

The CONNECTOR

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



WORKING TOGETHER

TOP STORIES INSIDE



p. 4

Gearing up for Breast Cancer Awareness



p. 6

HCDE Honors 5 Area Media Representatives with Media Honor Roll 2019 Awards



p. 5

ABS East Staff Holds Flag at UH Football Game

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Of Note...

First, our apologies that this newsletter is being sent out on Monday instead of Friday. As you know, we closed all HCDE offices, schools and Head Start Centers on Friday due to impacts of Tropical Depression Imelda.

Inclement weather requires that educators be flexible and proactive. Last week, the region was surprised by the amount of rain that fell in such a short period of time. Staff monitored the weather beginning on Wednesday and I joined the county-wide inclement weather call at 3 a.m. Thursday morning to discuss the impacts on the schools in the region. I was impressed with the collaboration of the different school districts and superintendents and how diverse their communities are. After this call, I was confident that HCDE should stay open on Thursday. As I mentioned at the board meeting, we need to be open more than we are closed so we can effectively serve our client districts, students and staff.

However, on Friday, after joining the call again, I determined it was in the best interests of our students and staff to close all HCDE facilities. This activity happened to occur while I was at the Texas Association of School Administrators/Texas Association of School Boards fall conference in Dallas. I, along with several superintendents and administrators from the Houston area, spent much of Thursday talking with staff and monitoring the impacts of weather on the county from more than 4 hours away. I was proud of how our staff handled the storm and various effects on our facilities, always working diligently to ensure that the safety of students and staff was our top priority.

At the conference, which lasted through Saturday, I also judged the Texas Academic Decathlon competition and attended a reception for Dr. Michael Hinojosa, superintendent of Dallas ISD. This conference is an amazing opportunity for board members and administrators to network with others who understand the work of public education in Texas, while learning about innovative programs and services that support teaching and learning. This year Mr. Norris joined several HCDE leaders and I hope he was able to take advantage of the great presentations and seminars and shares this information with you.

Earlier in the week, I held several internal meetings and attended the PFC meeting, budget workshop and regular board meeting on Wednesday. Thank you for the robust conversations about our budget, tax rate and the future funding of HCDE programs and services.

This week, I travel to Austin to fulfill my duties as a member of the UIL State Executive Committee and will meet with staff about various projects in the department.

Have a great rest of the week.



BOARD BRIEFS



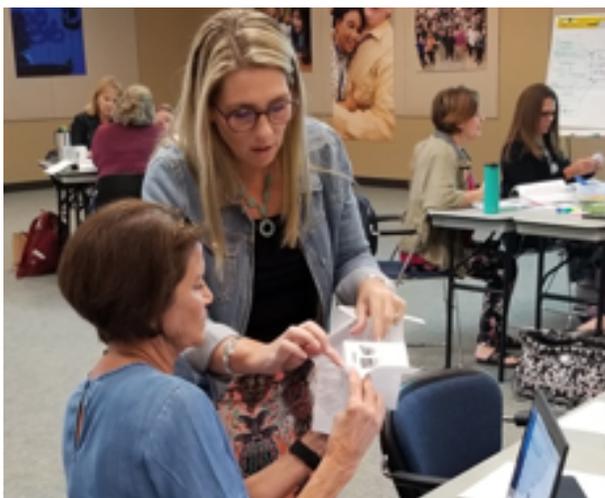
State Representative for Texas House District 134 Sarah Davis provided a legislative update regarding special education issues at a Schools Division meeting Sept. 12 at HCDE.



A new HCDE-produced video talks about the merits of equine therapy for students with emotional and intellectual disabilities. The SIRE program will be used at all four HCDE schools this year. View the video: <https://youtu.be/rFjsqBgMfB8>



Employees were provided flu shots at both Irvington and North Post Oak locations this week. Aetna provided the shots for free and reduced rates through certain health plans. HEB was the health care provider who administered the shots. Experts predict a robust flu season this year comparable to 2017.



Math Curriculum Specialist Director Nicole Shanahan hosted a dozen math leaders Sept. 17 as Visible Learning for Math Surface Learning was held at HCDE. Presenter Connie Hamilton demonstrated surface learning, a learning process which goes beyond memorization of facts and show concepts to students.



Educator Certification and Advancement welcomed 13 candidates into its 2019-2020 inaugural Superintendent Institute cohort this week. More cohorts may be added to the roster as the month progresses.

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Schools Division to Participate in Autism Speaks Walk at University of Houston Oct. 19



For a second year, Schools Division staff, students and their families participate in the Autism Speaks Walk Oct. 19 at the University of Houston Lynn Susan Park, 4800 Calhoun Road.

A call-to-action goes out this year asking HCDE staff and their families to participate. The Schools Division goal is to raise \$3,000 towards the national goal of \$377,100 for autism research.

Organizing the event this year is Gabriela Hernandez-Aguilera, parent engagement liaison for Schools.



"Together, we can accomplish amazing things for people living with autism," said Hernandez-Aguilera. Registration for the walk begins at 8 a.m., and the walk begins at 9:30 a.m. at Lynn Eusan Park.

To register, go to <https://bit.ly/2kkmTd3>. For additional information, email gghernandez@hcde-texas.org.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

HCDE Gears Up for Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October

Employees are being invited to “dress to support” on Fridays in October as part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The themed events help raise awareness with themes like “one team-one dream (sports team attire),” “hunt for the cure (camo),” “positively pink (pink clothing)” and “pink superhero power (superhero).” Employees are urged to share photos.

Other Breast Cancer Awareness Month activities will include a door decorating contest through HCDE facilities and classrooms. Communications will provide several feature stories about employees who are breast cancer survivors.



PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

ABS East Staff Holds Flag at UH Football Game



Academic and Behavior School East Educational Aide Albert Joulevette organized staff to participate through the University of Houston Little Coog Program and take part in the pre-game flag ceremony at NRG Stadium last Friday. Some of the staff members are UH alumni.

With the help of family, about 40 people represented Harris County Department of Education before the University of Houston kicked off against Washington State University. Students were not included due to the late notice.

Rehearsal took place hours before showtime and participants were treated a sneak peek of the field during warm-ups. The game was televised nation-wide and HCDE was recognized for taking part that evening.



PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

HCDE Honors 5 Area Media Representatives with Media Honor Roll 2019 Awards



Harris County Department of Education named five media representatives to the 2019 Media Honor Roll this month. Representatives being honored this year by HCDE are Rose-Ann Aragon, KPRC 2; Kaitlin Monte, KRIV 26; Gilbert Hoffman, North Channel Star and Highland Star-Courier (Grafikpress Corporation); Chris McDonald, formerly with KIAH 39; and Juan Beltran, KTRK 13.

The Media Honor Roll, sponsored by the Texas Association of School Boards, honors media representatives statewide who deserve recognition for fair, accurate and balanced reporting of news about public schools. Plaques and a media release provide recognition.

Each year HCDE selects local media representatives for recognition of their outstanding contributions to education. Criteria for HCDE's selection process include the media representative's efforts to report school news in a fair, accurate and balanced manner and give a high profile to positive news about education.

Aragon is honored for a feature story she reported on regarding a car giveaway to a needy Head Start mother. Monte served as emcee for a ceremony recognizing afterschool providers for the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or Case for Kids. Hoffman is celebrated for his continued support in publishing information about HCDE education events which benefit the community. McDonald provided coverage of a fine arts summer program which helps disadvantaged children. Beltran shared a story about teens recovering from addiction who attend the county's first public recovery high school called Fortis Academy.

"We believe it's important to single out individuals who deserve recognition for their outstanding contributions to education and celebrate them," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert Jr. "We are grateful for these talented professionals."

This year's honorees appear on the Texas Association of School Board's website at www.tasb.org as more than 300 representatives from Texas newspapers, radio and television stations and online publications representatives are honored statewide.

SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

Organizational Morale and Community Relations

In an effort to:

- Create an open environment of sharing resources and exchanging ideas to improve organizational climate; and
- Model and support responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas; and
- Demonstrate quality management through delegation of authority, team building, consensus development, leadership development and self-management; and
- 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.



Staff participated in a unique event this week by representing HCDE at the 2019 Advocare Texas Kickoff game at NRG Stadium for the University of Houston. ABS East staff carried the flag and their families were able to attend the football game, courtesy of the Little Coggs program.

Employees and their families also begin gearing up for two events in October: Breast Cancer Awareness Month and the Autism Speaks Walk. These two events empower employees to get involved to help with two philanthropic causes.

The Media Honor Roll is another way we can bolster relations within the community as we honor local media representatives who have worked to promote public education in a positive way. We will be visiting these media members to present plaques and balloons at their prospective offices.

Through these events, we are establishing a culture in which we treat every person with respect and dignity while implementing effective management practices ensuring all policies are supported by effective procedures. We also direct administrators to accomplish the mission, goals and objectives of the Department, monitor progress, evaluate staff performance and hold staff accountable as appropriate.

I am also acting as the primary ambassador for the Department while presenting a positive, professional image of the Department in all venues—community, political, educational, business and board. I also maintain visibility and involvement in the community by promoting HCDE in a positive way.



HCDE BOARD

Board President

Josh Flynn

Vice President

George Moore

Board Members

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:
School Finance Council
September 20, 2019

Play with Math
September 23, 2019

Board Meeting
October 16, 2019

ABS WEST Students Award Ceremony
October 16, 2019

