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### Actions Taken by the Board of Directors

The TCEA board of directors met in a regular, scheduled meeting on Jan. 14-15 and took the following actions:

- Approved the appointment of Lee Sleeper as the replacement for incoming president Lacey Gosch effective April 1, 2011.
- Approved the appointment of David Jacobson as the replacement for VP-Records and Finance Lee Sleeper effective April 1, 2011.
- Appointed a standing Strategic Long-Range Planning Committee to discuss and plan for the future needs of the organization.
- Approved a partnership with Learning.com to provide a free technology literacy assessment for all Texas eighth grade students.

### QR Huh? What the Heck Are QR Codes?

By Steven W. Anderson

I was a little surprised when I saw these QR codes all over the Black Friday ads back in November. A [QR or Quick Response Code](#) is a 3D barcode. It's a much more sophisticated version of the barcode found on a bag of potato chips or a soft drink. QR codes are popping up everywhere and are gaining in popularity in education.

To use a QR code, you need three things: a device that has a camera so you can scan or take a picture of the code, a program to do the decoding, and web access to see where the code takes you. This limits you to cell phones and the new iPod touch. (You could use a computer and a scanner, but we are going for mobility here.)



### Upcoming Events

["Lunch and Learn: Digital Citizenship and Internet Safety" webinar](#) - Jan. 19

["Presenting Successfully at Convention 2011" webinar](#) - Jan. 19

["Leading with the iPad" workshop \(Area 4\)](#) - Jan. 20

["What's My Membership Worth?" webinar](#) - Jan. 24

["21st Century Learning with Thinkfinity: Language Arts" webinar](#) - Jan. 24

["Assessing Technology Literacy in Staff and Students" webinar](#) - Jan. 25

["Lunch and Learn: Tech Apps Tools for Everyone" webinar](#) - Jan. 26

["Presenting Successfully at Convention 2011" webinar](#) - Jan. 26

["Legislative Update" webinar](#) - Jan. 27

["Presenting Successfully at Convention 2011" webinar](#) - Jan. 27

["Surviving and Thriving at Convention 2011" webinar](#) - Jan. 31

["Presenting Successfully at Convention 2011"](#)

## Apps

You will need a reader installed on your phone. There are lots to choose from and most are free. For the iPhone, [NeoReader](#) seems to be the most popular. On Android, the [Barcode Scanner from Zxing](#) is very popular. But NeoReader works on most Android phones as well. There are other apps, too, for non-smart phones. Just do a Google search for your phone and "qr code reader" and you should come up with something.

The biggest question I have gotten about using QR codes in the classroom is "What do I do if my students don't have mobile devices?" Not to worry! Many of the ways I have been thinking about using them don't involve mobile devices at all.

I threw together a [short screencast](#) with a couple of ideas on how to use a desktop QR reader. You can download the desktop [QR Code reader here](#). Again, it is very easy to use and, since Adobe Air will run on just about any platform, you can install it on just about any computer.

## Why A QR Code

Because QR codes can contain up to 4,000 characters of information, you can put a ton of information in just one code. For example, it could be something as simple as a web address. So if you scan the code at the top of this post, you will get the address for my blog. QR codes are also beginning to appear on business cards because, again, they can contain lots more information. But by far their most popular use is for web addresses. The ads I mentioned earlier all contained codes to sales information that didn't appear in the ad or on the regular website. Another place I have seen them is at our local zoo. You can walk up to the exhibit, scan the code, and get more information about the animals and even video and audio. (Great for those times when the animals aren't active.)

QR codes definitely have the cool factor. Get your mobile device, scan, and be taken away to the magical world of the Internet to get some great information. Are they a necessary teaching tool? Probably not, but neither is most of what we use in education today. But they are another tool to use. QR codes are taking off, evident by their growing presence in advertisements and other places. Sure, it will take some time for them to become mainstream. One question I got was are students using these now. I don't think so, but they are poised to hit things like console games. Think about it. Your game comes with this funky black and white box with the directions to scan. When you do, you get a secret cheat code, or a code to unlock some part of the game you can only access by scanning the code. Pretty cool, huh?

## Creating QR Codes

There are lots of different websites that will allow you to make QR codes. One of my favorite is from [Kaywa](#). Simply drop in the website you want the user to be directed to (or other information like general text, phone number, or SMS message), click Generate, and BANG! a QR code you can embed or print anywhere.

## Ideas for Education

There is a lot of great information out there on using QR codes in education. Here is just a sampling:

- [Interesting Ways to Use QR Codes in the Classroom](#)
- [Using QR Codes to Tell a Story](#)
- [Using QR Codes in Student Projects](#)
- You could put QR codes on the front of books. Kids can create podcasts of book reviews, video trailers, etc. Then, in different places in the library, stations can be set up so the students may scan the code and get the information. No mobile device is needed; just use a dedicated workstation with a QR reader app and a webcam.
- Many schools have welcome videos or messages from the administrator (or

[webinar](#) - Feb. 1

["Cool Tools and Trends: Resources for Special Needs Students" webinar](#) - Feb. 1

["Surviving and Thriving at Convention 2011" webinar](#) - Feb. 2

## Quick Links

[Free Google SketchUp Pro Licenses](#)

[Thinkfinity Resources for the Classroom](#)

## Websites for February

Black History Month:

- [Black History Month resources](#)
- [Black History in America interactive](#)
- [African American Inventors](#)
- [NAACP Historical Timeline](#)
- [Celebrate Black History](#)
- [In Motion: The African American Migration Experience](#)
- [African American World](#)
- [Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database](#)

Valentine's Day:

- [Valentine's Day Is Today! activities](#)
- [Valentine's Day Math](#)
- [Happy Valentine's Day from PBS Kids](#)
- [Make a Valentine Interactive Story](#)
- [Valentine's Day from the History Channel](#)
- [Are You a Green Valentine?](#)

better yet, ones that kids have made) that many times live on the web. What if you put a QR code on all your letterhead, school cards, even on in a permanent location in the front of your building? Anyone could scan your code and get an overview of what your building is all about.

- I could see desktop scanners being placed all over a school for a beginning-of-the-year scavenger hunt or even just a "Getting to Know Your Building." Set up a desktop scanner at all the locations (library, office, guidance, gym, etc) and in the student handbook or a handout, have all the codes for those locations. The codes could be for websites for more information about the location or just text about the location.
- I created a [Livebinder](#) full of more ideas, applications, and resources.

Take some time and read up on QR codes. Even if you don't have the devices for your students to use, it is still worth knowing about. Or maybe your students have cell phones you could sneak and use for a lesson. I promise; I won't tell anyone.

*[Steven Anderson](#) is currently a district instructional technologist working with district and school administrators on how to harness the power of technology to enhance learning in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools of North Carolina.*

## TCEA 2011 Update: Webinars for Attendees and Presenters



TCEA is offering two free-to-all webinars to ensure your convention experience is fantastic. The first of these, "Presenting Successfully at Convention 2011," is for those presenting a session or workshop at the conference. Find out how to better engage your audience and use back channels for discussion.

Session dates and times are:

- [Jan. 19](#) at 3:30 p.m.
- [Jan. 26](#) at 3:00 p.m.
- [Jan. 27](#) at 3:00 p.m.
- [Feb. 1](#) at 10:00 a.m.

The second webinar being offered is "Surviving and Thriving at Convention 2011" and is designed for all attendees. Find out what's new this year, the can't miss events to attend, and how to navigate the huge Austin Convention Center. Session dates and times are:

- [Jan. 31](#) at 3:00 p.m.
- [Feb. 2](#) at 3:00 p.m.
- [Feb. 3](#) at 3:30 p.m.
- [Feb. 4](#) at 9:30 a.m.

If you cannot attend a webinar during the time that it is offered live, please register anyway. We will email you a link after the webinar is over so you can listen to the recorded version at your leisure.

Not attending the convention? Keep up with all the TCEA 2011 happenings by following us on Twitter @TCEA or on Facebook.

## TCEA 2011 App Now Available

The app for convention is now available for all types of smart phones. For the iPhone, you may search for TCEA2011 in the iTunes Store. For the Droid, click [here](#). For all other smart phones, click [here](#).

- [Punny Valentine Talking Story](#)

Presidents' Day:

- [Teaching Abraham Lincoln](#)
- [A Word Fitly Spoken: An Interactive Timeline of Lincoln's Most Famous Speeches](#)
- [Abraham Lincoln's Crossroads](#)
- [Washington Crossing the Delaware interactive](#)
- [What Made George Washington a Good Military Leader? unit](#)

## Don't Forget to Volunteer at Convention

All TCEA 2011 attendees are encouraged to volunteer during the convention. Shifts are short to allow you to maximize your time learning. Take an active role and see the behind-the-scenes action at the largest educational technology conference in the southwest! All volunteers receive a t-shirt and are entered for a chance to win one of the daily door prizes. Sign up [here](#).

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

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Texas Computer Education Association