



Of Note...

Great teachers are to be treasured. Taking time out each year to honor them is routine throughout school districts, but we wanted to do a little more. Our 2nd annual Teacher of the Year celebration gave us pause to honor two outstanding educators: Zachary Wikstrom, math teacher at Fortis Academy and Byron Clay, educational aide at AB School East. The stories and inspiration among all six candidates were amazing, and we are thankful for their commitment to our special populations students. In turn, I want to express my appreciation to you this month for your support of our special schools.

May seems to accelerate as we near the end of our school year. In addition to attending the Teacher of the Year celebration on Monday, I met with the Executive Leadership Team. Tuesday marked a special day for our therapists as we hosted Staff Appreciation for 150 School-Based Therapy Services staff members. This division works dutifully to support children with disabilities to help them be successful in the classroom and provides 53 percent of all therapy in Harris County school districts.

Internal meetings filled the calendar before I met with you at the May Board Meeting on Wednesday. Thank you once again for your commitment to the students of Harris County.

Friday rounded out the week with our All-Earth Ecobot Drone Challenge for approximately 100 middle school students held at Space Center Houston. I can't begin to explain the intricacies behind the space mission challenges these teens undertook. As drones become a fixture in our landscape, students are being introduced to more career options with geocaching. This event gave us the opportunity to introduce professionals from NASA to network with the students. I piloted a drone myself and will talk about that next week!

Later Friday evening, I'll attend an exclusive dinner with University of Houston Downtown President Dr. Juan Sánchez Muñoz which will honor 2019 university commencement speakers, including author, speaker and entrepreneur Chris Gardner. His biography was the basis for the movie "Pursuit of Happyness," starring Will Smith.

Graduation for our Adult Education learners comes only once a year. The adversities and challenges these older learners face are unfathomable for many. We invite you to join us this year at this unconventional graduation on May 18. The pride on the faces of our students, families and teachers will leave an everlasting impression.

Next week, I am in the education community with an outreach leadership event where I represent HCDE at the the 2nd annual Men of LEGACY (Leadership, Excellence, Grades, Access, Collaboration and Identity) End-of-Year Awards Ceremony at University of Houston Downtown. This program is a leadership program that helps with minority students' retention and graduation.

Thursday, we head to Baytown Head Start for the ribbon-cutting ceremony with community leaders there, and I hope you will join us. We are excited about this initiative which combines both Early Head Start and Head Start programs and expands our capacity and service in the Baytown community.

I also hope you find time to read the enclosed article about our "See the Impact" public awareness campaign or go to our awareness page at www.hcde-texas.org/impact. I look forward to communicating with you next week.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Adult Education GED Graduation—Saturday, May 18, 2019, 11 a.m., 6300 Irvington Conference Center
HCDE Board Meeting—Wednesday, June 19, 2019

WEEK OF MAY 13, 2019

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Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Drones Rule at Teen Competition 'Ecobot Challenge' Hosted by HCDE's CASE for Kids



Drone challenges drove the competition between middle school drone pilots at the 2019 All-Earth Ecobot Challenge scheduled on Friday, May 17 at Space Center Houston, 601 E. Nasa Parkway, Houston, Texas.

Teams from middle schools in greater Houston vied for trophies as they maneuvered their drones on Mars, surveyed the town, collected data and raced to see which drone was the fastest. Each drone is controlled by a tablet, phone or controller. The teams had practiced for the challenge since the beginning of the year through schools and community organizations.

HCDE Superintendent James Colbert stopped by the challenge to lend his support to the teens while also trying his hand at maneuvering a drone.

The All-Earth Ecobot Challenge was hosted by HCDE's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids, or CASE for Kids, and the Education Foundation of Harris County. The event was sponsored by Workshop Houston, Wood, CenterPoint Energy, Spindletop Charities and the Education Foundation of Harris County.

"The dynamics and capabilities of drones is expanding, and the Ecobot Challenge 2019 provides an opportunity for teens to explore careers using geographic information systems and drones," said Lisa Thompson-Caruthers, director for HCDE's CASE for Kids.



Ribbon Cutting for Baytown Early Head Start/Head Start Set for May 23



The time is finally here to officially open the new Baytown Early Head Start/Head Start Center on Thursday, May 23 with a ribbon cutting celebration from 12:30-1:30 p.m. The new 20,000-square-foot facility, located at 323 Massey

Tompkins Rd. in Baytown, will house both centers under one roof. We welcome your attendance on May 23.

NEXT WEEK'S EVENTS

MAY 21, 2019

STEM Workshop K-12 (6 hours G/T update)
Deep Dive in the New ELAR/SLAR TEKS (K-8)

MAY 22, 2019

Houston Science Educators' Leadership Association

Quest for Grants Training Series: Team Approach to Proposal Writing!

MAY 23, 2019

HCDE Principal Certification Academy Information Seminar

Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Wikstrom, Clay Named HCDE's 2019 Teacher of the Year and Educational Aide of the Year



First-year Fortis Academy Math Teacher Zachary Wikstrom was surprised May 13 by being named Harris County Department of Education's 2019 Teacher of the Year while Academic and Behavior School East Educational Aide Byron Clay was named the 2019 Educational Aide of the Year.



"I'm at a loss for words as this is my first year teaching and it was very unexpected," Wikstrom said. "It's a quite an honor to be selected and I know there were such high-quality candidates I was going against."

It's special to Wikstrom to be able to work with the students at Fortis Academy because he says they are real treasures. Fortis Academy is the first public recovery high school in Harris County.

"To be able to reach them with one-on-one time is a special experience to get to see these kids grow," Wikstrom said. "To see them as A and B students now when they were failing all of their classes is amazing."

Clay always tells youth, especially his daughter, that regardless of the position, title or challenge you're up against, you always put your best foot forward.

"I sent her a text telling her I wasn't sure what the outcome was going to be, but I always give my best," Clay said.

He wants to set an example for his daughter and youth he comes in contact with. His work environment as an educational aide allows him to do it on a daily basis.

"It's more rewarding now because these kids are hurting," Clay said, "The reason I can relate is that I'm able to reach them on how they can take their experiences in class to life. When there's an adverse challenge, I try to convert that to a learning lesson when given an opportunity."

Other Teacher of the Year nominees included: ABS East teacher Kenneth Davis, Highpoint School teacher Ashley Johnson and ABS West teacher Jeffrey Sam.

The second Educational Aide of the Year nominee was ABS West Alejandra Garza.

The four HCDE schools provide three specialized education programs and feature individualized learning and small-group instruction in highly structured classes. Programs are for students with intellectual, developmental or behavioral disorders; troubled or adjudicated youth; and recovering youth.



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

See the Impact: HCDE Launches Awareness Campaign



HCDE recently launched a multi-media campaign called “See the Impact” to raise public awareness about our programs and services. The campaign also highlights how critical HCDE services are to the success of public education in the Houston region and how it only costs the average homeowner 73 cents a month to support our programs and services.

We realize we have a lot to talk about, and everything HCDE does is important. The campaign features the five pillars of service programs that directly impact students in greater Harris County: Adult Education, CASE for Kids (afterschool), Head Start, Special Schools and School-Based Therapy Services. Support divisions like TLC, Choice Partners, Records Management, Educator Certification and the Center for Safe and Secure Schools are also highlighted in certain aspects of the campaign.

The campaign will be carried out through various marketing publications, such as a new annual report and Quad-fold brochure with the “See the Impact” slogan along with a video and other advertising collateral. The video, built around the concept of “See the Change Your Change Makes,” showcases the impact HCDE makes by leveraging tax dollars through grants, fees and the purchasing cooperative to turn \$1 of property taxes into \$5 of services. It emphasizes that all of HCDE’s services are possible for an average of 73 cents a month in property taxes.



In the upcoming months, the campaign will appear on local radio stations, YouTube, Facebook display ads and through organic posts on other HCDE social media platforms. A short video will also play this summer in movie theaters around the Houston area before blockbuster films including Godzilla and The Lion King.

You may ask what all this has to do with us? We know we are better together, and we are HCDE’s greatest ambassadors. So, we want to share the impact of who we are and what we do through this campaign within our social circles. We can all do this by sharing social media posts and mentioning HCDE impact in simple conversations with friends and family.

The impact we make on the lives of children and educators in Harris County is tremendous, and we want to share the value of your efforts in our local communities.

Use the hashtags #HCDEimpact and #Seetheimpact to help spread the word.

View our annual report or see the video: [See the Change Your Change Makes](#). Like our [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) pages to catch new items as they are created. Check out our [LinkedIn](#) page and [YouTube](#) pages.

HCDE plays a critical role in public education in our region and our public needs to know who we are, what we do and how we affect schools around the greater Houston area. We hope you’ll help us share the impact!



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Therapy Services Hosts Staff Appreciation to Promote Camaraderie, Express Thanks for Successful Year



“Joy in the Journey” was the theme of the School-Based Therapy Services end-of-year celebration on May 14 as 150 occupational, physical and music therapists and staff came together for lunch, inspiration and “laughter yoga.”

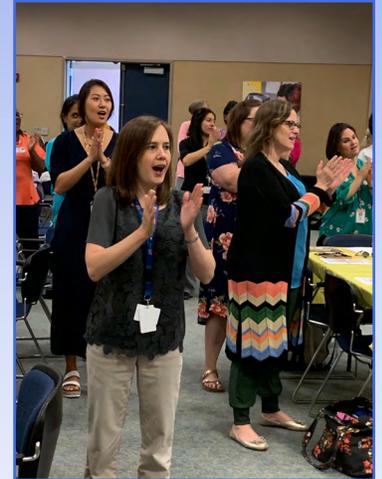
School-Based Therapy Services Executive Director Carie Crabb joined Superintendent James Colbert and Assistant Superintendent Jonathan Parker to thank the therapists who help students in greater Harris County be successful in the school environment.



Caroline Christopher is an occupational therapist who is working for HCDE in Katy ISD. As a newcomer to HCDE’s School-Based Therapy Services, she says she loves working with teachers in the school district.

“I love working for the school system because I

love working with the teachers to give them different strategies they can implement and provide immediate results for their students in the classroom,” she said. “Also, I love providing different strategies for the students so they can gain confidence in the classroom. Those are my favorite things about working here.”



Therapists and staff were treated to a photo booth and laughter yoga by Emma Ferguson, a registered nurse.



Opportunity

PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

Avant-Garde Graduation 2019: 3 GED Adult Grads from HCDE Share Stories

Attend an avant-garde graduation as 65 adult learners ranging in age from 17-65 celebrate gaining their high school equivalency degrees with family, friends and their teachers. The ceremony takes place on Saturday, May 18 from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Harris County Department of Education Adult Learning, 6300 Irvington Blvd., Houston, Texas.



Adult graduate Virginia Haracha, 56, Pasadena, Texas

With 25 years of service in the public sector, Virginia Haracha, 56, feared she might lose her job because she had not told the truth about earning her GED. Rather than dismiss her, Haracha's employer gave the Pasadena resident three weeks

to earn her high school equivalency degree. After getting her GED, she also received a promotion and raise.

Through the help of her teacher, support from her family and encouragement from the president of her place of employment, she walks the stage on May 18 at 11 a.m. at Harris County Department of Education through the Adult Education program.

"I can't believe I got it that quick, and I'd been scared of doing it forever," she said. "I did it, and I'm proud of myself."

View Virginia's story: https://youtu.be/tl_-ljFIBLO



Adult graduate Veronica Davila, Baytown, Texas

Spanish-speaking student Veronica Davila moved to the United States two years ago. A registered nurse in Mexico, she started over to receive her credentials in the United States.

Upon passing her high school equivalency diploma,

she enrolled in free certified nursing assistant classes, as well as free phlebotomy classes. She is employed at a local nursing home as a CNA. She continues to take English conversation classes with HCDE to improve her conversation skills with her patients. Her future plans include enrolling in nursing classes at Lee College.

View Veronica's story: https://youtu.be/BSyn_OROU-Y

Adult graduate Andrea Rodriguez, Alief, Texas



Mother and wife Andrea Rodriguez tried to go back to school twice. The third time was the charm. Her inspiration was encouragement from a friend who showed her a photo of two women posing in a grad photo from HCDE.

"If they could do it, so could I," she said.

Math was hard for Andrea, but she persisted with the help of her teacher. Once she completed her GED, she enrolled in CNA classes and plans to work in the medical field with her credentials.

"I'm excited about helping other people," Rodriguez said.

View Andrea's story: <https://youtu.be/EjljvoRayAY>

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 <http://www.hcde-texas.org/adult-education>.

Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

Community Relations:

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

- 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.

This week we will host several



Through collaborations with workforce partners, we extend our reach from the immediate role of helping the adult learner to connecting that adult learner to opportunities after receiving education. Many times, that adult learner can continue his/her training in programs like pipefitting and medical fields. These opportunities are due to our continued partnerships with businesses and institutions.

We also introduced the public awareness campaign: See the Impact. This campaign helps expand our reach to the education public.

As HCDE continues to nurture and grow these workforce partnerships and by introducing the awareness campaign, I am working to achieve the Board's goal to present a positive, professional image of HCDE; maintain visibility in the community; be open to the ideas and needs of the community; and communicate the needs and accomplishments of the Department, as appropriate.



hundred adult learner graduates, their families and community partners as we host GED Graduation 2019. Commencement speaker will be Mike Temple, director for the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and its operating affiliate Workforce Solutions.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Josh Flynn

Vice President

George Moore

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Summers

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May Board Meeting

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

