

The CONNECTOR

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

NEW HORIZONS

TOP STORIES INSIDE



Ecobot 2020 Issues Recycle Challenge through Reveal Day



ABS West Construction Update for January



Professional Development for Head Start Staff Kicks off New Year

The CONNECTOR



Of Note...

The New Year typically brings the promise of hope and a renewed sense of purpose to a school district. Staff return from break ready to embrace students, serve the community and offer the best educational programs possible.

For HCDE nothing embodies this spirit of hope for the future quite like the new ABS West campus. We are entering the final phase of construction this month, where the heart of the campus really comes to life. Crews are beginning interior work and soon we will see years of planning come to fruition with a state-of-the-art campus dedicated to meeting the unique needs of our students.

The spirit of collaboration was also apparent with our Head Start staff this week, as they gathered to kick off the new year with professional learning about cognitive development in children. These types of continuing education opportunities are critical for our staff, giving them insight and knowledge for how to meet the evolving needs of our community's children. These experiences also reinforce the interpersonal relationships our staff have with each other, forging bonds that enhance the collaborative culture within HCDE.

I started off the week with my Executive Leadership Team on Monday, followed by agenda review for the board meeting next week. I held my monthly Leadership Team meeting on Tuesday, where all the directors come together to update one another on the work of their divisions. These meetings are an opportunity for all HCDE leaders to see not only what each other is doing, but also for me to articulate the vision for the organization in the coming year.

I met with one of my mentees on Wednesday and read to the Humble Head Start as part of my SuperMENTor duties on Thursday. On Thursday afternoon I also met the new Klein ISD Superintendent, Dr. Jenny McGowen and had a great conversation about how HCDE can collaborate with Klein to support students and staff. I wrapped up the week with internal meetings at NPO on Friday.

I look forward to seeing you at the Board Appreciation Reception before the board meeting next week.

Have a relaxing weekend.



**Harris County
Department of
Education**

BOARD SHORTS

Sole December Grad Celebrated at ABS West

Cy-Fair ISD student Baily Menkes, a new ABS West December grad, talks about what he loves about his alma mater: faculty, staff and students. He promises to make regular visits to his lifelong friends. Most students graduate from our Schools in May, but sometimes students have the credits to move forward with their lives during December. Congrats Baily!



Winter Warming Project Coordinated by ECA, Choice Partners

Educator Certification and Advancement (ECA) teamed with Choice Partners for the Winter Warming Drive to provide blankets, socks, scarves and mittens to seniors at the Highland Park Rehabilitation and Nursing Center. In total, employees contributed 140 pairs of socks along with approximately 70 hats, gloves, blankets and other items of clothing. The gifts were delivered during the holidays as a humanitarian project coordinated by the two HCDE divisions.



Trustees to Be Honored Guests at 'Board Appreciation Reception'

Prior to the Jan. 15 Board of Trustees meeting, HCDE employees will gather from noon-1 p.m. in the Irvington lobby meeting rooms to honor the HCDE Board of Trustees at the Board Appreciation Reception. The traditional reception allows employees to express their appreciation to the board as both are served finger foods and desserts. The Texas Association of School Boards prepares the theme for each year's celebration to help districts recognize their local trustees during School Board Recognition Month. This year TASB selected the space theme: Launching the Next Generation.



ABS West Students, Staff Give Back to Neighboring Rehab Center

Students and staff at ABS West made an early holiday visit to residents of the Galleria Residence and Rehabilitation Center prior to winter break. Students crafted Christmas cards, provided homemade cookies and performed holiday skits for the residents. Principal Victor Keys said smiles abounded as the students enjoyed the community project as much as the residents.



PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

ABS West Construction Update for January

Although December was a short month for local school districts, contractors reported steady progress on construction of our new Academic and Behavior School West. The school construction is on-track and scheduled for completion this spring.

Updates on the school follow:

- The sensory room design has been finalized with the theme “under the sea.” The room features interactive equipment and was designed to benefit our students with intellectual, developmental and behavioral disorders. Students' senses are stimulated by the visuals, lights, sounds and touch.
- HVAC is ready for startup, pending power restoration by CenterPoint. (After being stalled by a CenterPoint Energy power outage, the energy company reported it will restore power this week.)
- Plumbing is near completion.
- Restroom walls are tiled; floors are staged for completion.
- Restroom fixtures, partitions, ceiling tiles are scheduled after flooring is installed.
- Gym construction is almost complete—awaiting tiles, flooring, hand-painted mural.
- Cafeteria is near completion.
- Ballistic-rated walls in the bus drop-off area are installed and passed manufacturer's inspection.
- Glass in lobby (ballistic rated) is scheduled for installment later this month.

Current north view at school



NORTH
Academic & Behavior Center West

webber
commercial
12-18-2019

School entrance



Sensory room



Tile progress



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Ecobot 2020 Issues Recycle Challenge through Reveal Day

The All-Earth Ecobot Challenge officially kicked off in December with the elementary reveal day held at 6300 Irvington provided by CASE for Kids. Three dozen teachers and parents from schools in Houston, Cleveland, Galena Park, New Caney, Aldine, Huffman and Cy-Fair and several charter schools attended the reveal.

This year's theme for the elementary school challenge is Ecobot Kingdom with an emphasis on creating a recycle kingdom where students reduce, reuse, recycle and rethink. Coordinator and award-winning Humble teacher Joe Panietz led the educators through the new challenge and rules.

Lego Mindstorm robotics kits are used as students defend their kingdoms through a tabletop challenge through their program robots. The challenge is an innovative engineering competition that engages students in complex problem-solving while developing critical thinking skills and elevating their confidence in formulating solutions to real-world missions.

New to the challenge is an actual recycling competition to be held at each school campus.

The elementary Ecobot Challenge for fourth through sixth graders will be held on April 18 at the Gerald D. Young Agriculture Center in Katy ISD. A middle school challenge with drones is slated for April 25 at the same location. More details about practice days and registration may be found at www.ecobotchallenge.com.



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Spotlight on New HCDE Trustee Andrea Duhon, Position 4, Precinct 3

Newly appointed board member Andrea Duhon was sworn into office Dec. 18 to represent Position 4, Precinct 3 within the Harris County Department of Education Board of Trustees.

A self-professed public education advocate, Duhon wants to bolster Harris County student opportunities in early childhood education, adult education workforce certification and second-language acquisition.



"WHEN WE SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS FROM A COMMUNITY LEVEL, WE GROW AS A SOCIETY."- ANDREA DUHON

"I have been in the fight for public education programs for several years now through galvanizing public support and testifying in the 86th (Texas) Legislature in support of HCDE," she said. "I will continue to stand up for the good of our community through public education programs."

The Katy resident holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from McNeese State University. She is a territory manager and marketing strategist for Plant Sight 3D.

Her affiliations include community leader for Combined Arms, formerly Lone Star Veterans Association, a nonprofit helping veterans transition to civilian life. Her husband Hank is active-duty Navy.

As a mother to second-grade student Jaci, Duhon talks about education reaching outside the school.

"Education does not end in the classroom," she said. "It extends to the playground, the sports field, the neighborhood and home. When we support our students from a community level, we grow as a society."

Special Event This Month: Ron Clark

Gain creative practices for motivating students and succeeding in work and life with New York Times best-selling novelist and award-winning, Disney America Teacher of the Year Ron Clark on Jan. 25.

Clark presents at a workshop hosted by HCDE's Teaching and Learning Center at the Marriott Westchase, 2900 Briarpark Drive.

Registration info: <https://tinyurl.com/sgnvl12>



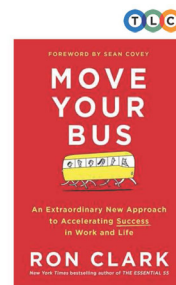
MOVE YOUR BUS:

RON CLARK

AN EXTRAORDINARY APPROACH TO ACCELERATING SUCCESS IN WORK AND LIFE

Saturday, Jan. 25, 2020

Workshop No.: 12727 | Houston Marriott Westchase - 2900 Briarpark Dr. Houston, TX 77042



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Professional Development for Head Start Staff Kicks off New Year

At some point during the first 18 months of infancy, research shows that every child diagnosed with autism departs from the typical brain development pathway.

Head Start staff from 15 area centers returned to work for professional development Jan. 6 to learn more about subjects ranging from cognitive development to classroom management to updates in state operations and licensing procedures.

Ann McKittrick with Texas Childcare Training tried a hands-on training project giving staff simple tasks with balls, then adding complex directions. The adults, like their young students, were challenged with the tasks which weren't reinforced.

"See what happens when you try to learn too much at one time," the trainer said. "If your brain has too much going on, we can't really focus."

Head Start Senior Director Venetia Peacock said the training sessions for staff are ongoing throughout the year and equip staff with the tools they need as teacher professionals.

Classes for both Head Start and Schools students began Jan. 7.



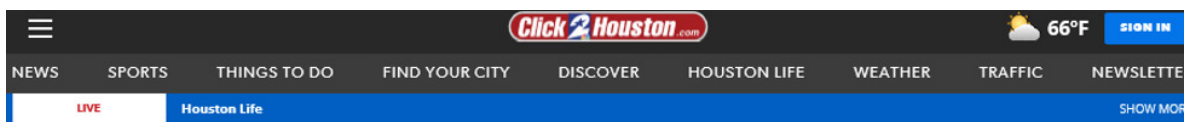
In the News: Head Start Parenting Award Featured through KPRC, Auto Magazines

KPRC Channel 2 provided this website wrap-up about the Head Start mom who gained a car via the Responsible Parenting Award from Bates Collision during the holidays. Several other auto body industry news magazines also carried the story:

KPRC: tinyurl.com/yzzmm5vp

Auto Body News: tinyurl.com/yelqo5jx

Body Shop Business: tinyurl.com/ygls8cyn



SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

Management of Administrative, Fiscal and Facilities Function and Professional Growth and Development

In an effort to:

Implement and oversee a planning process that results in goals, targets or priorities for major areas of operations;

Monitor effectiveness of operations against appropriate benchmarks;

Ensure the Department investment strategies, risk management activities and purchasing practices are sound, cost-efficient and consistent with policy and law;

Ensure that appropriate staff development is available and monitor staff development for effectiveness; and

Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration.



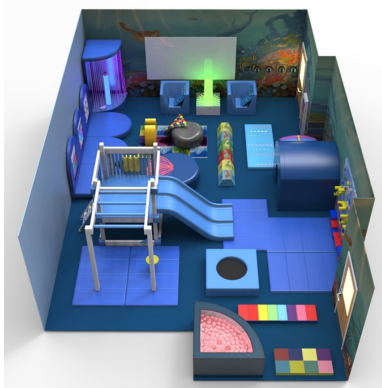
Head Start staff gathered here Jan 6., returning to work after a restful holiday break. Because it is essential for our staff to understand how preschool children learn, we provided professional development on cognitive growth. As you know, children ages 3-5 soak up knowledge like sponges. However, they need repetition and patterning to learn. Too much too soon equals overload.

Teachers learned about cognitive development as well as conditions like autism through our professional development. These sessions are integral to the success of our teachers and ultimately their Head Start students and their families.

In addition to hosting Head Start training, we invited teachers throughout Harris County to learn about the Ecobot Challenge 2020 through the reveal day. The Ecobot curriculum grows more enriched with STEM materials each year. This year, contestants will recycle at their respective schools and meet with recycle personnel in local businesses to learn about career paths in conservation.

We also bring a progress report about ABS West and its construction status. Staff, our students and our client districts are excited about moving into the school this spring. Each day of progress via construction brings us closer to that goal. I hope you'll enjoy reading the latest update!

By offering quality professional development to staff and educators in Harris County and by routinely keeping abreast of construction progress at the school, I am ensuring that: Quality staff development opportunities should be available to employees, and new effective tools must be available as we determine their applicability to HCDE staff and Harris County educators. Also, I am acting as a prudent leader to ensure that goal and targets for ABS West are fulfilled while monitoring these operations against planned benchmarks.



HCDE BOARD

Board President

Eric Dick

Vice President

Danny Norris

Board Members

Richard Cantu

Andrea Duhon

Amy Hinojosa

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Jan. 13

Visible Learning for Math
Deep Learning
8:30 a.m.

Jan. 15

- Public Facility Corporation (PFC) Meeting, 11 a.m.
- Audit Committee Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- Board Appreciation Reception, 12 p.m.

Jan. 16

Threat Assessment Team
Workshop Sheldon ISD
8:30 a.m.