

INFORMALLY SPEAKING

The Newsletter of the Informal Science Education Association of Texas

10th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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The mission of the Informal Science Education Association (ISEA) is to improve science education in Texas by supporting partnerships among informal and formal educators.

On February 28th through March 2 we celebrated ISEA's 10th annual conference at The University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas. The conference brought together 68 formal and informal science educators from around the state to share their experiences as "out of the classroom" leaders. As in past years, the site provided interesting opportunities for learning outside of the sessions with excursions on the UT Research Vessel Katy and birding in the mornings.

We were fortunate to have Dr. Elsa Bailey with us this year as the keynote speaker. She gave us great insights into the roles that informal science education can play as part of the work of the National Science Education Association.

Thanks to all of you who presented sessions and participated in the poster session and to all of you who attended as well. It is always exciting to have so many interesting people sharing their ideas and experiences.



Enjoying some food and friends at the Crazy Cajun restaurant during the conference.

**2007
ISEA Officers**

President

Kiki Corry
Bat Conservation
International
kiki@corrywood.net

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Charlie Walter
Fort Worth Science
and History Museum
cwalter@fwmslh.org

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Tara Schultz
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tschultz@txstateaq.org

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The University of Texas
junkdeb@mail.utexas.edu

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Eunice Hefty
Consultant
nayann4@aol.com

Newsletter Editor

Amy Robertson
amymrobertson@verizon.net

Website Editor

Roger Stryker
Austin ISD
roger.stryker@earthlink.net

CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS

*Reflections and musings on the conference
submitted by first-time conference attendees and
scholarship recipients.*

*Dear ISEA Members,
As a first-timer at the annual
meeting, I was delighted to
discover a group of
professionals so dedicated to
making science education fun
and relevant to the real-world.
The meeting was a great
opportunity for me to connect
with people who are truly
passionate about their work. As
I left the meeting, I found myself
with a notebook full of valuable
thoughts and ideas I had*

*scribbled throughout the sessions—
some of which I will share with
others, some applicable to current
projects, while others pertain to
projects I hope to initiate in the
future. Thanks ISEA for expanding
my perspectives of the role of
informal educators!*

Jaime Cupit
Conservation Educator
Welder Wildlife Foundation

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT...

Greetings from soggy Austin! I can only imagine the rainy variations on the normal heat-avoiding summer offerings at the informal science locations across the state. After two and a half years (seems like forever and no time at all) at Texas State University, I have finished my Masters of Education and landed the Austin Educator position at Bat Conservation International. Although I was living in the formal realm, I was still staying busy with informals. I have been participating in Texas Environmental Education Advisory Committee (TEEAC) meetings, attended the National

Science Teacher Association Congress in San Antonio on behalf of ISEA, and have been working with Christy Youker in anticipation of receiving a funding from the Austin Community Foundation for *Out of the Classroom!*

Although I have been attending TEEAC meetings for a few years, it was just this summer we realized that as president of ISEA, I can be an official member without being appointed by a state board member. And in a flash I went from new member to incoming chair. One of the

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, CONT. FROM P.2

interesting new connections being made with environmental education, especially in the informal realm, is childhood obesity. Exploration in informal settings tends to require physical activity. We are working on a survey based on the physical education TEKS to show the health benefits of field trips to informal sites. It

will be interesting to see the results of the survey and where they take us.

NSTA congress was a terrific leadership training opportunity. I just hope I can implement some of what I learned to the benefit of ISEA.

*by Kiki Corry
Bat Conservation International*



**Visit ISEA
online**

www.
texasinformalscience
.org

OUT OF THE CLASSROOM!

Field Experiences and Great Resources for Middle School Designed by Teachers for Teachers

The Out of the Classroom! model of building authentic communities of learning between informal educators and teachers was begun in the Austin area with local funding in 2006. After expressed interest from informal educators in implementing more projects, ISEA recently partnered with the Texas Regional Collaboratives for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching (TRC) in a preliminary proposal to NSF to expand the program statewide and focus on the professional development of informal educators. *Out of the Classroom: A Community of Learning Professional Development Model for Informal Educators* is a proposed project designed to investigate how professional development for informal educators can effectively address the needs of local communities. The focus will

be to build a community of learning around the shared goal of identifying the strengths of informal institutions to address secondary science needs. We propose to invite 27 informal institutions from nine geographic areas over four years to work with teachers and scientists to design programs for secondary students in the STEM areas. We will provide leadership and professional development through our model, sharing of research, a website space and help in finding partners. The project team includes Christy Youker, PhD, Debbie Junk, PhD (Math Initiative Coordinator for TRC), Jim Barufaldi, PhD (Principal Investigator for TRC) and Amy Moreland, a doctoral student at the Univ. of Texas. We are excited about these future possibilities!



For more information, visit the Out of the Classroom Austin Area website <http://www.statweb.org/outoftheclassroom/> or contact Christy Youker at cyouker71@yahoo.com or Debbie Junk at junkdeb@mail.utexas.edu

NSTA CONGRESS UPDATE

For more information, visit NSTA's website:

www.nsta.org

National Science Teacher Association (NSTA) held its summer congress, "Charting a Course for the Year of Science" in San Antonio this year. Delegates at the congress were representatives from the state science teacher organizations and NSTA affiliates. Since ISEA is an affiliate of the Science Teacher's Association of Texas (STAT), rather than an affiliate of NSTA, Kiki Corry, president of ISEA, was there as an attendee only. But what an interesting and productive experience!

Five focus groups met to discuss science teaching issues such as teacher retention, science technology engineering and math (STEM), 21st century learning skills, and research based education. Kiki participated in the "Anchoring Science Content in the National Standards" focus group. What science content will really be important in the upcoming decades and how will that be expressed? The discussions of the focus groups were boiled down into resolutions that were presented to the congress. After the motions containing the resolutions were passed, they progressed to the NSTA council and then to the board.

While the NSTA council and board were meeting, the attendees and delegates attended workshops. These workshops, rather than the teacher-oriented ones you might expect at a conference, were for leadership. Topics such as getting published, using media, and budgeting were offered. Kiki attended parliamentary procedure 101, strategic planning, enhancing membership, and a roundtable discussion on pre-k programs.

All this work rested gracefully on the backdrop of the San Antonio River Walk. There was time in the evenings to stroll and shop and visit with old and new friends. And of course, how could science teachers gather in San Antonio and not go to Sea World? Even diehard classroom teachers can't resist the draw of an informal science experience. Although the skies opened up and poured rain, canceling the Shamu show, and making exploration rather soggy, great fun was had in the arcade using the game passes provided with dinner.

Kudos to Vanessa Westbrook and Tara Schulz for bringing this event to the attention of the ISEA board and suggesting that ISEA send someone.

MORE CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS

On Feb 28 through March 2, 2007, I had the honor to attend the Informal Science Education Association (ISEA) of Texas' 10th year conference in Port Aransas for the first time. I was a first-year scholarship recipient and had an absolutely phenomenal experience. I did not know what exactly to expect since this was my first professional conference ever, and not only was I a first-timer, but I also presented a poster there!



Conference attendees trying to keep their "boats" afloat during the icebreaker activity.



Sharing ideas through the poster session

The conference organizers and participants made it super easy to feel confident and at ease with my poster-presenting jitters. I appreciate the laid-back and personable atmosphere that ISEA created and left there with numerous professional contacts, interesting potential research projects, and some new friends! Conference highlights for me were: the panel 'round-table'

**Reflections by first-time conference attendee,
Amy Moreland
University of Texas at Austin**

session "What's in a Name?" with keynote speaker Dr. Elsa Bailey, the Hispanic student session with Dr. Eduardo Guevara, "Out of the Classroom" with Dr. Junk and Dr. Youker, and the evening bon-fire on the beach. I am the founder of the University of Texas at Austin's Informal Science Education Research Group (ISERG), so it was wonderful to enjoy this conference with professionals in the informal science field and 3 of my graduate student colleagues. My colleagues and I arrived there with a scant few dissertational ideas (due to UT's lack of emphasis in informal science education), and left there with more project ideas than we could possibly do in our lifetimes!



Get ready for ISEA's 11th annual conference next year in Fort Worth!

More info coming soon!

Linda, Eunice, Kiki and Tara at the registration table

ISEA is a proud
affiliate of:



Go to
[http://www.
statweb.org/
CASTAustin
/index.html](http://www.statweb.org/CASTAustin/index.html)
for more
information.

***Conference for the
Advancement of
Science Teaching,***

*"Celebrate the Past.
Imagine the Future"*

November 15-17, 2007

Austin, Texas

*Join us in Austin to
enhance your content
knowledge and expand
your understanding of
effective science
instruction while
participating in the
country's largest state
science conference.*

Join us at CAST 2008!

Wednesday, November 14

ISEA/TSELA Annual Reception (All ISEA Members are welcome!)
Austin Children's Museum, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 15 – Saturday, November 17

Visit us in the Exhibit Hall! Booth #319

PLUSHES! Add a plush toy or other goodies from your institution to our raffle!!
Kiki Corry is collecting them to build a large basket to raffle (tickets will be \$1.00).

Friday, November 16

ISEA Session Strand - See CAST program for locations

Workshops

9:00-10:15 a.m. ***Out of the Classroom***, *Christy Youker and Debbie Junk:*
Get a secondary teacher's look at community based science resources. Local
field experiences and other resources designed BY teachers FOR teachers.

2:00-3:15 p.m. ***It's Not Easy Being Green***—*Linda Kunze and Jennifer
Chapman, Caldwell Zoo:* Did you enjoy some chocolate today? Chew a
stick of gum? Sit at a wooden table? Without plants you couldn't have done
any of these things. This session will acquaint teachers with botany basics as
well as several fun, hands-on activities for an interdisciplinary study of
plants.

3:45-5:00 p.m. ***Wildlife for Sale: Wildlife Trade and Biodiversity***—*Casey
Harris, Frank Buck Zoo:* Examine our relationship with wildlife and how
wildlife trade affects biodiversity around the world. Confiscated illegal
wildlife products and live animals supplement hands-on activities.
Participants will be eligible to check out U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's
"Suitcase for Survival" resource loan kits.

Short Courses

8:00-11:00 a.m. ***Zoo-Matics***—*Jennifer Chapman and Linda Kunze,
Caldwell Zoo:* Tap into students' enthusiasm for animals, and focus it toward
designing, creating and studying zoos. This program concentrates on
intermediate and middle school students using zoos and animals to develop
analytical thinking skills through hands-on activities focusing on math with
an integration of science, economics, language arts, and map skills.

2:00-5:00 p.m. ***Awesome Astronomy for Educators***—*Janice Sturrock,
Genie Martin, and Jessica Gilzow, Austin Nature & Science Center:*
Educators engage in fun, effective, hands on activities that teach and
reinforce astronomy concepts. Themes include, "The Moon", "The Stars
and Planets", and "The Sun". Activities can be replicated with students,
handouts and "how to" instructions included.

We welcome your assistance with any of the ISEA CAST activities, especially
spending an hour or two at our exhibit booth. Contact Johnnie Smith at (361) 654-
1452 or jesmith@txstateaq.org to find out how you can help!

If you want to be part of the ISEA Strand at CAST 2009 in Fort Worth, please contact
Tara Schultz at (361) 881-1218 or tschultz@txstateaq.org.

Call for Nominations!

Join a dedicated group of individuals and contribute your talents to the ISEA Leadership! The ISEA Board of Directors consists of 10 At-large Members and the Executive Committee (President, Past President, President-elect, Secretary, and Treasurer). The Nominating Committee is now accepting nominations for At-large seats. At-large Members will serve a three-year term starting on January 1, 2008. Only At-Large Members are eligible to be nominated for Executive Committee positions.

All nominees will be asked to commit to the following to the best of their ability if elected:

- Attend the Fall Board retreat and at least one other regular Board meeting. Meetings are generally held in May, September, and January.
- Fully attend the annual conference. The 2008 conference is February 20-22 at Camp Carter in Fort Worth.
- Actively participate in committees or volunteer for specific tasks. Currently we are seeking individuals who have an interest in securing sponsorships and/or writing small grants.
- Actively participate in CAST via one or more of the following: assisting the CAST chair with preparations, assisting with the ISEA/TSELA reception, presenting an ISEA strand workshop or short course, and/or helping in the ISEA exhibit booth.

If you are interested in serving on the Board, please fill out the form below. You may also nominate fellow colleagues—please be certain the nominee is interested in serving. ISEA rotates members off each year and is committed to maintaining diversity in site representation and geographic location.

Please submit the form by mail, email, or fax to:
Tara Schultz, Nominating Committee Chair
2710 N. Shoreline Boulevard
Corpus Christi, TX 78402
tschultz@txstateaq.org
(361) 881-1257 (fax)

Deadline for nominations is October 15. For more information, please contact Tara at (361) 881-1218.

2008 ISEA Board of Directors Nomination Form

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Years ISEA member: _____ # ISEA conferences attended: _____

Nominated by: _____ Organization: _____

(Self nominations are encouraged)

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Qualifications of nominee (150 words or less):