

THE CONNECTOR

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

WEEK OF JANUARY 25, 2021

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 18

SUPPORTING THE ARTS

TOP STORIES

Deadline for Second Round of Partners in Education Grants This Week p.2-3



HCDE Announces 2021 Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awardees p.4-6



ABS East Students Visit S.I.R.E. p.7



Of Note...



One of the coolest programs HCDE runs is the regional Scholastic Art & Writing contest. Each year, HCDE facilitates judging and awards for upwards of 9,000 entries from middle and high school students around the region for the prestigious national art competition. Participants come from local school districts along with private schools, charter schools and home school students.

Students enter various categories with visual art projects such as paintings, sketches and photographs as well as written works ranging from short stories to opinion pieces. The 2021 award recipients were announced this week and can be seen via an interactive map on our website. On average, HCDE sends more than 1,000 entries on to the national competition each year. In 2020, 176 HCDE entries were awarded a national medal! Our local students are so talented and each year I am amazed at the depth of emotion and skill they show in their entries. The service HCDE provides by coordinating this contest and recognizing budding artists is something families and teachers look forward to each year.

I started the week with ELT and several standing meetings. On Tuesday I attended the annual Texas Academic Decathlon board meeting virtually. This meeting is typically held in conjunction with the TASA Midwinter conference, but due to COVID, has shifted to virtual discussions.

Wednesday morning, I fulfilled my duties as a board member for Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM) via ZOOM. This is a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to supporting families with basic needs such as food, shelter, education, safety and financial education.

On Thursday and Friday my days were filled with meetings with various staff members for ongoing projects and leadership team updates.

Tomorrow I will provide virtual greetings to the more than 1,200 attendees at the Early Childhood Winter Conference. This conference has grown in the past few years to become the second largest PreK conference in Texas. This year we have attracted people from all over the world for both presenters and attendees. I am excited to hear feedback on the digital platform as well as the outstanding speakers and professional development provided.

I am looking forward to our next workshop on a potential Equine Enrichment Center, tentatively scheduled for February 27. At this meeting we will follow up on the questions expressed at the initial workshop and discuss the impact equine therapy has on students and the community.

We continue to roll out the individual board videos on our website. This week we featured Ms. Duhon and Ms. Hinojosa's video will be posted today.

Have a fabulous weekend.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Collier". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J".

EDUCATION FOUNDATION



HCDE Trustee Andrea Duhon attends Crosby ISD iPad delivery event, Houston Dynamo Dash Partners with HISD

This month, Trustee Andrea Duhon joined Drew Elementary school (Crosby ISD) leaders to present the school with a shipment of iPads for virtual learners as part of the Education Foundation of Harris County's (EFHC) continued support of area school district through the Partners in Education Grants.

Through the \$15,000 grant, the school was able to purchase 40 iPads for its young scholars, many of whom are attending classes virtually.



Due to the generous donation from the HCDE board last summer, six Houston ISD campuses – including Pugh, Port Houston, Mark White, Helms, Grissom, and Whidby elementary schools – each received 83 single-use art kits through the Partners in Education initiative for their "Providing Hope and Healing" program. The program provides a creative outlet for kids to express themselves while facilitating continued learning. Chief of Staff Danielle Bartz attended Whidby's art kit delivery event.

EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The art kits will be distributed first to the schools' asynchronous learners who lack art supplies at home. The remaining art kits will be provided to other art students at the six campuses based on need.

The Houston Dynamo and Dash Football Club, an ongoing supporter of HISD, has partnered with the district's fine arts department to host an art competition called "Art Goals" for students receiving an art kit through the grant. The competition's objective is to incentivize scholars to use the art supplies and support their educational and social-emotional needs. Each of the six campuses will have a first, second, and third-place winner and will receive Dynamo "swag."

Ending 2020 on a high note, the EFHC also supported the Aldine ISD Education Foundation's 8th annual golf tournament to benefit student scholarships and teacher grants.

Because school district foundations have been forced to cancel in-person fundraising events, many of their plans

to support teachers and classrooms are lagging. These strategic initiatives allow us to support districts quickly and effectively during the pandemic.

The deadline for districts to submit requests for the second round of grants was this week, and announcements will be made in February.

We look forward to issuing another report on the foundation in February 2021.



Partners in Education



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Zariah Parker - Cypress Ridge HS - Help Me Out



Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

HCDE Announces 2021 Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awardees

The Harris County Department of Education has announced the regional award recipients of the 2021 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Presented by the nonprofit organization The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are the country's longest-running and most prestigious scholarship and recognition program for creative students in grades 7–12.

“Paper Swan”

“And reality hits you hard.

You're a nobody.

You simply pick up what others don't want to.

You pick up their trash.

And then you don't want to be like this....”

– Avani Yaltho

Since the program's inception in 1923, the awards have fostered the creativity and talent of millions of students, including renowned alumni who have gone on to become leaders in their fields, including Andy Warhol, Sylvia Plath,

Truman Capote, Richard Avedon, Stephen King, and Robert Redford. More recently, Richard Linklater, Zac Posen, Lena Dunham and Amanda Gorman, who made international headlines earlier this month by becoming the youngest known U.S. presidential inaugural poet at the age of 22.

“Mother”

“Again at the harbor, I scrunched my nose at the odor of fish. I held tightly onto Cô Thao's hand that night and I watched my mother as she slowly walked away without turning back once...” – Natalie Dinh

“Martin & Bobby”

“You were...

The second smartest,

The second strongest,

The second messiest,

A bunch of second –ests.

But was that all you were?...” – Sai Kaushik

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Landen Tran-Nguyen - League City Intermediate - Power

An award signifies to parents, teachers, the community, and colleges that a student is an accomplished artist or writer and offers creative teens the opportunity to earn recognition, exhibition, publication, and up to \$10,000 in scholarships. Works that receive Gold Key recognition at the regional level are automatically submitted for national adjudication.

“Excerpt from “Hunt”

*“But after all my work, my name won’t change
I’ll always be the wife of Senator Hunt
I’m done being the tortured Senator’s wife,
I simply want to be in love with you.”*

– Alena Haney

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, no regional in-person ceremonies, receptions or exhibitions will take place this year. A virtual gallery with the art and written works will be made public at a later date. Additionally, a virtual ceremony recognizing the regional awardees will take place in late



Sophia Liu - Kincaid School - Undeclared All Hands on Deck

March. For the full list of 2021 awardees, updates and more information, please visit hcde-texas.org/scholastic-awards.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards National Medalists will be announced on March 17, 2021. The national ceremony will be live-streamed on June 9.

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Ivan Payton - Klein Collins HS - Digital Prey



Katherine Xie - Berry Milly Junior High - You and Me

This year, more than 100,000 teens submitted their best art and writing in more than 100 regions across the country. A total of 8,874 works were submitted for adjudication in Harris County. From these submissions, over 2,400 creative teens from Harris County received regional honors, including Gold Key, Silver Key, Honorable Mention, and American Visions & Voices nominations from HCDE, including:

American Voices Nominees, Writing

- Natalie Dinh, 11th grade, Kerr High School
Work title: "Mother"
- Alena Haney, 10th grade, Episcopal High School
Work title: excerpt from "Hunt"
- Sai Kaushik, 10th grade, Glenda Dawson High School
Work title: "Martin and Bobby"
- Alex Watson, 11th grade, Kinkaid School
Work title: "Daddy Dearest"
- Avani Yaltho, 7th grade, Veritas Christian Academy
Work title: "Paper Swan"

American Visions Nominees, Art

- Landen Tran-Nguyen, 8th grade, League City Intermediate School
Work title: "Power"
- Sofia Liu, 11th grade, Kinkaid School
Work title: "Undeclared: All Hands on Deck"
- Zariah Parker, 12th grade, Cypress Ridge High School
Work title: "Help Me Out"
- Ivan Payton, 11th grade, Klein Collins High School
Work title: "Digital Prey"
- Katherine Xie, 7th grade, Berry Miller Junior High School
Work title: "You and Me"

ABS East students and staff enjoy their monthly trip to S.I.R.E.



IN THE NEWS

Educators from around the world continue to register for R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Conference



With only hours away from the 35th annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference, educators from around the world continue to register for the all-virtual professional development event on Saturday, January 30, 2021.

Anticipated attendance has now increased by 50% compared to last year, with over 1,200 educators registered to participate.

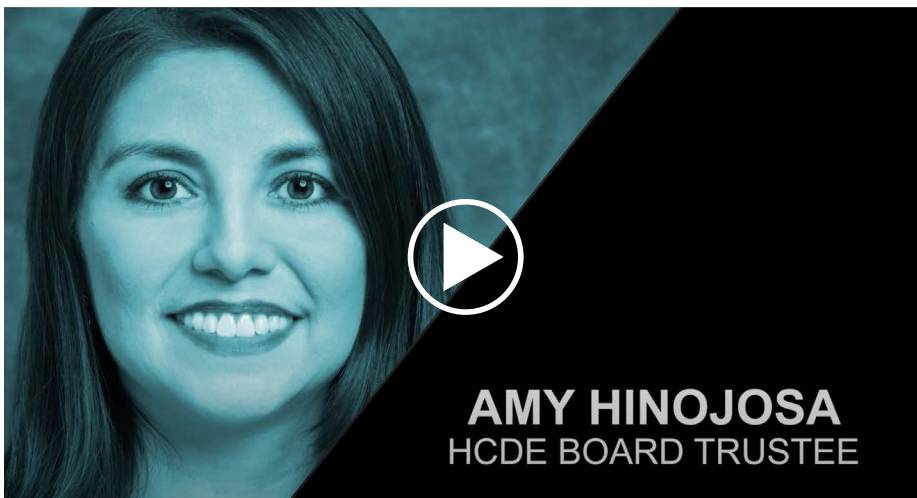
Morning keynote speaker Eric Litwin will be joined by Dr. Gina Pepin, an award-winning K-3 reading teacher and graduate literacy professor, with whom he co-authored “The Power of Joyful Reading: Help your Young Readers Soar.”

Litwin is a former third-grade teacher and the number-one New York Times best-selling original author of the “Pete the Cat” series, as well as the author of “The Nuts” and “Groovy Joe.” Eric’s books have sold over 13 million copies, been translated into 17 languages, and won 26 literacy awards.

Pepin holds an Ed.D. in Teacher Leadership and a MA in Reading, Literacy, and Assessment. She is the 2018–2019 Upper Michigan Teacher of the Year. She is currently a K-3 reading teacher in Escanaba, Michigan, and an online instructor of graduate literacy courses at Grand Canyon University and Northern Michigan University.

Afternoon keynote speaker Dr. Kenneth Wesson, a consultant and child neuroscience expert, will provide insights into how young brains work.

As one of the largest early childhood conferences in Texas, the R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference is named after former HCDE Board President R.T. Garcia, a longtime supporter of early childhood education.



AMY HINOJOSA
HCDE BOARD TRUSTEE

Trustee Amy Flores Hinojosa reflects on the lessons she learned from her parents, the importance of public service and her mission to give back to the community by ensuring a quality education and opportunity for all.

[View video](#)

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

Superintendent Objective D: Community Relations

- Works with other governmental entities and community organizations to meet the needs of students and the community in a coordinated way

Superintendent Objective G: Professional Growth and Development

- Ensures that appropriate staff development is available and monitors staff development for effectiveness

The deadline for the 2nd round of Partners in Education Grants from the Education Foundation of Harris County is this week. Districts from across the area



have taken advantage of the opportunity to fund projects for art supplies to iPads during the pandemic.



This year's regional recipients have been announced for the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. More than 2,400 students submitted a total of 8,874 works. HCDE has proudly sponsored the competition in Harris County since 1993 and we look forward to supporting the arts for many years to come.



Finally, this week several members of the executive leadership team joined students and staff from ABS East on their regularly scheduled trip to S.I.R.E. Touring facilities is helpful for understanding the scope of a program but actually seeing students engaging with the horses reveals the true impact it has on them.

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

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

Feb. 16
Leadership Cohort
Series, Winning in the
Trenches
3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Feb 27
Leadership Cohort
Series, A Call for Reality
Pedagogy
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.