

# Stephen F. Austin State University

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## Teachers attend Texas Tides curriculum development workshop at SFA

"Integration of technology" is a phrase with which most teachers have become extremely familiar. Through the resources available on the Internet, the answer to practically any question is just a mouse-click away.

The Texas Tides Web site hosted by Ralph W. Steen Library at Stephen F. Austin State University is a virtual magic carpet for students who want to visit libraries, museums and other historical locations in East Texas. Texas Tides can even transport students to a different day and time, or to another country.

The goal of Texas Tides project directors is to make the information available on their Web site accessible to every student, educator and researcher who wants it. Their first step in that process is making sure people know it is there.

Rachel Galan and Susan Clarke of the Texas Tides project recently met with a group of teachers for a curriculum development workshop. Sean Bibby of Texas Tides led a Web site demonstration, so teachers would be aware of all the information they can find at their fingertips, through the project.

One of the biggest challenges teachers said they face is finding information on-line that is relevant to the lessons they are planning. A simple "Google" search on any given topic can yield thousands of results, and narrowing the search can prove challenging and time consuming. For that reason, part of the Texas Tides summer workshop provided teachers with tips on finding and evaluating Web resources. Information was provided on the "online learning community" and teachers heard from three professionals who provide content for the Texas Tides Web site: Ann Howington of Sam Houston State University, Susie Lower of Millard's Crossing Historic Village and Linda Reynolds of the East Texas Research Center.

Another emphasis for Texas Tides is bridging the gap between the American and Mexican culture. Three teachers from Mexico attended the Tides workshop and described what schools are like in their country. There is no lunch program, there are no school buses, and a greater emphasis is placed on arts and crafts, one Mexican teacher said.

With an increasing number of Mexican immigrants entering American schools, Texas Tides directors said it is important for teachers in the United States to have an understanding of the Mexican culture. Galan said the recent workshop was great, and the participation and exchange of ideas was impressive. "These teachers are the cream of the crop," she said, of those who were selected for the workshop. "They are innovative, creative and excited."

At the conclusion of the workshop, teachers were challenged to create eight lesson plans based on the resources available on the Texas Tides Web site. They were asked to "field test" two of those lesson plans, and to submit them to the Texas Tides Web site for other teachers to use.

At the conclusion of the workshop teachers described what they find most helpful about Texas Tides.

Many said they appreciate the fact that the information is easily accessible and free.

Maria Eugenia Avila Mayor of Cuernauaca, Mexico, said Texas Tides offers an easy way to find information. Last year, Texas Tides representatives visited her school in Mexico and studied the eclectic "montesori/traditional" mixture of instructional methods, she said. This summer, it was her turn to visit Texas, to learn more about the instructional methods in this country. While she was here, she visited several historic homes. She took photographs so that when she returned to Mexico, she could teach her students about the brick and wood houses in the United States.

Claire Bray, a history teacher at Nacogdoches High School, said she used Texas Tides previously, when she taught seventh grade. Because the content of the Tides Web site has expanded so much in the past couple of years, she said she is confident she will now use it in her high school classroom as well.

Bray said she also enjoyed the aspect of the workshop that allowed her to interact with the teachers from Mexico. "It was interesting to learn more about their culture and traditions," she said.

Bray said she would encourage teachers to use the Texas Tides Web site in developing lessons, adding that it is easy to access and navigate. "It's our duty to look for new ways to present information, and this is a wonderful tool," she said.

Udoro Gatewood, an English teacher at Center High School, said the information on the Texas Tides Web site is valuable, because it allows students to see things through a different perspective. For more information on Texas Tides, visit <http://tides.sfasu.edu/home.html>. Texas Tides is funded through a Texas Infrastructure Fund grant.