

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...

I returned to the office on Wednesday of this week from the Texas Association of School Administrators/Texas Association of School Boards Midwinter Conference. As always, it was a worthwhile experience with valuable professional development opportunities. To that end, I participated in a Superintendent's Think Tank Session on school finance where members of the state legislature addressed current trends and challenges, and fielded questions related to the current legislative session. Due to the HCDE audit by the state auditor's office, not all members of the Executive Leadership Team were able to travel to Austin; however, it was a week well-spent for those members of the team who did.

Tomorrow is the 29th annual Early Childhood Winter Conference hosted by HCDE. We expect to have 1,200 early childhood educators in attendance. The event will be held at the Kingdom Builders' Center located at 6011 West Orem in Houston. Keynote speaker is award-winning author, Eric Litwin. The Opening Session is at 8:30 a.m. While your attendance is not mandatory, should you wish to be recognized as a member of the HCDE Board of Trustees, please join me on the stage by 8:30 a.m. tomorrow. I will be providing the welcome and introductions at that time. (Event location is included on page 2 of this issue of **The Connector**.)

This weekend, I will be returning to Austin to attend the University Interscholastic League (UIL) Review Advisory Committee Meeting. I currently serve as the Vice-President of the State Executive Committee for the UIL. This committee is tasked by the UIL's Legislative Council with conducting a review of the organization's constitution and contest rules, and making recommendations to the Legislative Council. I will return to the office from this meeting on Tuesday.

I am looking forward to hosting my first HCDE Board Walk with you next month. The Board Walk will give you the opportunity to experience our programs and services up close and in person. I have reserved three days (you only need to select one of the dates)- February 10-12, for you to join me as we travel to various HCDE campuses and auxiliary locations. Due to policy constraints, I am unable to have more than three trustees accompany me at a time. Please plan to meet me in the lobby at 8:00 a.m. on the day you can attend. At the end of the Board Walk, we will have lunch and debrief on your experiences. Opportunities such as these allow you to make even more informed decisions as you provide oversight to the Department. Karla Cantu, my assistant, returned from FMLA today. Please contact her at 713-696-0715 and let her know your availability for one of the three February dates. Please be sure to save one of the dates. In closing, we have updated our website to reflect our newest trustees. I encourage Mr. Sumners and Mr. Wolfe to provide Karla with a biographical sketch and preferred contact information. This may be submitted to Karla via email at kcantu@hcde-texas.org. Know that we are also working to accommodate your schedules to have your official board portraits taken.

Thanks for your attention and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. Have a great weekend!

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PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference is Tomorrow!



When: Saturday, January 31, 2015
Where: Kingdom Builders' Center
Address: 6011 West Orem, Houston, Texas
Time: 7:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

CASE for Kids City Connections Grantee Awards

CASE for Kids visits Council Districts A and F in January to deliver grant awards to a nonprofit providing services in Spring Branch ISD and to several afterschool programs in Alief ISD. For more information about the ceremonies, call Michelle Amos, 713-696-1353. For City Connections grant opportunities, go to www.afterschoolzone.org.



Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 3 p.m.: Grantee: College Community Career with Council Member Stardig, District A, location is Spring Branch ISD: Spring Woods High School, 2045 Gessner Drive, Houston, TX 77080

Thursday, January 29, 2015, 4:30 p.m.: Grantee: Alief ISD - Afterschool Program, Council Member Nguyen, District F, location is Martin Elementary, 11718 Hendon, Houston, TX 77072

Friday, January 30, 2015, 4:30 p.m.: Grantee: Alief ISD, Afterschool Program, Council Member Nguyen, District F, location is Miller Intermediate, 15025 Westpark Dr, Houston, TX 77082-3925

CASE for Kids Hosts Leadership Training

CASE for Kids hosts a training with Debra Hamilton, a former teacher, principal and education specialist who talks about communicating through her workshop set for Friday, January 30, 2015, 9:00 a.m. Through her management experience, she leads and facilitates coaching trainings to support struggling leadership structures. Acknowledging her leadership efforts in the education profession, CASE for Kids shares her insight at the upcoming training series.



CASE for Kids MLK event featured through OneStar Foundation statewide newsletter

CASE for Kids AmeriCorps members participating in the January 19 MLK beautification day were featured in the OneStar Foundation AmeriCorps newsletter online this week. The newsletter includes a story which aired on KTRK about the event.



ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING by training the trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

- 01.27** | ELA Leadership Group Meeting
- 01.29** | Developing Fraction Concepts from the Ground Up
- 1.30** | Communication: Say What you Need to Say so Others Will Listen
- 01.31** | 29th Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference

HARRIS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT



Humble ISD is hosting its Sixth Annual Humble ISD Golf Classic on Monday, February 16, 2015 at the Clubs of Kingwood. The Golf Classic supports the high school golf programs at Atascocita, Kingwood, Kingwood Park, and Summer Creek High Schools.

For more information visit www.humbleisdgolf.com

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

HCDE names 1,346 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recipients

HCDE named 1,346 Harris County students as recipients of Scholastic Art & Writing Awards 2015. Several receptions are planned to celebrate and highlight the accomplishments of students. A Gold Key art and writing exhibit will be held at the Glassell Junior School, 5100 Montrose, from 5:30-8 p.m. on Friday, February 20. The public is invited to meet the artists and writers and to view their artwork and to hear recitations. A reception for the Gold and Silver Key art honorees will be held at HCDE on 7 p.m. on Tuesday, February 24 at HCDE. The writing reception for Gold and Silver Key awardees will be held on Wednesday, February 25 at 7 p.m. at HCDE. Photo: Mixed media piece is from Linda Dixon, Pasadena ISD. Linda's father Kelly Dixon was an Adult Education teacher who died after a brave battle with cancer last year. Her Gold Key art focuses on her childhood recollections of her father.



BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

Longtime Business Service Compliance Officer John Weber Retires

Business Services longtime employee John Weber retired February 28 with 11 years of service. Weber provided expertise on many projects regarding the budget and publications such as the PAFR and the CAFR. He will be missed for his wit and business savvy. Hayley Wilson will be taking over John's position as accounting reporting and compliance officer.



Application Submitted to Comptroller's Office

HCDE has submitted its 2015 application towards a sixth award in Transparency from the Comptroller's Office. We project to be able to receive the feedback in the next few days. Our current level of transparency is at the PLATINUM Leadership Level which is the highest attainment by a local government.



State Audit

Week 1 of the state audit is complete. A series of interviews and reviews with HCDE staff have taken place. Data has been compiled and provided upon request. Auditors will continue the review process.

Budget Process Underway

The budget process has begun for FY 2015-2016. Next week, division directors and budget managers will begin developing SWOT analyses, need assessments, budget projections, and risk assessments. The next cycle will include reviews of divisional plans and mid-year revenue analysis in preparation of the formal budget workshops later in the spring and early summer.

La Marque ISD Requests Assistance

The LMISD Superintendent has requested assistance during the transition period in the area of business functions. The district is actively recruiting a Business Manager. HCDE will submit an extension to its contract to include business function oversight for the LMISD budget process, payroll process, procurement process, tax collection and state reporting processes, risk assessment process, treasury functions, and other business-related processes.

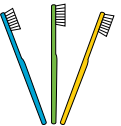
GIVING BACK...

Many children who rely on free or reduced-priced lunches during the school year go home to meager or no meals on weekends. Houston Food Bank's Backpack Buddy program works to fill that gap. On Fridays, at participating schools and other locations, children take home child-friendly, non-perishable, easily consumed and vitamin-fortified food. The food is given to the children discreetly, to avoid inviting unwanted attention. HCDE's Human Resources division is participating in the Backpack Buddy Toothbrush Drive. 15,000 toothbrushes are needed to help at-risk kids who benefit from the Backpack Buddy program of the Houston Food Bank. All members of the HCDE family are encouraged to support this endeavor!

BackpackBuddy Toothbrush Drive

15,000 toothbrushes needed

Donate toothbrushes between **now and February 2015** to Houston Food Bank's Backpack Buddy Program and **help at-risk kids.**



For more information, contact:
Ashley Long, HCDE Human Resources Wellness Coordinator
along@hcde-texas.org
713-696-2113



About Backpack Buddy
Many children who rely on free or reduced-priced lunches during the school year go home to meager or no meals on weekends. Houston Food Bank's Backpack Buddy program works to fill that gap. On Fridays, at participating schools and other locations, children take home child-friendly,

Adult Education collaborates with YouthBuild

Adult Education is collaborating with YouthBuild Houston in an eight-month workforce development program to help low-income, young adults ages 16-24 to gain their GEDs as they develop workforce skills. The youth are currently building affordable housing for the homeless and low-income and participating in leadership development activities. Technology videographers are capturing video to tell the story through a month-long documentary.



CollegeCommunityCareer awarded \$5,000 in afterschool funding from City Connections grant from City of Houston, CASE for Kids

Council Member Brenda Stardig and Center for Afterschool, Summer and Expanded Learning (CASE for Kids) Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers present a check for \$5,000 to Executive Director of CollegeCommunityCareer, Kathy Rose. CollegeCommunityCareer was awarded the grant in afterschool funding from the City Connections initiative with the City of Houston and CASE for Kids for their college preparation programs at Spring Woods and Northbrook high schools in Spring Branch ISD.



Technology's Cirrus Learn gains \$187,500 grant to partner with Cy-Fair with digital safety

Cirrus Learn will partner with Cypress Fairbanks ISD to implement the Cirrus Learn Online Understanding Digital Safety (CLOUDS) program through a \$187,500 grant. The program teaches educators and students critical digital literacy information and skills that they can apply to online privacy decisions while learning in digital environments. The program will provide teachers and students with the most up-to-date laws and policies regarding Internet safety. Students learn to protect themselves in the online environment as they understand the impact of their digital footprint.



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

BOARD SPOTLIGHT: MICHAEL WOLFE



A native Houstonian with a passion for Reagan Conservative Values and a heart for Education, Mike Wolfe gained a reputation as the conservative standard bearer during his first six year term as a Harris County School Trustee.

A graduate of the current Houston Christian High School, Wolfe holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of St. Thomas with a focus on Public Administration and a Masters Certificate in Healthcare Administration from Houston Baptist University. Mike has also studied law at Ave Maria School of Law.

A former Educator in the Houston Independent School District, Mike has also worked with young people as a Juvenile Supervision Officer at Harris County's Juvenile Justice Center. Wolfe is now Community Outreach Coordinator for the Harris County District Clerk's Office, where he continues his lifelong mission of service to the community that has done so much for him.

Originally nominated for office at age 29, Wolfe became known as one of Harris County's youngest countywide elected officials and served as your only Countywide Elected Republican at the Harris County Department of Education for the last four years of his first term of office.

As a leader in education, Mike Wolfe was endorsed by the Chair of the Texas State Board of Education, Barbara Cargill, in his 2012 bid for reelection. In his second term of office, Wolfe is committed to redoubling his efforts of successfully bringing daylight and a conservative philosophy to the inner workings of the Harris County Department of Education "HCDE".

Democrats who have served with Wolfe have publicly called him the "Tea Party Leader" at HCDE, during his time in office. In both the Fall of 2011 and 2012, Wolfe helped lead the charge in stopping a tax increase proposed by HCDE's Superintendent that was well in excess of \$1 Million Dollars. During his years as a HCDE Trustee, Wolfe has also took up other conservative causes including cutting HCDE's tax rate, adding Christmas to HCDE's official calendar, and naming HCDE's Administration building in honor of former Democrat and current Conservative Republican Icon Ronald Reagan. Reagan was Wolfe's childhood hero and as a teenager in the 1990's, Wolfe had the honor of meeting Reagan on a number of occasions and exchanging correspondence with him over the years.

As Mike Wolfe looks to the future, he cannot help but to keep his roots and his family close by his side. Mike is a proud Uncle to his young nieces Loryn and Addyson, daughters of his brother Jeff and Sister-In-Law Debra. Wolfe also holds his parents in high regard. His Mom recently retired as an English Teacher at Lamar High School in HISD and she is also a former Trustee elected to the Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District Board of Trustees. His Dad, Bob, is a CPA and Attorney and a current elected Trustee to the Lone Star College Board of Trustees.

Family lore suggests that among Wolfe's other relatives are American Explorer Meriwether Lewis, U.S. President James K. Polk, and Alamo Defender Anthony Wolfe. Whatever the truth is, Mike Wolfe is proud to serve his community. An active Member of Houston's Second Baptist Church, Wolfe is also a Lifetime Member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo serving on the Lamb and Goat Auction Committee and Gatekeepers. A founding donor to the Center for Public Affairs at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, Wolfe is also a Lifetime Member of the Republican Senatorial Inner Circle based in Washington, D.C. Active in Rotary and other community endeavors, Wolfe continues to be, above all else, true to his roots as a Native Houstonian, Reagan Conservative, and Christian Family Man.

Source: Biography- Michael Wolfe (www.michaelwolfe.com)

HCDE BOARD

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BOARD VICE-PRESIDENT
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Position 3, At Large

Michael Wolfe
Position 5, At Large

Upcoming Board Events:

February 24, 2015
1:00 p.m.
HCDE Board Meeting

No March Board Meeting