

Newsletter --

SOUTHEAST Texas P-16 Council

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Board of Directors: <http://setxp16.org/wp/about/> web site: <http://setxP16.org>

Kids Kollege 2

Kids Kollege 2 moves onward. We have received back commitment forms from several ISDs and Charter schools, but we have quite a few to go. That will be on my agenda as soon as I finish this newsletter. (By the way, I am sorry about this February newsletter getting out late. When did they hold the meeting to make February 2 days shorter than the other months? I must have been out in the field that day -- left field).

The event date will be May 19. We chose that because it is day after the last TAKS make-up test for the school year. We know you don't get much attention for an outside activity during TAKS countdown.



We have a new Curriculum Development Team leader, Candyce Tompkins the Program Leader for Career and Technology at Region 5 ESC. She takes the place Bertie Standley for the rest of the school year so Bertie can hunker down for a busy semester trying to make sense of all the new stuff coming down the pipe for education.

Candyce and I made a couple trips down to Lamar Port Arthur last week to try to drum up instructors and new classes. We will have at least one new class from there --Cosmetology. In addition, a couple young instructors will be doing a more expanded Music program for us. Next on tap is presentations to Lamar State College Orange and Lamar Institute of Technology. Finally we're developing plans on how to get to all the Lamar University faculty.

Our next Kids Kollege Team meeting is Tuesday March 15 at 11:55 a.m. If you didn't get the meeting notice and are on the team (or want to be on the team), email me : sbuser@setxP16.org

Math is king

I had a small idea last week that I thought would improve our web page a bit: <http://setxP16.org> Turns out I was wrong. It apparently improved it enough to catch the attention of educators around the world. About 30 minutes after I posted the information on the web site, visitors started coming in by the groves.

We had 59 visitors that first day (normally we have about 30) 89 the following day. Then Saturday set the all time record with 267 visitors. They are still coming. Right now we have had 91 visitors (Tuesday 3 p.m.)

Apparently it was a combination of [Twitter](#), Facebook and [Diigo](#) and some emailed links that threw us in the limelight. (the great bulk of visitors came from Diigo.com)

What was the post? I was getting to that.

I had put up a web page a couple weeks ago about math resources. It followed from a email conversation I had with Professor Jennifer Daniel (Mathematics) at Lamar University. But that page didn't get very many hits.

Then last week I decided to put a post on the new blog on the front page of our site. The title was "Free math resources proliferate on the web." There were about a dozen links to math sites in the post.

Later when I checked the visitor logs, almost all visits to the site were to that post and they started by coming from a link in Diigo.com. Then, from our Facebook page, and then Twitter (I had Twittered about the post).

You need to go check out the post, and the links. Let me know what you think.

<http://setxp16.org/wp/2011/02/freemath/>

Generation TX

Generation TX, or **GENTX**, is a statewide, grassroots movement focused on creating a culture of college and career education that leads to the most successful generation ever. My favorite part of the site, are the breathtaking videos of students talking about their educational journey.

The Southeast Texas P-16 Council joining in this statewide effort and raising awareness of the web site <http://GENTx.org> Among the resources on the site is a matrix with information on how to prepare, apply for, and pay for college. The information is broken down into separate information for 9th, 10, 11th, and 12th graders and for supporters -- higher education, counselors, parents as well as those seeking an adult degree.

The site's builders have a promotion going on -- if you send an email to enroll on the site (Simply email the word **JOIN** to join@GenTX.org) -- you will receive a attractive [GenTX lanyard](#) (click) with various logos from the site on it.

From the **Generation TX website**, students can

- Participate in discussion groups about education with their peers.
- Watch videos from students with who they can identify.
- Find out how learning more can lead to earning more in career paths of various industries.
- Search the calendar for GenTx activities -- events that can help them make their college plans and be more successful in college.
- View the challenges, goals and aspirations of other students striving for a good education.
- Ask for advice or help on college plans from GenTX supporters.
- Browse through dozens of resources gathered by experts and students such as "What college admissions officers look for."
- and lots more.

While you are in GenTX.org, look up the groups and join our Southeast Texas group: SE TX GenTX



The budget education hole

How is the legislature going to solve the big budget crisis without damaging education?

If you are focusing on budget cuts having a big impact on education next year, I think you are missing the bigger picture.

Setting the scene : I remember working for a city in Louisiana many years ago. We had been trimming the budget for about 3 years and it was about as trimmed as it was ever going to get. You might say we had reached the end of the pre-broke stage and were ready to slip over the cliff.

One councilman came up with an idea. Couldn't we save a lot of money "by not buying police cars and maintenance trucks next year?"

My response was "we could spend less money in the vehicle buying line item. But I doubt we could SAVE money."

First there was the increase in maintenance -- the average vehicle in our fleet had more than 70,000 miles on it. In a year, that would pass 90,000. You would have to increase the maintenance line item at least 30%, I opined. Also, every year, we would lose a few vehicles to accidents and just general old age. You could not reduce the new vehicle line item to zero. You also have to consider that we surplus auction off several vehicles every year. If we don't do an auction then you have to reduce revenues.

But worst of all, the following year -- or more like two years hence (since there was nothing on the horizon to see the revenues getting any better) -- you were going to have a major cost on your hands just to get back to a 70,000-mile-average fleet -- you'd have to replace one-third of the fleet that year. You could set-up a set-aside fund to prepare for that (drop some in each year), but, all told, you would have to put more into it this year than it would cost to buy the vehicles we need now.

Back to the plot: Education it seems, to me is similar, but, a much harder situation. Cutting deep in funding would mean layoffs, and less money for maintenance or education materials. You can get classrooms back to "normal" in three years by restoring funding. The problem is -- the bigger damage may already have been done.

Schools are struggling to help students pass standardized tests and meet the needs of the workforce. Texas already spends less than most states on K-12 education. That ranking makes it certainly hard for me to vision that significant funding cuts won't weaken K-12 results in the near term.

The longer term is even more worrisome. Take for instance the statistic that if a child is not at grade level in reading when he enters the 3rd grade, his/her prospects for eventually going to college are dismal at best. We know that students who do not get a degree or career certification after high school have a very low chance of entering the middle class. We know that about 40 percent of Texas fourth grade students are reading below grade level.

If reduced funding keeps 30,000, 60,000, 100,000 or more students below that at-grade reading threshold, the **real costs to Texas won't show up for 12 or more years when those children will not graduate from high school with their class and/or not enter college.**

You can extrapolate studies to show they will suffer higher unemployment, poorer health and a poorer quality of life. Texas will have more children in poverty ([already 28%](#), more than one in four children live in poverty in Texas), more crime, more cost to incarcerate criminals and higher healthcare and welfare costs.

Maybe even just as important will be a dwindling of the skilled workforce that business and industry needs. A 2009 Census report from the *American Community Survey* shows that Texas and Southeast Texas are starting a couple laps behind in the education attainment race. While 34.9% of Americans 25 years old and older have an associates or higher degree, just 31.5% of Texans do vs **23.3% of Southeast Texans**. That same study finds that 24.2% of the American population without a high school diploma live in poverty vs 3.7% of those who hold a bachelors or higher.

The Texas Closing the Gap Initiative has struggled to make a seemingly impossible goal of getting 630,000 more students in college in Texas and, in the year 2015, to produce 230,000 more degrees and certificates than were issued in Texas in the year 2000. Earlier this year it looked as though that victory was at hand. Now the struggle seems even more important.

Our legislators have hard choices to make, with long-lasting consequences. I don't envy them in the least.

Website

New on our website (<http://setxP16.org>)

- [Students gather from 10 counties to learn to lead](#)
- [Kids Kollege 2 -- new information](#) (English and Spanish)
- [Free math resources proliferate on the web](#)
- [Career Videos](#)
- [Southeast Texas Learning Resources](#) (Spanish links)

New on [GenTx.org](#)

- [40 reasons to Go to College](#)
 - [Types of Colleges: Your Options After High School/](#)
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Lagniappe -- that's what I'm thinking

I was talking to a student the other day about change -- the change I have seen in my career --

- My first IBM Selectric, My first IBM Selectric with correction, My first daisy wheel typewriter (Oh, come on, you remember them).
- The first fax machine I used (with the cradle for the phone and the spindle that you attached each piece of paper to), all the way up to automatic faxing via Act!, then mass emails.
- The endless stream of newer and better modems, then routers and switches.
- My first one-mega-pixel digital camera.
- Dos 1.1, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, 5.0, Windows then 2.0, 3.0, NT, 95, ,98, 2000, ME XP, Vista, Windows 7.
- Floppies (single sided), flippies, Zip drives, CD's, DVD's,
- The trip from Multi-plan to Lotus, to Excel.
- Car phones, mobile phone, cell phones, pocket pc phones, smart phones.
- TVs? Green and black, black and white, color, remote clicker, infrared clickers, rear projection tv, rear projection you could see in the light, digital video recorders, LCD, LED, Plasma, DLP, 3D.
- VCRs, Portable Video recorders, DVRs.

The conversation came around to what this student could expect in her life time. I used the iPad as an example. iPad 2 was introduced just about 1 year after the first iPad. If the rate of change doesn't speed up (don't count on it) and a student of today stays in the workforce for 45 years -- she could see iPads-like breakthroughs leaping on to their stage 45 times. And, (yes, I have succumb to the write-like-you talk forces and started a sentence with an "AND." Times are changing, you see) that doesn't count the myriad of other changes that the youth of today have already seen, adapted to, adopted, curated, introduced, built a market for, etc. If you are sophomore in high school, all of this was introduced (or at least took a good foothold) since you started 1st grade:

- Twitter, MySpace (goodbye), Facebook, Youtube, Flash Websites, Flickr (and other media-sharing sites)
- Texting, blogging, Google Apps, curated web sites, user-generated content, interactive journalism.
- Social bookmarking (i.e. Diigo), backchannels, Guitar Hero, social shopping.
- LED TV, HD TV, 3D TV, DVRs, Video On the Go.
- Pocket PC phones, Bluetooth phones, camera phones, smart phones.
- Wikipedia, Wikileaks, WikiCommons.
- Digital cameras (well, at least digital cameras that take decent pictures).
- Xbox Wii, (internet connected game consoles).
- XP, Vista, Windows 7, the Cloud.

- Firefox, Chrome, Opera, Apps, Click-to-Donate.
- Pentium 4, duo core processors, 3 core processors, quad core processors.
- Netflix, Satellite Radio.
- Google Earth, consumer GPS.
- Interactive Projectors, personal response systems.
- TAKS, TEKS, STAAR, CCRS, NCLB, Race to the Top.

My thought on all of this -- when we talk about internet literacy, 21st Century Skills, 21st Century fluencies or the like. Which particular piece of the puzzle do we have in our hands?

The youth of today are doing something that former generations did very little of -- writing rules of the road for continuously appearing new media, while they driving. Building the road and driving at the same time. They write the rules by what they write, create and use. By the various acts of using some media and not others (Facebook vs MySpace for example). By how they respond to rudeness, bullying, invasions of privacy. It's not by a single person or committee that the norms of behavior, the acceptable uses, are written, but rather by the crowd.

Take Twitter, for instance, it sprang into existence in 2008, no history, no users manual, no politeness policy, no one to tell you how many followers you can have vs how many you follow. No one to tell you how much you can "listen" without talking. No one to tell you how and when you can re-tweet someone's tweet. No one to tell you how much self-promotion was acceptable. No one to monitor how you use direct mentions, or if you can harvest another's timeline (even automatically) or their followers. No one to tell you how to tell if a follower is malicious, or how they might spam you.

To me, the conversation should not be about developing the tutorials to tell students the rules of the road in using internet media. Those rules are fluid and ever changing. (How someone can harm you on Facebook is not the same as Linked-in).

Rather we should be afford students the opportunity to look critically a media as it is birthed, and how to write (and right) rules. What rule writing is all about vs the capabilities of the media. How their actions will push the cloud toward good or bad rules. Ask them to tell us what we are missing. What are the rule issues that are bubbling up as they see them? Maybe we should call this a *creative conversation*, a conversation about how their acts, presence, uses, creations, etc., create the new media and its rules. They need to decide what their role will be.

That's what I'm thinking.

Want to be part?

The Southeast Texas P-16 is currently seeking volunteers to work on the various program if you are interested call us a 409-880-7639 or email sbuser@setxp16.org

You can mail us at P.O. Box 10008, Beaumont, TX 77710.

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