



## Of Note...

Several school districts around the county started school this week, as HCDE welcomed back teachers and aides at our four schools along with staff from Therapy Services. We are immersed in back-to-school mode, with staff attending and leading professional development training sessions designed to help teachers better support students in our schools and throughout our client districts.

Teachers from our four special schools attended specialized training in collaboration with the University of Houston Downtown this week, focusing on behavior management techniques and supporting students with social and emotional issues that impact learning. This partnership helps us not only enhance the skills of our teachers, but also provides the opportunity to cultivate the next generation of teachers through UHD's education program while giving our teachers and aides a way to pursue continued education at the downtown campus.

Last week, a group of educators from a non-profit in San Antonio visited Fortis Academy to gain advice, strategy and insight for how to develop a recovery high school. The team from Rise heard about Fortis during our presentation in Boston last month. During the visit, Rise team members indicated they were overwhelmed with the intricacies and details of our program and offerings, commenting on the complex nature of educating students in a comprehensive sober environment. As I've said in the past, Fortis is making quite a name for itself in the recovery arena as we continue to push the boundaries of education for students dealing with addiction.

I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team on Monday and a full Leadership Team gathering on Tuesday. HCDE has strong leaders and I am confident these administrators will continue to propel our organization to new heights as we strive to always meet or exceed the needs of our client districts.

The rest of the week was filled with internal meetings and our special called board meeting on Friday. Thank you to those of you who came to the Policy Committee and provided input on our proposed policy revisions.

Next week is packed as I iron out the final details of the Convocation. While planning for the Convocation takes a tremendous amount of time and effort, the actual event is filled with smiles and laughter as staff greet one another and fellowship as a group. I love walking around and hearing the rumble of close to 1,000 people talking, having fun and getting excited to start the new school year. The enthusiasm is contagious!

I hope you can make it to the event and experience this atmosphere first-hand. I look forward to seeing you at the board meeting Wednesday and the Convocation next Friday. Have a restful weekend.

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**HCDE Board Meeting—Wednesday, August 21, 2019**

WEEK OF AUGUST 12, 2019

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# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Schools Division Partners with UHD for Professional Development



The four Harris County Department of Education schools attended two days of professional development workshops

Aug. 13 and 14 hosted by the University of Houston Downtown's College of Public Service (CPS).

Workshops such as legal updates, unique learning, applied behavior analysis (ABA), behavior intervention plan de-escalation and many more were offered to staff members of Academic and Behavior School East and West, Highpoint and Fortis Academy. Throughout the day, community partners and CPS faculty provided HCDE staff with resources to effectively support students who deal with a variety of social, emotional, academic and behavior challenges.

Prior to the training, first-year ABS West teacher Ivneroner Fultz reviewed the agenda so she would have a basic idea of what to expect.

"I didn't know the unique learning workshop would go into so much depth and there are so many benefits it provides to staff and students," she said. "I was really excited to hear about it and have the support now in the classroom to help develop our students and the lessons that are more centered towards the individual student and that student's particular need."

She also enjoyed the ABA training because they were given resources and information about social autopsy, which is reteaching a lesson if there was a misconception.

"When it comes to social issues such as a student pushing someone, that's considered an error too because they're pushing and they don't know not to do it, so we have to go back to reteach those social errors like we teach academic errors," Fultz said. "I really enjoyed learning this because if you don't know, then you have to reteach it."

When looking for a university to partner with to help grow HCDE staff professionally, Senior Director of Schools Anthony Mays said UHD came forward last year.

"We continue to collaborate and think about ways to support their students and our staff with professional development opportunities," he said.

HCDE hosts several CPS student interns at the schools to work with students. In return, UHD supports the opportunity for HCDE teaching assistants to earn their teaching degree and teachers to work on their master's degree.

Superintendent Colbert visited staff as the workshop ended to bolster staff as they begin the new year.



"I want our campuses to be the standard that others are inspired to replicate. I want people from all over the state, if not country, to come watch you. Dr. Mays has moved you all towards our goal of being the best with these past two days of professional development."

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Therapists Offer Backpack Safety Tips as Students Head Back to School



Students are heading back to school starting this week and physical and occupational therapists at Harris County Department of Education offer tips for backpack safety.

Five tips you can practice to help prevent backpack strain with your child:

- The bottom of the backpack should rest in the curve of the back and be no more than four inches below your child's waist
- Have padded and adjustable shoulder straps. Make sure your child uses both shoulder straps when wearing the backpack to evenly distribute the weight of the pack.
- Have a padded back that will provide cushioning against your child's spine.
- Have compartments to secure items in place and pack heavier items closest to the child's back.
- Weigh less than 10 percent of your child's weight when fully packed.

"Make sure only necessary items are inside your child's backpack and that it is adjusted and worn correctly to prevent back strain and long-term effects on posture and the developing spine," said Carie Crabb, senior director of HCDE School-Based Therapy Services.

HCDE's therapy specialists work with students in school districts and charter schools throughout greater Harris County. Specialists include physical therapists and assistants, occupational therapists and assistants, and music therapists.

For questions about backpack safety or HCDE School-Based Therapy Services, contact Crabb at [ccrabb@hcde-texas.org](mailto:ccrabb@hcde-texas.org).



### Plantgistix Donates \$5,000 to HCDE Head Start to Promote Child Literacy



Plantgistix, a Houston-based plastic logistics company, recently provided a \$5,000 back-to-school donation to Harris County Department of Education

Head Start to support child literacy.

HCDE Head Start Senior Director Venetia Peacock said the company, with bases in both east Houston and Baytown, has supported Head Start with child literacy

efforts for multiple years, including back-to-school supplies after the devastation of Hurricane Harvey.

"We remain grateful to this community-minded company for continued support of our families," Peacock said.

Plantgistix is a provider of in-plant, contract packaging and specialty services to the plastic resin industry.

*PHOTO: The Plantgistix Outreach Committee meets with HCDE Head Start leaders to pledge support for the 2019-2020 school year. Pictured includes (left) committee member Tierra Warmly with HCDE Head Start leaders Armando Rodriguez and Venetia Peacock and committee member Adriana Lu. (Not pictured: Plantgistix Outreach Committee members Tiffani Speller, Tamara Schrader and Hannah Locke)*

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### 5 Ways Families Can Reduce Summer Learning Loss for Back to School



Post-summer “brain drain” or summer learning loss for students is real, according to Harris County Department of Education Center for Afterschool,

Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids) Director Lisa Thompson-Caruthers. Most teachers spend at least three weeks re-teaching last year’s lessons at the beginning of each school year, she said.

Research outlined by the National Summer Learning Association reveals that most students lose two months of math skills every summer, and low-income students lose another two-to-three months in reading.

“Summer camps and activities for children are important for a number of reasons,” said Caruthers. “During the summer it’s important to keep kids engaged, maintain regular sleep routines, provide social interaction with other kids and practice following rules.”

Regardless, gaining a healthy transition back to school can be achieved, Caruthers said.

Here are some tips for getting kids back into their academic routines:

**1. Jumpstart a healthy family routine.** Get back to normal sleeping schedules.

- 2. Identify a child’s interests in books.** While school ramps up the academics, it’s important for kids to access books based on their interest areas. Visit the library to check out books that compliment school-day learning.
- 3. Prime the mental pump.** Museums are abundant in the greater Houston area, and many have free or discounted hours or days. Mix in educational apps to the games your kids play. along with their favorites. Have them watch educational YouTube videos and report back what they learn.
- 4. Get homework help and enroll in afterschool.** When homework is completed inside an afterschool program, family stress is reduced, leaving more quality time at home for family time. Afterschool provides a variety of activities that reinforce school-day learning, encourage social interaction and help youth develop skills.
- 5. Add incentives to your child’s learning with quality family time.** After homework is over, play a family game. After six weeks of school, let your child plan a weekend excursion. Make a wish list of places your child wanted to visit this summer, but time ran out.

CASE for Kids provides resources, trainings and funding for afterschool programs, serving students in grades pre-k through 12 in afterschool programs in schools, childcare facilities and community centers throughout Harris County. For more information go to [www.hcde-texas.org/after-school](http://www.hcde-texas.org/after-school) For research about summer learning loss, go to [www.summerlearning.org/at-a-glance](http://www.summerlearning.org/at-a-glance).

## NEXT WEEK’S EVENTS

### AUGUST 19 2019

HCDE Superintendent Certification Institute Information Webinar

Alternative Certification Program for Teachers - Information Session

### AUGUST 21, 2019

Taking Care of Ourselves, Finding Joy at Work

HCDE Principal Certification Academy Information Seminar

### AUGUST 22, 2019

School Finance Council

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Fortis Academy Provides Tour, Info Session to Recovery Nonprofit in San Antonio



Fortis Academy staff welcomed representatives from Rise Recovery in San Antonio as the nonprofit looks at opening a recovery

school within its umbrella of programs for drug and alcohol recovery for youth.

Members of the Rise Recovery High School Task Force toured Fortis



to view facilities and learn about its academic and counseling components. Staff members Anthony Moten and Beverly Dotson provided the Fortis tour and overview for three members of the task force.

“We met the Rise staff as they attended our recovery presentation in Boston at the Association of Recovery in Higher Education Conference in conjunction with the Association

of Recovery Schools and the Association of Alternative Peer Groups,” said Jonathan Parker, assistant superintendent. “Rise wants to serve youth during the school day in greater San Antonio by providing recovery in a public-school setting.”



Rise Recovery Executive Director Evita Morin is scheduled to return next month to gather additional information about the Fortis Academy recovery model. Rise is the former Palmer Drug Abuse Program which was originally headquartered in Houston and expanded to San Antonio.



# Systemic Achievement

...with purposeful intent

## Instructional Management and Community Relations:

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

- **Establish effective mechanisms for communication to and from staff in instructional evaluation, planning and decision-making;**
- **Ensure that goals and objectives form the basis of curricular decision-making and instruction and communicate expectations for student achievement;**
- **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 community; and**
- **Work with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way.**

Schools teachers and staff trained this week at the University of Houston Downtown, gaining two



days of professional development on subjects like behavior modification techniques, team-building and legislative/TEA updates and requirements. Through a collaborative with UHD, our assistant teachers, teachers and administrators can return to school to pursue degrees and training. In turn, we assist UHD by providing opportunities for their student interns within our schools.

Later in the week, Dr. Anthony Mays visited KHOU studios to talk to parents about dress codes and how to help students dress for success.

As Therapy Services staff returns to work this week our occupational, physical and music therapists are planning and preparing to help students who need assistance in the school environment. That help could mean transitioning from the classroom to the playground or finding success with communication devices. In addition, senior director Carie Crabb is issuing some backpack safety reminders for parents as we inform the community through social media and the press about students' back health.



Last week Fortis staff were visited by a San Antonio recovery program called Rise. We connected with this recovery program while presenting about recovery at a Boston conference. Rise Recovery looked at our instructional program to mirror our best practices. It is their hope that they can begin serving San Antonio youth with a wraparound instructional and therapeutic program.

**Through professional development and community relations events such as these, I am ensuring that I meet the Board's goals of my performance to present a positive, professional image of myself and the Department in all venues—in both community and educational arenas. I am also ensuring that by providing quality instruction, each student's learning goals are met or exceeded while also investigating best practices for student achievement and using effective practices that maximize achievement of student potential.**

## HCDE BOARD

### Board President

Josh Flynn

### Vice President

George Moore

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### August Board Meeting

Wednesday, August 21, 2019

### Convocation

Friday, August 23, 9:00 a.m.

Kingdom Builders

6011 W Orem Dr

Houston, TX 77085

