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## ***NEWS***

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### **TEXAS AFTERSCHOOL CENTERS ON EDUCATION UTILIZING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY TO ENGAGE STUDENTS**

The Texas **Afterschool Centers on Education™ (ACE™)** are incorporating innovative technology into the program curriculum through a number of applications designed to engage students. By offering access to online content that enriches academic and social skills, ACE participants benefit from activities that are core to the Four-Component Activity Guide which provides a framework for Texas ACE:

- Academic Assistance
- Enrichment
- Family and Parental Support Services
- College and Workforce Readiness

ACE online activities such as virtual field trips, podcasts, and blogs allows students and parents the opportunity to tap into programs that broaden exposure and encourage participants to think “outside of the box”.

One such example is the Ranger Fit blog (<http://rangerfit.blogspot.com/>), created by middle school students at Stevenson Middle School in Houston ISD. The blog was designed to increase physical fitness through running and health awareness. Students post their run times and give each other encouragement via the blog. This is an opportunity for parents to participate in the fitness activities and to learn more through this venue about the activities being provided through ACE.

The internet also brings the outside world to students as evidenced at ACE located at Spring Branch Elementary. Students followed Buzz Lightyear on his international space tour provided by [NASA Quest](#) and posted character lessons through puppetry on [TeacherTube®](#), the education version of [You Tube®](#). The social network site, [Flickr®](#), was utilized to develop Space Trading cards, which entailed the downloading of pictures from [Microsoft®'s WorldWide Telescope](#). These cards became a lesson and a fun game to play.

Not only are many ACE programs utilizing technology to motivate students, now Program Administrators and Center staff are being provided professional development and, training through new technologies such as webinars and podcasts. Grant leaders can find information about innovative programming on iTunes and via a new secure online learning site at [MyTexasACE.org](#). The site provides the opportunity for ACE staff to:

- Develop an ACE community by sharing and discussing lessons learned
- Obtain support to implement program requirements
- Participate in online courses that are on-demand or facilitated
- Access a variety of resources and tools

A webinar series, **Innovative Learning through Technology**, has been delivered in 2009-2010 to provide Texas ACE staff training and practical ways they can use new web tools and technology to engage students and families in meaningful activities. They are not only receiving information but becoming active contributors in the digital world, enhancing their learning experiences.

ACE is administered by the Texas Education Agency and funded by the Texas 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Program administered by the US Department of Education. Edvance Research, a women and minority, employee owned firm, is the provider to TEA for Program Enhancement & Quality Assurance for ACE, and is headquartered in San Antonio, Texas. To learn more visit [www.TexasACE21.org](http://www.TexasACE21.org)

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