

# The CONNECTOR

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



WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2017

VOLUME 3/ISSUE 52



## Hurricane Harvey Emergency Resources

FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

As you are already aware, as of this week, the Department resumed its first normal work week since the Harvey weather event. Unfortunately, we are now well aware that numerous employees, Department-wide, were severely impacted by area-wide flooding. Community-wide networks and various community drives bring great hope that Houston comes together as one during and after devastating events such as this historic flood which has topped any national record.

This week marked the first day of school for our campuses, and many of our programs, and services. As reflected in the special edition of **The Connector** which was disseminated on Monday of this week, the first day of school was a success at our various locations. (Additional photos are included in today's issue as well.)

I began this week with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team followed by a meeting with the Leadership Team. In both meetings, we discussed moving our programs forward, with modification as necessary, as it relates to rolling starts of some school districts as well as damage to some of our facilities. I am pleased to report that we are moving ahead without delay in the majority of our service-providing divisions. It is important to note that we are also doing all we can to support school districts in the Harris County area.

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Due to the postponement of agenda review last week, I conducted it this past Tuesday, in preparation of next week's Board Meeting. I also toured Fortis Academy this past Wednesday with Trustee Don Sumners and met with appropriate staff to discuss adjusting the groundbreaking event date for that location. Information regarding this change will be forthcoming.

Today, I attended a meeting of the Houston Recovery Initiative. This group is a great networking opportunity and launching pad for HCDE and Fortis Academy. I am pleased with the inroads we are making to that end. We are certainly making a footprint in the recovery community, and this is something we should all be proud of.

Looking ahead into next week, please be reminded of next Wednesday's Board Meeting which will take place at 1:00 p.m.

I look forward to seeing you next week and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. Have a relaxing weekend and thanks for your service to HCDE.

### Upcoming Events:

**Wednesday, September 20, 2017**  
Board Meeting

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Staff Prepares Facilities for Students' Return after Hurricane Harvey



Harris County Department of Education staff joined schools and districts across the area last week in assessing and repairing facilities affected by Hurricane Harvey.

The four facilities affected were the Early Head Start and Head Start centers in Baytown, the site for Fortis Academy located at 11902 Spears Road, and Academic and Behavior School East located at 7703 South Loop East.

While the damage at these sites was extensive, a team of HCDE employees worked tirelessly in the aftermath of Harvey preparing these facilities for students'

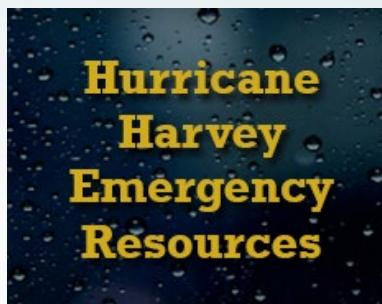
return. The two Baytown Head Start centers and AB School East welcomed students when they returned on Monday, September 11, 2017.

As a result of the damage to HCDE's public recovery school Fortis Academy, the groundbreaking event originally scheduled for September 12 is postponed.



To stay informed on HCDE recovery efforts and updates, visit [www.hcde-texas.org](http://www.hcde-texas.org) and follow us on social media at [facebook.com/HCDEtx/](https://facebook.com/HCDEtx/) and [twitter.com/HCDEtx](https://twitter.com/HCDEtx).

### Human Resources Provides Hurricane Harvey Emergency Resources for Staff



Last week, as many HCDE employees were still dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the Human Resources division provided a list of helpful links to emergency resources as part of the Employee Assistance Program.

View the list of resources here: <http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/4859/eap-links-hurricane-harvey-2017.pdf>.

### ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2017**  
U.S. History: EOC and Beyond



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### 2017-2018 Annual Staff Meeting Focuses on Service



“Service is the Key” was this year’s Annual Staff Meeting theme as over 1,000 employees from Harris County Department of Education’s 21 divisions attended the 2017-2018 meeting on August 24.

Employees participated in an exciting game of HCDE Bingo to network and get to know staff from other divisions. The meeting also honored employees with 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years of service, and ended with a presentation by HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr.



In his presentation, Superintendent Colbert discussed the impact of HCDE services and how they can become a lifeline for many students who fall between the gaps in traditional public education. He also praised staff for going above and beyond to serve the students, teachers and districts in Harris County.

Throughout the event, employees used the #HCDEserves hashtag to demonstrate why they serve students by working at HCDE. To view photos from this event, visit <https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/2017-Annual-Staff-Meeting/> (password: hcde189).



### HCDE Welcomes Students Back to School



On Monday, September 11, HCDE Head Start centers and special schools welcomed students back for the 2017-2018 school year. From words of encouragement to warm smiles and hugs, staff ensured every student felt welcomed and excited to start the new school year. View photos from the first day here: <https://goo.gl/Dh41CG> (password: hcde1889).



# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Fortis Academy Supports Houston's Recovery Community at Recovery in the Park



Harris County Department of Education's Fortis Academy staff, along with other programs in the Adolescent Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (AROSC), celebrated Houston's adolescent

recovery community at Recovery in the Park on Saturday, September 9.

The annual event allows students from Harris County recovery programs to connect through a day of engaging activities and create social support groups with their peers.

"Many students don't realize they live close to others who are also going through the recovery process, so Recovery in the Park allows them to meet other students who can support them," said Sarah Scherzer, executive director of The Turning Point, Inc. and organizer of the event. "It's also important that our students see us working together and that we're invested in their success."

HCDE's Fortis Academy is the newest member of AROSC,



a group of agencies in the Houston Recovery Initiative that provide substance abuse treatment, preventative care, after-care and recovery support for adolescents in the Houston area. The goal of the group is to create a continuum of care for students and ensure there are no gaps at any point in the recovery process.

"I'm honored to be a part of the AROSC family and experience the kinship between organizations," said Fortis Academy Principal Dr. Anthony Moten. "Like these agencies, Fortis Academy will be life-changing and life-sustaining for Harris County students."



Fortis Academy will be the county's first public recovery high school and will open during the 2017-2018 school year. The 20,000-square-foot facility will help students who have completed a substance abuse or dependency rehabilitation program continue their high school education in a sober environment.

For more information about Fortis Academy, visit [www.hcde-texas.org/recoveryschool](http://www.hcde-texas.org/recoveryschool).

View photos from Recovery in the Park at <https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/Schools/Recovery-in-the-Park/>. (password: hcde1889)

### Plantgistix to Deliver School Supplies to Head Start Centers September 25



Head Start students at the Fifth Ward, Pugh, Dogan, Coolwood, San Jacinto and Sheffield centers will receive backpacks full of school supplies donated by local business Plantgistix.

Originally scheduled to deliver the backpacks on September 8, the Plantgistix Charity Committee consisting of Darryl Dastous, Felesia Taylor, Tiffani Speller and

Scott Skrabaneck rescheduled the delivery until Monday, September 25, 2017 due to the impact of Hurricane Harvey. Plantgistix is also donating funds for classroom supplies and materials for the centers.

The 500 donated backpacks will include essential classroom items such as colored markers, crayons, glue sticks, folders and more.

For more information about Plantgistix, visit [www.plantgistix.com](http://www.plantgistix.com).

# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Organizational Morale

**In an effort to meet the expectations of this element of performance as it relates to the Board's goals for me to:**

- Create an open and positive environment for sharing resources and exchanging ideas to improve organizational climate;**
- Seek systemically to improve the climate by obtaining and utilizing feedback from employees of the Department;**
- Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge excellence**



Houston was hit with Hurricane Harvey in the midst of the projected opening date of school for many of our school districts. HCDE employees (including teachers and

other campus staff) were adversely affected by this event; however, campus administrators and other leaders within the Department have worked hard to ensure the best organizational morale under these life-changing and life-altering events for many of our students and staff.

This week, our campuses greeted our students with great enthusiasm with the goal being to help provide a sense of normalcy and a strong investment in their education goals. While the city continues to undergo change, HCDE continued its goal to meet the needs of the students of Harris County.

**As a result of these events, I am striving to meet the Board's expectations of me to ensure high organizational morale, not only within the employee population of Harris County, but also within our student and client populations.**



## HCDE BOARD

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**Wednesday, September 20, 2017**

- Board Meeting

