

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...

This has been a productive week at HCDE. Thanks to everyone for attending the Governmental Relations Board Committee Meeting, Budget Workshop session, and regularly scheduled Board Meeting this past Tuesday. We accomplished a great deal.

Most of our client school districts are wrapping up their academic sessions on either June 3rd or June 4th, while Houston ISD's year will end on next Thursday, May 28. Likewise, our campuses administrators are continuing their year-end festivities, only to prepare for yet another year of academic successes during the 2015-16 session.

Yesterday, I attended the All Kids Alliance Council of Executives Meeting at the United Way of Greater Houston. The members of the Council were provided an update on the various partnerships of the All Kids Alliance, and policy issues facing public education in Texas. The body will reconvene in August.

Next week, I will be attending the Education Foundation's Board Meeting. I will keep you apprised of any developments that may arise out of those discussions.

As I've mentioned before, I am always excited about opportunities to increase HCDE's visibility in the community. To that end, I am pleased to inform you that I have been nominated to participate in the next class of the Houston/Gulf Coast Chapter of the American Leadership Forum. I am excited about the opportunities this new relationship will bring to HCDE, and vice versa.

In closing, please be reminded that our next Budget Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 26th at 1:00 p.m. I look forward to us continuing our work as we move towards finalizing the budget for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Additionally, because of the Memorial Day holiday, HCDE will be closed on Monday. We will resume normal business hours on Tuesday.

I wish all of you a great holiday weekend and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**.

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Science Fiction: Teaching Weather with Children's Literature

Huffman ISD teachers Stephanie Young, Melanie Hortch, Melissa Hairston and Tanya Landburg attend a science workshop that teaches weather with children's literature. The workshop is held by HCDE Science Curriculum Director Lisa Felske and teaches hands-on activities that develop the skills of observation, prediction, and drawing conclusions. The teachers are practicing an activity that helps students understand wind by predicting whether different objects will move if placed in front of a fan. Participants receive children's books, student activities, and a teacher's guide as well as some necessary materials for classroom use.



HISD Secondary Teacher of Year Finalist is HCDE Teacher Alternative Certification Graduate

Teacher Vladmir Lopez completed the HCDE Teacher Alternative Certification program in 2010. As a newcomer to the U.S. from Spain, he said he appreciates the extra one-on-one support he received from the program. From day one, he felt at home at HCDE.

"I think that the people in your program provide a lot of experience and support," he said. "They cover all aspects of teaching, from helping with content, to assisting us in finding positions. From day one, and as you move forward, you are supported by an excellent staff."



Lopez teaches math and science and also coaches the campus robotics team at East Early High School in southeast Houston. Although Lopez was not chosen as Teacher of the Year for the entire district, he said he is humbled that he was a top four finalist from over 300 candidates.

Summer AmeriCorps Members Sworn into Service for Summer Afterschool Programs

AmeriCorps members were sworn into service at the May HCDE Board of Trustees meeting as they dedicate their summer to community service through youth afterschool programs and community projects. Nineteen members pledged to provide direct services to Harris County afterschool youth in elementary and middle schools and community centers.



Many members are pursuing degrees or have recently graduated with career aspirations of working with children. Summer AmeriCorps members fulfill a 10-week commitment during May, June, and July. Summer positions are grant-funded by OneStar Foundation through the Corporation for National and Community Service. AmeriCorps members receive a modest monthly stipend and tuition credit to pay for college, graduate school, or to repay qualified student loans.

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

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Kids Day at HP Connects Afterschool Programs to Real-World Professions

Nine teams of elementary and middle school students compete using LEGO Mindstorm robots during the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Expanded Learning for Kids, or CASE for Kids "Kids' Day at Hewlett-Packard." Over 100 students from nine Harris County schools used robots prepared in their afterschool programs to demonstrate programming, design, and marketing skills. The event is held annually at the HP Houston campus and is made possible through donated equipment and prizes from HP. The company also assists with development of the robotics curriculum administered through CASE for Kids afterschool programs.

Winners of the 2015 competition are:

Overall winners (average of all categories): 1st Place-Kennedy Elementary (Alief ISD); 2nd Place-Raymond Academy (Aldine ISD); 3rd Place-Roberts Road Elementary (Waller ISD). **Robotics winners:** 1st place-Kennedy Elementary; 2nd place-Roberts Road Elementary; 3rd place-Stehlik Intermediate (Aldine ISD). **Marketing winners:** 1st place-Raymond Academy; 2nd place-Boone Elementary (Alief ISD); 3rd place-The Rhodes School (charter). **Speed Demon winners:** 1st place-Boone Elementary; 2nd place-Green Valley Elementary (Galena Park ISD); 3rd place-Kennedy Elementary.

See event photos: <http://hcdetx.smugmug.com/CASE/Kids-Day-HP-2015/>



ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING by training the trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

- 05.18** | Online Instructor's Training - Part III
- 05.19** | Test Prep Series for TExES Generalist EC-6 Exam (#191) - SOCIAL STUDIES Sessions ONLY
- 05.20** | The Quest for Grants Training Series Webinar - Using a Logic Model to Create Your Grant Project Design
- 05.21** | HCDE Principal Certification Academy Information Meeting

HARRIS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT



Twenty-seven students at New Caney ISD's Infinity Early College High School (IECHS) participated in Khan Academy's "Introduction to JavaScript" programming course this spring. IECHS students earned \$3,000 for school projects through a program sponsored by Khan Academy, Google, and DonorsChoose. The program is designed to encourage students to explore computer programming, and it funds school projects based on student completion of the online course hosted by Khan Academy. For more information on this innovative partnership, check out this link, <http://www.newcaneyisd.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=4&ModuleInstanceID=569&ViewID=047E6BE3-6D87-4130-8424-D8E4E9ED6C2A&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=16392&PageID=1>

BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Public Funds Investment Act Training from University of North Texas Hosted by Business Services for Area School Business Leaders

Business Services hosted the Public Funds Investment Act training workshop on May 14. The training was presented by the Center for Public Management at the University of North Texas in Denton. The day began with a market update report followed by security, strategy, and market risk and diversification presentation. UNT staff delivered presentations on financial institution deposits and the Federal Reserve System. About 100 area school business leaders attended.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Ecobot Attracts 1,000 Student Participates and Includes Special Award for Supporter Humble ISD Superintendent Sconzo

The All-Earth Ecobot Challenge 2015 provided an innovative engineering competition for 1,000 students in grades 5-8 on May 16 at NRG Center.

A special award was given to Humble ISD Superintendent Dr. Guy Sconzo this year for continuous support of the engineering and robotics competition since 2009. On average, Humble sends 140 teams to the event each year. See photos from the energy-packed day on our HCDE SmugMug photo-sharing site: <http://hcdetx.smugmug.com/EducationFoundation/2015-Ecobot-Challenge>.



News coverage of the event included multiple broadcasts on [KRIV Fox 26](#) as well as stories on [KPRC](#) and [Telemundo 47](#).

Practice-Based Coaching Leadership Academy

Program leaders from Head Start grantees across the state of Texas attended a 2.5 day practice-based coaching training at HCDE. The training is based on the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning PBC model, and helps teams develop an infrastructure and skills needed to establish a planning process for the next year to improve student outcomes. Grantees in attendance were from El Paso, Livingston, Amarillo, Bryan, Permian Basin, Austin, Port Arthur, New Caney, and Houston.



T together
E everyone
A achieves
M more

BOARD SPOTLIGHT

TRUSTEE KAY SMITH ATTENDS ECOBOT CHALLENGE 2015



HCDE BOARD

BOARD PRESIDENT
POSITION 2, PRECINCT 4
Angie Chesnut

BOARD VICE-PRESIDENT
POSITION 4, PRECINCT 3
Kay Smith

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Position 6, Precinct 1

Marvin W. Morris
Position 1, Precinct 2

Don Sumners
Position 7, At Large

Diane Trautman
Position 3, At Large

Michael Wolfe
Position 5, At Large

Upcoming Board Events:

**Tuesday,
May 26, 2015
1:00 p.m.
Budget Committee
Meeting**

**Tuesday,
June 16, 2015
1:00 p.m.
May Board Meeting**

