



## In this issue...

- 2 *March CASE for Kids Meetings Provide Resources for Harris County Afterschool Providers*
- 5 *HCDE Short: CASE for Kids Coordinator Chavez Helps Provide Water Well to Children in Guatemala*
- 6 *Two AB School West Student Place First in Youth Golf Program at Houston Open*

FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

I began the week, as usual, with the Executive Leadership Team. It was a productive meeting as we discussed several Department-wide topics. This meeting is effective as we come together to discuss forwarding HCDE from every perspective.

The regularly-scheduled IMPACT Meeting was also held this past Monday. It was very well-attended and included board presidents and trustees representing many of our client school districts. It, too, provides opportunity for a great brain-share related to advancing teaching and learning, as well as making districts more efficient. I encourage all HCDE trustees to take part in this meeting.

On Wednesday of this week, I convened Agenda Review in preparation for this month's Board Meeting. Please be reminded that the April Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 18, with a policy meeting immediately preceding at 12:45.

This week in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following workshops and training sessions: Online Instructor's Training, Part III; National Incident Management System (NIMS) ICS 300 (3-day workshop); Great Explorations in Math and Science (GEMS): Animal Defenses/Tree Homes, Pre-kinder-1 (6 hours G/T update); TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291)- Math Test Prep; Out of School Time Spring Symposium; and TExES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291)- Science Test Prep.

Looking ahead into next week, I will begin the week meeting with ELT on Monday. I also extended an opportunity to meet with all board candidates later that day. To date, only one has responded in the affirmative.

Tuesday, our Human Resources division is hosting a mandatory Diversity Inclusion Training session, which I will be attending. I will also be meeting with a mentee—an educator aspiring to the superintendency.

I will continue my volunteerism Thursday with Head Start through the SuperMENTors Male Initiative reading program. Again, this is a very rewarding opportunity.

Next Friday, April 13, kicks off the FY2017-18 budget hearing process. Budget hearings will conclude Thursday, April 26, 2018. This methodical series is an integral and essential part of our overall budget process and aligns with my systemic achievement approach.

In closing, I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**, and I hope you have a relaxing weekend. Thank you for your service to HCDE.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Wednesday, April 18, 2018**

- Board Meeting

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### School Safety Issues, Services Evolve with Changing Times Via HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools



Ecomet Burley

School safety and security issues continue to be at the forefront as school districts deal with issues like school shootings, cyberbullying, discipline, and emergency management planning. Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools continues to evolve and seek innovative ways to build safer and more secure learning environments for area school districts in greater Harris County.

Currently the Center for Safe and Secure Schools focuses on four areas of services: school culture and climate, emergency management planning, safe schools plans and facility audits, and member benefits.

Ecomet Burley, director of the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, says the Center's newest service area called Restorative Discipline provides alternative discipline methods versus the traditional, expulsionary or punitive systems. He took time this month to answer several questions about the Center, which was founded in 1999 at the request of area school superintendents to advance safe and secure school environments. Learn more about the Center at [www.safeandsecureschools.org](http://www.safeandsecureschools.org).

#### ***Why is it important to have an organization like yours available to school districts?***

We support school districts' efforts to have safe teaching and learning environments. We can become experts in this area because of our specialization and laser-focused scope of work around safety and security in the educational environment. Our staff has literally walked in the shoes of educators and understands the day-to-day challenges. We can design programs and trainings to fit the needs of educators who are in the "trenches" because we've been there and understand those challenges.

#### ***How can school districts assure parents that districts are doing a good job with school security?***

Districts can assure parents that they are doing a good job with school security by communicating with parents throughout the year about what they are doing to keep their child's school safe. Parent meetings, e-newsletters and social media can be used to communicate real-time information before, during and after an emergency. Parents appreciate being informed about things that may impact their child's safety at school.

#### ***What about teachers? Are they stressed out about school safety?***

Educators are very concerned about school safety these days. With the recent high profile active shooter events, school safety and security has come to the forefront. Policymakers, students, parents, educators and the public are intensely focused on this issue right now.

*continued on page 3*

### **ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER**

**APRIL 2, 2018**

Online Instructor's Training - Part III

**APRIL 3, 2018**

National Incident Management System (NIMS) ICS 300 (3 Day Workshop)

**APRIL 4, 2018**

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

**APRIL 5, 2018**

TEXES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291) - MATH Test Prep

**APRIL 6, 2018**

Out-of-School Time Spring Symposium

TEXES Core Subjects EC-6 Exam (#291) - SCIENCE Test Prep



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

*Continued from page 2*

### ***What about the issue of educators being armed in the classroom?***

On the issue of arming educators in schools, this evokes a lot of strong emotions. Personally, I think that we must be careful with that idea, and it needs to be discussed and vetted well. In some rural districts it might make sense because of the amount of time it takes for first responders to get to the site, whereas here in the inner or suburban cities many of our schools have armed, commissioned officers on campus. The response time is typically three minutes or less. Ultimately, I think it is a local district decision that needs to be discussed and looked at in the context of what is best for our district and our situation.

### ***How have you evolved your services throughout the years to help districts? What do you think the biggest challenge is now for districts in terms of school safety?***

The most urgent challenge in terms of school safety for educators and policy makers today is how do we protect our students from those who would come into our schools to hurt and kill students due to mental health issues or other reasons? How do we better protect our students while they are at school? Additionally, educators understand that the “whole child” must be educated. Social and emotional health for students has emerged as an issue that educators must address. They need to receive training to deal with some of the issues students bring to the school house today.

We respond to the emerging issues in education such as the concern over the number of black and Hispanic students being expelled, suspended or assigned to alternative education facilities. We are responding to this issue with training in Restorative Discipline, which provides educators with skills to develop positive, healthy relationships with students. Educators explore alternative ways to hold students accountable for inappropriate behavior versus relying on exclusionary practices to correct inappropriate behavior.

### ***How can Restorative Discipline help prevent acts of aggression in a school? Why is it needed today, and what does it look like when it's put into action in a school community?***

Restorative Discipline can help prevent acts of aggression through its intentional focus on building healthy, positive

relationships. It teaches educators how to create “safe spaces” for students to have a voice and platform to talk about issues that may be affecting them at home or at school. The “circle process” creates connectivity and discussion between students and teachers and students-to-students. Moreover, it creates a support system and avenue to resolve conflicts, repair harm to relationships and teach social skills that are critical to peace-making and safe school learning/teaching environments. However, there is a mind shift that is required, and that is a part of our school staff and student training.

### ***What is an Emergency Operations Plan, or EOP? How does it affect the school community?***

All Texas public schools are required by statute to have these plans in place and updated annually or as often as needed. An EOP forms the foundation for a good, effective, school safety plan. The EOP should outline a district or school's plan to prevent, mitigate, respond and recover from an emergency event. EOPs proactively provide guidance for staff, students, and administrators in event an emergency occurs. The entire school community should be aware of the plan and review it to use in the event of emergency.

For more information about the Center for Safe and Secure Schools, call 713-696-2127 or email [eburley@hcde-texas.org](mailto:eburley@hcde-texas.org).

### ***About the Center for Safe and Secure Schools:***

Harris County Department of Education: The Center was established in 1999 at the request of school superintendents to advance safe and secure environments for learning and teaching. We partner with federal, state and local entities to take the lead in the development of increased safety and security strategies, standards and best practices for K-16 school environments for both students and educators. The Center continually seeks new and innovative opportunities to build safer and more secure learning environments, [www.hcde-texas.org](http://www.hcde-texas.org).



## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

The workshop began with an imaginary defenseless animal to teach children about defensive adaptations in the animal world. This guide is an excellent way to introduce biological concepts of adaptations and help children recognize defensive structures and behaviors.

The second part of the workshop focused on appreciation for trees and the animals that live in them, stimulating children's interest in the natural world and emphasizing the biological need for warmth and shelter.

Alicia Gladney, manager, said a total of 932 employees participated, and Gladney commended directors and employees for a phenomenal job on response.

participation from employees. The survey gives support divisions important feedback on performance, including factors which identify strengths and weaknesses. Results will be forthcoming.

Photos from several recent events are available for viewing through our photo-sharing gallery. See links below and enter hcde1889 as the password to gain access.

- Scholastic Art & Writing 2018 receptions/ceremonies:  
<https://bit.ly/2JicPI4>
- Schools Division 2nd Annual Chess Tournament:  
<https://bit.ly/2Gyid1D>
- Cybersecurity in Education Conference:  
<https://bit.ly/2EjD2vV>



# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Short: CASE for Kids Coordinator Chavez Helps Provide Water Well to Children in Guatemala



Jacqueline Chavez works each day to connect Houston children in afterschool programs with enriching activities in the fine arts, sports and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) through the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids. During Spring Break 2018, the program coordinator reached beyond the familiar to supply basic needs to impoverished children in Guatemala through a volunteer project.

Through a nonprofit called Living Water International, Chavez joined a team to drill a shallow water well in the village of San Benito, a community of 60. While there, she and a team of volunteers provided basic hygiene education training to children and their parents.

The Katy resident says the trip allowed her to connect with people around the world and begin to understand the challenges and needs of communities different from our own.

“This experience was very personal for me because I was able to teach the kids and families different skills that are not usually taught in the classroom,”

she said. “About 30 men, women and children gathered every afternoon to learn about hygiene and sanitation. It reminded me of the important work we do at

Harris County Department of Education through CASE for Kids as we work to serve families.”

Through CASE for Kids, Chavez is able to invest in youth while working towards the well-being of the community, she said. The essence of her trip can be summed up through this affirmation requested from the nonprofit she serves: “It’s hard to know which lives are changed more—those ‘serving’ or those ‘being served’.”



#### **About the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids:**

As an afterschool intermediary, CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings and funding for students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, child care facilities and community centers. As a branch of Harris County Department of Education, the division was founded in 1999 with a goal to keep kids safe, help working families and improve academic achievement: [www.afterschoolzone.org](http://www.afterschoolzone.org).

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Head Start Offers Center Tours for Week of the Young Child



In celebration of the Week of the Young Child, HCDE Head Start invites employees, business partners and community members to participate in one of two center tours scheduled for April 19 and 20.

Join Head Start staff at 6300 Irvington at 8:45 a.m. for light refreshments and depart for the center at 9 a.m. Participants will return by noon.

Participation in a center tour will provide staff and community members the opportunity to see high quality comprehensive early childhood education services. Partners will be encouraged to join in on activities, interact with children and

explore ways that we can further strengthen our relationship.

School Readiness is crucial for children entering the school system and it is imperative that the entire community be involved. HCDE Head Start welcomes the opportunity to see first-hand how children are learning and why it is important to continue to work together in partnership.

RSVP no later than April 10, 2018, at (713) 696-2179 or by email at [arodriguez@hcde-texas.org](mailto:arodriguez@hcde-texas.org).

View the flyer for more information: <http://www.hcde-texas.org/media/5268/head-start-center-tours-flyer.pdf>



# Opportunity

## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

### Two AB School West Student Place First in Youth Golf Program at Houston Open



Open PGA Tournament held March 29-April 1 at the Golf Club of Houston in Humble, Texas.

Camden Cotlar, 10, and Devin Wright, 9, attended the challenge as a culminating event in the First Tee program, a golf education program that meshes the game of golf with lessons in good sportsmanship, effective communication, integrity, and honesty. They played within a team of 12 teammates from public schools around Houston.

The tournament provided an “even playing field” for both the AB West School students who are emotionally disturbed.

Two middle school students attending Academic and Behavior School West are working their way up to the pros as their team won first place at the First Tee of Greater Houston Challenge, a part of the famed Houston

Wright received a hole-in-one at the event. Other challenges include the longest drive, accuracy in hitting the ball, the 50-year dash and putting on the green.

“Both of these young men did very well,” said Victor Keys, principal of AB School West.

Principal Keys coaches the 25 First Tee program students along with his two assistants, coach Tamara Powers and coach Ricky Oliphant. Cotlar has been participating in the First Tee program for several years through AB School West and takes golf lessons now as a hobby.

“By learning the appropriate skills and the etiquette of golf, these students can progress and gain scholarships,” said Keys. “We could even see them go on as golf professionals.”





# 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 effective;
- Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration;
- Work with other community and governmental entities and educational organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated 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.

HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools continues to serve as a catalyst for school safety as school



districts confront issues such as school shootings, cyberbullying, discipline, and emergency management planning.

The center is also focused on the concept of restorative discipline. This form of discipline provides alternative discipline methods as opposed to the traditional punitive systems. Instilling this discipline style requires a paradigm shift and the center is working to make that happen.

By focusing on relevant and nearly real-time issues in the area of school safety, I am working to meet the Board's goals of me to ensure that the community is benefiting from the Department's services; that we continue to serve as a haven for exceptional professional development; that HCDE is visible in the community that supports safe teaching and learning; and that we are committed to school safety and high academic performance for all learners.

## HCDE BOARD

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Wednesday, April 18, 2018**

- Board Meeting

