

# The CONNECTOR

A weekly publication of Harris County Department of Education for the HCDE Board of Trustees

## TOP WORKPLACE

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# The CONNECTOR



## Of Note...

As we head into the Thanksgiving holiday break, it is always nice to take time to celebrate with staff.

Last week HCDE was named one of the 2019 Top Workplaces by the Houston Chronicle. The reception to celebrate this honor was a great way to cap off this semester and send staff into the holiday break filled with excitement and pride about working at HCDE. Thank you to those of you who attended the reception and commemorated this award with our staff. I know it means a lot to them that you recognize their hard work and honored them in this way.

It was fun to see how excited our employees were during the celebration, posing for pictures with the Top Workplace banner and proudly displaying Top Workplace stickers. While we did not win any of the specific awards this year, it is a huge testament to our staff and the culture they cultivate every day for HCDE to be named one of the Top 150 overall businesses in the region. I am proud to lead our impressive staff and I find it gratifying to know the majority of employees believe in our mission and enjoy working here as much as I do.

I started the week off with my Executive Leadership Team and several internal meetings. On Wednesday we held an Audit Committee prior to the reception and met for our regularly scheduled board meeting, where we discussed many important matters before the board. Thank you for the robust discussions about the makeup of the Board of Trustees and your vision for the future of HCDE.

Thursday and Friday were spent in internal meetings with staff discussion actively planning for next semester.

We will not have a Connector next week, as schools are closed for Thanksgiving break and many staff are on vacation. We will resume the week of December 2.

Have a great weekend and I hope you enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday with friends and family.



# TOP WORKPLACES 2019

## HCDE Ranks Top 25 in Houston's 2019 Top Workplaces

Harris County Department of Education was recognized as one of Houston's Top 25 large businesses Nov. 14, as part of the Houston Chronicle's 2019 Top Workplaces program.

**Chron.com:** <https://bit.ly/2rLY3id>

HCDE received the award at a special ceremony at the Royal Sonesta Hotel. Companies recognized are awarded solely on anonymous workplace surveys completed by their employees.

"HCDE is the best of both worlds as it is a dynamic place to work which encourages excellence and fosters an entrepreneurial spirit in an ever-changing educational environment," said Superintendent James Colbert Jr. "We also gain the personal satisfaction of serving area school districts and helping a wide array of students succeed, from pre-k students to students with special needs to adult learners."

Top Workplaces rankings are determined by a scientific employee survey process provided by Energage, an independent research company partnering with the Chronicle for the past 10 years. This year, 150 employers earned recognition as Top Workplaces in three categories: small, medium and large. HCDE was ranked no. 24 in the large-company category.

In all, 134,258 employees from 257 companies took the survey. Questions included issues relating to workplace culture such as management, benefits, employee appreciation, workplace flexibility and more.

Longtime employee Laura McFarland nominated HCDE for the award after seeing an ad in the Houston Chronicle requesting company recommendations for Top Workplaces. McFarland is an occupational therapist and manages therapists who work with students in the Houston Independent School District and several other districts through HCDE's School-Based Therapy Services. She has been employed with HCDE for 21 years.

"Because of the culture of excellence that exists at HCDE, everyone is encouraged to show initiative and professional growth," McFarland said. "We are constantly evolving and adapting to best meet the community's needs."

**#SeeTheImpact** at [www.hcde-texas.org](http://www.hcde-texas.org).

**View photos (password is hcde1889):**

[https://hcdetexas.photoshelter.com/gallery/20191114-TWP/G0000hTw.mCfHPGw/C0000pY8VX0A\\_b7l](https://hcdetexas.photoshelter.com/gallery/20191114-TWP/G0000hTw.mCfHPGw/C0000pY8VX0A_b7l)

**"HCDE IS THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS..." SAID SUPERINTENDENT JAMES COLBERT JR.**

**TOP  
WORK  
PLACES  
2019**

HOUSTON★CHRONICLE

HOUSTON★CHRONICLE



### Classroom Management: Teachers Fill Their Toolboxes by Sharing Strategies

Four-year Highpoint School teacher Craig Perry considers himself an organized teacher who runs a tight ship in terms of behavior management. Yet he knows he can always use help building his classroom management toolbox.

He enrolled in Harris County Department of Education's Classroom Management class provided by Teaching and Learning Center Curriculum Director for Special Populations Brenda Arteaga. When working with teens, he believes in sharing strategies: what works and doesn't.

"It's very important to give kids the right tools to focus," said Perry, who teaches students in a self-paced computer lab where they earn high school credits online. Students transitioning to Highpoint, then back to their home schools are either adjudicated teens or troubled youth.

"Kids might be coming into my classroom with some real problems," he said. "Where they are coming from can affect what is happening in the classroom."

Arteaga, who is seasoned in classroom management strategies, agrees wholeheartedly. As a former teacher, principal and superintendent, she has a stockpile of human relations experiences.

"All teachers need a refresher and new ideas for classroom management," she said.

Arteaga trains teachers using the STOIC model. **Structure** and organize your room for success. **Teach** expectations and rules/norms. **Observe** and monitor. **Interact** Positively. **Correct** misbehavior fluently.

She says a common complaint from teachers is disrespect from their students.

"One of the tools that we utilized in the training is a social contract or agreement which focuses on values and how you want to be treated in the classroom," she said. "After discussing those values and writing them down, everyone signs the document. It is a way to level out the playing field and make it equitable for everyone."

**In addition to the social contract, Arteaga has these tips for teachers:**

- Build positive relationships with your students.
- Let students know that you care about them and are interested in who they are as a person.
- Have high expectations for every student.
- Communicate in a positive way, without tone or elevated pitches and voice.
- Consistency is key. Ensure that behaviors and consequences math for all students.

**For more information about upcoming workshops, go to** <https://hcde-texas.org/teaching-and-learning-center>.





# PROGRAM

## CONNECTIONS

### AREA GIS Day Held at HCDE Helps Teens Map-Out Career Futures

Geographic information systems, or GIS, is the mapping bedrock used in meteorology, city planning and medical fields. Houston Area GIS Day held Nov. 14 at Harris County Department of Education allowed 140 high school students the chance to learn about growing career opportunities in the field of GIS.

"GIS is new and exciting, and it's a very stable job to have," said Nicole Ceranek, coordinator for the event and GIS manager for Montgomery County.

Although GIS isn't a core curriculum in Texas, several schools incorporate the mapping software from Esri in their class offerings. Waltrip High School in Houston Independent School District provides a three-year GIS track which culminates in a GIS practicum with area companies.

"What teens can expect in GIS is to analyze data and problem-solve," said Ruby Blackmon, GIS instructor for Waltrip.

GIS is used to study migration of diseases such as mapping of the Zika virus, a project Waltrip students worked on several years ago. The teens also helped Houston ISD Transportation revamp their bus routes using GIS.

Senior Lisette Corona will use GIS to major in computer science, and she believes she'll have a one-up on her classmates in college.

Junior Guillermo Perez-Negron is a ROTC student and is using GIS to inspect maps for military applications. He'll also use it as he becomes a medical oncologist, post high school.

"It's also very practical in real-life situations because you will use geography in every single location you will be in, from finding a home to tracking job opportunities," he said!

GIS computer software is used for analyzing events ranging from flooding disasters to elections, said Lisa Felske, HCDE science curriculum director. She is a huge proponent of the GIS Day which has been held for a fourth year at HCDE.

This year Tye Payne, leader of the Lone Star Unmanned Aerial Systems Center at Texas A&M Corpus Christi, provided the keynote presentation to students.

Students also worked in stations with drones, competed in a geography bee and mapped with GIS software in computer labs and spoke to industry experts about career opportunities.

**View photos:** [https://hcdetexas.photoshelter.com/gallery/20191114-GIS/G0000D2cqkTx.8pA/C0000pY8VX0A\\_b7l](https://hcdetexas.photoshelter.com/gallery/20191114-GIS/G0000D2cqkTx.8pA/C0000pY8VX0A_b7l) (password is hcde1889)



**"GIS IS NEW AND EXCITING, AND IT'S A VERY STABLE JOB TO HAVE," SAID NICOLE CERANEK.**



# PROGRAM

## CONNECTIONS

### Principal for a Day Program Helps Build Community Partnerships

Visitors Angelina Brown of the National Association on Mental Illness (NAMI), Jim Thompson from nonprofit Center for Pursuit and Jaishree Ellis of Greater Houston Disability Chamber of Commerce (GHDCOC) walked away from the experience of being named “Principal for the Day” with much more than a certificate and a lunch.

After shadowing staff at Academic and Behavior Schools, the visitors representing nonprofit health organizations were fueled with information about the Harris County Department of Education schools in east and west Houston.

The schools serve 25 area school districts by providing services for their students with emotional and intellectual and developmental disorders on a contractual basis. The intent is for students to return to their home districts and schools once they are equipped with behavioral and life-skills tools to be successful.

“I have a son who is in an therapeutic environment with his school district and I know how it works as a parent, but being here today is giving me an insight on how the administrators think and how they’re building things around their campus,” Ellis said. “That helps me one as a parent, but also in my role at the chamber because we are trying to build relationships with transitional directors at the different school districts.”

Ellis was able to meet with administrators and teachers at Academic and Behavior School West and learn more about what takes place each day.

“I am impressed on how the techniques with behavior management are being incorporated throughout their processes and they focus on small achievements that are frequently rewarded and teaching the kids that they can get more at the end of the cycle,” Ellis said. “Ultimately, students are allowed to become independent enough that they no longer have to write down their progress because they have earned trust.”

Ellis compliments the model ABS West is using with its students because she hasn’t seen one like it anywhere else.

“It’s encouraging and eye-opening to see it all under one roof,” Ellis said. “The staff members here are so authentic and I can see the desire that they really want to help the students here. I appreciate that they show the students dignity and respect. At the end of the day, the prevailing message is that they (staff) love the kids but they shouldn’t stay here because they want to see them grow and be included in the community.”

Thompson acknowledged that the shadowing process helped him learn more about HCDE school services.

“I’ve known of the Department (HCDE), but now I know more about what you do,” said Thompson. “Now I see ways we can collaborate on things moving forward.” **To read more of the story go to:** [blog.hcde-texas.org](http://blog.hcde-texas.org)





# PROGRAM

## CONNECTIONS

### Top Workplaces Award Gives HCDE Community Occasion to Celebrate Nov. 20

Top Workplaces are work communities where employees feel valued, work collaboratively and are motivated to realize their full potential.

Congratulations to our employees and HCDE Board for all their hard work in making HCDE an elite, community-minded organization.

Here are some photos from our department celebration which recognized HCDE as a member of the top 25 large companies in the Houston Chronicle's Top Workplaces 2019.



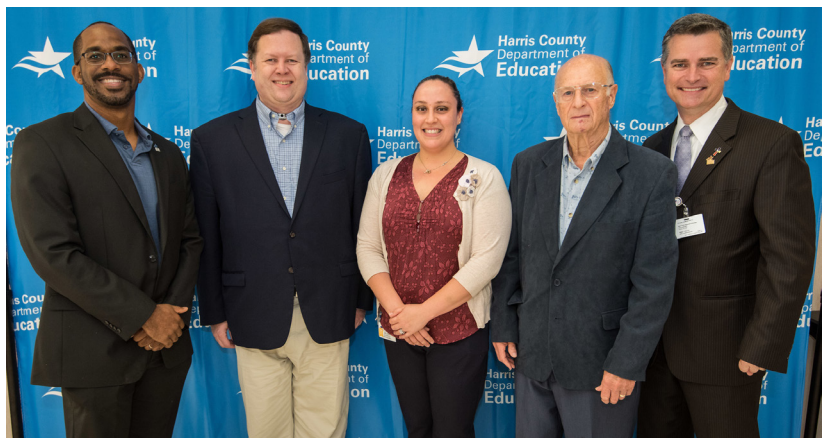


# PROGRAM

## CONNECTIONS

**To view more photos:**

[https://hcdetexas.photoshelter.com/gallery/20191120-TWP/G00002V\\_eihiAQkg/C0000pY8VX0A\\_b7I](https://hcdetexas.photoshelter.com/gallery/20191120-TWP/G00002V_eihiAQkg/C0000pY8VX0A_b7I)





## Campus Safety and Center for Safe and Secure Schools Cyberbullying

Campus Safety Magazine provided an article with interviews with Center for Safe and Secure Schools staff about the “No Place for Hate Youth Summit.” The summit addressed cyberbullying and supplied solutions for area youth.

### View Article:

[www.campussafetymagazine.com/safety/no-place-for-hate-youth-summit-cyberbullying/](http://www.campussafetymagazine.com/safety/no-place-for-hate-youth-summit-cyberbullying/)

**CampusSafety**  
ORIGINAL SCHOOLS UNIVERSITY

News School University Hospital Technology Clergy / Title

**FREE DOWNLOAD**  
PREVENTING VIOLENCE: An Inside-Out Approach to Campus Security & Safety

 School Safety

## No Place for Hate Youth Summit Addresses Cyberbullying

More than 250 Houston-area students attended the full-day workshop to learn how to confront bullying behavior and support those being bullied.

🕒 November 16, 2019 👤 CS Staff 💬 [Jump to Comments](#)

Hundreds of students and counselors from eight Houston-area school districts joined forces at a youth summit to discuss cyberbullying.

The “[No Place for Hate Youth Summit](#),” spearheaded by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), is a full-day workshop that teaches students how to recognize bullying at school, confront [bullying](#) behavior, and be an ally to those who are being bullied.

The Nov. 8 summit was held at the University of Houston Central Law School and was funded in part by the [STOP School Violence grant](#) provided by the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) Center for Safe and Secure Schools (CSSS).

“The primary goal of the grant is to reduce school violence by creating a positive school culture and climate through various adult and student training sessions, and the Youth Summit is focused on the same outcome—reducing school violence through anti-bullying awareness training. The synergy couldn’t have been better,” said Dennis Calloway, grant manager for the CSSS.



Middle schoolers Emilia Strother and Macian Fussell attended the summit to learn cyberbullying prevention strategies they can take back to school.

# HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS AT HCDE

**Holiday happenings abound at HCDE, with receptions, Santa visits, celebrations and more.**

## **VIEW THE LIST:**

**Dec. 12**

12-1 p.m.

**NPO Holiday Reception**

Rooms 1010-1012

6005 Westview, Houston, Texas

**Dec. 14**

9 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

**Ecobot-Challenge Elementary Reveal Day**

(plus Drone Training for Middle School teachers)

6300 Irvington, Houston, Texas

**Dec. 17**

10 a.m.

**Bates Collision Center Car Giveaway**

(Head Start mom gains car)

Channelview location

15532 I-10 East, Houston, Texas

**Dec. 18**

10 a.m.

**Bates Collision Center Car Giveaway**

(Head Start mom gains car)

Baytown location

3219 N. Main, Baytown, Texas

**Dec. 18**

10 a.m.

**Holiday Celebration at ABS West**

7800 Westglen Dr., Houston, Texas

**Dec. 19**

9:30 a.m.

**Santa Visits Compton Head Start**

9720 Spaulding St., Houston, Texas

**Dec. 19**

12-1 p.m.

**Irvington Holiday Reception**

Rooms 100A-C

6300 Irvington, Houston, Texas





### Organizational Morale and Community Relations:

In agreement of the Board's expectations of me to:

- Create an open and positive environment for sharing resources and exchanging ideas to improve organizational climate;
- Seek systemically to improve the climate by obtaining and utilizing feedback from employees of the Department;
- Model and support responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas;
- Celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge excellence;
- Ensure fair and equitable management practices;
- Demonstrate quality management through delegation of authority, team building, consensus development, leadership development and self-management;
- 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.

So many positive things happened this week for HCDE. Our Principal for the Day events at ABS West and East provided our staff and community partners with ideas about



collaboration as we walked the halls of both schools and talked about our students and services provided.

Community and employees learned about our exceptional organization through our ranking in the top 25, large companies of Top Workplaces.



Employees joined us in a celebration prior to the Board meeting to celebrate our success as an organization.

Finally, we share upcoming holiday events which further serve to let community know about our exceptional services. These events also allow staff to share new ideas and acknowledge success.

As we reflect, we continue to count our blessings as a service organization to our education community.

By providing an excellent workplace environment and continuing to share our education services with the community, I am working to achieve the Board's goals to treat every person with respect and dignity, implement effective management practices ensuring all policies are supported by effective procedures; and function as a primary ambassador for the Department. I am also presenting a positive, professional image of the Department in all venues—community, political, educational, business and board. We are also maintaining visibility and involvement in the community with ISD superintendents, elected officials, community leaders and the HCDE Board.

### HCDE BOARD

#### Board President

Josh Flynn

#### Vice President

George Moore

#### Board Members

Richard Cantu

Eric Dick

Danny Norris

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

#### Introduction to Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness

November 22, 2019

#### Ashes in the Snow Professional Development Workshop

November 25, 2019

#### Board Meeting

December 16, 2019

