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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

I began this week with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team. The meeting was quite productive as we prepared for this week's budget hearings, by division, which commenced this past Monday. Each division director proposed a budget for the upcoming year, and also presented their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Trends (SWOT) analysis to the group. Because our budget process is a very tedious one, these budget hearings have taken up a great deal of time on behalf of the Executive Leadership Team. We progress through a comprehensive process to ensure a fiscally conservative budget is presented to the Board for approval. We also held agenda review for the April 18, 2017 Board Meeting.

Earlier today, I attended the Little Free Libraries event which was held at the 6300 Irvington location on the parking lot. This event, coordinated by our Adult Education division was held in partnership with the City of Houston Public Library. The little libraries are wooden boxes filled with books and placed in targeted areas around the city that have been identified as low-literacy and with a population of low-income youth who have little to no access to quality books. Today's event was to paint the little libraries—each featuring a barbershop storefront décor, complete with red-white-and-blue barber poles. The libraries were donated by the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation and the Little Free Library organization.

This week in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following workshops and trainings: Special Populations

Leadership Group Meeting; Online Instructors' Training, Part III; Introduction to Restorative Principles and Circles; ESL Supplemental Exam 4-Day Test Prep Workshop; Capturing Kids Hearts; CPR/First Aid; Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Textbooks/Materials Showcase; Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar; Quest for Grants Training Series: The Case for Collaboration; The Heat is On!; Successful OST Programs Start Now!; School Finance Council; STAAR: A Vertical Alignment Look at RC2 for Grades 3-4 and 6-7.

Looking ahead, we will continue and hopefully complete the budget hearing process next week and move on to the next phase of the budget process. I look forward to presenting, for your consideration, a sound budget that has been thoroughly analyzed from every possible perspective.

Please be reminded that the next meeting of the HCDE Board of Trustees will be held Tuesday, April 18, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. As always, I appreciate your service to HCDE.

In closing, I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and I hope you have a relaxing weekend.

**Upcoming Event:**  
**Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday, April 18, 2017**

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### CASE for Kids Summer Learning Symposium Provides Engaging Day of Learning for Afterschool Professionals



Approximately 90 afterschool professionals attended last week's Summer Learning Symposium at HCDE hosted by the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids. The day-long symposium featured exciting and engaging ideas for their summer programs including how to incorporate storytelling, measurement and ecology into gardening projects, and using comic book curriculum to motivate students, encourage writing, and promote reading comprehension.

The workshop also featured a robotics session designed for educators and instructors interested in bringing STEM to their afterschool programs, and a hands-on science session that explored inquiry-based science kits.

View photos from the Summer Learning Symposium at <https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/CASE/Summer-Symposium-2017/>.



### ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

*Trainings hosted at HCDE this week*

**APRIL 3, 2017**  
Special Populations Leadership Group Meeting

Online Instructor's Training - Part III

**APRIL 4, 2017**  
Introduction to Restorative Principles and Circles

ESL Supplemental Exam 4-Day Test Prep Workshop

**APRIL 5, 2017**  
Capturing Kids Hearts

**APRIL 6, 2017**  
CPR/1st Aid

Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Textbook/Materials Showcase

Educator Certification and Professional Advancement Career Choice Recruitment Seminar

Quest for Grants Training Series: The Case for Collaboration

**APRIL 7, 2017**  
The Heat is On!

Successful OST Programs Start Now!

School Finance Council

STAAR: A Vertical Alignment Look at RC2 (Grades 3-4, 6-7)



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Purchasing Co-Op Hosts Membership Meeting in Dallas Area



Choice Partners, HCDE's purchasing cooperative, hosted a member workshop in Grapevine on Wednesday, April 5. The event was geared toward helping members in the Dallas-Fort Worth area learn about Choice Partners' procurement and contract solutions, as well as to introduce them to new contracts

that were recently board-approved.

Members in attendance heard from HCDE staff about how Choice Partners contracts meet the federal EDGAR guidelines for using federal grant money. They also received a brief tutorial on using the Choice Partners website to make purchasing easier and more user-friendly.

### Sweets for Tweets and Follows Launched to Increase HCDE Social Media Followers



Communications and Creative Services launched a new internal and external social media campaign called Sweets for Tweets and Follows. The campaign was created to increase followers for both HCDEtx Twitter and Facebook accounts. Followers receive candy, breakfast bars, or bottled water in exchange for following HCDE or for sharing a photo from a workshop or event with the hashtag #oneforall which refers to "one source for all learners," a new HCDE slogan being used.



HCDE currently has 1,738 twitter followers and 2,368 followers on Facebook.

### Popcorn Social Held at Irvington March 31



HCDE employees at Irvington enjoyed popcorn and conversation as the week wound down last Friday, March 31. The meet-and-greet socials are held monthly. Human Resources organizes the gatherings.

# Opportunity

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Restorative Justice



Nearly 20 counselors and other personnel from Harris County schools attended Introduction to Restorative Principles and Circles, a workshop presented on Tuesday,

April 4, by HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools. The training, which introduces school staff to ways to help

disproportionately disciplined students, was led by Udoro Ekpín-Gatewood, M.Ed.

Ekpin-Gatewood began the training by quoting Howard Zehr. "Rather than obsessing about whether 'offenders' get what they deserve, restorative justice focuses on repairing the harm of crime and engaging individuals and community members in the process," Zehr said.

### TLC Shares Tip for Teaching the Entire Class, Not Just the Front of the Room

David McGeary, curriculum director for digital education and innovation, HCDE's Teaching and Learning Center, shared a tip for teachers on Monday's news blog.

McGeary discussed how, when he was a teacher, he often noticed that students in the back of the classroom were less engaged.

"As much as I tried to walk around, I found that my students in the back of the class would lose touch with the classroom culture and feel more isolated from the front of the room," McGeary wrote.

He went on to describe how one day, on a whim, he decided to teach while standing on a table instead of in

front of his whiteboard.

"Changing perspective helped me to better engage with groups of students that I couldn't quite reach in my original approach," he said. "This change also invigorated my students by giving them a new way to see and interact with me."

While standing on a desk is probably not advisable for safety reasons, McGeary cautioned, changing the classroom's perspective is a good way to mix things up.

### Superintendent Joins Colleagues for Continued Learning

As requested by superintendents within Harris County, this year's Focal Point meeting will take place at Antietam. As a continuation of last year's eye-opening leadership experience, the group will further this invaluable professional development experience for the purpose of integrating the various elements covered during the course into their respective leadership styles for the betterment of school districts and education service delivery throughout Harris County.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Klein ISD Teacher Mike Keimig Receives HCDE Susan O'Connor Award for Teaching Excellence



*Klein ISD Teacher Mike Keimig with award namesake Susan O'Connor*

Klein ISD English Teacher Mike Keimig has been actively involved in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards for nine years. To him, the Scholastic Awards provide his junior high students opportunities to publish their work, earn scholarships, and most importantly, find their voice and learn to enjoy writing.

This year, Keimig received the 2017 Susan O'Connor Award for Teaching Excellence, a prestigious award highlighting his exemplary work and commitment to expanding opportunities for creative young people through the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.

The Susan O'Connor Award, named after writing teacher and Scholastic Awards advocate Susan O'Connor, is presented annually by Harris County Department of Education to one regional teacher who has made an impact on students' lives through the Awards.

"I encourage my students to participate in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards because I've found they show amazing individual voice when presented with an opportunity to be heard," said Keimig.

In addition to expanding opportunities through the Scholastic Awards, Keimig supports and challenges his students every day as their teacher. For Klein ISD parent Karen Dupont, Keimig has also become a mentor for her two boys, ninth grader Jacob and 11th grader David.

Keimig taught Jacob in ninth grade at Doerre Intermediate and continues to support him in high school. After being inspired to enter the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards by

Keimig, Jacob discovered a passion for writing and received National Silver and Gold Key Writing Medals.

Although he didn't teach Dupont's oldest son David, Keimig tutors him for the English End-of-Course exam. Due to David's Asperger's, a form of autism, he needed additional help with writing. When Dupont reached out to Keimig he offered to tutor David without hesitation.

"Mr. Keimig has allowed David to make incredible strides in his written and spoken communication," explains Dupont. "His help means so much to our family."

Dupont adds that Keimig makes an impact on his students by challenging, motivating, and supporting them and is a positive mentor for them at the intermediate age.

Keimig was recognized at the Regional Scholastic Art and Writing Awards Ceremony at the Alley Theater on March 25, where he was presented with a check for \$500 from award namesake Susan O'Connor. He is also invited to attend the National Awards Ceremony along with his students at Carnegie Hall in New York City this summer.

"I'm so thankful for the wonderful opportunities my students have received from Harris County Department of Education and the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards," said Keimig. "It truly does change young adults when they have opportunities to be recognized outside of the school setting."

Founded in 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the nation's longest-running, most prestigious educational initiative supporting student achievement in the visual and literary arts. The program has an impressive legacy of being the first to acknowledge creative talent and is today's largest source of scholarships for creative teens. For more information on the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, visit [www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic](http://www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic).



# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Houston Celebrates National Service April 4: VISTA CASE for Kids Members Honored for Service at City Hall



(left) Supporting national service are Houston City Council Members Dr. Jack Christie and Brenda Stardig; OneStar Foundation Service Commissioner Mary Grace Landrum; Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner; Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center of Houston's Walt McFadden; and OneStar Commission Chairman Ronnie Hagerty.

In Texas, 33,000 national service members work to strengthen communities through national service and volunteering. By shining the spotlight on the impact of service and thanking those who serve, local officials hope to inspire more residents to get involved in their communities.

Mayor Sylvester Turner honored national service in the Houston area on April 4 during the 5th annual Mayor and County Day of Recognition for National Service. Four CASE for Kids VISTA members were recognized during the ceremony.



(left) Ashley Davis, Munirah Jinwright and Angel Hillsman (Natasha Howard not present) pose for a photo at City Hall after being recognized for their service by Mayor Turner.

On April 1, OneStar Foundation Service Commissioner Mary Grace Landrum represented OneStar Foundation on KPRC's Newsmakers. OneStar Foundation, which serves as Texas' National Service Commission, administers \$14 million in AmeriCorps State grants to nonprofits each year.

Landrum invited CASE for Kids VISTA member Munirah Jinwright to talk about service on the show. View the video: <https://youtu.be/ezscbSrMS6o>

CASE for Kids VISTA members work in afterschool in training and technical support capacities and help support CASE for Kids services.



KPRC Khambrell Marshal interviews Munirah Jinwright, VISTA member with CASE for Kids and OneStar Foundation Service Commissioner Mary Grace Landrum.



### Harris County Educators Attend HCDE Language Other Than English (LOTE) Showcase

On Thursday, April 6, HCDE hosted a Language Other Than English (LOTE) Showcase for area school district supervisors, principals, and teachers involved with selecting textbooks and supplemental material for statewide adoption.



### HCDE Workshop Helps Educators, Administrators Improve School Performance

Harris County educators and administrators joined HCDE's Darlene Breaux and the Flippen Group this week for the two-day "Capturing Kids' Hearts" workshop. This workshop provides research-based processes to improve the five key indicators of school performance: fewer discipline referrals, improved attendance, higher student achievement, lower dropout rates, and higher teacher satisfaction.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Event held at HCDE Featuring Little Free Libraries to Make Big Literacy Impact through ‘Groomed for Literacy’



Fifty little libraries which could make a big literacy impact in needy children’s lives were painted today by adult learners enrolled in workforce development classes at Harris County Department of Education and other volunteers. The event will was held from 10 a.m. to noon at 6300 Irvington Blvd., Houston, Texas.

The collaborative program created by the Houston Public Library, in partnership with Put It In A Book Foundation, called “Groomed for Literacy” provides the wooden little libraries filled with books to barber shops in targeted areas with low-literacy, and low-income youth who have low access to quality books.

The little free libraries feature a barber shop storefront décor complete with red-white-and-blue barber poles. The little free libraries were donated by the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation and the Little Free Library organization. Other partners in the project include the Friends of the Houston Public Library, City of Houston Health Department – My Brother’s Keeper, Hott Blocc Barbershop (pilot location), and Franklin Institute.

“Our adult education students involved with this project can connect with this cause to promote

literacy among youth as many of them return to school to better themselves,” said Harris County School Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. “They see the value in this program and are offering to volunteer their time to encourage youth to read.”

This past fall, students in an adult education workforce development class helped to construct the little free libraries at the launch event announcing the program. After painting is completed, the Houston Public Library will work with local barber shops to implement the program. Service areas include Fifth Ward, Third Ward, East Little York, Independence Heights, Clinton Park, Sharpstown, Gulfgate, Hobby, and several dozen additional neighborhoods.

Several of the students putting finishing touches on the little free libraries are enrolled in a construction class through HCDE. The basic construction and safety skills class is called Core Curriculum Certification.

Student Leonardo Cordova took the class with a number of other employees laid off from General Electric last December.

“It’s a good feeling to help other people,” said Cordova. “I look forward to volunteering to get the job done.”

# Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

## Board Relations

In an effort to ensure that I meet the Board's expectations of me as it relates to the following element of performance related to Board Relations to:

- **Maintain a positive and professional working relationship with the Board;**
- **Keep the Board informed of significant issues as they arise, using agreed-upon criteria and procedures for information dissemination;**
- **Respond in a timely and complete manner to board requests for information that are consistent with Board policy and established procedures; and**
- **Provide recommendations and appropriate supporting materials to the Board on policy issues and matters for Board decision.**

Throughout my tenure at Harris County Department of Education, my weekly newsletter to the Board, **The Connector**, has served as one of the official vehicles of information dissemination to the board related to events, news, and goings-on within the



Volume 1 contained 36 issues.

Volume 2 contained 45 issues.

Volume 3 contains 30 issues to date.

Department. This issue marks the 30th of Volume 3 of **The Connector**. From the very start of each academic year, I will typically disseminate an average of 45 issues per volume, and each new year marks the beginning of an additional volume. This communication tool is reliable and is consistently distributed to each member of the board at the end of each work week, and contains vital information and details related to the Department and my activities.

By ensuring that the Board is kept informed through this medium, as well as through other media, I am striving to meet the Board's goal of me to ensure that there is a consistent flow of information between the Board and the superintendent, thereby further ensuring good Board Relations.

## HCDE BOARD

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## UPCOMING BOARD EVENT:

**Board Meeting**  
Tuesday, April 18, 2017

