

# The CONNECTOR

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



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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

It was yet another productive week at HCDE! I began the week by serving as the keynote speaker at the Region 13 (Austin area) Principals' Academy. I had an opportunity to impart wisdom from my varied experiences as a school administrator and field questions from members of the academy. It was an excellent opportunity for me to reflect on the past, in an invaluable way, in my effort to empower aspiring campus administrators.

Upon my return to the office, I conducted regularly scheduled meetings with staff. We continue to forge ahead with the mission of the Department across the board.

This past Wednesday, I attended the annual Food Vendor Cooperative event. It was very well-attended by vendors and school district representatives and it received publicity in local media outlets. This event is always an exciting one for the students, especially, who have an opportunity to taste-test prospective menu selections for school breakfasts and lunches.

Yesterday, I had a meeting with representatives from the Kinder Foundation. The purpose of this entity is to enrich the lives of people in the Greater Houston area through transformational grants that impact urban green space, education, and quality of life. That said, I think there is great potential for partnership, and a vital need to build a relationship with this foundation.

Of great significance, CASE hosted the Lights On Afterschool Celebration, recognizing children affected by Harvey at the Children's Museum. Children had the opportunity to trick-or-treat in areas of the museum and then gather for a mini science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) activity on air mass. While fun, it was also educationally worthwhile.

Today, I had an opportunity to serve as a judge at the AB School West Fall Festival. This is an annual event that involves fun, food, and games as well as a pumpkin decorating contest. I also attended a construction budget meeting associated with Fortis Academy. I am pleased to report that the project is progressing well, and we look forward to continued movement in the right direction.

Now, in retrospect, we are very aware of the damage caused by Hurricane Harvey's aftermath and its epic flooding over the city of Houston. While many of us have been able to compartmentalize or even emotionally move on from that nightmare, many of our employees are still living it. HCDE continues its efforts to raise money through our employees to assist impacted employees. To accelerate donations, our Business Services division hosted a taco fundraiser earlier this week. Images from that event are included in this issue of **The Connector**. We continue to keep our affected employees, and all of the citizens in the greater Houston and Harris County area, in our thoughts and prayers.

Looking ahead into next week, I will begin as usual with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team followed by a meeting with the North Harris County Education Alliance Leadership Council in Aldine. Later next week, I will attend a special committee meeting as well as attend other regularly-scheduled meetings within the Department.

In closing, as always, thanks for your service to HCDE and I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. Have a relaxing weekend.

**Wednesday, November 29, 2017**

- Board Meeting

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS



### HCDE Alternative Certification Alum Receives Intern of the Year Award at Annual Ceremony

At the annual Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education (CSOTTE) awards ceremony held this week, HCDE Alternative Certification alum Jennifer Siger received the 2017 Intern of the Year award from the Texas Alternative Certification Association, along with \$1,000. Read more about Siger's story here: <https://goo.gl/j6uD1r>.

### Rebuilding after Harvey: Garden Gets Redo



It takes a community to rebuild a garden! The City of Houston teamed with students and staff from YES Prep Public Schools to revitalize three vegetable gardens at our Compton

Head Start Center. Students will use the new soil to grow vegetables for the Harvest Festival held each spring.



### Business Office Raises Funds for Employees Affected by Hurricane Harvey



The Business Office hosted a mini-fundraiser earlier this week to benefit HCDE employees affected by Harvey flooding. There was a great turnout and the division raised \$260 as a result of the support from HCDE staff.

Once the Human Resources division calculated the proceeds, the funds were deposited into the Harvey Giving Fund via the Education Foundation of Harris County, along with other donations from HCDE employees.



The Business Services division thanks all of the volunteers who donated and prepared the food. The division also thanks the staff who came to support the endeavor.

### ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

**OCTOBER 23, 2017**

Instructional Leadership Symposium 2017 (by invitation only)

Online Instructor's Training - Part I

Online Instructor's Training - Part III

**OCTOBER 24 2017**

Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS) - Matter: Solids, Liquids and Gases/Liquid Exploration (6 hours G/T update)

**OCTOBER 25, 2017**

Groovin' Grammar

New to Your Grants Specialist Position? Learn How to Build Your Grants Office!

Restorative Discipline Practices for Safe and Supportive Schools

**OCTOBER 26, 2017**

Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Elephants and their Young/ Mother Opossum and Her babies (6 hours G/T update)

**OCTOBER 27, 2017**

Building Community

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Choice Partners Annual Nutrition Expo Debuts New Products to Area Schools



Choice Partners, Harris County Department of Education's purchasing cooperative, hosted its annual School Nutrition Expo on Wednesday at Humble Civic Center. The event featured more than 130 food and

equipment vendors, making it the largest in the program's history.

"We're proud to see this event growing so that we can continue to give students and nutrition directors broader choices that meet all guidelines and taste great," said Trisha Jensen, assistant director, HCDE Choice Partners.



More than 230 students from area school districts showed up to taste-test foods, letting school district nutrition directors know what they liked for the school cafeteria. Students came from Katy, Spring Branch, Columbia-Brazoria, Galena Park, Crosby, and Cleveland.

"I come every year to find out about new products," said Gail Stotler, nutrition director, Fort Bend ISD. Stotler added that this year she sampled some new chicken products that "look very good."

D'gusto Foods sent a representative for the second year in a row, this time to debut its new line of empanadas in corn dough.

"I came to introduce a new product: the empanadas, which come in beef, chicken, and veggie," said Oscar Velsasquez, CEO, D'gusto Foods.

New products on display also included the "Selfie Pizza" from Alpha Foods, a locally-owned company based in Waller, Texas.

Tasty Brands, a supplier of great-tasting school food that meets USDA regulations, also showcased its new mini ravioli dish.



As school nutrition directors evaluated quality, nutritional value, and student tastes, Choice Partners gathered necessary information to plan for future food contract purchases for school districts. Food is purchased annually by school districts in the Harris County area for more than 100 million student lunches through contracts available through HCDE Choice Partners cooperative.



Choice Partners' next event, its annual Vendor Exhibit featuring a variety of facilities, technology, supplies and services vendors, took place today from 10 a.m to 1 p.m. at Norris Events Center at City Centre. This event will be featured in next week's issue of The Connector.



### HCDE's Choice Partners Food Expo Featured through Fox 26

HCDE's Choice Partners Food Expo was promoted on Fox 26 Oct. 25. The early morning interview featured Janet Wachs from Client Development. Wachs brought several food items from vendors and explained what the co-op does for local school districts and municipalities.

View the story: <https://youtu.be/Wlad9Fn8tm0>

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Teaching and Learning Center Hosts Instructional Leadership Symposium for Harris County Educators



More than 30 educators attended a morning of thinking and learning together at this week's HCDE Instructional Leadership Symposium. Educators discussed the blind spots in education and gathered valuable

input from other instructional leaders across Harris County.

As a leader in innovative learning experiences for educators across the state of Texas, HCDE selected

educators from across the county to join us in an exclusive experience designed to gather valuable input from other educational leaders.



Participants collaborated with other campus- and district-level leaders and exchanged valuable feedback. This will promote an understanding of best practices, as well as teaching and learning needs, that serve to improve academic outcomes for diverse learners.

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### HCDE Hosts Free Editorial Cartoon Workshop



HCDE hosted the second annual Scholastic Art & Writing Editorial Cartoon Workshop last week for Harris County students in junior and high school. The free workshop allowed students to create their own editorial and political cartoons with the help of professional cartoonists William Flint and Isaiah Broussard.

During the workshop, the professionals discussed the history of editorial and political cartoons, as well as the elements and techniques cartoonists use such as symbolism, caricature, humor, exaggeration and more. They also spent one-on-one time with each student to help them develop their ideas and cartoons.



View photos from this event: <https://goo.gl/fDBDNv>.

# Opportunity

## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

### Highpoint East Students Hear from DEA Agent During Red Ribbon Week



Approximately 100 students at Highpoint East heard from Special Agent Donald S. Hurst with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

this week as part of Red Ribbon Week activities.

Special Agent Hurst discussed his 15 years of experience in the DEA, the requirements for being a DEA agent, answered students' questions, and talked about the importance of drug prevention education and advocacy. He also discussed the history and significance of Red Ribbon Week.



Toward the end of the presentation, Hurst encouraged Highpoint East students to work hard to reach their goals and stay positive when faced with adversity.



“Every one of us will face challenges in life,” said Hurst. “If you keep a positive attitude, you’ll keep moving forward. Don’t give up.”

Highpoint East students and staff participated in various other activities during Red Ribbon Week, including themed-dress days and daily classroom exercises.

### AB West Participates in Red Ribbon Week



AB West students kicked off Red Ribbon Week Oct. 23-27 with themed days to discuss the awareness campaign. Students signed a pledge and drew posters about the dangers of drugs. An assembly provided by two deputies from the Harris County Sheriff's Office provided more platforms for staff to discuss the important topic of saying “no” to drugs.



# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Organizational Morale

In an effort to meet the Board's goal for me as it relates to this element of performance to

- Create an open and positive environment for sharing resources and exchanging ideas to improve organizational climate;
- Seek systematically to improve the climate by obtaining and utilizing feedback from employees of the Department;
- Model and support responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas;
- Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge excellence;
- Ensure fair and equitable management practices; and
- Demonstrate quality management through delegation of authority, team building, consensus development, leadership development, and self-management.



In our ongoing efforts to assist HCDE employees who were significantly



impacted by Hurricane Harvey, a fund has been established through the Education

Foundation that allows employees to contribute via payroll deduction. This week, the Business Services division hosted a breakfast taco sale where both staff from

Facilities and the Business Services division donated ingredients and supplies, and prepared the food for the sale.

This gesture raised nearly \$300 which has been deposited into the Education Foundation account for future distribution to affected staff.



Events such as these encourage an environment of increased employee morale and assists in ensuring that I am meeting the Board's goal for me to make sure every employee realizes that his or her plight is important to the whole, and that as a community, we take care of each other.

## HCDE BOARD

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Wednesday, November 29, 2017**

- Board Meeting

