

Wednesday, February 10, 2016



Infectious Disease, Home Preparedness, SAT and Elections

Why is Dallas ground zero for infectious disease like Zika? That's a headline that should get the attention of any local citizen. The article, originally appearing in the *Dallas Morning News*, has been share across the land by [emergencymanagement.com](#). Fortunately, it's not as bad as it sounds. Written by UTD professor Seema Yasmin, a physician and former CDC epidemiologist, explains that since Big D is a city that appeals to businesses and people from all over the world, as a result it also attracts diseases. Dr. Yasmin spins it like pro by explaining that the ongoing threat has made area public health officials among the best anywhere. [A good read](#)...With all the natural disasters of late, it's hard to believe that [fewer than half of Americans have an emergency preparedness plan](#). FEMA urges preparedness with its [America's PrepareAthon campaign](#), along with a [variety of available resources](#)... A lot is being written [about the new SAT](#) (see today's News Scan item). For those who would like a preview, the *New York Times* [offers some sample questions](#) taken from a College Board practice test...*Texas ISD's* Joe Smith has been posting a list of helpful election info for local school officials to share with staff. If you haven't done so, and are so disposed, [check it out](#).

Spotlight on Region 10 Schools

Celina ISD is the only school district of its size in Collin County that does not employ its own police force or a school resource officer. But that won't be the case come next school year. [CISD officials recently announced that it's time for the district to have a force of its own](#). But they'll start small. The new department will cost the district approximately \$50,000 the first year, starting with one licensed police officer housed in an office at Celina High School. Supt. Rick DeMasters said the district was looking for more of an educator versus a police officer who would be a constant presence on campuses, building relationships with students, staff and parents. Melissa School Police Chief Kelly Davidson—formerly chief at Prosper ISD—has helped other districts establish departments and is voluntarily serving as a consultant for CISD.

Thanks to their new neighbors—the Dallas Cowboys—Frisco ISD football teams will play games in the state's first domed high school venue. That relationship paid off again this week when [Nike formalized a five-year, \\$1.74 million deal \(in products and discounts\) with the district](#) to serve as the sole provider of athletic uniforms and equipment in all of the its middle schools and high schools. Starting in August 2016, all of Frisco ISD's high school varsity football and soccer teams will wear Nike uniforms, with other programs transitioning over the length of the contract. Ironically, the Nike deal does not include shoes. Frisco ISD requires students to provide their own.

[Several grads from high schools in Region 10 were on the winning side in Super Bowl 50](#). Indeed, as many know by now, DeSoto High School's Von Miller was named the game's MVP, an award that usually goes to offensive players. Miller, a Denver defensive lineman, was recognized for his 5 tackles, 2.5 sacks and 2 forced fumbles. [Needless to say, Miller and his unit showed Carolina QB Cam Newton and his offensive group little mercy](#). Other local members of that defensive wall include cornerback Aqib Talib of Richardson Berkner (5 tackles) and linebacker Corey Nelson of Dallas Skyline (one tackle).

Scanning the News

Across Texas: In October, Huffman ISD trustees approved a change in their GPA scale moving AP classes from a 6.0 weighted value to 5.0, and Pre-AP classes from a 5.0 to a 4.5, beginning with this year's freshmen. [But subsequent feedback from parents](#) brought a staff recommendation—approved by the board—to return to the old scale...Austin ISD opened its [magnificent new Performing Arts Center last month](#), but trustees are concerned about a proposal from a Naming Committee for [procuring a sponsorship name](#) from individuals, associations and corporations. A vote on a related policy is scheduled on Feb. 29. The Ira ISD is closed again today as officials shuttered schools yesterday for two days and urged parents to limit their children's contact with others as they try to "break the cycle" and get a large number of strep and flu cases under control. [Read statement](#).

The *Washington Post* took an in-depth look this week at public education's role in helping tens of thousands of immigrant children find their footing in America. And as the article notes up front, it's not an easy task. Many of the new arrivals don't speak much English and are behind academically. They often come with scars, having fled desperate poverty or violence or both. Many endured difficult journeys, sometimes leaving their families behind or rejoining parents in the United States after years of separation. And U.S. schools, already strapped for resources, are trying to provide special services, including English-language instruction and mental-health care. AASA chief Daniel Domenech agrees the influx creates many problems, adding "Having said that, I have to tell you that just about in all cases, districts will bend over backward to accommodate and provide for these students whatever services they need." [Complete article here](#).

With the College Board ready to roll out its new SAT next month, experts say the changes are going to impact which students do well. Longer and harder reading passages and more words in math problems have some educators and college admissions officers fearing that the revised test will penalize students who have not been exposed to a lot of reading, or who speak a different language at home — like immigrants and the poor. It has also led to a general sense that the new test is uncharted territory, leaving many students wondering whether they should take the SAT or its rival, the ACT. College admissions officers say they are waiting to see how the scores turn out before deciding how to weight the new test. [More here from The New York Times](#).

Items of Interest

While all schools have comprehensive security plans, there's no question that administrative offices and other non-student locations where could and should have tailored plans. Most may already have that aspect covered, but *Emergency Management* reports that there's a growing number of businesses hiring [security experts](#) to train employees on how to respond to a workplace attack. The

security companies say that more and more employers are requesting a detailed analysis of facilities, from the parking lot to the break room, with an eye on preventing an active shooter situation. New innovations are on the horizon, like the [SiteGuard-Active Shooter Response System](#). A series of sensors placed throughout a facility detects gunfire and pinpoints its location, instantly notifying police and providing real-time information on a shooter's whereabouts, while advising employees on what areas to avoid. [Read about the trends here.](#)

Eleven states (excluding Texas) now tie teacher outcomes back to their preparation programs, and an increasing number of states are planning to use that data to decide whether to keep programs open, according to [a new report by Bellwether Education Partners](#). The report comes as many are waiting on the U.S. Department of Education to finalize new federal regulations that could require all states to determine how graduates fare after completing teacher preparation programs and report that data publicly. [The 11 states currently tracking this data look at a variety of graduate information](#), including the academic growth of students taught by graduates (as measured by standardized tests), job placement rate of graduates, and the persistence rate once teachers begin teaching. Some states, like North Carolina, track outcomes by institutions, while other states, like Ohio, dig into individual programs within institutions.

Some creative social studies teachers are taking their students into a real laboratory for learning about the American political system. An AP Government class from Ohio spent the days leading up to the Iowa caucus attending campaign events for presidential candidates on a unique field trip. "Not only do they now know more details about the candidates and how they feel on the issues and the process of caucusing, but a lot of them will always have an interest in politics because of this trip," said their teacher. High schoolers from [Illinois](#) and [Minnesota](#) were on similar trips in Iowa. More than 100 students from New York's [Mamaroneck High School](#) are in New Hampshire for the state's primary. Teacher Joe Liberti organized the trip after taking a smaller number of students in 2012 for what he called an amazing educational experience. The teachers [shared online resources](#) for others not able to take classes into the field.

Looking Ahead

An online group named "Evacuation Squad" is claiming responsibility for a wave of worldwide school bomb threats, [according to the digital media website Mashable](#) and news outlets in the [United Kingdom](#) and [Australia](#). Mashable says that Evacuation Squad is made up of six international members and listed a Russian email address on its social media accounts. A spokesperson for the group identified as Viktor Olyavich said the group makes the threats "because they are funny to us" and added: *"We are preparing to do schools across Europe as we speak. We don't worry about the consequences, because our main threat-makers are based in Russia and Iran."* The pay-to-threaten program targeting schools starts March 1st. Whether this group has anything to do with the recent rash of cyber-delivered threats against American schools remains to be seen. But it wouldn't hurt to keep the topic on your radar. [Read Ken Trump's latest blog post on the subject.](#)



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