

# The CONNECTOR

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



WEEK OF JANUARY 22, 2018

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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

First off, thank you for your support at this week's Board Meeting. As always, it was a pleasure to celebrate you in recognition of Board Appreciation Week. Our employees recognize your hard work and are grateful for your dedication and commitment to HCDE.

As recognized in Wednesday's meeting, I can't reiterate enough how pleased I am that the Department has yet three additional commendations from the Texas Comptroller for its commitment to easy, online access to HCDE financial data. The transparency awards are monumental and speak to the integrity of HCDE's financial systems. Moreover, according to a report from the Texas Comptroller's Office, HCDE is one of only two of the 1,350 "special districts" throughout the state to earn three fiscal "Transparency Stars" commendation awards. I am very proud of this accomplishment and I applaud the efforts of Dr. Amezcua and the entire Business Services team.

We resume **The Connector** this week after having been closed for three days last week due to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday and the two unexpected bad weather (ice) days. Of course, we resumed regular operations and business hours last Thursday. I am pleased to report that HCDE facilities and campuses sustained no damage due to the freezing temperatures.

On last Friday, January 19, I had the pleasure of visiting several Head Start Center locations: Compton, Fonwood, Tidwell, Coolwood, and LaPorte. I was as excited to see the students as they appeared to have been to see me! I was excited about the academic operations and activities at each of these Head Start locations. Photos from those visits are included in this issue.

This week, I began with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team and I also met with the core planning committee for the Academic and Behavior Center West construction project. I am pleased to report that all is on track and the project is progressing smoothly.

On Wednesday morning, I attended the State of the District address in Spring ISD, prior to HCDE Board activities. Yesterday, I fulfilled

my obligations as a member of the Northwest Assistance Ministries board, and I also welcomed vendors to the annual Choice Partners' Appreciation Luncheon. This morning, I attended the Cradle to Career Houston Leadership Council Meeting which was held at Interfaith Ministries.

Tomorrow morning, I will be welcoming attendees to the 32nd Annual Ray T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference at the Kingdom Builder's Center located at 6011 West Orem Drive. This year's conference will feature keynote speakers Becky Bailey and Gilberto Soto, as well as more than 80 engaging break-out sessions. This is always a successful and well-attended event.

Also, tomorrow, HCDE will be hosting a job fair specifically geared towards recruiting staff for our Head Start division.

After the Early Childhood Winter Conference, I will be leaving for the TASA/TASB Midwinter Conference and will be in attendance there through Wednesday. I will return to the office Thursday, February 1.

Again, thanks for your service to HCDE. While Board Appreciation is observed only once each year, please know that we appreciate you all year long.

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

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### Saturday, January 27, 2018

- Early Childhood Winter Conference

### Sunday, January 28-31, 2018

- TASA Midwinter Conference

### Wednesday, February 28, 2018

- Board Meeting

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Adult Education Begins Initiative for Tyson Chicken Employees through Texas Workforce Commission



Adult Education is the first adult education program in the state to work in collaboration with workforce partner Tyson Chicken to educate English language learners through an initiative called “Upward Academy,” a state-wide initiative with Tyson sponsored by the Texas Workforce Commission. The classes provide English as a language instruction for

contextual language for the workplace, as well as general ESL beginner classes. HCDE Adult Education will train about 150 students at the Houston Tyson plant.

In other Adult Education news, the division received \$9,000 as a donation through the Spring Branch Family Development Center earmarked to provide afternoon classes at the center. HCDE Adult Education already provides classes in the mornings and evenings. An additional 400 adults will be served.

### CASE for Kids Gains 2017 Best After School Program Award from National Teen Truth



The Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, has earned the “2017 Best After School Program Award” from Teen Truth, a youth empowerment program, for its partnership in a social-emotional learning program for teens called “Rising Up.” The award is one of several announced by national presenter and Teen Truth founder J.C. Pohl in January 2018.

### ECPA Alumna Earns National Award



An Educator Certification and Professional Advancement teacher trainee Jennifer Siger, who is now certified and works at Frank Black Middle School in Houston ISD, has earned the Outstanding New Educator Honorable Mention Award by the National Association for Alternative Certification. As a recipient, she will be invited to attend the national conference in April in Nevada to receive her award.

### ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

**JANUARY 22, 2018**

Online Instructor’s Training - Part II

Workstation Make and Take for Counting and Composing and Decomposing Numbers with Objects and Pictures for Grades 1 and 2

Workstation Make and Take for Counting and Composing and Decomposing Numbers with Objects and Pictures for Pre-K and Kindergarten

**JANUARY 23, 2018**

Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Animal Defenses/Tree Homes PreK-1 (6 hours G/T update)

**JANUARY 24, 2018**

Unwrapping the Read Aloud: Making Every Read Aloud an Intentional Act

**JANUARY 25, 2018**

Power to Express: Train the Trainer Model

Argumentation Strategies for Biology

**JANUARY 26, 2018**

Structure and Clear Limits

**JANUARY 27, 2018**

32nd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### 'Tackling A-F: Equity for All' set for Feb. 9 at HCDE to Feature National Presenters Cleveland, Mercado



"Tackling A-F: Equity for All" addresses diversity in the classroom and the strategies which can be used to bridge learning styles and culture. The workshop set for Feb. 9, 2018 from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington, features national speakers Roger Cleveland and Rosalinda Mercado. The Neuhaus Center for Education also provides a presentation on dyslexia.

Cleveland is known as a moderator and presenter at over 45 conferences. He is called upon for his work in diversity, instructional equity, cultural competency, closing achievement gaps, learning styles, transforming school culture and school improvement planning. His presentation is titled: "The Road to Proficiency is Not a One-Way Street: Equity for All."

Mercado is an expert in social-emotional awareness, the competencies which humans need to understand the emotions of others, including empathy, organizational awareness and service orientation. Her presentation called

"The 8 Essentials of High-Performing Teams with Self and Team Awareness" calls for a heightened self-awareness and awareness of others.

Additional speakers will provide breakout sessions on topics such as dyslexia, English language learner technology, independent reading/writing, students with limited education, restorative justice, and special education issues. Presenters include Carol Salva, Seidlitz Education; Krystal Gokey, licensed specialist in school psychology; Uyen Nguyen, educational diagnostician; Mary Yarus and Tracy Weeden, Neuhaus Education Center; Marisela Rodriguez; Vivian Pratts; and representatives from the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, HCDE.

In understanding that diversity and inclusion are different, the institute's objectives are to applaud diversity, support culturally responsive leadership, leverage difference, be reflective, provide researched best practices in teaching, open opportunity doors, and close gaps for all students.

Cost for the institute is \$125. Seating is limited. Register for the institute at [www.hcde-texas.org/register](http://www.hcde-texas.org/register) (workshop number 11635). Call 713-696-8223 for more information.

### HCDE Head Start Hosts Interview Fair Jan. 27



Harris County Department of Education Head Start is hosting an interview fair to recruit teachers, teaching assistants, family service providers and other staff members to join any of

its 15 locations spread throughout northeast Harris County. The recruitment event will be held Saturday, Jan. 27, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the 100 rooms at 6300 Irvington Blvd.

Qualifications for Head Start Teaching Assistant, Early Head Start Teacher and Head Start Teacher include experience working with young children and an interest in early

childhood education. Those who hold child development associate (CDA) degrees are strongly encouraged to apply. Interested candidates may call 713-696-2177 or email [HSeducation@hcde-texas.org](mailto:HSeducation@hcde-texas.org).

HCDE Head Start provides services to facilities in Barrett Station, Baytown, Channelview, Compton, Coolwood, Dogan, Fifth Ward, Fonwood, Humble, J.D. Walker, La Porte, Pugh, San Jacinto, Sheffield and Tidwell. Head Start ensures future success for students both academically and socially and provides comprehensive health, education, nutrition and financial services to the families.

Find more information on positions available and qualifications. Visit [www.hcde-texas.org](http://www.hcde-texas.org) for general information about HCDE Head Start and locations.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Superintendent Visits Head Start Centers



On Friday, Jan. 19, HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. visited Head Start centers to interact with students and experience their learning and development firsthand. Colbert visited excited students and staff at the Compton, Fonwood, Tidwell, Coolwood and La Porte centers.



### HCDE Celebrates School Board Recognition Month with Special Reception, Handmade Gifts



HCDE joined school districts across the state in January to thank our HCDE Board

of Trustees for their commitment and contributions to the students of Harris County. This year's campaign was "Helping Kids Soar to Success."

HCDE Superintendent James Colbert Jr., along with staff, honored the board with a special appreciation reception held before the scheduled board meeting. Schools



division students even created handmade kites that were presented to the board members during the reception.



"Our board members have chosen to be public servants and work countless hours to enhance education in Harris County," said Colbert. "We thank them for providing vision and leadership for the Department, so our staff can continue serving the community."

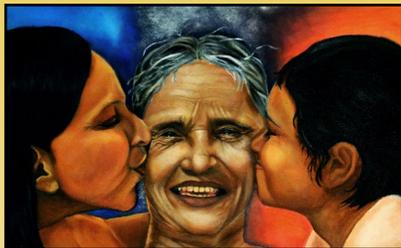


View photos from the reception (download: hcde1889): <https://goo.gl/DMufGJ>

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### Harris County Department of Education Announces Teens for 2018 Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards



Kavya Balaji, *Seven Lakes High School, Katy ISD, painting*

Teen awardees for the 2018 Harris County Department of Education Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are announced as a record 6,225 Harris County entries are judged in the prestigious competition. Recipients join the ranks

with iconic writers and artists Sylvia Plath, Robert Redford, Truman Capote, Andy Warhol and Richard Avedon, who all earned awards as Scholastic Art & Writing awards as teens.

View the awards: <https://goo.gl/1eDk9f>

Twenty-one school districts, two charter schools and 16 private schools are represented as students earn Gold Key, Silver Key and honorable mention awards. Gold Key recipients advance to national judging to be considered for Gold and Silver Medals which are announced in March and awarded in June through a ceremony at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, founded in 1923, provides young artists and writers in grades 7-12 with the opportunity to showcase their work as it identifies and documents their outstanding achievements. The competition's mission is to bring outstanding visual art and writing created by teens to a national audience by showcasing the work and encouraging creative and career development.



Divya Khatri, *Village School, fashion*

Students submitted their work through the 531 teachers who support and participate in HCDE's regional competition. Several hundred volunteer art and writing professionals judge the submittals.

"We are grateful for the supporters of Scholastic Art & Writing in Harris County—from the community supporters who offer space to showcase art and writing to the companies who offer student scholarships to the hundreds of judges who volunteer their time," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "There is a deep well of artistic talent represented, and we are

proud to host, showcase and support this iconic program."

The following area school districts are represented: Aldine, Alief, Alvin, Clear Creek, Crosby, Cy-Fair, Deer Park, Friendswood, Galena Park, Goose Creek, Houston, Huffman, Humble, Katy, Klein, New Caney, Pasadena, Pearland, Spring Branch, Spring and Tomball. Charter schools include KIPP Academy and YES Prep.



Lilyana Tristan, *Langham Creek High School, Cy-Fair ISD, photography*

Private school students with awards include: Calvin Nelms, Annunciation Orthodox, Concordia Lutheran, Duchesne Academy, Emery Weiner, Episcopal High, Houston Christian High, Incarnate Word, Kinkaid School, Presbyterian School, River Oaks Baptist, St. Agnes Academy, St. Thomas High, St. John's, Tenney School and the Village School. Several private art school and home school students are also represented.

Ten students earned recognition through the American Voices and American Vision awards. These 10 awards are judged nationally through Scholastic Art & Writing in New York City for American Voices/American Visions Medals. One in each art and writing category will be selected and announced in March.

American Visions (art) awardees: Kara Alker, Cypress Woods High School, Cy-Fair ISD; Lillian Hogan, Kingwood Park High School, Humble ISD; Amy Vaclavik, Taylor High School, Katy ISD; Christina Zhou, Tompkins High School, Katy ISD; and Emilio Recio, Rayburn High School, Pasadena ISD

American Voices (writing) awardees: Emma Bennett, High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Houston ISD; Cora Wen, Carnegie Vanguard High School, Houston ISD; William Sharpe, Krimmel Intermediate School, Klein ISD; Noah Rubinson, Kinkaid School; and Sophia Sutter, St. Agnes Academy

For more information about HCDE's regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and opportunities to sponsor, judge and enter the competition, go to [www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic](http://www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic).

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Teaching and Learning Center Hosts ‘Make and Take’ Workshop for Math Educators



The HCDE Teaching and Learning Center led two math “Make and Take” workshops this week for pre-k through second grade educators. These hands-on workshops allow participants to experience 10 workstations that enable independent practice so students can master a variety of math skills. Each educator left with their workstation activities to use in the classroom.



### 32nd Annual Early Childhood Winter Conference Jan. 27



Don't forget the 32nd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference will be held on tomorrow, Jan. 27 at the Kingdom Builder's Center located at 6011 West Orem Dr. The conference will feature keynote speakers Becky Bailey and Gilberto Soto, as well as more than 80 engaging break-out sessions. To learn more, view the ECWC promotional video at <https://goo.gl/HZuzr1> or visit [www.hcde-texas.org/ECWC](http://www.hcde-texas.org/ECWC).

### CASE for Kids News: MLK Jr. Day of Service



HCDE CASE For Kids AmeriCorps VISTAs Javier Lopez and Ruqia Osman participated in the 2018 MLK Jr. Day of Service on Jan. 15. Day of Service is a tradition with VISTA members.

Osman attended the Houston Texans YMCA Sports Tour Harvey Relief. She aided in organizing and packing goody bags. Several athletes from the Houston area were invited to do drills and practices with the students at various sports stations.



Javier attended a University Interscholastic League (UIL) event at Elkins High School where he assisted with tutorials and registration.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Commended for Superior Online Financial Transparency from Texas Comptroller



Harris County Department of Education has received three commendations from the Texas Comptroller

for its commitment to easy, online access to HCDE financial data. The transparency awards were announced at the HCDE Board of Trustees Public Hearing on Jan. 24 regarding findings of the HCDE Annual Financial Management Report.

The recognitions are part of the Department's ongoing efforts to provide open and honest communication with Harris County taxpayers and other community stakeholders through online, financial transparency processes.

"Our board and administration believe that in order to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, we must provide an open, unfiltered window into our organization," said Board President Louis Evans. "Financial transparency is just one example of this."

According to a report from the Texas Comptroller Office, HCDE is one of two of the 1,350 "special districts" throughout the state to earn three fiscal "Transparency Stars" commendation awards.

Specifically, the awards from Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar commend HCDE for transparency in the areas of debt obligation, contracts and procurement, and traditional

finances. Those goals are achieved through HCDE's website on a visually enhanced financial transparency page at [www.hcde-texas.org/transparency](http://www.hcde-texas.org/transparency). The page offers visual and narrative detail on finances, including outstanding debt obligations; spending and revenue information; and accountability and transparency for contracting activities.

The Texas Comptroller's Office launched its program called "Transparency Stars" in March 2016 to recognize cities, counties, school districts and special-purpose districts which make important strides toward greater government transparency. After achieving a base level of transparency, districts can apply to gain accreditation for five additional areas. HCDE achieved all of those applicable transparency categories.

Also Wednesday, Whitley Penn shared the results of the 2016-2017 Annual Financial Audit of HCDE. The department received the highest possible rating of "unmodified opinion" of HCDE's financial statements.

For more information about HCDE's financial management, visit [www.hcde-texas.org/transparency](http://www.hcde-texas.org/transparency).



### All Earth Ecobot Challenge Practice Held at Salyards Middle School in Cy-Fair

The All Earth Ecobot Challenge was held on Jan. 21 at Salyards Middle School in Cy-Fair ISD as 120 students gathered for practice for the April 21 event. The competition theme was revealed to be agriculture. Students spent their time between rotating seminars that covered agriculture related topics and building. There was also a teaching seminar for the coaches. There will be three more practice days followed by the All-Earth Ecobot Challenge Day set for Kashmere High School.

# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Management of Administrative, Fiscal and Facilities Function

In accordance with the Board's goal of me to

- Oversee a budget development process that results in recommendations based on Department priorities and available resources;
- Oversee budget implementation in a way that ensures appropriate expenditures of budgeted funds and provides for clear and timely budget reports;
- Ensure that the Department investment strategies, risk management activities, and purchasing practices are sound, cost-efficient, and consistent with policy and law;
- Implement and oversee a planning process that results in goals, targets, or priorities for major areas of operation;
- Monitor effectiveness of operations against appropriate benchmarks; and
- Recruit and maintain high-quality, professional staff at all levels

At this week's HCDE's meeting of the Board of Trustees, HCDE shared with the Board that it has received yet three additional commendations from the Texas Comptroller for its commitment to easy, online access to HCDE financial data. The transparency awards are



monumental and speak to the integrity of HCDE's financial systems. Moreover, according to a report from the Texas Comptroller's Office, HCDE is one of only two of the 1,350 "special districts" throughout the state to earn three fiscal "Transparency Stars" commendation awards.

Additionally, our auditors presented to the Board the results of the last fiscal year's audit where HCDE received the highest rating possible. This, too, is significant. Both accomplishments are exceptional and speak to HCDE's commitment to tight financial controls, and its extraordinary dedication to transparency for the Harris County citizenry.

**HCDE (and especially its Business Services division, under the leadership of Dr. Jesus Amezcua), is to be commended for this significant accomplishment in public education and exemplary procedures and systemic best practices throughout its budgeting process.**

## 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 Summers

*Position 7, At Large*

Diane Trautman

*Position 3, At Large*

Michael Wolfe

*Position 5, At Large*

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Saturday, January 27, 2017**

- Early Childhood Winter Conference

**Sunday, January 28-31, 2017**

- TASA Midwinter Conference

**Wednesday, February 28, 2018**

- Board Meeting

