



Of Note...

Although we began the week with a holiday, the balance of my week has been filled with meetings and other professional obligations. The Department resumed its regular operating hours Tuesday, and due to Monday's holiday, I conducted the usual Monday morning meeting of the Executive Leadership Team on Tuesday. I spent the remainder of the week in meetings and preparing to be in a position to attend the TASA/TASB Midwinter Conference to be held next week, Sunday, January 27- Wednesday, January 30.

This year's conference begins early Sunday morning, in Austin, with a Budget Boot Camp facilitated by school finance experts and TASA consultants Doug Karr and Omar Garcia. The conference runs through end of day Wednesday, ending with an Accountability Forum Seminar. Throughout the week, a variety of sessions and workshops will be held, including numerous Thought Leader Sessions, General Sessions, and Aspiring Superintendents Academy Sessions—several of which I have served as a facilitator and/or panelist, over the years. These conferences are informative and offer an opportunity for brain-sharing among colleagues and networking with my peers from all parts of the state of Texas.

This week in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE provided the following trainings and workshops: Outer Edges Online: Communicating with Google; School Threat Assessment Training: Creating a SAFE Environment for Students; Alternative Certification Program for Teachers—Information Session; Every Moment Counts: Promoting Participation and Mental Health Throughout the Day; Basics and Outer Edges—Communicating with Google; Make Them Think: Argumentation in Middle School Science; Dyslexia Summit; The Heat is On!; Restorative Practices Refresher; CPR/First Aid; Proportionality (Grades 6-8); STAAR Academy Grade 8 Science: Essential Tools for RTI; Intro to Guided Math Grades 3-5; Learning to Lead for Success; and School Finance Council. HCDE remains a leader in professional development and continued learning for educators in Harris County for the betterment of learners of all ages.

Upon my return to the office next week, I will participate in a site visit to an equestrian facility as we continue to study and consider integrating equine therapy within our various programs for the special populations we serve. I will also conduct my standing meetings with staff upon my return to the office.

Please be reminded that the 33rd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference is being held tomorrow at the Kingdom Builders Center, located at 6011 West Orem Drive in Houston (77085). Over 1,000 early childhood educators are expected to attend. Trustees are invited—but not expected—to attend and, if present, will be recognized during the welcome/opening session, starting at 8:30 a.m. The event will end at 3:30 p.m. Also note that the regularly-scheduled February Board Meeting will be held Wednesday, February 27, 2019.

Thank you for your 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

WEEK OF JANUARY 21, 2019

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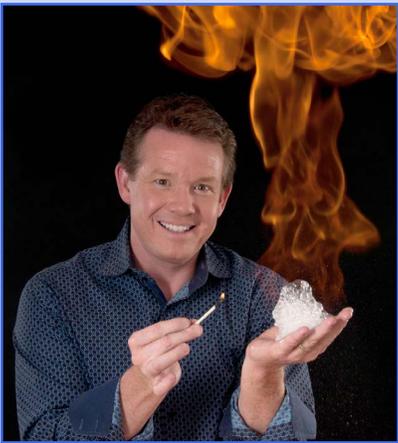
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Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

YouTube Celebrity Steve Spangler Opens Early Childhood Conference Jan. 26 with Science Magic



Emmy award-winning and YouTube celebrity Steve Spangler will bring his science magic to the stage for the 33rd Annual R.T. Garcia Early

Childhood Winter Conference Saturday, Jan. 26 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Kingdom Builders' Center, 6011 W. Orem Dr., Houston.

Over 1,000 early childhood educators are expected this year and will have the chance to network with experts in the field. Topics of interest include classroom safety and security and developing social emotional intelligence.

The Harris County Department of Education conference is a tradition for generations of



educators of pre-k through second grade since 1986—features over 60 breakout sessions for educators.

Keynote speakers are best-selling author Steve Spangler, who will do just about anything to get people excited about science, and bilingual specialist Laurie Weaver, who will focus on differences between English and Spanish and how those differences affect early literacy instruction.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Youth Volunteers Create Care Packages at Irvington for Houston Homeless During Martin Luther King Day



Forty youth volunteers with the Mayor's Youth Council City of Houston gathered to assemble care packages for the homeless on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on Jan. 21 at HCDE headquarters at 6300 Irvington. Five hundred care packages were assembled to be distributed. Inside were medical supplies, a rain poncho, socks and bottled water. A personalized "care" note was included.



ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

JANUARY 21, 2019

Outer Edges Online - Communicating with Google

JANUARY 22, 2019

School Threat Assessment Training: Creating a SAFE Environment for Students

Alternative Certification Program for Teachers - Information Session

Every Moment Counts: Promoting Participation and Mental Health Throughout the Day

Basics and Outer Edges - Communicating with Google

Make Them Think: Argumentation in Middle School Science

JANUARY 23, 2019

Dyslexia Summit

The Heat is On!

Restorative Practices Refresher

JANUARY 24, 2019

CPR/1st Aid

Proportionality (Grades 6-8)

STAAR Academy Grade 8 Science: Essential Tools for RTI

Intro to Guided Math Grade 3-5

Learning to Lead for Success

JANUARY 25, 2019

School Finance Council

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Local Partnership Project Funding Helps Deliver Afterschool with ‘All the Toppings’



Two years ago, 11-year-old Ilija Rivera's grandmother got sick and was hospitalized. Her mom Karen reached out to get afterschool help for babysitting. She got much more when she enrolled in a program funded by the CASE for Kids Partnership Project.

The Partnership Project is a locally funded collaboration between Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment, or CASE for Kids, the Houston-Galveston Area Council, the Texas Workforce Commission and local afterschool sites like Houston Independent School District's Park Place Elementary.

The 20-year-old program is unique because multiple partners—local, state and federal—contribute funding.

The Partnership Project fills funding gaps with a variety of resources. The CASE for Kids lending library provides curricula, educational games, sporting equipment and STEM-based materials like robotics kits. Vendors specialize in academic focus areas that highlight math and language. Social and emotional learning skills help children to understand and manage their emotions.

In Karen Amaya's Latina culture, kids stay with family members when parents are working, so the notion of afterschool was a bit hard to accept. After Ilija's abuela (grandmother) got well, she remained in afterschool and has been busy with activities like robotics, art, tennis, choir, cooking and academic tutorials.

"I was impressed by the program," said Amaya. "I really do think CASE for Kids is an exceptional program. I work in school settings and have never seen an afterschool program like this one."

CASE for Kids is an afterschool intermediary which provides resources, training and afterschool services for over 9,000 students in greater Harris County.

"As CASE for Kids celebrates its 20th anniversary, we look to the Partnership Project as one of the ways we expand our reach to local families and the education communities we serve during times when public school budgets are lean and federal funding for afterschool is diminished," said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, CASE for Kids director.

Ilija likes the time she gets to socialize with her friends after 3 p.m. and admits she would be on her electronic devices, otherwise. Her mother likes the community environment offered through afterschool at her neighborhood school in southeast Houston

near Hobby Airport.

"The more exposed she is to different hobbies and careers, the better," said her mom. "I am first-generation college, so college is a must for her too."

Teacher and afterschool robotics coach Yasin Puertas took Ilija and her classmates last year to Ecobot Challenge, a large-scale CASE for Kids robotics competition funded through the Education Foundation of Harris County, a nonprofit which provides support for education initiatives.

Puertas' team of students won first place in the competition.

"Funding for local afterschool initiatives is very important," said Puertas. "We need support from the community, and this is the best example of how local dollars are converted into local resources."

Last month, Puertas brought a robotics show-and-tell to parents at a local PTA meeting at Park Place.

"Parents were literally in tears because they were watching their children who are doing engineering as fourth and fifth graders," the afterschool coordinator said. "These are future engineers, and they don't have to have the money to study. They have the brains and the will.

"Afterschool gives them that place to wonder and get inspired."

Ilija likes to show off her afterschool art project, a multi-media art piece with a motorized arm she engineered with a robotics kit from Puerta's afterschool robotics class. She says she likes to build things and see them work.

Though the preteen cherishes the time she spends with her grandmother and other family members, she also craves the afterschool time she gets with classmates and teachers to build creativity.

"Think of plain vanilla ice cream," Ilija said, illustrating her analogy by circling the air with her hands to fashion the mountain of sugary goodness.

"Even though I like ice cream, I don't get all the toppings," said the fifth grader. "In afterschool, I get all the toppings—all the toppings for my brain."

To learn more about the CASE for Kids collaboratives, go to www.hcde-texas.org/after-school or call 713-696-1331.

(View Ilija Rivera's afterschool art GIF: <https://media.giphy.com/media/1zh70I8C23xuox7CII/giphy.gif>.)

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

School Threat Assessment Training Reveals School Shooting Facts from Studies



School Threat Assessment, a training for delivering school safety strategies, provided opportunity for conversations between 75 teachers, administrators and school security

officers on Jan. 22 at HCDE through the Center for Safe and Secure Schools and Sigma Threat Management Associates.

“I encourage you to look at how we are going to work together—police departments, communications and parents,” said Thomas Munoz, emergency manager and homeland security director with Texas City Independent School District. Munoz is a 24-year veteran with the Houston Fire Department and became the assistant chief of homeland security and planning with HFD. Munoz stressed the importance of teamwork between different agencies, including the district.

Mike Matranga, executive director of security and safety at Texas City ISD, stressed how the school landscape has changed, especially with students using social media throughout the school day. He said Texas City is taking a proactive approach to threat assessment and urged other districts to follow.

“We’re at a place in our society when our kids need professional help in our schools in terms of security,” Matranga said. Matranga is a former U.S. special agent of the U.S. Secret Service.

Keynote Marisa Randazzo served 10 years with the Secret Service as chief research psychologist. She shared the presentation: “Best Practices in Threat Assessment: Building a Program and a Process.”



In the largest federal study of school shootings in the United States, the U.S. Secret service and U.S. Department of Education collaborated by studying 37 incidents through 41 attackers. Focus was on operational information: What could be detectable and usable from the incidents?



Randazzo supplied these major facts about findings of school shootings:

1. School-based attacks are rarely sudden, impulsive acts.
2. Prior to the attacks, others usually knew of the attacker’s idea/plan.
3. Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to the attack.
4. There is no accurate or useful profile of the “school shooter.”
5. Most attackers had seriously concerned others in their lives prior to the attack.
6. Most attackers had significant difficulties with losses or failures. Most were suicidal.
7. Many felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.
8. Most attackers had access to weapons—and had used weapons—prior to the attack.
9. In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity.
10. Despite prompt law enforcement response, most incidents were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention. Most were very brief in duration.

Practical application was provided as tabletop exercises with threat assessment scenarios helped attendees make observations and suggestions about school security. For additional information about upcoming Center for Safe and Secure workshops at HCDE, go to www.hcde-texas.org/register.



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Dyslexia Summit Attracts Educators to Increase Awareness



Over 100 educators attended the Dyslexia Summit Jan. 23 hosted by HCDE's Teaching and Learning Center and the Neuhaus Education Center. Attendees were able to collaborate with experts in the field of dyslexia to raise their level of awareness and have a deeper understanding of the condition, its early identification and treatment through evidence-based instruction. This summit also helped with inspiring the recognition,



valuing and encouragement of the unique brilliances and creativity bestowed upon students. Activities consisted of learning how to read and write from the eyes of dyslexia students.

Education Leaders to Present at TABSE in February



Our education leaders are readying for the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators' 34th Annual State Conference on Feb. 20-24. Don't miss these dynamic panelists: (left) Dr. Anthony Mays, Schools; Rich Vela, Facilities; Darlene Breaux, Research and Evaluation Institute; Dr. Frances Watson-Hester, Teaching and Learning Center; James Colbert, Jr., HCDE superintendent; Jonathan Parker, assistant superintendent; and Stephanie Ross, Adult Education (not shown).

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Professional Growth and Development and Community Relations

In accordance with the Board's expectations of me to:

- **Ensure that appropriate staff development is available and monitor staff development for effectiveness;**
- **Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration;**
- **Establish and maintain a program of public relations to keep the public well-informed of the activities of the Department, ensuring a wholesome and cooperative working relationship between the Department and the community; and to**
- **Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.**

On Tuesday of this week, the Center for Safe and Secure Schools hosted a School Threat Assessment Training that revealed



facts from school shooting studies.

The training delivered school safety

strategies, offered opportunities for conversation among the teachers, administrators and school safety personnel. Most significantly, officials shared significant facts regarding the warning signs that preceded many school shootings.



By HCDE hosting this event, I am striving to meet the Board's goal of ensuring that, not only are employees, both within and outside of HCDE exposed to quality professional development, but I am also helping to ensure the safety of schools in Harris County. Also, HCDE is making a tremendous impact by serving our client districts at all levels of public education.

Further, I am meeting your goal of me to communicate the needs and accomplishments of HCDE through a variety of formats: through written reports, communication with school districts, in political arenas, and at public meetings.

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

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

February Board Meeting
Wednesday, February 27, 2019

