



## Connected Texas, TCEA Co-Host Texas Broadband Symposium Focusing on Broadband Access in Education

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*Discussions over the two-day event highlighted challenges and best practices to provide broadband access in school districts across the state*

**Austin, TX** – Connected Texas and TCEA co-hosted the Texas Broadband Symposium Tuesday and Wednesday at TCEA’s headquarters in Austin, concentrating on the importance of connecting all students to broadband and the steps to follow to overcome various obstacles toward statewide implementation.

The event began with the announcement of Connected Texas’ release of the [Broadband and Education – Connecting Students in Texas](#) report, and followed with panel sessions on challenges at the state and national level, historical and present funding of broadband access, success stories from around the state, approaches from other states, and school and community connections.

Speakers included Don Shirley and Tom Koutsky from Connected Texas and Connected Nation; Dr. Walt Magnussen, director of telecommunications at Texas A&M University; Dr. Mickey Slimp, executive director, Northeast Texas Consortium of Colleges and Universities (NETnet); Gloria Meraz, director of communications of the Texas Library Association; and Jeff Mao, senior director of learning solutions programs at Common Sense Media, to name a few.

Attendees were divided into groups and were given the opportunity to collaborate on the identification of key barriers to providing broadband access to Texas schools, categorizing strategies that policy-makers and practitioners can support to overcome barriers, as well as solutions and next steps.

“Our compliments to TCEA for holding a great symposium and it’s clear that we collectively in Texas owe it to every child, and ultimately every citizen, to be able

to provide the technological and computer support in schools around Texas,” said Coryell County Judge John E. Firth. “Hopefully what we’ve come out of this symposium with are some great ideas on how to move forward and achieve those results.”

“My hope for this symposium was that when people left, they would have a good understanding of the barriers and challenges of providing broadband access to all Texas schools at an affordable, scalable rate,” said Jennifer Bergland, TCEA director of governmental relations. “I hoped the attendees would also see some solutions that maybe other states were doing or other entities in Texas were doing and I believe that we accomplished that goal as evidenced by the suggestions that people came up with and a lot of the energy and synergy that was created.”

In photo: Connected Texas Executive Director Don Shirley and TCEA Director of Governmental Relations Jennifer Bergland at the conclusion of the Texas Broadband Symposium this week in Austin.

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**About Connected Texas:** Connected Texas, the Texas division of Connected Nation, is a public-private partnership, funded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the State of Texas, working with telecommunications providers, business and community leaders, information technology companies, researchers, public agencies, libraries and universities to enable economic growth and a better way of life through improved broadband Internet access, adoption, and use. For more information visit: <http://www.connectedtx.org>.

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**About TCEA:** The Texas Computer Education Association is the largest state organization devoted to the use of technology in education. Founded in 1980, the organization has grown to more than 11,000 members and has been a leader in supporting instructional technology throughout Texas. TCEA’s primary focus is integrating technology into the PreK-12 environment and providing its members with the latest in state-of-the-art information. For more information, visit [www.tcea.org/assessment/](http://www.tcea.org/assessment/).