

# The CONNECTOR

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



VOLUME 2/ISSUE 24  
Week of March 7, 2016

From the office of **JAMES COLBERT, JR. – SUPERINTENDENT**

## IN THIS ISSUE



TASBO Award of Merit for Purchasing Operations Awarded to Purchasing Division  
pg. 2



Center for Safe and Secure Schools Hosts Intensive, 3-Day Restorative Justice Workshop for 40 Educators  
pg. 3



Rodeo 2016 Provides Learning Experiences, Fun for Students at AB West School  
pg. 4



Unlocking Literacy Conference Attracts Nearly 200 Educators  
pg. 4



HCDE Celebrates Scholastic Art & Writing Award Recipients at Gold and Silver Key Ceremonies  
pg. 5

## OF NOTE

Today marks the end of the week prior to the Spring Break holiday. Please be reminded that HCDE will be closed next week, March 14-18. The Department will resume normal business hours on Monday, March 21. This year, for the first time in several years, all 25 Harris County School Districts will share the same Spring Break holiday schedule.

This week, we continued to fortify our work in the area of workforce development in conjunction with an education partnership. HCDE Adult Education division representatives and I met with representatives from Capital IDEA—whose mission is to break the cycle of poverty by supporting low-income adults in their efforts to earn college level credentials, and enter a living wage career. Similar to HCDE, Capital IDEA brands itself as a catalyst to connect people to their future. I will keep you posted should a partnership arise out of these discussions to forward our workforce development achievement.

I participated in a number of meetings this week as a result of my involvement with the Mayor's Education Transition Team Committee. I am preparing to present to both the Mayor, and the larger committee, on how the city can solidify the Mayor's initiative related to establishing a partnership between area school districts and the city, to ultimately bridge the gap between school districts and institutions of higher learning to advance opportunities for the students we serve. I am excited about the work in this area, and HCDE's role to serve as a leader in these discussions. Our involvement at the city level further increases HCDE's visibility in the public education community.

As mentioned in last week's newsletter, I attended the TABSE Annual Conference. I had the unique opportunity to attend a legislative caucus event where I participated on a panel related to Board Relations geared toward aspiring superintendents. Additionally, I continued to serve as a professional mentor to aspiring education leaders in a variety of breakout sessions where I had a chance to impart wisdom to mentees on a variety of topics related to advancing one's career in education administration.

I am happy to report that I have begun my quarterly meetings with each of you. I have nearly completed this round of meetings, and I look forward to completing these sessions with the remaining trustees after Spring Break. I find these opportunities to be informative, usually for both parties, and it serves as an excellent way to learn about the milestones the Department has reached, as well as those in which we are striving.

We continued to create value, deliver opportunity, and provide service for educators in Harris County and beyond through a host of training sessions that will benefit the students we serve. We facilitated fifth and eighth grade science STAAR sessions entitled, A Closer Look at Matter and Energy and A Closer Look at Force, Motion, and Energy, respectively. We also hosted Dual Language Programs and Strategies, which was a 2-day academy, as well as Intervention and Review Strategies for U.S. History EOC—a social studies focused training. As previewed in last week's newsletter, the Center for Safe and Secure Schools division hosted its 3-day restorative justice workshop for over 40 attendees across the county. (See page 2 for additional details on this exciting new topic in public education.) Finally, we ended the week with a Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Biological Processes and Systems. We continue to serve as an essential piece of the education puzzle.

Again, please be reminded that the next regularly scheduled Board Meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 19. **The Connector** will resume during the week of March 21, 2016, once the Department and our member districts return from Spring Break.

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

# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### TASBO Award of Merit for Purchasing Operations Awarded to Purchasing Division



The HCDE Purchasing division earned the Texas Association of School Business Officials Award of Merit for Purchasing Operations at the 2016 TASBO Conference on March 1. The award was given to only 29 organizations through the entire state of Texas.

Receiving the award were Bill Monroe, director of the Purchasing division and Lytrina Bob, manager of procurement.

The internal Purchasing division of Harris County Department of Education is part of the Business Services division and is responsible for the administration of procurement for HCDE in compliance with all state, local, and federal regulations.

*Photo: Harris County Department of Education Purchasing gains the Texas Association of School Business Officials Award of Merit for Purchasing Operations for 2016. Only 29 organizations in the state received the award. (left) Steve Fisher, Texas Association of School Board BuyBoard Market and Sales; Bill Monroe, director of HCDE's Purchasing division; Lytrina Bob, manager of procurement, HCDE Purchasing; and Nancy Mowry, Region 6 Educational Service Center*

### Harris County Educators Get a Closer Look at Science TEKS

Harris County educators attended multiple workshops held by the Teaching and Learning Center this week to analyze and review the recently released STAAR questions related to various science topics. During the workshops, attendees also addressed common student misconceptions and received strategies and best practices to increase classroom rigor.



### Advancing Teaching and Learning by Training the Trainer

Trainings hosted at HCDE this week

#### MARCH 7, 2016

Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Matter and Energy

Restorative Practices Implementation Training

#### MARCH 8, 2016

Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Matter and Energy

#### MARCH 9, 2016

Grade 5 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Force, Motion and Energy

Dual Language Programs and Strategies: A 2-Day Academy

#### MARCH 10, 2016

Grade 8 Science STAAR: A Closer Look at Force, Motion and Energy

Intervention and Review Strategies for U.S. History EOC

#### MARCH 11, 2016

Biology EOC: A Closer Look at Biological Processes and Systems



# Opportunity

## PROGRAM CONNECTIONS

### At-risk Youth Gain Worksite-Based Training, Education through \$148,000 Community Collaborative with HCDE Adult Education

Unemployed, at-risk youth will be trained both vocationally and academically by Harris County Department of Education's Adult Education division through a \$148,000 community collaborative funded through Gulf Coast Workforce Board and the Texas Workforce Commission.



The partnership provides workforce training through multiple local companies in high-need, designated geographic areas where the youth reside. The grant was awarded and is administered by Dynamic Educational Systems, Inc., a workforce service contractor for youth services. My Brother's Keeper is leading the outreach campaign to recruit young candidates for the program. The Houston nonprofit's mission is to provide emergency assistance, social services, and training for individuals and families in crisis.

The first classes begin in late February in northeast Houston at Building Specialties, Inc., a contractor that provides mechanical, thermal, and acoustical insulation in southeast Texas.

As the project expands, other local companies will be recruited to join the collaboration, said Eduardo Honold, director of HCDE Adult Education.

"Access to education and vocational training is challenging for these youth," said Honold. The goal is to provide opportunities within their communities, he said.

The project engages youth in immediate and extensive worksite-based training and employment along a high-skill, high-growth occupational pathway. HCDE will provide integrated vocational instruction which will lead to National Center for Construction Education and Research certification, coupled with basic skill instruction in reading, writing, and math at worksites.

HCDE Adult Education provides classes to adult learners with a goal to "learn to earn," including adult basic literacy and math skills, GED, English as a second language and vocational training. Classes are held in 35 community locations throughout Harris and Liberty counties. Communities include Baytown, Alief, Channelview, Cy-Fair, Deer Park, Galena Park, Goose Creek, Katy, Klein, Pasadena, Sheldon and Spring Branch and Liberty. Corporations also benefit from HCDE services provided to English language learning employees aimed at improving productivity and safety in the workplace. For more information access [www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation](http://www.hcde-texas.org/adulteducation).

### Center for Safe and Secure Schools Hosts Intensive, 3-Day Restorative Justice Workshop for 40 Educators



HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure Schools led a three-day Restorative Justice training designed to help schools get to the heart of student misbehavior and reduce suspensions. Over 40 participants—drawn from central office personnel, campus principals, attendance clerks, truancy officers and school staff other members—were in attendance on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Leading spokesperson and trainer Sherwynn Patton lead the in-depth training that focuses on strategies for school-wide implementation of restorative justice practices. Through community-building and talking circles, Patton teaches staff how to empower students to resolve conflicts and repair the harm caused by inappropriate behavior.



# Opportunity

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



## Rodeo 2016 Provides Learning Experiences, Fun for Students at AB West School

Students and staff at AB School West went on a field trip to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo 2016 last week. Students earned the privilege to attend based on behavior. Students viewed the honey bee hives, experienced the animal birthing center, and the milking parlor. The trip was a great experience for students to learn about animals and farming techniques. The bull rides, pig races, and mutton busting contest were part of the rodeo experiences. Dr. Victor Keys, principal, said the enthusiasm of students was as joy to experience for all the staff.

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



## Unlocking Literacy Conference Attracts Nearly 200 Educators

Neuhaus Education Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting reading success, hosted the 2016 Unlocking Literacy Conference for nearly 200 participants at HCDE

this week. The two-day conference provided information on cutting-edge best practices for today's educational leaders and featured keynote speakers Dr. Stephen Klineberg with Kinder Institute and Dr. Julie A. Washington with Georgia State University.



## DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: Aldine ISD

Aldine ISD hosts a Web page which offers college and trade school scholarship opportunities, news and resources for students.



Details:

<http://www.aldineisd.org/cms/one.aspx?portalId=750&pageId=14641>

# Service

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

### HCDE Celebrates Scholastic Art & Writing Award Recipients at Gold and Silver Key Ceremonies



Above: Local author and artist Justin Garcia speaks to the award-winning artists about the importance of purpose

HCDE hosted three Scholastic Art & Writing ceremonies on March 5 to celebrate the award-winning Harris County artists and writers. The Gold and Silver Key writing recipients were honored at 10 a.m., the Gold Key artists at 2 p.m. and the Silver Key artists at 3:30 p.m. Special awards were presented at each of the three ceremonies, and local artist and author of "One Ton Goldfish: In Search of the Tangible Dream" Justin Garcia spoke at both art ceremonies about finding purpose through art. Garcia also provided the young artists with important lessons for a successful career.

This year the awards were casual receptions and allowed writers and artists to mingle and network while they viewed art and writing posted on the walls. Our Scholastic Art & Writing regional coordinator Andrea Segraves provided greetings and facilitated award announcements. A red carpet gave students the opportunity to get "selfies" with family and friends.

All Gold Key art and writing pieces advance to the national level. National Scholastic Art & Writing winners will be announced on March 14 and will be invited to attend a special ceremony at Carnegie Hall in New York City. View photos from the Scholastic Art & Writing ceremonies here:

<https://hcdetx.smugmug.com/Scholastic-Art-Writing>. (password is hcde1889)



Above: Cy-Fair ISD student Leslie Tehuitzil stands by her Gold Key artwork titled "Maily"



Above: Superintendent Award Writing: Eli Winter, Carnegie Vanguard, Gold Key Awards (2) including journalism portfolio, Silver Key Award, \$1,000 scholarship, teacher Erica Harris



Above: Hajar Mohammad and Mother Nisa talk about the feelings behind Hajar's poetry. Read about it in our School Bell blog: <http://blog.hcde-texas.org/2016/03/07/express-yourself-scholastic-art-writing-awards-gives-teen-artistic-opportunity>.



Above: Teacher Paula Schamburger of Deer Park Junior High School earned our "The Susan O' Connor Award," the teacher award for excellence. She received a \$500 check and certificate for the award. Her students earned five Gold Key Awards and four Silver Key Awards.



Above: St. John's School student Caroline Huang poses with her certificates at the Scholastic Art & Writing Art Ceremony



# Systemic Achievement

*...with purposeful intent*

## Professional Growth and Development

In accordance with the Board's goals for me to:

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

Last week, several members of HCDE's administration attended both the TABSE Annual Conference in Frisco, as well as the TASBO Annual Conference in Austin. During the TABSE Annual Conference, I participated in a legislative caucus event where I served on the panel, and I also continued my work with Superintendents across the state in a variety of professional development sessions. Further, I served as a mentor to several aspiring school district level administrators where I had the opportunity to share my varied experiences and acquaint them with my skillset as it relates to how I climbed the education administration ladder. In addition, other HCDE staff in attendance participated fully in the sessions, and were engaged and involved in a variety of applicable ways that will prove beneficial to HCDE and the students we serve.



Above: Superintendent James Colbert attends 2016 TABSE Conference with Jonathan Parker (Administration), Dee Mattox-Hall (Schools division) and Kimberly McLeod (Administration)

Both conferences (TABSE and TASBO) offered all HCDE staff in attendance valuable outlets to

- Interact with other colleagues from across the state in an environment conducive for professional growth;
- Compare notes and contrast outcomes;
- Consider a broad spectrum of other view points and frames of reference; and
- Implement any and all innovative initiatives and strategies that will further benefit the students of Harris County.

**Through HCDE's representation at this event, and through my participation and the participation of all HCDE staff who attended these events—at varying levels—I am working to achieve the Board's expectation of me to encourage employees to participate in professional development opportunities, as well as to assess any new and effective development tools available, and determine their applicability to HCDE staff. Attending events such as these allow me an even broader frame of reference to achieve these goals.**

## HCDE BOARD

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## UPCOMING BOARD EVENTS:

**NO MARCH BOARD MEETING**

