

The CONNECTOR

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



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The CONNECTOR



Of Note...

When I was researching the duties of a superintendent, I knew that I could handle anything instructional. After all, I had nearly 20 years in education as a special education teacher, campus principal and several roles in district administration. However, I soon learned that being a Superintendent is about more than academics. It's about community relations, personnel management, facilities, programs, services and the budget. Of all of these, managing and preparing the annual budget is one of the biggest things I do all year.

I am proud of the 2019–2020 budget that Dr. Amezcuca and I presented to the board and am happy that we were able to approve a tax rate that not only lowered the burden on local property owners, but sufficiently covers the growth and evolution of Harris County Department of Education for the coming year. I take great honor in being a good steward of taxpayer dollars and thank you for your support of our efforts in this area.

I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team meeting and Impact Training for Harris County board members on Monday. As I noted earlier this week, I traveled to Austin to fulfill my duties on the UIL State Executive Board and returned Tuesday. On Wednesday, I attended Commissioner Adrian Garcia's Superintendent Breakfast and was able to collaborate and enhance many of our relationships with my colleagues and local elected officials. I also fulfilled board member duties with the North Harris County Education Alliance and Northwest Assistance Ministries this week. It is important that HCDE have a presence with community organizations, as we impact life in the county in so many ways.

Today, I joined several of you at the AB West construction milestone luncheon. It was awesome to see the progress on this campus and I am very excited to open what I believe will soon become the gold standard for special education school facilities in Texas. We heard from the contractor that construction is progressing as planned and we remain focused on a Spring 2020 opening.

This coming Monday, HCDE will host its annual Leadership Symposium, with more than 300 local educators coming to hear from TEA representatives and listen as 10 county superintendents discuss the impact of the new accountability system on their schools, staff and communities.

The school year is in full swing at HCDE and we continue to excel and push the boundaries of our support for the community. Have an amazing weekend.



BOARD BRIEFS



HCDE's Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Coordinator Andrea Segraves (left) attended an honorary ceremony in New York City as one of five members of the affiliate advisory council representing 100 regions nationwide. Philanthropic supporters honored the five educators.



HCDE Science Curriculum Director Lisa Felske hosts a two-day workshop to analyze all released science STAAR questions for fifth grade testing. Teachers work with hands-on activities to take back to the classroom.



Like many employees in Houston, HCDE staff sheltered in place during tropical depression Imelda. These photos were captured at lunch at Irvington and NPO.

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Afterschool Infused by City Connections Funding to Promote Youth Safety, Crime Prevention Via CASE for Kids



Afterschool in Houston this school year receives a \$770,000 funding infusion through City Connections, monies from the city of Houston. The program is administered by the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Environment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, a division of Harris County Department of Education.

For a sixth consecutive year, families in 11 Houston City Council districts benefit from the city funding. Nonprofit organizations in each of the council districts receive \$22,250 from Oct. 14-Dec. 31. The city and CASE for Kids encourage nonprofits like arts organizations, faith-based organizations and civic groups to apply through a request for proposal.

In January, new funding opportunities of \$22,250 will be available through a request for proposal in each council district as the new city council is sworn into office. Those afterschool funds will be used from March 9-May 15.

“City Connections gives Houston youth opportunity to grow, develop skills and discover hobbies,” said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, director of CASE for Kids. “Besides promoting child safety, afterschool supports social and emotional learning. We are grateful for the continued support of afterschool by city of Houston leaders, including the mayor and the council members.”

As an afterschool intermediary, CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings and funding for students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, childcare facilities and community centers. As a branch of Harris County Department of Education, the division was founded in 1999 with a goal to keep kids safe, help working families and improve academic achievement.

According to the national nonprofit Afterschool Alliance, more than 15 million students—including approximately 3.7 million middle schoolers—are alone and unsupervised between 3 to 6 p.m., the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex.

HCDE Superintendent James Colbert Jr. said CASE for Kids City Connections is critically needed as one or both parents or guardians work in many families, leaving unwatched children vulnerable during out-of-school time.

“We are thankful the city continues to invest in our children and their families, especially as afterschool funding is being cut through other sources,” Colbert said.

To find out about the organizations in each council district that will provide services or to contact CASE for Kids about new opportunities in January 2020, visit www.hcde-texas.org/after-school.

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Balint Charities Donates Books to Head Start Students

Students at the 15 Harris County Department of Education Head Start Centers now have a new book to add to their home library thanks to Balint Charities, a nonprofit seeking to strengthen school success by enriching young lives with reading and music.

Four members of the Balint family toured the Fifth Ward Head Start Center and learned what students do each day. Barbara Balint read *Curious George Museum Mystery*, the book each student received, to a class.

"I didn't realize the extension of the Head Start program here like serving breakfast, lunch, the curriculum and visiting the homes of students; it's amazing," said Steve Balint. "We're happy to donate books because it helps children grow and they have something to enjoy at home."

Balint Charities began working with HCDE Head Start in 2017 after Hurricane Harvey affected the Houston area. To date, they have donated over 5,000 books to Head Start students.

To learn more about Balint Charities, visit <http://www.balintcharities.org/>.



IN THE NEWS

2 BOARD STORIES RECENTLY

HCDE Board Accepting Applications for Trustee Position 1, Precinct 2



Applications are currently being accepted for Harris County Department of Education Trustee Position 1, Precinct 2, currently held by Dr. George Moore. Dr. Moore submitted his resignation for the position, May 15.

The individual appointed to fill Moore's position will serve the remainder of the current term ending December 2022. The appointee and any other qualified person may run for the position during regular elections held in November 2022. The elected individual would then serve a full six-year term beginning January 2023.

Applicants for Position 1 must complete a letter of interest; submit a resume; and include a notarized affidavit affirming the individual's eligibility qualifications. Qualifications include a requirement the appointee live in Precinct 2 for at least six months preceding the date the application is filed.

Deadline for application is Monday, Oct. 14, 2019 at 12 p.m. Additional details about eligibility and the application process are available online: <https://bit.ly/2lpwIF7> or <https://hcde-texas.org/board-trustees/>.

HCDE Board Lowers Property Tax Rate as 'Good Stewards for Taxpayers'

With the welfare of taxpayers in mind, Harris County Department of Education's Board of Trustees voted for a fifth consecutive year to lower its tax rate for property owners in the county.

Fiscal accountability continues to be on the minds of board members as HCDE trustees adopted the 2019 tax rate of \$0.0050 in a vote of four to three. The rate is significantly lower than the 2019 effective tax rate of \$0.005030.

The 2018 tax rate was \$.005190 per \$100 assessed property value.

"HCDE continues to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars for the citizens of Harris County," said James Colbert Jr., Harris County school superintendent.

For a home valued at \$150,000, the adopted rate of \$0.0050 means the taxpayer will pay HCDE \$7.50 a year. For a home valued at \$250,000, the tax bill will be \$12.50 annually.

HCDE benefits school districts and the community at-large by providing wraparound services which include adult education, special schools, school-based therapy services, Head Start and afterschool programming.



SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

Organizational Improvement and Management of Administrative, Fiscal and Facilities Functions

To meet the expectations of the Board's goals for me to:

- Ensure that key planning activities within the Department are coordinated and consistent with board policy and applicable law, and that goals and results are communicated as appropriate.
- Organize the central administration in a manner consistent with Department priorities and resources and monitor administrative organization at all levels for effectiveness and efficiency.
- Oversee procedures to ensure effective and timely compliance with all legal obligations, reporting requirements and policies.
- Oversee a budget development process that results in recommendations based on Department priorities and available resources;
- Oversee budget implementation in a way that ensures appropriate expenditure of budget funds and provides for clear and timely budget reports; and
- Implement and oversee a planning process that results in goals, targets or priorities for major areas of operations



Despite city budget shortages, city administrators and leaders approved \$770,000 which is critically needed for afterschool

programs in all 11 council districts in order to keep kids safe and crime down in Houston. Through City Connections, CASE for Kids will administer the funds for 2019-2020. This is an example of the entrepreneurial spirit we foster throughout our education partnerships.

Last week you adopted a lower tax rate to conserve tax dollars. Because I have remained engaged with a pulse on the budget with the help of the HCDE Executive Team and the assistant superintendent of Business Services, we are able to lower the tax rate while supporting the adopted budget.

Our collective planning process with a conservative budget and lowered tax rate provides results that meet the priorities for our key organizational operations.

Through successful completion of the budget/tax process and in thinking outside the box in terms of funding collaboratives, I am being a strategic, financially transparent leader who:

Develops and implements a clear vision for the Department and fosters an entrepreneurial spirit to understand HCDE's role in the changing educational environment.

I am also looking for ways to improve programs and services without greater expenditures and with concern for cutting expenses and costs to public schools for service without sacrifice to high quality services. Finally, I am recommending the annual budget to maximize resources and manage the budget while exercising prudent judgment.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Josh Flynn

Vice President

George Moore

Board Members

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Intentional Leadership
September 30, 2019

Boosting Your Practice
October 1, 2019

Capturing Kid's Hearts
October 8, 2019

Board Meeting
October 16, 2019

