

The Connector

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

From the office of **JAMES COLBERT, JR. | SUPERINTENDENT**



Of Note...

It was a great week at HCDE! Our Scholastic Art & Writing program attracted over 1,000 attendees over a two-night period of HCDE-hosted receptions. These well-attended tributes to the students across Harris County illustrated our impact and reach. This initiative exhibits our commitment to the exceptionally talented students in our county. It allows us to enhance their potential and it offers a wonderful platform for healthy competition. Festivities began with the kick-off reception last Friday night at the Glassell Junior School, where over 300 people were in attendance, and culminated Wednesday night at the final reception held here at HCDE. Many students will go on to compete nationally at Carnegie Hall in New York City. It is a remarkable accomplishment for all students who participated in this worthwhile endeavor.

Please be reminded of the HCDE Board of Trustees Retreat and Training event being held this Saturday, February 28, 2015, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. It will take place at the Capital One Building located at 5718 Westheimer Road-Suite 1200, Houston, Texas (77057).

I will be in Austin for the first half of next week. I will be attending both the Texas Legislative Capitol Workshop and the African American Legislative Summit. The workshop is designed for Superintendents and legislators to converge and discuss items currently facing lawmakers on the public education front. We will hear from legislators and their staffers on a variety of topics related to proposed education legislation. The summit will allow me an opportunity to meet with legislators to discuss issues related to HCDE and the school districts we serve in Harris County.

Also, HCDE is hosting a meeting for Harris County area Special Education directors next week. This event allows HCDE to serve as the catalyst to bring together this distinguished group of educators. As a speaker at the event, it also allows me the opportunity to provide my unique perspective on special education. I will be joined by Jim Walsh and Paula Maddox-Roalson, both of Walsh Anderson Gallegos Green & Trevino, P.C. They will provide an update on the changes in laws governing Special Education across the state and nation.

In closing, I look forward to seeing you at tomorrow's Board Retreat and Training and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**.

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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

CASE for Kids Issues Request for Proposals for Summer and Afterschool Service Providers for Community Programs

CASE for Kids is accepting bids for contracts for afterschool and summer service providers. Awarded providers will be designated as out-of-school time vendors through Harris County Department of Education.

Approved vendors will be eligible to deliver services to school-age youth in childcare centers, summer camps and afterschool programs.

To submit a bid for future contracted services, go to <https://hcdeebid.ionwave.net> and follow the two-part process to register as a bidder and to respond to RFP #15/028LB for Afterschool and Summer Direct Service Providers. Applicants should note all the services they provide and upload all required attachments.

A committee selected by HCDE will review and evaluate proposals and make recommendations to the HCDE Board of Trustees. HCDE will base a recommendation for contract award on the evaluation factors listed in accordance with Texas Education Code 44.031.

Questions about the RFP process may be directed to Lytrina Bob, lbob@hcde-texas.org.

Project-based Learning Provides Modeling of Teaching Strategies to Increase Rigor

Teachers try out a project-based learning (PBL) teaching strategy through engaging in a student project at the HCDE Science Center on February 23. The workshop with science curriculum director Lisa Felske promoted PBL, a teaching strategy that puts students in charge of their own learning, increases rigor, and teaches content in a way that fosters student engagement. The workshop applied to all grade levels and subjects.



Staff Members Attend, Present, Gain Awards at Texas School Public Relations Association Conference 2015 in San Antonio

Communications staff from Communications and Public Information, Client Development Services, and Technology presented at the Texas School Public Relations Association (TSPRA) Conference 2015 in San Antonio, Texas this week. Six hundred school district public relations staff throughout the state attended the conference this year. The theme was "TSPRA Strong."



Members from all three divisions earned a cumulative 33 professional awards for public relations deliverables such as videos, magazines, press releases, reports, programs and annual reports, websites, graphics and marketing campaigns.

ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING by training the trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

- 02.23** | Online Instructor's Training - Part I
- 02.24** | Test Prep Series for TExES Generalist EC-6 Exam (#191) - SCIENCE Sessions ONLY
- 02.24** | PBL Basics
- 02.25** | HCDE Principal Certification Academy Information Meeting
- 02.25** | The Quest for Grants Training Series Webinar: Finding Funding to Support Your Programs
- 02.26** | Ethics For Accountants
- 02.27** | Tweens and Tweens Internet Behavior, Risk and Trends
- 02.27** | Integrating Elementary Social Studies and Science
- 02.28** | Test Prep Series for TExES Generalist EC-6 Exam (#191) - SOCIAL STUDIES Sessions ONLY

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

QZAB Tax Credits Available for Texas Public Schools

Congress has announced that Texas will receive an allocation of \$35,854,000 in QZAB funds. Eligible school districts and charters will be able to apply for those tax credits. Among the eligibility requirements include forming of a qualified zone academy, a 10% match of qualified contributions, 35% of students being economically-disadvantaged, and use of proceeds for renovation of public school facilities, equipment, and development of course materials, and teacher training. HCDE, through the Business Office, assists school districts in developing applications and identifying match requirements.

School Finance Council Provides ISDs Training

HCDE School Finance Council provides training to school business officials. Four hours of CPE training included sessions from Sarah Cortez, author, poet and writer (writing session) Jaime Martinez, Ethics Provider Speaker (Ethics Code of Conduct session), Jon Karp, Tax Consultant (Tax Updates), and Sarah Langlois, Attorney (Public Information Act session). Over 30 registrants attended and it was also video streamed for those who could not attend.



HARRIS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT



Spring Branch ISD (SBISD) has partnered with KIPP Houston Public Schools (KIPP) and YES Prep Public Schools (YES Prep), two high performing charter management organizations, to expand middle and high school choices and opportunities for SBISD students. This partnership, known as the SKY Partnership, launched in the 2012-13 school year with KIPP Courage at Landrum Middle School and YES Prep Northbrook at Northbrook Middle School. This innovative partnership will allow all three institutions to pool resources and share best practices.

Here's the link, <http://cms.springbranchisd.com/sky/WhatisSKY/tabid/27025/Default.aspx>

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

SCENES FROM SCHOLASTIC RECEPTION AT HCDE



On Tuesday and Wednesday nights of this week, HCDE hosted the Scholastic Gold and Silver Key Writing Awards and Scholastic Gold and Silver Key Art Awards receptions. Over 1,000 people were in attendance and both events were marked as a success. Guest speakers over both evenings included Patrick Renner, sculptor and high school art teacher at Sharpstown International School, and Stephanie Jaye Evans, author. Over 50 awards were given to deserving students in various categories. The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards culminates at the national level at Carnegie Hall in New York City, New York.

(A kick-off reception was held last Friday night at the Glassell Junior School. See page 4 for additional details.)

25 HARRIS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Aldine
- Alief
- Channelview
- Clear Creek
- Crosby
- Cy-Fair
- Dayton
- Deer Park
- Galena Park
- Goose Creek
- Houston
- Huffman
- Humble
- Katy
- Klein
- La Porte
- New Caney
- Pasadena
- Pearland
- Sheldon
- Spring
- Spring Branch
- Stafford
- Tomball
- Waller

Energy City of Future 2050 Teams Gather at University of Houston Bauer School February 21

Energy City of the Future 2050 teams gathered at the University of Houston Bauer School and to use their critical thinking skills while also learning to be team players. The 10-week challenge was organized and coordinated through CASE for Kids and sponsored through the Education Foundation of Harris County. Energy sources of the future dominated the day. At the end, everyone was a winner according to sponsors who judged the model cities and PowerPoint presentations and were “wowed” by the young entrepreneurs. Congrats to our Energy City of the Future 2050 teams. Two teams earned \$2,000 each and split the winnings among team members.



High School: Houston Independent School District’s Madison High School Team No. 5 with Luis Pineda, Jamie Russell and Idalia Castro

Middle School: The Village School Team with Inara Khan, Leyah Matthew, Cristina Pontaza and Zoe Birbiglia

Photos available through SmugMug: <http://hcdetx.smugmug.com/C.../2015-Energy-City-of-the-Future/>

Energy City winners featured in HISD blog: <http://blogs.houstonisd.org/news/2015/02/25/outside-the-box-madison-team-wins-energy-city-of-future-contest-and-2000/>

Rotary, CPS and HCDE Partner to Bring Parents and Kids

The Fourth Annual Heart Festival was held last Saturday for prospective parents at HCDE. Kids in foster care were also available to visit with qualified families. Over 95 kids participated in the event. They enjoyed games, music, interacted with parents through games, music, dance and a luncheon.



Glassell Junior School Provides Venue for Scholastic Art & Writing Reception, Showcases Work of Young Harris County Artists and Writers

The Scholastic Art & Writing Reception attracted 300 attendees at the Glassell Junior School on February 20. The evening reception welcomed the community as student artists and writers, their families and teachers celebrated the accomplishments of Gold Key artists and writers.

“Students love this event because it gives them an opportunity to showcase their work,” said Melba Kent, HCDE regional Scholastic Art & Writing coordinator. “It also gives us the opportunity to let the community see how talented these young artists and writers really are.”



THERAPY SERVICES NEWS

On February 18, division director Jean Polichino participated in a stakeholder committee meeting for the TEA Texas Continuous Improvement Process, charged with recommending targets for indicators on the new State Performance Plan for special education. Ms. Polichino represents Related Services on this committee.

On last Friday, Polichino was also the speaker for a 1-hour live webinar, accomplished using Facetime, with Region 9 ESC. The audience for the webinar was occupational therapists and physical therapists working in the Wichita Falls area. The session was interactive, with questions on topics including legal, regulatory and practice issues submitted in advance. This professional development activity was provided through a fee-for-service revenue contract developed with Region 9 ESC, based on Therapy Services division’s Management Services fee schedule.

BOARD SPOTLIGHT

**HCDE Board of Trustees
Retreat and Training
Tomorrow- February 28, 2015
9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon**

**Capital One Bank Building
5718 Westheimer Road
Suite 1200
Houston, Texas 77057**



HCDE BOARD

BOARD PRESIDENT
POSITION 2, PRECINCT 4
Angie Chesnut

BOARD VICE-PRESIDENT
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Position 7, At Large

Diane Trautman
Position 3, At Large

Michael Wolfe
Position 5, At Large

TRUSTEES ON THE MOVE!

Trustee Erica Lee Carter attends the Scholastic Art & Writing Reception at the Glassell Junior School on Friday, February 20, 2015.



About Scholastic Art & Writing Awards: Founded in 1923, the Awards program is the longest-running, most prestigious initiative of its kind, having fostered the creativity and talent of millions of students through recognition, exhibitions, publications and scholarships. Over the past five years alone, students have submitted more than one million works of art and writing and more than \$40 million has been made available in scholarships and awards to top winning participants, www.artandwriting.org.



Upcoming Board Events:

HCDE Board of Trustees Training

**Saturday, February 28, 2015
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon**
Capital One Building
5718 Westheimer Road
Suite 1200
Houston, Texas 77057
Topics to be covered include:

- Board Operating Procedures
- HCDE Mission, Vision, and Goals



Contact Theresa Torres at 713.696.0713 regarding travel arrangements. Visit <http://www.nsba.org/conference> for additional information regarding conference details.