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REGION 10  
EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER

# COMMUNICATING for RESULTS

Region 10's Online Strategic Communications Service

Wednesday, April 20, 2016



## Thought of the Week

“A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.”

*Albert Einstein*

## Tip of the Week

To-do lists can energize you by helping set priorities for the day and motivating you to keep moving forward, even after those inevitable distractions or setbacks. Yet, so many people who write out lists find themselves unable to check everything off by the end of the work day. Caren Merrick, founder and CEO of [Pocket Mentor](#), says that's because they're not making their lists correctly. In fact, she adds, many people are habitually killing their own productivity with their lists. In a *muse.com* post Merrick identifies five reasons to-do lists make people less productive and offers solutions for each one. [Check them out here.](#)

## E-Rate, WEP, and Per Pupil Spending

With schools and libraries [being challenged by a new application portal](#), the Universal Service Administrative Company has extended the window for applying for E-Rate Internet subsidies to May 26. USAC is also opening a second filing window for libraries and consortia, like groups of school districts, which will close on July 21. [More here](#)... U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady of The Woodlands and chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, briefed retirees at the recent TRTA convention about efforts to enhance social security benefits for Texas educators. He is the sponsor of H.R. 711 [which would repeal and replace the Windfall Elimination Provision](#). He believes the bill will past this year. [More on WEP and the bill here](#)... Those interested in comparing per student spending by districts [can](#)

[check out an interactive map](#) which shows the FY 2013 figures for most U.S. school districts. The map, based on an Education Week Research Center analysis, was prepared by NPR for a story on public school finance (read about the complete NPR series in today's Items of Interest).

## Spotlight on Region 10 Schools

The Washington Post's Jay Mathews has released his [annual rankings of the most challenging high schools in the nation](#). Thirty-two of the top 100 are in Texas, eight are in Region 10. [The list is determined by](#) the number of college-level tests given at a school in the previous calendar year divided by the number of graduates that year. Also noted are the percentage of students who come from families that qualify for lunch subsidies and the percentage of graduates who passed at least one college-level test during their high school career. Five of the eight area schools are in Dallas ISD—The Science/Engineering Magnet (3), the Talented and Gifted School (6), Rangel Young Women's Leadership School (21), Sanders Law Magnet (44), and the School of Business and Management (45). Two of the Region's top 100 are charters: Uplift Education North Hills Preparatory-Irving (23), and Uplift Education Williams Preparatory-Dallas (75). The other local school, coming in at number 24, is the private Dallas International School.

Two Region 10 districts have been [selected as pilot sites](#) as part of an effort to expand blended learning statewide. DeSoto ISD and Grand Prairie ISD's Young Women's Leadership Academy will receive expert implementation assistance, coaching, and staff training as part of the project led by Raise Your Hand Texas, with support from Educate Texas and The Meadows Foundation. Pilot sites also get support for edtech selection, budgeting and financial analysis, teacher and school leader professional development, and project management. To help other districts and schools interested in learning more or pursuing blended learning, Raise Your Hand Texas also launched a public [blended learning resource portal](#) with curated national resources and materials, as well as content created exclusively for the Raising Blended Learners initiative.

The Plano ISD Health Sciences Academy—a joint program of Plano ISD and Collin College—has been awarded a Texas Association of College Technical Educators Award of Excellence. The award recognizes programs that demonstrate innovative partnerships; potential for positive economic impact; outstanding program outcomes; and best practices in workforce education and training that have improved student success. [The Academy offers a rigorous academic program](#) that prepares students for the demands of a four-year university or pre-med program. Opportunities include college credit, technical certificates, hands-on experience and mentorship from healthcare professionals. [Watch program video](#).

## Scanning the News

The State Court of Criminal Appeals will determine [if a parent can be prosecuted for violating state wiretap laws after secretly planting a mobile phone](#) in a locker room to check out allegations of verbal abuse by Argyle High School's basketball coach. The mother was initially convicted, but an appeals court overturned the decision saying the wiretap law didn't apply because the coach had no reasonable expectation of privacy while acting as a teacher. The prosecuting attorney defended the conviction, insisting that locker rooms are inherently private places where team members change clothes, treat injuries and discuss strategy with coaches. [The mom's lawyer pointed out that courts have consistently found that the law applies only in situations where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy](#), stressing that instructions in public school classrooms—including dressing rooms—aren't a private matter.

A *Dallas Morning News* analysis shows that while some safety steps have been taken across Texas following the deadly 2013 explosion in West, tons of the same kind of fertilizer involved in the disaster can still be found near schools and homes in some towns. [The newspaper's investigation found](#) that many of the agricultural stores that used to stock a lot of ammonium nitrate have stopped selling it and others have implemented safeguards such as moving the chemical out of dilapidated buildings

and into fire-resistant concrete structures. But it reports many recommendations by safety investigators have gone unheeded, including the installation of sprinkler systems. And despite calls for keeping stockpiles of ammonium nitrate away from populated areas, the *News* says that in up to eight communities, tons of the chemical still sit near schools, houses, nursing homes and even a hospital.

A Louisiana school system is taking steps to address [concerns about its policy on students reciting the Pledge of Allegiance](#). Lafayette Parish officials are giving consideration to removing a requirement that students stand during the pledge, even if they choose not to recite it due to religious beliefs. The district [received a letter](#) from the Appignani Humanist Legal Center claiming an Acadiana High student contacted the group after being “badly mistreated” by a teacher for opting out of the pledge. According to the letter, the student, for “personal and religious reasons” does not wish to participate in the pledge exercise “in any manner.” [It alleges that the teacher directed an expletive toward the student, and told him “he should move to a different country.”](#) The letter added that office staff did not address the student’s concerns, telling him he would have to take class in the guidance office if he did not take part in the pledge.

## Items of Interest

The [Network for Public Education](#) has released a report from a survey of nearly 3,000 teachers across 48 states on the impact of teacher evaluations. The results show that: (1) Teachers and principals believe that evaluations based on student test scores are neither valid nor reliable measures of their work; (2) The emphasis on improving test scores has overwhelmed every aspect of teachers’ work; and (3) Professional development tied to the evaluation process is having a stifling effect on teachers by undermining their sense of autonomy and limiting their capacity for real professional growth. The report includes six recommendations, ranging from an immediate halt to the use of test scores as any part of teacher evaluation, to basing professional development on teacher needs and not evaluation scores. [Access the full report here](#).

National Public Radio yesterday kicked off a major series on school finance and how the nation pays for its schools. The project, “[School Money](#),” includes radio reports for the next three weeks on NPR’s flagship news programs, collaboration with 20 education reporters at member stations, detailed spending data provided to the NPR team by the Education Week Research Center, and extensive Web stories and features. The theme of the first week’s package is why America’s schools have a money problem. The second week focuses on why money matters, digging into research about the power and limits of spending and its effects on the classroom and achievement. The third week is more political, focusing on whether there is a fairer way to fund education.

Microsoft is ramping up its effort [to compete with Google and Apple in the classroom](#), offering a slate of applications designed to make it easier for teachers and students to use the company’s products. The company last week unveiled [Microsoft Classroom](#), a hub built on top of its Web-based Office 365 suite for teachers and students to manage documents, calendars and assignments among classes. It will be available later this summer. The announcement comes a month after Apple [introduced](#) its own classroom hub for iPads. Google has offered a [similar, Internet-based service](#) since 2014. Microsoft has been piloting the new product—designed to give students and teachers one place to come to manage their day—in the Omaha Public Schools.

## Looking Ahead

In 1899, the Philippine-American War was getting started, Bayer had just begun selling aspirin to the masses, and Lever Brothers created the first known [employee suggestion box](#). The latter introduced internal communications to the industrial world, companies since have made it a point to keep their employees informed as possible. The existence of suggestion boxes today proves that organizations still care about feedback, but they also illustrate that internal communications methods have largely remained the same for a long time. Of course, many rely on printed newsletters, flyers on bulletin

boards, emails and intranets to keep employees engaged and in the loop. But intranets [have been largely ineffective for years](#), and emails are just digital flyers. In a recent *CEO.com* article, online marketing guru Russ Fradin makes a case for adapting new technological approaches to internal communications. With today's workforce full of mobile-first digital natives, he offers three ways leaders can exploit these tendencies to move their internal communications into the modern era. [Check it out.](#)

## Resource Bank

In her [nationally recognized blog](#) this weekend, Diane Ravitch put the spotlight on a recent Education Week commentary by a thoughtful and reflective educator. David Gamberg is the superintendent of two small adjoining school districts on the North Fork of New York's Long Island: Southold and Greenport. The citizens of these communities love their schools and support them. And, as Ravitch notes, it has a lot to do with Gamberg and his whole-child approach to education. His commentary underscores his belief in what today's school leaders need to focus on. It's message worth reading and sharing. ["What Defines a Good School"](#) is today's [Resource Bank](#) item.



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