

Harris County Department of Education Blog Archive

January 1, 2014 - December 31, 2014



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1. 2014

1.1 September

1.1.1 Rhymes and reason: The New Math TEKS arrive! (2014-09-22 13:44)

- hcdetx



As you well know, the new math TEKS are here. You have new resources to help assist in the transition. It's definitely taking longer to plan and generate lessons and assignments to meet these new standards. As my own children come home with work, I realize that some teachers may be looking for clarity on the key focus of the new standards.

Per the Texas Education Agency:

"The process standards describe ways in which students are expected to engage in the content. The placement of the process standards at the beginning of the knowledge and skills listed for each grade and course is intentional. The process standards weave the other knowledge and skills together so that students may be successful problem solvers and use mathematics efficiently and effectively in daily life."

These new math TEKS emphasize the process skills in all grade levels, from kindergarten through high school. Teachers are expected to use the mathematical processes to acquire and demonstrate mathematical understanding. All teaching, lessons, activities and WORKSHEETS should address these standards.

So what are these standards? To sum them up, I have put them into four categories:

1. Application and problem-solving (analyze relationships, make conjectures, justify, evaluate reasonableness)

2. Tools and techniques
3. Communication (using precise mathematical language)
4. Representation (using multiple representation)

Last Monday, my daughter came home with a homework packet for the week. The math practice sheets included “drill and kill,” out-of-context exercises or word problems only addressing application at the simplest level.

Guided Practice Name _____ Date _____

1. Carol has 56 dolls in her collection. If she rounds this number to the nearest 10, about how many dolls would that be?

$56 = 60$

2. Dante has 643 stamps in his stamp collection. What is this number rounded to the nearest hundred?

$643 \rightarrow 600$

3. Phillip has 321 baseball cards and 249 football cards. Which number sentence shows the best way to estimate how many more baseball cards Phillip has than football cards?

Ⓐ $300 + 200 = 500$
 Ⓑ $400 - 300 = 100$
 Ⓒ $300 - 300 = 0$
 Ⓓ $300 - 200 = 100$

4. Montel told a news reporter that there were about 780 students at his school. If he rounded the actual number of students at his school to the nearest 10, which of the following is the greatest number of students that could attend his school?

Ⓐ 774
 Ⓑ 789
 Ⓒ 786
 Ⓓ 784

5. Last year 3,441 tropical fish were sold at The Fish Tank. What is this number rounded to the nearest hundred?

Ⓐ 3,000
 Ⓑ 3,400
 Ⓒ 3,440
 Ⓓ 3,500

6. The table below shows the number of miles Mr. Parson drove last week.

Mr. Parson's Mileage

Day of Week	Number of Miles
Monday	104
Tuesday	183
Wednesday	278
Thursday	148

Which number sentence shows the best way to estimate how many more miles Mr. Parson drove on Wednesday than Thursday?

Ⓐ $200 + 100 = 300$
 Ⓑ $200 - 100 = 100$
 Ⓒ $300 - 100 = 200$
 Ⓓ $300 - 200 = 100$

$$\begin{array}{r} 42 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 40 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 624 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 620 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 850 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 850 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 17 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 20 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 91 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 90 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 277 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 280 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 231 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 230 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 593 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 590 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 263 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 260 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 44 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 40 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 955 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 960 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 621 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 620 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 952 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 950 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 975 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 980 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 69 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 70 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 232 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 230 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 534 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 530 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 841 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 840 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 60 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 60 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 921 \\ \downarrow \\ \hline 920 \end{array}$$

Total: 20

As she worked the first three, I noticed her answers were wrong. I asked her what she was doing.

“My teacher told me a rhyme for the rules,” she said.

“5 and above, give it a shove. 4 and below, keep it low.

You know...5 and above are big partiers and 4 and below are calm.

So when 4 and below go to the neighbor’s house, they want to move.”

I think my daughter mixed it up at the end, but she loved it. The pun was fun. However, I noticed my girl was a bit confused as she worked the drill-and-kill problems.

Each time I asked her to explain her thinking or represent it on a number line, she went back

to the rhyme. When asked what it meant by round to the nearest 100, she couldn't tell me.

This is what I might suggest to teachers to clear the murky waters:

1. Use multiple representations to teach overarching concepts in context and follow up with homework that looks like the lesson. For our example, teach using a number line. Give many examples using the same number, like 1,839. Use it to show how it works within each place value. Next, give examples of number lines and have students generate 10 or more examples of different questions that could be asked.
2. Do not teach tricks or mnemonic devices out of context. The TEKS explicitly state to use "precise mathematical language" using multiple representations. When children learn a trick without understanding the overarching context, it is memorization.
3. After enough examples have been given to show a pattern, let students create the rule. Let children make conjectures and create memory devices like the one my daughter was told, but only after they can describe it using precise academic vocabulary.
4. Have students write about what they have learned. Last night I had my daughter write down directions on how to solve rounding problems for her sister. I was amazed with her vocabulary and accuracy by saying "underline the place value digit."

Even newly adopted materials need some editing to make lessons meet the new TEKS. So make sure you add in all 4 categories of the process standards!

How are you using the process standards?

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: Secondary Math | Elementary Math

1.1.2 Classroom management: How to avoid or eliminate misbehavior

(2014-09-29 14:29) - hcdetx



Behavior management and instruction are two elements of teaching that go hand-in-hand. Good instruction requires good behavior management. Good behavior management calls for good instruction.

Behavior management is a popular call-for-help topic for both teachers and principals. New teachers are trained with supervising teachers who already have classroom routines and procedures in place. These novice teachers may have a false sense of ability to manage their own classroom due to the ease in which veteran teachers handle classroom behavior issues. It looks so easy and evident!

When working with teachers in training, I ask them to write down three to five worries they have with behavior management. Repeatedly they ask:

1. How do I keep control of the class?
2. What is the best way to keep students on-task?
3. How do I handle difficult students?
4. What is the best way to avoid confrontations with students?

The list continues. Teachers want to know how to keep their calm in the midst of chaos. What is the best way to react to talking back? How do you know when to send students to the principal? Repeatedly, teachers in their first year of training often voice these concerns.

I assure new teachers that all of us experience some of the behaviors they include in their list. Most veteran teachers can tell their own stories of behavior management problems and what they

learned to do to stop or lessen the misbehaviors. The misbehavior-free classroom does not exist. Granted, some classes are “better behaved.” But disruptions happen.

Here is my top 5 list of how to avoid or eliminate misbehavior in the classroom:

1. **Establish clear classroom rules** (but not too many). Students of all ages can contribute to the list of rules; however, the teacher has the final word on which rules are posted. Your class is not a pure democracy! It’s a mixture of student input in decision-making and veto power from the teacher.
2. **Routines and procedures** are explained and practiced on the first day of school and followed thereafter. Once the teacher relaxes routines and procedures, students revisit laid-back, noisy and chaotic behaviors. Which routines and procedures are at risk? These include entering the class; getting ready to work and starting work for the day; and moving into groups (quickly and quietly). Routines involve having materials needed to learn (paper, pens/pencils and other required materials); passing up or passing out papers, journals, books, etc.; and reacting to signals to be quiet.
3. **Create a sense of community** in the classroom. This practice among students and the teacher has gained more attention lately. The sooner that students get to know each other, the stronger a sense of belonging and cooperation occurs. Use ice-breakers during the first week of school to encourage students to get to know each other. Mix groups to cause students to become familiar with everyone in the class.
4. **Awareness of all activity** in the classroom gives the teacher the edge in behavior management. Being aware means paying attention to what is happening in the classroom “at all times.” Let your eyes and ears work for you. Avoid turning your back on the class. Keep students in your line of vision. Use your ears to listen for off-task behaviors like talking, unnecessary movement, and laughter. Monitor, monitor, monitor.
5. **Handle misbehavior yourself** unless it is severe (fighting in the classroom, really unruly behavior, stealing). Schools have district/school rules and consequences for violating them. Typically, there are procedures for teachers to follow such as talking to the student (document), talking to parents (document) and before/lunch/after school detentions (document). If all approved measures fail to get the student to comply, a trip to the principal or assistant principal follows (with your documentation). Teachers are expected to handle “routine” misbehavior themselves. (See the suggestions 1-4 for some ways to avoid challenges from students.)

What are your individual concerns and comments? Let’s discuss!

HCDE offers an online course on classroom management so you can learn on your own time, in your own space.

Want more on the topic of behavior management? Internet sources are plentiful. Search under behavior management, classroom management and discipline. Also, consider the following sources:

Emmer, Edmund T. and Carolyn M. Evertson. Classroom Management for Middle School and High School Teachers, 2012.

Evertson, Carolyn M. and Edmund T. Emmer. Classroom Management for Elementary School Teachers, 2012.

Jones, Fred. Tools for Teaching. 3rd Edition. (www.fredjones.com)

Marzano, Robert J. Classroom Management That Works, 2001.

<http://www.behavioradvisor.com/>

NEA Articles and Resources Searle, Margaret. Causes and Cures in the Classroom: Getting to the

Root of Academic and Behavior Problems, 2013.

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.

1.2 October

1.2.1 Student Interactive Notebooks: Are you doing it wrong?

(2014-10-06 09:35) - hcdetx



Interactive notebooks give students a way to be creative, independent thinkers and writers. Most examples I see when I visit science classrooms do not allow for creativity. Very few allow students to think independently.

What is an Interactive Science Notebook?

A science notebook is a tool that provides students a place to record their thinking and their learning before, during and after a science investigation. It reflects a chronological accounting of the progression of an investigation as students formulate and record questions, make predictions, record data, procedures and results. Students compose reflections and communicate findings. Interactive notebooks give teachers a means to assess science understanding or misconceptions. They provide the feedback students need in order to improve their performance.

My first rule of thumb: If every student has an identical notebook or journal, you're doing it wrong. How can you tell what your students are thinking if their notebooks are cloned?

What I do see are notebooks that have a table of contents, material from a worksheet glued down, or perhaps a foldable glued or stapled inside.

- If you have a table of contents, you're doing it wrong. A table of contents is not a record of independent thinking.

- If you only have worksheets or foldables stapled inside, you're doing it wrong. Foldables are a great way to condense notes, but they are not indicators of creative or independent thinking.

No matter what subject you teach, use interactive notebooks for activities where students are expected to express their own ideas and process the information presented in class. If all of your students need glue sticks and scissors, you're doing it wrong. An interactive notebook is not a scrapbook or a craft project.

So what is found in their science interactive notebooks or journals? This is the perfect venue for students to write down predictions to questions or a hypothesis for an experiment. They make sketches of how to set up equipment or draw their observations. Let them write down data or outline how they will graph their data.

Science teachers should continuously ask questions of their students. However, maybe just one student replies. Why not pose a question to the class and give them time to answer in their journals? Ask one or two students to share their thoughts? This is a much better use of class time than getting out the glue sticks.

So will these journals be messy? Most likely they will be. Will these journals be organized? They will be to some degree since entries are chronological. Ask students to give a date and title to each journal entry.

The biggest complaint about creating notebooks or journals in this fashion is about time, especially for the teacher who reads them. Here are some things to consider:

1. You will probably have more than 150 students, so checking those journals will take time.
2. Watching students cut-and-paste to make journal entries during class consumes classroom time. Make sure students are on task and talking about science when they are working with their scissors and glue.
3. For accountability, let students know that their journal or notebook is subject to be examined by the teacher during class.
4. It would be far more interesting to read what students are thinking instead of checking to see if everything in the table of contents is included. You make it interactive by adding comments or posing further questions in their individual journals.

The purpose of interactive notebooks is not to promote organization skills. If you want your students to learn organization skills and keep up with their work, assign a class folder or personal portfolio. You can even include a table of contents. Just don't call it an interactive notebook.

Sample Interactive Notebooks (Source <http://www.sciencenotebooks.org>)




My favorite part of our science investigation was breaking the rock. I also liked the streak test and scratch test. I want to know what is the cristalized formula? It was fun to be working with the nail and hammer. I might be a geologist.


You would make a fantastic geologist!
You will soon discover what the crystal are!

Rock 9


Back View



Front View



Left View



- Lots of bumps and ditches
- Whitish-Tanish-Yellow
- little bit of layers
- Feels like sandpaper
- If I scratch it, some will come off.
- looks like sand
- crystals inside

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.

Follow Lisa:

<http://www.pinterest.com/lisafelske>

http://www.twitter.com/HCDE_Science

1.2.2 Rigor is the new buzzword in education: What does it look like?

(2014-10-13 11:47) - hcdetx



Rigor is the new buzzword in teaching and learning. In assigning rigorous work, students demonstrate content mastery. But they must also apply skills and think critically about the content. Academic rigor should promote growth of knowledge in our students. Rigorous assignments provide opportunities to analyze, synthesize and critically evaluate the content.

Why is rigor being emphasized in today's classrooms? Exposure to high levels of rigor is associated with gains in standardized test scores. Students exposed to high-quality assignments have 20 higher gains than the national average. Low-quality assignments produce 20 percent lower gains nationally.*

Are the same methods of increasing rigor produced in all Texas schools? I say no. At many schools, rigor seems to be defined as doing more work at a faster pace. No time is available to critically analyze or evaluate topics at any level. Rigor is in the cognitive task the students are being asked to do. Assigning more high-level vocabulary words or additional math problems does not increase rigor. All that does is increase the difficulty of the task.

Teachers can use Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) as a tool to calculate the cognitive depth of an assignment. This framework categorizes assignments into 4 levels.

- Level 1 assignments focus mainly on recall and reproduction of knowledge. No matter how difficult or how many vocabulary words are assigned, simple recalls of information requires the lowest level of cognitive effort by the student.

- Level 2 assignments ask students to complete a higher cognitive task, such as identifying cause-and-effect or interpreting data.
- Level 3 assignments assign students to do strategic thinking and reasoning, such as understanding patterns or identifying the best answer when more than one correct answer is possible. They should be able to justify their choice.
- Level 4 tasks extend student thinking. A Level 4 assignment asks students to apply knowledge to a new situation or to synthesize information across multiple sources or content areas. Standardized assessments rarely address level 4 knowledge.

As an example, let's look at a science topic: the rock cycle. In sixth-grade science standards (TEKS 6.10.B), students "classify rocks as metamorphic, igneous or sedimentary by the processes of their formation."

- Level 1 tasks: Ask your students to describe characteristics of each rock type. This task requires only simple recall.
- Level 2 tasks: Require your students to compare and contrast the three rock types. This requires more cognitive processing to determine similarities and differences.
- Level 3 tasks: Assign students a project to develop a model that could be used to represent relationships that exist within the rock cycle. Is it really a cycle? This requires deeper understanding of the concept. Students should also determine how to best represent the rock cycle.
- Level 4 tasks: Get your students to compare-and-contrast the rock cycle with the water cycle. Include a discussion of forces and energy.

Every teacher wants students to master content knowledge and be successful on standardized tests. But we need to ask ourselves if we are offering students engaging and challenging cognitive tasks.

(Statistics are from SERVECenter at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro.)

For additional resources, including a web-based alignment tool from Norman Webb, see <http://wat.wceruw.org/index.aspx>.

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.

Follow Lisa:

<http://www.pinterest.com/lisafelske>

http://www.twitter.com/HCDE_Science

1.2.3 Get to Know Your OT and PT Team Members (2014-10-20 11:09) - hcdetx



Have you ever wondered what occupational therapists (OTs) and physical therapists (PTs) do at school? OTs and PTs have been part of campus teams since the late 1970's, supporting students with disabilities who need special education and therapy as a related service to make progress on their Individualized Education Program goals and objectives. The primary difference you will notice at school is that therapists do not typically pull students away from instruction for therapy. They look for barriers to learning and participation and find ways to remove or work around those barriers.

Physical therapists in schools intervene to ensure safe mobility and locomotion in all school environments as well as appropriate positioning for learning and participation in the classroom. Occupational therapists intervene to foster engagement and participation in learning and social activities, self-help skills and prevocational/vocational activities.

Research over the past 30 years has demonstrated that intervention by OTs and PTs at school is most effective if it takes place where and when a student's participation in school activities need support. Therapists who work in schools bring their services to the classroom, the cafeteria, the playground – wherever students are challenged.

Services include intervention directly with the student, but also training for school personnel, fabrication of materials, monitoring of students' mobility equipment, modifying environments, and collaborating with the teacher, parent, physician and/or private therapist, all on behalf of the student.

See how HCDE physical therapist Kaylon Fenner helps Racko, a student at Bleyl Middle School, use

his gate trainer to participate in school activities alongside his classmates.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADWMSseB_uk4

In addition to their work with students with disabilities in special education, occupational therapists and physical therapists contribute to campus activities that support all learners, not just those with identified disabilities. As part of campus efforts to intervene early and prevent unnecessary referrals to special education, therapists utilize their knowledge and skills by serving on school problem-solving teams. They help with collection and analysis for progress monitoring; design programs to foster social and emotional health, like bullying or obesity prevention; and provide training to teachers.

If you want to know more, contact the Special Education department in your local school district.

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.

1.2.4 Nation's longest-running, most prestigious award program for creative teens returns for an exciting new season at HCDE (2014-10-27 10:45)

- hcdetx



Each year thousands of students from public, private and home schools submit works to the local affiliate of the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards at Harris County Department of Education. The opportunity to compete in the nation's longest-running, largest and most prestigious competition motivates these teenagers to produce their best work. Teens hope to join the ranks of former writing award recipients like Joyce Carol Oates, Sylvia Plath, Truman Capote, John Updike, Ken Burns and Stephen King. Young artists strive to mirror the accomplishments of past medalists such as Edward Sorel, Cy Twombly, Kay WalkingStick, John Baldessari, Zac Posen and Andy Warhol.

Patrick Zapien (pictured), Houston Independent School District, earned regional awards via Scholastic Art & Writing Awards competition 2014 through HCDE and advanced to national acclaim as an art portfolio Gold Key medalist. Last summer he walked across Carnegie Hall in New York City to receive his \$10,000 scholarship award among a select 16 national art and writing portfolio winners.

"Teens in grades 7 through 12 apply in 28 categories of art and writing. Submissions are juried by luminaries in the visual and literary arts, some of whom are past award recipients. Panelists look for works that best exemplify originality, technical skill, and the emergence of a personal voice or vision.

Last year, students submitted 255,000 works of art and writing to the Awards; more than 68,000 were recognized at the regional level and celebrated in local exhibitions and ceremonies. The top 2,000 works in the country earned National Medals and were celebrated at a ceremony at Carnegie Hall.”

Source: <http://www.artandwriting.org>

Regionally, students are recognized with Gold Key, Silver Key and Honorable Mention awards. In 2014, students in Harris County earned 630 awards in writing and 957 awards in art. Total entries into the regional competition were 2,381. Regional judges are both local and national art and writing professionals who volunteer their time.

This is a wonderful and unique competition that validates youths’ art and writing and elevates their talent on a local, regional and national level. Since 1993, HCDE has relied on the invaluable volunteerism of hundreds of local educators, writing professionals and artists to help coordinate and judge entries.

For more information about entering or supporting the competition visit:

National website: <http://www.artandwriting.org/>

Regional Art website: <http://www.artandwriting.org/affiliate/TX001A>

Regional Writing website: <http://www.artandwriting.org/Affiliate/TX001W>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/artandwriting>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ScholasticArtandWritingAwards>

About the Blogger:

Melba Kent 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.”

1.3 November

1.3.1 Why early childhood education is important (2014-11-03 14:09) - hcdetx



From presidential speeches to charity luncheons, improving early education seems to be on everyone's agenda these days.

President Obama called for an increase in preschool education programs in 2013, referencing studies that promise future economic and social rewards for every dollar invested in quality early education. His multi-year, multi-billion dollar plan to expand pre-k programs and create new initiatives for even younger children continues to be a talking point for the White House.

It's no wonder that politicians from both sides of the aisle jump onto this bandwagon.

Seventy percent of Americans favor using federal money to fund universal preschool, according to a Gallup poll released this year.

The movement isn't just limited to school-based programs for 4-year-olds. Most states – including Texas –are applying more rigorous standards for commercial child care centers. Requirements include increased education levels and ongoing training for child care workers. Responsibility for regulating licensure requirements for child care centers in Texas falls to the Department of Family and Protective Services. The Texas Early Learning Council, a group appointed by the Governor, has developed infant, toddler and 3-year-old guidelines and training modules for child care workers titled “Little Texans. Big Futures.”

Here in Harris County, groups like the Texas Gulf Coast School Readiness Committee, the Collaborative for Children and the Early Matters coalition continue to strengthen the case for improving school readiness by enhancing the quality of early child care settings.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 57 percent of children under 5 are in the care of adults other than their parents during the work day. In the Texas Gulf Coast area, 35 percent of these children are enrolled in a center-based program such as public school pre-k, Head Start or commercial child care.* These statistics validate the growing concerns about the effectiveness of our preschool settings.

Here at HCDE, our efforts include oversight of Head Start programs in 16 locations across the county. We offer professional development to certified teachers and non-certified child care workers alike. Workshops like CIRCLE Early Literacy and Math Manipulatives are available regularly. Our home-grown Science Fiction workshops use children's literature to teach science concepts.

Our annual R.T. Garcia Early Childhood Winter Conference is in its 29th year and is the largest conference of its kind in the state. Named for retired HCDE Trustee Ray Garcia, the conference is attended by teachers from Harris County and across the state on the last Saturday in January. National experts, children's authors, musicians and vast numbers of local volunteer teachers present sessions designed to improve the quality of instruction in child care settings and school-based programs for children ages 3 to 8.

We hope to see you at this year's conference Jan. 31! By the way, we're sure you have your own opinion about early childhood education. Hope to hear from you soon.

Center for Houston's Future, Community Indicator Report 2012

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.

1.3.2 Tips on how teachers can help create meaningful afterschool programs (2014-11-10 10:18) - hcdetx



Afterschool programs provide enrichment activities that develop students' academic and social skills. Students who lack adult supervision or learning opportunities from 3-6 p.m. gain a safe, structured environment to develop and learn new skills.

The best afterschool programs support regular school day learning and help prepare our children for success. Organizers work closely with schools and teachers to produce activities that enhance and complement school-day activities, all while engaging student interests and needs.

Tips to help you enhance your afterschool programs:

- Develop a solid vision for your program. Effectively articulating the purpose and outcome of the program is the key to attracting families and supporters.
- Provide enriching activities youth can participate in. Include activities that develop leadership and decision-making skills. Familiarize yourself with available curriculum and activities and identify local training opportunities to gain the knowledge and resources to better serve school-age kids.
- Plan and share professional meetings and training with local school districts. Sharing can maximize resources and help develop positive outgrowth and collaboration.
- Invite community-based and volunteer organizations from places like museums, food banks, libraries and colleges to share their programs with your students.
- Create a mentorship program with a local high school, business, or community organization to offer guidance and support to the students.
- Search for information on federal, state or local funds that support afterschool programs. Funding can help strengthen the quality of the afterschool program.
- Evaluate your program. You should collect information from both internal and external sources like your staff, students and parents. Apply the results to the continuous improvement of your program. Examples of evaluation methods include surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires.

After-school programs keep kids safe, help working families and inspire learning for our youth. To learn more about how to effectively implement your afterschool program or to find funding opportunities, visit www.afterschoolzone.org.

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.

1.3.3 Bullying in schools: problems and solutions (2014-11-17 09:53) - hcdetx



What can teachers do about bullying? Empowering your students to be proactive when someone is being harassed may be one of the best life lessons they will learn.

This week is Bullying Awareness Week. One of the most interesting statistics we've found so far on bullying is this one, and it is powerful:

Bullying stops in less than 10 seconds, 57 percent of the time when someone intervenes on behalf of the victim - (Craig & Pepler, 1997)

Bully expert Fabian Ramirez knows about the power of peer pressure and bullying. As a bullying speaker for schools and conferences, he shares practical steps to coping with bullies. Fabian was victimized by bullies throughout his teens. In high school, he literally became the most popular guy in the school as he overcame his bullies and reigned as homecoming king.

Today, Fabian Ramirez is a bullying speaker for schools and conferences. Fabian teaches practical steps to coping with bullies to thousands of students. To learn more about Fabian, visit www.fabianramirez.com.

Bullying prevention begins by training and equipping students about how to respond to bullies at school, he says.

“We’ve discovered that most students don’t know how to handle negative emotions that correlate to being picked on at school,” says the East End Houston native.

In his bullying prevention video, students learn:

- How hurt people, hurt people
- Bullying is psychological
- 5 keys to healthy venting

Included in the free video presentation are guides for the teacher to present the video and follow-up exercises and discussions for students.

So what’s a teacher to do to get bullying to stop? Experts recommend open communications with students. Here’s a few recommendations from “White House Report—Bullying and the Power of Peers.” Check the article for actions for each suggestion listed below:

1. Ask Students about bullying.
2. Ask students about their relationships.
3. Build democratic classroom and school climates.
4. Be an informed consumer of anti-bullying curriculums.
5. Build democratic classroom and school climates.
6. Remember that bullying is also a problem of values

According to anti-bullying.net, the most effective tool teachers have against bullying is anti-bullying policy which is usually adopted by the school or school district. However, the policy should include:

- Curriculum on bullying
- How incidents are dealt with after they happen (proactive and reactive strategies)
- Involve all members of a school community: pupils, parents, teachers and other staff

If you’d like to hear bullying expert Fabian Ramirez as he addresses bullying in schools, register for his free workshop Friday, Nov. 21 at Harris County Department of Education.

For additional resources on bullying and cyberbullying, visit our HCDE Safe Schools Pinterest board.

What you are doing to prevent bullying in your classroom and school? We’d like to hear from you.

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.

Let us know what interests you! Send us your questions and suggestions on future blog top-

ics at schoolbell@hcde-texas.org. And don't forget to follow us!

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1.3.4 #GivingTuesday: How to get your campus involved Dec. 2

(2014-11-24 10:26) - hcdetx



Teachers will want to know about **#GivingTuesday**, a global day for giving back. We have a day for giving thanks. Two days—Cyber Monday and Black Friday—are dedicated to getting deals. **#GivingTuesday** allows family, community, companies or organizations to give something more.

In collaboration with our Technology division and its talented videographers, we've put together a video to highlight what we're doing at HCDE for **#GivingTuesday**. Hope you can use our video to get the think-tanks churning on your campus.

[youtube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulxmsjcQKAQ &w=696 &h=392](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulxmsjcQKAQ&w=696&h=392)]

Ideas for schools are listed through www.givingtuesday.org website.

As a teacher, you can encourage your students and parents to take action that day to support something they care about through social media.

- Organize an event on your campus like a clothing or book drive or another philanthropic activity.
- Give an award to someone on your campus who volunteers time within the community.
- Announce a new fundraising initiative for your school that day.

During this week of giving thanks, we'd like to wish you well and hope you are enjoying your mini-vacation.

Happy turkey-basting, casserole-cooking and pie-baking this Thanksgiving. Enjoy your family and friends. Give thanks. Please don't forget about **#GivingTuesday** Dec. 2. Share your **#Unselfie**.

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. This week we

want to be thankful for our Technology division videography team for producing this #GivingTuesday philanthropic video. 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 schoolbell@hcde-texas.org. And don't forget to follow us!

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1.4 December

1.4.1 Not enough time for science? Try an integrated approach to learning science (2014-12-01 11:16) - hcdetx



An informal analysis of K-2 classroom daily schedules shows that the majority of instruction time is spent on reading, followed by math. Science and social studies often have a shared block of time that averages 30 minutes per day. Often, the designated snack time is longer than the time specifically allotted to science.

- Long term studies* show that science is taught in kindergarten classrooms fewer than 30 percent of school days for an average of fewer than 15 minutes per day.
- Studies also show slightly more time is devoted to science in first grade, with about 44 percent of school days for an average of fewer than 30 minutes per day. Without a comparable study, I would predict that statistics for social studies are similar.

Integrating science through a cross-curricular approach:

Many elementary classrooms are self-contained, so using a cross-curricular approach is easy to implement. An integrated approach has many advantages. Children are taught knowledge and skills in a context that is meaningful to them and more memorable. To many students, "science" is something that happens in the classroom, not in the real world. You could teach a standard science lesson about the differences between density and buoyancy, or alternatively you could explain how those concepts were incredibly significant to historical events.

In George Washington's famous crossing of the Delaware, he had to move over 2,400 men in addition to horses, cannons and artillery across the ice-filled Delaware River on Christmas day in 1776. Since all of these items are more dense than water, how was this

accomplished? Why does ice float on water? Why can a boat laden with these heavy items float cross the river? Would the size and shape of the boat matter?

The type of lesson leads to true inquiry. The lesson begins with a scenario that is recognized as valid. Students can experiment to obtain their own data and then use the data to develop and justify an explanation. This type of lesson is more engaging than a traditional lesson. It leads to a deeper understanding of the topic.

Lessons that incorporate more than one subject and related standards are of great benefit to students. Texas standards for science and social studies actually have a lot in common. For example, look at this standard: Use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution. It is not easy to tell that this is a social studies curriculum standard.

To make science more relevant, investigations need to be given a context. History provides a wonderful context for learning science.

- How did Native American dye fabrics? Where does plant dye come from?
- What did Benjamin Franklin discover about electricity?
- How do airplanes (like the one flown by Amelia Earhart) fly? How can something so heavy get off the ground?
- How can sound waves travel long distances, like they do in a telephone?

These topics, along with others are featured in an upcoming workshop, Integrating Elementary Social Studies and Science, on Dec. 11.

How do you integrate science across curriculum?

Reference https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/17844/ctrstreadtechrepv_0199-1i00544_opt.pdf?sequence=1

Resources

Integrating Science Inquiry Across the Curriculum, http://www.fondation-lamap.org/sites/default/files/upload/media/4_%20-%20integrating_science_inquiry_across_the_curriculum.pdf

Inquiry and Problem-Based Lesson Plans, <http://www.indiana.edu/oso/inq.htm>

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.

1.4.2 Information literacy: Teach your students to be critical online researchers (2014-12-08 11:10) - hcdetx



Information literacy is an educated approach to finding and evaluating information. We are told that our primary goal as teachers is to teach the whole child. If this is true, then we must adapt to the ever-changing world that our students are born into.

Teaching students to effectively seek out, evaluate and utilize information they find online is no longer just for the computer science classroom. Using search tools like Google, Google Scholar and other search-related tools aren't as simplistic as responding to the very first link in a query. In order for our students to be successful citizens and competent adults, we must give them the important critical skills to research information online. Then we must show them how to apply the information to help solve problems or create something new. Students must learn to ask the right questions, to formulate a proper search statement and to critically evaluate the value of the information they find through online searches.

Kids are curious. By their very nature, they love to explore and experience the wonders of the world around them in a way that many adults no longer do. Add to this sense of wonder a resource like the Internet. Today's generation is labeled "the most curious generation" because of their propensity to seek out digital information resources to answer questions. While our students may be greatly informed by what they find online, the value of online information is dependent on their information-seeking literacy skills.

While most teachers find the prospect of teaching information literacy to be overwhelming, it's often as easy as making some short-and-simple changes to existing lesson plans. No matter the grade level, you can teach your students about information literacy without completely changing your lesson content:

1. Rather than lecture, work with your students to pose a research question and let them try to find the answer online.

Try to help your students identify high-value keywords to plug into a search engine while also focusing on ways to expand on the information that they find. The best research questions explore the impact of something or its contribution to a bigger idea.

Example: To teach a lesson about the Large Hadron Collider, instead of lecturing you ask students to research the impacts of the collider on modern medicine or computer circuitry. “When, where, what, why and who” questions pose little risk for inconclusive or misleading online searches, even for young kids. Most kids have issues with information accuracy and face dilemmas over the value of information when exploring big ideas, controversies or ethics surrounding a topic.

2. If your students use an online search tool to find information on classroom assignments, engage them in a discussion about the value of their search results and their processes for searching.

Focusing on the process of searching has tremendous value in cementing foundational search skills in K-12 students. It’s extremely valuable to start talking to students about the anatomy of a search result link and how to use the information returned in a search result to help clear up information on the link page.

Remember, most search engines return values based on qualities other than the “correctness” of the information. Google looks at the frequency of page access, keywords and cross-linking of a page to determine its value in a search result.

If your students find a certain search process to be valuable, encourage them to make notes of techniques that work well for them.

3. Periodically introduce an advanced search feature to help your students make better use of search tools online.

Whether you choose to model the use of an advanced search feature or just share a tip/trick with your students, you’ll be amazed at how readily students begin to explore advanced searching. You may want to start with simple features that allow students to narrow their time frame or media type or expand into a quick discussion on the use of Boolean expressions to more specifically narrow a search.

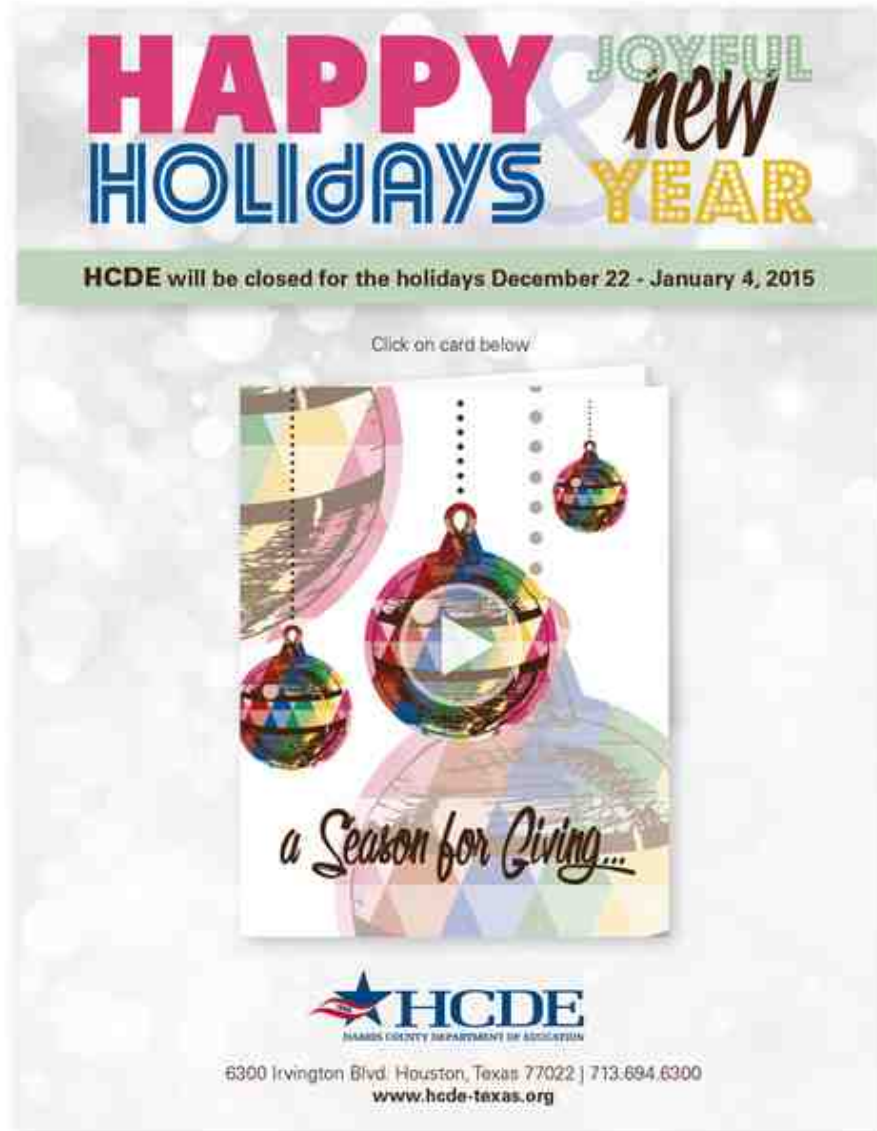
For better techniques for searching, Google has two online courses that introduce students to more complex and focused search processes. These courses help students to narrow down search results and guarantee better results: <http://www.google.com/insidesearch/searcheducation/>

For additional details about information literacy, look to your school’s librarian for help in adjusting your lessons or teaching newer and better research techniques. No matter what you do, just getting students to critically approach how they locate information online can go a long way to satiating their curiosity.

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.

1.4.3 Happy Holidays from Harris County Department of Education: We'd like to hear from you! (2014-12-15 09:15) - hcdetx



Happy Holidays from HCDE: Send us your ideas for education topics!

While we know you're busy posting grades and juggling holiday parties, we'd like to hear from you. What education topics would prove helpful to you as an educator? Our education specialists are happy to help through our School Bell blog.

In the meanwhile, we're delivering a little holiday cheer as you dream of foot massages, reading the latest bestseller or settling into football bliss. Happy holidays from HCDE...

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

JOYFUL *new* YEAR

HCDE will be closed for the holidays December 22 - January 4, 2015

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