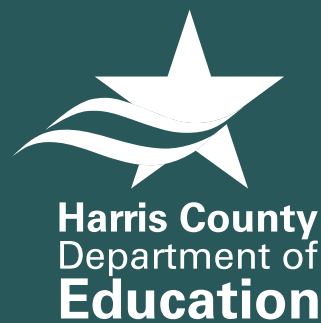


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# THE CONNECTOR



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## OF NOTE

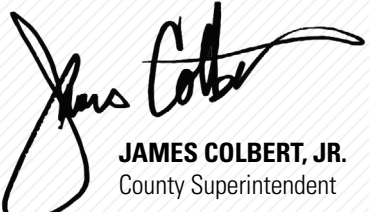
**HAVING STAFF BE CONSIDERED** subject matter experts is critical to the success of our dynamic strategy to Be Exceptional. If our staff are seen as leaders in their industry, then HCDE, where they practice this expertise daily, is likely considered a thought leader by extension. This type of synergy, with staff leading out in their area of professional expertise, will naturally elevate the reputation of HCDE around the state and country, as other educational leaders see our employees as outstanding representatives of the industry and aspire to emulate HCDE's success.

We saw this goal come closer to reality this week with Dr. Teryana Lamb, compliance manager with the Center for Educator Success, being named president of the Texas Association of Certification Officers. As president of TACO, Dr. Lamb is in a position where she can influence discussions about teacher certification. In this role, she will naturally be seen as a leader in the industry, fostering conversations about how to impact the teacher shortage and get more teachers ready for the classroom. This leadership role will naturally extend to CES and the work they are doing with school districts in Harris County, while also elevating HCDE's standing in this arena. It is exciting to see how the small steps our staff take can have such a huge impact on HCDE's footprint overall. I am proud of Dr. Lamb's accomplishments, and I look forward to seeing how CES and HCDE grow their influence as standard bearers in teacher certification circles.

I started the week with ELT on Monday, followed by standing meetings with staff. On Monday we opened registration for the Tools for Teachers 2023 initiative, with the 2,000 slots filling up in just a few hours. This is a great indicator of the need for the program and just more proof that HCDE and the foundation are filling the gaps in public education locally. Shopping opens for eligible teachers on October 9.

On Tuesday, I met with staff to discuss ongoing projects and initiatives and on Wednesday I attended Houston Mayor Sylvester's final State of the City. On Thursday I traveled to Dallas for the Texas Association of School Administrators/ Texas Association of School Boards (TASA/TASB) annual conference. This is a great opportunity to hear what other districts and school boards are doing and the challenges they face in their communities. Today I participated in the Superintendent's Leadership Lab at the conference, a discussion with superintendents from around the state focused on issues facing public schools today.

I will return to Houston on Sunday. Have a fabulous weekend.



**JAMES COLBERT, JR.**  
County Superintendent





*Dr. Teryana Lamb, left, receives the Texas Association of Certification Officers (TACO) gavel from Immediate Past President Melissa Beene, right.*

## DR. TERYANA LAMB MAKES HISTORY AS FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN PRESIDENT OF TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF CERTIFICATION OFFICERS

**H**ARRIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION is known for hiring top talent, and that proves true as one employee made history at the state level. Dr. Teryana Lamb, Manager of Compliance, Recruitment, and Data for the Center for Educator Success (CES), was recently elected as the first African-American President of the Texas Association of Certification Officers (TACO).

"I was shocked when I was nominated because I'm usually in the background as a worker bee, getting the

job done," said Lamb. "I didn't realize my associates were listening when I voiced my concerns on issues across the state, but I'm excited about this new journey and honored to represent TACO and make history within this organization."

TACO is a member organization of the Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education (CSOTTE), a nonprofit dedicated to supporting and refining development

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4





Director of the Center for Educator Success Andrea Segraves, left, and Dr. Teryana Lamb, right, pose for a photograph with a representative from Aldine ISD.

programs for school personnel in Texas. TACO is a forum where educators can share ideas and common concerns while providing an organizational framework to improve the quality of teacher and administrator certification.

Lamb is a native Houstonian with more than 20 years of educational experience who began her career as a chemistry teacher in the Houston Independent School District. She

While obtaining a master's and doctorate from Texas Southern University in Higher Education Administration, she gained a wealth of knowledge exploring the administrative side of becoming a certified teacher in Texas.

Lamb joined TACO in 2016 while employed as a teacher education certification and compliance coordinator at the University of Houston-Downtown. She specialized in identifying UHD graduates who would be solid teacher certification program candidates. Lamb quickly became a bold advocate for Harris County pre-service teachers and their needs after witnessing first-hand the challenges teachers face while seeking state certifications, specifically minority applicants.

"I noticed teacher candidates of color have a challenge with passing the certification exams, and I wanted to be on the ground level as we implemented changes that impacted all teacher candidates," Lamb said.

Peers voted Lamb TACO President-Elect in the summer of 2022, where Lamb continued to advocate for incoming teachers and worked to update the Texas Administrative Code to support Districts of Innovation (DOI) hiring non-certified teachers. Lamb's work to update state code persists as she steps into her new role as president.

While impacting education at the state level, Lamb described wanting to bring policy knowledge and improved practices back to HCDE and the Center for Educator Success.

"This position allows the CES to be in the room where decisions happen," Lamb smiled. "It gives our division a leg up to know changes coming down the pipeline and better prepare applicants participating in our certification program."

Lamb will serve as President of TACO for the 2023-2024 school year. 🌟

“  
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THE BACKGROUND AS A WORKER BEE,  
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”

was later promoted to secondary science curriculum specialist, where she helped create a science curriculum and offered professional development opportunities district-wide for teachers.





## ABS WEST'S FIESTA OF COLORS IN HONOR OF HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

**ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIOR SCHOOL WEST** recognized Hispanic Heritage Month during a luncheon this week. Middle and high school students honored the rich contributions, histories, and traditions of people with Hispanic ancestry.

Middle school students from teacher Yakia Hall's class facilitated a Q&A session for students about the observance, detailing the dates when U.S. Presidents signed Hispanic Heritage Month into law, why the nation celebrates the holiday, and the significance of the days between September 15 and October 15. The group also engaged the audience by listing the countries that Hispanic heritage observes during the month, including Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Spain.

Seven high school students presented their research projects highlighting prominent figures, historical events, and popular modern-day Hispanic recipes based on traditional dishes.

"As educators, we are responsible for informing our students about different parts of the world and how people live," ABS

West Principal Jatata Hutton said. "Since our campus and staff are so diverse, it's easy to appreciate and celebrate Hispanic Heritage."

Hutton also used the luncheon to acknowledge Clifford Tompkins, the school's first student to transition back to their home campus during the 2023-2024 school year. Originally from Waller Independent School District, Tompkins has been at ABS West for three years, working with staff to correct several behavioral challenges. Tompkins returned to his home campus on Wednesday.

"This is a peek into the future of our plans at ABS West," Hutton said proudly. "Clifford is an example for our other students that you can return to your home district, and that success is possible. This is only the beginning, and I'm excited for what's to come."

Before returning to class, select students were invited to the gymnasium for a chance to break open one of two piñatas. The group smiled and laughed as students rushed to get their favorite Spanish candy. 🌟





## ABS WEST WELCOMES FAMILIES, DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES TO ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE

### ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIOR SCHOOL

**WEST** welcomed students and families to its annual open house on September 21 to allow parents to meet their children's teachers and discuss their progress.

Principal Jatata Hutton kicked off the event by introducing himself to the Knights community and reaffirmed his mission to uphold the legacy of former Principal Dr. Victor Keys, who retired over the summer. Hutton was met with positive responses from parents and received praise for the successful start of the 2023-2024 school year.

Nearly 15 families learned about ABS West's academic agenda, extracurricular programs offered to learners, and what they can expect from faculty throughout the year. Teachers invited parents to join them in their classrooms, where guardians viewed students' current assignments and addressed any issues or concerns.

Representatives from students' home districts also participated in the open house. They provided parents with insight on successfully transitioning children back to their home campuses once they have met the necessary requirements. 🌟



## CASE FOR KIDS' LEVELUP HOUSTON PREPARES FOR LAUNCH

**HARRIS COUNTY'S NEWEST** student badging platform, LevelUp Houston, is one step closer to launching this fall. On September 21, leaders from Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids) welcomed potential project collaborators, stakeholders, and LevelUp steering committee members to an evening cocktail reception at West Houston restaurant Warehouse 72 for a milestone event.

After light bites and refreshments, CASE for Kids Senior Director Dr. Lisa Caruthers and LevelUp project coordinator Tineka Rentie provided a broad-level overview of the badging platform, emphasized the importance of the project, and provided a timeline of important events related to LevelUp for the 2023-2024 school year. Caruthers and Rentie recognized pioneering supporters who were essential in the feedback and development phases of the project and also introduced Miles Warren, vice president of strategic partnerships for MyVoluntier, the developer of the LevelUp platform, who spoke about their support of the project. LevelUp Houston, funded by the Houston Endowment through the Education Foundation of Harris County, is anticipated to launch in October 2023. 🌟





## HCDE MAKES WAVES AT TPCSA CONFERENCE

**HARRIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION** expanded its footprint this week with a vendor booth at the Texas Public Charter Schools Association (TPCSA) conference in Austin. Members of the Marketing and Client Engagement division represented HCDE and Choice Partners to promote the Department's divisions and services. Charter school

leaders were particularly interested in Fortis Academy, Adult Education programs including English as a Second Language (ESL), and the Center for Safe and Secure Schools. The annual event gathers the state's charter school leaders for three days of professional development, networking, and training for board members. 🌟

## IN THE NEWS



**HOUSTON LANDING**

Essential journalism. Empowered communities.

### THE CENTER FOR AFTERSCHOOL SUMMER AND ENRICHMENT FOR KIDS

(CASE for Kids) was mentioned in a column published by the Houston Landing, a digital nonprofit news organization, about Crosby ISD's decision to embrace a four-day school week this year. The column discusses how the school district's decision to adopt a four-day school week raised concerns about childcare for working parents in the area. In response to this concern, CASE for Kids is one of the programs helping parents bridge the gap caused by the change in the school schedule. At two Crosby ISD elementary schools, CASE for Kids offers homework help and enrichment opportunities for students on Fridays. CASE for Kids Senior Director Dr. Lisa Caruthers is mentioned in the column.

Read the story [here](#).



**Houston Style Magazine**



### MEDIA SPOTLIGHTS TOOLS FOR TEACHERS PROGRAM AHEAD OF REGISTRATION RUSH

HCDE and the Education Foundation of Harris County's third annual Tools for Teachers program garnered media coverage on radio and digital platforms before registration opened on Monday. Fox 26 Houston and Houston Style Magazine published articles on their website promoting the initiative. NewsRadio 740 KTRH mentioned the program during a spot for their Saturday afternoon show, detailing eligibility requirements and registration deadlines.

Read Fox article [here](#).

Read Houston Style article [here](#).

**HOUSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL**

### HCDE'S 10TH CONSECUTIVE TAX RATE REDUCTION GAINS ATTENTION

HCDE received positive coverage from the Houston Business Journal for the Department's adoption of a lower tax rate for the tenth consecutive year. Superintendent James Colber Jr. and Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Dr. Jesus Amezcua were quoted on the Department's ability to efficiently utilize taxpayer dollars while providing high-quality programs and services to learners across 25 school districts in Harris County.

Read the story [here](#).





## CASE DEBATES SEMINAR KICKS OFF 2023-2024 DEBATE SEASON

**ON SATURDAY**, nearly 150 Harris County high school debate students attended the 2023 CASE Debates Seminar at HCDE's North Post Oak building, an annual event that kicks off the CASE Debates season. Twelve school teams from YES Prep Public Schools and Aldine, Alief, Goose Creek, and Spring Branch independent school districts gathered to either renew or learn the basics of the four debate formats offered through CASE for Kids' CASE Debates program: World Schools, Policy, Lincoln-Douglas,

and Congressional debate. Team coaches were also provided with a box of resources their teams can use throughout the year such as legal pads, dictionaries, timers, copies of research articles, highlighters, and almanacs. Teams will compete in five tournaments throughout the school year, culminating in the Houston Urban Debate League's City Championship Finals at the Bob Casey Federal Courthouse in March. The first tournament of the season will be on Oct. 21. 🌟



## HIGH DEMAND FOR FALL 2023 TOOLS FOR TEACHERS INITIATIVE

**REGISTRATION FOR THE FALL 2023** Tools for Teachers initiative, which opened on Monday, September 25, closed after about three hours, just a few brief hours after nearly 3,000 requests were received. Once again, the incredible response highlights the personal costs teachers incur as they purchase materials necessary for their classrooms and how HCDE and the Education Foundation of Harris County are helping teachers mitigate this expense. Teachers who qualify will receive an email next week informing them of the details of the program, including how to use the \$100 credit to purchase classroom supplies online through a local vendor from October 9-16. 🌟



## THIS WEEK, THE FOLLOWING BOARD EXPECTATIONS WERE MET:

### Superintendent Objective D: Community Relations

- Works with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.



*Dr. Lamb, center back, poses for a photograph with members of the Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education (CSOTTE).*

**HCDE PRIDES ITSELF** on hiring top talent, and this week, we highlight a member of #TeamHCDE who is no exception. Dr. Teryana Lamb, who serves as manager of compliance for the Center for Educator Success, was recently elected as the first African-American President of the Texas Association of Certification Officers (TACO). TACO serves as a forum where professionals from teacher certification programs across the state can discuss and address issues relating to teacher and administrator certification issues. Dr. Lamb's leadership within the CES and in TACO defines the exemplary leadership that HCDE is known for.

CASE for Kids' LevelUp Houston student badging platform is one step closer to launching. Division leaders recently welcomed potential project collaborators, stakeholders, and LevelUp steering committee members to an evening cocktail reception where they were provided with an update on the progress of the platform. Pioneering

supporters who were essential in the feedback and development phases of the project were also recognized at the event. LevelUp Houston is anticipated to launch in October 2023.

Finally, we are proud to announce that registration for the fall 2023 Tools for Teachers initiative, which opened on Monday, September 25, closed after about three hours, with nearly 3,000 registrations being logged during that time. The incredible response highlights the personal costs teachers incur as they purchase materials necessary for their classrooms and how HCDE and the Education Foundation of Harris County are helping teachers mitigate this expense. This is another example of HCDE and the foundation helping to fill the gaps in public education in our county.

By effectively partnering with entities and community organizations, I am working to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way. 🌟



### HCDE BOARD

#### Board President

Andrea Duhon

#### 1st Vice President

Amy Hinojosa

#### 2nd Vice President

David W. Brown

#### Board Members

Richard Cantu

Erica Davis

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### October 18

Board Meeting

Choice Partners Nutrition and Product Expo

#### October 19

Choice Partners Vendor Exhibit

#### November 15

Board Meeting

#### November 23-24

Thanksgiving Break (HCDE Closed)