

THE CONNECTOR

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

WEEK OF OCTOBER 26, 2020

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 8

UNITED IN EDUCATION

TOP STORIES

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Via \$40,000 Grant p.2**



Archive Photo

**Education Foundation Grant
Funds Drone, STEM
Education p.3**



Archive Photo

**HCDE Gains 'Purchasing
Award of Merit' p.4**



Of Note...



There is no question the pandemic has taught society many lessons. In HCDE the biggest lesson we learned was the importance of being nimble and flexible. The shutdown emphasized the need for our divisions to shift to meet the needs of our clients and the school districts we serve. I am proud to say that HCDE rose to the challenge with the innovation and commitment we are known for.

This innovation can be seen this week in the Center for Safe and Secure Schools' efforts to support conflict resolution and mental health in our local school districts. Using a \$40,000 grant, the Center is leveraging its renowned work in restorative practices to impact even more students through activities designed to build a positive school climate. This work has also highlighted the increasing need for mental health support in schools and the Center is looking into how they can support those efforts moving forward.

Likewise, grant awards by the Education Foundation of Harris County symbolize how HCDE is meeting emerging needs in local school districts in innovative and flexible ways. These small grants are providing a large impact on students and supporting districts in meeting varying needs due to COVID-19. I am proud that HCDE used its creative forces to emerge from the shutdown as a stronger organization that can quickly pivot to meet the needs of our community.

I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team and several standing meetings. On Tuesday I attended our annual Principal's Appreciation Dinner, sponsored by Ms. Langlois' firm. I look forward to this event every year. Our principals do a tremendous job of serving our students and this year, even amidst a global pandemic, their dedication to student success was evident in every action. This dinner is a way to show them how much we appreciate their hard work and how their work is making a name for HCDE amongst educators across the nation.

On Wednesday I met with several staff members about various initiatives and on Thursday I joined our Teaching and Learning Center with some strategic planning. Today we held a PFC and Special Called Board meeting. Thank you for the robust discussion regarding the architectural firms for our capital improvement plan as well as the TMC partnership. I am excited for the planned family engagement at our Head Start centers through this collaboration. I believe HCDE can help make a difference in how the pandemic affects our students and families and that is all part of our efforts to create happy, healthy productive citizens in our society.

I looks like the rain and cold has finally passed, so enjoy the beautiful weekend.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

Conflict Resolution Being Supported in Aldine, Humble by Center for Safe and Secure Schools Via \$40,000 Grant

Students in 20 elementary schools in Aldine and Humble will learn about conflict resolution early-on thanks to a \$40,000 grant provided to Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools this fall. The yearlong grant is awarded by the JAMS Foundation, a nonprofit founded by JAMS, the largest private provider of alternative dispute resolution services worldwide.

The center's grant proposal with Aldine and Humble was one of two selected from 130 applications. Center Director Julia Andrews said the grant officially called #RollingwithRestorative is a conflict resolution program using Restorative Practices which trains and supports teachers, counselors, school personnel, parents and students in conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution is the process by which two or more parties reach a peaceful resolution to a dispute. Teaching youth how to resolve conflict in a peaceful way can help reduce incidents of violence, criminal mischief and absenteeism.

"School climate and culture also directly influence student belonging, teacher morale, parental involvement and school safety," Andrews said.



Archive Photo.

Center staff will provide multiple trainings to accommodate approximately 100 employees in each district. Schools included in #RollingwithRestorative are the following:

Aldine elementary schools: Anderson, Ogden, Hill, Cypresswood, Orange Grove, Eckert, Stehlik, Escamilla, Smith and Johnson.

Humble elementary schools: Humble, Jack Fields, Lakeland, North Belt, Oaks, Park Lakes, Ridge Creek, River Pines, Whispering Pines and Atascocita Springs.

"The intent is to change the school climate and to build relationships inside and outside of school through engagement."

Staff from the center have trained neighboring districts in Restorative Practices, a means to reform discipline by reducing suspension and improving attendance. Through Restorative Practices, the focus is on resolving conflicts by addressing the problems which caused the at-risk students to misbehave.

"In contrast to punishment and suspension, this approach focuses on the needs of victims and offenders as well as the community as a whole," said Andrews. "Using the group discussion model, including talking circle, restorative justice seeks to repair broken bonds between students, or between students and teachers."

The #RollingwithRestorative program will be evaluated for success through a third-party evaluator. The center may reapply for an additional \$20,000 in funding in 2021-2022. For more information, access www.hcde-texas.org/safe-and-secure-schools.

EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Education Foundation Grant to Stafford Municipal School District Funds Drone, STEM Education

Students ages 11-18 enrolled at Stafford Municipal School District (SMSD) will be using drones donated through a \$7,000 grant from the Education Foundation of Harris County in their afterschool and ROTC programs.

The five new drones and backpacks being purchased from the grant will greatly enhance the district's science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) initiatives, according to Cherise Roberts, coordinator of grants and partnerships for the SMSD Education Foundation. The district has also added drones to expand its robotics program.

"The use of drones is an emerging technology that frequently stimulates a student's interest and may be used to help steer them toward careers in related disciplines," she said.

Roberts added that early interests in STEM hobbies are often the catalyst that ignite professional pursuits and lead to meaningful and productive careers in computer science, construction project management, petroleum engineering, aviation, digital coding, agriculture and entertainment.

"SMSD is committed to preparing students to compete and excel in the advanced technology and digital space of the 21st century," Roberts said. "The knowledge, training and skill sets obtained by SMSD students who endeavor to master the drone technology offers students a technology-rich setting to experience and explore in a small way and in the much larger universe of aerodynamics."



SMSD Robotics club (Archive Photo)

BOARD BRIEFS

CASE for Kids Celebrates Lights on Afterschool Virtually



Lights On Afterschool, the nation's celebration of the importance of afterschool, went virtual this year. CASE for Kids joined the Greater Houston Afterschool Alliance and Out 2 Learn organizations to celebrate the day on Oct. 22. Throughout the week, a daily celebration theme was provided to afterschool sites. #Lightsonhou was the hashtag used locally at celebrations.

In Alief, CASE for Kids afterschool students participated in a Zoom dance celebration on Oct. 22. Similar virtual events were held throughout the county.

HCDE Gains 'Purchasing Award of Merit' Top Honors from Texas Association of School Business Officials



Harris County Department of Education's Purchasing Division was awarded the "Purchasing Award of Merit" by Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO).

The award recognizes Texas school districts, open-enrollment charters and education service centers which are committed to following professional standards in the acquisition of goods and services.

In addition, HCDE's Purchasing Division earned the "Best in Class" designation for its procurement card system (P-Card).

"We could not be more pleased with the growing recognition of the important work all of our honorees do to streamline operations, comply with regulations and set the standard for how to utilize taxpayer dollars," Tracy Ginsburg, TASBO executive director said.

HCDE Purchasing will be recognized for its accomplishments at the annual TASBO conference Feb. 16.

Community Partner Balint Donates 2,400 Books to Head Start

Community partners Balint Charities, Inc. has donated 2,400 books to students ages 3-5 enrolled in Harris County Department of Education Head Start programs.

Balint is a longtime supporter of HCDE's Head Start program. The foundation was created eight years ago by Kathleen Christesen to honor her parents, and it supplies books to schools and early childhood centers throughout the nation. With assistance from Steve Balint, the foundation continues to support HCDE Head Start and Early Head Start programs.



Photo: HCDE Head Start Community Partnership Administrative Clerk Linda Hazelip sorts through books donated by Balint Charities with HCDE Assistant Superintendent for Academic Support Services Jonathan Parker.

"Head Start appreciates this contribution from Balint Charities and its vital support of early childhood literacy," HCDE Head Start Senior Director Venetia Peacock said.

The donation is valued at \$2,700, and the books will be delivered to all HCDE Head Start centers in northeast Harris County.

BOARD BRIEFS

HCDE Director, Alief Trustee Darlene Breaux Selected for Education Leadership Program



Darlene Breaux, Harris County Department of Education's Director of Research and Evaluation, was recently selected by the Texas Association of School Boards for the Leadership TASB class of 2021.

Breaux, who serves her community as vice president and policy committee chair for the Alief Independent School District Board of Trustees, was among 26 school board members statewide selected for the leadership program.

As she completes the required elements of study and service, she will earn the "Master Trustee" designation next year. Trustees in the group represent school districts of all sizes.

Each Leadership TASB session has a unique theme that builds on the previous session and features nationally recognized experts in the fields of leadership develop and education. Members also complete extended learning assignments.

Breaux joined HCDE in 2016 and leads the research division which serves HCDE divisions and supports local school districts.

Leadership TASB has more than 900 graduates to date since its inception in 1993. TASB is a voluntary, nonprofit association established in 1949 to serve local Texas school boards.

'The Link' Provided by Education and Enrichment Supplies Education Best Practices, Research, Tips

Education and Enrichment is producing a news blog published through Word Press which is being shared to educators through social media and eblasts. "The Link" allows educations the opportunity to gain tools and share information which is beneficial, from teaching tools to research to best practices.

View the social media video which is being used to spread the word about "linking up" with "The Link." <https://youtu.be/WpSrFc7Yz6w>

Subscribe to The Link: www.link-hcde-texas.org



Red Ribbon Week Celebrated at HCDE

Red Ribbon Week 2020 held from Oct. 22-31 featured a theme this year "Be Happy, Be Brave, Be Drug Free."

Students and staff at ABS West dressed in themed attire. "Team Up Against Drugs," "Put a Cap on Drugs," and "Mask Up Against Drugs" were Red Ribbon Dress Themes.

Door decor lined the halls of ABS East. [View video.](#)

At Highpoint School, staff and students took part a virtual, stay drug-free puppet show. The skit opened the classroom for dialogue with students about drugs.

Red Ribbon Week is the oldest and largest drug prevention program in the nation. [View more photos here.](#)



PHOTOS

SCHOOL BUS

Scenes from Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Throughout the month of October, HCDE employees participated in Breast Cancer Awareness Month with themed-dress Fridays. This week employees will enjoy a slide show of the photos sent in from participants. In addition, a mask contest allowed employees to show off their creativity, with first, second and third prizes. Prizes were given in weekly drawings to those participating in themes like “booting out cancer” and “pinking out.” While allowing for social distancing, these activities give employees a sense of camaraderie and allow them to support breast cancer prevention.

[View entire gallery.](#)



SYSTEMIC SCHOOL BUS

ACHIEVEMENT... WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

Superintendent Objective A: **Management of Administrative, Fiscal and Facilities Function**

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

Superintendent Objective B: **Organization Morale**

- Creates an open and positive environment for sharing resources and exchanging ideas to improve organizational climate.
- Models and supports responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas.
- Celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges excellence.

Superintendent Objective F: **Organizational Improvement**

- Ensures that key planning activities within the Department are coordinated and consistent with board policy and applicable law and that goals and results are communicated as appropriate.

Superintendent Objective H: **Board Relations**

- Keeps the board informed of significant issues as they arise, using agreed-upon criteria and procedures for information dissemination.
- Maintains a positive and professional working relationship with the board.

As we begin to hear from the school districts who are benefiting from our Education Foundation grants, we realize how much they need and appreciate our support as they use funding for necessary staples related to COVID-19

and innovative programs such as drone technology.

Our Center for Safe and Secure Schools continues to assist districts with conflict resolution as school districts work to be nurturing communities for both students, parents and staff during these difficult times. We see an increasing need for being attentive to mental health issues among our students, and the center is working to train and support communities.

We celebrate the accomplishments of our Purchasing and Business Services divisions as they continue to model exemplary and transparent fiscal effectiveness and gain acknowledgement through multiple awards. In addition, we are encouraging our employees like Research and Evaluation Director Darlene Breaux to be leaders in the community as they share their professional knowledge and expertise with the districts we serve.



Finally, what an honor it is to work in an organization where employees are community and philanthropic minded as we worked together this month to support Breast Cancer Awareness and Autism Awareness.

HCDE BOARD

Board President

Eric Dick

Vice President

Danny Norris

Board Members

Richard Cantu

Andrea Duhon

Amy Hinojosa

Don Sumners

Michael Wolfe

UPCOMING EVENTS:

WORKSHOPS

(Online only)

Nov. 3

Teaching for Understanding:
Multiplication and Division of Rational Numbers with Cuisenaire Rods (6-7)
4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Nov. 03

Make Them THINK!
Successful Readers and Writers-Secondary (Grades 6-12)
9 a.m. - Noon

Nov. 04

Utilizing Engagement and Critical Thinking Skills to Increase Student Achievement (Grades 3-5)
9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Nov. 06

School Finance Council
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.