

THE CONNECTOR

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

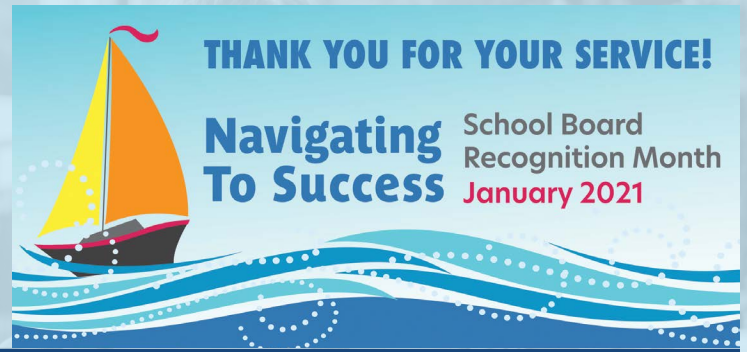
WEEK OF JANUARY 11, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 16

CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP

TOP STORIES

National School Board
Recognition Month p.2



TLC Launches 2021 Spring
Leadership Cohort Series p.3



Employee Spotlight p.4



Of Note...



As you hopefully already know, January is National School Board Appreciation Month. This is the time when instead of the board recognizing the hard work of our students, staff and community, we come together to celebrate you!

As part of this celebration, we have planned some great avenues to honor your service to the students, educators and residents of Harris County. First, we are creating individual videos of each board member, highlighting why you chose to serve. We will debut one video every couple days, posting it on our website as a featured video. We are starting with Mr. Dick and Mr. Norris this week and will roll the others out as they are completed. All videos will be posted on our website on the Meet the Board page next to your name and bio.

We usually host a reception before the board meeting with staff and the board, but with COVID we are including that in the board meeting. I enjoy celebrating the board, as we don't often get to talk about the work you do: hours reading 1,000-page agendas, discussions of issues and ideas for HCDE, meetings with community members and so much more. Your passion for making public education better in Harris County is amazing and I am proud to honor that each year!

I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team and standing meetings with several staff members. On Tuesday I met with a mentee to discuss her future plans and how she can take her career to the next level. That afternoon Dr. Amezcua and I met with Moak Casey, one of the premier school finance experts in the state, to finalize the economic impact HCDE has on our community, local school districts and the region. Every year, Moak Casey reviews our Cost Savings Report, which takes our service delivery data (how many students, educators and entities each division served in the prior year) and places an economic impact value to those services. Using a complex and validated formula, Dr. Amezcua computes how much money we saved each district with our services. Moak Casey takes this data and further calculates some of our key data points such as turning every \$1 of property taxes into nearly \$5 of services. This report showcases some of the intangible value HCDE brings to Harris County.

On Wednesday we reviewed the plans for the new Adult Education building and on Thursday morning I virtually read to our Head Start students as a SuperMENTor.

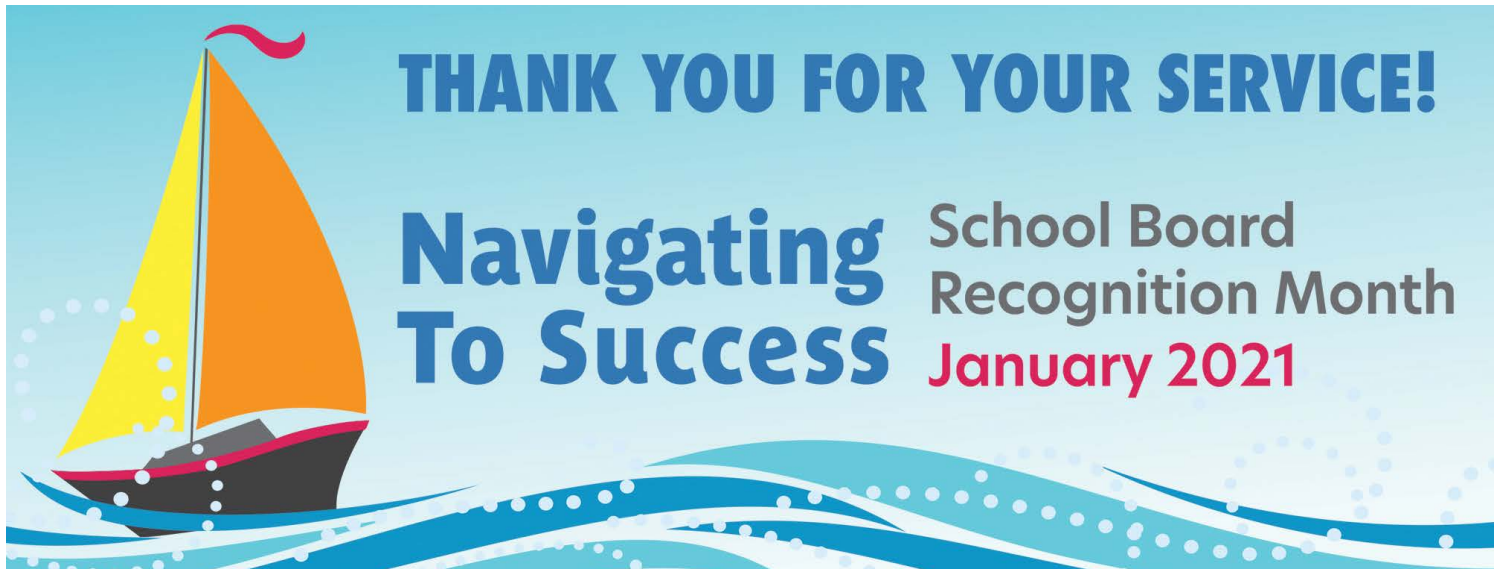
Thank you for the robust conversation and questions at our Equine Therapy Feasibility workshop on Thursday. It is critical we are on the same page in how HCDE will innovate and create new programs to better serve our community. I look forward to more discussions about the future of HCDE and how we can work as a team to achieve our goals at our retreat in February.

Monday is a holiday in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. so all HCDE buildings will be closed.

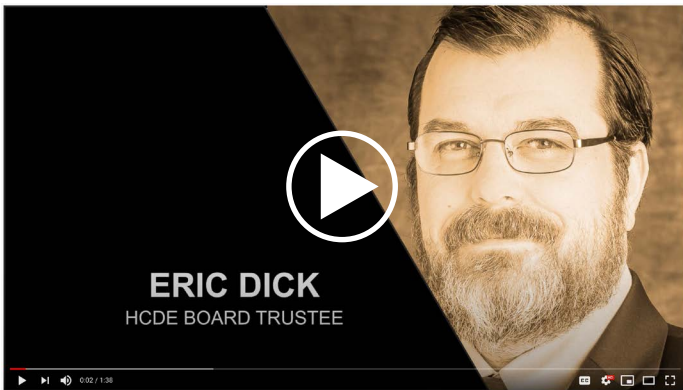
Have a fabulous three-day weekend.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Collier". The signature is stylized and cursive.

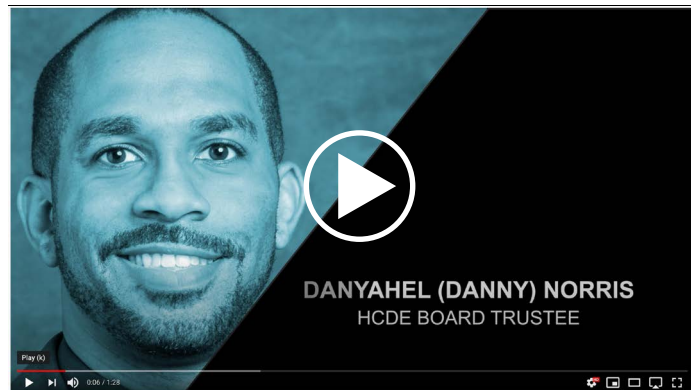
BOARD BRIEFS



In celebration of National School Board Recognition Month and we are looking forward to honoring your service to the students and educators of Harris County at our meeting next week. We have special plans as part of the recognition, we are creating a series of profile videos highlighting each of you that will be shared throughout the rest of the month.



[Watch Eric Dick video](#)



[Watch Danny Norris video](#)

HCDE Honored for Integrated Campaign



HCDE has won a Platinum Distinction (the highest award level) at the 2021 AVA Digital Awards for the digital portion of our Integrated Marketing Campaign.

This is an international competition that recognizes creative professionals for excellence in planning, designing and executing digital campaigns by honoring the evolving ways we engage our audiences through the creative convergence of digital arts, technology and information.

Other winners this year include AT&T, Microsoft, NATO, and Cornell University.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

Leadership Series Kick-off

This week the Teaching and Learning Center launched the 2021 Spring Leadership Cohort Series with a powerful session, “Is My School, Team, Department, Division or District Better Because I Lead It?” led by Principal Baruti Kafele.

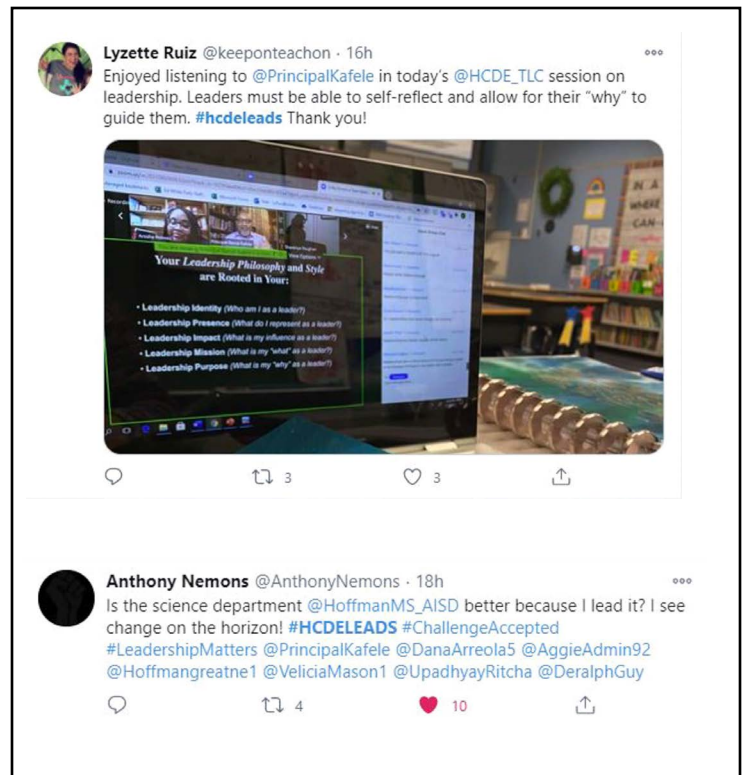
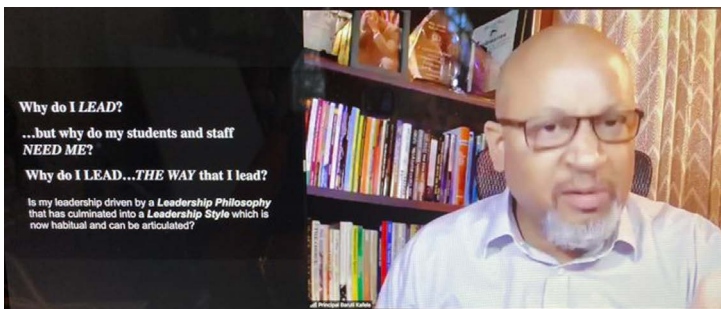
An expert in the area of “attitude transformation,” Principal Kafele is a national leader on strategies for creating a positive school climate and culture, transforming the attitudes of at-risk students, motivating Black males to excel in the classroom, and school leadership practices for inspiring schoolwide excellence.



Kafele virtually guided more than 70 school leaders from the area through an in depth, self-reflective, interactive examination of who they are as leaders and the intention driving all aspects

of their work. Participants were challenged to look deeply within themselves for greater meaning and understanding of their own personal value and worth to the staff and students that they lead.

Fifteen principals from Clear Creek ISD experienced the Series for the first time. “Baruti Kafele is masterful at explaining the art of leadership and how leading well is more about “being” than “doing”. I am always inspired by his constant connection to his WHY. He definitely helps you “get your mind right” about your role as a school leader,” said Stephanie McBride, Executive Director of Professional Learning from CCISD.



The Series continues with upcoming sessions:

Feb. 6 Family Engagement

Todd Nesloney leads a conversation with actionable items to immediately involve families in school.

Feb. 16 Winning in the Trenches

Danny Steele focuses on the nuts and bolts of school administration and how to thrive in everything from student discipline to parent conferences.

Feb. 27 A Call for Reality Pedagogy

Chris Emdin shares strategies to connect academic content to what’s happening in the world that affects students and to ensure their lives and backgrounds are reflected in the curriculum and in classroom conversations.

She may feel like a New Yorker, but her sense of community is the size of Texas

Last year, over 17,000 students in Harris County participated in afterschool and summer enrichment activities facilitated by the Harris County Department of Education's Center for Afterschool, Summer and Enrichment for Kids (CASE for Kids).

Ensuring that CASE for Kids remains a quality program for students during their out-of-school time is Kathleen "Kathy" Evans, HCDE manager of quality for CASE for Kids.

Now approaching her tenth year with the Department, Kathy – a native New Yorker – oversees program quality, professional development, the SMART Zone, and partnership schools for her division.

Before moving to Space City, Kathy had always worked in early childhood education and professional development for nonprofits.

"When I was dating my now-husband, he was trying to get me to move to Houston, and he told me there was less traffic. He really lied!" she said jokingly. "I have a t-shirt that says, 'I'm a New York girl in a Texas world,' and I do feel that."

Naturally, when she started working at HCDE, it was an interest of hers to work with the afterschool program.

"I've gone from working at schools out in the community to being a supervisor to all of the people who work at the schools."

During her tenure, Kathy has been an essential part of building professional development resources for CASE for Kids staff and volunteers – including during the Covid-19 pandemic. Last year, HCDE offered 50 professional development CASE for Kids workshops for over 1,300 individuals.

"There is a lot of research that shows that if you have a well-educated, quality staff, then the afterschool program is going to be better," she said, "and I like having an impact on that."

Like so many other things during the pandemic, many of these workshops, symposiums, and consulting services transitioned to an online setting.

"It's been challenging to change how you train people," she said. "We had to re-think and re-vamp the way we execute professional development. We decided to offer shorter, one-hour workshops that have been very successful."

Another area of focus for Kathy: Social and Emotional Learning.

"Kathy has become our team's Social and Emotional Learning ambassador-superstar," said CASE for Kids Director Lisa Caruthers. "She's holding us accountable as a division to make sure that we implement those practices

into our out-of-school-time programs and is taking a more purposeful role with it as part of her own professional development."



Kathy admits that what she loves most about her job is the ability to be creative and meet the community's needs.

"Houston has been hit with a lot of obstacles over the past few years like Hurricane Harvey and with the pandemic," she said. "We know that a lot of our students and adults have been exposed to trauma, and we know that Social and Emotional Learning doesn't stop as you get older; you keep practicing. You are always working on your empathy, your social relationships, and on building community. That's something that CASE for Kids works on as a team, and then we try to help people do that in their classrooms."

To learn more about CASE for Kids, visit [hcde-texas.org/after-school](https://www.hcde-texas.org/after-school).

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

Superintendent Objective B: Organization Morale

- Celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges excellence.

Superintendent Objective D: Community Relations

- Establishes and maintains 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.

Superintendent Objective H: Board Relations

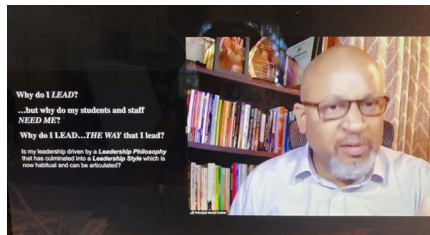
- Maintains a positive and professional working relationship with the board.

This week we celebrate one of our employees, Kathleen Evans, manager of quality for CASE for Kids. Evans, a native New Yorker and dog-lover – oversees program quality, professional development, the SMART Zone, and



partnership schools for her division. She has been an essential part of building professional development resources for CASE for Kids staff and volunteers – including during the Covid-19 pandemic. Last year, HCDE offered 50 professional

development CASE for Kids workshops for over 1,300 individuals. Evans is also very passionate about social and emotional learning. Director Lisa Caruthers says of Evans, “She’s holding us accountable as a division to make sure that we implement those practices into our out-of-school-time programs and is taking a more purposeful role with it as part of her own professional development.”



The Spring cohort of the Teaching and Learning Center Leadership Series kicked off with a session led by nationally recognized Principal Baruti Kalefe. More than 70 school leaders from the area benefitted from his guided journey of self-reflective interactive examination of how their leadership impacts staff and students.

I want to thank you for your time and feedback during our equine therapy workshop this week. The conversation we shared provides a strong foundation for collaboration and further strengthening of our relationship.

Finally, next week’s board meeting will be special as we celebrate you for your dedication and service to the people we serve. Also, keep an eye out for the video profiles we will be sharing through the end of the month.

HCDE BOARD
Board President
 Eric Dick
Vice President
 Danny Norris
Board Members
 David W. Brown
 Richard Cantu
 Erica Davis
 Andrea Duhon
 Amy Hinojosa

UPCOMING EVENTS:

WORKSHOPS (Online Only)

Jan. 16
Dyslexia Summit
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Jan. 20
Board Meeting Irvington
1 p.m.

Jan. 30
Early Childhood Winter Conference
9 am. - 3 p.m.

Feb. 6
Leadership Series
Family Engagement
10 am. - 12 p.m.