

NEA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR VISITS TEXAS • INCLUSION • TSTA CONVENTION UPDATE

Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

Winter 2011-12

What is success?

Three teachers give their answers

Finland schools' secret strategy

Hint: It involves trusting and respecting educators

Budget fallout

Schools struggle to meet kids' needs



The fresh **vitality** of youth

As you have noticed, the cover of this magazine features a photo of Montserrat Garibay, a young leader who not only represents the future of public education in Texas but also the future of TSTA. **By Rita Haecker, TSTA President**



tirelessly — both in the classroom and in their TSTA local associations — to make a difference. You can read some of their stories in this issue of the Advocate.

Our younger members bring youthful enthusiasm to our classrooms, along with fresh perspectives and new ways to tackle old and emerging problems. They are doing so during one of the most difficult and challenging budgetary periods faced by public schools in decades.

TSTA's more experienced members must help and encourage our up-and-coming leaders. No one is trying to shove seniority aside. We veterans have invaluable experience, and we must find opportunities to share our knowledge, honed through years in the public education, union, and political arenas, with our younger counterparts.

We experienced members must recruit our younger colleagues for TSTA membership and be receptive to their new ideas. Our organization must be dynamic, not to blindly embrace change merely for change's sake, but to increase our membership, advance our professionalism, improve the Texas public education system, and enhance our students' opportunities.

Our goal of offering a sound education to our students in a safe and healthy environment — and getting them to and from campus safely — remains the same. But technology has transformed the way our students learn, and our young generation of tech-savvy teachers is at the forefront of these changes. These teachers are not afraid to embrace new ideas and ways of doing things, and we more experienced professionals must encourage and mentor them.

Teachers and other educators know as well as anyone that the future of our state is in our classrooms today. The future of those classrooms is increasingly in the hands of our younger teachers. And so is the future of our profession.

By working cooperatively and blending the wisdom of experience with the fresh vitality of youth, we will assure a strong future for Texas' public schools and for TSTA.

As teachers and education support professionals, we at TSTA play an important role in providing Texas school children the opportunity for a successful future. We also must assure a strong future for our own organization.

TSTA is blessed with hard-working, experienced members and leaders who contribute much to public education and to the professional advancement of our fellow teachers and support staffers. But there are also plenty of opportunities for our younger members to become active participants in our "leadership pipeline," our route to continued success.

I applaud Montserrat, a bilingual pre-kindergarten teacher in Austin ISD, and her young colleagues who already are working



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1 NEA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPENDS A WEEK TOURING TEXAS

John Stocks, who became the executive director of the National Education Association on Sept. 1, visited schools and met with members on what he called a “listening tour” of West and South Texas during October. He was accompanied on the trip by TSTA President Rita Haecker, Vice President Noel Candelaria, and Executive Director Richard Kouri. See page 25 for more photos from the tour, courtesy of Miguel Gonzalez, NEA Public Relations.

2 PRESIDENT OBAMA MEETS TSTA PRESIDENT

On Nov. 1, TSTA President Rita Haecker was one of 11 NEA leaders who met with President Obama in the White House to discuss the American Jobs Act (AJA). AJA will provide funds to retain and hire educators, rebuild schools, and keep America moving forward toward educational and economic success.

3 LOYA UNOPPOSED IN NEA DIRECTOR ELECTION

The filing deadline for NEA Director for Texas, Place 2, was Sept. 15, 2011; this NEA term will run Sept. 1, 2012 through Aug. 31, 2015.

Evelina Loya, a member of Garland Education Association, is unopposed in her bid for a second term in this position.



4 WEBSITE PROMOTES ONLINE SAFETY

NEA Health Information Network has launched bnetsavvy, a website with resources, tools, and insights that can be used to promote safe and smart Internet behaviors. Check it out at www.neahin.org/bnetsavvy.



5 ESKELSEN JOINS PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMISSION

In October, NEA Vice President Lily Eskelsen was sworn in as a member of the Presidential Advisory Commission for the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. The commission will advise President Obama on educational attainment of Hispanic students. See www.nea.org/home/48692.htm for more information.

6 WHAT'S NEW AT THE NEA ACADEMY?

The NEA Academy, www.neaacademy.org, offers the best in online continuing education and Master's degrees that will fit your budget, your schedule, and your life. Among the programs you can find there:

- Tuition assistance for laid-off NEA members. Walden University offers qualified members a 50 percent tuition reduction on their first term when they enroll in the M.S. in Education or the M.S. in Instructional Design and Technology program, plus an additional 10 percent tuition savings on the remaining portion of their program.

- A free 1.5-hour course on managing asthma in the school environment that

addresses the causes, signs, and symptoms; triggers; key elements of asthma control; and strategies for creating asthma-friendly schools.

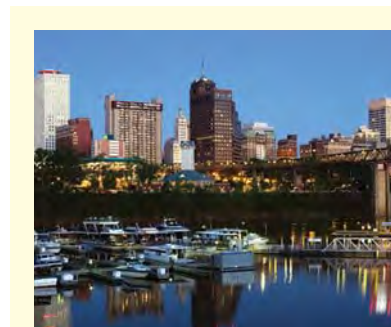
- Strategies for classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to use in working with students of limited English proficiency — a five-hour course for \$69.

7 HOW ARE THE BUDGET CUTS IMPACTING YOU?

Tell us how the budget cuts

are affecting your school and your classroom. We know many programs and opportunities for students have been lost this year. Help us compile a list of how budget cuts are impacting Texas' schools.

We need to help legislators and the public understand. Email your stories to debbiem@tsta.org. (We are also still looking for two other kinds of stories: How you have made a difference in the life of a student and local organizing successes.)



10 ESP MEMBERS TO MEET IN MEMPHIS

The 2012 NEA Education Support Professionals Conference will be March 9-11 at the Marriott Memphis Downtown Hotel. You'll leave with the skills needed to build stronger locals; you'll learn how to forge strong internal and external relationships, organize members, and help them have a positive influence on student achievement. www.nea.org/grants/31430.htm

8 BECAUSE 'NEWS' AND 'QUARTERLY' DON'T MESH

For the latest news about education and the association, please check our website at www.tsta.org.

You also can follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/txstateteachers> and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/texasstateteachersassociation.

9 IF YOU PLAN YOUR VACATIONS AROUND THE RA

The NEA Representative Assembly (RA) is the largest democratic deliberative assembly in the world. During the RA, some 9,000 delegates from state and local affiliates gather to set policy and chart the direction of NEA. Here's where the RA meets for the next eight summers:

- 2012: Washington, D.C.
- 2013: Atlanta, Georgia
- 2014: Denver, Colorado
- 2015: Miami Beach, Florida
- 2016: Washington, D.C.
- 2017: Boston, Massachusetts
- 2018: Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 2019: Houston, Texas

Election 2012: Time for accountability

**TSTA Public Affairs Director
Ed Martin, Nov. 3, 2011**

The campaigns are underway, and the political pundits are keeping score every night on cable TV, but for educators, Election 2012 is not about the politicians, it's about us. Most voters will go to the polls to vote for a Presidential candidate, but this election is about much more than that. It's also about our students, our classrooms, and stopping the assault on our public schools.

The stakes have never been higher. For the first time in over 60 years, the Governor and the legislative majority failed to meet the state's legal responsibility to provide enough state funds to cover projected school enrollment. They left \$6 billion sitting unspent in a Rainy Day Fund while shortchanging local schools by over \$5.3 billion.

The legislative cuts carried a harmful punch. Thousands of teachers were laid off with even more layoffs expected next year. Local districts have requested waivers to allow over 5,000 crowded classrooms to exceed class size limits. And the new STAAR test will add an even greater standardized testing burden at a time teachers need more freedom to teach and help students learn. And, in 2013, we expect an assault on the Teacher Retirement System pension fund.

Teachers and public school employees are in a unique position to make a candidate's record on public education the defining issue in legislative and local school board elections. Over 500,000 teachers and public school employees are woven into the fabric of every Texas community, and our voices can command the attention of friends, family, and voters.

It's our responsibility to make sure voters understand that over \$5 billion in education cuts had a direct and harmful impact on our children's classrooms. Democracy requires citizens to hold elected officials accountable for their actions. On behalf of our students, their parents, and our fellow educators, 2012 is the time for the same kind of accountability at the ballot box that politicians demand from teachers in the classroom. We cannot afford to remain silent.

Candidate Perry vs. Gov. Perry on teacher jobs

**TSTA Public Affairs Specialist
Clay Robison, Oct. 20, 2011**

Last spring, Rick Perry, the governor of Texas, gave school teachers the back of his hand as he presided over more than \$5 billion in education budget cuts. Teachers were losing jobs, but budget cuts were Perry's first priority, even as enrollment in Texas' public schools was increasing by 80,000 or 85,000 a year.

Now, Rick Perry, the Republican presidential candidate, is claiming another viewpoint for the national media.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram story linked below is another report about how Perry's slash-and-burn approach to budget-writing is undermining his claim to be a champion "job creator."

Among other things, it points out that public sector jobs have grown at a faster rate than private sector jobs during Perry's nearly 11 years as governor and that the loss in August of 11,500 jobs in local government, including schools, was a major factor in raising Texas' unemployment rate to 8.5 percent.

Most of this has been reported before, but the article also found a quote from Perry, the national candidate, explaining (believe it or not) that population growth requires more teachers in the public schools.

According to the article, the governor said on CNBC: "Well, our teachers in Texas are public employees. So we've had a huge influx of people into the state of Texas. So you have to have more teachers, obviously, to do that as well."

Obviously.

Unfortunately, Perry and the legislative majority deliberately chose to ignore the obvious last spring, when they were imposing the deep budget cuts on Texas' public schools.

TSTA doesn't have a running count of how many Texas teachers have lost their jobs so far under Perry's anti-education budget. But the well-respected Center for Public Policy Priorities believes that as many as 49,000 school jobs, including teachers, may be lost by this time next year. Meanwhile, enrollment in Texas public schools will have grown by 170,000 kids since the governor signed the budget. <http://bit.ly/vwnOKo>

Perry security, a growth industry

**TSTA Public Affairs Specialist
Clay Robison, Oct. 3, 2011**

While school districts and most state agencies are struggling with billions of dollars in Rick Perry budget cuts, one group of state employees is spending more taxpayer dollars, lots more. This would be the governor's state-paid security detail. Perry has long exercised his fondness for travel at someone else's expense, but the tab is rapidly increasing now that he is crisscrossing the country, running for president.

Perry for years has used political funds to pay for his own travel expenses, and that practice continues. But Texas taxpayers always have paid for his Department of Public Safety bodyguards, and they still are. According to a recent article in the Hous-

ton Chronicle and San Antonio Express-News, the taxpayer-paid cost for security for Perry and/or his wife for out-of-state trips since his re-election 11 months ago exceeds \$364,000.

That covers 38 trips in all, including a family vacation to the Bahamas, economic development and book promotion tours and, more recently, presidential campaigning. The last eight trips covered by the article, which included Perry's first several campaign trips to South Carolina, Iowa and New Hampshire, accounted for \$70,869 of the total. The amount already is outdated by thousands of dollars and will continue to escalate.

The governor obviously needs security. But should the taxpayers have to continue paying for his security on presidential campaign trips? Or, should Perry reimburse the state from his political contributions? In a blog posting, an editorial writer for The Dallas Morning News wrote that since the governor is seeking another office, "a strong argument could be made that his campaign should foot the bill."

While the high-flying Perry has been running up his security costs, he, of course, has been demanding that mere mortals make do with less. He demanded deep budget cuts from the Legislature in education, health care and other important programs and signed the worst public education budget in Texas of his lifetime. It slashed \$5.4 billion from public schools and, with it, many educator jobs.

Compared to cuts that deep, \$364,000 may not seem like much. But it could help a school district, such as Dallas ISD, which lost more than 1,000 teachers and other employees since the last school year, start rehiring. You could pay about seven teachers for a year for \$364,000 (based on Texas' average teacher pay), and you could pay many more with the huge security tab the governor will have rung up by the time the presidential nominating season is over next spring.

President Obama will visit Dallas tomorrow to promote his new jobs plan, which could mean at least \$191.6 million for Dallas ISD. Perry opposes it.

The Department of Public Safety has fought the public release of information about Perry's security expenses. And, three months ago, the Texas Supreme Court ruled that DPS need only report the bottom line. The details of how the money actually is spent can now remain secret.

DPS argued security concerns, although I believe the agency was more concerned about being embarrassed by publicity over how extravagant some of the expenses can be.

Two years ago, for example, Perry traveled to Israel to accept a "Defender of Jerusalem" award from a political supporter. Security for that five-day trip cost more than \$70,000. Many school districts can hire two teachers for a year for that amount. The tab included \$17,000 for the bodyguards' rooms at the King David Hotel and nearly \$13,000 for their food. That would buy a lot of school lunches. <http://bit.ly/vMaqBK>

Putting school kids' health and safety at risk

**TSTA Public Affairs Specialist
Clay Robison, Oct. 10, 2011**

More than our children's academic opportunities are jeopardized by the budget cuts forced upon school districts by Gov. Rick Perry and the legislative majority. Our kids' health and safety also are at risk.

Here are two examples coming to my attention. The first involves cafeteria workers in San Antonio ISD, and the second is about overcrowded school buses in Northeast ISD, another San Antonio district.

SAISD cafeteria workers are now required to double up as custodial workers, raising

the threat of food contamination and serious illnesses being spread in the district's cafeterias.

In addition to preparing and serving food, the food service employees also are cleaning and mopping the cafeterias and hauling garbage bags and trash bins to the dumpsters. They are doubling up because the budget-strapped school district (that's a redundant description these days) tried to save money by cutting custodial positions.

The San Antonio Alliance, TSTA's local affiliate, has filed a grievance against the district on behalf of the workers, who also risk on-the-job injuries for heavy lifting, pulling and pushing, which they didn't sign on to perform

The most critical health risk, however, may involve the students who eat in the cafeterias each school day. With extra duties to perform, even the most-conscientious and careful cafeteria workers may occasionally get in too big of a hurry to perform adequate sanitation. And, SAISD may be one skipped hand-washing away from a bunch of sick kids.

As outlined in the TV story linked below, buses in Northeast ISD are so crowded that some students have to sit on the floor, endangering their safety and even their lives in the event of an accident. Despite the pleas of parents and other safety advocates, the Legislature has never seen fit to order seat belts on most school buses, much less prohibit overcrowding. Districts were supposed to install belts on new buses, but the state cut the funding.

Now, heaven forbid, Northeast ISD is one bus wreck away from a potential disaster.

Budget cuts have real-life consequences, folks. The governor and legislative majority can pretend they don't, but school employees — and school kids — know better. <http://bit.ly/w27fLw>



When students' needs take **second place**

When it comes to class size, especially in the elementary grades, more is less. More students per class means less time for a teacher to give each child the individual attention so crucial to helping the child develop strong learning skills. **By Clay Robison**

This is why the Legislature in 1984, as part of the landmark public education overhaul known as House Bill 72, enacted a law setting a cap on the student-teacher ratio in each kindergarten through fourth grade class at 22-1. That cap has been credited with helping to raise student test scores and other educational improvements and, 27 years later, remains overwhelmingly popular with parents and teachers alike.

Due to the work of TSTA and other public education advocates, the 22-1 limit survived a strong assault from short-sighted legislators (and many school administrators) during the budget-slashing legislative sessions earlier this year and, technically, remains on the books. Nevertheless, several

thousand K-4 classes throughout the state have shot through the 22-1 ceiling.

The media has been full of reports of primary classes as large as 24, 25, 26, or more. One Houston-area teacher, in a posting on the TSTA Facebook page, said his kindergarten class had 28 kids.

This year, of course, is not the first time K-4 classes have exceeded 22 students. From the day the limit became law, the Legislature has allowed school districts to seek waivers for such reasons as lack of classroom space or an inability to hire enough qualified teachers. And waiver requests, which have

been routinely granted by the Texas Education Agency, have been increasing in recent years.

But this year, the number of waiver requests may have set a record. Although that is disheartening to many educators and unfair to thousands of young students, it should come as no surprise, following the enactment of the worst public education budget in Texas in more than 60 years.

Gov. Rick Perry and the legislative majority cut \$4 billion from the state's financial obligations to school districts, approving an appropriation that doesn't cover the 170,000 new kids expected to enroll in Texas' public schools over the next two years. And they cut another \$1.4 billion from public education grants for such programs as full-day pre-kindergarten, while leaving \$6.5 billion of the taxpayers' money unspent in the emergency Rainy Day Fund.

While leaving 22-1 ostensibly intact, the governor and legislators passed the buck for dealing with the impact of the budget cuts to local school districts and the Texas Education Agency. State Education Commissioner Robert Scott then made it even easier for districts to get waivers from 22-1 by adding a new waiver provision — "financial hardship."

By the time the Advocate went to press, 242 school districts, almost one-fifth of the state's total, had filed waiver requests with TEA. That compared to 168 districts during the 2010-11 school year and 144 in 2009-10. Some districts filed for waivers for multiple classes.

Altogether, some 5,243 classes were included in the waiver requests. That was double the number of classes for which waivers were granted in 2010-11. By press time, TEA had approved the vast majority of waiver requests, rejecting

some class size changes in only a handful of districts. And there is no limit, under a waiver, to how large an individual K-4 class can grow.

According to media reports, Houston ISD was seeking waivers for more than 1,000 K-4 classes: Northside ISD in San Antonio, 440; and Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, about 300. Elsewhere, Denton ISD was seeking waivers for 83 classes; Tyler ISD, 81; Victoria ISD, 43; Abilene ISD, 101; and Keller ISD, 61.

Even a relatively small district, River Road ISD in Amarillo, filed for waivers for seven classes — three in kindergarten, three in first grade and one in third grade.

Altogether, some 5,243 classes were included in the waiver requests. That was double the number of classes for which waivers were granted in 2010-11.

And the number of classes larger than 22-1 may continue to increase. Districts can apply for additional exemptions throughout the school year if their enrollments grow.

Patrick M. Self, a fourth grade teacher at Andre Elementary School in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD and a member of Cy Fair TSTA/NEA, greeted 27 students on the first day of the fall semester. They included a number of English as a Second Language (ESL) students and six special education students of varying degrees of disability.

"It was a struggle just to manage that many kids in a room," he said, noting

that he often felt like he was babysitting more than teaching. He even had to borrow chairs from another classroom for every child to have a seat.

"It was very difficult. It was very hard to put them into groups because they were at so many different (learning) levels," he added. "There were days when I just had to pick which group I was going to work with."

Consequently, the other kids didn't get the attention they needed that day.

Six weeks into the semester, Cy-Fair hired an additional teacher for Andre, and Self's class was reduced to 22, including the six special education students. He is assisted with the special education kids by a paraprofessional but continues to have his hands full.

Self, nevertheless, considers himself "kind of lucky" because many other K-4 teachers in the district still have larger classes. Cy-Fair, as noted above, is seeking about 300 class-size waivers from the state.

Legislators and school superintendents looking for an excuse to retreat on 22-1 often claim there is nothing "magical" about a class size of 22. But they ignore the experiences of teachers, such as Self, and research that repeatedly has shown that the smaller the class, the better the student outcomes on such measurements as test scores and eventual college enrollment.

In one of the most frequently cited studies, the Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) study conducted in Tennessee in the 1980s, students in kindergarten through third grade who were assigned to small classes were found to outperform their classmates assigned to larger classes. Black students, economically disadvantaged students, and boys benefitted the most from the smaller classes in that study.

A more recent, follow-up study found that students assigned to small classes at the beginning of elementary school were more likely to be enrolled in college at age 20.

Research also has indicated that the greatest academic benefit is realized when students, particularly disadvantaged students, are placed in small classes in the earliest grades.

The Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) also conducted research strongly indicating that 22-1 has been a positive factor in student and school performances in Texas.

According to TEPSA, the number of class size waivers granted in 2007-08 per campus was in direct inverse proportion to the state accountability rating of that campus. In other words, the higher rated campuses received fewer waivers to the 22-1 cap. TEPSA derived its finding from the TEA Regional and District Level Report to the 2009 Legislature.

TEPSA found that only about 10 percent of “exemplary” campuses asked for and received waivers allowing larger class sizes, compared to 40 percent of lower-ranked “recognized” campuses and 50 percent of the even lower-ranked “academically acceptable” campuses.

Not only do more waivers mean weakened educational opportunities for Texas’ youngest students, they also mean fewer job opportunities and more layoffs for K-4 teachers.

TSTA doesn’t yet know how many teachers and other school employees have lost their jobs as a result of the state budget cuts. The Center for Public Policy Priorities, a well-respected, Austin-based think tank with expertise in state budgetary issues, has projected the loss of as many as 49,000 school jobs by the time the second round of budget reductions takes effect in 2012-

13. Some school districts will suffer even deeper budget cuts then, and Texas will lose \$830 million in emergency, federal education funds that saved many educator jobs this year.

Consequently, the number of 22-1 waivers may increase next year.

Meanwhile, increasing class sizes in K-4 is not the only bite financially challenged districts are taking out of the classroom. High school and middle school classes also are larger in some districts, and teachers’ work schedules are more crowded.

According to one TV news report, at least one high school in Houston ISD, which is struggling with an \$80 million loss of state funding, began the fall semester with more than 100 additional students and 19 fewer teachers. Consequently, there were classes with more than 40 students, although the principal denied reports that some students in packed classrooms were sitting on the floor.

Dallas ISD shed more than 1,000 employees over the summer, many through early retirement, so the district could save money by increasing class sizes in middle and high schools.

Staff cuts in Arlington ISD have forced high school teachers to teach extra courses while getting less conference time.

Gareth Gingell, a science teacher at Langham Creek High School in Cypress-Fairbanks, said his classes have increased by about five students each this year. The largest is now 35.

“We have to do more group work. And it has cut down on the ability to do labs because we don’t have enough equipment for all the people,” he said. “It’s just much more difficult to meet the needs of individual students.”

Clay Robison is TSTA’s public affairs specialist.

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What is success?

Three Austin teachers talk about how they define success in their classrooms and how they overcome obstacles to achieve it. **By Clay Robison**



MONTSERRAT GARIBAY

When you teach a pre-kindergarten class of 4-year-olds, success requires patience, and it must be measured in small steps. But it can be memorable.

“When they start pre-K, many of my students have never been to school. They can’t even hold a pencil. They don’t know any letters. They don’t know any shapes. They don’t know any colors. And a lot of them don’t have social skills,” said Montserrat Garibay, a bilingual teacher at Austin ISD’s Lucy Read Pre-kindergarten Demonstration School.

Her students, all native Spanish speakers, face the additional challenge of learning English.

Some of the first things the young children learn are how to share and use words to communicate with one another and with their teacher.

“They’re not fighting anymore. They’re listening,” Garibay said of her latest group of charges, several weeks into the fall semester. “Half of my class is starting to write their names. It’s going to be a wonderful year.”

Her school days can run as long as 10 hours; part of her weekend is devoted to class preparation; and the threat of budget cuts is never very far away. But she knows what she is doing is making a positive difference in young lives, and sometimes she is rewarded with a personal reminder.

She teared up when she recalled running into a former student, now a sixth-grader, at a neighborhood store.

“He said that he was learning a lot. He was one of the kids who were struggling with behavior (in pre-K). So it was very nice to see he was very communicative, was very well mannered,” she said. “I think that pre-K really works.”

It works because of Garibay and other dedicated teachers like her.

Now in her ninth year in the classroom, Garibay, a member of Education Austin, begins each school year by reaching out and recruiting the assistance of parents, few of whom speak English themselves but they value the opportunity she gives their children.

She spent the first two weeks of this school year making home visits to the parents of her 20 students.

“Home visits are very important to build good relationships with the parents,” she said. “In pre-K, I think that it’s essential that they trust me; they know I’m the teacher and that we’re going to work together.”

She also invites parents to activities at the school, and she reaches into her own pocket to pay for learning tools that AISD doesn’t provide and many of the parents can’t afford.

Her students, for example, have a garden outside the classroom. Garibay planned to purchase the dirt, seeds, and plants herself.

“It’s important to me for the parents to come (see the garden). If they don’t have the money, it doesn’t matter. I just want them to be here,” she said. “So I tend to just put (in) the five, 10, 20, or 40 dollars.”

Pre-kindergarten is credited with building an early foundation that keeps the low-income and English-learning children it serves in school, rather than dropping out, in the later grades.

Garibay doesn’t know how many of her early students, who are now teenagers, are still in school. But, she said, many parents have told her they were grateful their children went to pre-K because now they are happy and excited about school.

“When they leave pre-K, I am very happy that a lot of them know the very basics, and they know how to behave, and they know how to ask a question. To me, that’s very important,” the teacher said.

“A lot of the kids that end up dropping (out of school)...never had a good foundation....If they like school and they’re excited about it, they’re going to keep going, no matter what.”

Garibay admitted that the state budget-cutting last spring, including the loss of grants for full-day pre-K, was “very, very scary” for her and other pre-K teachers. She is grateful that Austin ISD found other funds to keep the full-day program, but she pointed out the district is still struggling with budgetary problems.

“We don’t know what’s going to happen. We need to educate our peers and educate our community and really empower the parents to speak up and say, ‘Pre-K is important,’” she said.

“We need to invest in our (next) generation right now while they are young and ready to learn.”

IAN GRAYSON

For Ian Grayson, teaching is the “family business.”

“My father was a teacher. My mother is still a teacher. My mother’s sisters, most of them are teachers. My dad’s father was a teacher. It’s just something that kind of happens,” he said.

Grayson, an Education Austin member, teaches U.S. history and economics at Austin High School. He believes the road to success is not reciting answers for his students to memorize but teaching them how to find the answers by thinking through what they know.

“Someone asks you a question, you don’t answer it. You start teaching them how to learn the answer themselves,” he explained. “Teaching for me has al-

ways been a joy. It’s always been really fun, as stressful as it gets.”

Grayson enjoys telling students they have answered a question correctly and watching their eyes “pop up” as if they don’t believe it.

“If we could all get it right the first time, we wouldn’t need school,” he said. “It’s not me giving them the information so they can answer correctly. It’s me showing them how they can apply their own understanding to it (a question) and come up with the correct answer.”

Grayson believes the period of American history that his students find most interesting is the 1920s, including Prohibition and a changing culture. Thanks to the emergence of radio advertising, it was the first time that youth became a target demographic.

“The automobile and the radio made teenagers and people in their 20s mobile, and it changed their social interactions and their social dynamic,” he said. “They started to become the culture of the demographic that was looked at as the ‘cool’ group or the one that was ‘in’ at that moment. So the kids really kind of get into that.”

Standardized test scores indicate Grayson is successful at what he does, but he realizes it may be years before a fuller measure of his efforts can be determined.

“I don’t think they (students) are really going to understand and appreciate the need to apply what they learn here until they are truly adults and they have to function in our society as such,” he said. “At this point they’re just absorbing it all, and I’m doing my best to plant seeds so they’ll grow into something meaningful in 10 years, when they realize how much their parents really did (know).”

MARIA REYNA MENDOZA

Maria Reyna Mendoza, part educator, part social worker, and last year’s Teacher of the Year at Andrews Elementary School in Austin ISD, ex-



presses a lot of warmth for her mostly low-income students. She has been known to find coats and purchase socks for her third-graders and, sometimes, even make home visits.

But she doesn’t coddle them.

“I tell them there are no excuses for not doing homework, not meeting school requirements,” she said. “I’m strict, I’m just, I’m fair, but at the same time I’m caring.”

A native of Mexico who grew up in San Antonio, Mendoza teaches reading and social studies. She has 18 kids in each of two bilingual classes and 17 in a third. Spanish is her students’ native language, and most qualify for a free or reduced price lunch.

Andrews has achieved “recognized” status, the state’s second highest accountability rating, from the Texas Education Agency, thanks to the hard, dedicated work of Mendoza and other teachers like her.

“Telling a student ‘I believe in you’ can make a big difference,” she said.

Mendoza’s contribution to student success includes 13- to 14-hour days, including visits with parents and prepa-

ration and grading time at home. She also spends about \$100 to \$150 a month from her own pocket to purchase school supplies and personal items for her students.

Since many of her students’ parents are struggling financially, she is concerned about conditions at home and the impact that has, not only on the kids’ education but also on their overall well-being.

“Some parents don’t know how to help their kids” with their school work, she said. “Sometimes, I give a lesson to the parents.”

In class, the 28-year-old Education Austin member has her students apply for “jobs” for which they can earn play money. Then they use the “money” to purchase supplies or personal items in a classroom “store.” The idea is to help teach the youngsters how to earn money and let them experience the responsibility that comes with fulfilling a job.

“It (teaching) is not easy. It’s very, very challenging,” Mendoza said. But, she added, it is also very rewarding.

“Seeing their little faces after they finally get something. They’re happy about learning.”



Why are Finland's schools successful?

The country's achievements in education have other nations doing their homework. **By Lynnell Hancock**



Finland has vastly improved in reading, math and science literacy over the past decade in large part because its teachers are trusted to do whatever it takes to turn young lives around.

It was the end of term at Kirkkojarvi Comprehensive School in Espoo, a sprawling suburb west of Helsinki, when Kari Louhivuori, a veteran teacher and the school's principal, decided to try something extreme — by Finnish standards. One of his sixth-grade students, a Kosovo-Albanian boy, had drifted far off the learning grid, resisting his teacher's best efforts. The school's team of special educators — including a social worker, a nurse, and a psychologist — convinced Louhivuori that laziness was not to blame. So he decided to hold the boy back a year, a measure so rare in Finland it's practically obsolete.

Finland has vastly improved in reading, math, and science literacy over the past decade in large part because its teachers are trusted to do whatever it takes to turn young lives around. This 13-

year-old, Besart Kabashi, received something akin to royal tutoring.

"I took Besart on that year as my private student,"

Louhivuori told me in his office, which boasted a Beatles "Yellow Submarine" poster on the wall and

an electric guitar in the closet. When Besart was not studying science, geography, and math, he was parked next to Louhivuori's desk at the front of his class of 9- and 10-year-olds, cracking open books from a tall stack, slowly reading one, then another, then devouring them by the dozens. By the end of the year, the son of Kosovo war refugees had conquered his adopted country's vowel-rich language and arrived at the realization that he could, in fact, learn.

Years later, a 20-year-old Besart showed up at Kirkkojarvi's Christmas party with a bottle of Cognac and a big grin. "You helped me," he told his former teacher. Besart had opened his own car repair firm and a cleaning company. "No big fuss," Louhivuori told me. "This is what we do every day, prepare kids for life."

This tale of a single rescued child hints at some of the reasons for the tiny Nordic nation's staggering record of education success, a phenomenon that has inspired, baffled, and even irked many of America's parents and educators. Finnish schooling became an unlikely hot topic after the 2010 documentary film "Waiting for Superman" contrasted it with America's troubled public schools.

"Whatever it takes" is an attitude that drives not just Kirkkojarvi's 30 teachers, but most of Finland's 62,000

educators in 3,500 schools from Lapland to Turku — professionals selected from the top 10 percent of the nation's graduates to earn a required master's degree in education. Many schools are small enough so that teachers know every student. If one method fails, teachers consult with colleagues to try something else. They seem to relish the challenges. Nearly 30 percent of Finland's children receive some kind of special help during their first nine years of school. The school where Louhivuori teaches served 240 first through ninth graders last year; and in contrast with Finland's reputation for ethnic homogeneity, more than half of its 150 elementary-level students are immigrants — from Somalia, Iraq, Russia, Bangladesh, Estonia, and Ethiopia, among other nations. "Children from wealthy families with lots of education can be taught by stupid teachers," Louhivuori said, smiling. "We try to catch the weak students. It's deep in our thinking."

The transformation of the Finns' education system began some 40 years ago as the key propellant of the country's economic recovery plan. Educators had little idea it was so successful until 2000, when the first results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a standardized test given to 15-year-olds in more than 40 global

The people in the government agencies running the schools, from national officials to local authorities, are educators, not business people, military leaders, or career politicians.

venues, revealed Finnish youth to be the best young readers in the world. Three years later, they led in math. By 2006, Finland was first out of 57 countries (and a few cities) in science. In the 2009 PISA scores released last year, the nation came in second in science, third in reading, and sixth in math among nearly half a million students worldwide. "I'm still surprised," said Arjariita Heikkinen, principal of a Helsinki comprehensive school. "I didn't realize we were that good."

In the United States, which has muddled along in the middle for the past decade, government officials have attempted to introduce marketplace competition into public schools. In recent years, a group of Wall Street financiers and philanthropists such as Bill Gates have put money behind private-sector ideas, such as vouchers, data-driven curriculum, and charter schools, which have doubled in number in the past decade. President Obama, too, has apparently bet on competition. His Race to the Top initiative invites states to compete for federal dollars using tests and other

methods to measure teachers, a philosophy that would not fly in Finland. "I think, in fact, teachers would tear off their shirts," said Timo Heikkinen, a Helsinki principal with 24 years of teaching experience. "If you only measure the statistics, you miss the human aspect."

There are no mandated standardized tests in Finland, apart from one exam at the end of students' senior year in high school. There are no rankings, no comparisons or competition between students, schools, or regions. Finland's schools are publicly funded. The people in the government agencies running them, from national officials to local authorities, are educators, not business people, military leaders, or career politicians. Every school has the same national goals and draws from the same pool of university-trained educators. The result is that a Finnish child has a good shot at getting the same quality education no matter whether he or she lives in a rural village or a university town. The differences between weakest and strongest students are the smallest in the world, according to the most recent

The transformation of the Finns' education system began some 40 years ago as the key propellant of the country's economic recovery plan.

survey by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). “Equality is the most important word in Finnish education. All political parties on the right and left agree on this,” said Olli Luukkainen, president of Finland’s powerful teachers union.

Ninety-three percent of Finns graduate from academic or vocational high schools, 17.5 percentage points higher than the United States, and 66 percent go on to higher education, the highest rate in the European Union. Yet Finland spends about 30 percent less per student than the United States.

Still, there is a distinct absence of chest-thumping among the famously reticent Finns. They are eager to celebrate their recent world hockey championship, but PISA scores, not so much. “We prepare children to learn how to learn, not how to take a test,” said Pasi Sahlberg, a former math and physics teacher who is now in Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture. “We are not much interested in PISA. It’s not what we are about.”

Maija Rintola stood before her chattering class of 23 7- and 8-year-olds one late April day in Kirkkojarven Koulu. A tangle of multi-

colored threads topped her copper hair like a painted wig. The 20-year teacher was trying out her look for Vappu, the day teachers and children come to school in riotous costumes to celebrate May Day. The morning sun poured through the slate and lemon linen shades onto containers of Easter grass growing on the wooden sills. Rintola smiled and held up her open hand at a slant — her time-tested “silent giraffe,” which signaled the kids to be quiet. Little hats, coats, shoes stowed in their cubbies, the children wiggled next to their desks in their stocking feet, waiting for a turn to tell their tale from the playground. They had just returned from their regular 15 minutes of playtime outdoors between lessons. “Play is important at this age,” Rintola would later say. “We value play.”

With their wiggles unwound, the students took from their desks little bags of buttons, beans, and laminated cards numbered 1 through 20. A teacher’s aide passed around yellow strips representing units of 10. At a smart board at the front of the room, Rintola ushered the class through the principles of base 10. One girl wore cat ears on her head, for no apparent reason. Another kept a stuffed mouse

on her desk to remind her of home. Rintola roamed the room helping each child grasp the concepts. Those who finished early played an advanced “nut puzzle” game. After 40 minutes it was time for a hot lunch in the cathedral-like cafeteria.

Teachers in Finland spend fewer hours at school each day and spend less time in classrooms than American teachers. Teachers use the extra time to build curriculums and assess their students. Children spend far more time playing outside, even in the depths of winter. Homework is minimal. Compulsory schooling does not begin until age 7. “We have no hurry,” said Louhivuori. “Children learn better when they are ready. Why stress them out?”

It’s almost unheard of for a child to show up hungry or homeless. Finland provides three years of maternity leave and subsidized day care to parents, and preschool for all 5-year-olds, where the emphasis is on play and socializing. In addition, the state subsidizes parents, paying them around 150 euros per month for every child until he or she turns 17. Ninety-seven percent of 6-year-olds attend public preschool, where children begin some academics. Schools provide food, medical care, counseling, and taxi service if needed. Student health care is free.

Even so, Rintola said her children arrived last August miles apart in reading and language levels. By April,

nearly every child in the class was reading, and most were writing. Boys had been coaxed into literature with books like “Kapteeni Kalsarin” (“Captain Underpants”). The school’s special education teacher teamed up with Rintola to teach five children with a variety of behavioral and learning problems. The national goal for the past five years has been to mainstream all children. The only time Rintola’s children are pulled out is for Finnish as a Second Language classes, taught by a teacher with 30 years’ experience and graduate school training.

There are exceptions, though, however rare. One first-grade girl was not in Rintola’s class. The wispy 7-year-old had recently arrived from Thailand speaking not a word of Finnish. She was studying math down the hall in a special “preparing class” taught by an expert in multicultural learning. It is designed to help children keep up with their subjects while they conquer the language. Kirkkojarvi’s teachers have learned to deal with their unusually large number of immigrant students. The city of Espoo helps them out with an extra 82,000 euros a year in “positive discrimination” funds to pay for things like special resource teachers, counselors, and six special needs classes.

Rintola will teach the same children next year and possibly the next five years, depending on the needs of the school. “It’s a good system. I can make strong connec-

tions with the children,” said Rintola, who was hand-picked by Louhivuori 20 years ago. “I understand who they are.” Besides Finnish, math, and science, the first graders take music, art, sports, religion, and textile handicrafts. English begins in third grade, Swedish in fourth. By fifth grade the children have added biology, geography, history, physics, and chemistry.

Not until sixth grade will kids have the option to sit for a district-wide exam, and then only if the classroom teacher agrees to participate. Most do, out of curiosity. Results are not publicized. Finnish educators have a hard time understanding the United States’ fascination with standardized tests. “Americans like all these bars and graphs and colored charts,” Louhivuori teased, as he rummaged through his closet looking for past years’ results. “Looks like we did better than average two years ago,” he said after he found the reports. “It’s nonsense. We know much more about the children than these tests can tell us.”

I had come to Kirkkojarvi to see how the Finnish approach works with students who are not stereotypically blond, blue-eyed, and Lutheran. But I wondered if Kirkkojarvi’s success against the odds might be a fluke. Some of the more vocal conservative reformers in America have grown weary of the “We-Love-Finland crowd” or so-called Finnish Envy. They argue that the United States has little to learn from a

country of only 5.4 million people — 4 percent of them foreign born. Yet the Finns seem to be onto something. Neighboring Norway, a country of similar size, embraces education policies similar to those in the United States. It employs standardized exams and teachers without master’s degrees. And like America, Norway’s PISA scores have been stalled in the middle ranges for the better part of a decade.

To get a second sampling, I headed east from Espoo to Helsinki and a rough neighborhood called Siilitie, Finnish for “Hedgehog Road” and known for having the oldest low-income housing project in Finland. The 50-year-old boxy school building sat in a wooded area, around the corner from a subway stop flanked by gas stations and convenience stores. Half of its 200 first-through ninth-grade students have learning disabilities. All but the most severely impaired are mixed with the general education children, in keeping with Finnish policies.

A class of first graders scampered among nearby pine and birch trees, each holding a stack of the teacher’s homemade laminated “outdoor math” cards. “Find a stick as big as your foot,” one read. “Gather 50 rocks and acorns and lay them out in groups of 10,” read another. Working in teams, the 7- and 8-year-olds raced to see how quickly they could carry out their tasks. Aleksi Gustafsson, whose master’s

degree is from Helsinki University, developed the exercise after attending one of the many workshops available free to teachers. “I did research on how useful this is for kids,” he said. “It’s fun for the children to work outside. They really learn with it.”

Gustafsson’s sister, Nana Germeroth, teaches a class of mostly learning-impaired children; Gustafsson’s students have no learning or behavioral issues. The two combined most of their classes this year to mix their ideas and abilities along with the children’s varying levels. “We know each other really well,” said Germeroth, who is 10 years older. “I know what Aleksi is thinking.”

The school receives 47,000 euros a year in positive discrimination money to hire aides and special education teachers, who are paid slightly higher salaries than classroom teachers because of their required sixth year of university training and the demands of their jobs. There is one teacher (or assistant) in Siilitie for every seven students.

In another classroom, two special education teachers had come up with a different kind of team teaching. Last

year, Kaisa Summa, a teacher with five years’ experience, was having trouble keeping a gaggle of first-grade boys under control. She had looked longingly into Paivi Kangasvieri’s quiet second-grade room next door, wondering what secrets the 25-year-veteran colleague could share. Each had students of wide-ranging abilities and special needs. Summa asked Kangasvieri if they might combine gymnastics classes in hopes good behavior might be contagious. It worked. This year, the two decided to merge for 16 hours a week. “We complement each other,” said Kangasvieri, who describes herself as a calm and firm “father” to Summa’s warm mothering. “It is cooperative teaching at its best,” she says.

Every so often, principal Arjariita Heikkinen told me, the Helsinki district tries to close the school because the surrounding area has fewer and fewer children, only to have people in the community rise up to save it. After all, nearly 100 percent of the school’s ninth graders go on to high schools. Even many of the most severely disabled will find a place in Finland’s expanded system of vocational high schools, which

Teachers in Finland spend fewer hours at school each day and spend less time in classrooms than American teachers. Teachers use the extra time to build curriculums and assess their students.

“It was simply the idea that every child would have a very good public school. If we want to be competitive, we need to educate everybody. It all came out of a need to survive.”

are attended by 43 percent of Finnish high-school students, who prepare to work in restaurants, hospitals, construction sites, and offices. “We help situate them in the right high school,” said then deputy principal Anne Roselius. “We are interested in what will become of them in life.”

Finland’s schools were not always a wonder. Until the late 1960s, Finns were still emerging from the cocoon of Soviet influence. Most children left public school after six years. (The rest went to private schools, academic grammar schools, or folk schools, which tended to be less rigorous.) Only the privileged or lucky got a quality education.

The landscape changed when Finland began trying to remold its bloody, fractured past into a unified future. For hundreds of years, these fiercely independent people had been wedged between two rival powers — the Swedish monarchy to the west and the Russian czar to the east. Neither Scandinavian nor Baltic, Finns were proud of their Nordic roots and a unique language only they could love (or pronounce). In 1809, Finland was ceded to Russia by the Swedes, who

had ruled its people some 600 years. The czar created the Grand Duchy of Finland, a quasi-state with constitutional ties to the empire. He moved the capital from Turku, near Stockholm, to Helsinki, closer to St. Petersburg. After the czar fell to the Bolsheviks in 1917, Finland declared its independence, pitching the country into civil war. Three more wars between 1939 and 1945 — two with the Soviets, one with Germany — left the country scarred by bitter divisions and a punishing debt owed to the Russians. “Still we managed to keep our freedom,” said Pasi Sahlberg, a director general in the Ministry of Education and Culture.

In 1963, the Finnish Parliament made the bold decision to choose public education as its best shot at economic recovery. “I call this the Big Dream of Finnish education,” said Sahlberg, whose upcoming book, “Finnish Lessons,” is scheduled for release in October. “It was simply the idea that every child would have a very good public school. If we want to be competitive, we need to educate everybody. It all came out of a need to survive.”

Practically speaking — and

Finns are nothing if not practical — the decision meant that goal would not be allowed to dissipate into rhetoric. Lawmakers landed on a deceptively simple plan that formed the foundation for everything to come. Public schools would be organized into one system of comprehensive schools, or *peruskoulu*, for ages 7 through 16. Teachers from all over the nation contributed to a national curriculum that provided guidelines, not prescriptions. Besides Finnish and Swedish (the country’s second official language), children would learn a third language (English is a favorite) usually beginning at age 9. Resources were distributed equally. As the comprehensive schools improved, so did the upper secondary schools (grades 10 through 12). The second critical decision came in 1979, when reformers required that every teacher earn a fifth-year master's degree in theory and practice at one of eight state universities - at state expense.

From then on, teachers were effectively granted equal status with doctors and lawyers. Applicants began flooding teaching programs, not because the salaries were so high but because autonomy and respect made the job attractive. In 2010, some 6,600 applicants vied for 660 primary school training slots, according to Sahlberg. By the mid-1980s, a final set of initiatives shook the classrooms free from the last vestiges of top-down regulation. Control over poli-

cies shifted to town councils. The national curriculum was distilled into broad guidelines. National math goals for grades one through nine, for example, were reduced to a neat 10 pages. Sifting and sorting children into so-called ability groupings was eliminated. All children — clever or less so — were to be taught in the same classrooms, with lots of special teacher help available to make sure no child really would be left behind. The inspectorate closed its doors in the early ’90s, turning accountability and inspection over to teachers and principals. “We have our own motivation to succeed because we love the work,” said Louhivuori. “Our incentives come from inside.”

To be sure, it was only in the past decade that Finland’s international science scores rose. In fact, the country’s earliest efforts could be called somewhat Stalinistic. The first national curriculum, developed in the early ’70s, weighed in at 700 stu-tifying pages. Timo Heikkinen, who began teaching in Finland’s public schools in 1980 and is now principal of Kallahti Comprehensive School in eastern Helsinki, remembers when most of his high-school teachers sat at their desks dictating to the open notebooks of compliant children.

And there are still challenges. Finland’s crippling financial collapse in the early ’90s brought fresh economic challenges to this “confident and assertive Eurostate,” as

David Kirby calls it in “A Concise History of Finland.” At the same time, immigrants poured into the country, clustering in low-income housing projects and placing added strain on schools. A recent report by the Academy of Finland warned that some schools in the country’s large cities were becoming more skewed by race and class as affluent, white Finns choose schools with fewer poor, immigrant populations.

A few years ago, Kallahti principal Timo Heikkinen began noticing that, increasingly, affluent Finnish parents, perhaps worried about the rising number of Somali children at Kallahti, began sending their children to one of two other schools nearby. In response, Heikkinen and his teachers designed new environmental science courses that take advantage of the school’s proximity to the forest. And a new biology lab with 3-D technology allows older students to observe blood flowing inside the human body.

It has yet to catch on, Heikkinen admits. Then he added: “But we are always looking for ways to improve.”

In other words, whatever it takes.

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What you need to know about **inclusion**



Very few topics in the public education community cause as much consternation as inclusion; still fewer are as controversial or laced with legal minefields. Inclusion, which is not required by IDEA 2004, has replaced mainstreaming as a means of ensuring that children with disabilities have the opportunity for a free appropriate public education with their non-handicapped peers. So why do we talk about inclusion and why do we need to fully understand not only what it is but also what it isn't?

By Bryan Weatherford, M.Ed.

IDEA 2004 never mentions inclusion. In fact, if you go to idea.ed.gov and do a search of the statute or regulations, the only use of the word "inclusion" is in reference to Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded schools and their inclusion in IDEA to make them eligible to receive funding. IDEA 2004 requires that students with disabilities be educated in "the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate" to meet their needs. In IDEA 2004, LRE consideration typically begins with placement in the regular education classroom. This is different from the initial P. L. 94-142 where placement considerations usually began with special education services.


Not all children, however, can or should be educated in the regular classroom setting. IDEA 2004 recognizes that a continuum of placements must be considered, ensuring that the child with a disability is educated in the environment where he or she has the greatest opportunity for success. When Admission, Review, and Dismissal/Individualized Education Program (ARD/IEP) decisions put children with disabilities into the regular education setting under the guise of inclusion, the environment may not provide enough support for success. The goal of any IEP is to ensure student success and growth so the ARD committee may need to consider a more appropriate environment.

An important rule to remember is that the IEP is developed to meet the child's unique needs, not to satisfy a parent's desire for full inclusion or convenience for the district. The program fits the child, not the other way around. The degree of inclusion is driven by the student's needs, first and foremost.

This is necessary to maximize the opportunity for children with disabilities to experience success and lead normal lives.

When does inclusion become exclusion? Too often it seems, children with disabilities are "dumped" into the regular education setting with little or no support for them, their classmates, or their teachers. Time spent with a special education teacher in a resource or self-contained classroom for so many hours a week has given way to time spent by the special education teacher in the regular education setting for

 Access your district's Academic Excellence Indicator System report at the Texas Education Agency website, <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis>.

The website idea.ed.gov is a one-stop shop that will change and grow as resources and information become available. 

fewer hours a week. This practice often leads to a situation where most of a regular education teacher's students are children with disabilities, in addition to bilingual/ELL and at-risk students — all of whom are entitled to accommodations, adaptations, and different types of modifications.

Just as inclusion is not mentioned in IDEA, neither is exclusion. There is no law or statute that dictates how many children with disabilities may be in a regular education setting at a given time; however, a rule of thumb (and

that's all it is) is that the number of children with disabilities in a regular classroom setting at the same time should not exceed the percentage of children with disabilities in the district. If this is happening, your local association has an excellent organizing issue. Access your district's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report at the Texas Education Agency website (www.tea.state.tx.us), or simply contact your district's special education office to find out the percentage of special education students in your district.

IMPLEMENTING INCLUSION

Inclusion doesn't just happen. Schools and school districts must identify appropriate models of inclusion so that they are in compliance with Free and Appropriate Public Education requirements and maximize instruction and learning for all children. In their book "Inclusion and School Reform: Transforming America's Classrooms," Gartner and Lipsky identify three models of support for inclusion:

Consultant model: The special education teacher is available to re-teach a difficult skill or to help the student(s) reinforce a newly acquired skill. This is a non-intrusive approach that provides the special needs students with at least two teachers to ask for help with curriculum problems. Regularly scheduled meetings are encouraged rather than communication on an as-needed basis.

Teaming model: The special education teacher is part of a grade-level or content area team and provides student information, possible instructional strategies, modification ideas for assignments/tests, and behavior strategies to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The team meets on a

regular basis, establishing consistent communication among the team members. All team members work together and broaden their knowledge in various areas.

Collaborative, co-teaching model:
The general education and special education teachers work together to teach students with/without disabilities in a shared classroom where both are responsible for instruction planning and delivery, student achievement, assessment, and discipline. Students receive age-appropriate academics, support services, and possible modified instruction. This model provides a minimum of scheduling problems, continuous and ongoing communication between educators, and lower student to teacher ratio than the teaming or consultant models.

Professional teams — teachers, ESPs, professional support — working with children with/without disabilities enhance success by remembering four

basic elements of collaboration, as outlined by Canter, Voytecki, Zambone, and Jones in “Teaching Exceptional Children”:

1. Create a foundation of mutual respect and understanding;
2. Create a focused purpose for collaboration;
3. Generate a written plan for collaboration; and
4. Plan collaborative activities of mutual responsibility.

Effective inclusion is carefully and deliberately thought out prior to its implementation. Teachers and education support professionals are informed and trained in the process of inclusion. Children are educated about it and what they can do to make inclusion successful. Parents understand what to expect for their children as a result of inclusion.

IDEA requires the ARD committee to consider placement in the regular

education classroom as a beginning point for determining appropriate placement for the child with disabilities. As the ARD committee makes its decision, it needs to consider the following questions:

1. Is the program individualized on the basis of the student’s assessment and performance?
2. Is the program administered in the least restrictive environment?
3. Are the services provided in a coordinated and collaborative manner by the key stakeholders?
4. Are positive academic and non-academic benefits demonstrated?

Inclusion, however, doesn’t begin with the ARD decision; rather, it is an instructional practice that is already rooted in the culture and behaviors of the school and the school district.

Bryan Weatherford, M.Ed., is TSTA’s teaching and learning specialist.

INCLUSION IS	INCLUSION IS NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Students learning together with supports to be successful.➤ Each child's needs being met.➤ Children with and without labels having facilitated opportunities to interact and develop friendships.➤ Collaboration between general and special education.➤ Support for general education teachers who have children with disabilities in their classrooms.➤ Children learning side-by-side even though their educational outcomes and objectives may be different.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Dumping children into general education classrooms without appropriate supports.➤ Trading quality of education or intensity of supports for inclusion.➤ Ignoring the needs of any child.➤ Sacrificing the education of any child.➤ Everyone learning the same thing, at the same time, in the same way.➤ Eliminating or cutting back special education services.➤ Expecting general education teachers to teach students with challenging needs alone, without support to teach effectively.

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Political engagement: TSTA President Rita Haecker talks to Region 4 presidents and leaders about why it matters.

Political action tops Region 4 agenda

Forty presidents and leaders from throughout Region 4 — the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex and East Texas — attended the Presidents and Leaders Summit Oct. 15. The summit focused on political action and what it means to TSTA members.

TSTA President Rita Haecker gave opening remarks, followed by TSTA Public Affairs Director Ed Martin, who talked about the local impact of legislative decisions, why TSTA members should be involved in campaigns, how to be involved in campaigns, and what locals’ duties are in relation to political action. School board members Charles Wilson from Marshall ISD and Bruce Parrot from Dallas ISD answered questions from members about budgets, teacher RIFs, excessive paperwork, and local taxes. TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria closed the summit by talking about the Pandora’s box legislators opened for education.

Photos from the event are posted on TSTA’s Flickr page at <http://bit.ly/uAImPB>.

NEA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR VISITS TEXAS ►

The second week of October, NEA Executive Director John Stocks came to Texas for a “border listening tour” of Brownsville, Laredo, San Antonio, San Elizario, Socorro, and El Paso. He talked with local leaders, met with superintendents, toured schools and missions, and spoke at an “Under the Same Sun” celebration for El Paso area education support professionals. But mostly, he listened.



LISTENING TOUR: From left, row one: NEA Executive Director John Stocks, TSTA President Rita Haecker, TSTA Executive Director Richard Kouri, and Superintendent Carl Montoya, Brownsville ISD; Loya Primary School, San Elizario ISD. Row two: Gallego Elementary, Laredo ISD; Guillen Middle School, El Paso ISD; El Paso area ESP meeting. Row three: Loya Primary; Gallego Elementary. Row four: Riverside High School, Ysleta ISD; TSTA-Student Program members from the University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso area ESP meeting.



Locals meet: Donna TSTA/NEA representatives cheer one another on at a back-to-school gathering (left), and Rep. Drew Darby meets with the San Angelo local chapter.



BLOWING THEIR OWN HORN IN DONNA

Donna TSTA/NEA held a "Welcome Back Social" at the end of September at Don Panchito's Restaurant. The theme was "Let's Celebrate," and the more than 50 members in attendance were encouraged to blow horns every time an association representative or member reported something positive.

SAN ANTONIO FOOD SERVICE TAKES ON CUSTODIAL DUTIES

When San Antonio ISD cut custodial positions this school year, duties previously performed by custodians — including cleaning, mopping, and handling garbage — were given to food service employees. The San Antonio

Alliance, concerned about employee safety and the risk of food contamination, has filed a group grievance on behalf of food service employees.

LEGISLATOR ADDRESSES SAN ANGELO LOCAL

Rep. Drew Darby talked about public school finance and the constitutional amendments on the November ballot at an October meeting of the San Angelo TSTA local chapter. TSTA lobbyist Portia Bosse also addressed the group.

TSTA-RETIRED: EVENTS AND ELECTIONS

The TSTA-Retired Board of Directors held its first meeting of the 2011-12

membership year in September. The directors approved the audit report; adopted the 2011-12 budget; amended the calendar by deleting the December meeting; re-affirmed their commitment to the TSTA and TSTA-R Mission and Vision Statements; kicked off the Quilt Give-a-Way Project; reviewed a distribution plan for membership posters; listened to a presentation by staff on "Keeping a Lock on Pandora's Box"; and welcomed a newly organized region.

Upcoming events: The next board meeting will be Feb. 2-3 in the Antoinette Miller Room at TSTA Headquarters. All are invited to attend.

The TSTA-R Annual Meeting (formerly known as the TSTA-R House of Delegates) is April 18-19 in Dallas. All members are eligible to attend and vote. The retired host committee is working with the active host committee on an entertaining time for participants. You are invited to take part in the business as well as the fun parts of the meeting. Watch for details in the spring issue.

The NEA-Retired west and east conferences are combining into one conference, beginning in 2012. It will be the third week in March. Watch This Active Life magazine and the NEA-Retired website (www.nea.org/home/1598.htm) for dates, location, and registration information. Registration is only offered online. If you need help

with registration, call one of the officers or the TSTA-R office.

In the past, NEA-R offered one "give-away" to each state — allowing one newly active member to attend the conference — to increase involvement. We will let you know if this practice continues. If so, NEA-R will pay two nights' lodging for one person/double room occupancy, and will submit the name of a recent retiree who has never attended the conference.

If you feel this room has your name on it, submit your name and contact information to Johnetta Williams at town-view@swbell.net. You may also mail your information to TSTA-R, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701. The deadline for submitting your name is Feb. 1.

The NEA-Retired Annual Meeting is June 26-29 in Washington, DC. Watch the NEA-Retired website and "This Active Life" magazine for registration information; registration is only offered online. All members are encouraged to attend and participate in the business of the association.

Elections: Filing forms are due at the TSTA-Retired office in Austin, postmarked by Jan. 17, for these positions:

- TSTA-Retired Secretary and TSTA-Retired Treasurer: The filing form can be found on page 26. Ballots will be mailed in early February. The positions are for a two-year term, July 15, 2012 to July 14, 2014.
• TSTA-Retired At-Large Delegates to the TSTA House of Delegates: The form is in the winter issue of the Advocate and on the TSTA-R web page. The meeting is April 20-21 at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Dallas.
• TSTA-Retired Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly: The form is in the winter issue of the Advocate and on the TSTA-R web page. As an elected delegate to the NEA RA, you



Houston's Hermann Park: Student Program leaders in District 3 share ideas on recruiting and fundraising.

will hold dual voting rights as a delegate to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA RA. The Retired Annual Meeting is June 26-29, and the NEA RA is June 30 to July 5. Both events are in Washington, D.C.

All elections will take place by mail ballot between Feb. 5 and March 1. Members may file for a position or nominate another member. Written permission must be obtained from your nominee. For information on duties and responsibilities, contact the TSTA-Retired office.

TSTA-STUDENT PROGRAM: NEA CHAIRPERSON COMING

The TSTA-Student Program had a very busy fall, full of planning and recruiting. TSTA staff member Clinton Gill, former president of the group, is now the staff liaison, along with TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria.

The SP Executive Committee met Oct. 1 to plan events for the year, including the 56th annual TSTA-Student Program Conference and House of Delegates, which will be held March 23-25 at the Omni Austin Hotel Southpark in Austin. Tommie Leaders, NEA-SP chairperson, will start things off at the

opening session Friday night, followed by professional development opportunities Saturday to help prepare members for the classroom. One focus of the conference will be civic engagement, to teach SP members about ways they can be involved in political and legislative activities.

On Oct. 22, the District 3 Student Program held a picnic in Houston's Hermann Park. NEA-SP coordinator Kimberly Anderson and TSTA-SP Liaison Clinton Gill spoke with student leaders about state and national issues. The event allowed time for the leaders in District 3 to meet and hear ideas from one another on many different topics, including recruiting and fundraising. Congratulations to Keely Drewnowski from the University of Houston-Clear Lake who spoke to the group about how she tripled membership on her campus in just a matter of days!

The Student Program encourages all active TSTA members to talk with student teachers and field based teachers on their campuses about joining TSTA-SP. They can sign up online at http://bit.ly/u18ePV or get more information by contacting Clinton Gill at clintong@tsta.org.

TSTA-R NOMINATION FORM
Check box beside office this nomination is for: [] TSTA-Retired Secretary [] TSTA-Retired Treasurer
QUALIFICATIONS: Must be an active member of TSTA-Retired and NEA-Retired
Nominee's name
Address City/State Zip
Home phone Day phone
I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the above information is true and correct.
Nominee's signature
Nominator's name
Address City/State Zip
Home phone Day phone
I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the above information is true and correct.
Nominator's signature
Send by U.S. Mail (or FAX to 512-486-7043) by Jan. 17, 2011, to TSTA-R, 316 W. 12th St., Austin, TX 78701.



133rd Annual TSTA Convention

The annual TSTA Convention will be in Dallas on April 20-21. All convention events will take place at the landmark Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion. The hotel is adjacent to the heart of downtown, near premium shopping and entertainment venues, and connects via an underground concourse to historic Union Station.

To access periodic updates about convention schedules and events, be sure to visit the “For Members” area of the TSTA website and enter your “Leaders Login” information (first-time users may need to register for access to this area of the site).

BECOME A DELEGATE

The House of Delegates (HoD) serves a vital role in the governance of TSTA and helps to shape the future of our organization. The HoD may establish goals for TSTA, amend its bylaws, and act on recommendations from the TSTA officers, board, or committees. This year delegates will elect the NEA Director for Texas, Place 2, and if necessary, at-large members of the TSTA Board of Directors.

Please contact your local president for details on how to become an elected delegate in your local. Delegate allocations are based on membership totals as of Jan. 15, and local delegate election results must be reported to TSTA by March 15.

If you do not have a local in your area or your local is not eligible to elect a delegate, you may request to become a cluster delegate. The deadline to seek nomination as a cluster delegate is February 22. Complete and return the form printed in the Fall 2011 issue of the Advocate or contact TSTA’s Center for Executive and Governance (CEG).

REGISTRATION

Registration and certification of delegates, non-delegates/alternates, and guests will be in the Reunion Ballroom foyer, beginning at 7:00 a.m. on Friday, April 20, continuing to Saturday, April 21. All TSTA members and guests are welcome to attend the convention, but only delegates with proper delegate badges are allowed in the designated delegate section and voting area. Non-delegates/alternates and guests are encouraged to register.

HEARINGS AND WORKSHOPS

Open hearings will be held Friday morning on the proposed 2012-13 TSTA budget and any proposed bylaws amendments or NEA Resolutions. Additional topics may be added. Professional development workshops eligible for continuing education credit also will be offered on Friday.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

The Hyatt Regency is holding a room block for TSTA convention attendees. Reserve your room directly with the hotel by March 18, 2012, to ensure your room at the group rate of \$149.00 (plus applicable taxes currently at 15 percent). Guests may opt to increase the room rate \$5 per person per day to receive a \$15 daily food voucher for use at most food outlets on the property. Valet parking is \$14/day. Self-parking is available without in and out privileges at either \$10 or \$5 per exit (depending on which parking lot is used).

The hotel is approximately 10 miles from Dallas Love Field and 20 miles from DFW International Airport. You must make your own arrangements for transportation. One-way transportation costs from Love Field average \$17 on SuperShuttle and \$25 by taxi. One-way transportation costs from DFW to the hotel average \$19 on SuperShuttle and \$45 by cab. Also, the Trinity Railway Express (TRE) runs from DFW to Union Station and costs about \$5 for a pass. From the airport you would board the airport’s Remote South parking lot shuttle then connect to shuttle buses serving the CenterPort/DFW airport train station to catch the TRE to Union Station. Groups traveling together should also check with SuperShuttle for available discounts.

Make your reservation online at <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/TSTA2012> or call 888-421-1442. Identify yourself as a participant of the “Texas State Teachers Annual Convention” at the time you make your reservation to obtain the group rate. Please note: A first night room deposit secured with a major credit card is required for all reservations. (TSTA warns against using a debit card or card that can be used as a debit card to secure your reservation.) Cancellations must be made with the hotel 24 hours before your scheduled arrival to avoid a charge for the first night.

Local associations that wish to pay by check should be aware that payment by check is only an option if reserving a room block of 10 or more and an approved credit application is on file at the hotel. Payment of estimated charges is due in advance. If you are interested in this option, please contact Rizwan Naqvi at R.Naqvi@hyatt.com for assistance with your reservation.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

Physically challenged or special needs delegates should contact TSTA’s CEG no later than April 5, 2012, to arrange assistance during the convention. Payment for special needs requests such as wheelchairs or transportation is the responsibility of the delegate, but TSTA will help make arrangements for services. Members who do not have a roommate but would like to share accommodations should contact the CEG before making their hotel reservation. We will attempt to match members who want to share expenses, but we cannot guarantee a roommate for everyone.

TSTA HOST COMMITTEE

TSTA would like to thank the HoD Host committee, appointed by President Haecker, for their efforts to help ensure a successful and fun event. HoD Host Committee members are: Winifred Jackson, Debra Howell, Norman Quigley, Angela Davis, Evelina Loya, Johnetta Williams, Carlos Reza, and Lisa Wingo.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE	
Thursday, April 19	
8:00 a.m.	Advisory Committee Meeting
1:30 p.m.	Board of Directors Meeting
6:00 p.m.	Candidates Meeting
Friday, April 20	
7:00 a.m.	Registration
8:00 a.m.	Special Interest Exhibits
8:00 a.m.	Open Hearings
9:15 a.m.	Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)
10:30 a.m.	Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)
1:00 p.m.	Parliamentary Procedures Workshop for New Delegates
1:00 p.m.	Recognized Caucus Meetings
2:30 p.m.	House of Delegates Opening Ceremony and Meeting
Saturday, April 21	
6:30 a.m.	Registration
7:00 a.m.	Regional/TSTA-Student Program/TSTA-Retired Meetings
8:00 a.m.	Special Interest Exhibits
8:30 a.m.	Voting/Elections
10:00 a.m.	House of Delegates Meeting
12:30 p.m.	Lunch and Recognized Caucus Meetings
2:00 p.m.	House of Delegates Meeting



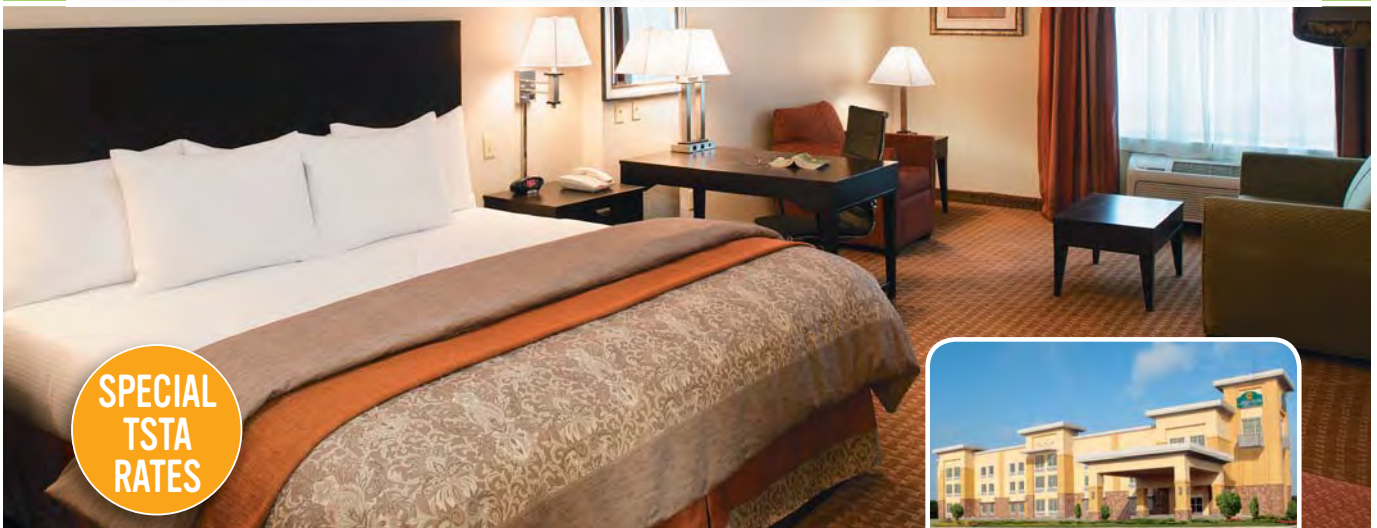
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