



## Of Note...

I trust that everyone had an enjoyable holiday season. As you know, the Department returned to its regular hours of operation on Thursday, January 4, 2019, along with the majority of our client school districts.

Prior to the holiday season, the various divisions, along with the overall Department, held numerous festive events in observation of the season. The most memorable of all were likely the Bates Car Giveaway events benefiting deserving Head Start families in the Baytown and Channelview areas.

We are now embarking upon the second semester of this academic year. It's hard to fathom that this year is halfway over. To that end, all of our programs and services have resumed with a renewed energy to meet the needs of the students of Harris County.

Upon my return to the office this past Monday, I held Agenda Review in preparation for next week's Board Meeting. I also conducted my regularly-scheduled ELT Meeting. On Tuesday, I conducted Leadership Team Meeting and met with the superintendent of Stafford MSD, a client district. I am pleased to report that he is pleased with the services we are providing. Yesterday, I fulfilled my responsibility as a SuperMENTor volunteer at Humble Head Start. Today, it was a pleasure to have, yet, another new Board member sworn in, and we also had a successful Board Workshop. I am also pleased to report that Choice Partners held an impressive awards ceremony.

This week in the area of teaching and learning, HCDE hosted the following trainings and workshops this week: Alternative Certification Program for Teachers Information Session and the STAAR Academy Grade 5 Science: Essential Tools for RTI. HCDE will continue to serve as a beacon in the area of professional development and continued learning to benefit learners of all ages in Harris County.

Looking ahead into next week, I will begin the week with both ELT and IMPACT Meetings. IMPACT is a group comprised primarily of school board members from the greater Harris County area, as well as superintendents. This serves as a unique think tank in public education for the betterment of the students we collectively serve. I will travel Tuesday to fulfill my duties as a member of the UIL Board, returning Wednesday for Board Appreciation festivities.

To that end, please be reminded that the Board Appreciation reception will be held Wednesday, from 11:30-12:30, immediately preceding the regularly scheduled January Board Meeting at 1:00 p.m. Our staff looks forward to expressing appreciation to you for the work you do all year long.

Effective immediately, I will be working from the North Post Oak location each Friday. Additionally, members of my Executive Leadership Team will increase their presence at that location as well. Each member of the team will work from that location one day every week. (The Human Resources division has always maintained a weekly presence at NPO but I have decided to expand that effort to ensure that at least one ELT member is present at NPO weekly.) Again, I will report to that location each Friday.

Finally, I look forward to seeing you at next week's Board Appreciation Reception and Board Meeting on Wednesday, January 16, 2019.

In closing, I hope you enjoy this issue of **The Connector** and I hope you have a relaxing weekend.

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**January Board Meeting—Wednesday, January 16, 2019**

**33rd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference—Saturday, January 26, 2019**

PLANTING SEEDS OF  
**SUCCESS**



SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION MONTH

**#SchoolBoardMonth**



WEEK OF JANUARY 7, 2019

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# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### Head Start Kicks Off Year with Mid-Term Conference



Head Start staff started the new year with a mid-term conference on Jan. 3-4. Motivation speaker and master child care trainer Albert Wright of Wright One Training providing several sessions.

Management strategies with various adult personality types was one of the sessions. Other sessions included curriculum training and various self-improvement topics. This is a tidbit of safe advice from the longtime trainer: “It takes one fool to argue and two fools to make a conversation out of it.”

### ADVANCED TEACHING AND LEARNING BY TRAINING THE TRAINER

**JANUARY 9, 2019**

Alternative Certification Program for Teachers - Information Session

**JANUARY 10, 2019**

STAAR Academy Grade 5 Science: Essential Tools for RTI

### Annual Early Childhood Winter Conference Set for Jan. 26



The 33rd Annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference will be held on Saturday, Jan. 26. This year’s keynote speaker is Emmy award-winning and best-selling author, Steve Spangler. He will do just about anything it takes to get people excited about science. Accomplished children’s book author Karma Wilson

will speak in the morning. Her Humorous, rhythmic picture books share her faith in a fun, understandable way with young readers. In the afternoon Juliet Stipeche, who is a great proponent of early childhood education, will present her passion about education as she is the director of education for the city of Houston.



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Behavioral Specialist James Reshapes Young Lives



*Teacher Stephanie Stamps, student Ronshanique and behavior specialist Melissa James*

While it's a challenge to understand and redirect the behavior of multiple special needs students, Harris County Department of Education behavioral specialist Melissa James considers it the perfect job.

James exudes calm and smiles as she routinely greets students by name on her journey through school hallways. Students are referred to HCDE's four special schools on a contractual basis by client school districts in greater Harris County. Two schools serve students ages 5-22 with emotional and academic special needs. One school helps high school students who are recovering from addiction while a fourth serves adjudicated and troubled youth.

"Each and every student at HCDE is different and has his or her own individualized education program within our small classroom settings," said HCDE Schools Senior Director Anthony Mays. "Ms. James observes student behavior and works one-on-one with students and teachers to identify solutions and to support and eliminate inappropriate student behavior."

James has extensive experience as a counselor and holds a master's in psychology and education administration. She is a certified special education administrator and spent numerous years educating children with behavioral challenges at public, private and nonprofit institutions, including Avondale House, which specializes in autism services and resources.

When evaluating each student in meetings called the admission, review and dismissal (ARD) process, James looks for triggers or antecedents that will lead to inappropriate behavior. What works with one student won't necessarily work with another. Student Julia came to Academic and Behavior School West from her home district in Fort Bend Independent School District. Her future looks starkly different today than it did when she came to

her new special school several months back.

The 15-year-old's aggression is put in check as the teen gets frustrated. She holds up an orange card to her classroom teacher as a coping strategy, signaling she needs quick help. James will take Julia for a cool-down walk, reassuring her and discussing behavior solutions. In the beginning, James rode the bus home with the young girl who had repeatedly fought and been in trouble with the law. Today, Julia is working on returning to her home campus so she can become a cosmetologist.

By coaching teachers like Stephanie Stamps, sharing behavior strategies with teachers also becomes part of James' daily routine. Stamps, a veteran, 20-year teacher, leads a class of five adolescents with severe behavioral challenges and varying degrees of autism. Bad behaviors are redirected, not punished.

"We have to provide coping skills and ways to handle frustration because students can lose control very quickly sometimes," Stamps said. "Sometimes the student needs to hear it from someone else besides me."

The ultimate goal at HCDE's special schools is for students to return to their home campuses, but sometimes the behavioral school becomes the home school, especially in the case of life skills students with intellectual as well as behavioral challenges.



*Behavior specialist Melissa James and student Julia*

"My goal is to help students learn to assess their own behaviors and understand how their actions affect their own learning and safety, as well as the safety of those around them," James said.

In shaping student behavior, the behavior specialist knows that young futures are charted as well.



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### School Board Appreciation Month Delivers Local Celebration to HCDE Board Jan. 16



HCDE joins school districts across the state in January to thank our HCDE Board of Trustees for their commitment and contributions to the students of Harris County. This year's campaign is "Planting Seeds of Success."

"Our board members serve countless volunteer hours working to enhance education services for students and community in Harris County," said HCDE Superintendent James Colbert Jr. "We thank them for providing vision and leadership for the Department."

Each January, the Texas Association of School Boards organizes the School Board Recognition Month campaign to focus on the crucial role an elected board of trustees plays in our communities and schools. For more information, visit <https://goo.gl/ZfKLss>.

An appreciation reception is planned in rooms 100 A-C at 6300 Irvington on Jan. 16 from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., before the scheduled board meeting. Employees will be in attendance, with current, outgoing and new trustees as the guests of honor. Appetizers, cake and punch will be served.

### HCDE Communications Host Social Media Workshop



The Communications division hosted two social media workshops for members of the Houston Area School Public Relations Association and many HCDE divisions. Tristen Sutton presented Social Media Engagement Strategies for school districts and how to promote HCDE services to the community.

Client Engagement Coordinator Nick Covanes presented a sales 101 presentation about relation-based sales to divisions such as Center for Safe and Secure Schools, Teaching and Learning Center, Choice Partners and CASE for Kids.

### CASE for Kids Celebrates 20th Anniversary in 2019, Events and Publications Planned



CASE for Kids celebrates its 20th year anniversary in 2019 and plans several celebrations and publications to commemorate its beginnings and accomplishments along the way. A 20-year logo will be included on many CASE publications this year. We congratulate CASE for Kids on its big anniversary!

# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Professional Growth and Development

In an effort to meet the Board's expectations of me to achieve the element of performance related to this goal to:

- Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration
- Ensure that appropriate staff development is available and monitor staff development for effectiveness;
- Stay abreast of developments in educational leadership and administration



HCDE's Area I Head Start division kicked off the new calendar year with a professional development experience facilitated by motivational speaker and master child care trainer Albert Wright of Wright One Training.

Wright hosted several sessions, offering management strategies,

including one regarding various adult personality types. Other sessions included curriculum training and a variety of self-improvement topics. The workshop was very well-attended and will be impactful for staff within that division as they work to meet the needs of our youngest learners and their families.

As a result of Head Start hosting this session, I am ensuring that I systemically strive to meet the Board's goal of exposing staff to quality professional development by:

- Ensuring that each staff member is evaluated annually and informed of progress or needs for improvement and expectations;
- Ensuring that staff development opportunities are communicated and available to employees; and finally,
- Assessing any new and effective development tools available, and determining its applicability to HCDE staff.

## HCDE BOARD

### **Board President**

Louis Evans, III

**Position 4, Precinct 3**

### **Vice President**

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**Position 6, Precinct 1**

George Moore

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**Position 3, At Large**

Michael Wolfe

**Position 5, At Large**

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**January Board Meeting**  
Wednesday, January 16, 2019

