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REGION 10
EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER

COMMUNICATING for RESULTS

Region 10's Online Strategic Communications Service

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Thought of the Week

"We spend January 1st walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives...not looking for flaws, but for potential."

Ellen Goodman

Tip of the Week

While that list of New Year's resolutions may soon be wearing thin, freelance writer Stephanie Vozza urges to not dismiss the idea of lists. Her authority on the suggestion is Paula Rizzo, author of [Listful Thinking: Using Lists to Be More Productive, Highly Successful, and Less Stressed](#). "When you're juggling a lot of tasks, things will fall through the cracks, and lists are amazing for keeping yourself on target and getting things done," she says. Rizzo notes that a lot of people want to be list makers, but they aren't sure how to create lists that actually help. "The key is making the right lists and being strategic in how they're used," she adds. [Read Vozza's article](#) which includes six lists that Rizzo says are helpful to leaders, and explains how you can use them to be more productive.

Storms Mar Holiday, Challenge Schools

While it will take a few days to catch up on all the school-related items that occurred over the break, there's no question that the biggest news locally was the destruction caused by numerous tornadoes that touched down in Ellis, Dallas and Collin counties on the day after Christmas. Eleven people died in the storms and hundreds of homes were destroyed, most in Rowlett, Garland and Glenn Heights.

The only major damage reported by school officials was at Red Oak ISD's Donald T. Shields Elementary which is reported to be out of commission for seven to eight months. District [employees and volunteers have been busy](#) salvaging usable contents and preparing a vacant junior high which will house the 500 students. ROISD Supt. Scott Niven has been active [keeping constituents updated on the situation](#). Meanwhile, Garland and other districts have made school facilities available as temporary shelters and emergency supply distribution sites. No doubt many students and staff members have been personally impacted by the disaster, and as always it will be up to schools to take a key role in the healing process. Based upon reports to date, Region 10 school leaders and staff are up to the challenge.

Spotlight on Region 10 Schools

Some 425 school districts across the U.S. and Canada—including 23 from Texas and four from Region 10—are being honored by the College Board with placement on the 6th Annual AP District Honor Roll for increasing access to AP course work while simultaneously maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP Exams. Inclusion on the Honor Roll is based on the examination of three years of AP data, from 2013 to 2015, looking across 34 AP Exams, including world language and culture. Reaching these goals indicates that a district is successfully identifying motivated, academically prepared students who are ready for the opportunity of AP. Each of the Honor Roll districts from the region—Allen, Coppell, Lovejoy and Plano ISDs—are repeat honorees. [The complete 6th Annual AP District Honor Roll can be found here](#).

Some Irving ISD students are learning how to identify, investigate, and prevent cyber-attacks like those that recently have targeted major cities and school districts across the country. The cyber security concentration is a new addition to Singley Academy's School of Law and Public Service this year. The instructors include experts in technology and a former federal agent. They say the students selected for the rigorous program start off learning basic computer knowledge. They advance to classes in basic ethical hacking. The instructors say students walk away with certifications in FEMA, incident command systems, and network security, among others. The teens will be on their way to career-ready for a variety of government agencies. [Read more here](#).

Six student athletes from Region 10 were involved in nationally televised all-star football games over the weekend. Three suited up for last night's [Semper Fidelis All-American game](#) carried on Fox Sports 1 from Carson, California. They included corner back Jared Mayden from Garland ISD's Sachse High School, defensive tackle Marcel Southall from Duncanville High School, and Kenan Ivy, a safety from Lancaster High School. The other three participated in Saturday's [Under Armour All-American Game](#) in Orlando, Florida. It was broadcast live on ESPN2. Students from the region included another Sachse athlete, wide receiver Devin Duvernay, offensive tackle Jean Delance of North Mesquite, and Greg Little, an offensive tackle from Allen High School.

Scanning the News

An engineer who was part of a National Weather Service team inspecting damage across North Texas following recent tornadoes [raised red flags over what he termed "a tremendous number of improper attachment of the walls to the foundations"](#) of many homes and buildings. The construction he questioned included that of Shields Elementary School in Glenn Heights which suffered extensive damage. While [Red Oak ISD leaders say they have not received any official report substantiating the claim](#), the district asked its engineering firm to look into the matter. Meanwhile, their focus has been on preparing a temporary site that the school's students will attend second semester. A news article noted that Florida created an enhanced building code after a hurricane revealed inadequate construction. Moore, Okla., adopted similar guidelines after a tornado caused \$2 billion in damage and killed students in an elementary school.

While annual calendars for area schools are traditionally similar, a new state law on required instructional time is prompting districts to explore a variety of alternatives for 2016-17. The law requires students to be at school for 75,600 minutes instead of 180 days, and [the Dallas Morning News reports](#) that some districts are adding a few minutes to daily class schedules in order to allow students and staff more days off during the year. Dallas ISD has used the change to include a week-long Thanksgiving break next year. Arlington is already taking advantage of the new law this semester by extending the school day for elementary and junior high students by nine minutes, eliminating the need for weather makeup days. Frisco is currently considering a plan that will give students and staff three additional days off next year.

As schools were closing for winter break, [some state lawmakers and Austin political observers were predicting that a ruling in the school funding case could come as early as January](#). While no one was guessing how the high court might rule, many agreed that the Legislature on its own lacked the political will to approve a fair funding plan. If the court rules in favor of the plaintiffs, some questioned whether Greg Abbott would call a special legislative session as previous governors have done. Although no lawmaker was predicting a special session, some said they would prefer tackling the school funding issue right after the Supreme Court ruling, instead of waiting until the 140-day regular session of 2017.

Items of Interest

The Texas Education Agency has been notified that [its federally required state plan to ensure equitable access to excellent educators has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education](#). The Equity Plan is part of a federal effort designed to ensure all students have equal access to a high-quality education. Formally submitted this past summer, TEA staff worked with the Texas Comprehensive Center (an affiliate of American Institutes for Research) and various stakeholders in developing the plan that focuses on five key strategies that build upon work the state and districts have already begun. The state's 2015 Equity Plan can be viewed on the [Texas Education Agency website](#).

As 2015 came to a close, many major public education issues impacting Texas schools are in flux or left hanging in the balance. The Texas Tribune published its list of such items along with links to its top related education stories of the year. [Check them out here](#). The folks at *Education Week* went the extra mile in providing an overview of the top happenings in American schools during 2015. Check out the following: [Education Week's Most-Viewed Stories of 2015](#), [Top Education Commentaries of 2015](#), [Top Teacher Stories of 2015](#), [The Top 10 Politics K-12 Blog Posts of 2015](#), [Top Opinion Blog Posts of 2015](#) and [Education Week's Videos of the Year for 2015](#).

And speaking of top stories of 2015, [the Ragan Report has a list](#) that represents what editors say was a primary item on the minds of its readers this year—internal communications. Take a look at these top 5 stories and consider adding the included tips to your communications strategy in 2016: (1) [How to keep employees engaged with one simple question](#), (2) [The Audrey Hepburn guide to employee recognition](#), (3) [The only employee engagement questionnaire you'll ever need](#), (4) [Infographic: How work friendships improve employee engagement](#) and (5) [How NOT to motivate and reward employees](#).

Looking Ahead

Mobile communication is no longer emerging—it's been around for years and employees and constituents expect mobile interaction with organizations and expect to have a consumer-grade experience when doing so. But in a recent blog post, corporate communication consultant Dom Crincoli says that surprisingly few organizations are using mobile to drive engagement effectively. This is borne out by independent research, his own client interactions, and those of other professional communicators, he adds. Crincoli notes that he continues to encounter organizations that only use

mobile for the occasional emergency or crisis notification—including those with remote and hourly workers, who aren't tethered to a computer during the day and to whom mobile may be the only available channel for real-time communication. [He offers five suggestions which will ensure workforce and customer engagement through mobile communication.](#)

Resource Bank

Winter break came none too soon for schools caught up in growing threats about violence at schools. One can only hope that the epidemic doesn't resume anytime soon. But whether targeted or not, school districts are being asked to respond to what the Oakland School Police chief recently called "an air of anxiety in this country." Indeed, public anxiety about terrorist threats has increased in the aftermath of attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, and concern about keeping children safe at school has been heightened for years because of school shootings. The advice schools are receiving, experts say, starts with this: Keep the adults calm. A recent *EdSource* article—reprinted by the *Huffington Post*—provides a helpful overview of what schools are doing to deal with the anxiety, including links to several useful resources. "[How Teachers Should Cope with School Terrorist Fears](#)" is today's [Resource Bank](#) item.

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