



## In this issue...

- 2 **HCDE Board Members Tour Fortis Academy**
- 3 **Harris County Department of Education Names 2018 Teacher of the Year**
- 5 **HCDE Head Start Celebrates SuperMENTors**

FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

## Of Note...

***The Department grieves with the families of Santa Fe High School in the aftermath of today's tragic school shooting. We plan to reach out to the district at the appropriate time in an effort to offer whatever support we can. We certainly keep the victims' families and everyone in the Santa Fe community in our thoughts and prayers.***

It's been a productive week here at HCDE. I began the week with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team, followed by a Development Committee Meeting at Fortis Academy. Both meetings were productive, and it was exciting to see the progress that has taken place over the past many months on the Fortis Academy campus. We remain excited about the new beginnings many students will experience in this recovery environment.

On Tuesday evening of this week, HCDE celebrated its first ever Teacher of the Year event. This year's event was a reception held in the HCDE Conference Center. Several teachers were nominated and the winner was JoAnna Lee, an exceptional teacher at Highpoint East.

This year's inaugural event was a great success and attended by many campus employees, as well as other employees within the Department. We congratulate, not only this year's Teacher of the Year, but the other nominees and all of our teachers who do an exceptional job each day of every year!

The regularly-scheduled May Board Meeting was held Wednesday, preceded by the Public Facilities Corporation Meeting. Both meetings were productive. Thanks to all of you for attending the respective meetings.

Yesterday, I conducted standing meetings with staff, and today

I will be conducting interviews for the position of Executive Director of Facilities.

Tomorrow, HCDE's Adult Graduation will be held in the Conference Center from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. A total of 80 GED graduates are opening the doors to new possibilities as they celebrate their accomplishments tomorrow morning. Board members are invited to attend.

This week in the area of professional development, HCDE hosted the Attendance Officer's Share Session. HCDE remains a connection between client district representatives and pertinent information.

Looking ahead into next week, I will begin the week with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team, followed by a construction meeting at Academic and Behavior Center-West to discuss and address concerns raised during this week's PFC Meeting.

I will spend next Thursday and Friday conducting meetings and interviews.

Thanks again for your continued service to HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and have a relaxing a weekend.

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Saturday, May 19, 2018**

- Adult Education GED Graduation

**Thursday, May 31, 2018**

- AB West Graduation

**Wednesday, June 20, 2018**

- Board Meeting

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Unconventional Graduation 2018: Doors Once Closed, Now Open for Harris County Department of Education GED Grads



*Valedictorian Regan Remus and teacher Ronalee Martinez, Baytown Learning Center*

Stories of struggle and triumph are brought to light as HCDE's Adult Education Class of 2018 GED graduates walk across stage on May 19, from 11 a.m.- 1 p.m. at 6300 Irvington.

The Valedictorian is Regan Remus, 32, a mother who returned to GED classes to further her career under teacher Ronalee Martinez. Remus is currently attending a medical assistant program at Lee College in Baytown while attending classes at HCDE's Baytown Learning Center. Her goal is to become a registered nurse.

Salutatorian is Betul Bolat, 22. She dropped out of high school after her family moved to Turkey. After returning to the United States, she enrolled in GED classes at the Irvington Learning Center with teachers Maria Kirtland and Grant Winston. She aspires to attend Lone Star College and graduate from University of Houston Downtown with a communications degree.

The graduates have many inspiring stories. GED grad Rudis Elias from El Salvador began taking classes at the Spring Branch Family Development Center in 2013. After completing 800 hours of instruction, he progressed through English as a second language (ESL) classes into GED classes. He earned his GED this semester and will enroll in a trade school.

### HCDE Board Members Tour Fortis Academy



Several HCDE Trustees toured Fortis Academy this week to view progress at the school. Trustees Don Sumners, Michael Wolfe, Louis D. Evans, III and legal

counsel Sarah Langlois joined Superintendent James Colbert and other HCDE leaders for a tour of the new recovery school led by Facilities' Greg Lookabaugh.

A portion of the tour focused on the new commercial kitchen which will be equipped with commercial-grade ovens and equipment for culinary curriculum.



### ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

**MAY 14, 2018**  
Attendance Officer's Share Session



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Harris County Department of Education Names 2018 Teacher of the Year



Harris County Department of Education named Highpoint East teacher JoAnna Lee as the 2018 Teacher

of the Year at a special recognition ceremony on May 15. Lee was selected from three Teacher of the Year finalists from HCDE's schools and will receive \$1,000 donated by online learning company Edgenuity.

In its inaugural year, the HCDE Teacher of the Year program recognizes teaching excellence from



its Academic and Behavior and Highpoint East campuses. This year's finalists for Teacher of the Year were Gabrielle Gore Gardner, Academic and Behavior School East; Suzanne Boyd, Academic and Behavior School West; and JoAnna Lee, Highpoint School East. All three finalists were honored at the ceremony surrounded by family, friends and HCDE administrators.

"JoAnna Lee's dedication to serving at-risk students goes beyond classroom instruction,"

said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert, Jr. "HCDE is blessed by her leadership and ability to compassionately meet her students' needs."

Lee is a veteran English teacher who nurtures a love of writing and literature in her students.

As an experienced educator in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), she works with teachers new to the DAEP setting to share her experience and passion for teaching at-risk students.

HCDE's Highpoint School East is a campus for troubled youth in grades 6-12 that offers a safe and highly-structured learning environment, with a low student-to-teacher ratio. Students come to Highpoint on a contract basis through their home school district with the goal of returning to and graduating from their home-district high school.

Read more about Lee's experience and passion for helping at-risk students at <https://bit.ly/2L11kPL>. Find more information about HCDE's schools at [www.hcde-texas.org/schools](http://www.hcde-texas.org/schools).





# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Kids' Day at FotoFest Benefits Students from Nine Area Schools



CASE for Kids hosts Kids' Day at FotoFest May 21 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. as 155 students from nine elementary schools show off

their creative talent at the Spring Street Studios downtown Houston.

"The event is a culmination of a semester's work of visual literacy as students combine creative writing with photography," said CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers. "Students have the opportunity to share their writing from their photography projects and journals through our creative ceremony."

In addition, children experience the art gallery's showcase during a scavenger hunt. Many of the at-risk students have never had an opportunity to visit downtown Houston.

"Through the Partnership Project, these afterschool students are gaining literacy skills and the cultural experience of showing off their work at a downtown art gallery," said Caruthers.

Funding through the Partnership Project allows economically disadvantaged students ages 4-12

to benefit from supplemental funding in their comprehensive afterschool programs. Funds are applied to increase support of numeracy and literacy development and to promote social and emotional learning skills.

This year, through the Partnership Project--a collaboration between HCDE, the Houston-Galveston Area Council and the Texas Workforce Commission--more than \$550,000 funds 24 projects in Harris County.

CASE for Kids afterschool vendor FotoFest Literacy Through Photography Project is part of the Select Services Provider network, an afterschool vendor which is approved to deliver services and provide quality programming and reliable teaching staff at multiple afterschool sites. This year FotoFest earned an innovation award from the Case for Kids End-of-Year Celebration.

Schools participating in Kids' Day at FotoFest include Raymond Academy and Goodman Elementary in Aldine ISD; Briscoe, Park Place, Whidby and Whittier elementaries in Houston ISD; Frazier Elementary, Pasadena ISD; Bissonnet Elementary (Southwest Schools Charter); and Carroll Elementary, Sheldon ISD.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Complimentary School Safety Event Set for June 6 at HCDE Provides Topics to Promote Security



Educators are invited to attend the School Safety Institute on June 6 from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. at Harris County Department of Education, 6300

Irvington, Houston, Texas to gain strategies to change your school climate and strengthen security. The free event features Gaye Lange, director for Restorative Practices for the Texas Education Agency; Sasha McLean, executive director of Archway Academy, a recovery school; and Eloise Sepeda, a Restorative Justice trainer.

Breakout sessions include the following topics: active shooter response, mental health first aid for educators, cyber security, threat assessment, dropout prevention awareness, social and emotional learning and panel discussions with area chiefs of police.

“Restorative Practices is introduced in this institute as a way for schools to change the school climate, which is a big step towards improving school safety and open communication,” said Ecomet Burley, director for HCDE’s Center for Safe and Secure Schools, host of the institute.

Complimentary breakfast and lunch are included with registration. The first 50 registrants receive a \$50 discount on upcoming June 26 workshop “What are Restorative Practices?”

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) credits will be issued to commissioned law enforcement and continuing education units will be given to educators.

Register in advance to attend the free event at [www.hcde-texas.org/register](http://www.hcde-texas.org/register) (search for workshop number 11962 or date). View the flier: <http://bit.ly/2G6yObK>.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Head Start Celebrates SuperMENTors



HCDE Head Start centers honored their SuperMENTors last week with special celebrations. Men in the Real SuperMENTors Read program commit one hour of their time once a month to read to students in their classrooms. From luncheons to handmade cards to special presentations, students at each center eagerly thanked their volunteers for their commitment. For more information or to apply to be a SuperMENTor, visit <https://bit.ly/2wwtrmN>.

# 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; and
- Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge excellence



This week, HCDE hosted its inaugural Teacher of the Year event. It was a great success, well-attended, and served as motivation for next year's recognition of its kind. Highpoint East teacher, JoAnna Lee was this year's recipient for her outstanding work in the classroom.

Lee is a veteran English teacher who nurtures a love of writing and literature in her students. As an experienced educator in the Disciplinary Alternative

Education Program (DAEP), she works with teachers new to the DAEP setting to share her experiences and passion for teaching at-risk students.



By the Department hosting events such as this, I

continue to work towards the Board's goal to:

- Ensure that every person is treated with respect and dignity;
- Implement effective management practices ensuring all policies are supported by the effective procedures;
- Direct administrators to accomplish the mission, goals, and objectives of the Department;
- Monitor progress, evaluate staff performance, and hold staff accountable as appropriate; and
- Effectively delegate authority with responsibility, and monitor staff to ensure that support programs and services are cost effective and are of high quality.



## 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:

**Wednesday, June 20, 2018**

- Board Meeting

