

# The CONNECTOR

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



WEEK OF JANUARY 30, 2017

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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

As mentioned in last week's issue of **The Connector**, I attended the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) Midwinter Conference in Austin. The conference took place Sunday through Wednesday. One of the conference highlights was the Commissioner's address to superintendents and other education leaders from across the state regarding the A-F district ratings, school vouchers, school finance, and other pertinent issues facing public education. I returned to the office yesterday, meeting with members of my Executive Leadership Team.

This past Saturday, the Teaching and Learning Center held yet another successful R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference event. This year marked the 31st annual conference and it was celebrated by over a thousand educators and presenters in attendance, many of whom were transported by numerous school buses. This conference is a vital piece of the early childhood education puzzle across the state of Texas and HCDE is pleased to be the brainchild of such a valuable event that positively impacts public education in Texas.

This week in the area teaching and learning, we hosted the following trainings, workshops, and meetings for education leaders: Social Studies Leadership Group; Test Prep Series for TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291)-SCIENCE Sessions ONLY; Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Interdependence and Environmental Systems; Music Therapy Workshop; and Engineering Activities in Afterschool.

Next week, I will be attending an IMPACT Meeting that is being hosted by Spring Branch ISD. IMPACT is comprised of Harris County school district board presidents and trustees. The group was established by HCDE many years ago and re-emerged as

an opportunity for governance leaders to converge and increase their impact on public education. In the past, all meetings were held at HCDE. Just recently, board presidents and trustees have begun hosting these meetings within their respective districts.

Also, next week, I will be attending my American Leadership Forum (ALF) as I continue fulfilling my responsibility as a member of the 2016-17 class. Next week's event is surrounding Class Dialogue Participation. This forum is an excellent professional development outlet and the skills obtained are applicable throughout every profession represented within the class.

HCDE is entering its annual season for budget preparation. The Business Services division is hosting its major budget planning meeting for all divisions next week. Our budget planning process is a very tedious one, comprised of various phases and components. Next week's meeting officially kicks off this critical function within the Department.

In closing, please be reminded that the February Board Meeting will be held Tuesday, February 28, 2017 at 9:00 a.m.

Thanks for your service to HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and I hope you have a relaxing Super Bowl weekend!

### Upcoming Event:

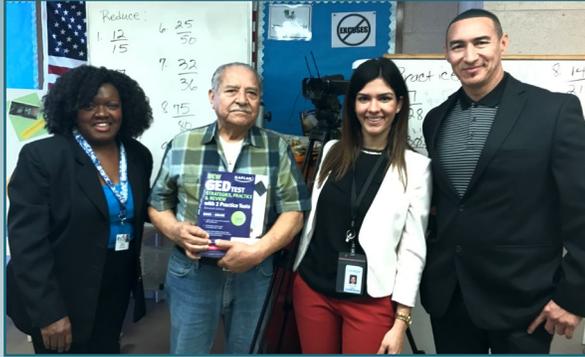
#### Board Meeting

Tuesday, February 28, 2017 at 9:00 a.m.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### National Cox Online News Mundo Hispanico to Publish Story about Adult Education



Adult Education teacher Evelyn Steptoe, student Salvador Escobedo, reporter Sylvia Oben, and manager Bill Medina

Mundo Hispanico, a national online Hispanic news publication, visited a Pasadena Adult Education location January 31 to interview student Salvador Escobedo, 84. The story follows Escobedo's classroom experience with longtime GED teacher Evelyn Steptoe. Adult Education Manager Bill Medina provides an interview about how students can enroll in classes. Mundo Hispanico has three million social media followers on Facebook. Sylvia Oben is the Mundo reporter. The story will be published February 2 on <http://mundohispanico.com/noticias/houston-texas>.

### Adult Education Staff Receives Beneficial Training to Enhance Programs



Sixty Adult Education staff participated in professional development through trainers from TRAIN PD, the statewide professional development organization for adult education and literacy programs in Texas. Topics ranged from using social media in the classroom to improving writing and math skills.

Teachers are encouraging students that succeed in gaining their GEDs to return to the classroom and to share their success stories with other students. In west Houston, GED graduate Elizabeth Tellez returned to her classroom at Memorial Assistance Ministries to inspire fellow students to not give up on their education goals. She continues her education as a cosmetology student at Houston Community College.

### Math Curriculum Director Shanahan Joins College Readiness Task Force



Math director Nicole Shanahan joined a state task force called the Texas Children's Savings Task Force. This year, the group focuses on "Expanding Access to Children's Savings Accounts for College."

Shanahan said that although many parents want their children to earn a degree, the cost of a college education has increased and the ability for families to finance education has diminished. The group works to promote programs like the Children's Savings Accounts for College, long-term savings accounts set up for young children which offer a policy strategy to encourage positive savings behavior and increase college attendance among students and their families.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### CASE for Kids Workshop Attendees Experience Poverty Simulation

CASE for Kids recently hosted Poverty Simulation, a day of walking in the shoes of someone who lives in poverty. The simulation included the challenges of navigating the complex world of government services and services from other essential providers.



Attendees experienced the benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. They also went through a poverty simulation experience designed to view poverty from different vantage points. At the end of the simulation, discussions allowed for reflection on the experiences.

### CASE for Kids Hosts Spring 2017 Symposium February 25

CASE for Kids will host the Spring 2017 Symposium on February 25. Workshops offered are part of the Youth Program Quality Intervention, a comprehensive system for integrating assessment and training for afterschool. Topics include youth voice, behavior management through structure and clear limits, building community, and planning and reflection. The conference is set from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 6300 Irvington Blvd. Cost is \$40.

### CSSS Staff Train in Suicide Prevention



The Center for Safe and Secure Schools participated in the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training session, a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first aid. The workshop teaches enrollees to recognize someone with suicidal thoughts and work with them to create a plan to support their immediate safety.

### ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

#### FEBRUARY 1, 2017

Social Studies Leadership Group

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

#### FEBRUARY 2, 2017

Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Interdependence and Environmental Systems

#### FEBRUARY 3, 2017

Music Therapy Workshop

Engineering Activities in Afterschool



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Target Hunger Donates Seeds to Support Head Start School Garden Initiative

On January 26, Sha Lewis, Garden Coordinator with Target Hunger, donated millions of seeds to HCDE Head Start to support the school garden initiative. All types of vegetable seeds were donated including lettuce, broccoli, carrots, and mustard greens. The Head Start school garden initiative provides students with lessons ranging from responsibility and science to the environment and healthy eating.



Target Hunger is one of Houston's largest organizations providing direct food distribution to food-insecure seniors, children, and families who face the risk of going hungry every day. They distribute 3.9 million pounds of food each year – the equivalent of 3.2 million meals.

### Senior Director for School-Based Therapy Services Retires



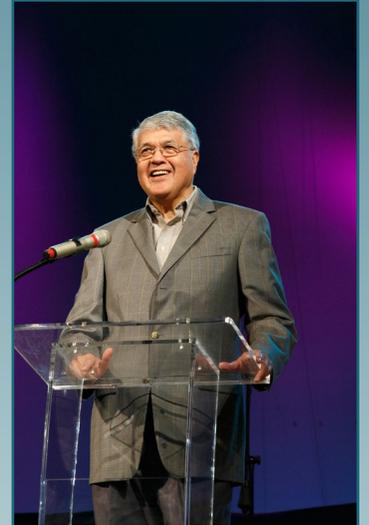
School-Based Therapy Services Senior Director Jean Polichino retired this month after 28 years of service with HCDE. Many friends and co-workers attended Polichino's retirement reception on January 27. View photos from the reception here: <https://goo.gl/cIVsy6>.



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Scenes from Early Childhood Winter Conference



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Longtime HCDE Employee Karla Cantu Graduates with Bachelor of Arts from UH Downtown



Karla Cantu, senior executive assistant to the County School Superintendent James Colbert, graduated from the University of Houston Downtown on December 17. Cantu received her Bachelor of Arts degree in communication studies, with a corporate convention.

“My final semester was no small feat as I was pregnant most of the semester and gave birth Nov. 1 at the end of the semester,” she said. “It was difficult juggling home, work, and school but most rewarding when I walked across the stage at Minute Maid Park,” she said.

Cantu said she encourages others to follow their academic and career dreams, no matter how long it takes.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Garcia, Stipeche Attend Community Leaders’ Luncheon



HCDE’s Teaching and Learning Center and Center for Grants Development hosted a Community Leaders’ Luncheon at Saturday’s Early Childhood Winter Conference. Attendees included former HCDE board president Raymond T. Garcia, after whom the conference is named, and Juliet Stipeche,

director of education in Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner’s administration.

Frances Watson-Hester, senior director, Teaching and Learning Center, welcomed and thanked leaders in the Harris County education community, as well as sponsors and other guests.

When Garcia spoke, he quoted Frederick Douglas to emphasize the critical importance of early childhood education.

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men,” he said.

Garcia served as an HCDE board trustee from 1994-2009

and was board president for eight of those years.

Andrea Segraves, director, Teaching and Learning Center, thanked sponsors, in particular, for their generous support of the Early Childhood Winter Conference, which typically attracts 1,000-1,500 attendees.

“Your sponsorship helps us keep the conference fee at a low rate for teachers,” Segraves said.

“I really believe in this conference,” said Maria Nevarez-Solis, director, Early Childhood Programs, Spring ISD.

Attendees were also treated to musical performances by students from The High School for the Performing and Visual Arts and Parker Elementary School.

“They are precious souls, and they’re regular kids,” said Parker Elementary music teacher Charles Bardin, presenting his students as shining examples of high-quality education in Harris County.



# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Community Relations

In an effort to achieve the Board's expectations of me as it relates to this element of performance 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 community; and to
- Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way

in attendance. This event serves as a leading statewide convening of experts and educators in the area of early childhood. Sessions were facilitated by cutting edge professionals with innovative spins on the delivery of early childhood education services.



This event garners the respect of early childhood leaders statewide. HCDE is pleased to play such an integral part in the early childhood community through this unique medium.

By hosting this event, I am striving to achieve the Board's goal of me to

- Maintain visibility and involvement in the community with ISD Superintendents and community leaders;
- Communicate the accomplishments of the Department in a variety of formats;
- Represent HCDE by attendance at events and speak professionally; and
- Make professional presentations to all audiences in all arena.



This past Saturday, HCDE hosted the 31st Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference at the Kingdom Builders venue. Over 1,000 educators and presenters were



## HCDE BOARD

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## UPCOMING BOARD EVENT:

**Board Meeting**  
Tuesday, February 28, 2017  
at 9:00 a.m.

