

WHERE DID TESTING GO WRONG? RATLIFF REFLECTS ON EDUCATION

Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

FALL 2007



High Cost of Dropping Out

TSTA/NEA parental
involvement campaign
targets border areas

Be a Part of Our Schools' Success

In August, several Texas newspapers ran my op-ed column on parental involvement. It's part of the multimedia campaign we're running this fall in several school districts on the border (see pages 14-17), and it includes some good information that I thought you might want to share with parents. Here's an excerpt:

We need your help.

If you're a parent with a child or children in Texas public schools, professional educators need your help as the 2007-08 academic year begins. Parental involvement in their children's education matters—a lot.



Every parent's involvement in a child's education helps that young person's likelihood of succeeding in school. The more time a parent can invest, the greater the payoff for the child.

In "A Parent's Guide to Supporting School Success," the National Education Association suggests what parents can do:

- Talk to your child's teachers regularly.
- Support your child's teachers and encourage your child to respect teachers and behave appropriately at school.
- Be clear and direct in your expectations of your child's teachers. Let them know you are looking for teachers who listen and recognize what you have to offer to support your child's education.
- Let teachers know about any situations or conditions at home that may affect your child's performance. Matters ranging from a family health crisis to language differences can interfere with a child's school success.

- Regularly express confidence in your child's ability to succeed in school, emphasize the importance of education and set high expectations for success.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences at least once a year.

You can become involved in other ways through a Parent-Teacher Association or similar group. If one doesn't exist at your child's school, organize one.

In the 25 years that I was an English and language arts classroom teacher, I saw just how important these parent-teacher groups are and what they can accomplish.

Traveling around the state, I see that happen again and again. In one district, I saw parents substituting in classes so the teachers could conduct parent conferences during the school day instead of at night and on Saturdays. I also have seen PTA fundraisers that provided classroom supplies, library books and materials.

The help you give us as we work with your children will benefit them immensely. No matter how you provide that help, it matters greatly — to your kids, to their success in school, to their future.

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Donna".



RAISE YOUR HAND TEXAS: Their mission is simply to support public schools--by defending them from unfounded criticism, talking about the good things that are happening in them, and suggesting ways (such as smaller class sizes and full-day kindergarten) to make them even better. Read more on page 8.

FEATURES

- 8 Bill Ratliff Raises His Hand for Education**
The former lieutenant governor talks about the legislature, education, and Raise Your Hand Texas, a group of business leaders advocating for public schools.
- 14 High Cost of Dropping Out**
Texas ranks 38th among the states in high school completion. Recognizing that parental involvement is crucial to changing that statistic, TSTA/NEA has launched a campaign to target parents in four cities along the border.

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 Education News**
Who will pay for fingerprinting; TSTA action keeps most teacher test scores confidential; information about the new incentives; TOPS update; TSTA helps soldier get his school job back; mark calendars now for Celebration of Great Teaching; Connie Roccato retires after 33 years; Texans win NEA posts; and reminders for state and national delegates.
- 18 Classroom Tips**
Four main instructional ideas for school dropout prevention.
- 20 Ask Our Legal Team**
A quick recap of some new laws that affect school employees.
- 22 Around Texas**
Ambassador Academy rocks; NEA Republican leaders meet; TSTA delivers staff development; Waco local ups starting pay to \$37,000; Ysleta local advises a television show; a member sits on stage with Presidential hopefuls; Dallas raises \$50K for math; and news from TSTA-Student Program and TSTA-Retired.
- 26 Upcoming Events**
Nominate someone for an award from TSTA!
- 28 Governance**
National delegate elections and state House of Delegates delegate elections.

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Who Will Pay for Fingerprinting?

SB 9, which passed in the 2007 legislative session, requires that all active certified personnel and other staff be fingerprinted for criminal history background checks by 2011.

We knew that. You knew that. But now there's a new twist. The fee for each individual to be fingerprinted is estimated to be \$47 to \$52. And you may have to pay it!

Funds to cover existing certified personnel were appropriated by the legislature, but Texas Education Agency (TEA) is now saying the funds might not be available. It is possible that school districts will have to decide whether to pay the fee or pass it on to their employees.

Another concern: TEA will decide when a district must start an 80-day timeline for making sure that all of its active certified employees get fingerprinted. Notices will go to every certified employee explaining how to get fingerprinted; employees will have 80 days to complete the process, with a one-time, 10-day extension for good cause. If employees fail to comply within the timeline, their certification will go on inactive status, making them ineligible to teach.

TSTA is concerned that, due to the number of uncontrollable factors in the process, the timeline might not be long enough in certain circumstances. As there are a number of third parties involved in this process—such as the Department of Public Safety, its vendor for fingerprinting, and the school districts—unforeseen circumstances might arise which are totally out of the control of the educator.

TSTA is working on these issues. The proposed rules must still go before the State Board for Educator Certification and State Board of Education prior to going into effect sometime in November. Please check www.tsta.org for updates.

The fee for each individual to be fingerprinted is estimated to be \$47 to \$52. And you may have to pay it!

NEW INCENTIVE PLAN DETAILS

District Awards for Teacher Excellence, or DATE, is the state's newest incentive program. DATE was enacted during the third special session of the 79th Legislature and funded during the 80th Legislature at \$147.5 million for FY 2009. All districts are eligible to apply for grant money, with amounts based on the district's average daily attendance during the 2007-2008 school year.

It will be up to the district-level planning and decision-making committee to develop a district awards plan and to determine which campuses are eligible to participate.

Read more about DATE at www.tsta.org.

TOPS: WE SENT A MESSAGE

In 2005, the state Commissioner of Education issued a directive that all English-language learners would have to be evaluated according to the Texas Observation Protocols (TOPs). The Commissioner directed all school districts to select teachers of English-language learners to be trained as TOPs raters; they were required to attend training and pass a Texas Education Agency-created test to be certified raters.

The Commissioner's directive concerned TSTA for many reasons. When the directive was issued, many school districts' budgets had already been finalized, leaving no money to compensate teachers for additional training.

Teachers also had to take and pass a test to be a "certified rater." Prior to the directive, all teachers were certified to evaluate their students by virtue of their teaching certificates; under the new rule, teachers were required to obtain another certification to do what they were already doing. If a teacher was not a "certified" rater, another rater who was certified was required to review the non-certified teacher's evaluations of his or her students.

TSTA believed that the Commissioner did not have statutory authority to require additional teacher testing and certification. Further, TSTA contended that the Commissioner had instituted

the entire process illegally. The Commissioner had not followed proper rule-making regulations in issuing this directive. Because of these issues, TSTA filed suit against the Commissioner of Education in January 2007.

At the hearing, rather than face a court order to immediately cease all testing and certification requirements, the Commissioner agreed to modify the directive. As a result, the Commissioner issued a new directive stating that teachers who did not pass the certification test would not be required to have another teacher review their ratings.

In response to TSTA's lawsuit, the Commissioner also took steps to correctly institute the TOPs training and testing requirements. The Legislature passed a law giving the Commissioner the authority to make such directives related to training and certification. TEA then correctly complied with the regulations for making new rules.

While the Court of Appeals ultimately ruled with TEA on some procedural issues, the goals TSTA had set out to achieve had been accomplished. TSTA's lawsuit brought about all of these changes. By filing suit, we sent the message that we are willing to stand up to the state when laws are violated.

MOST TEACHER TEST SCORES REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL

Several months ago, a news station in Houston aired a segment in which teachers' certification test scores were revealed. Thereafter, Texas Education Agency (TEA) received several other requests for similar information. TEA requested an opinion from the Office of the Attorney General as to whether such information should be released under the Texas Public Information Act. TSTA joined with several other employee associations to provide a brief to the Attorney General arguing that such information should not be disclosed.

The Office of the Attorney General issued a ruling which is favorable to teachers. The Attorney General fol-

lowed new legislation that makes teachers' certification scores confidential unless the teacher has failed an exam more than five times.

Here's TEA's response to the Attorney General's ruling: "For an educator who has taken a certification exam only once, TEA will withhold the test result (pass/fail) and the test score. We will release the fact that an educator has taken an exam once because taking the exam once is not an indication of whether an educator has passed or failed. For an educator who has taken an exam more than once, but has not failed the exam more than five times, TEA will withhold the educator's name for each time the educator took the exam because knowing that an educator took the same examination multiple times indicates failing results of the previous exams. De-identifying the educator's name secures the results of these exams. For educators who have failed an exam more than five times, TEA will release all of those educators' results and scores in regard to that particular exam."

A CELEBRATION OF GREAT TEACHING: DON'T MISS IT!

It's fun, it's motivational, and it's coming soon! TSTA's Educational Issues Conference, with a theme of "A Celebration of Great Teaching," will be January 11-13, 2008, in Austin. Speakers will include educational award winners and NEA staff experts. The EIC conference gives you a chance to update your skills and knowledge in one exciting weekend at the Hilton Austin Airport Hotel.

Continuing Professional Education Credit: TSTA is an approved continuing professional education provider. For those individuals who are on renewable certificates and need continuing professional education, we will offer workshops that can be taken for credit. The conference agenda, workshop schedule, registration form, and hotel reservation form will be posted on the TSTA website (www.tsta.org).

Hotel Reservations: The conference will once again be held at the Hilton Austin Airport Hotel at 9515 New Airport Drive in Austin. The hotel is located off Hwy. 71, near the Austin Bergstrom International Airport. Go to the Hilton website (www.webeventplanner.com/directory/hiltonaustinairport) for directions. As of January 2008, the Hilton will become a 100% smoke free hotel. Hotel reservations must be received by the Hilton by December 19 to guarantee occupancy and the TSTA rate. The rate for a single or double room is \$94; a triple room is \$104; and a quad room is \$114 plus local taxes and fees (currently 15%). To make reservations please call 800-584-5091 or 512-385-6767 (hotel staff at the Hilton Austin Airport Hotel are most familiar with the TSTA conference and the contracted rate). You may also download a hotel reservation form from the TSTA website and mail it directly to the hotel. Be sure to guarantee your reservation with a credit card or check if you plan to arrive later than 6:00 p.m. on the date of arrival. Check-in time is 3:00 p.m. on the day of arrival; if you arrive earlier, the hotel may or may not be able to check you in, provide a room key and let you into your room, based on the room being cleaned from a prior guest's stay. Check out time is before noon on the day of departure. Please note, if you check out prior to the scheduled checkout date, you will incur an early departure fee of \$50 plus taxes and fees.

Conference Registration: Please look for the conference registration form on the TSTA website. Download it, complete it, and send it along with the appropriate payment to TSTA, Attention: Lori Buckner, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701. TSTA cannot guarantee that you will be registered for the sessions of your choice if your conference registration form is received at TSTA Headquarters after December 19. If your registration form is postmarked by Saturday, December 1, you qualify for an Early Bird Special of \$109 for each participant. For registration forms

postmarked beginning Monday, December 3, the fee is \$129, and on site registration will be \$159. Non-members may register for \$199.



SOLDIER TO GET HIS JOB BACK

The threat of exposure in the news media may be enough to convince school officials to do the right thing, after all.

And bringing in Eve Bell, a lawyer for the TSTA Help Center and NEA-Dallas, didn't hurt, either.

U.S. Army Reserve Staff Sergeant James Stafford III has been on active duty since May 18, continuing through September 12. After he talked with his principal in early June about ultimately returning to his civilian job as the head band director at a Dallas high school, the administrator later decided to demote Stafford to assistant band director.

Such a demotion would have been "a clear violation of federal law," Bell said.

"The Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA) protects members of the guard and reserves from job loss, demotion, loss of seniority and loss of benefits when they are called to active duty," Amy R. Gershkoff of the MSHC Partners consulting firm recently wrote in *The Washington Post*.

Stafford researched the matter with U.S. Defense Department's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve organization (www.esgr.org) and sent a detailed summary of the law's requirements to his principal.

The federal law requires that, instead of a demotion, "as a general rule, the em-

ployee is entitled to re-employment in the job position that he or she would have attained with reasonable certainty if not for the absence due to uniformed service."

But the law is not the only reason the school should've welcomed Stafford back with applause, rather than a demotion. Anyone who voluntarily, honorably serves our country in the armed forces is an American hero who deserves better treatment than Stafford was going to receive.

Also, as the sergeant recounted in an email to his principal, in his four years at the school, he has built its "band program from its small humble beginnings of only seven students to this past year's enrollment of nearly 40 students."

The principal did not appropriately respond to Stafford's attempt to regain his position as the school's head band director. So the sergeant went to TSTA/NEA-Dallas for help.

"I called the principal and told him that I was planning to do a TV and newspaper story," Bell explained. "Suddenly he has decided to comply with the law and give the member his job back when he returns."

Dale Kaiser, the president of NEA-Dallas, also spoke with the principal and received verbal assurance that Stafford will return to his head band director position when he gets back from active duty.

"Truly you are for the teachers and take immediate action in time of need," Stafford said in an email to TSTA and NEA-Dallas. "You aided me in my small part to continue the proud tradition of the greatest fighting force in the world, the U.S. Army. On behalf of this fine organization, I thank you."

Stafford is far from being alone in facing inappropriate employer treatment when returning from active duty. "More than 16,000 reservist complaints were filed between 2004 and 2006, the Government Accountability Office said this year," Gershkoff wrote in the *Post*. "But

fewer than 30 percent of the reservists who experience USERRA violations file complaints, the GAO estimated.”

Any other TSTA members who face this kind of situation when returning from voluntarily, honorably serving our country in the armed forces should call the Help Center at 877-ASK-TSTA.

“TSTA is committed to doing whatever is needed to ensure that employers fairly treat our members returning from military service by fulfilling the federal law’s requirements,” said Joey Moore, the association’s manager of legal services.



CONNIE ROCCATO RETIRES

When Connie Roccato came to work for TSTA in May 1974, the association was one year away from voting to unify with the National Education Association. The “new” wing of the headquarters building, which houses the board of directors’ meeting room and six floors of offices, was still under construction.

Connie was first hired to work in Communications & Publications. She moved into one of the secretarial positions in Governance in September 1980 and continued in different supportive roles until May 1999, when she filled the Governance Coordinator position.

Connie is retiring this fall. “It is hard to imagine TSTA without Connie Roccato,” TSTA Executive Director E.C. Walker said. “For over 30 years she has been a hard-working, dedicated member of the TSTA staff. The title of her final

position was ‘Governance Coordinator,’ but that really is not sufficient to capture all that she does. Because of her knowledge and experience, she has been invaluable to me as an Executive Director coming in without that TSTA-specific data. Connie always wanted to work behind the scenes and out of the spotlight, but I can tell you that she has been as big a contributor as anybody to the TSTA turnaround in the last five years. We will all miss her, but no one more than me.”

“Our beloved Connie leaves us after dedicating most of her adult life to TSTA and our members,” TSTA President Donna Haschke said. “She will be sorely missed. Connie is always pleasant, helpful, and caring when our members call, and she is never too busy to listen and advise, no matter what! We wish her well in all future endeavors, and we want her to know she will always be in our hearts.”

We’ll miss you, Connie.

TEXANS ELECTED TO NEA POSTS

At NEA’s annual convention, the Texas Caucus reelected Gordon Gauthier of Deer Park, Reagan Hawkins of Nederland, and Chris Tullis of Dallas to the NEA Resolutions Committee, which prepares and presents to the Representative Assembly resolutions that are proposed for adoption.

ATTENTION, DELEGATES!

Here’s a quick review of dates and expenses for members who are attending TSTA’s 2008 State House of Delegates and the 2008 NEA Representative Assembly.

Turn to page 28 for election information on NEA state and retired delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly. Delegate information for State and Regional Houses of Delegates will be communicated to local presidents sometime in October.

If you need further information, contact the Center for Executive and Governance at 800-324-5355, ext. 1510 or email (carolm@tsta.org). Lodging and

delegate information will appear in the winter and spring issues of the *Advocate*.

State House of Delegates, April 18-19,

2008, Plano: The Marriott Dallas/Plano at Legacy Town Center Hotel will host delegates to TSTA’s State House of Delegates. Lodging expense at the hotel is \$129 singles/double/triple/quad plus 13% tax (\$16.77) totaling \$145.77 per night. Complimentary self-parking will be provided to TSTA hotel guests only, with other guests being provided self-parking at the rate of \$8 daily and valet parking at \$12.

The hotel also provides shuttle service within a three-mile area and is just steps away from shops at Legacy, www.shopsatlegacy.com. The hotel is located 18 miles from DFW and Love Field Airports and 22 miles from downtown Dallas.

NEA Representative Assembly, July 3-6, 2008, Washington, D.C.:

The First Texas Caucus meeting is scheduled for July 1 at the Texas Delegation hotel. Texas’ delegates will be staying at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel in Arlington, VA. The hotel provides shuttle service to and from Reagan National Airport. Lodging expense at the hotel per night is \$159 single/double plus 10.25% tax totaling \$175.30 (\$179 triple plus tax, totaling \$197.35, or \$199 quad plus tax, totaling \$219.40). Taxi service to or from the airport is \$6-\$10. The hotel provides self-parking at the rate of \$16 daily and valet parking for \$22. Taxi expenses to the Convention Center (4.3 miles) are \$15-\$22.

The hotel is just minutes from Reagan National Airport and is located in Virginia’s vibrant Crystal City district, an area replete with world-class shopping and dining. Washington, DC’s metro rail system is easily reached via direct hotel access, quickly linking delegates to all of the city’s attractions including the Washington Convention Center. Delegates will also find underground shops and a food court with the hotel also connecting to the Crystal City Marriott Hotel.

Bill Ratliff

Raises His Hand for Schools

Bill Ratliff has done a lot of things in seven decades.

He got his start in the small West Texas town of Sonora, where his earliest memories are of his father—a school principal-turned-merchant with a master’s in history from Columbia and a passion for politics—telling stories about Huey P. Long, the colorful governor of Louisiana.

Although all the boys were “infected by public service” early on, Ratliff’s two brothers excelled in debate and became lawyers, while Ratliff “quaked at the thought of having to get up before a crowd” and opted to study civil engineering at the University of Texas.

In 1989, Ratliff’s life took an ironic turn when he retired from engineering, moved to Mount Pleasant in East Texas, and embarked on a second career as a state senator—engaging in the debate and public speaking he had feared on a really big scale.

He became one of the Senate’s most powerful and respected members, chairing the education and finance committees. He was the architect of the so-called “Robin Hood” plan, which attempted to equalize school funding, and the controversial education reform package of 1996, which included the first accountability language.

When George W. Bush became President in 2000 and Lt. Gov. Rick Perry moved into his spot as Governor, Ratliff was elected by his peers in the Senate to be Texas’ Lieutenant Governor.

They called him Obi Wan Kenobi after the Star Wars character, for his integrity and skill at bringing parties together. A moderate Republican, he made *Texas Monthly* magazine’s “Best Legislators” list six times.

Ratliff got crosswise with his fellow Republicans when he opposed their plan to redistrict for the second time in two years, an ugly fight that continued through one regular session and three special sessions. The climate at the Capitol had shifted from collegiality to partisanship, a loss he felt deeply.





Ratliff withdrew from the race for lieutenant governor in 2002 and, after one more session, left his Senate seat altogether. He said his only regret was he wished he could have done more for teachers.

In 2005, Ratliff was one of four people to receive the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for his “principled and bipartisan leadership” and “willingness to make the difficult and unpopular decisions necessary for good governance.” He was in good company: the other honorees were Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, who almost lost his life in the fight for democracy for his country; Atlanta Mayor

Shirley Franklin, the first African American to serve as mayor of a major U.S. southern city; and U.S. Army Specialist Joseph Darby, who exposed the Abu Ghraib situation.

In February, Ratliff announced a new twist in his remarkable life. He is heading a new organization called Raise Your Hand Texas, a bipartisan group of Texas’ top business and community leaders, parents, and taxpayers whose mission is to advocate for public schools.

We talked to Ratliff in August about his years in the legislature and his new calling.

Q You and Paul Sadler were the architects of the 1995 education reform package. In 2006, after you left, the legislature passed another education reform package. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of those packages?

A Our philosophy in the [1995] rewrite was the state should tell school districts and school boards what children should know and when they should know it and leave the “how do we get there” up to the local people who are trained to teach. We went through that entire code and anywhere it infringed on the “how” question, we struck it. I still believe in that philosophy.

All of this big movement to dictate teacher appraisal systems by the state,

When a parent sees where his or her child's grade school is given high marks under the state system and failing marks under the federal system, what's that parent to believe? It's ludicrous. I never dreamed that when we first adopted the accountability system that it would spin so out of control.

as opposed to local school boards being able to design their own teacher appraisal systems, has nothing to do with the question the state should be concentrating on, which is what children should know and when they should know it.

Q Where did the accountability system go wrong?

A We knew when we adopted the very first TAAS [Texas Assessment of Academic Skills], the very first accountability system in '93, that we were adopting what we called at that time a high stakes system. We had no idea what high stakes really were.

Yes, I think the testing system is being used for things it should not be used for. When we first adopted that system it really did two things. It was designed first to report to the local parents and the local taxpayers how their school was doing as compared to the other schools in the state, because few people really knew how their school measured up. Second it was a diagnostic tool for the teachers and the principals to look at those tests, and say, "How can we do this better? How can we shore up these weaknesses?"

Today it's turned into a punishment tool. It's used to punish teachers. It's used to punish schools. It's used to punish students. I think it's just absolutely gone berserk.

That's one of the reasons, in my role as chair of the advisory board of Raise Your Hand Texas, we advocated...scrapping the entire accountability system and...trying to adopt a system that is positive in nature, that doesn't concentrate on the negative.

And to make it simple. Make it where the parents and the teachers can understand it. The current system can't be understood by people who study it for a living, much less by some PTA mother who would like to know how her child's school district is doing. When a parent sees where his or her child's grade school is given high marks under the state system and failing marks under the federal system, what's that parent to believe? It's ludicrous. I never dreamed that when we first adopted the accountability system that it would spin so out of control.

Q How would you change the accountability system?

A If nothing else I'd go back to the original idea. Maybe that's ego talking, but the strange thing about this was, when George W. Bush went to Washington, he went there with it in mind to adopt a federal system that was a spin off of the state system, because ours had been so successful. And yet we've left the system that got us deemed the "Texas Miracle," with our minority kids doing so well under the system. I don't know why, when that system was working as well as it was, why people in the state didn't leave it alone and then why we had to completely bastardize the system by trying to adopt a federal system on top of it, which in many places is contradictory.

Q Had the Senate changed, too? Was it maybe not just you?

A Yes, yes it had. It had become much more partisan, mainly because of that horrific redistricting battle. Which is exactly what I was trying to avoid.

I was the seventh Republican in 31 members of the Senate, so I was very much in the minority when I first went to the Senate. When the Republicans got to the point where we flipped over and we had more than a third so we could block any piece of legislation, it was just an accepted fact that the Democrats were going to change the rules so you didn't have to have the 21 votes.

But at that time the Senate was such a collegial body the Democrats never even proposed doing that. I take my hat off to them; they could easily have changed the rules way back then. They didn't even talk about doing it, even on the most hard-fought bills. And then we get the redistricting session and the Republicans decide we have to do away with the two-thirds, and it really, really became not only partisan but vicious at times. That wasn't the body I had known and loved.

I'm told much of that collegiality has been restored. I hope so. I hope the body can return to the one I knew and loved. I'm afraid once you let that genie out of the bottle it's not easily retrieved.

Q When you left the Senate, you said your only regret was you wished you could have done more for teachers. Is that part of what sparked Raise Your Hand Texas four years later?

A I was actually contacted by [H-E-B Chairman and CEO] Charles Butt, and Charles had been talking to some of his counterparts in circles I never traveled in, that is, CEOs of the major companies in the state of Texas, and he and they were expressing concerns about the fact that their future workforce is currently in grade school. He was worried about the public schools of Texas. He didn't have a solution. What he wanted to talk to me about was what can we do to make the public schools better, and a subset of that was not to allow the voucher efforts to further erode the public schools.

He asked me what I thought needed to be done, and my answer to him was, I think, a little bit of a surprise to him. That was to say first of all we have to get the people of Texas to understand the good things that are going on in public education, because all they hear are the criticisms. And unless the people believe we have good things going on they're not going to give us the support we need. If they don't support us, the legislators won't support us.

If we can get the people to understand that public education is better than they've been led to believe, they'll be willing to put more money into it. When we're able to put more money into it, we can attract better teachers; we can train them better; we can pay them enough to keep them in the teaching profession; [and we can get] all of the technology, all of the things we need to do to bring the schools into the 21st century. But the first order of business is to convince the people of Texas they're worth supporting.

Q Where does your passion for public education come from?

A When I was first elected, I had a few months and I thought, "What can I bone up on to get ready to be there?" The first Edgewood decision was just being argued before the Supreme Court, so I thought, "Well, I'll read up on the education code and figure out public school funding. That's for-

mulas and I'm an engineer, so I ought to be able to understand public school funding."

I think the week before I was sworn in, the first decision came down, striking down the system. It became the hot potato, it became the thing we had to do that session. Because I had boned up on the formulas, I was one of only two or three people in the Capitol at that time that really did understand public school funding, so I got deeply involved—even though I wasn't on the Education Committee—in trying to solve the problem.

When [Bob] Bullock became lieutenant governor, I feel sure that what happened was [previous Lt. Gov. Bill] Hobby told him I knew public school finance. By that time we'd already had at least two plans struck down by the court. Bullock told me he was going to make me chair of education, and I said, "Bob, I don't know anything about education, literally zero, all I know is public school funding formulas." [He said,] "Well, that's what we need right now, so you're it." So I began this huge learning curve on public education itself.

I guess how I became an advocate was I visited hundreds of public schools during that period. In particular I thought it was instructive to go to schools of poor socioeconomic circumstances who were doing a good job. I guess spending that much time I began to have appreciation of the people who were there. I began to appreciate the dedication of some of these people, the unsung heroes of the public school system.

Q How would you summarize the mission of Raise Your Hand Texas?

A Raise Your Hand Texas has three missions. First, we want to defend the public schools from what we believe to be unfair or unfounded criticism. We believe only when people really appreciate the good things that are going on in public schools can we get more and more support for public schools. So we're going to defend them from unfair criticism and try to point out the errors, the fallacies, in many of the rumors, many of the stories they've heard about our public education system.

Second, we want to spread what we believe to be the good news about public education and

We have to get the people of Texas to understand the good things that are going on in public education, because all they hear are the criticisms. And unless the people believe we have good things going on they're not going to give us the support we need. If they don't support us, the legislators won't support us.

talk about the successes we have. There are lots of successes but people don't hear those. For far, far too long, it's been the critics of public education who've had all the microphones. The teachers, the principals, the superintendents, the school boards, have all been defending public schools, but to far too many people, those folks are suspect. They're considered part of the problem—the education establishment—so [people think] naturally they're going to defend public education because they like the status quo, et cetera.

We want this to be a group of business people unaffiliated with public education because we think that by maintaining that kind of membership, we can show a far more credible front to the world. We've got a more credible message.

One thing [teachers] need to understand is we consciously want to make sure that we're not identified as an education group. We're primarily business people who are trying to support public education. But as a result of that, there will be times when teachers and teacher groups, and maybe school boards and school board groups, don't understand why we take a position that's contrary to one that maybe they've taken. They have to understand that will be the nature of our group.

We had a situation in the last session where Senator Shapiro was carrying a bill on autism vouchers, and I got deeply involved in that and convinced her to modify that bill in a manner in which I believed did not constitute vouchers. I told Senator Shapiro that if she would amend it in that fashion we would support it. I honored my commitment to her. Many of the education groups were aghast. They still believed it had some of the earmarks of a voucher program and were unhappy with me and with us.

People have to understand that we're going to call each one of them the way we see them. We're going to look at it from the standpoint of the business community, what's good for the workforce of this state, for the kids of this state. There may be times when the education groups

might not agree with us. I think they'll be few and far between, but that will be the nature of the beast because we want to make sure we maintain our independence and therefore our credibility.

The third [mission] is to make some suggestions about how our schools can be made better. Too many people when they say they want to make the public schools better, their approach is "Let's go beat on the teachers. Let's criticize them, let's tell them what they're doing wrong." There's a saying that the beatings will continue until morale improves. We don't think that's the way to improve public schools.

We think the way to improve public schools is to do things like having full-day pre-k and full-day kindergarten available to every child in the state if they want to access it. Lowering the class size, the number of students in the classroom.

There's some egghead theorists who say it doesn't matter how many kids are in the classroom. That is such hogwash. That cannot be true. If a teacher has 30 kids in the classroom and you reduce that to 20, each child gets 50% more of that teacher's time. How can it not be a critical factor in how much learning goes on in that classroom? Not to mention the kind of disruption that you compound when you have that many kids.

We want to resist the wrong kinds of appraisal systems, where a teacher is evaluated simply on the basis of the test scores of the students in that classroom.

We want to resist private school vouchers. We don't believe that's the solution. We've got four and a half million children in the public schools of Texas, and you can't even send a small majority of them to private school. We cannot walk away from the public schools. If we have public schools that have problems, we need to fix them.

dress and become a member. There are no dues.

What it does is it gives us a huge database of people that, when things in the legislature get down to push and shove, we can email thousands of people asking them to send a message to their house member or senate member supporting our position. We had some success at that this last time even though we didn't even form this organization until October and we didn't roll it out until February. It would be very, very helpful if when we went to the legislature we could tell them we have 100,000 members and tell them if you will carry this bill or you will help us, we'll throw the support of that kind of base toward helping you pass this legislation.

We also have a way in that website for people to sign up for a speakers' bureau. We have a DVD that—since I'm a good part of the DVD, I should say with all modesty—is very well done. It would be so easy for a local educator to get on the local Lions Club agenda and play that little seven-minute DVD, hand out some brochures, tell them what we're about, and urge them to support public schools. That's really the message. Our bumper sticker says "Support public schools." That's all it is. We have to multiply our numbers by having people like that who are willing to spend a little bit of time and a little bit of effort carrying the message.

Unfortunately, I've known teachers for a long time. Most teachers, God love 'em, what they want to do is go in their classroom and close the door and teach those kids. That's their passion, that's their mission in life. Their attitude is "Don't bother me with all the politics, just let me teach my kids." I wish we could.

What they need to understand is they need to help us a little bit in defending what they do. If we only signed up the teachers of Texas, we'd have 300,000 members of Raise Your Hand Texas, and they don't have to do anything. If they'd each do just a little bit, passing out bumper stickers, that's easy. Every teacher parking lot ought to have every car with a Raise Your Hand Texas bumper sticker.

Q What can educators do to positively impact the legislative process?

A We have a website (www.raise-yourhandtexas.org). All you have to do is give a name and an email ad-

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Young Texans who do not complete high school become losses for their communities, their state and themselves. Their lives will be poorer in ways that can only partly be calculated in economic terms.





Generation at Risk

A radio campaign TSTA launched August 28 in the Texas border region, funded by the National Education Association, encourages parents to become involved or to get more involved in their children's education, especially at their schools.

BY JOE BEAN, TSTA PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Far too many young Texans do not complete high school. This crisis costs the state economically and in quality of life, and the cost will climb unless the dropout rate can be reduced.

Only 64.2% of incoming Texas ninth-graders went on to graduate within four years, according to 2001-02 data from the U.S. Education Department's National Center for Education Statistics.

The national graduation rate was 68.3%. In California, the nation's most populous state, it was 69.6%.

Texas, the nation's second largest state by population, ranked 38th among the states in high school completion. It's not too big a stretch to see a correlation between that sorry ranking and how poorly the Lone Star State ranks in paying its education professionals, compared with other states that value public schools more highly.

Education matters greatly to the individual, to the economy and to the resulting quality of life of the community and the state.

"An educated work force raises income levels, which generates businesses' activity and increases the market for goods and services," State Demographer Steve Murdock, the director of the Institute for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research at the University of Texas at San Antonio, told the *San Antonio Express-News*.

"It also increases investments for new businesses, which in turn increases tax revenues. Higher education equals higher incomes," Murdock added.

The U.S. Census Bureau agrees: Nationwide, the annual average earning for a high school dropout is \$16,485. That jumps to \$26,156 for a person who earned a high school diploma, \$35,103 for an associate's degree and \$49,656 for a bachelor's degree. People who complete graduate and professional degrees typically earn even higher salaries.

"High school dropouts, on average, earn ... about \$1 million less over a lifetime than college graduates. Students who drop out of high school are often unable to support themselves," according to "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts," a report by Civic Enterprises.

"Everyone benefits from increased [high school] graduation rates. The graduates themselves, on average, will earn higher wages and enjoy more comfortable and secure lifestyles," the Alliance for Excellent Education explains. "At the same time, the nation benefits from their increased purchasing power, collects higher tax receipts and sees higher levels of worker productivity."

The alliance identifies several other economic and social benefits the typical high school graduate will enjoy: living longer, less likely to be a teen parent, more likely to raise healthy children, less likely to

commit crimes, less likely to rely on government health care or human services programs, more likely to vote and to engage in civic activities.

But not enough young Texans are completing high school. That deprives them, their communities and their state of all of these advantages. And as *The Texas Observer* newspaper warned, based on some of the state demographer's projections, Texas will pay a very high price if the dropout rate is not reduced:

“By 2040 wages will be even lower and the median income will drop from \$39,927 to \$33,191 in 2000 constant dollars. Even as the tax base shrinks, demand for services will grow. By 2040, the number of people depending on grants under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] program is expected to rise 148.9%. Medicaid use will rise 181.9%. The percentage of Texans without a high school diploma will rise from 18% to 30%. The prison population will increase by 124.4%.”

No racial/ethnic group is immune to the dropout crisis, but it hits some with particular severity: “For minority students (black, Hispanic or Native American), the rate at which they finish public high school with a

regular diploma declines to approximately 50%,” according to “The Silent Epidemic.”

In the Lone Star State, according to the most recent data released by the Texas Education Agency, for the 2005-06 school year, 10,068 young non-Hispanic white Texans in grades 7 through 12 dropped out, as did 11,692 young African-American Texans and 27,633 young Hispanic Texans.

Hispanics made up the largest percentage of those who dropped out—57.39%—although they constitute 35.1% of the state's population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. African Americans, who account for 11.7% of Texans, tallied 22.89% of dropouts. Non-Hispanic whites accounted for 19.71% of dropouts.

In August 2005, the Census Bureau announced that Texas had become a majority-minority state. Although non-Hispanic whites remained the largest single group, all other groups combined outnumbered the white plurality.

By 2020, depending on immigration trends, Hispanics are likely to be the largest ethnic group in Texas, the state demographer projects. By 2040, depending on immigration trends, Hispanics are likely to make up a



Campaign Targets Parents

Fortunately, many Hispanic parents of current schoolchildren in four cities along the border recognize how important parental involvement is to success in school, according to a survey Pineda Consulting conducted this summer for TSTA.

When asked, “How important is the role that you as a parent play in helping your child be successful in school?” the survey's 400 respondents in Brownsville, McAllen, Laredo and El Paso were virtually unanimous that parental involvement is important; 45% said it is “very important,” while an outright majority of 54% said involvement is “extremely important.”

A radio campaign TSTA launched August 28 in the Texas border region, funded by the National Education Association, encourages parents to become involved or to get more involved in their children's education, especially at their schools. Last year, NEA launched a 12-step initiative to reduce the nation's dangerously high dropout rate (www.nea.org/dropout).

“Students with parents who are engaged in their lives—by monitoring and regulating their activities, talking with them about their problems, encouraging individual decision-making and being more involved in school—are less likely to drop out of school,” “The Silent Epidemic” notes.

“The communication links between parents and schools are critical if such involvement is to work effectively to monitor such ac-

tivities, exchange information, address problems, and ensure that issues are resolved quickly,” the study notes.

Most of the parents surveyed in El Paso report that their children's involvement in their education outside of school is low.

Of these parents, 66% said they set up one or more meetings to arrange any meeting with their children's teachers.

More than two-thirds of parents at schools in the four cities said they had met with their schools. Language barriers prevent 67% of parents who primarily speak Spanish from coming and 67% of all parents.

That shows how hard it is for the teachers and educators to be working to welcome

majority of the people living in Texas.

The bulk of Hispanic population growth will continue to occur, as it has done for some time, in the counties along the Texas-Mexico border.

More work will be needed to boost high school completion rates for young Hispanic Texans whom the state and particularly the border region need to become a key component of the next generation of professionals. More work is needed to boost high school completion rates for all young Texans statewide.

Young Texans who do not complete high school become losses for their communities, their state and themselves. While some will later return to school or study for the GED, many will not. Their lives will be poorer in ways that can only partly be calculated in economic terms.

High school graduation is not the ticket to economic security that it once may have been. But high school graduates nonetheless do earn considerably more than those who drop out before graduating. Lacking a high school diploma (or a GED), a young person will not be able to go on to college to earn at least a bachelor's degree and, with

it, the likelihood of a higher salary yet.

The state of Texas and local school districts statewide still have much work to do to address the dropout crisis and to dramatically increase the number of young Texans who go on to college and, beyond that, to graduate or professional degree programs.

“Unless Texas changes course, we doom an entire generation of kids,” state Rep. Pete Gallego (D-Alpine), the state House Mexican-American Caucus chairman, told the *San Antonio Express-News*. “We don’t doom them to mediocrity. It’s worse than that, because we take away their opportunity.”

Irrespective of what the Texas Legislature, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or individual school districts may do, all parents in the Lone Star State—regardless of race or ethnicity, where they live, what they do or earn or even how much education they have—can do a great deal to keep their children in school at least through high school graduation.

Being involved in their kids’ education, both at school and at home, is the most important thing parents can do to ensure a positive future for young Texans.

Information about school performance and where such problems are addressed early and effectively continues.

Parents surveyed in Brownsville, McAllen, Laredo and other areas act on what they believe through regular communication with their children’s schools and with their children’s teachers at school, according to Pineda Consulting.

75% said they set up more than one meeting with teachers in the last school year, while 16% said they did not have a meeting. Only 16% said they did not have a meeting with teachers.

85% of these parents with children attending public schools felt very welcome when they visited their child’s school, with 69% saying they felt very welcome. Parents who primarily speak Spanish saying they felt very welcomed and parents responding the same way.

80% of the public schools in those areas and 80% of the education support professionals there are providing information and encourage parental involvement.

The respondents largely believe their local schools are doing a good job educating their children. When asked “What grade would you give the public schools?” 25% awarded an A grade to the schools in their respective communities, while 41% gave them a B.

That is a solid foundation of support to build on as school districts, individual campuses, administrators, teachers and support professionals constantly seek to boost their performance and that of their students, particularly to reduce dropout rates.

What happens outside of the classroom is just as important to school success as what goes on inside it. These parents know that, too, with 46% saying they help their kids with homework assignments every night in a typical week and 36% saying they help a few nights each week. Only 7% said they don’t help at all.

The respondents have high expectations of what their schools will enable their children ultimately to accomplish educationally; 88% expect their children to go to college, with 40% saying they expect their kids to graduate from college and 27% expecting them to go on to post-graduate studies.

BEST DEFENSE: PARENT INVOLVEMENT

More parental involvement will significantly help reduce the dropout rate. Parental involvement is crucial to student success, according to a research review the Texas-based Southwest Education Development Laboratory published:

“Students with involved parents, no matter their income or background, are more likely to:

- “Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs.
- “Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits.
- “Attend school regularly.
- “Have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt to school.
- “Graduate and go on to post-secondary education.”

From Movies to Reality

We live in a society that places what President Bush calls a “soft bigotry of low expectations.” Hollywood concurs, with movies that tell compelling tales of how one teacher, one class, or one sports team found success, even if for just a little while.

BY DR. PAUL HENLEY, TSTA TEACHING AND LEARNING SPECIALIST

Movies like “Stand and Deliver,” “Dangerous Minds,” “Glory Road,” and even Goldie Hawn’s “Wildcats” show exceptions to a rule the education community has come to accept. It doesn’t have to be that way. Research strongly indicates that early identification and student progress monitoring are effective tools in dropout prevention.

This is encouraging because dropping out is not a single, impulsive action. Rather, dropping out is a multifaceted process in which a student slowly disengages from school. Some students show symptoms associated with dropping out as early as elementary school.

SETTING A TONE OF COMFORT

A teacher’s most effective dropout-prevention tactic could be creating a positive learning climate in the classroom. Students should want to learn, and, thus, be in your classroom.

In the movie, “Stand and Deliver,” Jaime Escalante began his teaching career by creating a positive learning environment for his students. He identified each student as an individual and built a rapport with the class. Students gave him the nickname Kimo, and they would let him know when he had gone too far. Since they felt they could express concerns and lack of understanding to him, they became comfortable with him. The comfort helped them learn.

It can be a big advantage to create comfortable physical learning environments. A considerable body of research shows the positive effect that physical comfort can have on learning, productivity, and creativity. One Texas school even replaced hard tables and chairs with couches in tutoring rooms. This action was given some of the credit for the school’s performance improvement.

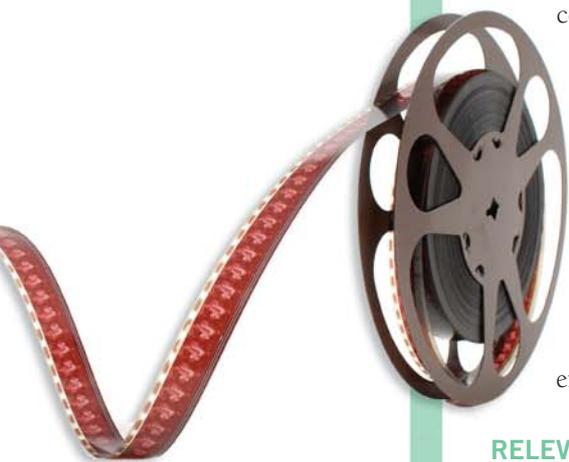
On the other hand, students drop out of school because they feel unsafe. In “Trends & Tudes,” Harris Interactive describes findings from its national survey of 1,814 U.S. seventh and eighth grade students. School safety (15% cited problems with gangs, bullies) was among students’ top concerns. Safe, orderly, non-threatening environments contribute to dropout prevention.

At TSTA, we constantly remind members and policymakers that teacher working conditions are student learning conditions. When we advocate for you as school employees, we also advocate for the students in your care.

RELEVANT COURSES

Many times, a curriculum is decided upon by those who have little direct contact with students. Each of these creators believes she or he has the students’ best interests at heart.

There are many factors affecting graduation rates, but some factors relate directly to activities in public school classrooms. Working within classrooms to improve and focus instruction for at-risk students could become a strong means of dropout prevention. This article will focus on four main instructional ideas: setting tone, building relationships, making courses relevant, and focusing on students’ individual needs.



While others may create the curriculum and the ensuing content, much of the responsibility for making content relevant falls on the teacher. Students want to know how your course relates to their world. Students need clear instructional objectives, and clear communication of the relevance of education to future endeavors will also help the cause.

In “Stand and Deliver,” Jaime comes to class with a meat cleaver — not for self-defense, but to halve an apple, thereby dramatically demonstrating the concept of 50%. Although many of his students were not prepared to be learners, their teacher immediately engaged the class with the apple activity. Now the abstract notion of fractions was something students could connect to their actual world. Each student could reflect and answer on her/his own terms. Escalante’s students became participants in the learning experience, and these involved students quickly became motivated learners.

The quickest way to connect your course with students is to determine who they are. A teacher needs to find student attitudes, abilities, and emotional baggage that they bring to the classroom.

RELATIONAL TEACHING

Community involvement outside of the classroom can result in improved instruction inside the classroom.

Civic Enterprises, an education think tank, tells us that students with parents who are engaged in students’ lives are less likely to drop out of school. “The communication links between parents and schools are critical if such involvement is to work effectively to monitor such activities, exchange information about school performance and problems, and ensure that such problems are addressed early and quickly,” the study says.

TSTA recently conducted a poll of Hispanic parents living on the Texas Rio

Grande Border (see page 16). These parents almost unanimously recognize the importance of parental involvement to student success. On the other hand, recognition and actual action are two different things.

To have meaningful parental involvement there needs to be meaningful communication. Schools and classrooms need to feel inviting to parents. Any meetings should fit a working parent’s schedule. Communications need to be translated to every relevant language and sent in many different formats: email, flyers, web page, newspaper advertisements, telephone calls, and notes sent home.

Communicating with parents and community members will not always bring support. Sometimes, the community disregards education, or at least the school system as it is. One scene in “Dangerous Minds” depicts a black grandmother who doesn’t want a white female teacher meddling in her grandson’s educational business. She insistently tells the teacher she doesn’t want her boy’s head filled with a bunch of poetry and nonsense that will have no meaning in his future.

None of these allows schools and teachers to stop attempting to connect with a community. There is too much at stake. Relating instructional content to the school’s larger community will help students find support both inside the building and outside, in their neighborhoods.

STUDENTS AS INDIVIDUALS

Researchers Loujeania Bost and Paul Riccomini tell teachers, “We cannot change what students learned last year, where students come from, or what the students do when they leave the classroom. However, we can focus on designing and delivering instruction that is more effective.”

In other words, you take them where they are...and teach them.

Showing students you care and value their success also helps them to internalize their own desire for success. Jaime Escalante showed great anger, and support, when his students’ scores were questioned by the national testing agency. Don Haskins defended his all-black Miners team against all racism. Goldie Hawn even stood up for her Wildcats football team when she thought they couldn’t hear her.

To finish high school, many students need accommodations to fit their adult lifestyles and schedules. The New York City school district has contracted for \$31 million in dropout prevention programs that focus on the specific needs of at-risk students, and they seem to be working. For students past the traditional graduation age, the city has established what they call “transition centers.” These centers are designed to avoid the stigma of being college age but in class with 14-year-olds.

The centers also provide necessary flexibility and student support. Flexibility can come in the form of online courses, night classes, and self-paced learning. Support can come in the form of child care, dual credit fee waivers, and transportation allowances. Results show that more students will finish high school if they are given the time and support to do it.

Finally, don’t forget who you are. A teacher is the single biggest determinant of student success. They need you, and they need you to enjoy teaching them. When talking with those who have dropped out, I asked about a time when school was fun and enjoyable to them. To a person, they pointed to a teacher. With only one exception, they mentioned that teacher’s sense of humor. Award-winning author Jonathan Kozol tells new, inner-city teachers to maintain an “enjoyable and mischievous irreverence.” Such an approach to any content material makes that learning enjoyable for students. It also makes teaching enjoyable for you.

What's New This Year?

Legislative Changes Affect School Employees

BY JOEY MOORE, TSTA MANAGER OF LEGAL SERVICES AND MEMBER ADVOCACY



TSTA HELP CENTER

Every day the TSTA Help Center handles numerous calls regarding employees' rights, as well as other questions about education and TSTA/NEA. Call 877-ASK-TSTA or email us through our website, www.tsta.org.

As schools were winding down last May for the summer months, the Legislature was wrapping up the 80th Legislative Session. The results of that session include several new laws that affect school districts and school employees. While many bills affecting public education were enacted, this article focuses on just a few that are particularly relevant to school employees. Here are some new changes which all employees should know about.

EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCES AGAINST A SUPERVISOR

This law requires a school district's grievance policy to have a process wherein the employee may report a grievance against his or her supervisor that alleges that the supervisor's violation of law or unlawful harassment to a supervisor other than the supervisor against whom the employee is filing the grievance.

In passing this statute, the Legislature recognized that requiring employees to present grievances to their immediate supervisor, when the employee is complaining of illegal acts by the supervisor, isn't always productive. In situations like these, the employee may be intimidated to directly confront the individual whom the employee is alleging violated the law. Allowing the employee to present such a grievance to another supervisor is likely to be more productive.

House Bill 1622

Effective date: September 1, 2007

NATIONAL CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS OF SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Senate Bill 9 was a huge piece of legislation that amended laws in the Education, Family, Government and Transportation Codes. The majority of the bill institutes national background checks on public school employees and those who have regular contact with public schools.

The new legislation requires the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) to review the criminal history of every applicant for or holder of a certificate who has not previously submitted fingerprints or national criminal history reporting information. SBEC is required to complete this review of all certified educators by September 1, 2011.

For any other employee who is not an applicant for or holder of an SBEC certificate, school districts must submit to the Department of Public Safety information that is required to obtain national criminal history reporting information. The district must obtain the information before or immediately after employing the individual, and the individual must submit to a national criminal history review before being employed.

Substitute teachers, student teachers and volunteers must all submit to national criminal history checks, as well. A district may require the employee to pay for the cost of the criminal history check.

A district must terminate or refuse to hire a person if the criminal history check shows that the person has been convicted of (1) a Title 5 felony, (2) an offense requiring registration as a sex offender, or (3) an equivalent federal law or law of another state, and the victim was under 18 or enrolled in a public school.

Senate Bill 9
Effective date: June 15, 2007

CONFIDENTIALITY OF TEACHER CERTIFICATION TEST SCORES

The results of teacher certification ex-

aminations are confidential and not subject to disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act unless: (1) the district is notifying a parent of the assignment of an uncertified teacher to a classroom, or (2) the educator has failed a test more than five times.

Senate Bill 9, amending Texas Education Code § 21.048
Effective date: June 15, 2007

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS WITH TRUSTEES

A school district may not establish a policy that restricts the ability of an employee to communicate directly with school board members regarding a matter relating to the operation of the district. A policy may prohibit communications by one side of an adversarial proceeding in which the other side is not made a party. For example, the district may prohibit communications by a teacher to a board member regarding the teacher's termination case if the communication is made outside the presence of the administration, and is regarding the termination.

Senate Bill 135
Effective date: April 23, 2007

CERTIFICATION OF EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTICIANS

All individuals hired after September 1, 2008, as educational diagnosticians must hold an appropriate certificate or permit issued by the SBEC. This requirement only applies to educational diagnosticians hired after September 1, 2008.

Senate Bill 158
Effective date: September 1, 2007

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MATERIALS

A district cannot, through policy, contract or administrative directive, require an employee who acts in good faith to pay for property belonging to a student or other person that the employee possessed in the course and

scope of their employment. Further, a board of trustees cannot require an employee who acts in good faith to pay for a textbook, electronic textbook, or technological equipment that is damaged, stolen, misplaced, or not returned.

This statute will protect employees in situations such as when teachers confiscate prohibited items, like cell phones, from students which then may be misplaced, stolen, or damaged. Similarly, employees may not be required to pay for textbooks, electronic textbooks or technological equipment of the district's that is damaged, stolen, misplaced, or not returned.

However, a district and an employee may agree in writing that the employee is responsible for an electronic textbook or technological equipment that the employee uses off school property, if the employee also gets to use the equipment for personal business. If the parties enter into such an agreement, the agreement must (1) be separate from the employee's written employment contract; (2) inform the employee of the financial responsibility he is assuming; (3) advise the employee to consider getting appropriate insurance. Such an agreement may not be a condition of employment.

Senate Bill 370
Effective date: May 17, 2007

SUMMER BENEFITS AFTER RESIGNATION

An employee who resigns effective after the last instructional day of the school year is allowed to continue in the district's uniform group health coverage through the summer months and up to the anniversary date of the district's participation in the plan for that school year. The district may not reduce the amount of its contribution during this period.

Senate Bill 973
Effective date: September 1, 2007



Ambassador Academy Rocks!

They ranged in age from 24 to 57. They came from different parts of the state. Their experience with TSTA varied greatly. But by the end of the week, the 19 people who went through TSTA's Ambassador Academy in July were a team.

They learned about the legal rights and responsibilities of Texas educators, and the actions of the 2007 legislative session. They worked through an emotional and energetic training session on relational organizing. They visited with staff at TSTA headquarters and had their class photo made on top of the TSTA building with the Texas Capitol in the background.

For two days, they were trained in the Personal Assessment of Leadership Skills program by trainers from the NEA Women's Leadership Training Program. One evening, they went with their trainers for a team building activity at Dave and Buster's restaurant. At their graduation ceremony, TSTA President Donna New Haschke and Vice President Ann Heuberger presented them with certificates, and the ambassadors' thank-you speeches brought tears and laughter to the audience.



The final day was spent setting goals for the coming year, and developing and presenting their "Pizza Boxes," a vehicle for analyzing and synthesizing their knowledge of TSTA at the beginning of the week and the end of the week. This exercise required participants to research and develop talking points about TSTA/NEA; when they left Austin, they couldn't wait to share what they learned with non-members and use it to further engage current members.

The 2007 Ambassador Academy Team was Organizational Development Specialists DeShaunta Kearns (Chair), Shane Riddle, and Bryan Weatherford; Secretary Kara Knorpp; Director Brenda Pike, Organizing Center for Affiliate and Leadership Development; TSTA President Donna New Haschke; and TSTA Vice President Ann Heuberger. Organizational Development Specialist Susan Salinas acted as a facilitator from the previous years' planning team. (Knorpp, Riddle, Weatherford, and Kearns are shown the bottom left photo.)

If you are interested in being an Ambassador next summer, check www.tsta.org in the spring for information or call 877-ASK-TSTA!



NEA REPUBLICAN LEADERS MEET

Sarah Simoneaux, Chris Tullis, Ginny Evans, and Gordon Gauthier were among more than 80 Republican educators from across the nation who attended NEA's first-ever Republican Leaders Conference August 2-5 in Minneapolis.

The conference, which featured panel discussions by NEA Republican members who are state legislators and party activists, was sponsored by the NEA Government Relations Department to assist NEA Republican members in becoming more active in their local and state Republican parties. Approximately 1 million of NEA's 3.2 million members are Republicans, and they have the potential to have a significant impact on Republican Party activities, organization and platforms in 2008.

During the conference, NEA hosted a reception for Republican National

Committee members that was attended by GOP Presidential candidate Mitt Romney; the campaign manager for Presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani, Mike DuHaime; and the White House political director, Jonathan Felts.

CALL US FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

At the invitation of Linden-Kildare President Becky Cerliano, TSTA Organizational Development Specialists Janna Connolly, Charles Axe, and Bryan Weatherford provided the first day of district-wide staff development for district employees. The topics included Response to Intervention, Effective Parent Conferencing, Using Relational Organizing in the Classroom, and two sessions on classroom management.

TSTA staff also helped North Lamar TSTA/NEA welcome all educators back to work. Through a rural grant they received, the local sponsored a portion of the professional development at the district's New Educator Orientation. Weatherford presented workshops on understanding and using brain research to help students achieve, classroom management, making connections with parents, and helping teachers identify strategies for dealing with disruptive behavior; Connolly gave a workshop on using relational organizing in the classroom setting. Stephen Smallwood, president of North Lamar TSTA/NEA, talked about Social Security Offset Provisions, which resulted in approximately 600 signatures on the TSTA-sponsored Social Security Petition drive in August/September. Fourteen of the 24 new teachers joined North Lamar TSTA/NEA.

WACO STARTING SALARY:\$37,000

"All your hard work, PowerPoint presentations, and sheets of reminders of what we want have certainly paid off," Waco TSTA/NEA President Ann Sandifer told TSTA Organizational Development Specialist Jason Wylie in a recent email.

Through the local association's efforts,

teachers' starting salary is \$37,000, current teachers received an increase of roughly \$1,500, several new stipends were included, and substitute pay was raised. Sandifer said her only disappointment was that support professionals received only a 3% increase.

Sandifer said it was clear that TSTA did it; she was interviewed by newspaper and television reporters, and the latter showed her speaking before the school board. "TSTA is getting a lot of recognition in this city," Sandifer said.



WITNESS TO HISTORY

As the top Texas contributor to NEA's Fund for Children and Public Education, Helen Sutton Tegbe of Beaumont got to sit on stage at the NEA Convention this summer while eight Presidential hopefuls—Sen. Hillary Clinton, former Sen. John Edwards, Sen. Chris Dodd, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, Gov. Bill Richardson, Sen. Barack Obama, former Gov. Mike Huckabee, and Sen. Joe Biden—spoke.

"What an awesome feeling, listening and sitting so close to the presidential candidates as each one gave such emotional speeches," she said. "I was thrilled when Sen. Barack Obama referred to me as his cheerleader. Barack and Hillary Clinton both shook my hand. It was a memorable occasion that I will tell my grand kids someday." Tegbe said she was happy to give to a good cause.

YSLETA ADVISES TV SHOW

KFOX-TV Channel 14 News asked Ysleta Teachers Association (YTA) for advice on how to conduct local auditions for the "Are You Smarter than a 5th

Grader?" game show. The phone call led to YTA becoming a major sponsor of the program, Arlinda Valencia reports.

YTA received thousands of dollars in advertising on KFOX TV and the *El Paso Times*, Valencia said. In return, they recruited YTA members from Hacienda Heights Elementary to help write grade-level questions for the game show audition, met with the KFOX executives to establish contest guidelines, and recruited all of the work force for the night of the competition. Hacienda Heights Principal Marilyn Luckett acquired the white boards, desks, and chairs for the participants.

More than 200 students participated in several rounds of spirited competition, and some 13,000 votes were cast. "Thanks to the volunteers, YTA became the major ingredient in helping to pick El Paso's brightest 4th grader, 10-year-old Gentry Sims," Valencia said. "It was a great experience for YTA. KFOX was so impressed with the final outcome that they are looking forward to joining YTA in future endeavors."



DALLAS RAISES \$50K FOR MATH

NEA-Dallas and Innovative Urban Educational Services partnered in the spring to host their first annual Mental Math Summer Institute fundraising gala. Proceeds funded a summer institute to teach Mental Math to Dallas ISD students and to train teachers in how to teach it.

The evening was hosted by Honorary Gala Chair Maria Arita, anchor/reporter for KTVT-CBS 11. Speakers included:

NEA-Dallas President Dale D. Kaiser, President Aderemi Oki of Innovative Urban Educational Services (IUES), TSTA Vice President Ann Heuberger, and Camille Malone of the Dallas ISD Math Department.

Students performed complex mathematical equations in their minds and challenged the audience to do the same equations with the assistance of calculators. The students finished first each time.

The silent auction and gala was followed by a jazz concert by Tom Braxton. The evening raised nearly \$50,000 for the Mental Math Summer Institute. (Shown in the photo are David Mureba, Global Eletro-Comm International, Inc.; Wanda Huckaby, IUES; and His Excellency Perez Kamunaniwire, ambassador to the United States from the Republic of Uganda.

TSTA-STUDENT PROGRAM NEWS

From TSTA-Student Program President Leigh Anne Meeks: The new officers and I are already working hard to start preparing for this year's state student program convention. We're working on putting together a fun, interactive outreach project with an Austin area school, providing more professional development hours during the convention, and finding a few dynamic speakers. We'd love to have your input on what you would like to see at the convention, so let us hear from you! Email me at leighanne21@gmail.com.

If you are interested in joining our 2007-08 Executive Committee as a district president for District I or IV, please contact me as soon as possible! It truly is a life-changing experience and one that will only add to your professionalism and marketability. This year we will also have the tremendous benefit of having the TSTA Vice President, Ann Heuberger, working as our Coordinator. Ann is already shaking things up and leading us down a path of positive changes and greater membership num-

bers! Everyone on the Executive Committee has already gained valuable experiences from her involvement this year. She's truly an outstanding asset!

The summer has been busy, busy, busy! The TSTA House of Delegates was eventful as usual and also productive for the Student Program. We've taken one step closer to lowering student teacher dues and requested additional funds to help our locals and districts with professional development and outreach opportunities. Several of us attended the NEA-Student Program Summer Leadership Conference in Philadelphia at the end of June. Once again, we gained valuable insight into leading our association and becoming better educators.

We also enjoyed the uplifting experience of providing much needed assistance to Gotwals Elementary School by laying new sod, decorating bulletin boards, putting up walls, cleaning and painting their entire campus. It was another successful outreach project led by the NEA to promote our mission of providing every child a great public education! It is our hope to take many more of our members to next year's conference! More details will follow on how your local can receive financial assistance to fund this trip!

Of course, the highlight of the summer is always the NEA Representative Assembly! This year we had the privilege of hearing many of the presidential candidates speak about their stand on public education and how they plan to help improve the system for our future.

Check www.tsta.org/inside/student for the latest news on funding assistance for your local, convention plans, the latest news and information about the Student Program, and the new and improved Student Program Handbook! I hope you all have a great start in your Fall classes and I look forward to working hard for the Student Program in my last year as State President!



SUMMER PHOTO ALBUM

United Education Support Professionals (above) was one of many TSTA local associations to set up a booth at new employee orientations (NEO) in August. Go to the photo album on www.tsta.org to see pictures of NEOs and other summer activities, including the NEA Representative Assembly, TSTA Summer Leadership Conference, and TSTA Ambassador Academy.

TSTA-RETIRED NEWS

Nominations Are Due: Nominations are currently in order for the following positions.

- TSTA-Retired Secretary and TSTA-Retired Treasurer (form below)
- TSTA/NEA-Retired Delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly (form on pages 28-29)
- Retired At-Large Delegate to the TSTA House of Delegates (form on page 30)

All elections will take place February-March 2008 by mailed ballots. Members may nominate themselves or other members. Feel free to make additional copies of the form to nominate for more than one position. Please remember that you must obtain written permission from your nominee. You must be a Retired Active Member to nominate and serve. All forms will need to be completed and returned by January 15, 2008, to TSTA-Retired, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701.

Extra information that you might like to know:

- The Secretary and Treasurer offices are for two-year terms (2008-2010).

- The TSTA State Convention will be in Plano.
- The NEA Convention will be in Washington, D.C.

Officers: TSTA-Retired officers for 2007-2008 will be Letha Grace McCoy, president; Johnetta Williams, vice president; Mary Hellburg, secretary; Bobby Southwood, treasurer; and Pauline Dixon, past president.

Meetings: The NEA-Retired Annual Meeting was held in Philadelphia June 26-28, featuring a variety of workshops, speakers and elections. Tom Curan was re-elected the NEA-Retired Vice President along with other positions for the NEA-Retired Board of Directors and Advisory Committee. Members attending from TSTA-Retired were Betty Jo Brown, Marie Gerety, Letha Grace McCoy, Eddie Spence, Fran Valenzuela, Jerry Watkins and Johnetta Williams.

From June 30 to July 5, the NEA Representative Assembly met. Johnetta Williams and Letha Grace McCoy were TSTA-Retired delegates. Members elected to at-large delegate positions were Bobbie Duncan, Eddie Spence

and Jerry Watkins. Highlights included the 150-year celebration of NEA, the 50-year celebration of integration of Little Rock's Central High School, listening to eight Presidential candidates and hearing support for repeal of the Social Security Windfall/Offset Provisions and improvements to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind.

Fran Valenzuela and Jerry Watkins attended the Education International Congress in Berlin, Germany, this summer. They were observers and part of the United States/NEA Team.

TSTA-Retired Conference: Mark June 16-18, 2008, on your calendar. We are returning to the days of our Senior Partners Conference. This conference is very special including workshops, updates on retired issues, great food, shopping, games and FUN!

Web Page: We will be keeping our web page, www.tsta.org/inside/retired, updated with the latest news. Nomination forms are available there, as well as information to keep members and future members updated about retired issues. Please take the time to check it out.

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 _____ Work 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 _____ Work phone _____

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the above information is true and correct.

Nominator's signature _____

Completed forms must be received by 5:00 p.m., January 15, 2008, at TSTA-Retired, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701.

Honoring Excellence

For TSTA's
2007-08 Calendar:
www.tsta.org

TSTA recognizes outstanding members, regional and local associations, communities, businesses, organizations, media representatives, and individuals through its various awards programs. Look for "Awards" in the right column of the homepage, www.tsta.org, or, unless otherwise noted, contact the Center for Executive and Governance at 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1510, for details and nomination forms for the following awards.

Friend of Education Award recognizes either (1) an individual or a major single accomplishment or career effort which has greatly impacted Texas education and which achieves some aspect of educational progress with which TSTA agrees; or (2) an organization/company outside the field of education which has made an outstanding contribution in the field of education. Any TSTA member, local association, region, or other recognized group (e.g., statewide or special committee or caucus) may make nominations. A letter or memorandum of nomination should be submitted, accompanied by a biographical statement providing details about the major single accomplishment or career effort supporting the worthiness of the individual or organization/company to receive this award. Nominations must be received no later than November 30.

Frank J. Tejada Award for Public Service recognizes an individual for service at the state or national political/legislative level on behalf of public school children or educational employees of Texas. Nominees must be elected or appointed officials who are not currently employed full-time by a school district. Nominations must be received no later than November 30.

Professional, Human, and Civil Rights Awards recognize Texas educators, local associations, regional associations and individuals who are friends of education for distinguished service and contributions in promoting and/or encouraging professional and human rights activities. Categories of awards are: Individual, Special, Mickey Leland Memorial, and the Willie Velasquez Memorial. Nominations must be received no later than February 1.

TSTA also encourages regional and local affiliates or individuals to nominate an individual, organization and/or a region or local affiliate for an NEA Human and Civil Rights Award. Go to www.nea.org/annualmeeting/hcrawards; write NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-3290; or call 202-822-7709. Nominations must be postmarked no later than December 15.

Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award recognizes, rewards and promotes teaching excellence. Through this award, teaching excellence, public education, and the NEA's dedicated members are honored. A nomination packet must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 1. The recipient of this award will be submitted as TSTA's nominee for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, so individuals who are applying for the Boice award should comply with the guidelines provided for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence (www.neafoundation.org).



Ronnie Ray ESP Advocate of the Year Award recognizes a TSTA educational support professional whose activities reflect the contributions of ESP to public education and show outstanding accomplishments in one or more of the following areas: innovations to support the day-to-day educational process; professional achievements in his/her classification; involvement in the promotion of public education in the community; involvement in local, state, or national association; and enhancement of ESPs' image in his/her association, work site, or community. Nominations are accepted from regions and/or local affiliates. For a nomination form and nomination guidelines, contact the Center for Executive and Governance by email (carolm@tsta.org) or by calling 1-800-323-5355, ext. 1510. The deadline for submitting nominations is September 30. Your nominee must have been an educational support professional member of TSTA for three years (as of January 15) whose activities reflect contributions to public education and show outstanding accomplishments.

School Bell Awards recognize out-

standing media coverage of education issues and events. Awards are presented at our annual state convention. The deadline for nominations is January 31. Download the instruction booklet and nomination form at our website. For more information, contact TSTA's Center for Public Affairs at 877-ASK-TSTA.

Pride in Communications Awards recognize outstanding local/regional association newsletters and web sites. Entries are judged on the extent to which the local and/or regional association programs are identified and explained. Entry forms must be received by March 1 by TSTA's Center for Public Affairs, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701.

Instructional Awards recognize local associations for activity and accomplishments, encourage all locals to enhance their level of activity and accomplishment, and incorporate certain strands of the NEA's Priority Schools Initiative into local association planning. Go to http://www.tsta.org/teaching/current/instructional_awards.shtml or contact TSTA's Center for Public Affairs at 877-ASK-TSTA for details.

Dr. Sally Ride
Discover your Destination

TCEA 2008

Inspiring Speakers
Opening Keynote, Sally Ride, Former NASA Shuttle Astronaut and Mission Specialist
Thursday Speaker, David Pogue, Personal-technology Columnist for the *New York Times*
Friday Keynote, Marco Torres, Outstanding Educator

One-to-One Workshops
 New this year, all workshops will be one-to-one! Over 327 concurrent sessions are Super Sessions, with room for 200 people!

More Exhibits
 Over 700 Exhibit Booths showcasing cutting-edge educational technology!

Texas-Sized Events
 Austin City Limits with Texas' Official State Musician, Shelley King, and Thursday Social featuring the band, "Texas Unlimited"

Register online at www.tcea2008.org

2008 TCEA Discover your Destination

**Texas Computer Education Association
 28th Annual Convention & Exposition
 Feb. 4-8, 2008 • Austin Convention Center**

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

The Merchant of



ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY:
 Rebecca Greene Udden

January 14 - April 11, 2008

DATES: January 14 – April 11, 2008

SHOW TIMES: Performance and activity times arranged on a need basis.

PRICING: \$800.00 for a single performance
 \$1000.00 for a back-to-back performance

TOUR IS FREE TO TITLE 1 SCHOOLS! (Travel fees excluded)

CAPACITY FOR SHOW: 350

LENGTH OF TOUR: 90 minutes (including a brief talk back)

Recommended for Middle and High School students

Main Street Theater's production is part of *Shakespeare for a New Generation*, a national theater initiative sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest.

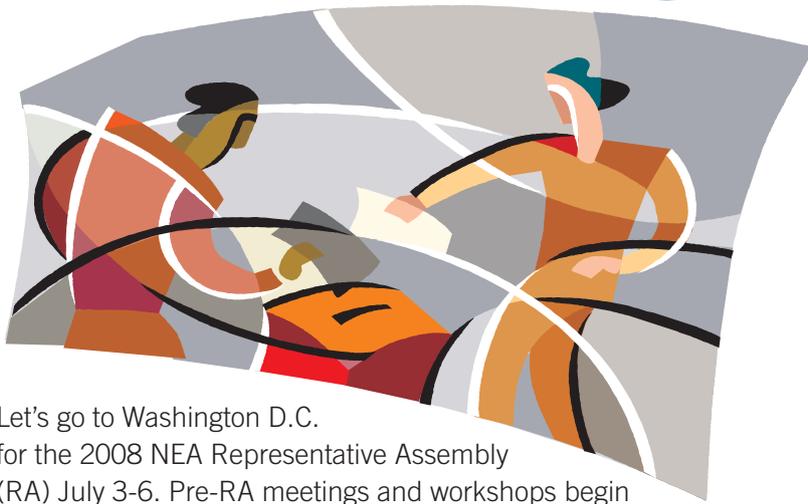


**MainStage
 Main Street
 Youth Theater
 Kids On Stage**



WWW.MAINSTREETTHEATER.COM

National Delegate Elections



Let's go to Washington D.C. for the 2008 NEA Representative Assembly (RA) July 3-6. Pre-RA meetings and workshops begin on June 25. The first Texas Caucus meeting will be on July 1.

The exact number of delegates from Texas will be determined by our TSTA/NEA membership as of January 15, 2008. TSTA will be allocated one state delegate for every 1,000 Active (Professional or ESP) and Active Life Active NEA members, and locals will be allocated one local delegate for every 150 members, or major fraction thereof.

NEA has established a policy of encouraging ethnic-minority representation reflective of the ethnic make-up of the state's population. The goal for TSTA is to elect at least 48% of our total delegation from among our ethnic-minority members. We cannot accomplish this goal unless all of our leaders and caucuses help recruit ethnic-minority candidates to run for delegate positions at both the state and local levels, and it is most important that the elected delegates attend the RA.

There is no funding from TSTA for state delegates. Some regions and a few locals provide some funding for state delegates.

Below you will find some of the specific requirements and timelines for election of state and local association delegates. Anyone with questions about the elections, or needing other information about the process, should contact Sandra Solimine at TSTA, 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or email sandras@tsta.org.

Please note that we cannot determine until after January 15 exactly how many state delegates we will elect or exactly how we will elect them. At least one state delegate will be elected on a statewide ballot. The remaining state delegates will be allocated to individual regions or to clusters of regions or, possibly, statewide. They will be allocated in a manner to comply with NEA rules on one-person, one-vote, and in accordance with TSTA policy.

STATE DELEGATES

The Advocate containing ballots for the election of state delegates should be received by members by March 31, 2008. Deadline for return receipt of ballots at TSTA is April 25, 2008, by 5 p.m.

NEA requires that all elections for state and local delegates must be conducted by open nominations and secret ballots. At the end of this article you will find a nomination form to seek election as a state delegate to the 2008 NEA RA. If you would like to run for a delegate position, please complete the form (or a copy of it) and return it to TSTA.

The form must be received by the Center for Executive and Governance at TSTA no later than January 11, 2008, in order for your name to appear on the printed ballot.

Each candidate for state delegate is entitled to have his or her name published in the *Advocate*, along with a biographical sketch of 25 words or less, which may include ethnic status.

NEA also requires proportional representation for supervisory and non-supervisory members. In order to insure this is not violated, supervisory members are not eligible to run for state delegate as outlined above. Instead, all supervisory members are eligible to run in a separate election for Category 2 State At-Large Delegate (which also includes NEA Active Life Retired members).

In addition, supervisory members who also are members of a local may run in the statewide supervisory cluster election unless their local is not a part of that cluster. Locals are removed from this cluster only if their inclusion would cost the local a non-supervisory delegate. Locals will be notified in February if they have been removed from the cluster.

Supervisory members desiring to seek election as a delegate should complete and return the nomination form (marking the appropriate box to run for a Category 2 delegate) along with the 25-word statement. Those supervisory members that return the form and who are eligible to run in the supervisory cluster will automatically be included on the ballot for that election as well.

Again, if you have questions please call Sandra Solimine at 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514, or sandras@tsta.org.

LOCAL DELEGATES

Since local associations are allocated one delegate for each 150 NEA members or major fraction thereof, a local must have at least 76 members (Active and Life) to qualify for a delegate. Locals with fewer than 76 members may cluster together for the purpose of electing local delegates. If you are a member in one of these smaller locals and would like to be a delegate, please contact Sandra Solimine as described above.

NEA will notify locals in mid-February of the number of delegates allocated for each local. Locals will be provided official NEA forms for reporting data about local delegates and alternates ("successor delegates").

Those completed forms must be received by TSTA no later than April 10, 2008, in order to insure proper credentials at the NEA RA. Locals must conduct an election that provides for open nominations and secret ballots. That can be done either by delivering a nomination form to each member (using a local newsletter is permissible), then insuring each member gets a ballot with the names of those returning the form, or by holding an all-member meeting, with proper notice to each member, and accepting nominations at the meeting, then voting by secret ballot.

RETIRED DELEGATES

TSTA-Retired/NEA-Retired members may run as either retired delegates or state delegates. The two elections have different eligibility re-

quirements. (1) The Retired Delegate Nomination Form is for a TSTA-R/NEA-R member who seeks election as a TSTA-R/NEA-R delegate. (2) A retired member who was an NEA Active Life member while teaching may seek election as a Category 2 State At-Large delegate by completing and returning the state delegate Nomination Form and checking the Category 2 box. Those who are eligible to run in both elections must choose; they may file in only one election. The deadline for submitting a nomination form (and an optional biographical sketch of 25 words or less) is January 15, 2008. For this election, one delegate is allocated for the first 50 TSTA-R/NEA-R members and an additional delegate for each additional 1,000 TSTA-R/NEA-R members.

RETIRED DELEGATE NOMINATION FORM

NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY TSTA/NEA-RETIRED DELEGATE POSITIONS—JULY 1-6, 2008

Deadline for receipt at TSTA Headquarters is January 15, 2008, 5:00 p.m. (This form is also available online at www.tsta.org)

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Day Phone _____
Email _____ Social Security No. _____

ETHNIC GROUP: (Check all that apply)

- American Indian/Alaska Native Asian Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Multi-ethnic
 Black Hispanic Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin) Other _____
 Check here if you do not want your ethnicity printed
 Enclosed is my biographical sketch of 25 words or less which will be sent with the ballot. (Note: If your statement exceeds 25 words, it will be cut at 25 words.)
 Check here if you will be a first-time delegate

Send by U.S. Mail or FAX (512-486-7043) to: TSTA-Retired, 316 W. 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701

Signature of Nominee _____

STATE DELEGATE NOMINATION FORM

2008 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY STATE DELEGATES

Deadline for receipt at TSTA Headquarters is January 11, 2008, 5:00 p.m. (This form is also available online at www.tsta.org)

NOMINEE FOR: (Check one)

- State At-Large Delegate: Category 1—Teacher, ESP or other Non-Supervisor
 State At-Large Delegate: Category 2—Administrator or NEA Active Life Retired*
 Statewide Supervisory Cluster—Supervisors who are members of a local association**

*NEA Active Life Retired—NEA Active Life member while teaching and now retired

**Supervisory members whose local chooses not to participate in the cluster are not eligible to run in this election.

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____ Cell Phone _____
Email _____ Social Security No. _____
Local Association _____ TSTA Region _____ Work Site _____
Position (Teacher, Principal, ESP, etc.) _____ Supervisory Non-Supervisory

ETHNIC GROUP: (Check all that apply)

- American Indian/Alaska Native Asian Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Multi-ethnic
 Black Hispanic Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin) Other _____
 Check here if you do not want your ethnicity printed
 Enclosed is my biographical sketch of 25 words or less which will be published in the spring *Advocate*. (Note: If your statement exceeds 25 words, it will be cut at 25 words.)
 Check here if you will be a first-time delegate

Send by U.S. Mail or FAX (512-486-7053) to: Sandra Solimine, TSTA, Organizing Center for Executive and Governance, 316 W. 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701

Signature of Nominee _____

TSTA State Convention Delegate Elections



State delegate allocations for local associations (including Texas Faculty Association) to the April 18-19, 2008, TSTA House of Delegates will be sent to local presidents on January 22. Delegates are allocated to locals in a ratio of one delegate for every 50 members or major fraction based on the local's Active Professional, Life and Active ESP membership on January 15, 2008. The policy regarding election of delegates, forms and timelines will accompany the allocation.

If a local wishes to conduct its election for delegates prior to January 15, it may do so and keep a list of delegates in the order of votes received. When the local delegate allocation is received by the local, then the top vote getters who are delegates are listed as delegates and the remaining vote getters are listed as alternates.

Contact Sandra Solimine in the Organizing Center for Executive and Governance at 877-ASK-TSTA, extension 1514, or sandras@tsta.org if you have questions regarding the elections.

ATTENTION, RETIRED MEMBERS:

According to the TSTA Bylaws, retired at-large delegates for the state House of Delegates are allocated to TSTA-Retired/NEA-Retired members. The number of at-large TSTA-R delegates will be based on TSTA-Retired membership as of January 15, 2008. In order to run for a TSTA-R at-large delegate position, a candidate must be a member of TSTA-R and NEA-R.

These at-large retired delegates are allocated in the ratio of one delegate for every 75 members or major fraction thereof. Nomination forms must be received by January 15, 2008. Ballots for the election will be sent to members in early February 2008. The deadline for returning ballots to TSTA Headquarters is March 20, 2008.

Any retired member who is a TSTA-R/NEA-R member may nominate himself/herself or another qualified member for a retired delegate position.

NOMINATION FORM

RETIRED AT-LARGE DELEGATE POSITIONS—TSTA HOUSE OF DELEGATES—APRIL 18-19, 2008

The deadline for receipt of this nomination form at TSTA's Headquarters is January 15, 2008. (This form is also available online at www.tsta.org.)

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Day Phone _____

Email _____ Social Security No. _____

ETHNIC GROUP: (Check all that apply)

- American Indian/Alaska Native Asian Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Multi-ethnic
- Black Hispanic Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin) Other _____
- Check here if you do not want your ethnicity printed
- Enclosed is my biographical sketch of 25 words or less which will be sent with the ballot. (Note: If your statement exceeds 25 words, it will be cut at 25 words.)
- Check here if you will be a first-time delegate

Send by U.S. Mail or FAX (512-486-7043) to: TSTA-Retired, 316 W. 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701

Signature of Nominee _____



TSTA/NEA

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION/NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

877-ASK-TSTA • www.tsta.org

2007-08 ENROLLMENT FORM

Please return this completed form to your Association Representative or mail to TSTA Membership Department, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701-1892. If you have questions, call **877-ASK-TSTA**.

NAME			SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER			DATE OF BIRTH					
ADDRESS						LOCAL ASSOCIATION			HIRE DATE		
CITY		STATE		ZIP		NAME OF ISD					
EMAIL AT HOME						CAMPUS/WORKSITE					
EMAIL AT WORK						POSITION (I.E. CLASSROOM TEACHER, LIBRARIAN, BUS DRIVER, ETC.)					

AREA CODE	HOME PHONE	AREA CODE	WORK PHONE
-----------	------------	-----------	------------

ETHNICITY

American Indian/Alaska Native Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 Black Unknown
 Hispanic Multi-ethnic
 Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin) Other
 Asian

Ethnicity information is optional and failure to provide it will in no way affect your membership status, rights or benefits in NEA, TSTA or any of their affiliates. This information will be kept confidential.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ANNUAL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS	AMOUNT
	1. Professional Dues—TSTA/NEA (Active)	\$409.00
	Professional Dues—New to the profession	\$280.00
	2. Educational Support Dues—Full-time	\$214.50
	Educational Support Dues—Part-time	\$111.50
	3. NEA Fund for Children and Public Education (suggested amount \$15.00)	
	4. TSTA-PAC (see disclaimer below)	\$ 9.00
	5. Region Dues	
	6. Local Association Dues	
	TOTAL	

NOTE: Membership must include local and region dues if eligible.

METHOD OF PAYMENT
PAYROLL DEDUCTION AUTHORIZATION (BELOW)

I hereby authorize the _____ School District to deduct the total amount of the annual obligation as set by the appropriate Association governance bodies in _____ equal payments in order to pay my dues to the professional associations and organizations listed and for political action contributions indicated. The authorization will continue in effect for this school year and future years, including any increase that may occur, until I give written notice to the local by September 15 to revoke. I further authorize any unpaid annual balance to be deducted from my final check. The Local Association or TSTA/NEA will notify School District officials of the annual dues amounts for all levels of the Association each year.

_____ Please check if you would like to receive TSTA's electronic newsletter, the *TSTA Briefing*, which is distributed by email at least once a week.
Send to: home email address work email address

Former student member?
_____ YES _____ NO

The TSTA Political Action Committee (TSTA-PAC) and the National Education Association Fund for Children and Public Education collect voluntary contributions from Association members and use these contributions for political purposes, including, but not limited to, making contributions to and expenditures on behalf of friends of public education who are candidates for federal office. Contributions to TSTA-PAC and The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education are voluntary; making a contribution is neither a condition of employment nor membership in the Association, and members have the right to refuse to contribute without suffering any reprisal. Although The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education requests an annual contribution of \$15, this is only a suggestion. A member may contribute more or less than the suggested amount, or may contribute nothing at all, without it affecting his or her membership status, rights, or benefits in NEA or any of its affiliates.

Contributions or gifts to The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, TSTA-PAC and local PACs are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.

Federal law requires political committees to report the name, mailing address, occupation, and name of employer for each individual whose contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year.

Federal law prohibits The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education from receiving donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families. All donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families, will be returned forthwith.

"I decline to contribute to TSTA-PAC and I understand this will not in any way affect my membership status or rights." _____ INITIAL _____

Annual membership dues to NEA include \$4.90 for NEA Today, \$2.85 for NEA-Retired, \$2.85 for Tomorrow's Teacher and/or \$19.25 for the Higher Education publications. The NEA publication(s) received by members are based on membership category. Annual membership dues to TSTA include subscription to the TSTA Advocate. Membership is open only to those who agree to subscribe to the goals and objectives of the Association and to abide by its constitution and bylaws.

Dues payments are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Dues payments (or a portion) may be deductible as a miscellaneous itemized deduction.

Legal Liability Coverage: Members of TSTA/NEA are automatically covered by \$6 million for most legal claims (\$300,000 for civil rights claims) while acting in the scope of employment. \$1 million is underwritten by Horace Mann Ins. Co. or successor provider selected by NEA. \$5 million excess is underwritten by United National Ins. Co., an A.M. Best Rated A+ (superior) carrier or successor provider selected by TSTA. Coverage is subject to the terms, conditions and exclusions of the policies which are available to members upon request by calling the TSTA Help Center at 877-ASK-TSTA. Notice required by Art. 21.54 of the Texas Insurance Code: These insurers may not be subject to all the laws and regulations of Texas. The insurance solvency guarantee fund may not be available to you or to TSTA.

Employment Defense: To be considered for legal services for job protection, membership is required for at least 30 days before the member knew or should have known of the events or occurrences leading up to the action complained about. Pre-existing conditions will not be pursued, except by discretion of TSTA.

MEMBER SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____ LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE _____



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