

# The CONNECTOR



**VOLUME 2 /ISSUE 1**  
**Week of August 31, 2015**

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

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

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## OF NOTE

We celebrate the start of a new year with this first issue of the second volume of **The Connector**. I hope you enjoy this new look and feel.

We enjoyed another successful week on our campuses. I continued making rounds and found operations running on track. I visited both of our Highpoint Schools this week. Our students are settling into their routines and our teachers are in the business of making teaching and learning exciting. They have their innovative think caps on, and they believe that every child can learn. We are hitting all cylinders.

Also, on that note, KHOU Channel 11 produced a story this week discussing children with special needs at our Academic and Behavior School- East location. They utilized several of our resident experts on the topic. I will keep you posted on the airing of the story once we have been informed of the air date. This will be excellent visibility for HCDE.

Tuesday, I facilitated our first Leadership Team Meeting of the 2015-2016 school year. It was a large group with all of our campus principals, division directors, and assistant superintendents in attendance. Impressive projects are unfolding in all of our divisions. HCDE is creating value, delivering opportunity, and providing service.

For example, our Center for Safe and Secure Schools is establishing new relationships with school districts, bringing them onboard as clients. Another district, in particular, is interested in HCDE possibly conducting security audits at each of its campuses. That division is also teaming up with other entities in Harris County to collaborate and ensure safety and security on campuses throughout Harris County. Meanwhile, our Teaching and Learning Center has reorganized to become a much more efficient operation by utilizing more internal resources, and creating synergy to better propel their efforts within the education community across Harris County.

Our Center for Grants Development is assisting Head Start with several federal applications that must be completed nearly simultaneously. Our Research and Evaluation Institute will now focus as much of its effort on conducting research as it does on evaluation. This will better assist us in meeting the needs of all of our clients. Our Educator Certification and Professional Advancement division is proud to boast that 35 teachers who recently completed the program have been placed in teaching positions this school year, and we expect an additional 10 to be placed very soon. Our School-Based Therapy Services division is experiencing growth as a result of their proven expertise and they are keeping up with the pace.

Our Human Resources division has unveiled extensive changes to our internal time clock system to increase efficiency on the managerial side of business. Our Communication and Community Engagement division is at work to ensure consistency in branding across the board. They are also gearing up to build a new website. Our Technology group has been upgrading several systems to improve our technology infrastructure. Also related to Technology, I look forward to presenting to you for approval, the extension of our agreement with Region 10 related to our administration of the Texas Virtual School Network program. I am pleased to report that we have been asked to continue that program.

The Facilities division has numerous projects underway to ensure first class facilities and our Records Management division recently relocated 50,000 boxes for various clients, just in the past several weeks. Last but not least, the State Auditor's draft report has been shared and the preliminary recommendations, while important, are relatively benign. We have already begun implementing systems in alignment with those recommendations— with several having been underway while the audit was in progress. Every unit within HCDE is working at maximum capacity to make great things happen.

Also this week, I attended my UIL meeting in Austin. It was another productive gathering and I continue to utilize this forum as a platform to advance HCDE's visibility. I continue to have other meetings with leaders in education and in the community in my efforts to network for the betterment of HCDE.

Again, I hope you enjoy the new layout and design of **The Connector** and I hope you have a great weekend. Thanks for

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### HCDE New Employees Onboard Creating Value, Delivering Opportunity, and Providing Service

The Human Resources division and the HCDE family welcome the following new employees who joined the Department to fulfill vacancies for the 2015-2016 academic year! All of these employees were hired to fill gaps and vacancies in our program-based areas.

#### ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIOR SCHOOLS:

|                 |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Gene Dolan      | Kimberly Walker | Howard Oliphant |
| Patricia Miller | Eric Wilcher    | Tamara Powers   |
| Arnetta Murray  | Toni Briggs     | Shantel Rayford |
| Maxwell Otolor  | L.B. Bryant     | Jeffrey Sam     |
| Zemonee Porter  | Breeana Cooke   |                 |

#### ADULT EDUCATION:

|                   |                 |                  |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Presha Barnes     | Johnnie Fowler  | William Robinson |
| Veronica Calderon | Ana Lopez       | Cheryl Sanders   |
| Nancy Carpenter   | Viviana Morales | Joann Sodolak    |
| Lottie Denman     | Deborah Mulvany | Rochelle White   |

#### HEAD START:

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Maricrus Bernal | Enedina Perez    |
| Arbrenia Bryant | Adrian Singleton |
| Ameyah Jackson  | Sabrina Thomas   |
| Courtney Lilly  |                  |

#### HIGHPOINT SCHOOLS:

Kari Trammell  
Joanna Lee  
Ann Marie John  
Gloria Rivera

#### SCHOOL-BASED THERAPY SERVICES:

|                  |                 |                  |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Thelma Banks     | Joeline Geick   | Tammy Takaishi   |
| Catherine Barker | Jamie MacDonald | Anne Watson      |
| Stephanie Branch | Tama Magallon   | Mary Wenzel      |
| Julie Erickson   | Susanne Minks   | Carissa Williams |
| Gillian Evans    | Angelle Radesky | Connie Wong      |

#### TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER:

Frances Hester  
Andrea Segraves

### Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

*Trainings hosted at HCDE this week*

#### SEPTEMBER 1 TRAINING

HCDE Principal Certification Academy  
Information Meeting

#### SEPTEMBER 3 TRAINING

Quarterly Operations Board Meeting

#### SEPTEMBER 3 TRAINING

Recruitment for HCDE Alternative  
Certification Program for Teachers -  
Information Meeting

### HCDE's Human Resources Division will be Participating in the Following Upcoming Job Fairs:

#### WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

Saturday, September 12, 2015

#### SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Wednesday, September 23, 2015

#### TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Thursday, September 24, 2015

#### UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Tuesday, September 29, 2015



# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Communication Redesigns, Launches Newsletter for Educators Called 'Weekly Workshops'

Some 9,000 teachers in greater Harris County received the first issue of "Weekly Workshops," a relaunched version of the Tuesday Bulletin. The redesigned newsletter features a mobile friendly format. The newsletter connects to workshops, events, the HCDE School Bell blog and HCDE social media outlets. To sign up to receive the newsletter, go to the following link: <https://app.e2ma.net/app2/audience/signup/1401179/1400932.26312804/?v=a>



### KHOU Visits AB School East for Story about Children with Disabilities

KHOU Reporter Lauren Talarico visited AB School East on September 2 and interviewed a student and his parents along with Assistant Superintendent Jonathan Parker for a back-to-school story. The story focuses on how a parent can help their child if they suspect the child is having behavior or learning challenges in school. More information is forthcoming about when the story will air.



### CASE for Kids Conference and Luncheon

Trustees are invited to attend the 2015 Out-of-School Time Conference luncheon to be held on September 25, 2015 at the Westin Houston in Memorial City. The luncheon will take place Friday, September 25, from 12:00-1:30 p.m., with registration starting at 11:30 a.m. The Conference goes through Saturday, September 26, 2015.





# Opportunity

## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

### AB West Gains Playground Equipment for Students

This fall Academic and Behavior School West students are gleefully heading to the playground with new equipment purchased through Choice Partners co-op.

"Our old playground equipment was old, needed painting and did not have a canopy to shield against the sun," said Principal Dr. Victor Keys. "The sun made the metal parts extremely hot which limited the time of day students could use the playground."

Student Jonathan Livingston (pictured) was one of the first to check out the equipment and quickly gave it a thumbs up.



### Head Start Kicks off School Year with Candid Shots of First Week

Head Start pre-k students and their parents spent the first week getting acclimated. For many of the students, it's their first experience in the classroom. Head Start staff shared some of their first-week photos with us as they got to know their new students and families.





# Value

## BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Business Services Earns Transparency Financial Awards from GFOA for Financial Reporting

HCDE Business Services division earned the “Certificate of achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting” for its 2014 comprehensive annual financial report. The award was issued by the Government Finance Officers Association of the U.S. and Canada for the comprehensive annual financial report, or CAFR. As the highest possible award, the certificate recognizes excellence in governmental accounting and financial reporting.



Along with the certificate, HCDE was awarded the “Award of Financial Reporting Achievement” for the HCDE CAFR.

“This is the 13th year that HCDE has received this award,” said Jesus Amezcua, assistant superintendent of finance. “We are proud that our business office has achieved this important milestone.”

The association said the CAFR is judged by an impartial panel and demonstrates a “spirit of full disclosure” to communicate an organization’s financial story.

HCDE was also commended for its popular annual financial report, or PAFR. It is the eighth year HCDE has prepared an annual report that is provided to the community. The PAFR provides overall information regarding the services provided to the community and the cost of programs in an easy-to-read format.

The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association with offices in Chicago and Washington, D.C. and serves approximately 17,500 government finance professionals.

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### Amezcua Selected for Meritorious Budget Award Advisory Committee

HCDE’s Jesus Amezcua has been selected as a member of the Meritorious Budget Award Advisory Committee for the Association of School Business Officials. This committee meets regularly to review budget standards and provide best practices to school districts across the nation.



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**ASSOCIATION OF  
SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS  
INTERNATIONAL**

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Founded in 1910, the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) is an educational association that supports school business professionals who are passionate about quality education. ASBO is committed to providing programs and services that promote the highest standards of school business management, professional growth, and the effective use of educational resources.

# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Management of Administrative, Fiscal, and Facilities Function

In an effort to ensure exceptional facilities and academic environments where students can learn and engage in active play, a playground was overhauled at the Academic and Behavior School (West location). New, state-of-the-art equipment was purchased and installed featuring a canopy to protect children from the sun that also helps keep metal equipment cooler. Ensuring the best product at the best value, the equipment was purchased through the Choice Partners Cooperative.



## Community Relations

To ensure positive community engagement and to keep the public well-informed of HCDE's programs and the value, opportunity, and service that HCDE provides the Harris County community, HCDE hosted KHOU Channel 11 at our Academic and Behavior School East for an interview and discussion regarding children with disabilities. KHOU utilized several HCDE resident experts in the area of special education.



## HCDE BOARD

*Board President*  
**Position 2, Precinct 4**  
Angie Chesnut

*Board Vice-President*  
**Position 4, Precinct 3**  
Kay Smith

Erica Lee Carter  
**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:

**SEPTEMBER 15**  
**September Board Meeting**  
**1:00 p.m.**

