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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

This week was one filled with celebrations and transitions. I began the week with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team, followed by a meeting with the North Harris County Education Alliance Leadership Council. Wednesday, we celebrated the retirement of Les Hooper, now the former Executive Director of Facilities. Yesterday, we celebrated Board Appreciation, and today, we will honor Jean Polichino, Senior Director of School-Based Therapy Services, on her retirement. (Both Hooper and Polichino are retiring after 28 years of service to HCDE.)

Thanks to all of you for attending yesterday's committee meetings, Board Appreciation festivities, and the January Board Meeting. As always, thanks for your commitment to HCDE.

Tomorrow, HCDE will host the 31st Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference, as mentioned in previous issues of **The Connector**. The event will be held from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Kingdom Builders Center, located at 6011 W. Orem Drive in Houston (77085), near Beltway 8 and the Fort Bend Tollway. Board members who plan to attend will be recognized at the beginning of the event. Your attendance is not required. We expect over 1,000 early childhood educators and presenters in attendance.

Starting Sunday, I will be attending the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) Mid-Winter Conference which is being held in Austin. The conference runs through Wednesday and I will return to the office Thursday.

This week in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE provided value, opportunity, and service to educators and learners of Harris County through the following trainings and workshops: Defining Academic Rigor and Aligning Vertically for STAAR Success; Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Force, Motion, and Energy; Writing: The Inking of Your Thinking; Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Force, Motion, and Energy; Building Academic Vocabulary through a Language Rich Environment; Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Evolution and Classification; Manuel Scott/Freedom Writer: How to Create an Unquenchable Thirst for Education in Young People/How to Reach "Unreachable" Youth Today; Integers and Algebraic Reasoning in Grades 6-8; School Finance Council; and Winning Strategies L.E.P.

In closing, thank you for your service to Harris County Department of Education. Have a great weekend, and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**.

Upcoming Event: Tomorrow, January 28

31st Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference
8:30 a.m. -4:30 p.m.
Kingdom Builders
6011 W. Orem Drive
Houston, Texas 77085

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Executive Director Hooper Retires



Les Hooper with wife and daughter

Executive director for Facilities Support Services Les Hooper retired this month after 28 years of service to Harris County Department of Education. His retirement reception on January 25 was complimented by well wishes from approximately 200 friends and co-workers, many of whom returned from the past to pay their respects.

In addition to being a calm-and-collected, well-organized and inspirational leader Hooper has left his imprint through numerous milestones at HCDE, including the creation and maintenance of facilities for



Hooper with longtime employee Susie Brown

clients and staff. Here are a few highlights:

- Orchestrated the building of 6300 Irvington, including the conference center and garage;
- Collaborated in securing and renovating all four schools, Highpoint East and North and AB School East and West; and
- Supporting the co-ops and providing leadership for Choice Partners.

Hooper will retire to Granbury, Texas with wife Louise. Many well-wishers predict he will reserve lots of time for hunting and fishing.



Superintendent Colbert congratulates Hooper

HCDE Board of Trustees Honored during School Board Recognition Month



HCDE Board of Trustees

Members of Harris County Department of Education's Board of Trustees were honored by staff and community at the January 26 board meeting and reception as part of School Board Recognition Month. This year's campaign was "All-Star Team."

Each January, the Texas Association of School Boards organizes the School Board Recognition Month campaign to focus on the crucial role an elected board of trustees plays in our communities and schools.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

CASE for Kids Coordinator Featured in Documentary Promotion for Afterschool



CASE for Kids Coordinator Adrian Izaguirre is featured in a video which promotes the impact that afterschool is making in the state of Texas. The documentary will be released in 2018, but a Facebook page (link to Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/esztexas>) featuring a trailer made with Izaguirre is released which promotes the documentary.

End School Zone follows the life of youth located in five major cities across the state: Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, and San Antonio. The documentary's purpose is to show the positive effect of afterschool in the lives of at-risk youth. Afterschool experts are interviewed in the film. The documentary is produced by filmmaker Adam Wigfall.

View the CASE for Kids trailer with Adrian Izaguirre:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Anwy9y4lbmE>

Noted Freedom Writer Presents at HCDE



Manuel Scott, one of the original Freedom Writers profiled in the 2007 movie, led a workshop on January 19 at HCDE's fifth-floor conference center. More than 130 educators in and around the Houston area signed up to hear Manuel Scott's emotional presentation entitled "How to Reach 'Unreachable' Youth."

Scott started out by sharing details of his early days as a troubled youth who faced family and neighborhood violence at every turn. Scott said his lowest moment came when his teenaged best friend was murdered, at which point he gave up on school and resigned himself to the life of a dropout.

"How do you reach that kid?" Scott challenged the audience.

Scott spoke both to the importance and difficulty of the work that educators do. He said his goal was for attendees to leave with a "renewed heart" for understanding, engaging, reaching, and teaching despondent students in every school.



ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

JANUARY 24, 2017

lead4ward: Rocking Review 360 ELAR (3-5)

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

Groovin' Grammar

Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Earth and Space

JANUARY 25, 2017

Quest for Grants Training Series Webinar - Diversify Your Funding Through Private Grants

Bilingual 164 Test Preparation Academy and BTLPT Review - Two Days

lead4ward: Rocking Review 360 ELAR (6-EOC)

JANUARY 26, 2017

CPR/1st Aid

DBQ Project - Social Studies Introductory Workshop Plus Follow Up

Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Biological Processes and Systems

Building Conceptual Understanding in Grades 3 and 4

Enhancing Academic Vocabulary with your English Language Learners

JANUARY 27, 2017

"Clean it Up" Customer Service in Afterschool

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

JANUARY 28, 2017

31st Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Jean Polichino, Director of School-Based Therapy Services, Retires after Nearly 30 Years of Service



In 1988, Jean Polichino was flipping through the Houston Chronicle classifieds when she came across an ad. Harris County Department of Education was looking for an occupational therapist who could be contracted to work in Spring Branch ISD, which happened to be where Polichino had attended high school.

So began a nearly 30-year career with HCDE that ends this month, with Polichino retiring from her post as director of School-Based Therapy Services, the division she has helped mold into a statewide information resource and a provider of vital services to more than 7,700 students annually.

“HCDE has afforded me a rich and meaningful professional life,” Polichino said, but the truth is that her service and leadership have paid large dividends back to the organization and its members – particularly to the school districts that rely on HCDE for well-trained, quality occupational therapists and physical therapists.

The fruits of Polichino’s labor, she’s proud to say, extend beyond the Harris County classrooms where HCDE therapists provide much-needed services. In 2014, School-Based Therapy Services launched TxSpot.org as a way to share information geared specifically for therapists working in public education throughout the state of Texas. A mere two years later, Polichino received word that the Texas Education Agency refers school therapists looking for specialized information about their practice in schools to none other than TxSpot.org.

Polichino named the creation and growth of TxSpot.org as one of her proudest accomplishments as director, but her long career at HCDE has provided other memories and milestones.

“In my first year working as an occupational therapist in Spring Branch ISD, I met a fourth-grader with a learning disability for written expression,” Polichino began, adding that the child was humiliated by her poor writing grades.

Polichino worked with the student, listening to her challenges and gaining her trust, and finally suggested strategies to help her with written assignments.

“She successfully employed the suggestions and was thrilled to find that despite her learning disability, she could produce work similar to her classroom peers, Polichino said. “I was struck by the transformation in her self-confidence and by the depth of her gratitude. It opened my eyes to the significant difference a therapist can make for children with disabilities at school.”

Making a “significant difference” in the lives of students with disabilities has been something of a motto for Polichino ever since. She has watched this commitment of HCDE therapists lead to tangible success for students, as in the case of Kyle Abbott.

Now an adult with cerebral palsy, Abbott received early intervention services from an HCDE occupational therapist and physical therapist while in the Katy TYKE Early Childhood Intervention program, and then had the same therapists in Cypress Fairbanks ISD until he graduated from high school. He has since earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Texas A&M, and he’s landed a job working for the Houston Astros – a dream job of sorts.

Abbott’s appreciation for the intervention that his HCDE therapists provided became apparent when he attended one of their retirement celebrations.

“It’s good to have the same professional or therapist throughout the years so they get to know you both on an educational and personal level, so they understand what your goals are and where you want to go in life,” Abbott said.

Now that Polichino’s time with HCDE draws to a close, she remains optimistic about watching its important work continue.

“Because of the support and guidance provided by the HCDE Board of Trustees and Mr. Colbert, the division is well positioned for continued growth long term,” she said. “HCDE School-Based Therapy Services is ready to take on the future!”

For more information about HCDE’s School-Based Therapy Services, go to www.hcde-texas.org/therapyservices .

Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Chinese New Year Recognition Held at AB School West



Academic and Behavior School West held its annual Chinese New Year Recognition which was spearheaded by staff Shu Nieh, Davietta Ford, and Patrick Coleman. It was held January 26, 2017, and the year of the rooster was celebrated. Students participated in a dragon dance and learned about the important contributions of the Chinese culture.

In China, the Chinese New Year is known as the Spring Festival or Lunar New Year. It's a different date each year, but typically runs from January 21-February 20, ending on the full moon. The assembly was capped off by delicious Chinese cuisine.



Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

HCDE Readies for Early Childhood Winter Conference



The Teaching and Learning Center is preparing for the Early Childhood Conference on January 28 at the Kingdom Builders Center. To view the conference program, go to http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/4427/ecwc_prog2017.pdf.

Tumy, and Nicole Shanahan. Superintendent James Colbert will welcome the guests along with TLC Director Andrea Segraves. A pre-k cheering squad from HISD will also energize the crowd of educators. Former Board of Trustee President and conference namesake Raymond T. Garcia will also greet guests.

Keynote speaker is entertainer Don Monopoli with his presentation: *All Aboard for Early Learning: Rock, Move and Learn*. Bilingual keynote is Dr. Gilberto Soto who presents: *Using Music, Songs and Movements to Enhance Dual Language*.

To keep up with social media posts at the conference, view the hashtag: #ECWC17. Featured speakers include HCDE leadership and staff Dr. Kimberly McLeod, Darlene Breaux, Lisa Felske, Kelly

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Board Relations

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me as it relates to the following element of performance:

- **Maintain a positive and professional working relationship with the Board**

and gifts to all trustees (current and former), and all trustees had their official Board portraits taken.



Trustee Moore and Superintendent Colbert

As always, HCDE appreciates the dedication and hard work of the Harris County Department of Education Board of Trustees.



Trustee Lee Carter and CASE for Kids Director Lisa Caruthers

By hosting this reception, I am striving to achieve the Board's goal of me to extend accolades and recognition—not only to HCDE staff, but also to HCDE's dedicated governing body to ensure appropriate Board Relations, also encouraging the respect of our Board by all employees.

Each year, the Governor declares January as Board Appreciation Month. Likewise, the Department honors the Board during a reception, immediately prior to the January Board Meeting.

Yesterday, the Department both honored the current trustees and recognized two former trustees. The reception was well-attended and employees had an opportunity to express appreciation in a formal setting. I distributed certificates

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Louis Evans, III

Position 4, Precinct 3

Vice President

Eric Dick

Position 2, Precinct 4

Erica Lee Carter

Position 6, Precinct 1

George Moore

Position 1, Precinct 2

Don Sumners

Position 7, At Large

Diane Trautman

Position 3, At Large

Michael Wolfe

Position 5, At Large

UPCOMING BOARD EVENT:

Tomorrow, January 28

31st Annual R.T. Garcia

Early Childhood Winter Conference

8:30 a.m. -4:30 p.m.

Kingdom Builders

6011 W. Orem Drive

Houston, Texas 77085

