



## Of Note...

Let me begin by congratulating all of our new Board members and welcoming you to HCDE. We are excited about the wealth of expertise you bring to the organization and we look forward to you helping us continue to advance teaching and learning across Harris County and beyond! I also thank our incumbent trustees for your ongoing and undying commitment to the Department. While School Board Appreciation is observed each January, it is important that you know we appreciate you all the year through.



I began this week, as usual, with a meeting of the Executive Leadership Team, followed by an IMPACT Meeting—an education think tank comprised of Harris County area board members and superintendents. I also departed for Austin late Monday in advance of my obligations to the UIL as a member of the board. I spent Tuesday in Austin for my UIL Board Meeting and returned to the city upon adjournment.

Thank you for your attention and participation in Wednesday's Audit Committee Meeting prior to the Board Appreciation Reception and regularly-scheduled January Board Meeting. I extend warm congratulations to our newly-elected Board officers: Trustee Josh Flynn- President and Trustee George Moore- Vice President. I look forward to us moving forward together as the team of eight. For the remainder of the week, I have been engaged in meetings. As mentioned in last week's issue of **The Connector**, please be reminded that I will be working from the North Post Oak location each Friday.



This week, in the area of Teaching and Learning, HCDE hosted the following trainings and workshops: Workstation Make and Take for grades 4-6; ELAR Make and Take for grades 9 and 10, EOC and Readiness Standards; Make Them Think: Argumentation in Elementary School Science; STAAR Academy- Grade 7 Writing Strategies and Mentor Texts; Outer Edges—Learning Safely with Google; CASE for Kids-OST Learning Community; Developing Fraction Concepts from the Ground Up for grades 3-5; Fractions, Decimals, Percentages, and Operations in grades 5 and 6; and Finding Common Ground: Empathy and Emotion Management in OST.

WEEK OF JANUARY 14, 2019

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Looking ahead into next week, please note that the Department will be closed Monday in observation of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. We will resume normal operations Tuesday. Upon our return, the Department will be represented in a Communities in Schools Meeting. I will conduct standing meetings next Wednesday and will attend my regularly-scheduled Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM) Meeting on Thursday, along with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in connection with NAM next Friday.

Please be reminded that the 33rd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference will be held Saturday, January 26, 2019, at the Kingdom Builders venue located on West Orem in Houston. The next HCDE Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 27, 2019.

Again, thanks for your interest in, and service to, HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector**. Have a relaxing weekend.

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**33rd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference—Saturday, January 26, 2019**  
**HCDE Board Meeting—Wednesday, February 27, 2019**

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Gains Meritorious Award for Best Budget Presentation Practices



Harris County Department of Education Business Services has earned the Meritorious Budget Award for the 2018-2019 budget year for excellence in presentation and issuance of its budget. The award issued by the Association of School Business Officials International recognizes best budget presentation practices in school districts.

According to ASBO, organizations receiving the award have budget documents which are accurate, easy to read and communicate district goals and objectives.

HCDE Assistant Superintendent of Finance Jesus Amezcua said it is important for the community to be able to access, easily find and understand important financial information from the Department. It is the 10th consecutive year HCDE has received the award; about 10 percent of school districts in Texas are awarded the Meritorious Budget Award.

"We remain committed to financial transparency, and these awards provide standards of best practices which are some of the tools we use to reach that goal," Amezcua said.

ASBO International is a nonprofit organization that represents approximately 30,000 school business professionals worldwide.

### ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

#### **JANUARY 14, 2019**

Workstation Make and Take for Grade 6

Workstation Make and Take for Grade 4

Make & Take for ELAR: Grades 9-10, EOC and Readiness Standards

Make Them Think: Argumentation in Elementary School Science

#### **JANUARY 15, 2019**

STAAR Academy-Grades 7 Writing Strategies & Mentor Texts

#### **JANUARY 17, 2019**

Outer Edges - Learning Safely with Google

CASE for Kids-OST Learning Community

Developing Fraction Concepts from the Ground Up for Grades 3-5

Fractions, Decimals, Percents, and Operations in Grades 5-6

#### **JANUARY 18, 2019**

Finding Common Ground: Empathy and Emotion Management in OST

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### 3 Newcomer Trustees Welcomed to Harris County Department of Education Board



Three Harris County Department of Education Board of Trustees were sworn into office in January 2019 to represent Harris County students and community. The

new faces who will help preside over HCDE matters are Richard Cantu', Position 3, At Large; Josh Flynn, Position 4, Precinct 3; and Danyahel (Danny) Norris, Position 6, Precinct 1.

Richard Cantu' is the deputy executive director of the East Aldine Management District and has held a number of nonprofit and municipal leadership positions. The self-proclaimed community and education advocate sees himself as a representative of working families. He supports increasing opportunities for citizens to access early childhood education, afterschool services for youth, workforce development initiatives and teacher professional development.

As the son of a Mexican immigrant who worked hard to achieve the American dream, Cantu' says he knows the importance of education in transforming lives of working-class families.

"I am committed to improving access to existing critical services and developing partnerships to address community needs and challenges," he said.

Josh Flynn is a licensed tax professional chartered through the IRS and specializes in nonprofit accounting. He formerly served as trustee for a university in Bethany,

Oklahoma. His immediate goal in office is to make HCDE as transparent as possible. Long-term, he will promote efficiency, directing maximum benefits to Harris County students.

Flynn's decision to enter public service occurs as the last of his three, publicly schooled children graduated in 2018. Choosing HCDE as a vehicle for public service seemed the logical progression for him to share his parenting skill-set.

"Knowing (that) my first grandchild will be entering the school system, I want the best system in place for him and future generations of children," he said.

Danyahel (Danny) Norris is law instructor of legal research and associate director of the Thurgood Marshall School of Law Library at Texas Southern University. He is a practicing intellectual property attorney, principal partner of Norris & Norris Attorneys and Counselors at Law and is part president of the Houston Lawyers Association. He shares his leadership skills through various professional organizations, including the New Leaders Council, Houston chapter.

Norris' immediate goal as trustee is to partner with local school districts and state legislators to help revise the school finance formula. Long-term, he values continuing HCDE partnerships with local districts and initiating innovative education practices in the county to eventually share statewide and nationally.

"I believe by strengthening the education in our county, we help strengthen the future of our county, and I'm looking forward to helping do so," Norris said.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### School Threat Assessment Training Jan. 22 Provides Tools for School Violence Prevention



School educators, leaders and first responders join threat management experts for a daylong workshop to assist in creating safer school environments for students on Jan. 22, from 8:30 a.m.-4:30

p.m. at Harris County Department of Education, 6300 Irvington. Included in the presenter lineup is a former U.S. Secret Service psychologist and Texas City Independent School District first responders from the Santa Fe ISD school shootings.

#### PRESENTER BIOS:

**Marisa R. Randazzo, Ph.D.:** Randazzo served for 10 years with the U.S. Secret Service, most recently as chief research psychologist chief. As executive office of SIGMA Threat Management Associates, she serves as an international expert of threat assessment, targeted violence and violence prevention. She has authored several threat assessment books and has appeared on 60 Minutes, Nightline, Good Morning America, the Today Show and Dateline NBC.

**Texas City ISD presenters who were first responders at the Santa Fe ISD shootings:**

**Mike Matranga, executive director of security and safety at Texas City ISD:** Matranga has a

demonstrated history of working in the security and investigations industry. The former U.S. special agent for the Secret Service has worked in law enforcement and criminal intelligence for over 15 years. As counter assault team assistant leader, he made tactical decisions regarding the U.S. president and vice president.

**Thomas Munoz, emergency manager and homeland security director with Texas City ISD:**

Munoz is a 24-year veteran with the Houston Fire Department and became assistant chief of homeland security and planning with the HFD. He serves in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserves as command and response section chief and is adjunct professor at University of Houston-Downtown.

**Rodney D. Cavness, Ed.D., superintendent/CEO of Texas City ISD:** Cavness has 29 years in leadership with Texas public education, with 14 years as superintendent. His career in education spans from Beaumont to Silsbee to Evadale to Port Neches-Groves. He is owner of Cavness Consulting Group and specializes in helping districts prepare for disasters like floods, fires, hurricanes and storms. Cavness has studied school safety/security for 29 years.

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Teens Debate in Third CASE Debates Tournament Jan. 12 at UH Downtown



Teens enrolled in the CASE Debate program completed its third tournament as 107 teens gathered to debate

on Jan. 12 at the University of Houston Downtown. Students competed in both Policy Debate and World Schools Debate styles.

CASE Debates pairs a successful, established debate model created by the Houston Urban Debate League with Harris County Department of Education's CASE for Kids. The program is funded by HCDE and provides opportunity for participation for public and charter schools within Harris County.

The teens from 12 schools representing five school districts broke from the competition at lunch to hear from college counselors about scholarship opportunities, application assistance and career/degree options at the university. Students from the UHD Public Service and Community Research Department hosted the tournament and volunteered throughout the day.

Twenty-four individual and group awards were given at day's end.

Top speaker awards went to Hannah Ali, Harmony School of Advancement for "Best Speaker-World Schools Debate Junior Varsity"; Maria Cortes, Galena Park High School, Galena Park ISD for "Best Speaker-World Schools Debate Varsity"; Vipash Nanda, Kerr High School, Alief ISD for "Best Speaker-Policy Debate Junior Varsity"; Mike Ly, Kerr High School Alief ISD for "Policy Debate/Cross Examination Varsity."

#### **Top team awards go to the following teams for first-place results:**

- World Schools Debate Junior Varsity, Kerr High School, Alief ISD: (Abinobola Onabaly, Justice Harry, Debora Temesgen, Brian Okereke and Syed Hussain)
- World Schools Debate Varsity, Spring Early College Academy, Spring ISD: (Ahmad Howard, Ifeoma Neobolisa, Boderhousse Houndekon and Kennedy Scott)
- Policy Debate/Cross Examination Junior Varsity, Kerr High School, Alief ISD: (Agha Mirza and Vipash Nanda)
- Policy Debate/Cross Examination Varsity, Kerr High School, Alief ISD: (Mike Ly and Hanna Ghebrelul)

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Fortis Academy Culinary Students Certified, Ready to Cook



Fortis Academy Culinary Arts Teacher Ouindetta Thomas couldn't help but smile with excitement as her kitchen was fully

operational the first week of the spring semester.

"Let's get cooking," she said, in anticipation of the first lesson.

Fortis Academy is the county's first public recovery high school. This school will help students who have completed a substance abuse or dependency rehabilitation program continue their high school education in a sober environment.

Five students were presented with their jackets, aprons and hats as they passed the ServSafe Food Protection Manager Certification Examination, which is accredited by the American National Standards Institute-Conference for Food Protection.

"This certification makes them eligible to get a manager position at a restaurant after they graduate from high school," Thomas said.

At the beginning of the year, students prepared for the certification exam by learning basic techniques, such as proper food handling and how to handle kitchen equipment, when working in a restaurant. Students must pass the exam in order to cook in the class.

"My main goal for when I teach a culinary class is to have the students by month two to be dressed and be ready to work on their own, and usually they are," she said.

Seventeen-year-old Roberta Vasquez chose to participate in the culinary program because it was something new and fun.

"I enjoy making caldo with my grandma," she said.

Vasquez hopes to learn new dishes to make, especially ones that are difficult to prepare and perfect.

"I've always wanted to work at a fancy restaurant and look forward to in the future," she said.

For 18-year-old Isaac Hinojosa, he said his interest in participating in the program is the certification being offered that are available outside of school.

"I like to cook, especially spaghetti, and have experience working in the food industry at various fast-food restaurants," he said.

His goal by taking this class is to be able to cook independently.

"I would like to be able to cook independently because sometimes I need help and want to learn how I can successfully do it myself," Hinojosa said.

Students prepared po-boys and paninis during the first week. Pastries such as cake baking, decorating and fruit-dipping are also on the to-do list and would be just in time for Valentine's Day.

"They will learn everything you would learn in a basic culinary arts class and food preparation techniques; it's more about skill than dishes," Thomas said.



# Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

## Board Relations

In an effort to meet the elements associated with this expectation of performance for me to

- **Keep the Board informed of significant issues as they arise, using agreed-upon criteria and procedures for information dissemination;**
- **Respond in a timely and complete manner to board requests for information consistent with Board Policy and established procedures;**
- **Provide recommendations and appropriate supporting materials to the Board on policy issues and matters for Board decision;**
- **Interpret and support Board Policy and decisions to staff and community; and**
- **Maintain a positive and professional working relationship with the Board**

By hosting events such as this annual one, maintaining regular contact with the Board (via the weekly newsletter, through meetings, and other ongoing communication), I am striving to meet the Board's goal of me, related to this element of performance to:

- **Serve as the primary public face of HCDE;**
- **Maintain a highly visible and positive profile in the Harris County community;**
- **Evaluate the risks and innovative programs, and advise the Board of the pros and cons of various issues related to policies, structure, image, politics, community, potential problems, as well as accolades and recognition of the Department or its programs;**
- **Use good judgment regarding critical or emergency issues; and**
- **Promptly inform the Board President, and then follow, alerting all Board Members in accordance with the Board policies and procedures.**



Board President Josh Flynn



Trustee Danny Norris



Trustee Richard Cantu

It is important that the HCDE Board of Trustees and I work together as a team of eight. Each year, we honor the Board during Board Appreciation Month to express our gratitude. Yesterday, in addition to celebrating our incumbent trustees, we also welcomed and recognized our three recently-elected Board Members: Mr. Josh Flynn, Mr. Richard Cantu, and Mr. Danny Norris.

## HCDE BOARD

### Board President

Josh Flynn

### Vice President

George Moore

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**33rd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference**  
Saturday, January 26, 2019

**February Board Meeting**  
Wednesday, February 27, 2019

