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FROM THE OFFICE OF JAMES COLBERT, JR.—SUPERINTENDENT

Of Note...

This has been a productive week at HCDE. I began the week with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team. We are focusing on sharpening our programming for the next academic year. This is our season of planning for excellence as we also decompress from the rigors of the last academic year.

I also spoke with Trustee Lee Carter this past Monday via teleconference to provide an overview of the proposed budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year since she was unable to attend the Board's budget workshop.

This past Tuesday, I welcomed the attendees of the Capturing Kids' Hearts workshop. The purpose of this popular two-day training is to help educators and administrators develop both self-managing and high-performing classrooms while also learning to deal with conflict and negative behavior, build meaningful relationships with students, and create an effective environment for learning.

Later in the day Tuesday, I attended the groundbreaking for a new campus in Spring ISD. It was a great opportunity for me to interact with officials from one of our client districts.

I conducted Leadership Team Meeting yesterday. The meeting was informative and brought everyone around the table up-to-date on the goings-on within divisions. Both my new chief of staff, as well as the new director of Adult Education, were in attendance.

Also this week, I continued my ongoing meetings with members of the board (Trustees Eric Dick and Diane Trautman), as well as board candidate Richard Cantu.

Today, the Human Resources division hosted a job fair specifically for the Head Start division. The event was

communicated to the public via local media outlets, as well as via social media. It was well-attended between the 100 Rooms and the HCDE Conference Center. Both the Human Resources and Head Start divisions are hopeful that many of the qualified applicants who attended may be ideal candidates for the various vacant positions in the Head Start division. Both divisions will continue their efforts to recruit and maintain staff within Head Start.

Looking ahead, I will begin the week as usual with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team. I will also participate in a conference call related to the Texas Academic Decathlon.

On Tuesday of next week, I will be meeting with board candidate Danny Norris, and I will continue my ongoing meeting with members of the board by meeting with Mr. Michael Wolfe. There is also a meeting of the Board Secretary Interview Committee in which I will participate.

Please be reminded that Board Meeting is next Wednesday, preceded by three committee meetings. I will be meeting with our new executive director of the Facilities division next Thursday.

In closing, I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and I hope you have a relaxing weekend. Thanks for your service to HCDE. I look forward to seeing you at next week's committee and Board Meetings.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

- Board Meeting

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Storybooks Come to Life Through Special Bond Between Girl Scout and HCDE Occupational Therapist Assistant



Girl Scout Katie Crabb and HCDE occupational therapist Mary Canada

Girl Scout and West University teen Katie Crabb grew up with a love for reading and can't imagine living in a world without books. Harris County Department of Education occupational therapy assistant Mary Canada works with children with severe auditory, visual and cognitive disabilities and

always looks for ways to allow her students to experience the joy of the printed page.

Together, an unlikely friendship formed as Crabb was looking for a Gold Award project to serve the community and Canada had an idea of how to bring books alive to children with severe learning issues.

Crabb, a 17-year old from Carnegie Vanguard School in Houston Independent School District, finessed 20 "books in a bag," packaged story books complete with auditory and sensory devices which help low-functioning students experience learning through touch, hearing and even smell.

Canada thought of creating the book bags after seeing the idea online from a speech language pathologist in the United Kingdom. Canada reported phenomenal success using the book bag in her classroom. Behaviors changed. Nonreactive children began to respond. The book bags had a decidedly positive effect.

A thrifty, resourceful and imaginative Crabb finds the books on sale and buys most of the objects that fill the bags from the dollar store. A carwash funded most of her purchases.

The book *Little Red Hen* weaves a tale of the virtues of hard work through plastic farm animals, two plastic eggs, a bread pan with beater and bowl. *Goodnight Moon* provides a tiny mouse that jingles along with a big moon that lights up. Many of the books have aromatic qualities that help children experience stories through smell.

"It's a community effort, really," said Canada, a 24-year HCDE occupational therapy assistant from Cypress, Texas who retires this year.

Canada hangs the bags on a clothes rack created by her husband so that occupational therapists who work in Cy-Fair ISD can check them out and use them in the classroom. Objects are sterilized after each use. Together, Canada and Crabb's books number over 30. Plans include housing some of the books at Harris County Department of Education so they may be used by HCDE therapists in the 24 school districts and charter schools which Therapy Services serves.

HCDE provides school-based physical and occupational therapy to approximately 7,500 students in school districts throughout greater Harris County. The 160 therapists work with students and collaborate with teachers and others so that students with disabilities can be successful in the school environment.

The book bags are fast-becoming part of the success story and will now travel from district to district as needed.

"I really wanted to do this project because I always loved reading," said Crabb. "I was always stuck in my able-bodied world, so now I want to impact these kids' lives in a positive way."



HCDE Head Start Hosts Interview Fair HCDE Head Start Hosts Interview Fair

HCDE's Adult Education division recently renewed their partnership with Houston Food Bank for the upcoming program year. In its third year, this partnership provides food vouchers to students at three Pasadena Adult Education sites as an incentive for being dedicated students. Students obtain food vouchers based on class attendance and redeem them at one of Houston Food Bank's nearby food pantry locations in Pasadena.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

16 Students from HCDE Regional Awards Travel to NYC for Scholastic Art & Writing National Medals



Pasadena ISD Medalists gather with their principal, teachers and HCDE coordinator Andrea Segraves outside Carnegie Hall.

Sixteen students from Harris County Department of Education's Scholastic Art & Writing Regional Affiliate program traveled to New York City to Carnegie Hall to gain national awards as Gold Medalists on June 7.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards recognizes student achievement for grades 7-12 in the visual and literary arts in 29 categories, including editorial cartoon, poetry, graphic design, fashion, science fiction, video game design and more. The Awards offers opportunities for creative teens to earn recognition, exhibition, publication and scholarships and signifies to parents, teachers, the community and colleges that a student is an accomplished artist or writer.

Gold Medalists attending the ceremony were:

Alexis Cazares, Melissa Sosa and Emilio Recio of Pasadena Independent School District; Hetian Duan, Houston Christian High School; Walter Hammann, Clear Creek ISD; Gracin Nguyen, Pearland ISD; Olivia Pierce and Kaitlyn Sheroke, Katy ISD; Emma Bennett, Houston Independent School District; Alexis DePinho, St. John's School; Esha Garg, The Village School; Amabel Letrung, Klein ISD; David Liang, William Miner and Cg Marinelli of The Kinkaid School; and Shadidhar Pinninti, The Village School.



Katy ISD teacher Jonathan Frishman and student Kaitlyn Sheroke

Each year celebrities attend the ceremony through surprise appearances. This year, American actor, singer and DJ Ansel Elgort was a star attraction. Elgort starred in the horror film *Carrie* and will star in the upcoming movie *The Goldfinch*. Other star guests at the celebration included children's author R.L. Stein of *Goosebumps* and author Marc Brown of the *Arthur* series.

Students and teachers traveling to Carnegie Hall ceremonies and celebrations throughout the week called the experience unforgettable.



Gold Medalists and their teachers attend the 2019 National Medalists Ceremony. (Photo taken at The Met, a side tour during the celebration.)

"Students use their art to tell their stories and remind us that a bright future awaits our world because they will lead it," said Pasadena ISD's Sam Rayburn High School Principal Vanessa Reyes. "I am filled with hope."

"I felt like getting to visit Carnegie Hall was a very unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said student Shasi Pinninti, The Village School.

"The Scholastic ceremony was an incredible, life-changing experience that made me love the city," said student Emilio Recio, Pasadena ISD. "It was an exciting and accelerating adventure I will never forget."

"It was wonderful to hear from R.L. Stine and Marc Brown about their experiences and their struggles in the real world, and it inspired me to (hopefully) one day write a novel," said Esha Garg, student from The Village School.



Author Marc Brown, children's book author, poses with Pasadena ISD student Emilio Recio

HCDE Scholastic Art & Writing coordinator Andrea Segraves provided leadership this year as Affiliate Advisory council member.

The committee is a working committee which provides communication between members of over 100 affiliate networks, the board and the national staff.

The regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards begins the 2019 awards in the fall of 2018. For more information about judging, sponsoring or entering, go to www.hcde-texas.org/scholastic.

Service

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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"

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.

workshop this week to help educators develop these skills and reach every child.

Three Communications and Creative Services Staff Named Finalists in 2018 Lone Star Awards



Three Communications and Creative Services employees were named finalists in the 2018 Lone Star Awards through the Houston Press Club. Daniel Villarreal earned two awards for public relations video entries

print photography for the inaugural Academic and Behavior Center chess tournament photo called "Focus." Carol Vaughn earned an award for public relations feature article about a Highpoint East student called "Overcoming Grief and Anger with Harris Co. Dept. of Education's Help." Final winners will be announced by the Houston Press Club on June 15.

entitled "HCDE Tax Rate" and "Mayor GoPublic Message." Lindsey Sanders earned an award for

Harris County Teachers Attend HCDE Math Institute



This week, early childhood teachers learned fun, age-appropriate math instruction aligning pre-k guidelines with kindergarten math TEKS at the HCDE Math Institute.

The two-day institute included 56 centers, eight small group instruction lessons and 16 whole group lessons. It also incorporated instructional strategies from some of the leaders in early childhood mathematics, including Dr. Juanita Copley.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Community Relations

In keeping with the Board's expectations of me to

- **Work with other community and governmental entities and educational organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way**

The Awards offers opportunities for creative teens to earn recognition, exhibition, publication and



scholarships and signifies to parents, teachers, the community, and colleges that selected teens are accomplished artists or writers.

By ensuring that HCDE continues to offer such programs for the students, 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 potential. Further, I am ensuring that HCDE maintains visibility and involvement in the community by continuing to offer this exceptional medium for the students within Harris County.



At the end of last week, HCDE's Scholastic Art and Writing program supported 16 students as they traveled to New York City to Carnegie Hall to gain national awards as gold Medalists. This quality program recognizes student achievement for grades 7-12 in the visual and literary arts in 29 categories, including editorial cartoon, poetry, graphic design, fashion, science fiction, video game design and more.

HCDE BOARD

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

- Board Meeting

