



Of Note...

What a week for HCDE! This past weekend, HCDE hosted 250 students who decided to take the Robotics Next Giant Leap at HCDE's All-Earth Ecobot Challenge for 2019. Twenty-nine teams of elementary students competed through robotics and commandeered Lego robots through space challenges. It was an exciting time in the life of CASE for Kids. This program exposes students in Harris County to experiences that they may not otherwise be privy.

I began the week with a meeting of my Executive Leadership Team (ELT), internal meetings, as well as traveling to Austin for the Senate Committee Hearing related to HCDE being placed under Sunset review. I spent Tuesday in Austin, returning to the office Wednesday morning to conduct my regularly-scheduled internal meetings. I also met with various representatives from entities in Harris County that are interested in creating partnerships with the Department. I conducted Agenda Review yesterday, and today, I am working from the North Post Oak (NPO) location and meeting with staff within divisions at NPO.

This week, in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following invaluable and informative workshops: Make them THINK! What Successful Readers and Writers Do-Elementary; Harris County ELAR Leadership Team; Harris County Bilingual/ESL Leadership Team; and E-Colors and Intentional Leadership: Diversity and Inclusion.

Looking ahead into next week, as usual, I will begin the week with a meeting of the ELT, followed by the regularly-scheduled IMPACT Board Training, and other internal meetings with staff. I will conduct Leadership Team Meeting, as we bring the school year to a close. This particular meeting will be a rewarding one as directors report on the accomplishments within our various divisions and programs.

I will be extending the welcome at the Head Start Community Partners' Appreciation Luncheon next Wednesday, May 8, at the HCDE Conference Center. I will also be attending that division's SuperMENTOR farewell event for the 2018-2019 academic year. I will end next week at the NPO location, conducting standing meetings with staff at that location.

In closing, please be reminded that the next Board Meeting will be held Wednesday, May 15, at its regularly-scheduled time.

As always, thank you for your service to HCDE. I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and I hope you have a relaxing weekend.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

HCDE Board Meeting—Wednesday, May 15, 2019

WEEK OF APRIL 29, 2019

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Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Hoops, Sobriety, Fellowship Define Springtime Basketball Tournament



Fortis Academy students and staff joined the adolescent recovery community for a Saturday of hoops and fellowship in a sober environment at the

South Main Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas in April.

The network of recovery communities allows youth the opportunity to be with peers who are recovering.

During the tournament, the Fortis team played hard. Even after a loss through elimination, our team members stayed on to cheer for their new friends.

Hot dogs and refreshments rounded out the day. #fortisrocks



ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

APRIL 30, 2019

Make them THINK! What Successful Readers and Writers Do-Elementary

MAY 1, 2019

Harris County ELAR Leadership Team

Harris County Bilingual/ESL Leadership Team

MAY 3, 2019

E-Colors & Intentional Leadership: Diversity & Inclusion



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

250 Students Take Robotics Next Giant Leap at HCDE's All-Earth Ecobot Challenge 2019



When students orbit the Earth, collect Moon samples and colonize Mars, a host of things can go right or wrong. The All-Earth Ecobot Challenge 2019 provided moments of uncertainty as well as celebration as 29 teams of elementary students competed through

robotics and commandeered Lego robots through space challenges on April 27 at Berry Center In Cypress, Texas.

Students prepare for the event through afterschool or out-of-school time programs after being prepped on details of each year's challenge, which has been an 11-year tradition at Harris County Department of Education. The challenge is provided through the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, and the Education Foundation of Harris County, the nonprofit foundation which supports HCDE programs and services.

Park Place Elementary teacher Yasin Puertas, whose team finished first in the challenge last year and 10th this year, says his school's robotics program has grown systemically because of support from parents, community and the principal. His school is located in southeast Houston in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood with a cadre of cultures.

"It's very important for our kids to find and see the amazing things they can do," the robotics teacher said.

CASE for Kids Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers said she knows the program helps to build confidence and leadership in the students involved.

"What robotics also does is promotes problem-solving and teambuilding skills," Caruthers said. "It helps students build critical thinking skills and introduces them to careers in



science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM."

Judges and volunteers helped make the event a success with funding from CenterPoint Energy and the Wood Group and volunteer assistance from the Assistance League of Houston, the Wood Group and Oceaneering.

KPRC reporter Sophia Beausoleil volunteered at the event on behalf of the Assistance League of Houston.

"We are helping out today because we know how important it is for kids to get STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education," Beausoleil said.

Student Hudson McCulley of Spring Forest Middle School, Spring Independent School District, was a bit disappointed in his team's first round of judging.

"Everything worked perfect for us in the practice round, but when we were judged, everything messed up," said the sixth grader. "My hope for round two is all goes as planned. We've got a 65 percent chance of it working."

Jose Hernandez from Golfcrest Elementary is a novice to robotics but is committed to having fun while learning to program and build his team's robot.



"I'm new to the team but I'm learning," he said.

Teams competing traveled from as far as Seguin, Texas and included students from Huffman, Spring, Spring Branch, Cy-Fair, Galena Park and Cleveland.

The approximate 200 students competing in the challenge enjoyed activities from the Eco-Genius Lab when not competing. The lab was staffed by afterschool vendors who provided hands-on science experiments with real-world examples of science, technology, engineering and math and included: Mad Science, Nutty Scientist of Houston, BotShop and MaKrU, LLC.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Demand for Certified Nursing Assistants Fuels Enrollment in Free HCDE Adult Education Program



Andrea Rodriguez put her family first for almost 20 years. One day a neighbor convinced her to attend a Harris County Department of Education GED class. From there, a teacher encouraged her to enter a free certified nursing assistant (CNA) program.

Nervous doesn't even begin to describe the beginning days for Rodriguez, a ninth-grade dropout with Spanish as her first language.

"I wanted to quit, but then I was always telling my girls to never give up," she said. So I put everything into God's hands and carried on."

She passed one of the five GED tests and felt a bit more confident; then she aced another and another.

HCDE Adult Education Manager May O'Brien visited Rodriguez's class as she was studying to pass the remaining two tests and told her about the CNA program. "She said, there's a difference if you want it or wish for it," the mother of three girls said. "I knew I didn't want to waste my time. I wanted it."

Once she passed her high school equivalency exams, Rodriguez was able to join the CNA program, a free, six-week training program offered in collaboration between HCDE Adult Education, the Texas Workforce Commission and Pioneer Nursing School. Upon completion, students take the CNA certification test.

The hybrid program mixes CNA training with content-enriched adult education classes. Students switch classes every-other week. One week they learn patient care and safety procedures and eventually train in clinicals with patients with teacher Dele Jokodola. The next week students gain experience with vocabulary and cultural competencies from their HCDE adult Education teacher Lavenia Cole.

All the while, the adult students prepare to take the CNA certification test. Upon completion, salary benefits range from \$12-\$15 an hour, depending on the employer. Students may

work in nursing homes, hospitals, rehab centers or home-care settings.

Student Estella Tchilendou is one of many students from Africa who are enrolled in a 20-student class. Her first language is French, and she is from Cameroon. She holds a master's degree in finance and had a 14-year career in business before moving to the United States in 2015.



"In our English class, we practice language, and I am learning vocabulary for the health care industry while improving my listening and speaking skills," she said. "I am learning how to take care of my patients and must learn bedside manner, which includes being friendly and confident."

Adult Education teacher Cole says health care industry careers are in high demand as boomers get older, and the sky is the limit in terms of opportunity.

"You can build on your CNA," she said. "There are other certifications you can add on like phlebotomy and CPR training."

Cole works with students on reading comprehension strategies like finding the key words, as well as testing strategies. She has even devised an ethical bingo game to broach subjects such as religious and cultural differences in the workplace.



"She was so patient," said Rodriguez about her teacher. "The one thing I know for sure now is that it's never too late to learn."

HCDE Adult Education is the largest, no-cost adult education program in Texas, with a variety of health care and construction career training options in Harris and Liberty counties. Students may also take English as a second language classes and high school equivalency degree classes simultaneously in a traditional classroom setting or online. For more information, go to www.hcde-texas.org/adult-education.

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

HCDE Brings Museums to Social Studies Educators



As the phrase goes, “Ask and you shall receive it,” and area social studies educators sure did receive. Harris County Department of Education Teaching and Learning Center Curriculum Director for Social Studies Kelly Tummy was asked by her social studies leadership team about bringing in area museums, so they could

obtain information to use in their curriculum.

The social studies leadership team is a free support program offered by HCDE’s TLC division for area social studies teachers. Topics of interest are provided throughout the year.



“They don’t have a lot of resources and money, so this would give them the chance to network and help plan curriculum at their districts,” Tummy said.

She was approached about this idea last May and was able to bring 15 libraries and museums to about 20 members of the leadership team.

New Caney Independent School District Secondary Social Studies Instruction



Specialist Leslie Sproat enjoyed being able to talk to many museums and libraries in one location.



“It was a great way for us who have limited resources and money to do research in one place,” she said. “It also provided networking with others within our subject area from other districts.”

Sproat enjoyed visiting with representatives from the Texas Foundation for the Arts and San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site because they are out of her area and she would not have been able to visit with them if it had not been for HCDE.



Eleanor Stoddart, educator/interpreter with San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site, visited with districts who are miles away from the site.

“I have gotten a lot of interest from teachers today because they said our information fits into their curriculum,” Stoddart said.

Tummy is already working for a second event for February 2020 and has secured the three presidential libraries in Texas. For more information, email Kelly Tummy at ktummy@hcde-texas.org.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Community Relations

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

- **Establish and maintain a program of public relations to keep the public well-informed of the activities of the Department, affecting a wholesome and cooperative working relationship between the Department and the community; and**
- **Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way**



This past Saturday, CASE hosted its All-Earth Ecobot Challenge 2019. It was an exciting day for students as they orbited the Earth, collected Moon Samples, and colonized Mars. It made for a challenging experience as the 29 teams of elementary students competed through robotics and commandeered Lego robots through space challenges at the Berry Center in Cypress, Texas.

Students prepared for this event through the CASE for Kids afterschool

programs across the city. The event is supported by the Education Foundation as well.



The team that finished first in the challenge last year and 10th this year was from Park Place Elementary School, located in southeast Houston in an economically-disadvantaged neighborhood with a cadre of cultures.

The event is one that both the client districts and HCDE look forward to. I am proud of our CASE for Kids division as they continue this exceptional program that embraces HCDE's commitment to STEM.

By furthering this already-established program, 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, political arenas, and public meetings. I am representing HCDE by attendance at events and speaking professionally.

Finally, I am continuing to make professional presentations to all audiences in all areas of the community, listening and taking into account differing viewpoints of various constituencies, and using good judgment to discern the best decision and action for the Department.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Josh Flynn

Vice President

George Moore

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May Board Meeting

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

