

# The CONNECTOR

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



## COMMUNITY LIAISONS

### TOP STORIES INSIDE



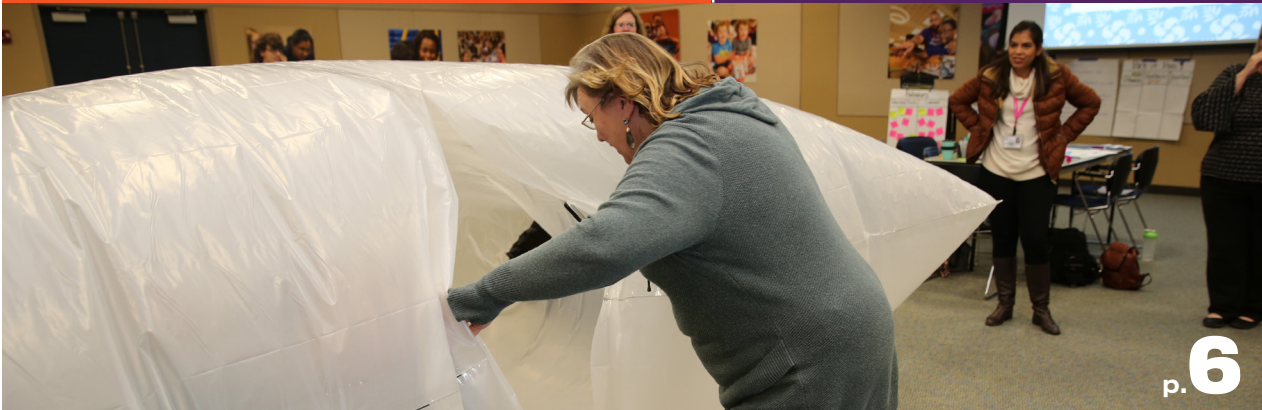
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# The CONNECTOR



## Of Note...

It is no secret that one of my goals for HCDE is to be the best educational service provider in the nation. I believe that in order to do this, we need to do everything at a world-class level and that means “owning the space” we are in, being seen as an expert resource in Harris County.

This vision is coming to life with many of our divisions, but this week we saw it play out with the Center for Safe and Secure Schools (CSSS). With the shooting outside Bellaire High School last week, the concept of school safety is once again at the forefront of the local news and on the minds of community leaders. Julia Andrews, director of CSSS, was called upon several times this week to speak on the concept of school safety from a restorative practices perspective.

This approach focuses on building relationships between students and adults at the campus level, emphasizing that a positive culture and climate at a school is one way to create a safe school environment. In the last few years, Ms. Andrews has become a local authority on restorative practices, speaking locally and around the nation on this approach to school safety. I am excited to see how we continue to define the school safety space and how our other divisions rise in the minds of the community to become experts in their areas as well.

It was a short week with the Martin Luther King holiday on Monday, primarily filled with standing internal meetings. Today I attended the Choice Partners Annual Vendor and Member Appreciation Luncheon, where we honored more than 50 vendors and members whose use of our contracts substantially contribute to Choice’s bottom line. This year the luncheon highlighted one “Star Performer,” a vendor whose contracts generated the highest amount of revenue for the purchasing cooperative: Facilities Sources. Facilities Sources is a company that offers a variety of general contracting services involving both interior and exterior building renovations. This year, HCDE utilized Facilities Sources for several projects including renovations at Fortis Academy and High Point East.

The appreciation luncheon is a great event where we thank those who help us give back millions of dollars to support public education in Harris County, as well as help our vendors and members get to know Choice staff and each other a little better.

I will be attending the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) Midwinter Conference next week, where HCDE will be presenting on several topics including the story of Fortis Academy and a case study of Restorative Practices at a middle school in Spring.

Have a wonderful weekend.



# PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

## School Finance Council: CPA Shares New Tax Info with Area Districts

School Financial personnel heard from Weaver & Tidwell Accountant Leland Dushkin, CPA at the January meeting. Dushkin shared information about the new W-4 and other factors which might impact school business officials and taxpayers in the coming year. He also mentioned that the 1099 Form will be changing in 2021.

**View the video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLlywXQdooQ&feature=youtu.be>



**“IF YOU WANT MORE MONEY BACK OR WANT TO HAVE LESS WITHHELD, YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE CHANGES (WITH NEW W-4).”  
-LELAND DUSHKIN**

## Save the Date Feb. 28: HCDE Go Texan Day/Chili Cook-Off



and

## Chili Cook-Off

**Divisions compete for the best chili!**

Conference Center Rooms 501 - 503  
11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.



#SeeTheImpact



# PROGRAM

## CONNECTIONS

### Center for Safe and Secure Schools Travels to Provide Countywide School Safety Trainings

With the recent passage of Senate Bill 11, Texas now joins the short list of states in the United States to legislatively mandate the implementation of threat assessment teams to promote school safety in its public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools.

Goose Creek CISD Deputy Superintendent Anthony Price is over safety and security and wants to be on top of what's going on within the state, district and area.

Patricia Kay, Crosby ISD assistant superintendent, wants to bring a team from her district so they can start the threat assessment process.

Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools recently partnered with Sheldon ISD to host the Threat Assessment Workshop: The Next Steps at Panther Stadium with hopes of neighboring school districts bringing additional personnel without worrying about travel. About 80 people were in attendance.

By traveling to area school districts, the Center hopes to empower more districts through school safety initiatives. Providing this training closer to many districts in east Harris County provided them the chance to bring additional staff. "We're strategically setting up these workshops throughout the county to impact this mandate and help the school districts we serve," said Julia Andrews, Center director.

"We love that it's here next to us in one of our neighboring school districts and because of that I was able to bring five others from my district," Price said.

"I was excited to see it here (Sheldon ISD) and I think that really allowed us to have as many as we have here since it's right in our backyard," Kay said.



The board of trustees of each school district is now required to establish a threat assessment team to serve at each campus of their district. Each team is required to complete base training provided by the Texas School Safety Center or a Regional Education Service Center. The base training is based on the training program developed by Sigma Threat Consultants.

"We want to provide every tool and best practice for students if a crisis situation were to occur," he said. "I've been doing active shooter and risk management trainings for 18 years, so anytime I can learn more information it makes it more important to better serve our students."

"This training will provide a take-away where we can have documents that will guide us as we go forward to forming our team and training," Kay said. "We built a team three years ago, but with the mandates from Senate Bill 11 we wanted to get we wanted to get structured and formal with it plan."

CSSS teamed up with Sigma Senior Consultant Melissa Reeves to provide the workshop that covers the next steps after the required basic training. Participants learned the legal and ethical guidelines driving higher standards needed for multi-disciplinary threat assessment teams. The session covered best practices, specific resources, an implementation checklist, and roles/responsibilities for establishing and/or refining their teams, protocols, and processes.

**Read more of the story:** <https://bit.ly/2NQ1V9Z>

# PROGRAM

## CONNECTIONS

### Ecobot Challenge Welcomes High School Competition to Be Held May 15

Forty Houston Independent School District high school students will participate in the inaugural high school Ecobot Challenge 2020 this year.

Officially, the new challenge launched Jan. 17 as teachers met for a train-the-trainer session at HCDE. The official competition date will be May 15, from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. at the HISD Field House.

Eight HISD high schools are competing, including Yates, Chavez, Worthing, Booker T. Washington, Sterling, Waltrip and East Early College, said Tracie Scales, CASE for Kids coordinator for the event.

The competition uses a larger, more complex robotics kit supplied by Rev Robotics. In working with the high school students, the robotics venture will be more robust and challenging.



“The adults must learn the curriculum, and in turn they teach their students,” said Scales.

Many of the teachers are science and math teachers who will be working with the students through their afterschool programs.

Yates High School teacher Paul Judice says he came to the training to keep up with ever-changing technologies.

“To me, the more I know, the more my students know,” he said.

**“TO ME, THE MORE I KNOW, THEY MORE MY STUDENTS KNOW.” -PAUL JUDICE**

# PROGRAM

## CONNECTIONS

### Make-and-Take Science, Math Workshops Increase Student Engagement

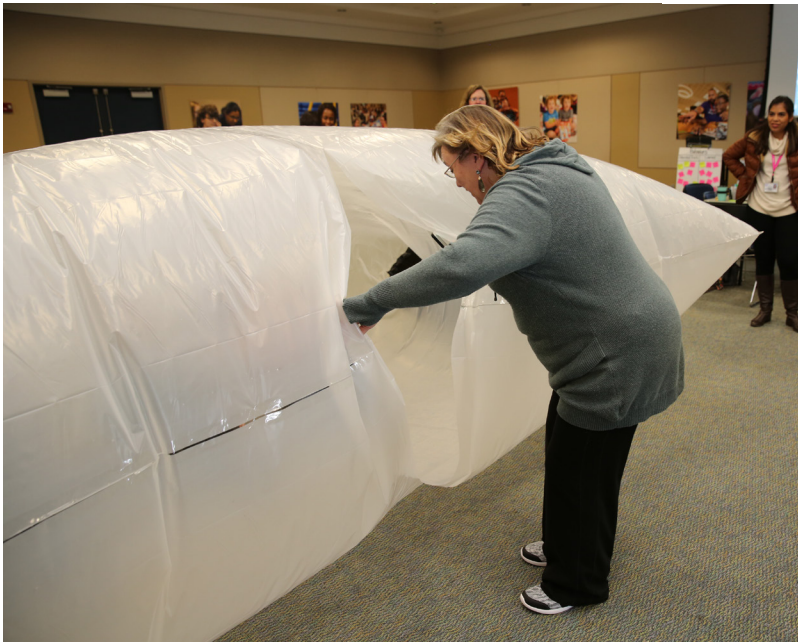
Science and math teachers gathered for three interactive workshops at HCDE featuring make-and-take activities for classroom for elementary and intermediate school students.

The workshops hosted by Teaching and Learning Center curriculum directors Lisa Felske and Nicole Shanahan put teachers in the students' role as educators tried out new interactive activities to increase their students' engagement. A biome created with plastic and controlled by a fan provided charting activities through a workshop called "Charting with the Chicks: An Interactive Approach to Science in Grades 1-5."

Consultant and 18-year teacher Melissa McElveen provided take-away activities complete with a science vocabulary wall for science teachers in the workshop.

"We're supplying academic vocabulary and science instruction by getting kids up and moving and making things interactive," she said.

Two math make-and-take workshops allowed for fraction and percentages instruction using popsicle sticks and Cuisenaire rods, math learning aids for visualizing problem-solving.



## Center Director Andrews Appears in Houston Chronicle School Shooting Story

Center for Safe and Secure Schools Director Julia Andrews was interviewed by Houston Chronicle Education Reporter Jacob Carpenter about the Bellaire school shooting. Carpenter asked Andrews about best practices in communication between faculty, students and parents.

Her comments appear at the end of the story: <https://tinyurl.com/qsn6ckr>



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Bellaire High School student Adrian Interiano holds a sign listing cities where school shootings have occurred, during a silent sit-in protest outside the Houston Independent School District headquarters Friday, Jan. 17, 2020.

Photo: Godofredo A. Vásquez, Houston Chronicle / Staff photographer

## Human Trafficking Story Airs on Univision 45 with Center Director Julia Andrews

Univision 45 reporter Marlene Guzman talked to Center for Safe and Secure Schools Director Julia Andrews about human trafficking Jan. 22 for a story which aired in the 5 p.m. Univision newscast. The story follows a ring of suspected traffickers who abducted two teenagers. Andrews provides safety considerations for both parents and teens in the interview. January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

View the story: <https://bit.ly/2NTZOC9>



### Instructional Management and Community Relations

• In an effort to:

- **Establish effective mechanisms for communication to and from staff in instructional evaluation, planning and decision making;**
- **Ensure that appropriate data are used in developing recommendations and making decisions regarding the instructional program and resources;**
- **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; and**
- **Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.**

Serving our districts continues to be our primary goal. This month we began offering the Threat Assessment training through the Center for Safe and Secure Schools. More frequently we are being asked to serve schools and districts within the community as time, budgets and convenience are critical.



By serving the geographical areas of the county, we find that more personnel can take part in the trainings. This was the case as approximately 60 employees from Sheldon, Goose Creek and Crosby were able to attend our Sheldon ISD Threat Assessment.

Our Teaching and Learning staff also provide customized trainings tailored to district needs and provide many of those trainings within the district.

Through our School Finance Council, we hosted financial officers from multiple districts at Irvington. We are also offered interactive math and science training for teachers; they left with ready-made activities to reinforce learning in their classrooms.

This week we were in the news as we shared critical discussions about school safety and protecting children from human traffickers and school violence.

As a result of our trainings inside our premises and within the communities we serve, as well as providing community education through local media I am striving to meet your goals for me to:

- **Identify learning needs of students and develop a process that ensures each student's learning goals are met or exceeded.**
- **Ensure feedback process is implemented to communicate effectively with the home ISD and parents.**
- **Present a positive, professional image of myself and the Department in all venues—community, political, educational, business and board.**
- **Maintain visibility and involvement in the community with ISD superintendents, elected officials, community leaders and the HCDE Board.**
- **Be open to their ideas and needs, listen and accept criticism, and be willing to seek advice and counsel when necessary.**
- **Determine the appropriate course of action to address issues.**

### HCDE BOARD

#### Board President

Eric Dick

#### Vice President

Danny Norris

#### Board Members

Richard Cantu

Andrea Duhon

Amy Hinojosa

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

#### Jan. 28

DIY: Workstation Make and Take (Gr. 7)  
6300 Irvington  
9 a.m.

#### Jan. 31

Coding 101  
6005 Westview  
9 a.m.

#### Feb. 1

34th Annual R.T. Garcia  
Early Childhood Winter  
Conference  
Kingdom Builder's  
Center  
8:30 a.m.

#### Feb 28

Go Texan Day/Chili  
Cook-Off  
6300 Irvington  
11:30 a. m.