

The CONNECTOR

A weekly publication of Harris County Department of Education for the HCDE Board of Trustees



FINISHING STRONG

TOP STORIES INSIDE



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Holiday Receptions for Staff and Board Members

The CONNECTOR



Of Note...

One of my favorite aspects of the holiday season is watching as our employees and community put others before self. While this attitude is exhibited throughout the region, I am especially proud of how this spirit is alive in HCDE.

This week was a prime example of the supportive environment that embodies HCDE. Houston Children's Charity donated dozens of gifts to the families of more than 450 Head Start students to ensure they have a special holiday. For many of these families, these gifts not only make the children happy, but give parents peace of mind that life won't get in the way of Christmas for their children.

We also learned more about a Head Start employee through our monthly employee spotlight.

This month we are highlighting a housekeeper who spends her days not only maintaining a clean environment but giving out hugs and support wherever needed.

This week was also filled with celebrations. I attended the holiday reception at NPO and was a guest at three different retirement celebrations. I always enjoy hearing about someone retiring as staff deserve the opportunity to pursue their personal passions after dedicating many years to HCDE. December is a popular time for employees to retire, with it being a natural break and the end of the calendar year. This year, we have several retiring this month and it was a joy to wish them well in the next chapter of their lives. Their work, dedication to the job and spirit of collaboration will truly be missed, but I am excited for the journey that lies before them.

I started the week with a presentation at the Region 13 Educational Service Center Principal Academy in Austin, which I have done for the last nine years. Upon returning to Houston, I engaged in various standing meetings to prepare for the board meeting next week and get a jump start on activities for the new year.

Have a wonderful weekend and enjoy the beautiful cool weather.



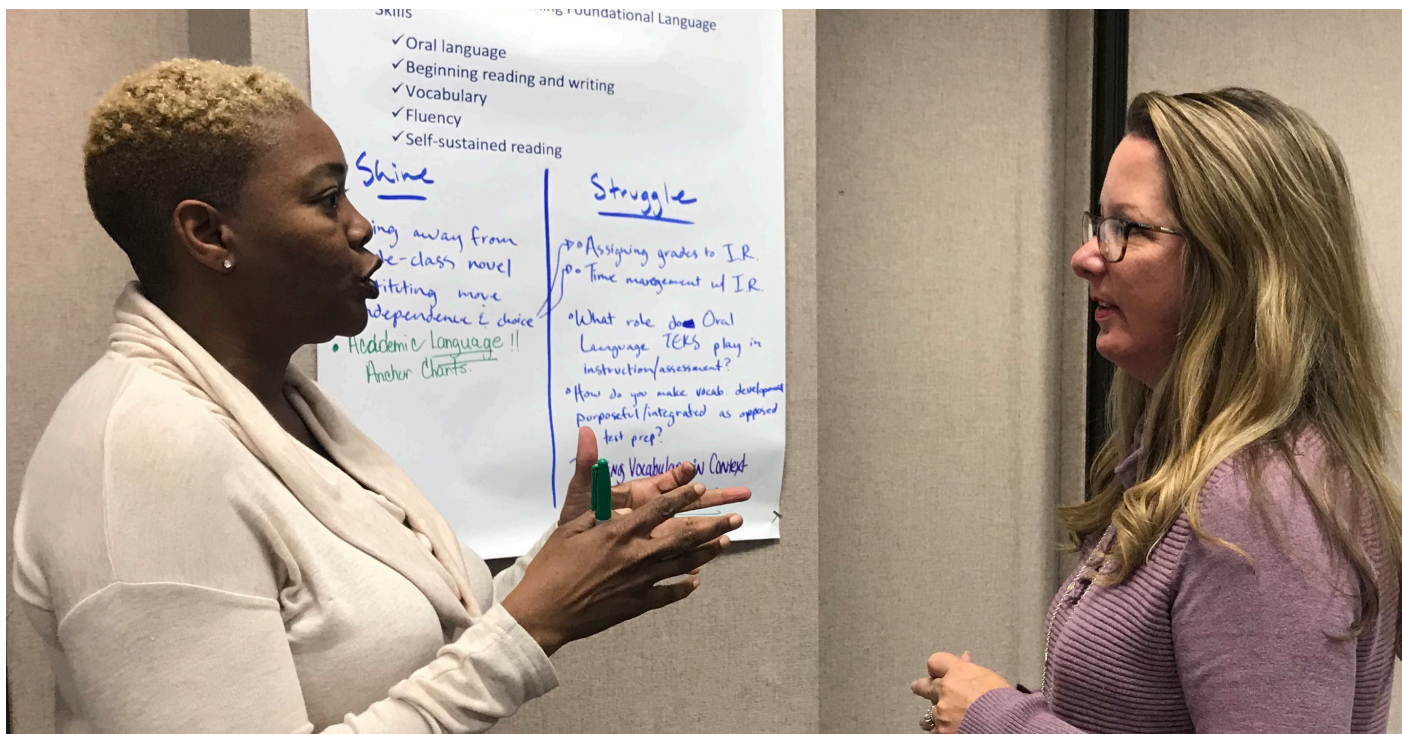
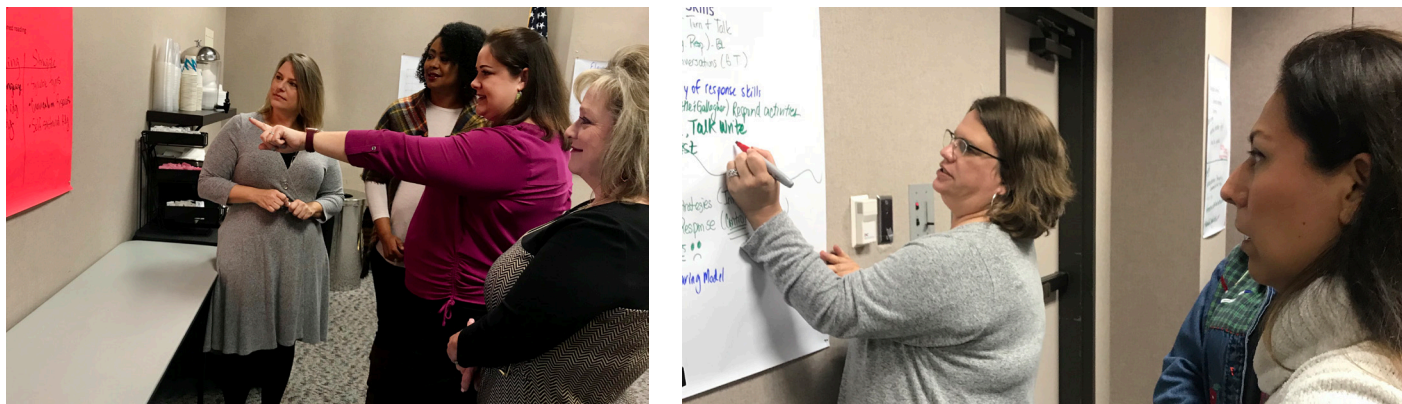
BOARD SHORTS

English Language Arts Specialist Gather at HCDE to Network, Discuss New TEKS

Approximately 50 English language arts (ELA) curriculum leaders from 30 school districts and charter schools throughout greater Harris County met to discuss the new ELA Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum at the ELA Leadership Meeting. Harris County Department of Education English Language Arts and Reading Curriculum Director Kelly Tummy says the leaders talked about both their challenges and successes in implementing the new standards across their districts.

“These sessions are extremely valuable because they allow for inter-district conversations,” said Tummy.

The quarterly HCDE ELA Leadership Meeting is free for attendees and includes timely topics for ELA educators. To attend, contact ktummy@hcde-texas.org.



PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Gift of Rehabbed Altima Provides Road to Success for HCDE Head Start Family

View photo album: <https://tinyurl.com/txsz2w9>

Harris County Department of Education Head Start Mom Jessica Bouldin and two sons Jyree, 3, and Jasious, 6, were gifted a shiny, blue rehabbed Nissan Altima this Christmas through Bates Collision Centers.

Bicycles, gifts and car were presented by Lee and Leila Bates and employees as they volunteered their resources through the Responsible Parenting Award, a philanthropic project which has been ongoing for 20 years.

The Bouldins received car number 37. Bates employees rehab the car and community members help with resources such as insurance, gas, tires and gifts.

"I think the important thing we need to recognize is that sometimes life gets in the way for whatever reason," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert Jr. "Someone needs a helping hand to get them back into a direction that can change their lives forever."

Bouldin is a victim of domestic abuse and is raising her sons as a single parent with the help of her aunt. She must find transportation to get herself to work and her sons to separate schools each day. Recently she was promoted on her job.

"I know that this car is going to make a big difference in your life," said Leila Bates.

Read more of the story at <https://wp.me/p4QJFI-16L>



PROGRAM

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Ready, Set Drone: Educators Get Behind Drone Controls

At first, afterschool coordinator Susana Salinas was skeptical about commandeering a drone. Once she was behind the controls, she owned the experience.

Salinas is one of 30 educators attending drone training hosted through HCDE's CASE for Kids which introduced curriculum to use drones in afterschool programs as part of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs.

Educators may borrow the drones from the SMART Zone, which stands for Sharing Multiple Afterschool Resources and Technology. The afterschool resource is a comprehensive collection of materials available to all out-of-school time programs in Harris County. The drones are housed there, as well as sports and fitness equipment, electronics, activity books and curriculum.

First, the afterschool adults must learn how to manage the drones themselves.

"This was my first time working with a drone, and it was definitely a lot more difficult than I thought," Salinas said.

Afterschool educators were introduced to control panels using Androids or I-pads. Salinas sees the flexibility which drones offer as afterschool curriculum through her organization called Sewa International, a nonprofit which serves underprivileged youth.

"Working with drones you can go anywhere—with the kid who likes art to the one who loves science," she said.

Teachers attending the drone training Dec. 13 and 14 learned about flying and gained certificates. They may borrow drones from the SMART Zone.

For more information about CASE for Kids SMART Zone, go to www.hcde-texas.org/after-school/resources.



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Irvington, NPO Host Holiday Receptions for Staff, Board Members

Holiday celebrations were held at NPO and Irvington respectively on Dec. 12 and 18. Superintendent James Colbert Jr. thanked employees at each event for their dedication and urged them to spend quality time with family and recharge during the holidays. Below are some photos from both events.

NPO reception: <https://bit.ly/2rGGWil>

Irvington reception: <https://bit.ly/2Z9ZFz6>



PROGRAM

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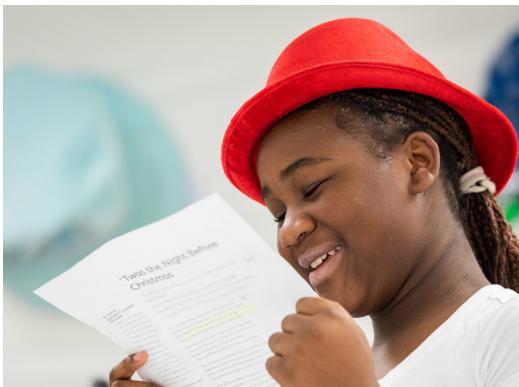
Students at HCDE Schools Division Usher in Holidays with Performances, Shared Family Celebrations

Students from three HCDE schools ushered in the holiday season the last few days of school with performances and celebrations with family and school staff.

At ABS East and West, students have been working on developing socialization skills along with fine and gross motor skills through skits and musical holiday presentations they shared with their families. These sharing opportunities important in building confidence, self-esteem and life skills.

At Fortis Academy, students shared school progress with their families along with a holiday dinner.

Below are photos from all three celebrations. HCDE students and staff return to school on Jan. 6, 2020.



HCDE Board of Trustees Appoints 2 Trustees, Elects New President and Vice President

The Harris County Department of Education Board of Trustees voted Wednesday to replace trustees George Moore, Position 1, Precinct 2 and Josh Flynn, Position 4, Precinct 3 with Amy Hinojosa and Andrea Duhon, respectively.

Both Moore, board vice president, and Flynn, president, had tendered their resignations prior to the meeting.

"I give my sincere appreciation to Dr. George Moore and Josh Flynn for their service to the students and citizens of Harris County," HCDE School Superintendent James Colbert Jr. said. "Dr. Moore is an outstanding man and has left a significant fingerprint on this organization as a fierce advocate for the underserved and as a great supporter for our 1,100 employees. Mr. Flynn was a good leader who is very well read, extremely efficient and took pride in his leadership post, and I wish him well in his new endeavors."

Hinojosa, a Pasadena resident, was sworn into office shortly after her appointment. She is a 16-year, oil-and-gas project manager. She serves as a board director with an education advocacy group called ProUnitas.

"I'm passionate about serving my community and about improving student outcomes," said Hinojosa. "I look forward to the work ahead, and I'm excited."

Duhon, a Katy resident, is a small business financial advisor who has a record for advocating for public education programs such as Head Start. HCDE currently serves 1,250 Head Start children and families in northeast and east Harris County.

"I look forward to serving the community on behalf of the students of Harris County," Duhon said.

At the meeting, the board also named Eric Dick as president and Danyahel "Danny" Norris as vice president. Dick called the new trustee appointments "a breath of fresh air."



Amy Hinojosa



Andrea Duhon



SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

Community Relations, Instructional Management, Personnel Management:

Following my goal to meet the elements of performance related to the Boards' goals to:

Encourages, oversees and participates in staff recognition activities;

Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way;

Establish and maintain a program of public relations to keep the public well-informed of the activities of the Department, affecting a wholesome and cooperative working relationship between the Department and community;

Ensure that appropriate data and objectives form the basis of curricular decision making and instruction and communicates expectations for student achievement;

Establish effective mechanisms for communication to and from staff in instructional evaluation, planning and decision making; and

Ensure that goals and objectives form the basis of curricular decision making and instruction and communicate expectations for student achievement.

Busy is the word to use as we wrap up the semester and the work year!

Holiday celebrations and performances filled our calendars. We celebrate accomplishments at three schools: Fortis Academy, ABS West and ABS East.

Our Teaching and Learning Center wrapped up workshops and we featured the English Language Arts Leadership Group as area district leaders shared successes and challenges with the new ELAR TEKS.

CASE for Kids hosted drone training for teachers around Harris County. Those teachers may borrow drones from a resource library called

SMART Zone. These activities will be great for promoting science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) curriculum.

Additionally, staff gather to share holiday greetings as we host two holiday receptions.

Finally, we celebrated our Head Start mom Jessica Bouldin at Bates Collision as she received a rehabbed Nissan Altima along with gifts for her two sons. We officially usher in the holiday season!



By hosting these celebrations and trainings, I continue to work towards the Board's goals to:

Function as the primary ambassador for the Department and present a positive, professional image of myself and the Department in all venues—community, political, education, business and board. I also work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.

I am also investigating best practices for student achievement and utilizing effective practices that maximize achievement of student potential within HCDE schools and beyond.

Finally, I am encouraging, overseeing and participating in staff recognition activities.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Eric Dick

Vice President

Danny Norris

Board Members

Richard Cantu

Andrea Duhon

Amy Hinojosa

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Board Appreciation Reception

Jan. 15, 2020

Board Meeting

Jan. 15, 2020

Ron Clark Move Your Bus

Jan. 25, 2020

Marriott Westchase

R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference

Feb. 1, 2020

Kingdom Builder's Center