

# Harris County Department of Education Blog Archive

January 1, 2015 - December 31, 2015



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# 1. 2015

## 1.1 January

## 1.1.1 Gangs in schools: Tips to keep your campus safe (2015-01-05 15:23)

- hcdetx



[1] Gang activity is an ongoing problem – recent statistics show an increased presence in suburban communities. Unfortunately, gang activity doesn't stop at the school door. The presence of gangs in schools comprises the safety, well-being and academic progress of all students. Gang members encounter each other at school during class changes, in the lunch room, during school assemblies and at other school events, allowing many opportunities for conflicts to occur between rival gangs. Because of the potential for violent gang interactions during the school day, educators must formulate an aggressive, proactive approach to keep gang activity at a minimum on campus.

Individuals may join a gang for various reasons, including protection, status, security, friendship, family, economic profit, substance abuse influences, etc. Members cross all socio-economic backgrounds, regardless of age, gender, race, economic status and academic achievement.

What can educators do to deter gang activity at school?

- **Create a positive classroom environment.** The classroom must be a peaceful space. Teachers must maintain vigilance over the slightest signs of challenges between students.
- **Develop rapport with gang-involved students.** Rapport is critical in both prevention and intervention. Do not be afraid to talk to them about their aspirations and hopes, or about informal matters such as favorite sports teams. These discussions show students that teachers do care for them, and facilitate rapport and bonding.
- **School staff should remain accessible to students during school hours.** Teachers, coaches and counselors are an important resource for students who may lack other positive role models and support.
- **Do not allow gang-type graffiti to be displayed on notebooks, papers, homework or school property.** If graffiti is discovered, it should be reported to a school administrator, documented, shared with local law enforcement and removed immediately.
- **Establish simple and clear rules for behavior in the classroom.** List the rules and consequences for breaking them. Teachers must enforce the rules consistently. When disciplining gang-involved students, teachers should ask them quietly to remain after class to discuss rule violation. Ensure that the gang-involved student does not have his associates with him during discussions.
- **Monitor social media and electronic media.** Gang members want to put information out there openly. If you suspect something wrong, screen capture it and send it to administration.

Gangs are a community problem. As a part of the community, schools must take proactive steps to control the risk of gang activity spilling into the school. Schools must set firm, clear policies regarding gang behavior and allow staff to take a strong, unified stand against gang activity.

For a list of local and national school resources on gangs, visit [2]Harris County Department of Education's Center for Safe and Secure Schools website.

**What is your campus doing to minimize gang activity in school? Let us know in the comments below.**

Sources:

NationalGangCenter.gov

Harris County Sheriff's Office

StopHoustonGangs.org

#### **About the Blogger:**

Harris County Department of Education's Communications and Public Information team helps promote the efforts of HCDE's programs and services to the education community. Our close-knit, award-winning team works together on creative strategies to effectively support the organization. We're always looking to share great stories and on occasion contribute to the HCDE blog, School Bell.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/gangs.jpg>
2. <http://www.safeandsecureschools.org/SitePages/Gangs.aspx>

## 1.1.2 Early childhood teachers return to ABCs of song, art, movement with interactive learning (2015-01-12 09:57) - hcdetx



[1]



Almost everyone loves music, and no one exhibits that love more than a young child.

New brain research shows that music accompanied with movement and activity has a positive effect on learning. Teachers of early childhood (grades pre-k to 2) have long known that music and movement are powerful tools for teaching everything from math and science concepts to colors and social skills.

The ABC song is probably our most common example of the power of music and rhyme to generalize learning. Young children are highly auditory learners. They have more vivid imaginations than their older counterparts and exhibit a natural urge to move. Good teachers know the key to successful teaching lies in capitalizing on those characteristics.

Howard Gardner's landmark study of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983) opened the door to a more serious conversation about the use of multiple learning modalities and interdisciplinary instruction. Teachers of all grades and subjects have spent the last 30-plus years moving away from their desks and engaging students physically and creatively as well as cognitively.

In recent years, however, the demands of high-stakes testing put a damper on many of our more imaginative teachers, especially in upper grades. Many experts find this trend troubling.

Interactive lessons which involve music, art and movement engage the brain and stimulate neural pathways associated with higher order abstract thinking. For the last 29 years, [2]Harris County Department of Education's R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference has played a significant role in bringing the latest research, strategies and practices in the area of interactive, multidisciplinary instruction to early childhood teachers in our area. The conference held each year on the last Saturday of January offers a full day of professional development. Teachers hear from nationally known experts and practicing classroom teachers alike about best practices in literacy, math, science, social studies, music, art, classroom management, parent involvement and technology.

This year's conference on Jan. 31, 2015 will continue this tradition with a keynote address by award-winning children's author Eric Litwin speaking on *Interactive Music & Literacy*. Bilingual and English-as-a-second-language teachers will be educated and entertained by popular speaker, Mike Longoria, Ph.D., on *Connections between Singing, Moving and Learning*. Over 90 additional breakout sessions will be available for teachers to choose from in addition to an interactive Exhibits Hall and great opportunities to network with other teachers.

To register or learn more about the conference, go to [3][www.hcde-texas.org/ECWinterConf](http://www.hcde-texas.org/ECWinterConf).

### **About the Blogger:**

Debra Anderson serves as curriculum director for Early Childhood and Special Education at Harris County Department of Education. She has almost 40 years of experience as teacher, coordinator and director of special education programs. She coordinates HCDE's annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference. Her passions are reading, travel and theater.

1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=OKD6mZDuoA4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=OKD6mZDuoA4)
2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=015.ECWinterConf>
3. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/ECWinterConf>

### 1.1.3 Social Studies: Help your students get to know Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (2015-01-19 06:05) - hcdetx



[1] Looking for ways to incorporate the history of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. into a school day social studies lesson? You might consider incorporating these facts into a classroom discussion or quiz game.

- The birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. is an American federal holiday observed on the third Monday of January each year. (His actual birthday is January 15.)
- Dr. King was the chief spokesman for nonviolent activism in the Civil Rights Movement.
- President Reagan signed the holiday into law in 1983.
- Some states use alternative names for the holiday: Robert E. Lee/Martin Luther King Birthday; Martin Luther King, Jr./Civil Rights Day; Martin Luther King, Jr./Human Rights Day.

- The national Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service (1994) was begun by national legislators from Pennsylvania and Georgia. The intent is to transform the King Holiday into a day of citizen action volunteer service in honor of Dr. King.
- One place outside of the United States, Hiroshima, Japan, holds a special banquet at the mayor's office as an act of unifying the city's call for peace with Dr. King's message on human rights.
- The city of Toronto, Canada, has officially recognized Martin Luther King, Jr. Day although it is not a paid holiday.
- Dr. King is most famous for his "I Have a Dream" speech given in front of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963.
- More than 730 cities in the United States have streets named for Dr. King.
- Awards bestowed on Dr. King include Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word album, 1971 (posthumously); Presidential Medal of Freedom, 1977, by President Carter; Congressional Gold Medal, 2004 (both Dr. King and his wife, Coretta Scott King received the award); Second in Gallup's List of Widely Admired People in the 20th Century; Time Person of the Year, 1963 and 2000; Third in the Greatest American contest (Discovery/AOL)

**Additional resources:** For additional historical evidence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s participation in the Civil Rights Movement, see: Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955; Civil Rights Act of 1954; Voting Rights Act, 1965; The Albany Movement, 1961; The Birmingham Campaign, 1963; St. Augustine, FL, 1964; Selma, AL, 1964; March on Washington, 1963.

### **About the Blogger:**

Mary Lynn Johnson is curriculum director for social studies at HCDE. The veteran Spring ISD teacher, former assistant principal and program director follows her passion to share the educational advantages of learning about the past. Her first love is teaching social studies and turning students and teachers on to history, geography, government and economics. Her zeal as a social studies leader earned her the 2012 Texas Social Studies Supervisors Association "Supervisor of the Year" award.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/mlk\\_web2.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/mlk_web2.jpg)

#### 1.1.4 Life experience fuels creativity for teen (2015-01-26 15:48) - hcdetx



[1]



Congratulations to the 1,346 talented students in Harris County from public, charter, private and home schools who earned 2015 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. The results were just released. Each year teachers like you take the time to sponsor students who are talented writers and artists. Thank you for investing in your students.

Past recipients are people like Zac Posen, Sylvia Plath, Robert Redford and Andy Warhol. Gold Key awardees advance to national judging in New York City.

We are touched by the stories that fuel passion for art and writing in our youth. We have our own story here at Harris County Department of Education. Our Adult Education GED/ESL teacher Kelly Dixon passed away last year after a brave war with cancer. His daughter Linda Dixon from Pasadena ISD was named a Gold Key recipient with her mixed media piece called "Treasure Chest." The piece is influenced by her childhood memories with her father.

Thank you art teacher Tara Thompson from Bondy Intermediate, Pasadena ISD, for encouraging Linda's creativity following the death of her father.

If you have similar stories about how your students were inspired in life to create their Scholastic Art & Writing masterpieces, please send them to us.

For a list of Scholastic Art & Writing awardees and for information about the iconic, 92-year-old program called Scholastic Art & Writing, go to [2]<http://www.hcde-texas.org/scholasticartandwriting> . See our [3]press release.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/lindadixon.jpg>
2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/scholasticartandwriting>
3. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=001.news&a=116>

## 1.2 February

## 1.2.1 Ideas? Gain a free workshop from School Bell (2015-02-02 10:49) - hcdetx



[1] We're looking for new ideas in our school house. School Bell would like to hear from you.

- Share a great lesson plan.
- Promote a resource which you find valuable.
- Share an ah-ha teaching moment when you knew your students "really got it."

Go on. Send us your great ideas. If we use them, you'll earn a free workshop. Send your post to [schoolbell@hcde-texas.org](mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org).

### **About the Blogger:**

Harris County Department of Education's Communications and Public Information team helps promote the efforts of HCDE's programs and services to the education community. Our close-knit, award-winning team works together on creative strategies to effectively support the organization. We're always looking to share great stories and on occasion contribute to the HCDE blog, School Bell.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/lightbulb\\_web.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/lightbulb_web.jpg)

## 1.2.2 Are you using iPads with your English language learners?

(2015-02-09 12:12) - hcdetx



iPads are a natural choice for the dual and multilingual classroom. Taking the leap of faith to introduce tablets into your lesson plans will be well worth your time and effort.

Here are a few benefits of using iPads with your English language learners:[1]



- A wide variety of language applications are available through the iTunes store to help language learners accelerate listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
- Content and supplemental resources for all subject areas are easily accessible.
- iPads are compatible with online programs designed to accelerate language acquisition and conceptual knowledge.
- Social networking enhances learning through interaction.
- iPads are mobile and light devices that help language learners find, explore, review, interact and compile data on a daily basis in different kinds of settings.
- Language learners have multiple opportunities to experience real-life situations through interactive social and academic language exchanges.

If you're already using iPads in your dual and multilingual classrooms, we'd like to hear from you. Send us your stories about student innovations and successes.

[2]To find out more information about using iPads in your English language learner classroom, consider attending our upcoming workshop March 31 with education specialist Michelle Reeves and Patricia Morales: [3][http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog &w=05053](http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05053) .

**About the Blogger:** Patricia Morales, Ed.D., is curriculum director for bilingual, dual, ESL and ELL at HCDE. As a 20-year veteran presenter and educator, she shares successful strategies that promote language proficiency. Dr. Morales prepares thousands of teachers for bilingual/ESL certification in Texas. In her free time, she plays volleyball and exercises her Spanish skills through song as a novice guitarist and singer. Patricia saves most of her energy for her real passion: teaching.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/ipad-photo\\_web1.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/ipad-photo_web1.jpg)
2. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05053%20>.
3. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05053>

### 1.2.3 Benefits of social media use in the classroom (2015-02-16 09:54) - hcdetx



[1] According to Pew Internet Project's research on teens, 95 percent of teens ages 12 – 17 are active in the online environment and 81 percent of online teens use some kind of social media. At the same time, 80 percent of teachers use social media for personal use but only 20 percent feel they are trained to use social media in a professional setting.

While many teachers avoid using social media for fear of conflict or going beyond the boundaries of appropriate use, social media use benefits the classroom by encouraging collaboration among students. Students are engaged in their world outside the classroom and are provided access to real world applications of the content learned. It also allows for faster and more effective communication.

While the benefits of social media in the classroom are great, the importance of proper training on digital literacy and digital citizenship for students, parents and teachers is greater.

#### **Here are a few ways that social media benefits classroom engagement:**

1. Offers opportunities for engagement and collaboration with other students outside the face-to-face classroom.
2. Provides an open, real-time pathway of communication between the classroom and experts.
3. Encourages students to explore their personal interests and establish a digital presence.
4. Allows shy and introverted students the opportunity for their voice to be heard.

While social media use in the classroom provides unprecedented opportunities for students, the role of appropriate digital citizenship should be taught and modeled by teachers. Teachers should be

comfortable in the digital space, aware of the possible consequences, be able to teach students safety online but also share and engage in the benefits.

**The following resources provide examples of how teachers can use social media in the classroom:**

<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/guidebook-social-media-in-classroom-vicki-davis>

<http://www.edudemic.com/social-media-in-education-series/>

[#sthash.kW216YIM.dpbs](http://www.pearsonschoolsandcolleges.com/blog/?p=2041)

<http://www.teachthought.com/technology/22-simple-examples-of-social-media-in-the-classroom/>

Social media remains a natural choice for students to communicate in today's digital society. It holds a place in education that fosters collaboration and engagement, while also encompassing generations of safe and responsible digital citizens that may take advantage of its benefits.

How are you using social media as a tool in your classroom? Tell us in the comments below!

**About the Blogger**

Lynnice Hockaday is a technology analyst for the Cirrus Learn Project at Harris County Department of Education. For the past 20 years, Lynnice has been an educator, curriculum specialist, technology coach and online instructor, and loves helping students and teachers reach outside the classroom walls by engaging and collaborating worldwide through online learning. Lynnice stays very busy outside of work with three active kids and enjoys hiking and biking in her spare time.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/teenstudents-web.jpg>

## 1.2.4 Rethinking the science fair (2015-02-23 07:53) - hcdetx



[1] How much do students really learn about science from a science fair? A typical student begins with an internet search. Teachers may even provide students with a list of websites. A Google search for science fair ideas results in **over 49 million links**. Before the internet, the local library was likely the primary resource for ideas. The search for ideas is just the first of many problems. A science fair project should arise from the student's own curiosity and be something the student wants to learn more about.

According to the National Science Teachers Association, "creativity is a vital ingredient in the production of scientific knowledge."

I've personally been involved with science fairs as a judge for over 20 years. Although I enjoy the process – especially with elementary students – I see little creativity. No matter what school district I go to, there will always be projects like, "Which gum lasts the longest?" or "Do video games affect your attention span?"

Many teachers dislike the science fair because of heavy parental involvement. As a judge, this is easy to see, and it is rampant. A second grader did a project with gas chromatography. Hmm... Then there is the project display done by a "scrapbook mom" with die-cut letters and images. When projects completed with obvious help win, we are rewarding privilege instead of scientific thinking.

When my daughter was in elementary school, I came to dislike the science fair because of the judges. Judges are often parents from other elementary schools, and even though they get a rigorous briefing, they are often not the best choice for a judge. I remember one year when my daughter wanted to see which type of sunscreen worked best, lotion or spray? The spray sunscreen was relatively new on the market, and she was really curious. Without going into too much detail, she thought the lotion would be more effective, but it turned out that the spray was. A judge told her,

“this was a really good project; it’s too bad your hypothesis was wrong.” The science teacher in me still cringes.



[2]

Given a set of materials, students attempted to recreate a structure based solely on notes and drawings from a teammate.

### **So what do we want students to get out of the science fair?**

We want them to develop explanations supported by evidence that are testable. We want them to be creative. We want them to see that science can explain and predict. We want them to be able to demystify science and see that it is fun and accessible. *A science fair is not the only way to reach these goals.*

Recently, under the direction of elementary science specialist Jessica Sanchez, elementary students in Galena Park ISD participated in a Science Survivor Series. To showcase skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), students competed in three challenges – academic, building and creativity. For the academic portion, teams were asked to showcase their science content knowledge. In a game called *Picture It*, a team member was selected to sketch up to 21 science terms while their teammates guessed as many as they could in five minutes. To showcase their building and writing skills, one student described a pre-built creation to a teammate, who then used a set of materials and their partner’s written notes to replicate the creation as closely as possible.



[3]

Drawing depictions of science terms on the board, the sketcher's teammates had five minutes to guess as many as they could.

Creativity was demonstrated with a Texas appropriate task – students were challenged to determine how to best insulate an ice cube to keep it from melting. The students were completely engaged, using creative and critical thinking, and best of all having fun.

### **About the Blogger**

Lisa Felske is curriculum director for science at Harris County Department of Education. Her areas of expertise include integrating science with other disciplines and student misconceptions in science. She enjoys being a Girl Scout leader, reading way past her bedtime, and using the Oxford comma.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/sciencefair.jpg>
2. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/stevegomez.jpg>
3. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/science-fair.jpg>

## 1.3 March

### 1.3.1 Get involved with afterschool: Apply for funding and get free resources (2015-03-02 18:03) - hcdetx



[1] We can help you start, fund and sustain your school or community afterschool program with our quality programming and services.

Who are we? We are the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Expanded Learning, or [2]CASE for Kids, a division of HCDE that supports and sustains afterschool programs and out-of-school time services for school-age youth.

CASE for Kids is leading two local initiatives to support providers of afterschool, child care and summer camp programs. We'd like to invite you to apply for or attend these two out-of-school time opportunities:

#### **[3]City Connections:**

City Connections is a grant for afterschool providers through the City of Houston in all 11 council districts. The out-of-school time funding is intended to help fight juvenile crime and to promote child safety during the hours of 3-6 p.m. during the school year when parents are working and in the summertime. The funding is especially needed due to decreased state and federal funding streams which previously supported afterschool locally. CASE for Kids promotes and administers the City Connections program. Deadline for the final funding opportunity is April 6 and funds must be used by June 30, 2015. Go to [www.afterschoolzone.org](http://www.afterschoolzone.org) under funding for more information.

#### **CASE for Kids Opportunity Fair:**

We provide free afterschool resources through several initiatives. Our lending library supplies activities and principles for best practice in afterschool. We also provide professional development scholarships for trainings. Funding is also available to compliment current programming with additional activities for school-age youth. You can learn more by attending our free fair on March 27 at 6300 Irvington Blvd. in Houston, Texas. Hours are from 10-11:30 a.m. or 12:30-2 p.m. Call 713-696-1331 or email [CASEForKids@hcde-texas.org](mailto:CASEForKids@hcde-texas.org) to make reservations for this free event.

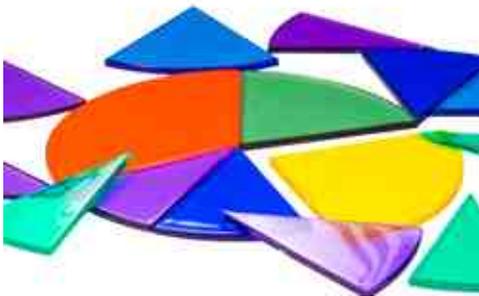
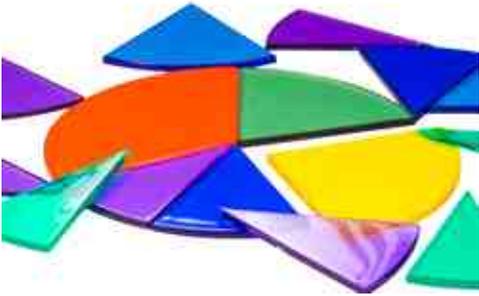
Need more information about CASE for Kids? We want to hear from you. Go to [www.afterschoolzone.org](http://www.afterschoolzone.org) or reply to our blog. We'd like to be inspired by what you're planning to do through afterschool.

#### **About the Blogger:**

Dr. Lisa M. Thompson-Caruthers serves as director for the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Expanded Learning, or CASE for Kids. CASE for Kids provides leadership, training, technical support and grants management to over 70 afterschool programs serving over 8,000 youth. In her leisure time, Lisa spends time with her hubby and children mastering her social work “active listening” skills and honing her artistic talents. These include building monster trucks and princess carriages out of Legos.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/afterschool-garden-e1425340852188.jpg>
2. <http://afterschoolzone.org/default.aspx?name=Funding>
3. <http://afterschoolzone.org/default.aspx?name=Funding>

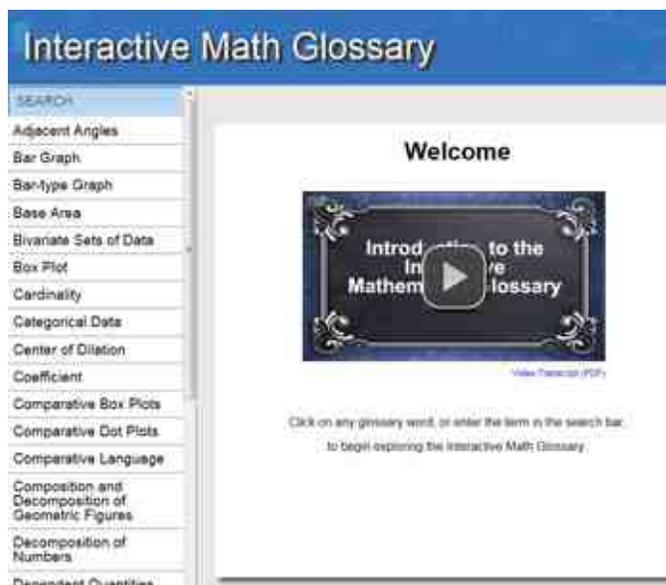
### 1.3.2 Interactive Math Glossary: Help with new math TEKS vocabulary (2015-03-09 08:27) - hcdetx



[1] Math teachers, are the new TEKS giving you the blues?

Take advantage of new resources to assist teachers and parents in transitioning to the revised mathematics TEKS. I highly recommend taking advantage of the free TEA [2]Interactive Math Glossary.

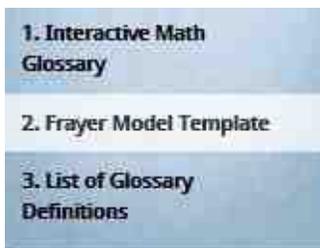
[3]



An array of benefits await when you use the Interactive Math Glossary as a math resource:

- Gain [4]interactive manipulatives (click on box plot interactive link) and videos to help students understand new vocabulary.
- Use the non-examples to help you, your team and students understand and brainstorm student misconceptions.
- Plan your lessons to use in class or when team planning.
- Use the editable or printable [5]Frayer Model Template.
- Take away a list of [6]glossary terms not yet in the Interactive Math Glossary. (The TEA will be adding new terms to the Interactive Math Glossary this semester.)

With the Interactive Glossary, the Frayer Model Template and a list of all the glossary definition, you've got what you need to plan for success.



[7] To learn more about math spring or summer workshop opportunities at HCDE, see my curriculum development page: [8]<http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=006.Math>

### About the Blogger:

Nicole Shanahan is the math specialist at HCDE. A self-professed Julia Roberts of presenters, she vows to weave a bit of entertainment into each of her math workshops. As teacher, mentor, trainer and coach, Nicole serves up workshops ala carte within districts or at HCDE headquarters at 6300 Irvington, Houston, TX. The mother-of-three clocks in more volunteer hours than the average bear can handle. She often writes about her cubs in her posts. Follow Nicole on Pinterest at: [9]Secondary Math | [10]Elementary Math

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/math-manipulative.jpg>
2. [http://projectsharetexas.org/resource/interactive-math-glossary?field\\_resource\\_keywords\\_tid=math%20teks&sort\\_by=title&sort\\_order=ASC&items\\_per\\_page=5](http://projectsharetexas.org/resource/interactive-math-glossary?field_resource_keywords_tid=math%20teks&sort_by=title&sort_order=ASC&items_per_page=5)
3. [http://jukebox.esc13.net/interactiveGlossary/HTML\\_files/\\_interactiveVocabularySearch.html](http://jukebox.esc13.net/interactiveGlossary/HTML_files/_interactiveVocabularySearch.html)
4. [http://jukebox.esc13.net/interactiveGlossary/HTML\\_files/\\_interactiveVocabularySearch.html](http://jukebox.esc13.net/interactiveGlossary/HTML_files/_interactiveVocabularySearch.html)
5. [http://projectsharetexas.org/resource/interactive-math-glossary?field\\_resource\\_keywords\\_tid=math%20teks&sort\\_by=title&sort\\_order=ASC&items\\_per\\_page=5](http://projectsharetexas.org/resource/interactive-math-glossary?field_resource_keywords_tid=math%20teks&sort_by=title&sort_order=ASC&items_per_page=5)
6. [http://jukebox.esc13.net/interactiveGlossary/HTML\\_materials/Interactive\\_Glossary\\_definitions.pdf](http://jukebox.esc13.net/interactiveGlossary/HTML_materials/Interactive_Glossary_definitions.pdf)
7. [http://projectsharetexas.org/resource/interactive-math-glossary?field\\_resource\\_keywords\\_tid=math%20teks&sort\\_by=title&sort\\_order=ASC&items\\_per\\_page=5](http://projectsharetexas.org/resource/interactive-math-glossary?field_resource_keywords_tid=math%20teks&sort_by=title&sort_order=ASC&items_per_page=5)
8. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=006.Math>
9. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/math-secondary/>
10. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/math-elementary>

### 1.3.3 Human trafficking: How our schools are vulnerable (2015-03-23 14:33)

- hcdetx



[1] Human trafficking is a topic that hits closer to the classroom than one might think.

A student affected by human trafficking may be one who is absent frequently. He might be quiet and withdrawn. She might show up to school hungry or tired. Although there is no equation for identification, educators often have a sixth sense for knowing when something isn't right.

What is human trafficking? It is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transporting or procurement of a person for labor or services for the purpose of involuntary servitude, slavery or forced commercial sex acts.

The [2]Center for Safe and Secure Schools of Harris County Department of Education is raising awareness about the issue of human trafficking through its membership. School security leaders heard about the topic at a March meeting at HCDE. As the leader of the Center, I am concerned that human trafficking of school-aged children is an emerging trend that must be on the radar screen of educators today.

Most importantly, educators must know about resources to learn more about the topic and to report it. The organization [3]United Against Human Trafficking is a local organization that raises awareness about the problem.

Here are a few facts from Misa Nguyen, director of programs for [4]United Against Human Trafficking:

- Human trafficking is a serious federal crime with penalties up to life imprisonment and is a form of human slavery.
- Those who recruit minors into commercial sexual exploitation (or prostitution) violate federal anti-trafficking laws, even if there is no force, fraud or coercion.
- The Department of Justice has called Houston one of the most intense human trafficking jurisdictions in the country because of proximity to the border and access to major international air and sea ports and interstate roadways. Houston's diverse labor sector and large immigrant population makes it particularly vulnerable to human trafficking.

Nguyen tells us that we all unknowingly play a role in human trafficking as consumers. She encourages educators to access [5]Slavery Footprint to see the ramifications of our actions in the free world. Fair trade products, she says, can help regulate against human trafficking.

Your school district probably already has protocol in place to report suspected child human trafficking. The [6]Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and the [7]National Human Trafficking Resource Center are two reporting resources. Together we can make a difference.

Let us know if you have any questions or comments on this critical issue.

### **About the Blogger**

Ecomet Burley, a 26-year administrator, is the new leader of the Center for Safe and Secure Schools. Established in 1999, the Center provides school safety and security training for school districts in greater Harris County. Burley, the former superintendent of La Marque ISD, resides in Pearland with wife Frances, an elementary school principal. Education, Burley insists, is the primary and native language spoken in their home.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/trafficking.jpg>

2. <http://www.safeandsecureschools.org/default.aspx>

3. <http://www.houstonrr.org/>

4. <http://www.houstonrr.org/>

5. <http://slaveryfootprint.org/>

6. <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>

7. <http://www.polarisproject.org/>

**1.3.4 Who we are: What does HCDE do for you? (2015-03-30 09:42) - hcdetx**





You may know that we offer workshops for educators and provide customized continuing education in your school district. What else does Harris County Department of Education do? We offer multiple services for the education public in greater Harris County.

View our newly launched video to learn more:

[youtube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZFoulDC-vw &w=560 &h=315](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZFoulDC-vw&w=560&h=315)]

HCDE provides education services to the general public and 25 school districts throughout Harris County and beyond.

Services include [2]adult education, programs to promote [3]safe schools, [4]after-school programs and support, [5]Head Start, [6]therapy services, [7]professional development for educators, [8]alternative certification for principals and teachers, and [9]special schools.

We offer [10]purchasing procurement, [11]grant development, [12]program research and evaluation, [13]records management, and [14]school finance support. Since 1889, our services continue to evolve to meet the needs of our education public. Visit us at [www.hcde-texas.org](http://www.hcde-texas.org).

### **About the blogger:**

Harris County Department of Education's Communications and Public Information and Technology Videography teams help promote the efforts of HCDE's programs and services to the education community. Our close-knit, award-winning teams work together on creative strategies to effectively support the organization. We're always looking to share great stories and on occasion, we contribute to the HCDE blog, School Bell.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/shutterstock\\_141207379.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/shutterstock_141207379.jpg)
2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=010.home>
3. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=028.SafeSchools>
4. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=025.CASE>
5. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=016.headstart>
6. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=002.TherapyServices>
7. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=006.ISS>
8. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=007.AlternativeCertification>
9. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=003.SpecialSchools>
10. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=Vendors>
11. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=004.ResourceDev>
12. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=005.Research>
13. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=011.RecordsManagement>
14. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=023.SFC>

## 1.4 April

## 1.4.1 How am I doing? Getting student feedback on teacher performance

(2015-04-06 12:02) - hcdetx



[1] Most teachers are eager to know how they are performing in their classrooms. We expect and await what our instructional leaders observe. All is documented on district or school forms. That's all well and good.

But how about taking the feedback on performance one step further? How about asking the students in your class how you're doing? No way, you say. Afraid they might not take it seriously or use the chance to document their gripes?

Back in my early years of teaching, I decided to give my students a chance to tell me how I was doing. I constructed a survey of items that I thought reflected most of what was occurring in my social studies class. I asked them about my teaching behaviors. Was I prepared for class and did I know my subject area? Was I fair? On the checklist I included items about classroom activities, tests and knowledge gained.

### Types of feedback devices you can use

1. **Survey method:** One type of feedback is the [2]survey mentioned above. Constructing your own would be best but you can find examples online by searching "Teacher Evaluation by Students" through this great resource: [3][www.rucharakter.org](http://www.rucharakter.org). This 29-item survey asks great questions, but please add a few open-ended questions to catch student comments on behaviors or activities not mentioned. Examples: What is one thing that your teacher does well? What is one thing that you can suggest to help this teacher improve?

2. **Class focus groups:** After you explain what a [4]class focus group does, students are grouped and use a series of questions to discuss your class. Each group summarizes its discussion and presents the teacher with its report. Questions are designed by the teacher. However, your students should be able to add their comments if they think of something the teacher overlooked.
3. **Note to teacher:** Students write “notes to the teacher” when they want to communicate versus having a one-on-one conversation. Throughout the year, encourage your students to write notes to you. Give no time constraints. Having a “note to the teacher” form would be advisable. A place to deposit the note is part of the routine.

### **The who, what, when, where about feedback...**

Still a bit leery of having your students give you feedback on your teaching performance? To get engaged with inquiry, be prepared to accept what your students have to say. If they love you, you'll likely get high praise. If you have recently chastised them, they'll be less loving. Overwhelmingly, I found that students are honest and appreciate giving them a chance to evaluate the classroom.

### **Here are some questions and answers about the process:**

#### **When do you get feedback?**

I recommended administering surveys at the beginning of second semester. Waiting until end-of-year doesn't afford time for change.

What grade levels should a teacher consider using student feedback?

Middle school and high school students are capable of answering the surveys and by extension the class focus groups and notes to the teacher. Perhaps fifth graders are candidates, but consider shortening the survey.

#### **What are some examples of feedback received?**

- During U.S. History class, we combined three classrooms for guest speaker lectures during election times. Some students complained they did not like the large group and could learn more from our guests in a small-group setting.
- Students complained in another class that I wasn't tough enough on off-task behaviors.
- One student complained that I “corrected” him more than others.

#### **Where can I find more information?**

[www.crlt.umich.edu](http://www.crlt.umich.edu)

[www.brown.edu/sheridan\\_center](http://www.brown.edu/sheridan_center)

### **About the blogger:**

Mary Lynn Johnson is curriculum director for social studies at HCDE. The veteran Spring ISD teacher, former assistant principal and program director follows her passion to share the educational advantages of learning about the past. Her first love is teaching social studies and turning students and teachers on to history, geography, government and economics. Her zeal as a social studies

leader earned her the 2012 Texas Social Studies Supervisors Association “Supervisor of the Year” award.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/how-am-i-doing.jpg>
2. <http://www.rucharakter.org/file/Microsoft%20Word-TeacherEvaluationbyStudents%281%29.pdf>
3. <http://www.rucharakter.org/>
4. <http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/howto/assessteaching/focusGroups.html>

## 1.4.2 Great leadership matters: Are you up to the challenge? (2015-04-13 09:46)

- hcdetx



[1] Long gone are the days when a principal's primary responsibility is to focus on managerial aspects of leading a school.

Today, a principal's role has dramatically expanded into areas including innovation, entrepreneurship and instruction. Principals are charged with developing human potential and cultivating success.

Recent [2]research done by the Wallace Foundation around effective leadership identified five key practices that such leaders perform consistently well:

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students
- Creating climate hospitable to education
- Cultivating leadership in others
- Improving instruction
- Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement

The dynamic nature of schools ensures that these key practices do not function in isolation but are part of a complex set of variables that a principal must continuously balance on a daily basis. As you can imagine, this is not an easy task. However, it can be very challenging and rewarding.

This new nature of principal's role requires a different set of leadership knowledge and skills. For the last 10 years, HCDE has developed and led a principal preparation program that allows

aspiring administrators to acquire, develop, hone, and practice a unique skill set centered around these key practices.

To learn more about HCDE Principal Certification Academy and how you can be a part of the next cohort, attend one of our information sessions on April 16 or April 27, 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Register to attend either session at [3][wms.hcde-texas.org](http://wms.hcde-texas.org) or call 713-696-0775.

**About the blogger:**

Lidia G. Zatopek is director of Alternative Certification and the Principal Certification Academy at HCDE. She has 25 years experience in education serving as teacher, assistant principal, principal and administrator. In her former career, she attempted to juggle four languages as an interpreter/linguist. Becoming an educator made her realize education has a language of its own, adding another juggling ball. In her leisure time and while not contemplating running marathons, she enjoys reading anything and everything about science and medicine.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/principal-certification.jpg>
2. <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/Pages/default.aspx>
3. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/>

**1.4.3 Using theatre to learn science concepts: Fine arts meets core curriculum (2015-04-20 12:13) - hcdetx**





Reviewing science concepts for standardized testing sounds pretty boring, and unfortunately it often is.

A new grant-funded initiative at Houston ISD through Main Street Theater is allowing children to learn science concepts through movement. “Steamwork!” is a theater arts integration residency provided at select middle schools. Through the program, participating teachers tell [2]Main Street Theater’s Education Director Jonathan Gonzalez what topics that they would like covered in the residency.

Through an education collaborative, Jonathan and I work together to craft ways that theater exercises can model scientific principles. Theatrical techniques are especially helpful in teaching abstract science concepts that are too small or too large to directly observe and manipulate. Topics covered in residencies this spring include plate tectonics, components of the universe, Hertzsprung–Russell diagrams, global weather patterns, evidence of chemical reactions and balancing chemical equation.



[3]

Garden Oaks Montessori Magnet classroom, Houston, TX

It's a challenge to address science curriculum in a meaningful way while keeping students engaged and motivated. Teachers will need to stop treating the mind and body as completely separate entities. Research has shown that there are strong connections between movement, energizing activities and improved learning.

According to Eric Jensen, author of [4]Teaching with the Brain in Mind, teachers who insist that students remain seated during the entire class period are not promoting optimal conditions for learning. It is when students are physically and creatively engaged in what they are learning, when they are physically experiencing the curriculum content, that their brains are in the optimal conditions for learning.

When the body is active, so is the brain. In a science class when students arrange themselves and move around as solid, liquid or gas molecules, it becomes much easier to understand the concept of density. The concept is easier to grasp than a worksheet with mathematical density problems. It is easier for students to answer higher-level, more rigorous questions when they gain deeper knowledge in learning while doing.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

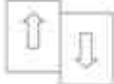
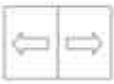
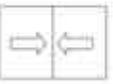
### Plate Tectonics

Identify the three types of plate boundaries.

Draw a line to match the name of the boundary to the descriptions.

new crust is generated as the plates pull away from each other.	convergent
crust is destroyed as one plate goes underneath the other.	transform
crust is neither made or destroyed as two plates pass by each other horizontally.	divergent

Write the name of the boundary shown in the diagram.

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[5]  
Traditional Worksheet

If your students are studying the movement of tectonic plates, should you have them do a worksheet or role play what happens at plate boundaries? Which would do a better job at helping students explain why volcanoes appear at convergent plate boundaries? Role-playing this event can help students understand how changes in density, temperature and pressure can lead to tectonic events.

I invite you to share your thoughts on embodied learning. What are your challenges with integrating the arts with core curriculum?

**References:**

[http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2013/03/19/fp\\_\\_griss.html](http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2013/03/19/fp__griss.html)  
Smart Moves: Why Learning Is Not All In Your Head by Carla Hannaford.

For other inspiration to integrate arts into a core curriculum, see [6]<http://artsintegration.com/portal>.

**About the Blogger:**

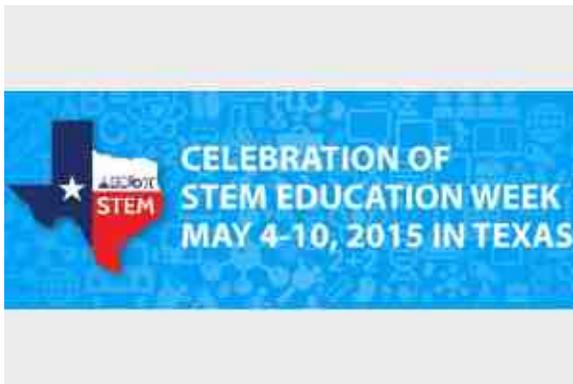
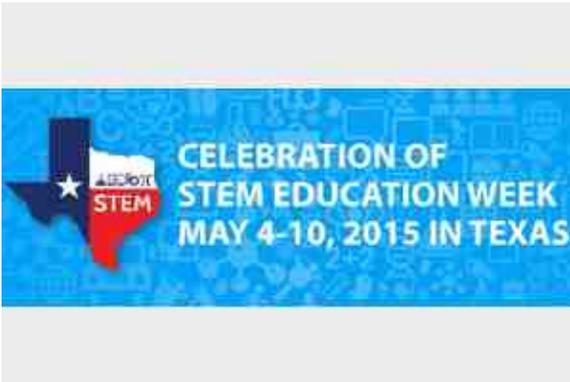
Lisa Felske is curriculum director for science at Harris County Department of Education. Her areas of expertise include integrating science with other disciplines and student misconceptions in science. She enjoys being a Girl Scout leader, reading way past her bedtime, and using the Oxford comma.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/theater-in-class.jpg>
2. <http://www.mainstreettheater.com/ed/index.html>
3. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/garden-oaks.jpg>
4. <http://www.jensenlearning.com/workshop-teaching-with-brain-in-mind.php>
5. [http://instantworksheets.net/plate\\_tectonics](http://instantworksheets.net/plate_tectonics)

6. <http://artsintegration.com/portal>

## 1.4.4 Free is good: Attend STEM Education Day in Houston May 8

(2015-04-27 09:18) - hcdetx



[1] When the word “free” is associated with professional development, we listen. STEM Education Day is a daylong, free, professional development event. It’s designed for teachers and career and technical education counselors for grades 6-12 on May 8 at George R. Brown Convention Center.

Why should we take heed and attend a STEM Education Day event? According to the [2]U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Projections to 2018 Report, STEM jobs will be numerous in the next decade, with too few students to fill them:

“The U.S. will have more than 1.2 million job openings in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)-related occupations by 2018. These include scientists, doctors, software developers and engineers. Yet, there will be a significant shortage of qualified college graduates to fill these careers. For the U.S. to succeed and continue to play a leadership role in addressing tough global challenges, we must do a better job of engaging students in these subjects and encouraging them to pursue careers in STEM-related fields.”

So in 2013, Texas universities, organizations and cities responded to the call to action for filling STEM jobs by calling attention to the issue. [3]Celebration of STEM Education Week in Texas was born.

Our Houston STEM Education Day is providing a unique opportunity for educators. Famed demographic guru Dr. Stephen Klineberg is keynote speaker who kick starts the event at the George R. Brown Convention Center on May 8 at 9 a.m. Klineberg discusses how demographic changes are impacting our community.

Afternoon sessions include STEM roundtable discussions from Harmony Public Schools students; a teacher and counselor resource fair; lunch and awards; and a corporate roundtable discussion.

HCDE is helping to sponsor the event, and we will be providing information about our [4]Alternative Teacher and Principal Certification programs in the exhibitors' area.

Please consider attending. After all, free is the operative word. [5]Register here.

### **About the Blogger:**

Lidia G. Zatopek is director of Alternative Certification and the Principal Certification Academy at HCDE. She has 25 years experience in education serving as teacher, assistant principal, principal and administrator. In her former career, she attempted to juggle four languages as an interpreter/linguist. Becoming an educator made her realize education has a language of its own, adding another juggling ball. In her leisure time and while not contemplating running marathons, she enjoys reading anything and everything about science and medicine.

1. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/celebration-of-stem-education-day-tickets-16322934336>
2. <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2009/11/art5full.pdf>
3. <http://stemtx.org/>
4. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=006.ISS>
5. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/celebration-of-stem-education-day-tickets-16322934336>

**1.5 May**



In particular, the researchers say that stretching and exploring allows students to learn to think and talk with others about an aspect of one's work or working process and learn to judge one's own work and working process and the work of others.

Sounds like higher-order thinking skills to me.

The Houston Chronicle editorial mentions that 86 percent of principals cite lack of funding as a barrier to arts education. Hopefully, principals can bring more visual arts instructors and organizations back into our schoolhouses to realize and actualize the benefits of visual arts learning. They could, if education leaders would commit to making visual arts a priority.

### **Sources:**

Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education (2007, Teachers College, Columbia University), written by five arts educators (Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema, Kimberly M. Sheridan and David Perkins) who received funding from the J. Paul Getty Trust to conduct research on visual arts in secondary schools. Their goal was to map visual arts teaching in ways that teachers and researchers would see more clearly what visual arts learning looks like.

Houston Chronicle editorial (May 1, 2015) Missing Link: Restoring arts education could make a big difference when it comes to testing

### **About the Blogger:**

Mary Lynn Johnson is curriculum director for social studies at HCDE. The veteran Spring ISD teacher, former assistant principal and program director follows her passion to share the educational advantages of learning about the past. Her first love is teaching social studies and turning students and teachers on to history, geography, government and economics. Her zeal as a social studies leader earned her the 2012 Texas Social Studies Supervisors Association "Supervisor of the Year" award.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/visual-arts\\_ps.gif](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/visual-arts_ps.gif)

1.5.2 **Subscribe to School Bell: Congrats to our lucky follower!**  
(2015-05-11 11:52) - hcdetx





Janis Gaul, our faithful School Bell subscriber from Galena Park ISD, wins a workshop from Harris County Department of Education! All she did was subscribe to School Bell, and her name was entered into our April contest. We'll have one more contest before school is out. [2]Subscribe today!

Janis insists that she is rarely a winner in random contests. She is program director for elementary language arts in Galena Park ISD. Sure she's a busy woman, but she took the time to click one button. It paid off!

[3]Subscribe to School Bell to enter our contest to win a free workshop. Someone will win on June 8, and it might as well be you!

**Question for the day:** Who's counting the remaining days of school, and how many are left in your district?

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/shutterstock\\_212968645.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/shutterstock_212968645.jpg)
2. <http://blog.hcde-texas.org/>
3. <http://blog.hcde-texas.org/>

### 1.5.3 Taking action against youth suicide: Proposed Texas legislation to require teacher training (2015-05-18 14:04) - hcdetx



[1] [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) Teachers will likely be required to take a two-hour course in suicide prevention as the Texas Senate passed the Suicide Awareness and Prevention Course ([2]Senate Bill 1169) last week. The bill is expected to pass the Texas House of Representatives before June 1.

New teachers would take the mandatory course during orientation, while existing teachers would take the course on a schedule to be created by TEA. Online courses will be an option, and details will be forthcoming.

Just how big of a problem is suicide in our Texas public school youth?

The bill's author, Texas Senator Donna Campbell, R-New Braunfels filed the bill over concern that suicide is the second-leading cause of death in Texas among older teens, college age youth and young adults 15-34 and the third case of death among young teens ages 10-14.

"No matter where we live or what we do every day, each us has a role in preventing suicide. Our actions can make a difference...We have no time to waste." - 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention

As a call to action before the bill is set into motion, there are lots of resources available to Texas

educators to help prevent suicide among our students.

Here are several resources:

[http://resources.kognito.com/texas/K12\\_STW\\_Page.pdf](http://resources.kognito.com/texas/K12_STW_Page.pdf)

[www.texassuicideprevention.org](http://www.texassuicideprevention.org)

### **About the Blogger:**

Harris County Department of Education's Communications and Public Information team helps promote the efforts of HCDE's programs and services to the education community. Our close-knit, award-winning team works together on creative strategies to effectively support the organization. We're always looking to share great stories and on occasion contribute to the HCDE blog, School Bell.

Let us know what interests you! Send us your questions and suggestions on future blog topics at [3][schoolbell@hcde-texas.org](mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org). And don't forget to follow us!

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1. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

2. <https://legiscan.com/TX/bill/SB1169/2015>

3. <mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org>

4. <https://www.facebook.com/HCDEtx>

5. <https://twitter.com/HCDEtx>

6. <http://www.youtube.com/user/HCDEtv>

7. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

1.5.4 Memorial Day: We remember those who have fallen (2015-05-25 05:40)

- hcdetx





While we recognize this federal holiday called Memorial Day with a day off, we make a concentrated effort to thank the men and women who died while serving our country. Today you may be saying a prayer; putting a wreath on a grave; reciting a poem for the fallen; or teaching your students about the meaning of Memorial Day.

The staff at School Bell and HCDE remember that we are indebted to those who fight for justice and freedom. We hope you have a memorable Memorial Day.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/shutterstock\\_192891791.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/shutterstock_192891791.jpg)

## 1.6 June

## 1.6.1 5 characteristics of effective teachers: Congrats to our 'Teachers of the Year' (2015-06-01 13:49) - hcdetx



[1] We must congratulate and brag a bit about our [2]Teacher Alternative Certification graduate [3]Valdimir Lopez. After training to be a teacher through our program in 2011, he embarked on his career and found his niche as a high school math and science teacher. Recently he was named one of four top finalists for Houston ISD Secondary Teacher of the Year.

Valdimir was an amazing student in our program. He continues to inspire us as a high school

STEM teacher.

We'd like to take the time to acknowledge all of the "Teachers of the Year" in the greater Harris County area. This time of year, school districts praise and celebrate their teachers of the year. Nomination processes vary, and both objective and subjective criteria are used. Through the process, many may question and continue to wonder: What are the characteristics of effective teachers?

Stanford University posts this article called: [4]Characteristics of Effective Teachers based on a scheme developed by M. Hildebrand, 1971. Stanford Teaching Commons is a resource for teaching and learning at Stanford University and beyond.

### **The top five things effective teachers do right are (drum roll please):**

Organization and Clarity (explains clearly)

Analytic/Synthetic Approach (has a thorough command of the field)

Dynamism and Enthusiasm (is an energetic, dynamic person)

Instructor-Group Interaction (can stimulate, direct, pace interaction with the class)

Instructor-Individual Student Interaction (is perceived as fair, especially in his/her methods of evaluation)

The article goes on to discuss what less effective teachers do wrong, but we'd like to focus on the positive.

As the year closes, we thank everyone for their tireless efforts of educating and nurturing our 1 million students in the greater Houston area. In our eyes, you're all "Teachers of the Year."

School Bell continues posting through the summer. Make sure you subscribe and follow us for a chance to win a free workshop. Happy trails this summer!

For more information about Teacher Alternative Certification or Principal Alternative Certification, email [hcdeacp@hcde-texas.org](mailto:hcdeacp@hcde-texas.org) or call 713-696-1348.

### **Resources:**

Characteristics of Effective Teachers, Stanford Teaching Commons:  
[5]<https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/teaching/planning-your-approach/characteristics-effective-teachers>

HCDE press release: [6]<http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=001.news&a=151>

Alternative certification at HCDE: [7][www.hcde-texas.org/alternativecertification](http://www.hcde-texas.org/alternativecertification)

### **About the blogger:**

Lidia G. Zatopek is director of Alternative Certification and the Principal Certification Academy

at HCDE. She has 25 years experience in education serving as teacher, assistant principal, principal and administrator. In her former career, she attempted to juggle four languages as an interpreter/linguist. Becoming an educator made her realize education has a language of its own, adding another juggling ball. In her leisure time and while not contemplating running marathons, she enjoys reading anything and everything about science and medicine.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/vladmir-lopez\\_ps.gif](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/vladmir-lopez_ps.gif)
2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=009.TeacherCertification>
3. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=001.news&a=151>
4. <https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/teaching/planning-your-approach/characteristics-effective-teachers>
5. <https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/teaching/planning-your-approach/characteristics-effective-teachers>
6. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=001.news&a=151>
7. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/alternativecertification>

## 1.6.2 Tipping the scale: Local teen takes on childhood obesity with video, website project (2015-06-08 11:38) - hcdetx



[1] The story of a campaign to combat childhood obesity starts with a roller coaster ride. Kinkaid High School rising senior Bradlee Few has a friend who cannot ride the ride because the safety bar won't latch over his large frame. She uses the story in her [2]video to drive home an issue of epidemic proportions.

According to Bradlee, there are 6.5 million children in the U.S. who are overweight. That is three times the population of Houston, she says.

Her compelling video called "[3]Tipping the Scale" is well researched and includes some impressive interviews. Moreover, the video is backed up with a plan of action through the website [4]<http://www.shouldieatthisorthat.org>.

[youtube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD0COCGh0DM &w=560 &h=315](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD0COCGh0DM&w=560&h=315)]

After volunteering with Recipe for Success, a Houston nonprofit dedicated to combating childhood obesity, Bradlee launched her own plan of action to advocate against childhood obesity. She is well aware of the psychological impacts of childhood obesity after interviewing her high school counselor Laura Lomax-Bream, who has practical experience with the matter.

"My original goal in making Tipping the Scale was to inspire individuals to take action against the spread of childhood obesity," said Bradlee Few. "That goal has largely maintained, but I have added to it with the goal of providing step-by-step ways to get involved. These advocacy methods and information about childhood obesity are available on the website, [5]<http://www.shouldieatthisorthat.org>, which I created in conjunction with Tipping the Scale to further the reach of the film's message.

"The website is running in the early stages of development, but I plan to officially launch it by

July.”

We are amazed that a teen has taken on the cause of childhood obesity and is actually issuing a call-to-action to her peers and adults. She drives home the importance by calling attention to the statistic that 45.7 percent of Texas children are obese or overweight.

Take a look at the [6]video and join the movement this summer. We’re interested in hearing how educators are addressing childhood obesity.

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Pinterest: [11]<http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/shouldieastthisorthat.jpg>
2. <https://youtu.be/JDOCOCghODM>
3. <https://youtu.be/JDOCOCghODM>
4. <http://www.shouldieatthisorthat.org/>
5. <http://www.shouldieatthisorthat.org/>
6. <https://youtu.be/JDOCOCghODM>
7. <mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org>
8. <https://www.facebook.com/HCDEtx>
9. <https://twitter.com/HCDEtx>
10. <http://www.youtube.com/user/HCDEtv>
11. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

### 1.6.3 Autism in your classroom: Summer Autism Institute brings together educators, parents, caregivers (2015-06-15 12:34) - hcdetx



[1] Autism now affects one in 68 children and one in 42 boys, according to [2]Autism Speaks, a nonprofit. As a teacher, it's likely that you will have an autistic student in your classroom in the upcoming school year.

This summer we're delivering a workshop for educators, parents and caregivers. Presenters are autism and behavior specialists Dr. Susan Catlett and Dr. Beverly Braman, founders of [3]Autism in Action. They are sharing their combined 50 years of practical experience in the classroom working with students with autism. Their step-by-step teaching program is easy to understand and effective.

The [4]Summer Autism Institute gives parents and educators the opportunity to interact for two days on June 22 and 25. Teachers, special education specialists, families and caregivers will be attending our daylong, two-day training.

Please share this information with a fellow parent or educator so that they can benefit from [5]Autism in Action®. Catlett and Braman show how to use applied behavior analysis, or ABA, as a part of everyday life.

[6]Register for our Summer Autism Institute to be held at [7]Harris County Department of Education June 22 and 25.

#### **About the Blogger:**

Debra Anderson serves as curriculum director for Early Childhood and Special Education at Harris County Department of Education. She has almost 40 years of experience as teacher, coordinator and director of special education programs. She coordinates HCDE's annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference. Her passions are reading, travel and theater.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/autism\\_ps.gif](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/autism_ps.gif)
2. <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>
3. <http://autisminaction.com/>
4. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05090>
5. <http://autisminaction.com/>
6. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05090>
7. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/>

**1.6.4 Did we say free? CASE for Kids provides Lending Library for after-school programs (2015-06-22 15:59) - hcdetx**



[1]



We'd like to share our free treasure chest of afterschool resources available to all Harris County out-of-school time programs.

The Lending Library is provided by our division called [2]CASE for Kids and includes tons of materials:

- Resource guides
- Comprehensive curriculum
- Activity books and kits
- Sports and fitness equipment
- Electronics
- Includes a list of free, web-based curriculum and activities

All materials are available for free use on a first-come, first-serve basis to all out-of-school time providers and programs in Harris County that serve youth ages 4-12. Items may be checked out for up to four weeks or longer, depending on some of the comprehensive curriculum.

All you need to do is register as a provider or program. Go to [3][www.afterschoolzone.org/default.aspx?name=Lending\\_library\\_homepage](http://www.afterschoolzone.org/default.aspx?name=Lending_library_homepage) for more info.

### **About the Blogger:**

Dr. Lisa M. Thompson-Caruthers serves as director for the Center for Afterschool, Summer and Expanded Learning, or CASE for Kids. CASE for Kids provides leadership, training, technical support and grants management to over 70 afterschool programs serving over 8,000 youth. In her leisure time, Lisa spends time with her hubby and children mastering her social work "active listening" skills and honing her artistic talents. These include building monster trucks and princess carriages out of Legos.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/shutterstock\\_41646289.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/shutterstock_41646289.jpg)
2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=025.CASE>
3. <http://Didwesayfree/?CASEforKidsprovidesLendingLibraryforafterschoolprograms>

**1.6.5 Congrats to our newest follower: Juanita Robinson wins a workshop!**  
(2015-06-29 09:15) - hcdetx





[1] Being a follower can be a good thing. Today we congratulate our latest School Bell follower: Juanita Robinson. She wins a free workshop from our [2]Instructional Support Services division which offers [3]educator professional development.

Juanita is an hourly Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teacher for [4]Houston Independent School District.

Remember, it pays to follow School Bell. We'll pick another new follower through a random drawing next month!

View our professional development offerings through our [5]Workshop Management System.

### **About the Blogger:**

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1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/juanita.jpg>
2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=006.ISS>
3. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=WorkshopRegistration>
4. <http://www.houstonisd.org/site/default.aspx?PageID=1>
5. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/>
6. <mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org>
7. <https://www.facebook.com/HCDEtx>
8. <https://twitter.com/HCDEtx>
9. <http://www.youtube.com/user/HCDEtv>
10. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

## 1.7 July

## 1.7.1 Managing Student Misbehavior: Why are teachers leaving the classroom and what to do? (2015-07-06 08:20) - hcdetx



[1] Behavior management is one of the top stated reasons for a teacher's departure from the classroom. A well-managed classroom is essential to effective instruction. So what can be done to reverse teacher attrition?

***Here are some things to think about when addressing behavior issues:***

- Students internalize the behavior they see around them, especially with adults or older students they hold in high esteem.
- Today's role models frequently symbolize rebellious and even anti-social behavior. Media exposure to violent and sexual themes further impacts student behavior in a negative way.
- Consistency is the most important aspect of managing behavior. Teachers must have clearly stated expectations and consequences and enforce them consistently in order to be effective.
- School-wide consistency with regard to rules and expectations, rewards and consequences, etc. has been shown to strengthen the behavior management efforts of classroom teachers.
- Studies have also shown that behavior changes occur through relationships. Effective school-wide discipline management plans begin with efforts to create positive, caring and respectful relationships between adults and students and also between students and their peers.

We'd like to hear from you about what works and doesn't in regard to behavior management in your classroom.

If you're looking for an upcoming behavior management workshop, consider this one: [2]Managing Student Misbehavior on Oct. 7, 2015.

### **About the Blogger:**

Debra Anderson serves as curriculum director for Early Childhood and Special Education at Harris County Department of Education. She has almost 40 years of experience as teacher, coordinator and director of special education programs. She coordinates HCDE's annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference. Her passions are reading, travel and theater.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/classroom-management\\_pm.gif](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/classroom-management_pm.gif)

2. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05078#http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05264>



## 1.7.2 Selecting a theme for your elementary classroom (2015-07-13 15:47)

- hcdetx



[1] Classroom themes help create a fun and inviting atmosphere for students. They provide a sense of classroom identity and also give you a starting point for planning the next year. With the summer half-way over, it's time to start considering themes for the new school year.

### **Here are a few tips to help you get started:**

- Think of a theme that fits your personality. Your room represents you. You don't want to be stuck with decorations you don't really like for the whole year.
- Use of more than one theme is strongly discouraged. Students with learning disabilities may find it a distraction.
- Limit your color scheme to three colors. Two solid colors and one print is a good rule of thumb. Use those same colors and pattern consistently throughout your room.
- Incorporate your theme into all aspects of classroom life. Depending on the theme, students will be part of a team (sports theme), crew (travel theme), troop (camping theme), or band (rock and roll theme). Carry the theme into your class newsletter, money in the class economy, group names and activities, and classroom management systems.
- Keep costs low by using butcher paper and printing materials yourself. Garage sales or resale shops may be a great place to find items to match your theme.

### **A few theme ideas that could work well for both boys and girls:**

- Camping (tent, fire, cabin, pinecones, bugs)
- Travel (airplanes, cars, ship, maps, luggage/tags)
- Children's literature (Dr. Seuss, Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, Where the Wild Things Are)
- Rock and roll (drums, guitars, microphones)
- Ocean or beach (fish, water, sand, shells)
- Movies (stars, popcorn, red carpet)
- Superheroes (comics, capes, cityscapes)
- Hippie (tie dye, shag carpets, lava lamps, bean bags)

Check out [2]Pinterest or [3]School Girl Style for loads of great classroom theme and design inspiration.

What is your classroom theme? Do you change every year? Let us know and share your ideas!

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1. <http://blog.hcde-texas.org/2015/07/13/selecting-a-theme-for-your-elementary-classroom/>

2. <https://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

3. <http://www.schoolgirlstyle.com/category/classroom-photos/>

4. <mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org>

5. <https://www.facebook.com/HCDEtx>

6. <https://twitter.com/HCDEtx>

7. <http://www.youtube.com/user/HCDEtv>

8. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

### 1.7.3 Behavior reward systems: What are you using? (2015-07-20 12:28) - hcdetx



[1] The first day of school is just around the corner. We're generating an open discussion on classroom behavior reward systems. What do you do to foster good citizenship in your classroom? Does the old systems of behavior bucks still work well? Are there new options?

An article from Education World called "[2]Reward Systems that Work: What to Give and When to Give It!" provides systems from four teachers along with a list of 35 Reasonable Rewards for Students. Here are a few of our picks from the list:

- Eat with a friend in the classroom (with the teacher).
- Be the first in the lunch line.
- Choose any class job for the week.
- Do half of a homework assignment.
- Take home a class game for the night.

Through Pinterest, the sky's the limit for getting new ideas for [3]rewards systems. Classroom coupons, behavior boards, marble jars and [4]Class Dojo are a few mentions. We all agree the best behavior reward systems are visual, positive and easy to understand. Care sharing what you're using?

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Pinterest: [8]<http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/good-behavior-award-480928.gif>

2. [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/curr301.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr301.shtml)

3. <https://www.pinterest.com/explore/reward-system/>

4. [http://www.talesfromoutsidetheclassroom.com/2014/08/using-class-dojo-with-classroom-economy.html#a5y\\_p=3283172](http://www.talesfromoutsidetheclassroom.com/2014/08/using-class-dojo-with-classroom-economy.html#a5y_p=3283172)

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7. <http://www.youtube.com/user/HCDEtv>

8. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

## 1.7.4 8 reasons to make the switch to school-based therapy (2015-07-27 14:42)

- hcdetx



[1] Are you an occupational or physical therapist? Have you ever considered working in a school setting? We need you!

HCDE provides therapy services to school districts in and around Harris County. Our therapists work in schools to assist students who need therapy in order to be successful.

Children served are challenged by learning disabilities, auditory or visual impairments, orthopedic impairments, attention deficit disorder, intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorders. Our school therapists work with the family and other professionals as members of the collaborative team to support student educational goals and objectives.

### **8 reasons to make the switch to school-based practice**

- We make a difference in children's lives at school
- Family-friendly work schedules
- Positions available close to home
- Professional development provided at no cost to you
- Strong support and mentoring from managers

- Comprehensive health/life insurance benefits
- Mileage reimbursement
- New graduates welcome/school experience not required

HCDE is currently seeking to fill several occupational therapist positions. If you are interested in making the switch to school therapy, or would just like to ask a few questions, please contact us at [2]bvalenzuela@hcde-texas.org or 713-696-8225.

Visit our [3]job site to apply.

**About the Blogger:**

Jean Polichino, OTR, MS, FAOTA, is senior director of Therapy Services at Harris County Department of Education. Her passion for school therapy is evident in her state and national committee involvement and her contributions to professional publications. This devotion is exceeded only by family, which includes a couple of sassy canines of the shepherd variety.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/07/therapy.jpg>
2. <mailto:bvalenzuela@hcde-texas.org>
3. <https://apps2.winocular.com/harriscosd/jobs/>

## 1.8 August

## 1.8.1 6 school zone safety tips from Harris County Department of Education (2015-08-03 11:12) - hcdetx



[1] School zones can be a stressful place in the morning. Parents are anxious to drop kids off before heading to work. Teachers are heading into the school to prep for the day's lessons before students arrive. Cars and buses are lined up down busy roads.

We all have hectic mornings, but that's no reason to put kids at risk. HCDE's [2]Center for Safe and Secure Schools urges all drivers to exercise extreme caution when traveling through school zones.

Please share these tips with your school community to keep kids safe and avoid costly fines:

- Remember to avoid double parking or stopping on a crosswalk to let children out of a car. These areas are designated for crossing guards to safely walk children across the street.
- Put away electronic devices. Cell phone use is prohibited in school zones. Violators face fines up to \$200.
- Watch out for crossing guards and obey their signals.
- Never pass other vehicles in a school zone.
- Obey the speed limit. Fines usually double in school zones.
- If you are not a parent dropping off or picking up a child, choose a different route and avoid the school zone altogether.

**About the Blogger:**

Ecomet Burley, a 26-year administrator, is the new leader of the Center for Safe and Secure Schools. Established in 1999, the Center provides school safety and security training for school districts in greater Harris County. Burley, the former superintendent of La Marque ISD, resides in Pearland with wife Frances, an elementary school principal. Education, Burley insists, is the primary and native language spoken in their home.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/schoolzonesafety.jpg>

2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=028.SafeSchools>

## 1.8.2 Clear boundaries between students and teachers: How instant communication plays a role in victimization (2015-08-10 12:55) - hcdetx



[1] The public continues to be outraged by the number of cases of students being sexually victimized by teachers and other school employees. Last year in Texas, 116 cases of inappropriate relationships were reported, and investigations grew by 27 percent in the past three years.

Recently Terry Abbott, owner of Drive West Public Relations, presented at HCDE at a meeting held by area school public relations leaders. He has experienced these victimizations firsthand as former Houston Independent School District's press secretary.

As cases continue to rise throughout the last three years, a bulk of those are attached to social media and easy access to personal cell phones. A teacher and student begin texting. They communicate through Facebook. Videos even document some of the relationships. Abbott's firm has tracked these statistics throughout the nation for years through media reports.

He points to the misuse and abuse of social media and personal cell phones as tools which give predators easy access to students. Abbott, who is also a concerned parent as father to a teenage boy, calls the problem "epidemic."

Abbott has these recommendations for schools as prevention tools:

- Adopt and enforce stricter policies regarding social media interaction between students and teachers.
- Aggressively investigate cases as a means to take care of students.
- Publicly denounce the crimes and never cover them up.
- Have strong social media and texting policies. Disallow social media interaction between students and teachers.
- Meet with staff and speak bluntly about the issues and the problems.

Where social media conversations are allowed, any messaging should be sent to both student and parent, Abbott says. In an age where "instant communication" is available to our students 24/7, where do you think the boundaries should lie?

### **About the Blogger:**

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1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/texting.jpg>

2. <mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org>

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4. <https://twitter.com/HCDEtx>

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**1.8.3 Backpack safety tips: How to prevent body pain, strain (2015-08-17 15:27)**  
- hcdetx





[2]Backpack safety is probably the last thing a teacher would be thinking about this time of year. Class rosters and sprucing up the classroom might top your list. However, [3]school-based physical therapists and occupational therapists are concerned about the physical strain and pain in transporting books and school materials. That goes for both students and teachers.

How heavy is that load of books and materials that you or your students carry each day? If you're 150 pounds, you should be carrying no more than 15 pounds in your bag. At 50 pounds, your student should carry no more than five pounds.

Here are some basic safety tips to consider for the school year:

- Choose the right size backpack: A small child needs a small backpack
- The backpack should fit snugly, with the backpack bottom at or slight below the waistline.

- Load the heaviest items closest to your back or your child's back.
- Use of both shoulder straps and the waist strap will distribute the weight evenly.
- Observe the 10 percent rule: A 50-pound student should only carry five pounds.

The U.S. Consumer Product and Safety Commission says about 7,000 kids ages 5-14 each year are injured due to backpacks. Statistics show that over half of the student population carries too heavy a load in their backpacks.

Help relieve backpack strain and pain by sharing this blog. Remember to lighten your load!

**About the Blogger:** Jean Polichino, OTR, MS, FAOTA, is senior director of School-Based Therapy Services at Harris County Department of Education. Her passion for school therapy is evident in her state and national committee involvement and her contributions to professional publications. This devotion is exceeded only by family, which includes a couple of sassy canines of the shepherd variety.

View our public service video for more information:

[youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Es1v9MqYV2c>]

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/backback1.jpg>
2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/back2school/index.html>
3. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=002.TherapyServices>

**1.8.4 Back-to-School Resource: View comprehensive calendar for all 25 Harris County school districts from HCDE (2015-08-24 16:09) - hcdetx**



[1] Need to know if Channelview shares the same winter break as Houston or Waller? Here's a handy resource with key dates from all the 25 school districts in Harris County. View our comprehensive school district calendar for 2015-2016 to see teacher work days and staff holidays. Already looking forward to spring break or the last day of the school year? We have all your district's dates so you can plan your next teacher-cation!

Most districts begin school on Aug. 24, with the exception of Deer Park and Pasadena (Aug. 25). School districts celebrate Thanksgiving from Nov. 23-27, except Houston, Katy, Klein and Spring Branch which are on holiday from Nov. 25-27.

All districts observe winter break from Dec. 21-Jan. 1, and all districts observe spring break from March 14-18. Easter is recognized on March 25. Staff work days and other holidays vary from district to district. Most districts end school on June 2, except Crosby, Cy-Fair and Waller (June 1); Houston (May 25); New Caney (May 27); and Spring (May 26).

View the calendar for the 25 school districts through the following link: [2]<http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=Calendar.Other>

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1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/postercalendar\\_main-15\\_16\\_sm-2\\_ps.gif](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/postercalendar_main-15_16_sm-2_ps.gif)
2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=Calendar.Other>
3. <mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org>
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7. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

## 1.8.5 Get Funded: Recharge your afterschool with money for nonprofits through City Connections (2015-08-31 15:21) - hcdetx



[1] If you're looking for the opportunity to recharge your afterschool or out-of-school time program, now's the time. The City of Houston just announced \$495,000 in funding throughout the 11 council districts through a program called "City Connections."

Nonprofits are chosen to work within existing or new programs. Programs can be held in schools, community centers or faith-based organizations or civic groups.

Services like dance, music, theater or art are offered by the nonprofits. Your students might take piano, violin or mariachi music instruction. Water safety classes could be the focus of the funding so that students like to swim or benefit from water aerobics. Language classes, gardening, computer courses or arts-and-crafts instruction are other possibilities.

[2] Learn more about getting up to \$10,000 in nonprofit programs through the City of Houston's City Connections which is administered by CASE for Kids, a division of Harris County Department of Education. Apply through the following link: [3]<http://www.afterschoolzone.org/default.aspx?name=Funding> .

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1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/garden\\_ps.gif](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/garden_ps.gif)

2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=001.news&a=177>

3. <http://www.afterschoolzone.org/default.aspx?name=Funding>

4. <mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org>

5. <https://www.facebook.com/HCDEtx>

6. <https://twitter.com/HCDEtx>

7. <http://www.youtube.com/user/HCDEtv>

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## 1.9 September

1.9.1 Attendance matters: Strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism  
(2015-09-07 10:30) - hcdetx

The poster features a green header with the text "ATTEND TODAY, ACHIEVE TOMORROW". Below this, the text "GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEANS..." is centered. Five cartoon characters represent different educational stages: an elementary student at a desk, a middle schooler, a high schooler with a graduation cap, a college student with a cap and diploma, and a worker in a business suit. Below each character is a purple box with text: "ELEMENTARY STUDENTS read well by the end of third grade", "MIDDLE SCHOOLERS pass important courses", "HIGH SCHOOLERS stay on track for graduation", "COLLEGE STUDENTS earn their degrees", and "WORKERS succeed in their jobs". A paragraph at the bottom states: "Too many absences—excused or unexcused—can keep students from succeeding in school and in life. How many are too many? 10% of the school year—that's 18 missed days or 2 days a month—can knock students off track." The Attendance Works logo and website are in the bottom right corner.

[1]

This is an identical copy of the poster described above, featuring the same header, text, illustrations, and statistics.

While we enjoy the day off from school and work this Labor Day, we recognize the impact of attending

school every day on student success.

September is [2]Attendance Awareness Month and the organization Attendance Works is partnering with families and community agencies across the nation to intervene when poor attendance becomes a problem for students or schools.

According to Attendance Works, “Students who miss more school than their peers consistently score lower on standardized tests, a result that holds true at every age, in every demographic group, and in every state and city tested.”

September is a significant month in identifying problem attendance. Attendance Works’ research finds the following:

- Students who miss less than two days of school in September typically have good attendance rates for the entire year
- Half of students who miss 2-4 days in of school in September typically go on to miss a month or more, which is known as chronic absence.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 students who miss more than 4 days in September are chronically absent for the year. These students miss an average of 70 days.

Houston ISD says, “Missing more than 10 percent (or 17 days) of school a year can lead to a student [3]not receiving a grade or being retained, but more importantly, it represents lost time in the classroom and a lost opportunity to learn.”

Educators can practice the following strategies to help reduce chronic absenteeism:

- **Promote good attendance among students.** Educate families on how quickly early absences can add up to academic trouble. Encourage good attendance by providing contests and incentives for students.
- **Track the right data.** Review data and looks for patterns around frequently missed dates. Look at both excused and unexcused absences. Send encouraging messaging out around the holidays as absences often spike as families try to squeeze in a few more vacation days.
- **Use community partners.** Evaluate barriers to attendance that lie beyond the classroom, such as a lack of reliable transportation, health and dental problems, or housing issues. Engage community partners who could help and offer the resources to families in need.

This summer, [4]Texas Gov. Greg Abbott signed legislature to decriminalize truancy. Attend our Truancy Officers’ Legislative Update 2015 Meeting at HCDE to get the scoop on the new truancy bill (HB 2398) Sept. 10, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Learn how it affects our schools, families and the court system. Register at: [5]<http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05134>

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1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/attendtoday.jpg>
2. <http://awareness.attendanceworks.org/>
3. <http://blogs.houstonisd.org/news/2013/12/19/what-it-means-if-your-students-report-card-has-an-n-g/>
4. <http://www.texastribune.org/2015/06/19/texas-decriminalize-truancy-after-abbott-signs-bil/>
5. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05134>
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## 1.9.2 5 tips from cyber education specialists to keep kids digitally safe, create responsible online citizens (2015-09-14 11:35) - hcdetx



[1] When it comes to student safety in the cyber world, digital content and education specialists David McGeary and Lynnice Hockaday know about the threats. From predators to hackers to intellectual property theft, they hear many a story in the trenches.

Still, these digital educators who provide services for educators and students through Harris County Department of Education prefer to focus on the positives of online learning. They believe they are preparing young responsible digital citizens of the future.

A responsible digital citizen is defined as someone who uses an online digital community as a communication and collaborative tool for the greater good.

“You build an online presence in a socially ethical way and also are able to judge the credibility of the information online while protecting users’ privacy and safety,” said Hockaday.

As HCDE digital specialists, the pair helps teachers find online resources that enhance learning in the classroom. They also help teachers develop a positive online presence to provide information and resources to students and parents.

“We help teachers build engaging online content for mainstream curriculum, as well as support for struggling students,” said McGeary.

McGeary and Hockaday share these five tips for digital safety as the school year begins. Suggestions and resources accompany each tip.

**No. 1: Learn to use privacy and security settings on your kids’ online devices and**

## **apps. Doing so protects them and their personal information.**

“You may need to control access to our child’s profile, how and when they are contacted online, and what information they can find through content filters,” said McGeary. “Privacy and safety extends to password and access control. When kids set passwords for apps, talk with them about setting up strong passwords and best ways to keep and remember passwords. Doing so gives the parent access to the password should they need it.”

## **No. 2: Talk to you kids about good online citizenship.**

Talk about safety and reliable resources online. Ask important questions about what might or might not be safe.

“Remind your kids that citizenship isn’t just about being safe, but about being a good person online,” said Hockaday, who has raised three tech-responsible kids ages 10, 17 and 20. Role play can help your child understand interactions and their consequences, she says. Try to define cyber bullying. A large percentage of online bullies are not bullies in real life. They just fail to connect the fact that there is another human being on the other end.

“Humanizing the online experience is important,” Hockaday said. “Teach your children to leave a big, positive digital footprint.”

## **No. 3: Use web-enabled devices and machines in public areas of your house as much as possible. Don’t be afraid to ask your kids what they are up to.**

While cell phones may seem harmless, they are essentially full-blown computers carried around in a pocket.

Create a central charging hub located in a well-trafficked area of your home like your kitchen or living area. Call it the cyber area and have your children use their devices there.

“By having discussions with your kids about what they are doing online, you are opening up communication and showing interest in creative use of their digital devices,” said McGeary. “Kids who actively share their musical, game or creative interests with their parents are statistically more likely to discuss other things that may be happening in their cyber world.”

## **No. 4: Use sites like[2] iKeepSafe.org and [3]CommonSenseMedia.org to stay up-to-date on new social media tools/resources.**

Parents may also want to invest in apps like [4]MyMobileWatchdog to help them learn what their kids are doing on web-enabled devices and to limit access to unsafe spaces.

“Using these apps help adults as well as kids,” said Hockaday. “Many adults use poor online habits, so these sites can help parents become better digital citizens themselves. “

## **No. 5: Help teach your kids to be content promoters versus content thieves.**

Encourage your child to give credit to other people for their good ideas in order to become a good online citizen.

While every thought is not 100 percent original, the Internet is often a ripe source for plagiarism. Teach children to share their new creations while also respecting the creations of others.

“Plagiarism, intellectual property theft, homework and test sharing and authentic scholarship are topics parents must discuss in relation to digital sharing,” said McGeary.

While online space is the sum total of all human information, it’s important to teach kids to be content producers versus content thieves who recycle ideas and dilute online scholarship.

“Support the value of your kids sharing their online creations while also respecting other users’ online creations,” he said.

For more information about online citizenship and services provided by the Teaching and Learning Center, a division of Harris County Department of Education, email [5][dmcgeary@hcde-texas.org](mailto:dmcgeary@hcde-texas.org) or [6][lhockaday@hcde-texas.org](mailto:lhockaday@hcde-texas.org).

### **About the Blogger:**

David McGeary, manager of innovation at HCDE, spends his days exploring the ways that old and new digital tools and resources can be used to enhance a student’s ability to learn new things, collaborate with learners anywhere and share new ideas with the world. When not hard at work, David enjoys playing classical guitar, practicing photography or doing anything his new wife tells him to do.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/computers\\_kids.gif](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/computers_kids.gif)

2. <http://www.ikeepsafe.org/>

3. <http://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

4. <http://mymobilewatchdog.com/>

5. <mailto:dmcgeary@hcde-texas.org>

6. <mailto:lhockaday@hcde-texas.org>

### 1.9.3 Creating videos for your Classroom: Good for students, parents and teachers (2015-09-21 14:13) - hcdetx



[1] Thinking about making videos for classroom instruction or for sending home to parents to explain homework? Why not—they're easy to create and are great visual tools.

We're all visual creatures these days. Videos can be effective in a sundry of situations, and it's easy to do with your cell phone.

Here are four ways math teachers and students can use video in and out of the classroom:

1. Create inquiry-based lessons for your students using video. Educator Dan Meyer uses video to create a conflict in which students ask questions, design their own problem and find their own resources to solve the problem. Then Dan sets up a sequel: <http://mrmeyer.com/threeacts/pyramidofpennies/act1/actone.mov>

Math specialist Jo Boaler offers this engaging math lesson via the inquiry-based model: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=len-86bXCrl>

2. Use video to help with teacher planning and professional development. New standards mean new methodology, so what better way than to turn to the visual route again to model best practices. Here are two examples: sample one and sample two. <https://vimeo.com/7682473> and [https://www.teachingchannel.org/blog/2015/05/15/collaborating-around-math-before-during-and-after-lessons/?utm\\_content=buffer6dc11&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](https://www.teachingchannel.org/blog/2015/05/15/collaborating-around-math-before-during-and-after-lessons/?utm_content=buffer6dc11&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

3. Parent tutorial can be helpful to explain methods of solving problems other than using the standard algorithm. Parents will benefit from your modeling the method through a YouTube session: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYp6xfnp\\_hbw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYp6xfnp_hbw)

4. Find or create videos to provide student review or help. When students are absent, they can view a lesson from home. If someone needs extra help, they find reinforcement through your video.

The flipped classroom inverts traditional teaching methods, delivering instruction online outside of the class and moving the practice into the classroom. Here's a sample on how it might work for you. Search the Internet for many more samples of this popular, new practice. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TIEwAztv9w>

Once you gain confidence creating and using video, you're the star! Students, parents and teachers benefit. We invite you to share your videos with our School Bell crew!

### **About the Blogger:**

Nicole Shanahan is the math specialist at HCDE. A self-professed Julia Roberts of presenters, she vows to weave a bit of entertainment into each of her math workshops. As teacher, mentor, trainer and coach, Nicole serves up workshops ala carte within districts or at HCDE headquarters at 6300 Irvington, Houston, TX. The mother-of-three clocks in more volunteer hours than the average bear can handle. She often writes about her cubs in her posts. Follow Nicole on Pinterest at: [2]Secondary Math | [3]Elementary Math

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/video-blog.jpg>

2. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/math-secondary/>

3. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/math-elementary>

## 1.9.4 School leadership: Letting data drive your instruction (2015-09-28 10:52)

- hcdetx



[1] Principals know that student achievement data is valuable for charting the campus road map. That information leads to good decision-making about instruction. Moreover, how that data is used is critical.

Here are five recommendations to help principals put student achievement data to the best possible use:

1. Make data part of the ongoing cycle of instructional improvement.
2. Teach students to examine their own data and set learning goals.
3. Establish a clear vision for school-wide data use.
4. Provide supports that foster a data driven culture within the school.
5. Develop and maintain a district-wide data system.

**Source:** [http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/Student %20Achievement \\_blue.pdf](http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/Student%20Achievement_blue.pdf)

For more information about how to use your data more effectively to plan curriculum, consider contacting the [2]Teaching and Learning Center at HCDE.

We're sponsoring several upcoming workshops on the topic, including the lead4ward workshop called [3]Leading Intentional Intervention with Stephanie Zelenak on Oct. 6 at HCDE.

Here is a brief description of workshop objectives:

- Use campus and student level data to design effective intervention structures.
- Leverage existing resources and commonly used review strategies in relevant and engaging ways.
- Use data to inform support for pivot teachers.

**Register** for the "Leading Intentional Intervention": [4]<http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog &w=05388>

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1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/student-data-analysis.jpg>

2. <http://www.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=006.ISS>

3. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05388>

4. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05388>

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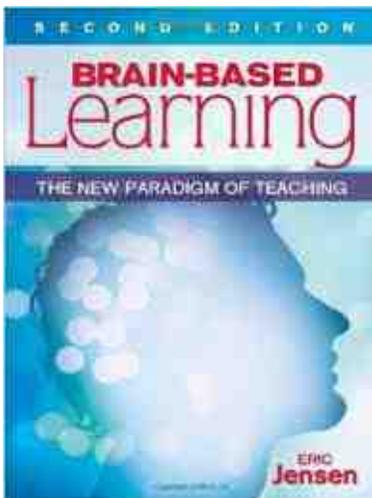
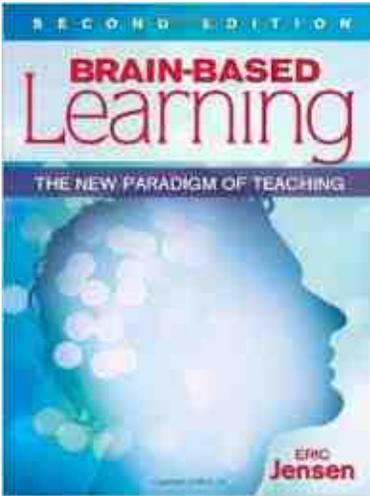
7. <https://twitter.com/HCDEtx>

8. <http://www.youtube.com/user/HCDEtv>

9. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

**1.10 October**

## 1.10.1 Brain-Based Learning: Share myths and realities with Eric Jensen (2015-10-05 14:26) - hcdetx



[1] Are your teaching methods aligned with scientific research about how the brain works?

Eric Jensen is the maestro of brain-based learning, and we're excited about hosting him as a presenter here at HCDE on [2]October 22. Jensen defines brain-based education as "the active engagement of practical strategies based on learning and behavioral principles derived from neuroscience."

Brain-based education, he says, is not a magic bullet to solve all of education's problems. Yet, integrating brain research with our everyday lives is quite important.

Brain-based research is here to stay, but not without critics when it's applied to the classroom.

The author of "Brain-Based Learning" cites several myths and realities about the subject. Here are some of our favorites from Jensen:

**Myth:** More content per hour is better.

**Reality:** Each subject and each learner probably have an ideal amount of “ideas per hour” that can be learned based on learner background, motivation, learning skills and subject complexity and novelty. Only language acquisition occurs better with more content per hour.

**Myth:** More focused classroom attention by students on the teacher improves learning.

**Reality:** Students need time to digest, think, reflect and act on their learning for connections to strengthen.

**Myth:** Rote memorization is brain-antagonistic.

**Reality:** The brain strengthens learning through repetition. It’s not repetition that’s bad; it’s when it becomes too boring. There are many creative and fun ways to review.

**Myth:** Emotions and Intelligence are separate.

**Reality:** While they may originate in separate areas of the brain, their paths usually cross in the orbitofrontal cortex. So, in a sense, they are inseparable.

Eric Jensen, our maestro of brain research, will be presenting at Harris County Department of Education headquarters at 6300 Irvington Blvd. on October 22. To say we’re excited is an understatement, and we are ready to fire up our neurotransmitters.

[3]View the flier or [4]register for the Eric Jensen workshop.

**Source:** <http://www.jensenlearning.com/news/what-is-brain-based-teaching/brain-based-teaching>

### **About the Blogger:**

Andrea Segraves served in the public school system for 14 years as a teacher and an administrator before being named the current Director of the Teaching and Learning Center for HCDE. She is a boy-mom who spends her extra time at the ball fields and reading educational literature.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/brain.jpg>
2. [http://tools.hcde-texas.org/users/0245/2014-15Fliers/Jensen\\_102215.pdf](http://tools.hcde-texas.org/users/0245/2014-15Fliers/Jensen_102215.pdf)
3. [http://www.hcde-texas.org/users/0245/2014-15Fliers/Jensen\\_102215.pdf](http://www.hcde-texas.org/users/0245/2014-15Fliers/Jensen_102215.pdf)
4. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05378>

## 1.10.2 It's National School Lunch Week: Encourage students to dig in (2015-10-12 10:36) - hcdetx



[1] Each year, more than 85 million student lunches are served due in part to contracts awarded by [2]HCDE Choice Partners cooperative. On Oct. 22, students and nutrition directors will taste food to help [3]Choice Partners members identify food purchases and plan their 2016-2017 menus.

Every year during the second week in October, we celebrate National School Lunch Week to remind teachers, students and parents about the nutritional and economic benefits of the [4]National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

The NSLP has its own rich history. Having begun in 1952 under President Harry Truman, the NSLP added breakfast to its menu in 1966 when the School Breakfast Program (SBP) was piloted. Many students in the U.S. are unaware that the NSLP and SBP require school meals to meet federal nutrition standards.

Did you know, for example, that school lunches are designed to provide one third of the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of essential calories, vitamins and nutrients? If you eat breakfast at school, you add an additional one fourth of the RDA and, according to recent research, boost your performance in class.

Too often, students develop a negative view of school food because it lacks the high sugar and fat content of snack food and other unhealthy items commonly marketed to children. School meals, by contrast, offer students items from all five major groups. In recent years, the NSLP has increased students' consumption of fresh fruits, vegetables and fiber-rich whole grains. Food served on a

school cafeteria tray is often much healthier than what's served at home or at a restaurant.

It's cheaper, too. Because they are federally subsidized, school meals are a more economical choice for parents as well as schools. Many people do not realize that student participation in the NSLP is voluntary. They are unaware that this self-supporting program uses no local district funds.

Teachers have many fun and effective options available to help educate students about the benefits of the NSLP. Nutrition lessons, taste tests, classroom celebrations and other activities all play an important part in promoting a program that serves our students year round – but only if they take advantage of it.

**About this blogger:**

Trisha Jensen is assistant director of HCDE Choice Partners cooperative and the director of food contracts. Her background in food service, commodity processing and contract procurement, including her B.S. in nutrition from Stephen F. Austin State University, makes her an expert on school nutrition and purchasing. She has two children – Andrew, 14, and Sydnee, 16 – so you could also say she's an expert on teenagers.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/school-lunch\\_ps.gif](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/school-lunch_ps.gif)
2. <http://www.choicepartners.org/>
3. <http://www.choicepartners.org/choice-partners-members>
4. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>

### 1.10.3 How to get urban high school students to do their work: Innovative solutions to urban problems (2015-10-19 10:54) - hcdetx



[1] Is the urban high school a factory for failure? High school teachers often complain about getting struggling students to do their homework. As great minds come together, educators are working to find innovative solutions.

Dr. Yvette Jackson believes in changing the reality for urban students. The author and presenter is CEO of the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education of Columbia University. She works with school districts to customize and deliver systemic approaches to help students demonstrate high intellectual performances.

[2] Jackson presents at Harris County Department of Education on November 12-13 from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

[3] An estimated 40 percent of urban students are failing multiple classes in ninth grade, and in many cities 50 percent or more leave school without graduating.

In innovative urban schools, Jackson says educators work together to find solutions to the perennial problem of getting struggling students to consistently engage in work.

Here are some [4] strategies which researchers say are proving successful in getting students to do their schoolwork:

- Assign work that is worthy of effort.
- Make the work doable.
- Find out what students need.
- Create space and time for homework.
- Make work public.

- Collaboration is key.

Administrators, counselors, curriculum coordinators, principals and teachers are invited to join us at Dr. Jackson's workshop called Optimizing the Learning of Disenfranchised Urban Students to change the reality of urban students on November 12-13. [5]Register for the workshop.

### **About the Blogger:**

Frances Watson-Hester has been an educator in public schools for the past 24 years. Her experience includes being a teacher, counselor, coordinator, assistant principal and principal. Frances is currently the senior director for the Teaching and Learning Center at HCDE. With two energetic boys, she spends her time keeping up with them and staying abreast of current educational practices.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/how-to-get-urban-high-school-students-to-do-their-work.jpg>
2. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05429>
3. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb06/vol63/num05/If-They'd-Only-Do-Their-Work!.aspx>
4. <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb06/vol63/num05/If-They'd-Only-Do-Their-Work!.aspx>
5. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/default.aspx?name=wmscatalog&w=05429>

#### 1.10.4 Tearing Down Classroom Walls: Use technology to make global connections (2015-10-26 10:43) - hcdetx



[1] Students are no longer limited to how and where they can access new knowledge because there are now no geographic barriers. Education technology tools and social media allow discussions to come from a wide range of worldwide ideologies and viewpoints.

Tearing down the walls and making connections outside the traditional classroom has become much easier. Below are tips that will help new and experienced teachers take their classrooms on a trip around the globe.

1. Follow blogs and actively engage in Twitter with other educators to build your personal learning network. Start making connections.
2. [2] Include digital citizenship and digital literacy in your classroom activities and discussions.
3. Decide where to create global connections in your curriculum. It doesn't happen overnight, and it requires some planning.

Global connections are rarely found in today's traditional classrooms. A global classroom provides regional, cultural and political insights that goes far beyond a student's hometown. Critical thinking is encouraged. Students will be better prepared to communicate and engage effectively in the global

economy that they will enter as grownups.

Many resources are available to help teachers make those connections with other students around the world through project-based learning opportunities. [3]TakingITGlobal is one of the world's leading networks of young people learning about, engaging with, and working towards tackling global challenges. It's a great resource for educators.

[4]TakingITGlobal works with youth and teachers around the world to engage students and work collaboratively to tackle the world's problem. Other resources are below:

#### Resources

- [5]International Society of Technology Educators
- [6]International Education and Resource Network
- [7]Teachers for Global Classrooms

#### **About the Blogger:**

Lynnice Hockaday is a technology analyst for the Teacher and Learning Center at HCDE. For the past 20 years, Lynnice has been an educator, curriculum specialist, technology coach and online instructor, and loves helping students and teachers reach outside the classroom walls by engaging and collaborating worldwide through online learning. Lynnice stays very busy outside of work with three active kids and enjoys hiking and biking in her spare time.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/global-learning\\_ps.gif](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/global-learning_ps.gif)
2. <http://wp.me/p4QJF1-9L>
3. <http://www.tigweb.org/>
4. <http://www.tigweb.org/>
5. <http://www.iste.org/>
6. <http://iearn.org/>
7. <http://tgcus.blogspot.com/>

## 1.11 November

**1.11.1 Motivating Young Readers: Don't forget to read aloud!**  
(2015-11-02 10:44) - hcdetx





Want to build a strong foundation for a literacy-rich classroom? It begins with reading aloud to your students. Reading aloud fluently and expressively communicates enthusiasm for reading and helps students realize the value of reading.

Reading aloud to students also helps expand vocabulary by presenting words in context. As you read, you demonstrate ways to derive meanings from context by “thinking aloud.” Try some of the following tips for getting your students geared up to make steady progress in reading all year long!

### 1. Start with read-alouds during the first days of school:

- *First Day Jitters* by Julie Danneberg
- *Brand New Pencils, Brand New Books* by Diane deGroat
- *Amanda’s First Day of School* by Joan E. Goodman
- *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes

2. **Read aloud and discuss books that demonstrate a love of books and learning.** Discuss the characters and talk about what the characters read, why they read, and also where and when they enjoy their books:

- *The Best Time to Read* by Debbie Bertram and Susan Brow

- *The Best Book to Read* by Debbie Bertram and Susan Bloom
- *I Like Books* by Anthony Browne

3. **Keep a list of books you have read aloud.** Post it in the classroom so that you and your students can easily remember them when making connections .

4. **Place books you have read aloud in a special basket or tub, or display them along the bookcase so that students can find and reread them.**

Reading aloud to students allows them to experience a variety of quality texts in different genres. Through “reading aloud,” you create shared literary experiences as a foundation for learning how to comprehend texts.

The ideas shared here are from the article by Ellery, Oczkus, and Rasinski in *LITERACY TODAY*: [2]<http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/cd43c2b8#/cd43c2b8/34>

#### **About the Blogger:**

Melba Kent, Ed.D, is curriculum director for language arts at Harris County Department of Education. She works with schools and districts across the county to help implement effective literacy instruction for all students. Melba is a pathological runner who makes a mean pot of red beans and rice and drinks lattes excessively. She lives by the motto: “Be a New Orleanian wherever you are.”

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/reading.jpg>

2. <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/cd43c2b8#/cd43c2b8/34>

## 1.11.2 10 Signs of Child Sexual Abuse: Recognizing and reporting (2015-11-09 14:58) - hcdetx



[1] Child sexual abuse will most likely affect your classroom at some point in your teaching career. Trust your instincts and suspicions about child abuse by looking for these signs issued by The Children's Assessment Center.

The Children's Assessment Center does warn that children may show all or none of the signs above. However, the list is a good starting point:

1. Changes in behavior
2. Returning to earlier behaviors
3. Fear of going home
4. Changes in eating
5. Changes in sleeping
6. Changes in school performance and attendance
7. Lack of personal care or hygiene
8. Risk-taking behaviors
9. Inappropriate sexual behaviors
10. Unexplained injuries

To report a case of child abuse or neglect in Texas, call 800-252-5400 or contact your local law enforcement agency. For more information about how you can help, go to [2][www.cachouston.org](http://www.cachouston.org)

The Center for Safe and Secure Schools hosts an a.m. or p.m. workshop on December 14 with the Children's Assessment Center called [3]Darkness to Light Stewards of Children. We hope you can attend. It's a free training that fulfills mandates of the Texas Education Code 38.0041 requiring school district staff training concerning "prevention techniques for and recognition of sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children.

About the blogger:

Harris County Department of Education's Communication team helps promote the efforts of HCDE's programs and services to the education community. Our close-knit, award-winning team works together on creative strategies to effectively support the organization. We're always looking to share great stories and on occasion contribute to the HCDE blog, School Bell.

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1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/abuse\\_ps.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/abuse_ps.jpg)

2. <http://www.cachouston.org/>

3. <http://www.safeandsecureschools.org/Lists/Upcomingevents/Attachments/72/Stewards%20of%20Children%20Flyer%20DEC-14-15.pdf>
4. <mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org>
5. <https://www.facebook.com/HCDEx>
6. <https://twitter.com/HCDEx>
7. <http://www.youtube.com/user/HCDEx>
8. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

1.11.3 Raising the Bar on Science Literacy: What do you know?  
(2015-11-16 15:08) - hcdetx





Americans seem to have a dim view on science education, according to a 2015 report from the Pew Research Center.

STEM education in our nation is seen as average or even below average compared to other countries. Views may be partly based on how science education is portrayed in the media.

Generally, Americans have a very limited knowledge about science. A recent clip from Jimmy Kimmel Live asked viewers about gluten. Not one person who was on a gluten-free diet could actually explain what gluten is.

It doesn't take very long at all to find gaps in understanding about vaccines, the use of pesticides, GMO crops or climate change. A general consensus is that people can believe anything they want and that looking at evidence is unimportant.

Somehow we have lost sight of the fact that a disbelief in data does not invalidate data. As Neil deGrasse Tyson says: "The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it."

The real problem is a lack of basic science literacy, not whether or not Americans can remember random science facts. Fewer than one in three college graduates can perform tasks such as interpreting a data table about blood pressure and physical activity. Furthermore, 32 percent of Americans believe that vaccines should be optional. And 33 percent of Americans say they avoid eating gluten because it is bad for you. In the age of the Internet, you can find evidence (valid or not) to support almost any belief you want.

[2]



Fossil fuels protestor wearing multiple examples of items derived from fossil fuels

In all levels of K-12 STEM education, students no longer learn science as a body of facts. Students are expected to analyze and interpret data. They must make logical arguments to support claims with evidence and understand how to see patterns and connection. Most importantly, students must be able to read and write for scientific understanding.

Recent STAAR data shows that we have room to grow in Texas. Students do well when asked factual questions, but do poorly when asked to interpret and analyze data.

We want all students to be scientifically literate as adults. They must be able to do the following:

- Read with understanding articles about science in the popular press and to engage in social conversation about the validity of the conclusions.
- Evaluate the quality of scientific information on the basis of its source and the methods used to

generate it.

- Pose and evaluate scientific arguments based on evidence and apply conclusions from such arguments appropriately.

We can start as early as kindergarten to teach students to evaluate claims (predictions) with evidence and reasoning. A teacher could pose a question such as “Are all magnets the same strength?” Students could then make a claim, such as “Bigger magnets are always stronger.” They can collect evidence by experimentation and then use that evidence to evaluate the claim. They can then explain their reasoning. It is important for us to help build both the language and content knowledge of all students in order for them to succeed in science.

What are your views on the importance of science literacy? We’d like to know...

Teachers can register for **Raising the Bar: Literacy Strategies in Science**, being offered on February 18, 2016 at [3]<http://wms.hcde-texas.org> .

### **Resources:**

[4]<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/09/10/what-the-public-knows-and-does-not-know-about-science/>

[5]<https://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

[6]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdJFE1sp4Fw>

### **About the Blogger**

Lisa Felske is curriculum director for science at Harris County Department of Education. Her areas of expertise include integrating science with other disciplines and student misconceptions in science. She enjoys being a Girl Scout leader, reading way past her bedtime, and using the Oxford comma.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/science.jpg>

2. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/fossil-fuel1.jpg>

3. <http://wms.hcde-texas.org/>

4. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/09/10/what-the-public-knows-and-does-not-know-about-science/>

5. <https://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdJFE1sp4Fw>

## 1.11.4 Happy Thanksgiving Factoids: Have a great holiday! (2015-11-23 07:13)

- hcdetx



[1] We're wishing you all a happy Thanksgiving complete with safe travels and many great memories. Below are some Thanksgiving factoids you might share with your students (if you're in session this week).

1. Abraham Lincoln issued a 'Thanksgiving Proclamation' on third October 1863 and officially set aside the last Thursday of November as the national day for Thanksgiving. Whereas earlier the presidents used to make an annual proclamation to specify the day when Thanksgiving was to be held.
2. President Franklin D. Roosevelt restored Thursday before last of November as Thanksgiving Day in the year 1939. He did so to make the Christmas shopping season longer and thus stimulate the economy of the state.
3. Congress passed an official proclamation in 1941 and declared that now onward Thanksgiving will be observed as a legal holiday on the fourth Thursday of November every year.
4. Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be the national bird of the United States. But it was Thomas Jefferson who opposed him. It is believed that Franklin then named the male turkey as

'tom' to spite Jefferson.

Source: [2][www.thanksgivingnovember.com](http://www.thanksgivingnovember.com)

### **About the blogger:**

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1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/shutterstock\\_334384415\\_small.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/shutterstock_334384415_small.jpg)

2. <http://www.thanksgivingnovember.com/>

3. <mailto:schoolbell@hcde-texas.org>

4. <https://www.facebook.com/HCDEtx>

5. <https://twitter.com/HCDEtx>

6. <http://www.youtube.com/user/HCDEtv>

7. <http://www.pinterest.com/hcde/>

**1.11.5 How to prepare children to be creative problem-solvers?**  
(2015-11-30 16:46) - hcdetx





Albert Einstein said that “Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

Most educators profess to value and encourage creativity. But do our current teaching practices really support students who see the world differently?

Experts in a wide range of fields from academia to the military agree that it has never been more important to arm our graduates with the skills to be creative thinkers. The problems our children will be called upon to solve require creative and out-of-the-box problem solving. But can creativity be taught or is it a genetic gift for a lucky few?

According to two recent studies at MIT and UC-Berkley, it is possible for teachers to “prime the minds” of their students for creative thinking.

Researchers found that children who were specifically instructed on one way to use a toy with multiple parts were less likely to try out the other parts to experiment. The other group was allowed to experiment with the toys on their own or in a group.

Based on these limited studies, it would appear that direct instruction alone reduces creativity and curiosity.

Some indicators of creativity are:

- the ability to express common ideas in new and surprising ways;

- the habit of asking constant, unique questions to understand an idea or problem;
- the ability to generate multiple solutions to a problem or multiple uses for an object, etc. (brainstorming); and
- the ability to communicate ideas in new and unusual ways.

Here are some ideas for fostering creativity:

1. Encourage questioning and brainstorming while driving in the car, reading a story or watching TV.
2. Talk about possible outcomes to a story or show and ask how many different ways something can be done.
3. Try to reward creative ideas and products (like purple trees and musical instruments made of toilet paper rolls). Allow for mistakes.
4. Encourage students to collaborate with peers and encourage them to see the viewpoints of others.
5. Find time for exploration and experimentation. From creative centers in primary grades to project-based learning in high school, today's students must have time to develop their creativity.
6. Learn to balance direct instruction which tends to value and reward conformity with learning time which encourages divergent thinking.
7. Purchase holiday toys with an eye for items that encourage and build creative thinking. For younger children, purchase toys like puzzles, building blocks or construction sets like Legos, role-playing toys like dress-up kits, or play kitchens. Older children benefit from art supplies, craft kits, more sophisticated construction sets like robotics or gear sets and musical instruments.

What are you doing in the classroom to encourage creative thinking processes. We'd like to know and share!

### **About the Blogger:**

Debra Anderson serves as curriculum director for Early Childhood and Special Education at Harris County Department of Education. She has almost 40 years of experience as teacher, coordinator and director of special education programs.

1. [https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/shutterstock\\_321699623.jpg](https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/shutterstock_321699623.jpg)

## 1.12 December

## 1.12.1 Get Your Game On: Use gamification to enliven content (2015-12-07 12:25) - hcdetx

[1]



A new movement in educational technology re-evaluates the benefits of “gamification,” the process of using game-design elements and game principles in non-game contexts.

In the past, gamification presented difficulties for effective learning. However, Jay Hanlon of Stack Overflow says it best: “Gamification has never gotten a single person to do anything they didn’t already basically like to do.”

I agree that a more purposeful approach is needed in order to make game mechanics beneficial to education. Below are a few suggestions for gamifying your courses the most effectively.

### **1. Identify what you are trying to accomplish and decide if gamification might make an impact.**

Start with a mechanistic approach to learning that shows some progress and apply gamification elements to enhance the learning.

### **2. When adding competitive aspects to learning, be careful to allow for participants to opt-in so you don’t threaten students who are more exploratory in their learning.**

While adding point systems and rankings to a course may inspire some users to be more com-

petitive, others may feel they are being left too far behind to be competitive. You don't want to disengage students from the learning.

### **3. Use a narrative to frame the learning experience and allow students to invest in the narrative.**

Some of the best games out there have a story to tell. Frame your content in the form of a narrative and let your students create avatars or characters that take part in the story. These processes engross learners in the educational experience.

### **4. Use leveling and the escalation of difficulty to drive competitiveness in the course.**

Escalate the rigor of the content as students climb the ranks in the game as a means to keep them engaged in content. Students will use this opportunity to compete against each other or try to beat their personal best scores.

### **5. Set very clear expectations for game play.**

Even the most simplistic games offer gameplay tutorials with instructions to help guide gamers in their journey. Clearly outline the expectations and objectives for every gamified activity and include examples that help the learner to be successful.

These five steps are just the beginning of a journey to help students to get their game on. Experiment with a few small changes to your curricula, and build additional game elements as you go. If you're careful to always keep the learners and learning objectives in mind, you'll all be winners!

**What do you do to help gamify your content? Join the conversation on Twitter by including me (@dcmcgeary) and by using the hashtag #GetYourGameOn.**

#### **About the Blogger:**

David McGeary, manager of innovation in the Teaching and Learning Center at HCDE, spends his days exploring the ways that old and new digital tools and resources can be used to enhance a student's ability to learn new things, collaborate with learners anywhere and share new ideas with the world. When not hard at work, David enjoys playing classical guitar, practicing photography or doing anything his new wife tells him to do.

1. <https://hcdetexas.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/gaming.jpg>

## 1.12.2 Happy Holidays from School Bell: 10 suggestions for Winter Break

(2015-12-14 14:12) - hcdetx



[1] Teachers are givers by nature so don't forget to spend time on yourself this holiday season. Here are some ideas to relieve stress and relax. In the meantime, have a great holiday break. We'll see you on January 4!

1. Take a book to the park and read for an hour or people-watch.
2. Write a list of 10 movies you want to watch and don't miss one of them.
3. Tap a nap a least once a day.
4. Call up an old friend and meet for lunch.
5. Spend time at a local museum you haven't visited for awhile.
6. Get a massage.
7. Start the hobby you've always yearned for: jewelry-making, guitar lessons, etc.
8. Buy a planner for the new year and tentative plan your spring and summer vacations, marking the dates in red.
9. Buy a gym membership--yes exercise can be relaxing.

10. Think of your future and write down 3 things that you want to change or impact.

**About the blogger:**

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