

The CONNECTOR

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



SHAPING THE FUTURE

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The CONNECTOR



Of Note...

This week, our activities had a common theme: helping our community as we work together to shape a positive future. This is fitting given that we are in the season of Thanksgiving, when we show gratitude for how the world around us benefits our lives.

One of our Adult Education teachers has been working with community members for more than 30 years to ensure students can help themselves. Her spirit of collaboration, support and “real talk” is producing high school graduates who are ready to make their mark on our community. This shows immediate impact to the region as residents become ready for the workforce, supporting regional economic development and enhancing quality of life in the county.

The Human Trafficking Summit this week, hosted by the Center for Safe and Secure Schools in partnership with Children at Risk, also showed how HCDE is impacting our community. A group of prestigious speakers, including a survivor, members of the DA’s Office task force and Congressman Joe Poe, discussed the importance of fighting this threat to the region. They emphasized how educators, parents and law enforcement officials work together to identify red flags, protect our citizens and be staunch advocates for victims of all ages. HCDE is emerging as a key partner in helping to spread the word and educate the community about this terrible situation locally and across the state.

I started the week off with my Executive Leadership Team meeting on Monday, followed by internal meetings on Tuesday. On Wednesday, I met with Mr. Cantu as part of my annual meetings with board members in preparation for my evaluation in December. I journeyed to Katy ISD Wednesday afternoon to meet with the new Superintendent regarding HCDE’s programs and services and how we benefit this district in particular. Thursday was agenda review in preparation for the board meeting and more internal meetings. Today, I met with Mr. Dick and hope to meet with the rest of you in the next few weeks.

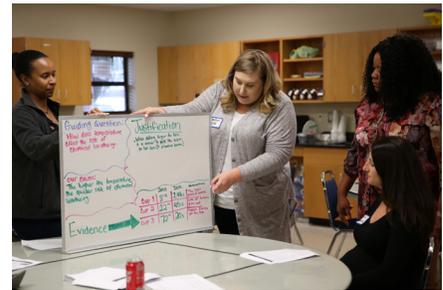
Next week, I travel to the National Alliance of Black School Educators annual conference in Dallas where HCDE will have a strong presence in the form of HCDE Assistant Superintendent of Education and Enrichment Dr. Kimberley McLeod, who is the president of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators. We will also have a vendor exhibit at the conference, exposing the organization to thousands of educators from around the country. I look forward to this opportunity for professional development and to see how HCDE can continue to support education locally and around the state and nation.

Have a great weekend.



Elementary Science Teachers Learn Argumentation to Teach Lessons

Labs, labs and more labs! Elementary science teachers from Cy-Fair and Lamar Consolidated ISDs conducted experiments during the Make Them Think: Argumentation in Elementary School Science workshop with Teaching and Learning Center Science Curriculum Director Lisa Felske. This hands-on workshop gave teachers strategies for student inquiry and assessment. When using the processes of scientific inquiry, scientists make claims based on observable evidence and must justify their evidence as relevant to the claims. Students can follow the same scientific processes while investigating elementary science topics like force and motion or animal adaptations. She used argumentation to teach the following topics: physical properties; thermal energy; solubility; force and motion; structure and function of living things; and non-living components of the environment.



Fortis Students Participate in Interviews with Communications

Several Fortis Academy students took part in interviews for a promotional video for the campus Nov. 5. Three boys and three girls shared their stories of how they found their place at Fortis and how enjoyable their experience has been so far. Many even spoke about how certain staff members have stepped up and been there when needed. They would recommend the campus to other students who are struggle just like they were at one time. At the end of the interviews, the students thanked their home school district for giving them a second chance by attending Fortis Academy.



HCDE Employees Treated to Football-Themed Fall Festival

Delicious hot dogs, nachos and Frito pies were served for lunch to about 100 Harris County Department of Education employees Nov. 1 to officially kick-off the fall season at the annual Fall Festival. Staff from the Human Resources Division served food to employees and decorated tables with footballs, silhouette cutouts of players and football balloons. Employees wore their favorite football team's jersey or t-shirt. The popular team amongst the employees was the Houston Texans, with other NFL and college teams in the mix. A photo booth was also set up with fun football props and a popular fixture for employees to get a fun group picture.



HCDE's Popular Annual Financial Report commended by Government Finance Officers Association

Harris County Department of Education received the Government Finance Officers Association's Award for Outstanding Achievement for its Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR). The award recognizes HCDE for its report on the budget for the fiscal year ending Aug. 31, 2018.

The award represents a significant achievement by HCDE. In order to be eligible for the PAFR award, a government must also submit its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) to GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellent in Financial Reporting Program and receive the CAFR award for the current fiscal year. Each eligible report is reviewed by judges who evaluate the report based on the following categories: reader appeal, understandability, distribution methods, creativity and other elements.

Government Finance Officers Association advances excellence in government finance by providing best practices, professional development, resources, and practical research for more than 20,500 members and the communities they serve.



PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

GED Teacher Makes Lifetime Vocation to ‘Help Others Help Themselves’

Helping others help themselves is a life vocation for 30-year Harris County Department of Education GED teacher Jackie Livingston.

Her commanding presence is mesmerizing, and her class is a theatrical performance of exaggerated movement and knowledge.

Today her community classroom in Spring Branch is abuzz with inferences. Is a truck or a car better? Students orally share their preferences.

“Kiss your brains because you have it going on,” their teacher exclaims.

Now, the moment of truth is at hand.

“Did anyone do their homework assignment?” she asks.

It’s so quiet you can hear the air.

“What is that you say?” asks Livingston. “The dog ate it? Okay now.”

It’s only week three into class, and her adult learners are building confidence. Slowly, two students turn over their thesis statements. Teacher “Jackie” likes challenge and urges others to follow.

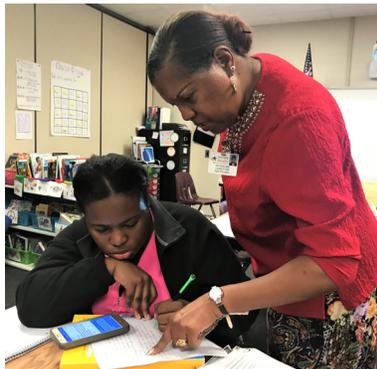
Over the years, she remembers the toughest tests. The student who battled cancer came to class with her life-thread supply of oxygen. An immigrant who knew not one word of English faithfully attended GED class for almost two years before he got his high school equivalency degree. All the while, his family discouraged him.

“Perfect attendance,” Jackie said, smiling at the memory.

Math hater Chris De La Cruz is returning to school after a decade to get his GED for a work promotion as a pipe cutter.

“She’s really patient,” said De La Cruz, 29. “When I find things are difficult, she explains.”

In Ms. Jackie’s class, students work together to solve equations and answer reading passages. She encourages collaboration. That’s the way of the workforce, she says.



HCDE Adult Education Manager May O’Brien said Livingston has never complained about completing the tedious, mandatory attendance reports. She also calls students to encourage regular attendance. Livingston goes above-and-beyond by encouraging students to become members of the Texas Association of Literacy and Adult Education, where they can earn GED scholarships for test registration.

Although GED classes are free on a first-come, first-served basis, tests can prove costly to students if they are taken repeatedly....**(to see more of the story go to <https://wp.me/p4QJFI-14S>)**

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

Human Trafficking Summit Exposes Epidemic, Supplies Solutions

An estimated 80 percent of humans trafficked in our country are American, disputing the notion that most are immigrants.

Former U.S. Rep. Ted Poe shared statistics and his passion for helping human trafficking victims in an event hosted by Children At Risk and the Center for Safe and Secure Schools held Nov. 5 at Harris County Department of Education. Presenters included Children At Risk staff, Love People Not Pixels organization, the Harris County District Attorney's Office for Sex Crimes and Trafficking, human trafficking survivor Sandy Storm and Poe, an ardent supporter of victims' rights.

Survivor Storm shared her personal story as a victim of human trafficking. American born, Storm was raised by her single mother who was influenced by a businessman who victimized both mother and daughter. Later, Storm turned to drugs to numb her life experiences. She was awakened by a human trafficking awareness event where she realized that she was a victim. Today she is writing her third books about the experience and presents throughout the nation to raise awareness.

"All it took was a man with power and money and me being vulnerable," Storm said.

She explains human trafficking as being a buying and selling of bodies and souls and differentiates porn as the renting and leasing of bodies and souls. Storm recognizes technological advances for enabling and proliferating pornography and human trafficking.

Children at Risk attorney Jamie Caruthers urged educators to look for red flags with children and teens Those include dramatic changes in behavior, talking about sexual activities that exceed age-group norms, barcode or ownership tattoos and physical signs of abuse or reluctance to explain injuries.

In Texas, approximately 900,000 children attend school within one mile of illegal massage businesses acting as fronts for human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

"It is important that educators, parents and community members are aware of this growing epidemic of Human Trafficking across the country, but specifically in Harris County," said Center for Safe and Secure Schools Director Julia Andrews. "Our young students are being trafficked and raising the awareness of what to look for can literally be a life-or-death situation. HCDE's Center continues to provide the Human Trafficking Summit and awareness trainings throughout the year to put a stop to this horrible crime in our city."

Johna Stallings from the Harris County District Attorney's Office of Sex Crimes and trafficking discussed Project 180, a local program that helps female victims ages 18-24. About 90 percent of the women helped have backgrounds of child sexual abuse, she said.

"Almost every single one of these women have been victimized," she said. "There is an escalation of risky behavior, and after that their self-worth diminishes."

Project 180 helps the women get away from their pimps and connects them with social services.

Stalling also shared the district attorney office's aggressive campaign to expose and prosecute sex buyers and sellers.

In closing the summit, Poe urged attendees to contact their legislators to support victims of human trafficking.

"A 13-year old girl that is trafficked is not a prostitute," he said. "They can't consent...(to see more of the story go to <https://wp.me/p4QJFI-152>)"

"All it took was a man with power and money and me being vulnerable" -- Sandy Storm, human trafficking survivor



PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

ABS West School Takes Shape at 'Rapid Pace' as Holidays Approach

The ABS West School construction project is taking shape at a rapid pace. Distinct areas of the school now discernable such as the courtyard and bus drop-off driveway. According to HCDE Construction Director Joe Carreon, a walkthrough yields visualization of corridors, classrooms, offices and common areas of the school.

The state-of-the-art HVAC system being installed in the school will allow individual temperature control with simultaneous heating and cooling in each classroom.

"This is super important due to the sensitivity of our student population," Carreon said.



Here is a checklist of construction progress for the school's interior/ exterior:

- The thermoplastic polyolefin roof, or TPO, is now complete.
- The interior framing is 90 percent finished.
- Interior electrical and plumbing rough ins are at 90 percent.
- Drywall is being delivered, and the contractor is scheduled to install one side of the drywall to prepare for insulation installation.
- The HVAC installation is moving along at a rapid pace.
- Rooftop units have been installed and indoor fan coil units are being mounted.
- Masonry on the exterior is at record speed, with 80 percent completion.
- Windows are set for installation in mid-November, with exteriors coming soon after.



WEST
Academic & Behavior Center West

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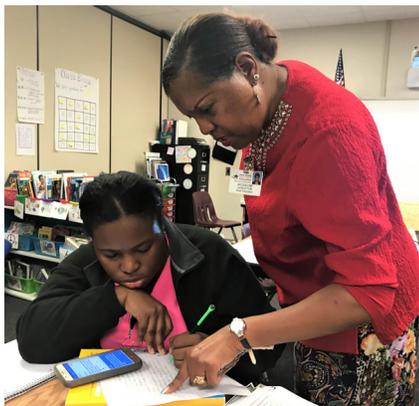
ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

Organization Morale, Management of Administrative, Fiscal and Facilities, Board Relations

To meet the Board's expectations of me as it relates to this element of performance to:

- Model and support responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas;
- Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge excellence;
- Monitor effectiveness of operations against appropriate benchmarks; and
- Keep the Board informed of significant issues as they arise, using agreed-upon criteria and procedures for information dissemination.

This week you'll read about a teacher who has used innovative practices to motivate and help her adult learner students succeed for the past 30 years. We revel in her success and are proud that we can share and model her teaching practices with the community.



Exciting news also surfaces about the progress at ABS West. As the school takes shape, both staff and



community are excited. I am proud to say we are on track for our completion of the building.

In addition, we celebrate the accomplishments of the Business and Purchasing Divisions as they win another transparency award.



Finally, we celebrate the hopeful change of seasons with employees and encourage camaraderie among staff while enjoying foods that represent the football season, i.e. chili, hot dogs and nachos.



By supporting staff, I am working towards a Board goal of treating every person with respect and dignity.

By communicating with the Board, I am keeping information flowing between us so that Board members are knowledgeable and sensitive to critical issues.

By encouraging financial transparency and keeping you informed about building timelines and progress at ABS West, I am being a conservative financial leader and 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.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Josh Flynn

Vice President

George Moore

Board Members

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

PLC+: The Plus is You

November 6, 2019

Capturing Kids' Hearts

November 7, 2019

Geographical Information Systems

November 14, 2019

Board Meeting

December 18, 2019

