Innovative Staff Members of CISD Serve as Speakers at TCEA Convention in Austin
By Nancy Longino

Several staff members of CISD were invited to be presenters at the Texas Computer Education Association's 28th Annual Convention & Exposition Feb. 4-8, 2008, in Austin at the Austin Convention Center. The TCEA annual five-day convention is recognized nationwide for its quality professional development opportunities, fun activities, and chances to meet and network with other education professionals. It is one of the largest educational technology conventions in the nation and the largest in Texas.

Julie Dillard, CISD's Technology Media Specialist joined forces with the creative teaching style of Nicole Hicks with a common goal of immersing technology into the day-to-day classroom instruction. They were proud to be asked to present the innovative technology used at Celeste schools. Mrs. Hicks, Celeste Junior High English teacher, shared projects she has incorporated in her classroom. Celeste network administrator Chris Johnston provided hardware support during the session. Superintendent Collin Clark said, "Mrs. Dillard and Mrs. Hicks represented Celeste very well. It was an honor for our teachers to share ideas with other Texas educators. What is most exciting is that CISD technology projects will be used in classrooms across the state!"

The presentation goal is to share educational technology with other educators to help inspire creative learning in the classroom, using today's creative technology abilities. The title of the presentation was 'Middle School Collaborative Technology Integration Projects'. Mrs. Hicks exhibited exciting teaching activities that she uses in her own classroom. She began with the epitaphs the students wrote about the history of the occupants of Lee Cemetery in Leonard, Texas. Another was based on the book The Call of the Wild, by Jack London where the kids dressed like characters in the novel and gave a character analysis, cooked Alaskan dishes or designed a book cover for the novel. In the fall they enjoyed the Haunted House project where the students chose a real-life haunted house and wrote fictional stories based on reality and created a class book. They then had to re-create or build the house using various supplies. In the end, the demonstration proved how much fun and creative teaching and learning can be using various software programs, such as Microsoft Photo Story 3, Windows Movie Maker, and Audacity in middle school collaborative cross-curriculum projects. "TCEA is one of the largest educational technology conventions in the nation, and it was such fun to be able to share with other educators; innovative technology for the classroom is a must," said Nicole Hicks.