

The CONNECTOR

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



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Week of February 15, 2016

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

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OF NOTE

It's hard to believe that we're already less than a month away from Spring Break. We, along with our member districts, are chipping away at the second semester of this academic year.

HCDE has received a great deal of visibility this week, especially in the education arena. I left for Austin this past Monday evening to fulfill my UIL responsibilities by attending meetings Tuesday. There, I met with my colleagues on the UIL Executive Committee who hail from areas across the state of Texas to discuss pending cases before the UIL Board. While fulfilling my UIL responsibilities, I consistently serve as an ambassador of the Department and I use that opportunity to the best of my ability to raise the Department's visibility with both my UIL colleagues as well as to members of our UIL audience(s).

Tuesday evening, members of the mayor-appointed Education Transition Team for the City of Houston held its meeting here at HCDE to continue its discussions regarding assisting the mayor in his efforts to build bridges to close education gaps in the community. As previously mentioned in **The Connector**, I am a member of that committee, and Trustee Erica Lee Carter serves as the co-chair of the Education Transition Team.

Wednesday, Harris County superintendents convened at HCDE for our first Focal Point Meeting. I introduced this initiative in a previous issue of **The Connector**. This endeavor is a forum for Harris County and surrounding county superintendents. Focal Point | Executive Leadership in Action is a leadership effort that is tailor-made for superintendents. With HCDE serving as its cornerstone, Focal Point will inspire superintendents to agitate traditional educational leadership theory; explore different education perspectives; and impact public education across the state of Texas. The first convergence of this group was powerful. During our inaugural breakfast meeting, the energy was high and the outlook was forward-moving. As one, we will be impactful in advancing the teaching and learning process on numerous levels. Collectively, we are excited about how we will propel public education in Texas to an even higher plane.

Also, this week, I went to Huffman to meet with the district superintendent. In addition to discussing the needs of his district and the programs and services HCDE currently offers Huffman ISD, we also discussed Focal Point and his participation in this leadership effort. The meeting was positive and I look forward to fortifying HCDE's relationship with Huffman ISD.

At the core of what we do to advance learning for the children of Harris County, HCDE spearheaded the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Adult/Juvenile Justice Conference. It was hosted by our Schools division. As you know, that specialized group of individuals within HCDE has routine interaction with area groups of professionals focused on student disabilities as well as matters related to juvenile justice as we continue to meet the needs of students who require alternative education settings. I am pleased that HCDE serves, each year in this endeavor, as a leader to unite such a meeting of the minds in that sector of the education arena.

In the area of organization morale, we unveiled an internal newsletter for HCDE employees this week entitled, The Hub. It has been coined The Hub because it is designed for the heart and center of our organization—our employees. Primarily disseminated electronically, it can also be found via hard copy in the common areas of our various facilities. The purpose of this publication is to increase cohesiveness within the Department, create an open and positive environment for sharing news that may be of interest to staff, celebrate accomplishments, and serve as a regular vehicle for staff recognition.

Finally, in the area of professional development for educators, we hosted a series of training sessions toward the TExES initiative in the subject areas of art, music, theatre, physical education and health, and math. We also focused on TEKS in a session entitled: Unwrapping the TEKS: United States Era Studies and Strategies. We "Raised the Bar" with Literacy Strategies in Science, conducted Behavior Management 3.0, Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Interdependence and Environmental Systems as well as Youth Engagement Ingredients to Increase Program Participation, just to name a few. We remain committed to our goal to create value, deliver opportunity, and provide service to the children of Harris County by empowering our member districts and equipping educators with the essential tools to meet the needs of our diverse student population. Equally significant, we hosted a meeting of Attendance Officers in a Share Session.

In closing, please be reminded that the February Board Meeting will be held next Tuesday, February 23, 2016. I look forward to seeing you then and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. Have a great weekend.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

HCDE Adult Education Launches \$250,000 Texas Workforce Commission Grant to Improve Industry-Specific Workforce Literacy with Business Partners

Several workforce literacy projects provided by Harris County Department of Education Adult Education are being funded by an estimated \$250,000 grant with the Texas Workforce Commission. The 14-month grant will fund contextualized instruction in reading, writing, math, and English language-learning skills to support industry-specific employee development and employer operations.



The grant allows HCDE to expand its contextualized adult learning services with five companies. One of those partners will be Marek Brothers System, a large specialty construction firm in Houston.

Contextualized learning is aimed at developing the skills and knowledge that adult learners need to deal with specific situations or to perform specific tasks. HCDE's role in the process is to provide industry specific materials and instruction for English language learners along with accelerated English language classes designed to improve productivity and safety in the workplace.

"We are both excited and proud to continue our working relationship with Marek Brothers so that we can continue to create a robust, competent workforce within the Houston construction industry," said Eduardo Honold, Adult Education director at HCDE.

HCDE is recruiting four additional industry-specific companies to partner with through the Texas Workforce Commission grant. About 180 employees will be screened by HCDE to be enrolled in the programs.

"We expect that we will have quite a bit of interest from prospective students who want to gain access to these high-demand industries that require specialty training," said Honold. "These types of collaborative projects combining adult education services with industry-specific skills are the way of the future, and we embrace these opportunities to serve the community."

HCDE Adult Education provides classes to adult learners with a goal to "learn to earn," including adult basic literacy and math skills, GED, English as a second language and vocational training. Classes are held in 35 community locations throughout Harris and Liberty counties. Communities include Baytown, Alief, Channelview, Cy-Fair, Deer Park, Galena Park, Goose Creek, Katy, Klein, Pasadena, Sheldon and Spring Branch and Liberty. Corporations also benefit from HCDE services provided to English language learning employees aimed at improving productivity and safety in the workplace. For more information access www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation.

For more information about opportunities to join the project as a corporation or student, email ajohnson@hcde-texas.org.

Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

FEBRUARY 15, 2016

Online Instructor's Training - Part II

FEBRUARY 16, 2016

Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291) - ART/MUSIC/ THEATRE/PE/HEALTH Sessions ONLY

FEBRUARY 17, 2016

Unwrapping the TEKS: United States Era Studies and Strategies

Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association

FEBRUARY 18, 2016

Nurtured Heart Approach

Attendance Officer's Share Session

Youth Engagement Ingredients to Increase Program Participation

Raising the Bar: Literacy Strategies in Science

FEBRUARY 19, 2016

Behavior Management 3.0

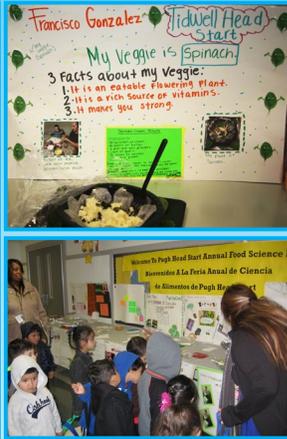
Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Interdependence and Environmental Systems

FEBRUARY 20, 2016

Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291) - MATH Sessions ONLY

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



Head Start Hosts Annual Food Science Fair with Nutritious, Tasty Dishes

Head Start hosted its annual Food Science Fair this week at each of its Head Start centers. The competition ignites creativity and fuels education about nutrition as students and their families select a fruit or veggie and create a healthy dish. Judges at each center pick the top 3 to move on in the competition. The 1st place dish from each center competes for the number 1 recipe. Some of this year's



1st place culinary delights include apple roses, mango pie, orange salad, lettuce chicken salad, Shrimp-lettuce bowl, and potato salad.

Students, Families Recruited for 15 Head Start Centers



Harris County Department of Education is enrolling children ages 3-5 for pre-k through Head Start at 15 centers located throughout northeast Houston. Children of income-eligible families and children with special needs are served through the program. Services are free.

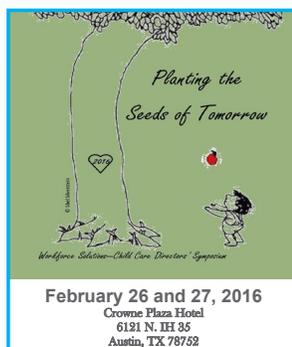
Head Start delivers school readiness services to ensure future success both academically and socially. Community centers include Barrett Station, Baytown, Channelview, Compton, Coolwood, Fonwood, Fifth Ward, Humble, and J.D. Walker. Other neighborhoods served are La Porte, Pugh, San Jacinto, Dogan, Sheffield, and Tidwell.

Head Start develops partnerships with social service agencies, local businesses, universities, and other community entities to offer combined services. Head Start is federally-funded with the commitment that HCDE will leverage community resources to provide services.

For information about enrollment or locations, go to www.hcde-texas.org/HeadStart or call 713-672-9343. For information about community partnerships or donations, call Armando Rodriguez, 713-696-2179 or email arodriguez@hcde-texas.org. Go to www.hcde-texas.org for general information about HCDE Head Start.

Head Start's Kuskos to Present at Symposium

Patricia Kuskos, Education and Special Services Coordinator (Area I Head Start), has been invited to serve as the keynote speaker for Austin-area child care directors at the Austin Association for the Education of Young Children's Childcare Director Symposium. The conference takes place February 26-27. Sponsored by Capital Area Workforce Solutions, this year's conference theme is "Planting the Seeds of Tomorrow". Hats off to Ms. Kuskos as she inspires and motivates members of the early childhood/childcare community while also representing HCDE's Area I Head Start division.



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Choice Partners Cooperative Featured in Texas County Progress Magazine

Choice Partners cooperative is featured in the December 2016 edition of the Texas County Progress. Two articles written by HCDE's Louise Henry outline new laws for maintenance and construction contracts and introduce new ice cream contractors to meet the demands of consumers who cannot access Blue Bell products. County Progress is the official publication of the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas and was authorized by the organization's constitution of 1923. The magazine covers all 254 Texas counties and is the only publication in Texas – and one of the few in the country – devoted specifically to county judges and county commissioners.

http://hcde-texas.org/users/0221/docs/Choice%20Partners/CountyProgress_120116.pdf



Workshop Teaches Chemistry, Physics Using Children's Literature

Twenty-five Lamar Consolidated ISD teachers attended a workshop this week led by HCDE's Curriculum Director for Science, Lisa Felske, called "Teaching Chemistry and Physics with Children's Literature." The workshop used children's picture books as a basis for teaching science topics such as solubility, chemical and physical properties, magnetism and density, and included hands-on science lab activities.

Archway Gallery Selects Scholastic Art & Writing Artwork for Gold Key Exhibit



Members of the artist-owned Archway Gallery, Andrea Wilkinson and Harold Joiner, picked up the HCDE Scholastic Art & Writing artwork this week for the upcoming Gold Key exhibit running from February 19-March 8. One of the two Gold Key Artist Receptions will be held at Archway Gallery, 2305 Dunlavy St., on February 25 from 6-8 p.m. to celebrate these talented Harris County artists.



Scholastic Receptions/Exhibits Set for February/March

Scholastic Art & Writing receptions are scheduled in the Houston community in February and March. View the video through YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Eu1pEVz9upM>

Awareness

EMPLOYEE CONNECTIONS

HR Continues to Increase Marketplace Visibility



While our city has a highly-competitive job market, HCDE's Human Resources division recruiters work to keep HCDE visible in the marketplace through regular attendance at various job fairs on a weekly basis. Just this week, Human Resources recruiters Kris Duke and Laura Nilon represented HCDE at the Workforce Solutions Senior Community Services Employment Program job fair. Our Human Resources division continually ensures a rich presence on behalf of HCDE as they continue to actively recruit competent employment applicants for the Department.

Update: Human Resources/Area I Head Start Job Fair

Last Saturday, the Human Resources division, in conjunction with Head Start, hosted a job fair specifically designed to meet the needs of HCDE's Area I Head Start division. As a result of this collaborative endeavor to increase the applicant pool for Head Start, 35 candidates attended, expressing an interest in a variety of Head Start job openings. Of that number, 20 candidates were identified and interviewed, several of whom will be recommended (per ordinary background and screening protocols) by Head Start staff for employment with that division for the following positions: Teachers, Teaching Assistants, and an Education and Special Services Coordinator.

ASK HR/HR Health

As a product within the Communication division's new internal newsletter (for HCDE employees), The Hub, the Human Resources division is excited to resume its internal communication efforts with HCDE staff in a section of The Hub called ASK HR/HR HEALTH which allows for two-way communication between Human Resources division staff and Department employees.

Employees will be able to submit questions to Human Resources staff that will be answered by Human Resources staff through The Hub platform. This section of the internal newsletter will also focus on upcoming Human Resources endeavors, projects, events, health awareness, and awareness of a variety of other topics that are of interest to HCDE staff, including benefits information and other pertinent news and deadlines for employees.

The first ASK HR/HR HEALTH feature includes Wellness360 information related to cardiovascular disease as well as snapshots of support for the division's recent heart health GO RED campaign, in conjunction with the American Heart Association, which was held at HCDE on the first Friday of this month.

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

AB East's Haywood Jeffires Inducted into North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame



Haywood Jeffires, employee at Harris County Department of Education's Academic and Behavior (AB) School East, is being honored in May as one of nine 2016 inductees into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame during the 53rd annual induction banquet.

Before teaching at AB East, Jeffires was a two-sport star at Page High School in Greensboro, North Carolina, and had the opportunity to play either football or basketball at the collegiate level. Jeffires accepted a football scholarship to North Carolina State, and was chosen as a first-round draft pick in 1987 for the Houston Oilers.

Jeffires played as the Oilers' wide receiver for 10 years, and was a three-time Pro Bowl selection from 1991 to 1993.

"Being selected for the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame is unbelievable," said Jeffires. "Anytime you're selected by your peers for something at the top of your profession, it's an honor."

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Jeffires serves the community through his involvement in Special Olympics programs, and provides inspiration and motivation to young students.



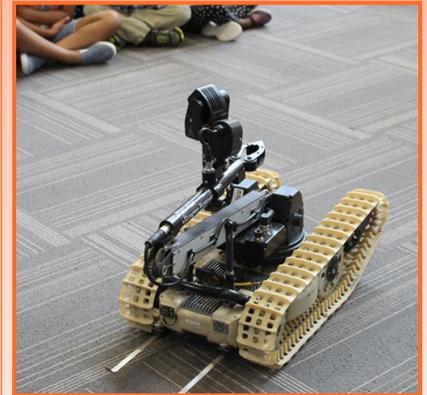
The induction banquet will take place on Friday, May 6 at the Raleigh Convention Center in North Carolina. Find more information at <http://www.ncshof.org/>.

AB School West Hosts Parent Workshop

AB School West recently hosted its fifth annual Fall Parent Workshop to provide parents from the surrounding area with strategies for positive relationships with their children at home. Parents also received a resource list of organizations in the county that will assist them in having a healthy home.



DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: Stafford MSD



Stafford MSD offers its IBOT robotics program that engages students in grades K-12. The districtwide STEM initiative features community collaboration.

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



Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Community Relations

In keeping with the elements of performance that the Board expects of me related to Community Relations to

- Establish and maintain a program of public relations to keep the public well-informed of the activities of the Department, affecting a wholesome and cooperative working relationship between the Department and the community; and to
- Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way

This week, the Department was at the center of several high-profile events in the community that supports education. Likewise, I attended several events of a highly visible nature that allowed me to serve as an ambassador on behalf of the Department.

To name just a few:

1. On Monday I traveled to Austin where I attended my UIL Executive Committee Meeting wherein I interacted with my colleagues from areas across the state of Texas, and where I consistently work to elevate HCDE's platform in that environment;
2. The Education Committee of the mayor's Transition Team held yet another meeting at HCDE this past Tuesday. Trustee Lee Carter serves as the co-chair of the committee and I am also a member. Our regularly hosting these meetings at HCDE, in addition to having representation from HCDE in these discussions, is ideal from a visibility perspective and will prove to be beneficial to HCDE.
3. Wednesday, I hosted the first Focal Point | Executive Leadership in Action meeting which is a convergence of Harris County and surrounding area superintendents. This endeavor replaces the former HCDE Superintendents' Institute. The inaugural event provoked thought, discussion, and brainstorming and will bring about more cohesive relations between Harris County (and surrounding county) superintendents and HCDE.
4. I visited the superintendent of Huffman ISD. In addition to discussing how HCDE can meet the district's needs, we also discussed Focal Point. This was an excellent opportunity, as are all of my meetings with our superintendents, to increase HCDE's visibility.
5. HCDE hosted the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Adult/Juvenile Justice Conference. HCDE's Schools division spearheaded this conference with professionals who regularly work with youth who meet the criteria for some of our programs.



HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

1:00 p.m.

Room 400

Per the Board's expectations of me, these events allowed me to present a positive, professional image of myself and of the Department in all venues- community, political, educational, and business. It also allowed me to maintain visibility and involvement in the community with ISD superintendents, elected officials, and community leaders. Additionally, I represented HCDE through my attendance at events and I've also spoken on behalf of HCDE.

