

# The CONNECTOR

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



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Week of May 23, 2016

From the office of JAMES COLBERT, JR. – SUPERINTENDENT

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## OF NOTE

I ended last week by attending the Adult Education GED graduation ceremony, held last Saturday. It was rewarding for the 82 GED grads, their Adult Education teachers, families, and everyone assembled in the HCDE Conference Center to witness the accomplishments of the students. It was certainly rewarding for me. While far more students received their GED certificates, only 82 participated in the ceremony.

This year's ceremony marked a great increase over last year's due to changes in the federal standards related to GED testing and scoring processes. From preparing our students for the GED test to preparing them for non-traditional employment opportunities that increase their earning power, the Adult Education division along with Education and Enrichment are to be commended. It was a proud moment for me to witness the successes of these students. Hats off to the Adult Education staff for not giving up on such a vulnerable population, and for challenging them to take their goals to the next level.

I began this week meeting with my Executive Leadership Team as we make final adjustments to the 2016-2017 budget. As you know, this has been a methodical process as we near the end of this budget planning cycle. We have maintained a fiscally conservative model, while ensuring that the essential needs of our programs and services are met. Our goal has always been to present you with a sound, justifiable budget, and we look forward to presenting it to you for your approval.

Also, this week, I fulfilled my civic duty by participating in the Harris County Jury Duty process. While it was a relatively time-consuming one, I am pleased that I was able to serve in my capacity as a Harris County citizen and play my role as a juror in the county's judicial system.

I returned to the office yesterday amidst a plethora of meetings, projects, and other business to be handled. First and foremost, our client districts and programs are bringing their school years to a close. As mentioned in earlier issues of **The Connector**, most school districts are ending their semesters between June 1 and 3. I am both pleased and proud of the advances all of our campuses, centers, programs, and services have realized during the course of this school year. Collectively, we continue to help the students of Harris County achieve!

In the area of teaching and learning this week, we facilitated a series of varied trainings, even as we approach the end of the school year. For example, we hosted Prioritizing for Powerful Results: Five Levers to Improve Learning, English as a Second Language ESL, TEXES #154 Supplemental One-Day Mini Academy, as well as an OST Executive Leadership Series regarding Organizational Strategic Planning.

In closing, please be reminded that HCDE will be closed Monday, May 30, 2016 for the Memorial Day holiday. We will resume normal business hours Tuesday, May 31. In the coming weeks, we will be transitioning to the flex summer schedule. Information regarding HCDE's summer hours will be included in next week's issue of **The Connector**.

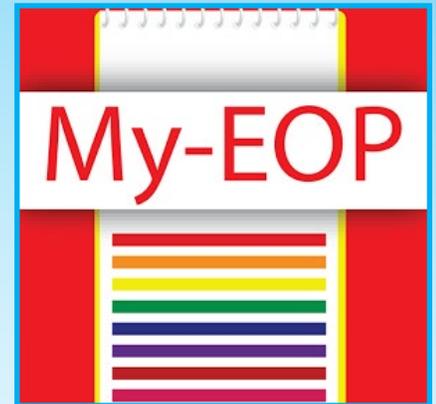
I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**, and I hope you have an enjoyable holiday weekend. As always, thanks for your service to HCDE.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### New App Allows Employees to Download the Emergency Operation Plan for HCDE

Employees were offered a new app this month which allows them to download the HCDE Emergency Operation Plan, or EOP, from their smartphone or iPad. The memo below went out to staff from the Center for Safe and Secure Schools. The app gives staff an online option as well as the paper copy of the EOP delivered early this year. View or download the app: <http://goo.gl/vgdaqN>



### What should employees do for any emergency situation at HCDE, whether in the office or school setting?

- Download our new, easy-to-use app for the HCDE Emergency Operation Plan (EOP). The My-EOP app delivers our customized HCDE EOP plan to your iPad or phone.
- What does it do? The EOP provides emergency response protocols for different hazards and emergencies. Protocols save response time and lives because employees know exactly what to do in an emergency.
- Why do we need the EOP? The legislature requires every school district to develop and distribute an EOP.
- Download your app today for your phone or iPad by using the attached instructions.

(Note: The Center for Safe and Secure Schools created the EOP and distributed paper copies of the HCDE Emergency Operation Plan during employee orientation.)

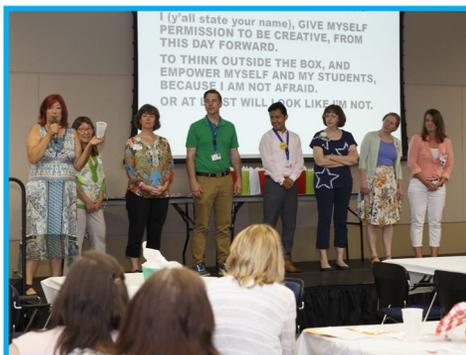


### School-Based Therapy Services Holds Staff Appreciation Day

School-Based Therapy Services held its Staff Appreciation Day on May 25 for its several hundred staff members. The afternoon event featured a social gathering at lunch with door prize drawings for staff. Jonathan Parker gave appreciation and administration remarks

along Jean Polichino. Guest speaker was Deborah Nowinski, founder of Dionysus Theatre of Houston, a nonprofit inclusion theatre company for actors of all abilities. Nowinski is the author of "Your Role in Inclusion Theatre: A Guide to Integrating Actors with Disabilities and Nondisabled

in Your Theatre and Classes." Her presentation called "Inclusion Works" related the benefits of inclusion in theatre, which can be applied to everyday curriculum.



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



### Compton Head Start Celebrates SuperMENTors

The Compton Head Start Center celebrated their SuperMENTors this week with a special recognition breakfast. During the superhero-themed breakfast, volunteers received hand-made posters and 'thank you' cards, and watched performances from some of the students.

The Compton center has seven SuperMENTors who read to students, as well as volunteer in a variety of ways. One volunteer, Pastor Maceo Dillard, Jr. of Restoration Missionary Baptist Church, has a special connection to the Compton center. Dillard attended Head Start as a young child and was taught by the Compton center namesake, Esther Compton.

"I volunteer because I believe in the Head Start program," said Dillard. "Esther Compton invested in me when I was a child and showed me the value of this program."



Men interested in becoming a SuperMENTor at any of the Head Start centers can find more information here: <http://goo.gl/Bzdq9f>.



21st Century Community Learning Centers Cycle 7 site coordinators and CASE for Kids Coordinator Jesselyn Allen (far right)

### CASE for Kids celebrates end-of-year with 'Afterschool Oscars'

More than 90 afterschool professionals attended the end-of-year celebration hosted by HCDE's CASE for Kids division on Tuesday, May 24. The event, which was decorated with a "Lights! Camera! Action!" theme, proudly displayed artwork made by students in afterschool programs supported by CASE for Kids.

"We are gathering here to recognize our outstanding programs, site coordinators, and community partners," said Dr. Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, director, CASE for Kids.

"We are finally at a place where we are seeing national foundations asking how they can advance funding for afterschool," she added.

HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr., congratulated those in attendance for doing the important and often difficult work of keeping students on track for success outside of regular school hours.

"We need people like you," Colbert said. "I want to encourage you to keep doing what you're doing."

In addition to acknowledging the educational and community-minded mission of afterschool programs, presenters kept the tone of the ceremony light-hearted.

"It's like the afterschool Oscars," joked Adrian Fields, coordinator, CASE for Kids, "but on an afterschool budget."

The remark drew laughs from the crowd.



Robert Westheimer (left) and Adrian Fields with artwork from Newspring, a CASE for Kids vendor honored at the event



Superintendent Colbert speaks to out-of-school time professionals and encourages them to be crusaders for youth.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



### 82 GED Grads and Families Pack the Conference Center for Commencement 2016

Eighty-two graduates were honored at the 2016 GED commencement May 21 at our HCDE Conference Center. Graduates were celebrated by about 300 family members and friends as they gained the graduation experience they never had.

GED graduate Yeni Carranza gave the words of motivation. Yeni, 21, was physically abused by her mother as a child. Her father divorced her mom and took Yeni to Florida in

the sixth grade. They continually moved as he was a roofer. She dropped out of school and lied about her age to work herself. For years they lived out of the car. Eventually they saved for a place to live. Now that she is older, one of her bosses talked her into going back to school to get her GED. She attended classes at our community center in Spring Branch. Yeni shared her story of strife and success and the audience was visibly touched by her life story.

Commencement speaker for the event was Berwick Davenport, author and life coach.

Upon receiving their diplomas, graduates were released to do a "happy dance" to the song "Happy" by Pharrell Williams before the traditional turning of the tassels.

View the video from valedictorian Carmen Guandique:

<https://youtu.be/BQEEexpTFPo> . See scenes from the graduation from our SmugMug photo gallery:

<https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/AdultEducation/2016-Graduation-Ceremony/> (password hcde1889)



### Policy Council Representatives Honored at May 24 Banquet

Head Start honored its Policy Council Committee members on May 24 at a banquet at HCDE. Members who included parents and community members were recognized. Trustee Don Sumners attended the celebration.

### Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

#### MAY 23, 2016

Online Instructor's Training - Part II

Prioritizing for Powerful Results: Five Levers to Improve Learning

#### MAY 24, 2016

English as a Second Language ESL TExES #154 Supplemental One-Day Mini Academy

#### MAY 26, 2016

OST Executive Leadership Series: Organizational Strategic Planning

#### JUNE 2, 2016

Text Structure in Content Area Reading for High School Teachers

School Finance Council

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



### Leaders Attend HCDE Leadership Speaker Series Featuring Michele De Bellis

Nearly 50 area educators attended the “Dispositions for Effective Education Leaders” workshop last week featuring speaker Michele De Bellis. Part of HCDE’s Leadership Speaker Series, the workshop provided leaders with ways to cultivate and nurture others as learners and leaders. The day-long workshop



also included multiple interactive sessions to increase awareness and response when faced with challenging decisions and conflicts.

### DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT:



Waller ISD sets the stage for its 4th Annual Waller Fine Arts Society Summer Music Camp June 20-24. Register soon, as space is limited.

Details:

<http://goo.gl/CRMvuF>



### Kids Day at HP Brings Nine Teams to Competition at HP May 20

Nine schools competed in the Kids Day at Hewlett-Packard event on May 20 at HP headquarters in north Houston. The afterschool students participated in robotic challenges using Lego kits and designed and marketed

fictional robots capable of surviving various challenges. HP generously donated prizes to the contenders who competed in teams with PowerPoint presentations and their robots. Schools included charter school Academy of Accelerated Learning, Inc.; charter school Southwest Bissonnet Elementary; Aldine ISD’s Goodman Elementary; Houston ISD’s Gregg Elementary, Deady Middle School and Hogg Middle School; Pasadena ISD’s Kruse Elementary; Sheldon ISD’s Sheldon Elementary; and Aldine ISD’s Stehlik Intermediate.



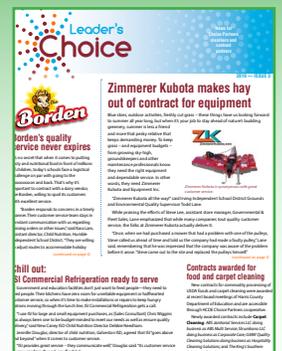
# Value

## BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

### Kids Day at HP Brings Nine Teams to Competition at HP May 20

The most recent issue of Choice Partners’ Leader’s Choice newsletter has been released.

Leader’s Choice is a product of Client Development and is a news vehicle designed for Choice Partners members and contract partners.



# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Instructional Management

In accordance with the Board's goals 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 conduct periodic assessments of the effectiveness of the planning process;
- Ensure 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; and
- Establishes a system for regular evaluation of instructional programs to meet student instructional needs and to attain desired student achievement

This past weekend, our Adult Education division awarded GED certificates to 131 students. This is a significant increase over last year and speaks to our commitment to the students enrolled in our program on the heels of extensive changes to the GED testing and scoring process. On Saturday, 82 of those 131 students were on hand during the GED graduation ceremony. It was a rewarding opportunity for both the students, our staff, and the families assembled to support the students.



Additionally, this year, the Adult Education division has raised the bar for our students by exposing them to non-traditional career opportunities (especially based on gender), as well to other career paths that will afford them much higher earning power than has been the case as they matriculated through more traditional career paths upon completion of their GED studies.



**By this accomplishment, I am working towards achieving the Board's expectations of me to**

- **Develop and implement a clear vision for the Department;**
- **Develop and foster an entrepreneurial spirit and understand HCDE's role in the changing educational environment;**
- **Work with the Board to set the vision, mission, goals, and objectives for the Department; and**
- **Manage the day-to-day business ensuring that the objectives are achieved.**

**In doing so, I am also meeting the Board's expectations of me to assess risks and determine that appropriate actions using sound business judgment to provide programs and resources that support educational opportunities.**

## HCDE BOARD

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

*Vice President*  
Louis Evans, III  
**Position 4, Precinct 3**

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:

**June Board Meeting**  
Tuesday, June 21, 2016  
1:00 p.m.  
ROOM 400

