anything is possible with HCDE when we come together as a team and support children. So that makes today’s theme ‘Realm of Possibility’ even more fitting.”

Employees took advantage of the Twitter Wall, a social media message wall which gathered employee tweets and provided responses based on the hashtag #HCDEConvo19. From many of the postings, it was evident that Annual Staff is an opportunity to network and share inspiration with old friends as well as new colleagues.

“The talent in this room is astounding, and I am proud to be on this journey with you,” Colbert said.

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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Featured Photos from Annual Staff 2019: 'Realm of Possibility'



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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

The Year Ahead: Annual Staff Attendees Share Hopes for School Year



We're just looking forward to a great new school year. We're looking forward to more transparency and effective use of dollars for the children in Harris County.

JOHN FLYNN, BOARD PRESIDENT

My hope is for all the students to reach for the sky and work for their fullest potential and gain all the positive services and support that our great staff is going to help them gain. We want to make sure that our students and clients are fully supported and make full use of all the services our department offers.

RICHARD CANTU, BOARD MEMBER



My goal is to fill in the education gaps and to make sure we have a strong foundation in the space of education. What I would like to do for the rest of the year is create more collaborations with community members.

DANNY NORRIS, BOARD MEMBER

My goals and hopes are that we inspire and change the lives of the students and adults we serve across Harris County. Let's get fired up!

FRANCES WATSON-HESTER, TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER SENIOR DIRECTOR



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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

The Year Ahead: Annual Staff Attendees Share Hopes for School Year



(Charissa) My hopes and dreams for this school year are to be a strong instructional leader and support my teachers, staff and students. (Edwin) One goal this year is to help one of my students to advance so he may go back to his old school.

**ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL CHARISSA JORDAN AND
TEACHER EDWIN SHARINA, ABS EAST**

I am looking forward to a great partnership not only with our schools and therapists, but to also collaborate with everyone in our Department.

**BERNICE VALENZUELA, SCHOOL-BASED THERAPY SERVICES
MANAGER, 25 YEARS**



My goal is to reach as many kids as possible for the time that we have them.

FRANK HARRIS, HIGHPOINT SCHOOL, SEVEN-YEAR TEACHER

My goal this year is to deliver quality, relevant services as they relate to keeping our kids safe so that teachers can teach, and students can learn. That's my passion: safety in our environment.

JANICE OWOLABI, CENTER FOR SAFE AND SECURE SCHOOLS



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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Local Media Call on HCDE Leaders as Back-to-School Experts

Local media continued to call on HCDE leaders as education experts on back-to-school issues this month. Following an interview with Jonathan Parker, assistant superintendent, on KTRK Channel 13, Fox 26 invited new Center for Safe and Secure Schools Director Julia Andrews to appear on Fox morning news with Melissa Wilson to talk about her new role within Harris County.

Schools Senior Director Anthony Mays provided his expertise on school dress codes for KHOU Channel 11 on Aug. 15. Later that day, KHOU visited with CASE for Kids Director Dr. Lisa Thompson-Caruthers for a special on summer learning loss to air later this month. KPRC came to North Post Oak for a discussion with CSSS's new leader Andrews about school safety concerns around the county as children go back to school.



Dr. Anthony Mays and KHOU Janel Forte



KPRC Owen Conflenti and Julia Andrews

That lengthy, five-minute news segment with KPRC anchor Owen Conflenti aired on Sunday Conversations, a morning news show. The interview also ran during the 10 p.m. news.

Teaching and Learning Center Curriculum Director Colina Poullard appeared on Facebook Live with KHOU to discuss cyber safety issues with students going back to school. TLC's Curriculum Directors Andrea Segraves and Brenda Arteaga also represented HCDE through a Facebook Live at KHOU regarding best practices for study habits.

HCDE continues to push out back-to-school information to the community through social media outlets and media. Updates will be provided about further coverage with our back-to-school experts.

KHOU, Channel 11 Facebook Live about Dress Codes, Dr. Anthony Mays, senior director of Schools:
<https://youtu.be/--ozgxlWz4>

KTRK, Channel 13 Pre-K Story with Jonathan Parker:
<https://youtu.be/QvFL2tRPiIA>

Fox 26, Melissa Wilson morning news story about school safety initiatives with Julia Andrews:
<https://youtu.be/yiBxULmom8g>

KPRC, Sunday Conversations, School Safety story with Julia Andrews, director:
<https://youtu.be/M0EyXi-FhTk>

KHOU, Channel 11 Facebook Live about cyber safety with students, Dr. Colina Poullard, curriculum director, Teaching and Learning Center:
<https://youtu.be/AMTXoKtTXq4>

KHOU, Channel 11 news story about summer learning loss and benefits of afterschool with Dr. Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, director for CASE for Kids: *(See next week's Connector)*

KHOU, Channel 11 Facebook Live about study habits with Andrea Segraves and Dr. Brenda Arteaga, curriculum directors, Teaching and Learning Center:
https://youtu.be/N_eAfWuU7YA

Houston Chronicle: Andrews to lead as director for HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools:
<https://www.chron.com/neighborhood/memorial/schools/article/Andrews-to-lead-as-director-for-HCDE-s-Center-14284833.php>



KHOU Brandi Smith and Dr. Lisa Thompson-Caruthers



Colina Poullard and Janel Forte

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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

CSSS Offers Driver Safety Tips as Students Head Back to School



School is now back in session for most of the school districts around Harris County. This means children will be walking to-and-from schools in the

early morning hours and late afternoon. Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools Director Julia Andrews offers tips to drivers to prevent accidents this school year.

"It is so important for drivers to slow down and pay attention when children are present—especially before and after school," Andrews said.

If you're dropping off:

- Do not double park; it blocks visibility for other children and vehicles.
- Do not load and unload children across the street from the school.
- Carpool to reduce the number of vehicles at the school.

Sharing the Road with Young Pedestrians

- Do not block the crosswalk when stopped at a red light or waiting to make a turn, forcing pedestrians to go around you; this could put them in the path of moving traffic.

- In a school zone when flashers are blinking, stop and yield to pedestrians crossing the crosswalk or intersection.
- Always stop for a school patrol officer or crossing guard holding up a stop sign.
- Take extra care to look out for children in school zones, near playgrounds and parks, and in all residential areas.
- Do not honk or rev your engine to scare a pedestrian, even if you have the right of way.
- Never pass a vehicle stopped for pedestrians wherever they may be, no matter who has the right of way.

Sharing the Road with School Buses

- Never pass a bus stopped to load or unload children from either direction if you are on an undivided road.
- If the yellow or red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended, traffic must stop.
- The area 10 feet around a school bus is the most dangerous for children; stop far enough back to allow them space to safely enter and exit the bus.
- Be alert; children often are unpredictable, and they tend to ignore hazards and take risks.

According to the American School Bus Council, passing vehicles cause an estimated two-thirds of school bus loading and unloading fatalities.

"By exercising a little extra care and caution, drivers and pedestrians can co-exist safely in school zones," Andrews said.

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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Stephanie Wright Chosen as Chief Accounting Officer for Harris County Department of Education



Stephanie Wright is the new chief accounting officer for Business Services at Harris County Department of Education. The Texas certified public accountant formerly served as executive director at Lone Star College for seven years where she provided leadership and strategic direction within the accounting

and financial reporting divisions. In addition to preparing monthly financial statements and board reports for the college, she facilitated the annual external audit and prepared the comprehensive annual financial report.

The Woodlands resident earned her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Houston-Clear Lake and Master of Science from Texas A&M University-Commerce. Her broad financial experience spans both private and public sectors.

“My goal at HCDE is to continue a legacy of financial transparency and fiscal diligence with the Department’s financial matters while also supporting and collaborating with not only the Department’s internal divisions but also among area school finance professionals from our greater Harris County school districts,” said Wright.

NEXT WEEK'S EVENTS

AUGUST 26, 2019

First Day of School at HCDE Schools

AUGUST 27, 2019

HCDE Superintendent Certification Institute Information Webinar

AUGUST 28, 2019

Quest for Grants Training Series: Find Funding to Support Your Programs!

AUGUST 29, 2019

Alternative Certification Program for Teachers - Information Session

HCDE Principal Certification Academy Information Seminar

AUGUST 30, 2019

4th Annual Scholastic Art and Writing Awards District Affiliate Leadership Conference

Charter School Roundtable

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Organizational Morale and Personnel Management

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;
- Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge excellence;
- Ensure that the system for recruiting and selecting results in personnel recommendations based on defined needs, goals, priorities and candidate credentials/qualifications; and
- Encourage, oversee and participate in staff recognition activities.

Staff are recognized for their dedication to our organization and the children and community they serve. Our "Years of Service" awards reinforce and reward that dedication as a token of our appreciation to employees.

This year we come together to "Be the Impact" as others "See the Impact." I look forward to a positive school year like no other.



In facilitating Annual Staff 2019, I continue 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. Once a year, I am also allowed to make this personal connection with many of the employees I might not otherwise meet. Through Annual Staff, I am also recognizing our exceptional, dedicated employees at this event, in keeping with establishing a culture among our staff so that we all strive to achieve excellence.



With the theme "Realm of Possibility," employees left Annual Staff 2019 invigorated with the charge to go forth and serve others with a compassionate team spirit.

Once a year, we come together to reflect and plan for the new school year. Feedback from staff each year affirms that this event is a catalyst to kicking off the school year in a positive manner.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Josh Flynn

Vice President

George Moore

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

September Board Meeting

September 18, 2019

