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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

First off, I extend my thoughts and prayers to the victims of last week's massacre in Parkland, Florida. It is my hope that children are ensured safe and secure school settings where they can learn and develop to their fullest potential and not be concerned with even the remote thought of an active shooter on campus. The events of last week are unspeakable and the various memorials and town hall meetings that have taken place since then have been quite provocative and informative. The entire country seems to be moved by that tragedy and I am hopeful that the nation will find a legislative position that will keep our students safe.

I hope you've had a productive week. It's been a busy one for me here at HCDE. I began the week with the regular meeting of my Executive Leadership Team, followed by the continuation of my quarterly meetings with members of the Board. I also had an informative meeting with Dr. Jerry Wallace from the University of Houston-Downtown.

This past Tuesday, HCDE hosted the Harris County Candidates' Forum. It was well-attended and HCDE served as the ideal location for this platform. It is important that HCDE serves as a beacon of light in the community as a venue for events such as this one.

On Wednesday of this week, I continued my meetings with superintendents in Harris County and the surrounding area. To that end, I met with the superintendents of both Waller and Cy-Fair ISDs. It remains important to me to keep my finger on the pulse of all of our client districts to ensure that we are meeting their needs at a high standard.

The TABSE Conference began yesterday and is being held in Houston this year. The conference will run through Sunday.

As usual, I will be presenting along with my other executive colleagues from across the state of Texas. This event is always an excellent pathway for me to strengthen relationships with superintendents from various parts of the state and it also allows me to continue my mentoring work with educators aspiring to both campus and executive level leadership positions.

This week at HCDE, in teaching and learning, we offered the following trainings and workshops: Help Kids Win the Race to Success by Using Digital Tools to Support Delayed Learners; Argumentation Strategies for Elementary Science; Find Funding to Support Your Programs; and Attendance Officers' Share Session.

Looking ahead, I will continue my quarterly meetings with members of the Board. I have several scheduled over a couple of days next week. I look forward to these sessions.

Please be reminded that our regularly scheduled February Board Meeting will be held next Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. A Development Committee Meeting will be held prior to the Board Meeting, at 11:00 a.m., followed by a Policy Meeting at 11:30. I also look forward to your attendance and continued support at next week's meetings.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

- Board Meeting

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Science Teachers Train at HCDE in Processes of Scientific Inquiry to Use with Elementary Students



Area elementary science teachers gathered this week to train in the processes of scientific inquiry to investigate science topics like force and motion or animal adaptation. The workshop gave teachers hands-on training in the HCDE science lab so they may use the inquiry processes with their students.

“Scientists make claims based on observable evidence and must justify their evidence as relevant to the claims, and students can follow the same processes to investigate science topics,” said Lisa Felske, science curriculum director for HCDE.



KPRC Visits Adult Education Learning Center Classroom for News Story to Investigate Devices to Deter Intruders



Left: KPRC investigative reporter Bill Spencer, HCDE's Executive Director of Facilities Support Services Greg Lookabaugh and City of Montgomery, Texas Chief of Police Jim Napolitano

HCDE Executive Director of Facilities Greg Lookabaugh lends a hand with trying out classroom safety devices to secure classroom doors in a special news segment with KPRC's Bill Spencer on Feb. 20 in an Adult Education Irvington Learning Center classroom. The story with Spencer and Montgomery Chief of Police Jim Napolitano focused on devices which could be installed on classroom doors to deter intruders in the wake of the Florida shootings. The story will air Friday, Feb. 23 on KPRC News.

ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

FEBRUARY 19, 2018

Help Kids Win the Race to Success By Using Digital Tools to Support Delayed Learners

FEBRUARY 20, 2018

Argumentation Strategies for Elementary Science

FEBRUARY 21, 2018

Find Funding to Support Your Programs!

FEBRUARY 22, 2018

Attendance Officer's Share Session



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

HCDE Communicators Honored with 12 Public Relations Awards from 2018 Texas School Public Relations Association Annual Conference



Members of the Harris County Department of Education communicators team attend the Texas School Public Relations Association Conference 2018 where the team earned 13 awards for work which benefits Harris County students and educators.

Harris County Department of Education communicators earned 12 awards for outstanding education communications from the Texas School Public Relations Association. Communications and Creative Services and Client Development

staff received the awards at the 56th Annual Texas School Public Relations Association Annual Conference in Frisco, Texas on Feb. 21, 2018.

This year, 1,331 entries were judged through categories including photography, writing, video, advertisements, social media, brochures and posters. Categories of entries are divided based on merit, including Bronze Star, Silver Star, and Gold Star. Judges reviewed highest-scoring Gold Star winners and selected Best of Category awards.

One Best of Category award was awarded for specialty/novelty writing to Carol Vaughn, Communications and Creative Services, for a Highpoint School East article entitled: Turning Anger to Success.

In addition, communicators gained five Gold Star awards for the following entries:

- Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, Teaching and Learning division, poster, Angela Hider
- Head Start Student Receives School Supplies, Head Start division, photography, Lindsey Sanders
- Turning from Anger to Success, Schools division, specialty/novelty writing, Carol Vaughn
- Lead Now! Educator Certification and Professional

Advancement, advertisement, Dave Einsel, Carol Vaughn and Maya Livingston

- Choice Partners, Choice Partners Cooperative, brochure, Juan Lopez

Five Silver Star awards and one Bronze Star award were awarded:

- Head Start Annual Report, Head Start division, Lindsey Sanders and Angela Hider
- Thriving vs. Surviving Article, Schools division, Lindsey Sanders
- Bates Custom Collision Video, Head Start division, Daniel Villarreal
- Hub Superintendent Message, Administration division, Daniel Villarreal
- HCDE Classrooms Video Promotion, Schools division, Daniel Villarreal
- Aging Workforce Article, Adult Education, (Bronze Star), Carol Vaughn

The Texas School Public Relations Association is a nonprofit, professional organization dedicated to promoting public schools through effective communications. With more than 900 members, TSPRA is comprised primarily of public information and communications professionals who serve the public school districts and education organizations of Texas. Membership also includes superintendents, administrators, principals, web/technology/electronic media and graphic professionals, education foundation executive directors and their boards, association executive directors, school consultants, vendors, and others who support public education in the state. TSPRA is a chapter of the National School Public Relations Association.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Emotional Narrative on Harvey Earns Kinkaid Student HCDE Regional ‘Best-in-Class’ Award from Scholastic Art & Writing



Noah Rubinson stands on a bench to demonstrate the depth of the Harvey floodwaters outside his home. The murky water rose to the top of his head.

With Harvey floodwaters invading his home, teen Noah Rubinson had 10 minutes to collect the things most important to him.

His written reflections during that short time span earned the Kinkaid High sophomore a distinguished award from Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Regional Affiliate Harris County Department of Education.

As an American Voices nominee, he and four other students judged out of 2,000-plus writing entries receive a best-in-class award for writing. One will receive the national American Voices Medal judged by a panel of jurors in New York City. Rubinson also earned a regional Gold Key from local affiliate HCDE, making him eligible for an additional national medal.

His English teacher Jennifer Kehler saw promise right away in her student’s class assignment, a personal narrative. It was the first writing homework for flood-shocked students as they returned to the refuge of their school community post-Harvey.

“It was a way to work through what had happened, to understand what is important in those types of situations,” Kehler said. “Students were asked to write a narrative after reading a Tim O’Brien novel of survival called ‘The Things They Carried.’”

Rubinson, 16, wrote about the items he reached for after his father announced an abrupt, early-morning evacuation of their condo-home situated in zip code 77024. The Memorial-area neighborhood experienced controlled flooding two days after the hurricane flood waters had receded. The murky water began rising downstairs on Aug. 30, 2018, just as the Rubinsons thought they had escaped Harvey’s wrath.

“I watched as the art I made in kindergarten – art that had been stuck onto my refrigerator since we moved in – floated away,” he wrote. “This was not a nightmare. Nightmares are scary; this was terrifying.”

Interrupting his thoughts on material items was a call to action to help a sister with developmental delays who suffers from debilitating seizures. Undoubtedly she would depend on her brother’s calm demeanor to guide her from harm’s way.

“My sister and I are extremely close, best friends,” he said. “My dad said, ‘you need to help with Ella.’ At that point the water chest-high on me would have been up to her neck.”

A friend with a boat helped the Rubinsons to dry ground less than a few blocks away. But they would not return to their home. Like many other Houston-Harvey families, they opted for new housing.

The experience still seems surreal to Rubinson, and the American Voices award was just as unexpected. His work will be recognized regionally by Harris County Department of Education as students, teachers and family attend an awards ceremony on March 20 at the Ballroom at Bayou Place, 500 Texas, Houston, Texas.

As regional affiliate, HCDE is responsible for judging the awards through volunteer writing professionals. Community partners like the Women in the Visual and Literary Arts and Texas Art Supply provide local scholarships. Gold Key and American Voices nominees like Rubinson advance to national judging through the Alliance of Young Artists & Writers team in New York City for additional awards and scholarships announced in mid-March.

Like any proud parent, Mom Kim posted her son’s story and award announcement through social media. People reading the story were touched to tears by the teen’s maturity and attachment to the immaterial things in life.

“When put up against family, against the most important people in the world, the people that can never be replaced, nothing else matters,” he wrote. “I could move past my phone and my wallet and my keys, past the photos and the art. I could never move past my family.”

The teen writer says the award is for everyone in Houston who weathered the storm of the century.

“It’s a tribute to everyone who experienced the tragedy of Harvey,” Rubinson said. “It belongs to all of us.”

View the Scholastic receptions press release:
<http://goo.gl/WZVf8X>

Read Noah Rubinson’s personal narrative:
“The Important Things”

Learn more about 2018 Scholastic Art & Writing Regional Affiliate Harris County Department of Education recipients:
www.hcde-texas.org/Scholastic.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Digital Citizenship, Safety Highlighted at Cybersecurity in Education Conference



As technology continues to grow and change, how can school districts ensure students are safe and responsible users? HCDE's Cybersecurity in Education Conference on March 27 discusses these issues and more during a day-long experience with experts in the cybersecurity field.

from digital citizenship sessions on keeping student information confidential, appropriate use of social media, increasing students' digital literacy skills and awareness of digital footprints, and modeling positive online interactions.

Other workshop strands include "hackenomics," data privacy and protection and cybersecurity in the K-12 curriculum. Find more information and register at www.hcde-texas.org/cybersecurity.

Educators, instructional technology teachers, administrators, police officers and more will benefit

CASE for Kids Prepares Students, Teachers for Upcoming Robotics Events: Ecobot and Kids' Day at HP



The CASE for Kids calendar is filled with upcoming robotics events as students and teachers prepare for the All-Earth Ecobot Challenge April 21 at Kashmere High School and Kids' Day at HP on May 18 at HP's corporate

headquarters in north Houston.

A third practice day for the All-Earth Ecobot Challenge happened last week at Woodcreek Middle School in Humble ISD. Students learned about the Ecobot "agriculture" theme and will be expected to come up with solutions to common agricultural problems in the

competition. Approximately 400 students participated and were given the official 2018 challenge exercises for their robots while also learning about scoring and navigating the robotics tabletop course. A final practice day for teachers only is set for March 24 at HCDE.

Teachers also participated in training for Kids' Day at HP, a corporate-sponsored event for CASE for Kids sites invested in the robotics curriculum authored by CASE for Kids. The educators learned how their students can design and market their own fictional robots and build robots capable of surviving various challenges. That curriculum also includes a marketing campaign component which enables students to work on their presentation skills.

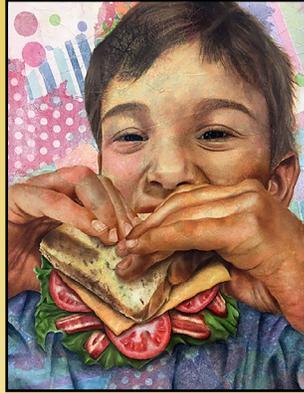
Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Samples of Student Artwork Scheduled for Display in The Galleria HCDE Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Showcase



Lillian Hogan, mixed media, "Mixed Up in a Crazy World," Kingwood Park High, Humble ISD,



Amy Yang, painting, "Afterschool Snack," Seven Lakes High School, Katy ISD



Giselle Cruz, drawing and illustration, "The Color of Me," Cinco Ranch High School, Katy ISD



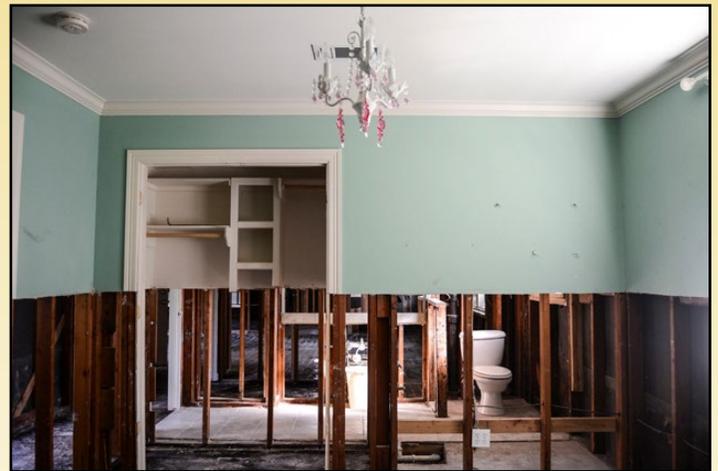
Grace Luu, mixed media, "Claire," Krimmel Intermediate School, Klein ISD



Uday Dhillon, painting, "Cathedral," Episcopal High School



Fabiola Macedo, digital art, "Vulnerable," Langham Creek High, Cy-Fair ISD



Hattie Meehan, photography, "Flooded Away," St. Agnes Academy

The Galleria showcases teens' Gold Key artwork from Regional Affiliate Harris County Department of Education's Scholastic Art & Writing Awards beginning Feb. 28-March 22 on level 1 outside Saks Fifth Avenue. It is the first time that Harris County student artwork has been featured in the high-profile shopping destination. The Galleria attracts both local and international shoppers, about 30 million visitors annually. Here are some samples of artwork which will be on display.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Area Math Teachers Learn to Use Manipulatives to Teach Difficult Math Concepts



HCDE's Teaching and Learning Center hosted two math workshops last week for area math teachers. The workshops titled "Using Manipulatives to Teach the TEKS" focused on using three manipulatives to help students succeed with difficult math concepts.

Educators left with 32 ready-to-use activities organized by strand for easy access in planning and practiced using manipulatives in whole group, small groups and work stations.

HCDE and Flippen Group Host Capturing Kids' Hearts Workshop



Reaching the heart of a child is the prerequisite for impacting their life and learning. In partnership with the Flippen Group, HCDE's Teaching and Learning Center hosted the "Capturing Kids' Hearts" workshop last week to help educators develop these skills and reach every child.

This two-day, immersive experience helped area educators and administrators develop self-managing, high-performing classrooms, learn to deal with conflict and negative behavior, build meaningful relationships with students and create an effective environment for learning.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Community Relations Professional Development

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me to

- **Ensure that appropriate staff development is available and monitor staff development for effectiveness;**
- **Work with other community and governmental entities and educational organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinate way;**
- **Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration;**
- **Model and support responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas; and**
- **Demonstrate quality management through delegation of authority, team-building, consensus development, leadership development, and self-management**

I want to assure you that the Department is heavily attuned to the increasing incidents of violence on school

campuses. As you know, our Center for Safe and Secure Schools assists client districts with safety audits

and other safety trainings. To that end, we are also focused on restorative discipline—which is a means to work



backward to help thwart incidents of school violence. The program works to avoid the disenfranchisement of students and it encourages keeping them engaged. It is important that no child feels left out of the educational setting as we know such helps crowd the pipeline to prison passageway.

Next week, the Center for Safe and Secure Schools will be hosting a Restorative Discipline training session for our campus staff. We look forward to this endeavor and increasing the trainings that we facilitate throughout the county, and beyond. Doing so can help play some part in minimizing, and preferably eliminating, the incidents of such violence on school campuses.

By ensuring that HCDE continues to offer these kinds of opportunities to both our staff and the community for the betterment of our future learners, I am working to meet the expectations of the board to identify the learning needs of students and develop a process that ensures each student's learning goals are met or exceeded and to investigate best practices for student achievement and utilize effective practices that maximize achievement of student potential within HCDE schools. Further, I am assessing any new and effective development tools available and determining their applicability to HCDE staff.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

- Board Meeting

