

# The CONNECTOR

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



VOLUME 2/ISSUE 19  
Week of February 1, 2016

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

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## OF NOTE

We entered the month of February on the heels of a phenomenal R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference 2016 (ECWC 2016). Last Saturday's workshop, with nearly 1,200 educators in attendance, was a great success. This event made an indelible mark in cyberspace with attendees utilizing HCDE-assigned hashtags during tweets and other social media postings throughout the day. Traditional media was also onboard through a live radio broadcast. The ECWC 2016 conference was an absolute example of our consistency, true to HCDE's mission to create value, deliver opportunity, and provide service to educators throughout Harris County. (See page 2-3 for additional details and photography footage from the 2016 R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference.)

Our week began Monday with budget training for fiscal year 2016-17. Division directors, managers, principals, and other personnel responsible for various aspects of HCDE budget management, convened for an extensive session with Dr. Jesus Amezcua and other staff from Business Services. I provided an overview of my vision for the Department, from a budgetary perspective, and Business Services staff delved into the specifics of this year's budget process, including critical dates and other pertinent details. I will keep you posted on updates regarding the HCDE budget as this process unfolds.

On Tuesday of this week, members of the Executive Leadership Team and I attended the State of the County event. In his annual address, Judge Ed Emmett discussed his top three priorities for Harris County, including the importance of improving transportation infrastructure to support the region's growing economy, meeting the county's health care needs, and what is next for the iconic Astrodome. HCDE's attendance at this event demonstrated our commitment to the betterment of Harris County, and support for Judge Emmett, in his role at the helm of the county's leadership. (See page 8.)

I also met with representatives from S&B Construction this week. Parties from both HCDE and S&B remain fully committed to our partnership to increase the earning power of women in fields, such as pipefitting, usually dominated by their male counterparts. As mentioned in a previous issue of **The Connector**, our Adult Education division is working in tandem with S&B Construction, one of the city's largest construction entities, to gainfully employ women in this sector of the workforce. I look forward to this continued relationship as we move forward creating unique pathways for women.

A high point of the week is the result of collaborations between HCDE and area school district instructional leaders. Yesterday, the Education and Enrichment division of HCDE hosted a Leadership Steering Committee Focus Group, composed of Assistant Superintendents. Steering Committee Members represented Alief, Crosby, Huffman, Katy, Klein, Stafford, and Tomball school districts. These districts are representative of urban, rural, and suburban communities and this meeting served as an ideal platform to begin the discussions of the diverse needs in the areas of teaching and learning in our vast county. This meeting was the first of more to come and I am excited about the possibilities that exist as a result of this collaboration.

I continued my visits with Harris County superintendents this week as I proceed to personally introduce the Focal Point initiative. I had productive meetings with Clear Creek and Pasadena independent school district superintendents. I am now less than two weeks away from the inaugural breakfast for this initiative and interest remains high. I am excited about the outcome of this unique leadership endeavor and I am confident that Focal Point will soar, thereby benefiting the educators and learners of Harris County. I will keep you apprised of future developments related to this opportunity.

As always, thank you for your service to HCDE and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. Have a great weekend.

# Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

## Early Childhood Conference Attracts More Than 1,000 Educators for a Day of Engaging Learning and Sharing



More than 1,000 early childhood educators attended the 30th Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference on January 30 to experience engaging, hands-on learning and share ideas and resources. The daylong conference held at the Kingdom Builders' Center in south Houston featured 60-plus breakout sessions focused on subjects such as bilingual education, math, reading, science, special populations, socialization and more.

Keynote speaker and award-winning author, presenter and recording artist, Dr. Jean Feldman, energized teachers

during the general session through movement and music and provided songs and creative activities that make teaching fun.

The conference also included an extensive vendor fair, special featured presenter Carl Anderson, one of the nation's leading experts on teaching writing to young students and an appearance from HOT 95.7's Sarah Pepper. Sponsored by the Gulf Coast Educators Federal Credit Union, Pepper spoke during both lunch sessions about the impact educators have had on her life.



[Click here](#) to view more photos from the Early Childhood Winter Conference. (password is hcde1889)



# Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

2016 R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### National AfterSchool Association Selects CASE for Kids Director Dr. Thompson-Caruthers for Leadership Award



Houston afterschool leader Dr. Lisa Thompson-Caruthers was named "Most Influential in State and Local Government" through an award issued by the National AfterSchool Association, the national membership organization supporting afterschool and youth development professions.

Caruthers, director of the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, is one of 39 state and local leaders being honored nationwide. CASE for Kids, a division of Harris County Department of Education, provides resources, trainings and funding for students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities and community centers throughout Harris County.

Awardees this year are an impressive group of mayors, superintendents, state legislators, agency leaders and others who are working to support afterschool in their communities, said Gina Warner, president and CEO of the National AfterSchool Association. The distinction recognizes state and local government officials who are strong advocates and supporters of afterschool and out-of-school time programs.

Caruthers was nominated for the award by Steven Villano, board member for the South East Texas Afterschool Association and an afterschool director for Pasadena Independent School District.

As the only national membership organization supporting afterschool and youth development professionals the National AfterSchool Association represents over 20,000 afterschool professionals.

Leaders selected for the award will be featured in the spring edition of the association's magazine. Other Texas leaders selected include Texas Senator Roy West and Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price.

### Choice Partners Features Vendor with 3-D Printers

See how students are benefiting from contracts that our HCDE board of trustees awards for use through Choice Partners cooperative. The latest issue of *Leader's Choice* features an article showing how contracts for curriculum and technology help high schools and colleges create STEM labs, some of which include the newest 3-D printing technology.



Read the article:

<http://www.choicepartners.org/tech-labs-navigates-demand-for-stem-learning>

### Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

*Trainings hosted at HCDE this week*

#### FEBRUARY 3, 2016

Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Earth and Space

#### FEBRUARY 4, 2016

Emergency Operation Plan Orientation  
10 am-11 am HCDE Employees Only

Emergency Operation Plan Orientation  
2:30 pm-3:30 pm HCDE Employees Only

Digging Deeper: Applying Webb's Depth of Knowledge to the Science Classroom

#### FEBRUARY 5, 2016

Anti Bullying Training Session

Charter Roundtable Session



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Tactics to Prevent Bullying: Workshop Helps Teachers Empower Students February 5

Bullying is both psychological and physical so safeguarding students against bullies has much to do about empowerment, says bullying prevention expert and presenter Fabian Ramirez. Ramirez spoke to educators about bullying prevention on February 5 at HCDE through a workshop offered by the Center for Safe and Secure Schools.



The national presenter who is a Houston native was victimized by bullying in middle school, and he uses that experience to talk to students about how to deal with bullies. His videos and lesson plans are directed to empower both students and teachers.

Ramirez says what you don't talk out, you act out. Most bullies are dealing with internal issues that they project on others.

He points to studies from the Secret Service which show that 71 percent of school shooters were bullied themselves. Most were loners and got picked on during school.

Venting, Ramirez says, is one solution which helps unleash emotions. He urges students to vent, and he defines venting as releasing or transferring your emotions through words.

In a free lesson provided through his bullying prevention series called *Everyone Matters*, Ramirez talks directly to students and empowers them with ways to vent:

1. Analyze: See where you are and work through it personally with the other party. Sometimes it's really not that bad.
2. Assume the best: Have a follow-up conversation with the person who is acting like a bully. Maybe you heard it wrong. Sometimes people don't mean what they said.
3. Don't take it personally: It's about them and not you. Don't think something is wrong with you.
4. Act upon your feelings: Don't bottle up feelings. Find a release. Draw. Journal. Get into sports.
5. Find one person to trust to talk to: Don't try to find affirmation with multiple people. Trust that one person and share your negative emotions through words.

### Education and Enrichment Meeting Gets Creative with Marketing Ideas



Education and Enrichment held its division-wide meeting February 2 led by Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kimberly McLeod. The "Rising Star Award" for recognized division was given to the Adult Education division under the direction of Dr. Eduardo Honold. During the meeting, five divisions shared ideas for marketing their services—The Teaching and Learning Center, Adult Education, Center for Grants Development, Educator Certification and Professional Advancement, and Research and Evaluation Institute. Campaign ideas ranged from creating fliers to videos to brochures to social media messaging. The Communication division helped provide feedback.

Two employees in Education and Enrichment received the "You Make a Difference Award." They are Amy Thompson, staff member from Education Certification and Professional Advancement and Mark Cadwalder, Adult Education teacher.



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### CASE for Kids News



CASE for Kids paired the afterschool vendor **“Recipe for Success”** with the Cornerstone Learning Academy last week. The result was a tasty, healthy culinary experience for students. The CASE for Kids vendor match program allows out-of-school time programs to choose from a sundry of vendors who offer services ranging from the arts, supports and academics.

Students at Cornerstone Learning Academy learned about nutrition and how to discern saturated fats from unsaturated fats. They were introduced to a healthy Greek salad with fresh ingredients that included kale, whole cucumbers, olives, red and yellow bell peppers and cheese. Students were able to use their fine motor skills by cutting the veggies and mixing the salads. Once the students were done prepping, students washed their own dishes, exercising more motor skills!

Later in the week, **ENRICH After School held community meetings** to present research on out-of-school time programs and to discuss the current afterschool landscape. Go to [afterschoolzone.org](http://afterschoolzone.org) and access the ENRICH After School page for the full research reports.

On January 28, CASE staffer Toni Candis led the **Engineering for the Non-Engineer Workshop**. The workshop engaged the audience in engineering activities. Educators and leaders learned how to support students to work through engineering design challenges and build on their own problem-solving, teamwork, communication and creative thinking skills.



The end-of-month with CASE for Kids closed with the request for proposal deadline. About 100 applications were received for the 2016 spring term. Announcements of funding will be posted soon.

### Eight Assistant Superintendents Meet for Steering Committee Which Will Drive Ideas for Upcoming Leadership Support Meetings in Fall 2016



Assistant superintendents from eight Harris County school districts attended the Assistant Superintendents Steering Committee on February 4 to plan for upcoming fall 2016 leadership events.

The primary goal of the meetings is to develop a leadership team for administrators at the assistant superintendent or deputy and associate level. The team will serve as a cornerstone of collegial support to address district and community teaching and learning needs. The meetings also will provide leadership growth and development.

The steering committee members represent both rural, suburban and urban districts from northern, southern, eastern and western areas of Houston.

The assistant superintendents serving on the steering committee include Gina Tomas from Alief; Dr. Sara Ptomey from Aldine; Dr. Patricia Kay from Crosby; Joel Nolte from Huffman; Dr. Christine Caskey from Katy; Dr. Jan Marek from Klein; Marva Rasberry from Stafford; and Dr. Martha Salazar-Zamora from Tomball.

In addition to discussions on programming, the team had individual photos taken for upcoming events and recognition.



# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Head Start Hosts Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference May 6



HCDE Area I Head Start and HOGG Foundation of Mental Health present the Healthy Minds Healthy Families Conference on May 6, 2016 from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. at the HCDE Conference Center. The conference provides training to parents, educators and other professionals on working with children with challenging behaviors, and increases the awareness of mental health issues in early childhood. View the Healthy Minds Healthy Families flier for more information: <http://hcde-texas.org/users/0221/docs/HealthyMindsConf2016.pdf>

### Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Hosts TACA Winter Retreat



The Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Division hosted the annual Texas Alternative Certification Association (TACA) Winter Retreat January 31 – February 1 at HCDE. TACA serves as a voice for alternative certification in Texas, and provides a vehicle for all alternative certification programs in the state to work together for the improvement and enhancement of the quality of alternative routes to certification for educators. During the retreat Melva Cárdenas, former Executive Director of Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators (TASPA), provided a legislative update from the 84th Texas Legislature

regarding rule changes affecting educator certification. Additionally, Dr. Tim Miller of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) provided an update on Educator Preparation, Testing and Program Accountability and discussed recent and upcoming Texas Administrative Code revisions.

Director of the Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Division Lidia Zatopek serves as President of TACA, and the division's Grants Development Manager Jonett Edwards Miniel was elected to the Executive Board to serve a two-year term as TACA treasurer.



# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Annual State of the County Address

On Tuesday of this week, I attended the State of the County address at the NRG Center, where County Judge Ed Emmett unveiled his three major thrusts for the year. They included improving the county's healthcare system; developing an even more robust transportation infrastructure by increasing awareness of railway transit for freight transportation– in an effort to relieve highway congestion; and last but not least, his plan to convert the existing Astrodome structure into practical indoor park space that will enhance the NRG complex and serve as a recreational outlet for Harris County taxpayers. Most significantly, Judge Emmett encouraged all attendees to take part in the electoral process and reminded the audience that everyone has a voice and a vote. Additionally, he reminded the group of the importance of tolerance within society, recognizing



County Judge Ed Emmett delivers the 2016 State of the County address

that we all have differences. Mayor Sylvester Turner was in attendance at the annual address and introduced the County Judge. The event, sponsored by the Greater Houston Partnership, was well-attended. I took advantage of the opportunity to network with area county and city officials as well as representatives from various public entities.



### Accolades from the Houston Police Department/ City of Houston

Director Ecomet Burley, Center for Safe and Secure Schools, received the following letter from Vice Division Captain H. D. Harris, in recognition of HCDE's willingness to serve as the venue and provide the necessary support for last week's Open Source Intelligence Training Course, hosted by the Houston Police Department for over 300 law enforcement professionals from across the country.

Our staff went the extra mile and over and beyond to help HPD ensure the success of this significant endeavor within the law enforcement community. Special thanks to the staff within the Facilities, Center for Safe and Secure Schools, and Technology divisions for jobs well done!

HCDE continues to play a vital role within the community it serves.



## CITY OF HOUSTON

**Houston Police Department**  
1200 Travis Houston, Texas 77002-6000 713/308-1600

Sylvester Turner, Mayor

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS: Brenda Starig Jerry Davis Ellen Cohen Dwight A. Boykins Dave Martin Steven Le Greg Travis Karla Cisneros Robert Gallegos  
Mike Laster Larry V. Green Mike Knox David Robinson Michael Kubash Amanda Edwards Jack Christie CITY CONTROLLER: Ronald G. Green

February 2, 2016

Mr. Ecomet Burley,  
Center for Secure Safe Schools  
6005 Westview Drive  
Houston, Texas 77055

**Charles A. McClelland, Jr.**  
Chief of Police



Dear Mr. Burley:

By way of this correspondence, I would like to commend the following employees of the Center for Secure Safe Schools for their outstanding teamwork and support services that they provided during the Houston Police Department's Open Source Intelligence Training Course, January 25 – 27, 2016.

<p><b>General Services Support:</b> Elisabeth Montes Ginger Thomas Sheree Kroeger Juan Carlos Nieto</p>	<p><b>Technology &amp; Network Support</b> Jim Schul Arthur Vu Jaime Salinas George Hembree John Kracht Kim Leung Al Hazbari</p>
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Your approval to host this course within the Harris County Department of Education facility came with significant challenges your staff had to overcome, such as the need for open internet access, which is highly unusual for an education facility, and the need to rearrange other classes to accommodate the department's need for more space.

In addition, I would like to specifically recognize Mr. Juan Carlos Nieto. Having such a large audience, almost 300 law enforcement professionals from across the country, Mr. Juan Carlos Nieto was quite busy accommodating all of their constant requests for everything from desks and chairs modifications to wanting more condiments. His attentiveness to the audience's needs did not go unnoticed. All of my staff and many of the class attendees commended his constant active support.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



### Scholastic Art & Writing Award Recipients to be Honored at Gold and Silver Key Receptions

Harris County Department of Education invites the Houston community to three upcoming events celebrating nearly 900 regional Scholastic Art & Writing Gold and Silver Key Award recipients. The Awards celebrate the talents of teen artists and writers across Harris County. Two Houston receptions will be held February 20 from 10 a.m.– 12 p.m. at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet, and February 25 from 6 – 8 p.m. at Archway Gallery located at 2305 Dunlavy St. (Gold Key Award writers will read excerpts from their entries at the Archway Gallery event only.)

The HCDE awards ceremony to be held in the conference center at 6300 Irvington Blvd. for all Gold and Silver Key recipients is set for March 5, with the writing ceremony starting at 10 a.m. and art ceremony at 2 p.m.

Additionally, Gold Key artwork will be on exhibit at three locations:

- **Fine Arts Museum of Houston** – February 15 - March 7
- **Archway Gallery** – February 19 - March 8
- **Harris County Department of Education** – March 5 for the ceremony

All Silver Key winning artwork will be on exhibit at one location:

- **Texas Art Supply** – February 15 – March 7



Students earning Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Gold Keys automatically advance to national judging in New York City. National winners may attend the ceremony in Carnegie Hall in New York City in June. For more information about the 2016 Harris County regional awardees or about entering, judging or sponsoring Scholastic Art & Writing, go to [www.hcde-texas.org/scholasticartandwriting](http://www.hcde-texas.org/scholasticartandwriting).



### HCDE Selects Best-of-Region Art, Writing Pieces as American Visions/ American Voices Nominees

HCDE announced this week the 10 Harris County American Visions/American Voices award nominees. These best-in-region art and writing pieces are judged nationally and two students (one artist and one writer) will be named national medalists in late March. The awardees are:

**American Visions:** Lenox Butcher, The Kinkaid School (private school); Madeline Castillo, Clear Creek High School, Clear Creek ISD; Melissa Sosa, Sam Rayburn High School, Pasadena ISD; Helen Wang, Glenda Dawson High School, Pearland ISD; and Anna White, High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Houston ISD. **American Voices:** Aishi Gulati, The Village School (private school); Kristina Levine, Tompkins High School, Katy ISD; Sophia Li, St. John's Upper School (private school); Angelica Torres, Galena Park High School, Galena Park ISD; and Jaelynn Walls, Carnegie Vanguard High School, Houston ISD.



# Value

## BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

### Business Services Conducts Budget Training Session



Budget Training Session for  
FY2016-17

Dr. Jesus Amezcua and his team conducted this year's budget training session with members of Executive Leadership Team, Leadership Team, and other Department staff associated with various aspects of HCDE's budget management process. The session covered a wide array of information related to HCDE's budget process for the next budget cycle, pertinent changes and updates, and also provided answers to questions from staff. I opened the training session with introductory remarks where I also articulated my vision for the Department from a financial and budgetary perspective. The workshop was comprehensive, informative, and provided direction to the different layers of management within the Department as we move forward through this year's budget planning process.

# Opportunity

## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

### Parent at AB East Shares Heartfelt Moment with Principal, Staff

AB East student Rodney Webb attended his first basketball game last month. For most students, that might not be unusual, but for Rodney it was a milestone.

Parent LaKesha Blakely wrote to AB East Principal Mindy Robertson to express her thanks for the behavior strides that teacher Sheridan Warren and staff have made with her son.

Last year, the mother could not fathom taking Rodney along to a noisy, crowded venue in a sports arena because of his adaptive behavior issues. This year is different for the Galveston ISD student who attends AB East. Last month he attended his first Houston Rockets game on his 11th birthday.

The positive outcome and testimonial from parents and community members reinforce the large strides and differences we make in students' and families' lives.



### DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: Stafford Municipal School District



Stafford Municipal School District presents Tech Fest, a month-long special events showcase which includes a technology fair and robotics competition.

Details:  
<http://goo.gl/vRw2Gz>

# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Management of Administrative, Fiscal, and Facilities Function

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me to

- Oversee a budget development process that results in recommendations based on Department priorities and available resources;
- Oversee budget implementation in a way that ensures appropriate expenditure of budgeted funds and provides for clear and timely budget reports
- Implements and oversees a planning process that results in goals, targets, or priorities for major areas of operations

This week, HCDE began its budget planning process for the FY2016-17 budget cycle. I articulated my expectations as it relates to budget planning, as well as HCDE's Business Model moving forward. The budget workshop, facilitated by Business Services, was attended by members of the Executive Leadership Team, Leadership Team, managers, directors, and other staff that are involved with the budget management process within the Department.



**Through this well-coordinated budget process, I am meeting the Board's goal of me as a conservative financial leader to look for ways to improve programs and services without greater expenditures and with concern for cutting expenses and costs to public schools for service without sacrifice to high quality services and to recommend the annual budget to maximize resources and manage the budget while exercising prudent judgment.**

## Instructional Management

In accordance with the Board's expectations of me to

- Establish effective mechanisms for communication to and from staff in instructional evaluation, planning, and decision-making;
- Oversee annual planning for increased student learning and conducts periodic assessments of the effectiveness of the planning process;
- Ensures that goals and objectives form the basis of curricular decision-making and instruction and communicates expectations for student achievement;
- Ensure that appropriate data are used in developing recommendations and making decisions regarding the instructional program and resources;
- Establish a system for regular evaluation of instructional programs to meet student instructional needs and to attain desired student achievement.

This week, HCDE hosted a Leadership Steering Committee Focus Group composed of Assistant Superintendents from school districts within Harris County. Representatives from Alief, Crosby, Huffman, Katy, Klein, Stafford, and Tomball school districts converged to discuss how, together, we can meet the growing needs of students and educators.



**Through this thoughtful initiative, I am working towards meeting the Board's goal and expectation of me to coordinate with client school districts to identify learning needs of students, and develop a process that ensures learning goals are met or exceeded; ensure an informed feedback process; and investigate best practices for student achievement; and moreover, utilize effective practices that maximize the achievement of student potential for students in Harris County.**

## HCDE BOARD

*Board President*  
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*Vice President*  
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Erica Lee Carter  
**Position 6, Precinct 1**

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Diane Trautman  
**Position 3, At Large**

Michael Wolfe  
**Position 5, At Large**

## UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

### FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

1:00 p.m.

Room 400

