

Newsletter

Southeast Texas P-16 Council

Volume 2, Issue 4 April 27 , 2010 Steve Buser 409-880-7639 steve.buser@Lamar.edu

Roundtables

We have started our Roundtables at schools and found them enlightening, and, as productive as we thought they might be. We also found they are considerable work. Teachers, administrators, and counselors all have a lot of questions and lot they want to know. The first two Roundtables were at West Hardin Consolidated ISD and Buna ISD.

Since we've already covered West Hardin let me bring up a couple points that came up at Buna: Dr. Daniel Bartlett, Director of Developmental Studies at Lamar University, did an outstanding job of discussing some of the reasons students end up in Developmental Education. Together Dr. Bartlett and the educators suggested a few ways they may be able to lower that number. One is to give a refresher workshop to students who don't take math as seniors in high school – that lay off can rust their math skill quickly. Of course, the four-by-four may also help in this area- no math byes in the senior year.

When one participant asked why the students can pass TAKS, but can't get into regular college classes, another reminded all of us that TAKS was originally designed as the MINIMUM ability needed to graduate from high school – it was not a college entrance exam.

Dr. Peggy Doerschuk and Dr Joe Kruger lead a great discussions on STEM degrees and careers. They have a \$million, multi-year STAIRSTEPPER program to get the underserved groups into these careers – (see : <http://dept.lamar.edu/stairstep/> and http://dept.lamar.edu/stairstep/StairStep_files/STAIRSTEP%20poster%20Spring%202010.pdf). I've taken the tour and sit on the advisory board, and I am very impressed.

Karen Bourdier (Entergy), Mark Viator (Partnership Strategies) and Steve Buser (P16 Council) discussed jobs and the economy. Dr. Richard Bothel (Executive Director of Continuing Education) served as moderator.

We're working with Hamshire Fannett ISD on another discussion. They want to focus on getting better local career related information. There's a lot out there that has not been brought into focus. Which leads us to...

Career Exploration (for Counselors) Page added to web site

The Southeast Texas P-16 Council has added a page to its web site that merges various information sources to give great insights into Job Clusters, pay, entry wages, turnover, projected growth and more – all for the Southeast Texas region.

The page is somewhat simple to use, but there are techniques and methods you can use to really beef up the information you get out of databases. So we are offering to do a training session for your team, or you can give us a call for a quick tip (409-880-7639)

The web page is located on our web site at :

<http://setxp16.org/wp/resources/achieve-texas-career-exploration-and-planning/Careers/>

To long for you? Try this shortened version: <http://wp.me/PJMzh-aH>

Here's an example of some data that can be extracted for the site (we printed it from the site and copied it into Excel to "pretty" it up. <http://bit.ly/bXE2b5> (we used a URL shorten service)

Hispanic Conference

Southeast Texas P-16 Council participated in the *Conferencia Familias Hispánicas* in March and was pleased with its success at the event. The council was part of the Catholic Archdiocese of Beaumont event in three ways.

- We set up a booth in the auditorium of the Beaumont Civic Center where more than 300 participants stopped by for information on enrolling in college.
- We hosted two presentation sessions for youth 12 to 14, and for youths 15 to 18 years of age. We had to unexpectedly open the sliding wall to handle the overflow crowds in both sessions. We estimated 150 or more in each session. The students were attentive and interested in presentations on preparing for college.
- The Lamar University Division of Continuing Education worked with the Beaumont Public Library to open the lower floor classrooms to the young children. The Southeast Texas Junior Achievement group led the program on financial literacy in the classes.

We want to thank Margaret "Maggie" Cano with the Lamar Recruiting Office, Teresa Medellin (our student translator), Tom Noyola (head of CTE at LIT), Lisa Cowart (Adult Studies Coordinator with Lamar University's Division of Continuing Education), and Elizabeth Lea (LU's Language Institute) for their help. Special thanks to Maggie and Teresa for their translating help, and Tom Noyola for bringing the SETX version of *El Chacal Sabado Gigante* and his entourage to enliven the presentation.

We appreciate the help of the Jesus Abrego and Fatima Burgueño with the Archdiocese for making it all work for us.

Thanks, also, to Paul Edy and Geri Roberts and all the others with the Beaumont Library that made the pounding patter of little feet all flow smoothly. (The Library folks even took advantage of the event to get input on increasing their Spanish literature collection.)

Originally, SETX P-16 Council had sought funding from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for a Hispanic Conference of its own. When we learned of the Archdiocese conference, we decided not to reinvent the wheel but, rather, to join forces. It was a great decision.

The SETX P-16 effort was part of a THECB initiative to reach out to Hispanic parents (and parents in general) to break down the cultural barriers that keep some students from finishing high school and pursuing post-secondary successes.

SE Texans on Technology TEKS review panels

Congratulations are in order for four Southeast Texas educators who will be helping to advise the State Board of Education (SBOE) in formulating the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in the public schools *technology* curriculum.

The Southeast Texans appointed by the SBOE to serve on the Technology Applications TEKS review committees include: **Cindy Cummings** (Lamar University, Clinical Instructor at Lamar University) and **Krin Bryson** (Director of Technology at the Region 5 Education Service Center) both serving on the **Grades K-2 Technology Applications Review Committee**.

April Petitt (Director of Instructional Technology at Region 5 ESC) will be on the **High School Desktop Publishing Review Committee**. **Kim Allen** (Technology Director at Little Cypress-Mauriceville CISD) will be serving on the **High School Independent Study Review Committee**.

SETX P-16 Board : “Get focused”

We held our first board meeting of the year to talk about planning for next year and to review our progress thus far.

We got a clear message from board members. Get focused. “You can’t do everything but you can do something.”

Several of the members suggested that we look at “the forgotten middle.” -- Not the top 15 percent of each class and not the bottom 15% but those in the middle. There was a suggestion about investigating what we can do for the “next 15%”—those just below the top 15%. So we have been looking into that a bit.

While the suggestion referred to the **Next 15%** in class rank order, those statistics will take longer to get. So, we looked at the second highest 15% in terms of TAKS scores. We found out something interesting. The **Next 15%** all passed the TAKS tests in the grades we looked at, but they usually fell just below the commended level. Why was the commended level sitting there like a barrier? Got any ideas? We’d love to hear them.

As one member put it, this **Next 15%** will be the ones running our plants and our businesses as they progress in their careers.

Group Brainstorming Not So Creative

Do you want to get a group together and brainstorm some unusual and novel ideas to solve your problem?

A new study by two Texas professors suggests you are going down the wrong path. “Exchanging ideas in a group reduced the number of domains of ideas that were explored by participants,” says Dr. Nicholas W. Kohn (University of Texas at Arlington) and Dr. Steven M. Smith (Texas A & M University).

The study, to be published in the journal [Applied Cognitive Psychology](#), says many of our ideas about group brainstorming are off. The study says that when participants suggest ideas, other brainstormers tend to conform to those ideas and produce fewer unique ideas.

The longer the brainstorming goes, the more idea generation drops off, but taking a break seems to help that the researcher said. The break tends to dispel the effect of brainstormers fixing on the ideas of others and slowing down the stream of new ideas.

The findings in the present study suggest that changes to the structure of brainstorming sessions could be beneficial. Let individuals or small groups come up with ideas before assembling into a larger group-think process.

Questions about financial aid for college?

Four suggestions –

1. **Call the financial aid office** at the college or university. Here are a few

- a. **Lamar University** -- (409) 880-7011 or financialaid@lamar.edu on the web : <http://dept.lamar.edu/financialaid/>
 - b. **Lamar State College Orange** (409) 882-3317 email: finaid@lsc.edu http://www.lsc.edu/Students/Students_Financial_Aid.htm
 - c. **Lamar State College Port Arthur** (409) 984-6200 email Diane.Hargett@lamarpa.edu <http://www.lamarpa.edu/?url=/dept/fam/index.html>
 - d. **Lamar Institute of Technology** (409) 880-8321 lisa.schroeder@lit.edu <http://www.lit.edu/depts/finaid/default.aspx>
2. **Pick up your phone** -1-888-311-8881 -- the Texas hotline, number
 3. CollegeForAllTexans.com is the state's web site for college information (including financial aid) that is always available.
 4. ApplyTexas.org is the site for applying to any Texas public college or university -- and even to apply to several of them with one push of the "Apply" button.

New Value of Education brochures at SETX-16

We've produced a couple new brochures about the value of education that you definitely interest you.

The Value of Education was the first, but, since a lot of people wanted more than just general U.S. data, we localized it in a second brochure: *Value of Education in Southeast Texas* both are at : <http://setxp16.org/wp/pubs/>

Connected Classroom (<http://setxp16.org/wp/connected-classroom/>)

We add slowly to our list of online resources. We are now up to about 570.

Some new favorites we have added:

MashPedia : Mixes standard online encyclopedia information with real-time results. Since real-time contents are ranked with the most recent coming first, Mashpedia can give you new information each day - even if you are looking at the same article. (tag: Resources)

Twurdy : Everyone has different reading abilities. Some people searching the web are university professors and others are 5-year-old children. Twurdy provides people with access to search results that suit their own readability level (Tag: Search Engine)

Preceden: Easy to create time lines. I tried it. "My technology life" is my first opus on Preceden: <http://www.preceden.com/timelines/3451-steve-buser---my-technology-life>

(note – it's still in a construction phase)

Of note –

It costs \$140,000 a year to hold a youth in a **secure facility** at the Texas Youth Commission (\$98,270 is the average of all TYC institutions). The average new arrival is four years behind in reading and 5 years behind in math – the 8th grade is most likely their last year in school.

A total of 187 youth from Jefferson County were committed to TYC facilities in the last 5 years. There were 20 from Hardin County and 49 from Orange County. That's a total of 256 from the three counties. That seems to come \$36 million, however, my math isn't very well ;- (It would have cost about 1/10 of that to keep them in school (were that an option).

Good News? The average length of stay is down to 16.7 months (Texas has shaved almost a half year off over the last 7 years). New commitments are down almost half since 1999.

Still the math is there.

Spread the word

This newsletter was sent by the Southeast Texas P-16 Council to educators, school board members, elected officials, businesses and others interested in education in Southeast Texas.

Our mailing address is P.O. Box 10008, Beaumont, TX 77710.

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If you know of someone who did not get the newsletter, forward them a copy. They can subscribe by emailing us at info@setxP16.org with "Subscribe" and their contact information in the email.

Anyone can sign up for our newsletter online at <http://setxp16.org/NewsletterSignUp.php>

Want to be part?

We are currently seeking volunteers to work on the various P-16 program if you are interested call us at 409-880-7639 or email steve.buser@lamar.edu

If you've made it down this far, thanks for staying with us. We're sorry about being so verbose, but it's been so long since we published (two months) that people are stopping us on the street asking when the next newsletter is coming out. Feels good.