

THE CONNECTOR

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

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 2, 2020

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 9

POSITIVE INFLUENCES

TOP STORIES

**HCDE Earns Financial
Transparency Award p.2**

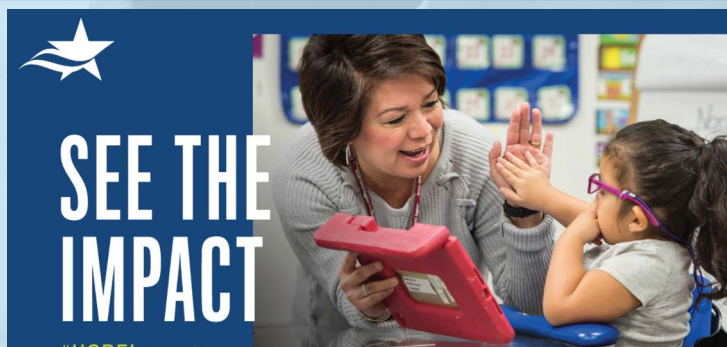


**Therapist Uses Music
to Communicate p.3**



Archive Photo

**Awareness Campaign
Combines Multiple
Communication Channels p.4**



Of Note...



This week was a bit of a roller coaster for many in Harris County and across the state, as the election continues to dominate the news. And while the final results of several national races have not been decided, in Harris County most races have been called and two new individuals were elected to HCDE's Board of Trustees. Ms. Erica Davis and Mr. David Brown will be joining the board in January. This gives us time in the next two months to celebrate the success of HCDE under the leadership and governance of Mr. Wolfe and Mr. Sumners as we thank them for their service to the children of Harris County and wish them well in their next endeavors.

I started the week with my Executive Leadership Team on Monday, followed by several standing meetings, including finalizing my 2020 Annual Reflections publication. Each year, prior to my evaluation, I meet with board members to review board goals and my areas of responsibility and hand out artifacts to demonstrate how objectives were met. I look forward to meeting with each of you for these discussions beginning next week.

On Tuesday, the Leadership Team met and discussed the status of HCDE with regard to COVID-19. HCDE is doing exceptionally well with having employees and students interact in person while remaining healthy and safe. We have had very few positive individuals at HCDE and all of them have contracted the virus outside of work. But I sense that COVID fatigue is setting in as I see employees beginning to become lax in their mask standards and gather in groups during breaks. I encouraged leaders to emphasize with their staff that we need to exercise continued discipline with our healthy habits and safety protocols. Local COVID case numbers are starting to rise again and with the holiday season upon us, we may see a surge in the coming weeks. I asked our leadership team to remind their employees to follow established protocols including wearing a mask and maintaining proper social distancing of six feet. I will reiterate these expectations in a video address to staff next week so HCDE can continue to provide a safe and healthy environment for everyone in our buildings.

Wednesday was filled with more meetings and a visit with one of my mentees and on Thursday we held agenda review in preparation for November's board meeting.

Today I am at ROCK (Ride On Centered Kids) in Georgetown to tour their equine therapy facility. ROCK is considered by many to be the premiere equine therapy facility in Texas, partnering with not only the military for therapy for disabled veterans but Texas A&M Corps of Cadets Parsons Mounted Cavalry at the College Station campus. In addition, ROCK staff boasts a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding starting this type of program and I look forward to hearing about their history, lessons learned, challenges, opportunities and documented best practices. I am excited to continue to explore implementing this type of program within HCDE to benefit not only our students, but potentially veterans and adults in our community as well.

Have a great weekend.

PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

Business Services Gains Top Award from Government Finance Officers Association

Harris County Department of Education has earned the “Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting” for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada. The CAFR covers HCDE’s fiscal year ending Aug. 3, 2019.

The GFOA Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management, according to the association.



The CAFR is judged by an impartial panel to determine if the organization demonstrates a constructive “spirit of full disclosure” to communities through its financial story and motivates users to read the CAFR.

HCDE also earned the Award of Financial Reporting Achievement this fall from GFOA for excellence in financial reporting. The certificate is presented to government agencies whose annual financial reports are judged to adhere to program standards. It represents the highest award in government financial reporting.

The Chicago-based association is a nonprofit which advances excellence in government finance by providing best practices, professional development, resources and practical research for more than 21,000 members and communities it serves.



PROGRAM

CONNECTIONS

Therapist Uses Music to Communicate with Students with Emotional, Intellectual Disabilities



Music is the voice box in Omar Reyna's life. The musician uses seven years of guitar and piano instruction to his advantage as a school-based music therapist, a licensed health professional.

He truly identifies with his students at Academic and Behavior School East because he has experienced their struggles. ABS East is a school for children with intellectual and emotional disabilities which serves area school districts through Harris County Department of Education.

At age 7, he barely spoke but turned to music to transpose his emotions. Diagnosed on the autism spectrum, he experienced pervasive development disorder, a delay in development of socialization and communication skills. Through support from his mother, he was mainstreamed into a regular classroom by third grade.

Reyna uses his skills in musical performance, lessons, songwriting, and listening as part of an integrative course

of therapy in the school setting to improve children's social, emotional, physical and/or cognitive abilities. A team of nine music therapists work with 150 physical and occupational therapists to serve children through Harris County Department of Education's School-Based Therapy Services. They provide 54 percent of school-based therapy in the county to area school districts.

At ABS East, Reyna works with elementary-aged, life skills students to gain beneficial social skills, focusing on one social skill each week.

This week that skill is dealing with anger, and Reyna is working with Blake and John, two fourth graders.

"You're feeling upset?" Reyna asks the boys. "Show it to me through your playing."

The students work their emotions on tambourine and drums, and Reyna orchestrates a pause.

The music therapist covers other coping devices for dealing with anger, sharing the tools and asking questions. Count to 10 and take a break. Tell an adult about your problem. Talk it out. What else?

"My job is to try to meet them in the middle and validate their feelings, because we don't want those feelings to lead to a negative trajectory," he said.

[Read More...](#)



SEE THE IMPACT

October/November Awareness Campaign Combines Multiple Communication Channels

October was a highly successful month for HCDE's awareness campaign, as evidenced by our advertisements garnering more than five million impressions across all channels.

The dominant feature for the month was the custom billboard campaign, a five-second video that ran on KTRK (Channel 13) during all local news programming for the entire month.



[View KTRK Billboard Schedule](#)

Pay Per Click (PPC) engagement increased in October, with clicks rising 52 percent on Google ads and impressions increasing 43 percent compared to August. (Ads were not run in September.)

Social media engagement also increased approximately 35 percent in October with more than 40,000 video views on Facebook and 350,000 impressions.

In November, HCDE's campaign continues through following communication channels:

- Billboard during newscasts on KTRK
- PPC ads on Google
- Social Media ads on Facebook
- Brochure mailed to 900,000 households ([view brochure](#))



HCDE mailer to 900,000 Households



Facebook Ads 4.75 Million Impressions

BOARD BRIEFS

Head Start Families Benefit from \$5,400 School Supply Donation from Assistance League of Houston's Operation School Bell

Families struggling with the financial backlash of the pandemic will benefit from a \$5,400 award in school supplies donated through the Assistance League of Houston's signature philanthropic program called Operation School Bell. Students at Harris County Department of Education's Compton, Fonwood and Pugh Head Start centers gain the school supplies made available through a school supply list on Amazon.

"We want to do everything we can to help children succeed in school," said Stella Evensen, Operation School Bell co-chair. "We are so proud we could do this and come together for the community."

Pre-k teachers and center managers ordered items including reading books, games, arts and crafts, backpacks and play dough for the classroom. Funds also went to purchase face masks and shields.

Evensen said uncertainties like delayed school start dates made online ordering of supplies the perfect solution. Co-chair Aida Ledet assists Evensen as they equip 26 Houston-area schools with supplies, including the three Head Start centers.

Throughout the years, the Assistance League of Houston has donated more than 10,000 uniforms to HCDE Head Start children. This year the pandemic prompted the need for the school supplies instead.

"We are thankful for the continued support of the Assistance League of Houston as they continue to support our families," HCDE Head Start Senior Director Venetia Peacock said.

Throughout the years, the Assistance League of Houston has donated more than 10,000 uniforms to HCDE Head Start children. For more information on Operation School Bell, visit www.assistanceleague.org/houston.

To enroll your child in HCDE Head Start or Early Head Start, go to www.hcde-texas.org/head-start.

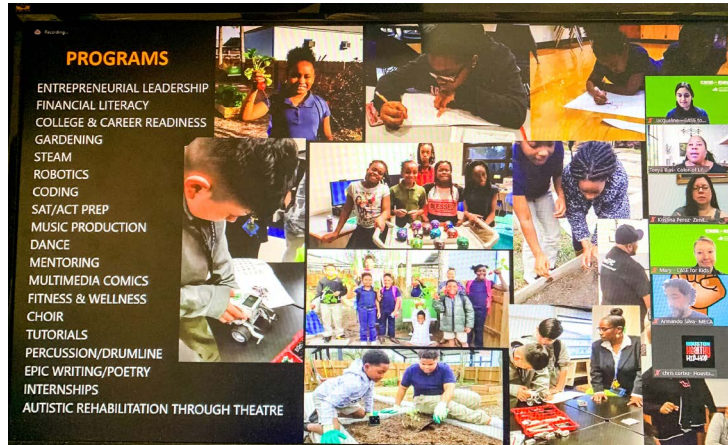


BOARD BRIEFS

CASE for Kids Provider Fair Goes Virtual with Resources, Remains Available to Clients Via Video

CASE for Kids held its annual Provider Fair virtually on Oct. 29 and 30. The free, annual event attracted 39 attendees the first day and 41 the second day.

The fair showcases afterschool services offered to the community. Attendees heard from afterschool providers for services ranging from homework help to STEM to character education. The providers also shared how they are adjusting services to meet the needs of students and families.



Both sessions were recorded and are available free to afterschool programs as a tool for resources:

<http://hcde-texas.org/media/uploads/2020/11/Provider-Fair-2020-Vendor-List-1.pdf>

Teachers WRITE! Writers in the Schools Nonprofit Teams with TLC for 4th Annual, Virtual Workshop

Writers in the Schools (WITS) teams with the Teaching and Learning Center to present “Teachers, WRITE!” The 4th annual workshop will be held virtually this year on Dec. 15 and focuses on boosting teaching abilities in our new and changing educational landscape.

The two-part workshop begins with “Diving In: Incorporating Empathy in Social and Emotional Learning” and “The Writer’s Way,” designed to deepen the practice of teachers as writers and offer useful ways to cultivate the habits of a writer.



4TH ANNUAL
Teachers WRITE! **DECEMBER 15TH 9A-4P**

Join us for the **4th annual Teachers, WRITE!** workshop, hosted by The Harris County Department of Education on the Zoom Virtual platform. All teachers, all grades, any content are welcome. Use writing as a tool to connect and build community with students. Our workshop this year features two new authors from Writers in the Schools, Houston (WITS) who will host a virtual workshop over two incredibly timely topics – a much needed boost for teacher efficacy in our new and changing educational landscape.

1 DIVING IN: INCORPORATING EMPATHY IN SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING
Teachers will explore the use of reflection, memory, and empathetic points of view to elevate descriptive language.

2 THE WRITER'S WAY
Designed to deepen the practice of teachers as writers and to offer accessible and useful ways to cultivate the habits of a writer.

COSTS STAFF DEVELOPMENT
IN-COUNTY \$75
OUT-OF-COUNTY \$88

PRESENTER: WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS
CPE CREDITS: 6 (GT UPDATE)
REGISTRATION LINK: [HTTPS://RB.GY/IKRENZ](https://rb.gy/ikrenz)
CONTACT: ROSA MURILLO (713) 696.1308

Teaching and Learning Center

Harris County Department of Education

writers in the schools

“Teachers WRITE!” is led by two authors who work within WITS and is designed for teachers in all grade levels and content areas. The workshop uses writing as a tool to connect and build community with students.

Cost is \$75 for in-county educators and \$88 for out-of-county.

[Register.](#)

SYSTEMIC

ACHIEVEMENT...WITH PURPOSEFUL INTENT

This week, the following Board expectations were met:

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

- Monitors effectiveness of operations against appropriate benchmarks.

***Superintendent Objective B:
Organization Morale***

- Models and supports responsible risk-taking so that all employees can be innovative and try new ideas.

***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 relationships between the Department and community.

This week we see how two pillar service divisions—Schools and Therapy Services—are working together for our students and districts. Our music therapists help give students at ABS a voice. By providing this support program and sharing resources between these divisions, we are ensuring cost effectiveness and high-quality instruction. We also supply best practices for student achievement and maximize achievement of student potential within HCDE schools.

We celebrate yet another fiscal award this month as Business Services gains accolades for the comprehensive annual financial report (AFR). This report helps us development and implement a clear fiscal vision for the Department. As a conservative financial leader, both the CAFR and AFR help us demonstrate our practice of prudent financial judgment.

To conclude, we provide a report on our community impact campaign. I continue to bring you this progress report so that you are knowledgeable about this public campaign. This visibility helps HCDE project our positive, professional image to the community along with educating

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. 9

Implicit Bias Awareness:
4-Session Series
4 - 6 p.m.

Nov. 10

Teaching Understanding
Solving Equations with
Algebra Tiles
4 - 6:30 p.m.

Nov. 11

The Grants Budget: Not
Just About the Math
1:30 - 3 p.m.

Nov. 12

Active Shooter Civilian
Response to Active
Shooter Events
10 a.m. - Noon

