

NATION'S TOP TEACHER • LESSONS LEARNED ON FINGERPRINTING

Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

FALL 2008



Do the Math

No, Really. Do the Math.

Are You Ready for November?

CHECK OUT THE TSTA VOTING GUIDE

Changes at TSTA

FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR NEW LEADERS

Fixing a Badly Flawed System



In February, TSTA released a detailed report on the state's school accountability system with our recommendations for change. Misuse of high-stakes standardized testing has prevented us from collecting the meaningful and accurate data on school and student performance that both the state and school districts need to ensure great public schools for every child, the report concluded. We hoped to accomplish two things:

- Convince the Select Committee on Public School Accountability that change is overdue and lay out the benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of any suggestions for reform.
- Stimulate broader public discussion on accountability and what such a system can reasonably be expected to accomplish.

The select committee's leadership seems to have gotten the message that change is overdue, judging from the comments its leaders, Rep. Rob Eissler and Sen. Florence Shapiro, have made. At the committee's first meeting, Eissler said the state needs an accountability system "with more carrot and less stick." He clearly recognizes that using standardized testing to punish school districts, campuses, students, and teachers just doesn't work.

Other organizations have joined the discussion. Raise Your Hand Texas and the Texas Institute for Education Reform (TIER) recently issued their own reports, both calling for an end to overreliance on high-stakes testing.

Raise Your Hand Texas, led by former Lt. Gov. Bill Ratliff, recommends that accountability "focus on improvement rather than labeling," which can be done by using more than one tool for measuring performance; setting "high expectations for achievement for all students"; and making the system "complex enough to differentiate among schools and districts" and "fair in addressing the diversity of educational settings and challenges."

TIER calls for "administering several different types of assessments [which] will provide Texans with a comprehensive, comparative and fully nuanced understanding of student performance." Unfortunately, it also calls for private school vouchers and merit pay for teachers, neither of which belongs in a report on accountability reform.

As lawmakers review these proposals and others that are likely to be released before January, we urge them to remember that, for meaningful and accurate measurements, an accountability system has to:

- Be diagnostic, not punitive.
- Be compatible with the federal accountability system.
- Measure growth.
- Evaluate necessary skills rather than irrelevant content.
- Have local control rather than remote control.

Accountability is about measurement only, not achievement. Changing the Texas accountability model must begin with this premise. Otherwise, change is likely to repeat the mistakes and shortcomings of the seriously flawed system it will replace. That would be bad for the students, teachers, and, most important, future of Texas.

—TSTA President Rita Haecker



NEA member Michael Geisen of Oregon, shown here with his family, is the National Teacher of the Year.

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Advocate

Vol. 28, No. 1 Fall 2008

TSTA Advocate is an official quarterly publication of the Texas State Teachers Association, affiliate of the National Education Association.

How to Contact Us: Call 877-ASK-TSTA, visit www.tsta.org, or write to TSTA, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701. Please send address changes to the attention of Membership Records or membershiprecords@tsta.org.

Advertising: If you would like to advertise, contact Claire Moore at 512-476-5355, ext. 1292.

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Read our report
in the Pressroom
www.tsta.org



Clockwise from top left, a few of TSTA-PAC's recommended candidates: Barack Obama (photo by Joe Bean), Rick Noriega, Sherrie Matula, Laura Ewing.

Who Will Be Our Strongest Supporters?

TAKS. NCLB. AYP. IDEA. ARD. EOC. RTI. ESL. TEEG. Sometimes we have to step back and remember that teaching is about more than acronyms and tests. It's about our children and our country's standing among nations.

On November 4, key races in America will decide everything from who will be the next president to who will sit on the local school board. Every decision that impacts the students and employees in our public schools will be made by the people who are elected this fall.

The stakes are high. Increasingly we are trapped in a system that views students as products and teachers as assembly line workers. High stakes testing is driving the system to the point there isn't anything that hasn't been or won't be sacrificed on the altar of TAKS.

School districts' finances are mired down in a system designed to perpetually underfund education. Those who believe that public dollars should be used to fund private schools continue to look for any avenue to move their agenda. We must be engaged in this fight.

TSTA members at the local, state, and national level have reviewed voting records and questionnaires, and interviewed candidates to determine which would be the strongest supporters of public education. Their recommendations are listed on the next page.

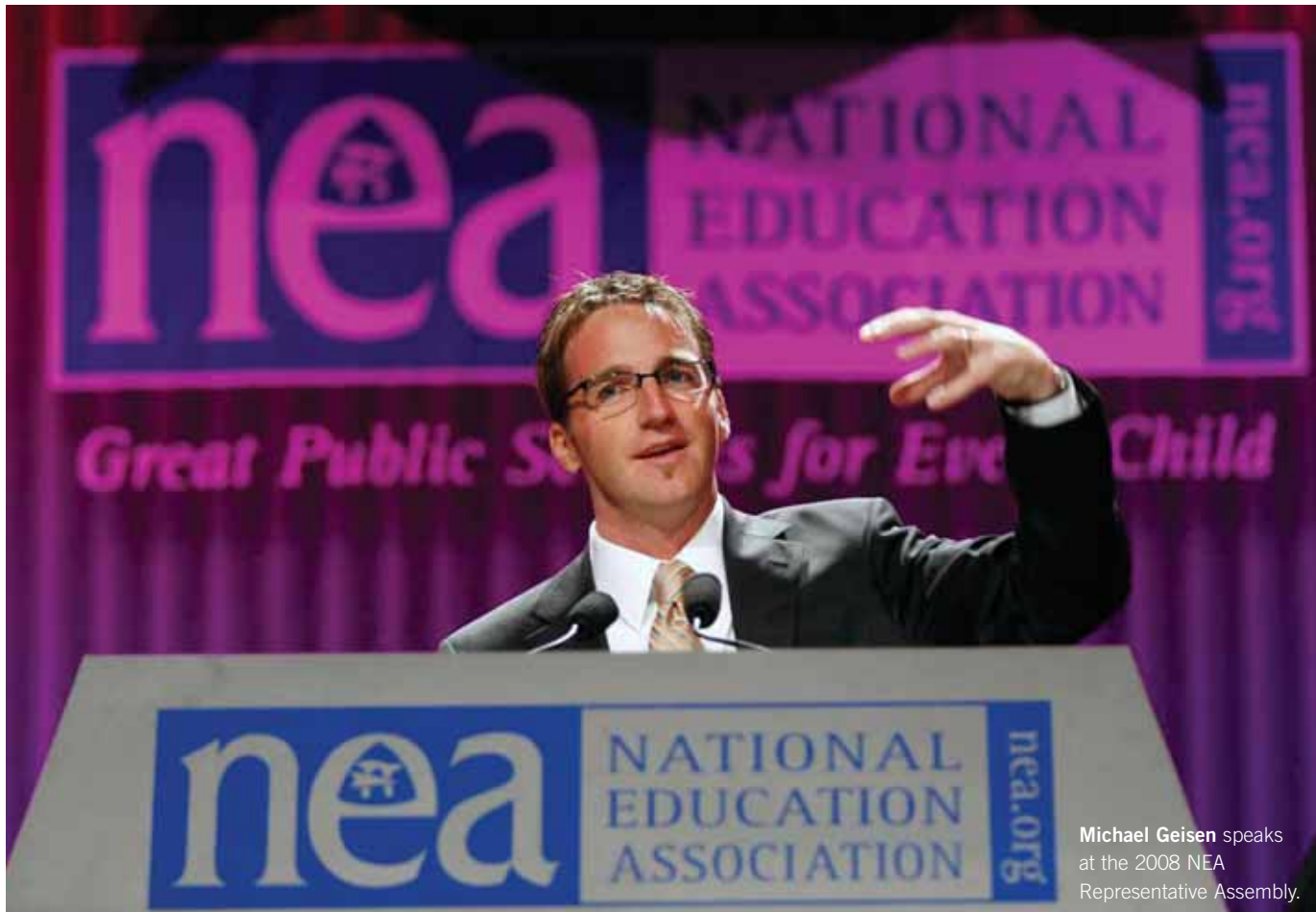
The TSTA Political Action Committee met August 20 to allocate over \$400,000 that you contributed, voluntarily, to help our recommended candidates get elected. While contributions are important, what is more important is that we get involved in campaigns at every level. Our strength as an organization is in our ability to engage in grassroots organizing across the state. Two or three hours of block walking or making phone calls for a candidate could be an invaluable investment in the future of public education.

Please contact your local president or go to www.tsta.org and click on the "Help Elect Friends of Public Education" banner to find out how you can help.

NOVEMBER 2008 ELECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

TSTA Political Action Committee recommends the following candidates in the General Election.

President			
Barack Obama			
U.S. Senate			
Rick Noriega			
U.S. Congress			
09	Al Green	012	Jim McReynolds
10	Larry Joe Doherty	014	Fred Brown
15	Rubén Hinojosa	015	Rob Eissler
16	Silvestre Reyes	016	Brandon Creighton
17	Chet Edwards	017	Donnie Dippel
18	Sheila Jackson Lee	019	Mike Hamilton
20	Charlie Gonzalez	021	Allan Ritter
22	Nick Lampson	022	Joe Deshotel
23	Ciro D. Rodriguez	023	Craig Eiland
25	Lloyd Doggett	027	Dora Olivo
27	Solomon P. Ortiz	031	Ryan Guillen
28	Henry Cuellar	032	Juan Garcia
29	Gene Green	033	Solomon Ortiz Jr.
30	Eddie Bernice Johnson	034	Abel Herrero
		035	Yvonne Toureilles
		036	Kino Flores
		037	Rene Oliveira
		038	Eddie Lucio III
		039	Mando Martinez
		040	Aaron Pena
		041	Veronica Gonzales
		042	Richard Raymond
		043	Tara Rios Ybarra
		044	Edmund Kuempel
		045	Patrick Rose
		046	Dawanna Dukes
		047	Valinda Bolton
		048	Donna Howard
		049	Elliott Naishtat
		050	Mark Strama
		051	Eddie Rodriguez
		052	Diana Maldonado
		054	Jimmie Aycock
		055	Sam Murphey
		057	Jim Dunnam
		066	Brian McCall
		069	David Farabee
		071	Susan King
		072	Drew Darby
		073	Doug Miller
		074	Pete Gallego
		075	Chente Quintanilla
		076	Norma Chavez
		077	Marisa Marquez
		078	Joe Moody
		079	Joe Pickett
		080	Tracy King
		083	Delwin Jones
		085	Joe Heflin
		090	Lon Burnam
		093	Paula Pierson
		094	Diane Patrick
		095	Marc Veasey
		096	Chris Turner
		097	Dan Barrett
		099	Charlie Geren
		100	Terri Hodge
		101	Robert Miklos
		102	Carol Kent
		103	Rafael Anchia
		104	Roberto Alonzo
		105	Bob Romano
		106	Kirk England
		107	Allen Vaught
		109	Helen Giddings
		110	Barbara Caraway
		111	Yvonne Davis
		112	Sandra VuLe
		116	Trey Martinez Fischer
		117	David Leibowitz
		118	Joe Farias
		119	Roland Gutierrez
		120	Ruth Jones McClendon
		123	Mike Villarreal
		124	Jose Menendez
		125	Joaquin Castro
		129	Sherrie Matula
		131	Alma Allen
		133	Kristi Thibaut
		134	Ellen Cohen
		137	Scott Hochberg
		138	Ginny McDavid
		139	Sylvester Turner
		140	Armando Walle
		141	Senfronia Thompson
		142	Harold Dutton
		143	Ana Hernandez
		144	Joel Redmond
		145	Carol Alvarado
		146	Al Edwards
		147	Garnet Coleman
		148	Jessica Farrar
		149	Hubert Vo
State Board of Education			
02	Mary Helen Berlanga		
07	Laura Ewing		
11	Pat Hardy		
13	Mavis Knight		
Texas Senate			
06	Mario Gallegos		
10	Wendy Davis		
11	Joe Jaworski		
16	John Carona		
17	Chris Bell		
20	Juan Hinojosa		
21	Judith Zaffirini		
23	Royce West		
26	Leticia Van de Putte		
27	Eddie Lucio, Jr.		
Texas House of Representatives			
001	Stephen Frost		
003	Mark Homer		
007	Tommy Merritt		
008	Byron Cook		
010	Jim Pitts		
011	Chuck Hopson		



Michael Geisen speaks at the 2008 NEA Representative Assembly.

Quotes: National Teacher of the Year

“Let us all in America sincerely focus on the whole child, not just test scores or future adult success. The further from children one is, the easier it becomes to forget that we are dealing with real live human beings with legitimate needs, desires, and feelings. These young people are our equals. They are not simply numbers, conglomerations of hormones, or future products. All the latest programs, fads, and statistics are meaningless to a child who isn’t cared for on a deeper level. Whether you are a teacher or parent, businessperson or retired, young or old: reach deep down into each child with humor, love, and compassion and they will learn from you. They will learn much more than just how to read and write; they will learn they are wonderfully human.”

Michael Geisen of Oregon, a forester-turned-middle-school-science-teacher and NEA member, is the 2008 National Teacher of the Year. Here are a few of his thoughts on education, as reported by the Learning First Alliance (www.learningfirst.org) and Council of Chief State School Officers (www.ccsso.org).

- We are in a system where I think we’ve really enshrined certain aspects of intelligence and really focused on those to the exclusion of developing the whole child. So I really want to try and help not only teachers at the classroom level but all the way up through policymakers to find a better balance in education. Because we need to start really viewing intelligence as multi-faceted and unique to each child, and help them develop their own unique way of how they’re going to thrive in the world.

- My general approach is to really take a multitude of approaches to learn a particular concept. We may act it out. We do a lot of computer simulations. We do discussions. Some students are very musical, and so I write songs and music about science concepts.
- I post one or two critical things that we’re trying to learn for that unit in a prominent place in the classroom, in front of the class. I share with students, “Here’s what we’re trying to learn,” and I post it up there for a couple of weeks. Not only does it help the students focus on what they’re trying to learn, but it also helps me. I need to look up there and say, “Hey, is what I’m doing right now related to that content standard?” I call them the “SAPSBATDOs.” It’s just a silly acronym that stands for “stuff all people should be able to do.” But it’s kind of evolved into this strange martial arts theme and people become SAPSBATDO masters....

- I quickly realized that, okay, I’m not just teaching science, I’m dealing with human beings. I think I’ve focused more on developing our classroom into community, and not been so concerned with getting through what we’re supposed to get through.

Because [a student is] not going to be learning that day if dad has left them, or—I’ve got kids who have parents who are in jail and they’re concerned because he’s about to get out. These are real issues. And you can’t learn when that’s pressing on you. So sometimes I just need to back off and realize, okay, probably it’s not the most important thing for this student right now to focus on what’s the difference between a plant and animal cell.

- I think what we really need in education is to stop enshrining this very narrow view of intelligence, and we need to start to formally value other forms of intelligence that are going to be essential in the 21st century.

ELECTIONS & CONVENTIONS

NOTICE OF FILING DEADLINE FOR NEA DIRECTOR

New TSTA President Rita Haecker announced at the recent TSTA Board of Directors’ meeting that she was resigning her position as NEA Director, Place 1, effective immediately. Under NEA Bylaws and policies, an interim director will be appointed at the next NEA Board meeting to fill that position until an election can be held in the normal manner to fill the remainder of the term. Region 3B President Frances Smith is being recommended by TSTA to serve until the election can be held.

That means there will be two elections for NEA Director at the TSTA House of Delegates in Houston, April 17-18, 2009.

Filing for the Place 2 Director position closed on September 15, 2008. The Place 2 election will be for a three-year term that will run from September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2012.

Filing for Place 1 Director is now open. The term of office for Place 1 will be April 19, 2009 to August 31, 2010. Nominations are due at TSTA’s Organizing Center for Executive and Governance (CEG) by January 9, 2009. Filing forms and information regarding the filing process can be obtained by contacting the CEG by mail at 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701; by phone at 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or 1510; or by email to sandras@tsta.org or carolm@tsta.org.

TEXANS ELECTED TO NEA POSTS

At NEA’s annual convention, the Texas Caucus elected Glenda Hawthorne of Socorro and re-elected Gordon Gauthier of Deer Park and Reagan Hawkins of Nederland to the NEA Resolutions Committee, which prepares and presents to the Representative Assembly resolutions that are proposed for adoption.

POCKETBOOK PLANNING FOR HoD AND NEA-RA

Members attending TSTA’s 2009 State House of Delegates and the 2009 NEA Representative Assembly may want to plan ahead for the travel expenses for these events. Complete lodging and delegate information will appear in the winter and spring issues of the Advocate, but here is a preview of what to expect.

State House of Delegates, April 17-18, 2009, Houston: The Intercontinental Hotel is the official convention hotel for TSTA’s State House of Delegates. The nightly room rate is \$139 plus tax, which currently is 17%, for a total of \$162.63 per night. Daily parking rates for hotel guests are \$8 for self-park and \$14 for valet. The hotel provides shuttle service within a three-mile area and is just a few blocks from Houston’s Galleria Mall and several dining venues. The hotel is located 16 miles from Hobby Airport and 26 miles from Bush Intercontinental Airport.

NEA Representative Assembly, July 3-6, 2009, San Diego, CA: The first Texas Caucus meeting is scheduled for July 1 at the Texas delegation hotel. The Texas delegation will be housed at the Doubletree Mission Valley. The hotel provides complimentary shuttle pick-up from the airport to the hotel. The departure shuttle fee is \$10 and must be reserved 24 hours in advance. The nightly room rate for single/double occupancy is \$170 plus taxes and fees, currently \$21.40, for a total of \$191.40. If more than two people share a room, a \$20 fee per each additional person will apply. Daily parking rates from hotel guests are \$14 for self-park and \$18 for valet. The hotel is conveniently located for a variety of shopping and dining venues, with a trolley stop directly across the street from the hotel. The hotel is approximately 9 miles from the San Diego airport.

Election information on NEA state and retired delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly can be found on pages 28-29. 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.

SENATE BILL 9:

Lessons Learned Since Fingerprinting Became Mandatory

BY JOEY MOORE, TSTA GENERAL COUNSEL AND DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES

Senate Bill 9 mandated that virtually anyone who comes into contact with students submit to some form of criminal background check to gain admittance to campus.

In the last legislative session, the Texas Legislature made sweeping changes to the Texas Education Code related to employee criminal background checks. While the State Board for Educator Certification has fingerprinted all applicants for teaching certificates since

2003, Senate Bill 9 mandated that virtually anyone who comes into contact with students submit to some form of criminal background check to gain admittance to campus.

Since Senate Bill 9 was enacted, several large school districts have completed the background check requirements. Let's reflect on what we've learned in the past year.

Senate Bill 9 requires that all certified educators, classroom substitutes, noncertified employees hired after January 1, 2008, and charter school employees (whether certified or not) who are working in a teaching or professional capacity must submit to a national criminal history check by 2011. That means that educators who received certifications prior to 2003 must now submit to a fingerprint-based background check.

Other employees and volunteers are also affected by Senate Bill 9. Noncertified employees hired before January 1, 2008, employees of contractors who have direct contact with students, student teachers, and some volunteers must submit to a name-based background check. A "volunteer" is defined as a person who has indicated in writing an intention to serve as a volunteer, unless that person (1) is a parent, guardian, or grandparent of a child enrolled in the district; (2) will be accompanied by a district employee while on the school

campus; or (3) is volunteering for a single event on the campus.

Information obtained about the individuals who complete the fingerprinting process is compiled in the Texas Department of Public Safety (TDPS) criminal history clearinghouse. The clearinghouse is a database containing the national criminal history of Texas school employees. TDPS is required to create and update a subscription service for eligible persons to review criminal history information. School districts subscribe to the clearinghouse for \$1 per employee.

RAMIFICATIONS OF THE FINGERPRINTING PROCESS

One of the most common questions the TSTA Help Center has received regarding the fingerprinting process is, "Will I get fired for..." Under the statute, school districts must terminate or refuse to hire anyone who has been convicted of a Title Five felony, which include serious offenses against other people, such as murder, kidnapping, sexual assault, and assault. It is up to the individual school district how they respond to other criminal offenses.

Employees are more likely to encounter employment problems as a result of the fingerprinting process in two situations: (1) if the employee did not disclose his/her criminal history in accordance with the employment application, or (2) if the employee did not report a criminal arrest in accordance with district policy after becoming employed. Keep in mind, though, local policy governs which criminal incidents are required to be reported and which are not. Some incidents, such as certain misdemeanors, may be so minor that

employees don't have to report them. You should always check your local policy to be sure.

ONE DISTRICT LEARNS FROM THE PROCESS

Austin ISD was the first school district to complete the fingerprinting process. To manage the data it obtained from the clearinghouse, AISD created a spreadsheet that contained several categories of information, including data that was part of the background check report, such as the employee's name, criminal history, and other identifying information. The district also included the campus at which the employee worked, the position the employee held, and the employee's hiring date.

Several media sources requested a copy of the spreadsheet through the Texas Public Information Act. The Attorney General ruled that while most of the information was confidential — be-

cause it was information contained in the report obtained from the TDPS — some of the information was not. Specifically, the campus, position, and hiring date were not confidential because those details were not contained in the TDPS report. Interestingly, had the district not included those three additional areas of information that were not included in the TDPS report, no information would have been disclosed.

TSTA and other associations filed suit against the Attorney General and the district, arguing that even with such a limited amount of information being released, it would not be difficult to discover the identity of any particular individual on the list of employees with a criminal history. TSTA argued that public school employees have common law right to privacy just as other individuals do. The case is currently awaiting trial.

Points to Remember

As the first few districts went through the process, the TSTA Help Center received numerous inquiries about possible ramifications for employees. When your district goes through the process, remember these points:

- There are no exceptions. If you are an employee who falls into one of the categories to be fingerprinted, you must do so if you wish to remain employed by the district.
- Not every hit on the criminal background check will result in termination.
- The information contained in the TDPS report is confidential and may only be disclosed to appropriate district personnel.
- It is better to disclose criminal history information in accordance with your district's specific policy than to wait until it shows up on the background check.
- If you have encountered a reportable offense or have missed your deadline to report, contact the TSTA Help Center.



‘WE CARE ABOUT KIDS’

Listen to TSTA's new leaders talk and it's obvious they loved teaching. Now they're taking it to the next level, working to make all schools better.

Both found a teaching position they loved and stayed with it, she as a first grade bilingual teacher in Austin for 16 years, he as a middle school teacher in Klein for 14 years. Both knew from the beginning that TSTA was the only organization that could make a difference. President Rita Haecker and Vice President Jason Hillman share a little about themselves and why they want to lead TSTA.

TSTA PRESIDENT RITA HAECKER

When Rita Haecker and her husband James were expecting their son Jimmy, she knew her \$19,000 teacher salary, even when combined with James' salary, would not be enough to support their new family. She worked a second job throughout her pregnancy.

That frustration almost 20 years ago set Haecker on a path to the TSTA presidency, a position she assumed in July and takes very seriously.

“From the beginning, what I saw in TSTA was teachers becoming directly involved in decisions that affected them in their classroom,” Haecker said. “When you are state president, the members put their livelihoods on your shoulders. I don’t take that lightly. Thousands of people are counting on me, and I’m committed to my members getting the representation they deserve.”

As a child, Haecker witnessed the power of collective action at home. Her father worked in a print shop in San Antonio for \$1.03 an hour, putting in many hours of overtime to support his three children. When he took a job in Austin working for the local newspaper, everything changed. “His benefits went up, his wages went up, and it was a better environment to work in because they had a union,” Haecker recalled.

Her father also taught her the importance of an education. One day he watched a woman apply for a secretarial position at his print shop in San Antonio; when she left, her application was thrown in the garbage.

“He believed the reason was she was not

educated,” Haecker said. “He came home and told us that story, and he said he expected every one of us to do well in school and go to the University of Texas. His expectation was we would not fail; he worked long hours at a hard job, and he expected us to work just as hard at school.”

Haecker did graduate from the University of Texas and, influenced by her music teachers at Travis High School in Austin, she became a teacher.

“What I saw was their unconditional commitment to their students,” Haecker said. “The power of education is dramatic. It makes a difference in every part of your life. My choir director, Josemaria Gonzales, helped me grow, not just musically but as a leader. My mariachi director, Zeke Castro, gave us opportunities to explore different experiences outside of our home and our neighborhood. From that time on, I knew what I wanted to do was give students the experiences I was given.”

She became a first grade bilingual teacher at Kocurek Elementary in Austin, a job she truly loved for 16 years.

“It’s exciting to see children open a book and start to read, and by the end of the year they’re reading everything. It’s a real evolution and a great reward,” she said.

“When you are state president, the members put their livelihoods on your shoulders. I don’t take that lightly. Thousands of people are counting on me. I’m committed to my members getting the representation they deserve.”



“I still have all those first-grade books out in my garage, because sometimes I just like to go back and remember how it is.”

At the beginning of Haecker’s first year as a teacher, a parent approached her about joining TSTA/NEA and the Austin Association of Teachers, now Education Austin.

“Don Bos, the librarian at Metz Elementary, came for his parent conference and asked me if I had joined a professional organization yet. He invited me to a building leaders meeting, and that’s where I became inspired to get involved in TSTA,” Haecker said.

She moved through the ranks from an association representative for her school, to a member of the local execu-

tive board, to NEA director for Texas and full-time vice president of Education Austin.

A merged local association whose members belong to both the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers, Education Austin holds an exclusive consultation agreement with Austin ISD.

“One thing I was really proud of was our two-year agreement over salaries,” Haecker said. “Our employees received an 11½ percent pay raise over two years, and we were able to focus on issues other than pay during consultation, such as quality professional development for teachers and restoring library books.”

Another great memory: restoring rea-

sonable class sizes for art, music, and physical education classes at the elementary level. “It was a two-year fight to educate the public and parents on the importance of a manageable and teachable class size for their kids,” she said. “We were able to keep the momentum high enough to get the school board to reverse its decision and go back to one class for one teacher.”

And then there was the local’s outreach to bilingual parents through two literacy events cosponsored by NEA and AFT. Some 600 parents and teachers spent a Saturday learning more effective ways to teach children through workshops, books, and handouts in Spanish and English. Breakfast and child care were included.

“It was a huge gift to the community that showed how much the association cares about kids and parents,” Haecker said.

“As TSTA president, I want to emphasize that we care about kids,” she continued, “kids who can’t speak English, kids who can’t pass the test, kids who drop out. How are we going to work on that? We need to talk about it, not just as one community or one school district but across the whole state.

“Texas is seeing big challenges,” she continued. “We’re shutting schools down because our minority kids are not doing well on standardized tests. We have millions of kids that are not being educated. We should be working together on the big issues we face.”

When she was an NEA director, she lobbied Congress and the U.S. Senate. “That was very enlightening because I saw the responsiveness of some of them to the issues in our schools, and then I saw some of them that didn’t seem too concerned about social security or NCLB,” Haecker said. “It really opened up my mind to know that we can’t just make an impact at the state level but we must work very hard to elect the right people at the national level, too, because they are key to how federal laws are written and implemented at the state level.”

As a local leader, she worked with state legislators, as well. “We need to form those political relationships and keep meeting with them so they understand why we take the stands on issues that we do,” Haecker said. “I will continue to do that as state president—lobby and visit with legislators and do whatever I need to do to make sure they understand what kind of support

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

- I was born in San Antonio but we moved to Austin when I was two, and I’ve been here ever since.
- I have a brother and sister who both live in Austin. My sister works for Whole Foods as a CPA, and my brother is still in school at the University of Texas and works for a children’s shelter.
- My son Jimmy is a senior in high school. He wants to be a lawyer. He’s a National Hispanic Scholar finalist, so he’ll have a lot of choices of where he can go to school. Of course I’m a little prejudiced; I want him to go to school here at Texas. I’m sure he’s going to be great whatever he does. I look forward to seeing the next part of his life. He’s already a great kid.
- My husband James has worked for the Austin Public Library for 20 years. He loves books and loves to read. He’s very thoughtful and has a peaceful personality. I met him my senior year in high school.
- I read nonfiction—how to build teams and be an effective leader. I’ve read Barbara Jordan’s speeches. I like biographies about strong women leaders. It’s important to see how other leaders dealt with obstacles and challenges. I just read Good to Great by Jim Collins and I’m about to read Death by Meeting by Patrick Lencioni.
- If I had free time, I would be sitting somewhere like the beach, reading a book, maybe listening to music, having some quiet time, walking, doing a lot of reflecting, being with my son, playing with my little nieces. Those are things that take my mind off of work and keep me more centered.

we need for our schools and our employees.

“It’s imperative that we work as a team to come up with strategies and solutions to address those issues that our members are dealing with — the No Child Left Behind law, cuts in funding, the emphasis on testing,” she said. “Our education support professionals unfortunately are still at will employees. They need a living wage that will allow them to support their families; they need health care benefits for themselves and their families; and they need respect, because they aren’t always treated in a professional way. We have to ensure that our school board policies and state laws guarantee that our ESPs have due process in their jobs.”

Her goal for TSTA itself is to increase the strength of local associations by boosting leadership development at every level. Her leadership style is collaborative.

“I believe when you get a group of leaders together you should take advantage of their different perspectives. Meetings should be engaging people, not lecturing them,” Haecker said. “That’s the kind of teacher I was. I never stood in front of my class. You had to look for me. I was there monitoring, but it wasn’t like I had to be the only person talking in front of the class.”

She plans to visit as many local leaders as she can this fall to find out how TSTA can help them, and her goal is to sign up twice as many members as last year, or more. “It’s about building our power in the state,” she said. “It’s exciting, very exciting,” Haecker said of her new role as president. “It’s going to be a lot of work but that’s okay.”

For some adults, being around middle school kids is a nightmare. For new TSTA Vice President Jason Hillman, it was a choice.



When he graduated from college, he spent a semester as a substitute teacher, just to find out which grade level he liked best. He worked at the elementary level and with homebound students, but he found he had an aptitude for working with middle school students.

"Eighth graders will roll with you. They're malleable. They're not jaded," he said. "It's easy to get them to question what you're saying, and that's when the real dialogue opens.

"Education happens through mentoring, and you can't do that unless you can talk with kids, not just at them," Hillman continued. "If you can joke with them and get them to realize you're human, and if you can bear with them as they go through all the changes they go through as teenagers, you'll earn their respect. They're a lot broader as a group than people give them credit for."

Born in Colorado in 1969, Hillman spent a couple of years on a ranch outside of Brownwood, Texas as an elementary student before moving to Georgia and back to Colorado. When he was 13, the family moved back to Texas for good.

His mom taught special education for 34 years, the last 20 in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD; his dad taught government and American history for 29 years, ending with 18 years in Conroe. Now retired, they summer in Maine and return to Magnolia when the leaves start to fall.

With both parents as role models, Hillman was pretty sure he wanted to teach, but he tried a few other fields. "I started in engineering at Tarleton State, but it was too cold," he said. "I'm a people person, and the computer labs didn't agree with me. Then I turned 180 degrees at Sam Houston State University and got a degree in psychology" with additional classes in teaching and geology.

Hillman taught in Klein ISD for 14 years at the same middle school he attended as a student, and he joined TSTA. "It was evident to me that TSTA was the leader. When I started paying attention to the professional organizations, I knew I needed to be part of TSTA."

He started attending building meetings, was elected as a delegate to the TSTA and NEA conventions, then became vice president and president of the Klein Education Association.

Hillman moved up to the state level in 2005, serving for two years as the vice chair and one year as the chair of the TSTA Legislative and Political Action Committee. It was an

exciting time. "We were very successful in the 2006 TSTA Political Action Committee campaign. We elected 104 of 113 of our endorsed candidates," he said.

In addition to TSTA's legislative work, "I've always been interested in the legal end of what we do," he said. "In school law class at Sam Houston, I came to have a real appreciation of the legal end of policy interpretation and how important it is to have the right players to protect our rights. The legislature makes the rules, the Commissioner interprets the rules, and the legal department tweaks the rules. There's a real civic component to what we do. I'm proud to be a part of it."

His wife Cindy is a counselor at Jack Hays High School in Hays CISD; previously she was a counselor in Humble. They have two boys: Reid, who is 11 and starting middle school, and Ryan Mize, who is 22 and just graduated from Texas State University in San Marcos with a degree in geographic information systems.

At the end of August, Hillman's thoughts were with his middle school students back in Klein. "I miss them. I'm sitting here in Austin on what would be the fourth day of school," he said on the day he spoke with the Advocate. His office was a testament to his words: the walls were lined with the posters of NASA and space exploration he always had in his classroom at the beginning of the year.

But he has no regrets. "I'm extremely happy to be here working for such a great organization on behalf of all teachers and other education employees," he said. "I want to make a difference for them."



President Rita Haecker and Vice President Jason Hillman talk with State Rep. Rick Noriega of Houston, TSTA's recommended candidate for U.S. Senate, at the association's Leadership Academy in June.



Nearly 40% of Texas students failed to reach the “proficient” or “advanced” levels on mathematics tests.

Do the Math. No, Really. Do the Math.

BY DR. PAUL HENLEY, TSTA TEACHING AND LEARNING SPECIALIST

THE PROBLEM

Every year in grades 3-11, Texas children are subjected to a high-stakes mathematics test, the TAKS Math. The test determines whether children are promoted. The test gives a numeric worth to a student, a teacher, a campus, and a district.

While few agree on the best way or ways to fix the problem, nearly all educators agree that the United States, and Texas, has a problem. The U.S. Department of Education

(DOE) reported to Congress on state results in reading and mathematics. Only one state, unnamed in the report, hit the mark on making Adequate Yearly Progress. Texas was not that state. Nearly 40% of Texas students failed to reach the “proficient” or “advanced” levels on mathematics tests.

The situation is even more disturbing for minority students. Students in minority sub-groups, especially English Language Learners, are falling further and further behind in their math achievement levels. Even more, the report notes that achievement in both math and reading drops as the grade level of students increases. “With each grade level,” the report says, “fewer states met their targets.”

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

There are a number of reasons that experts give for low scores on mathematics tests. One reason may be that TAKS math tests rely on reading ability. Undiagnosed dyslexia can be a real obstacle, and while some students have testing modified, others are left to read as best they can and accept their results.

Other reasons come from mathematics specialists: math anxiety, lack of direction, and what amounts to a generation gap in math teaching.

Math Anxiety: Mathematics is one of the least popular subjects in schools. Some students hate math. Let’s be honest, some teachers hate math. Some even see mathematics as elitist and geeky.

That stands in direct opposition to the beliefs of Brian Foley, the webmaster of MathMojo.com. He puts it differently:

“Math is the great equalizer. You don’t have to be rich or privileged to excel at it. Some of the greatest mathematicians started out as sons or daughters of poor, rural families. Curiosity and a local library are all you need to get you on your way.”

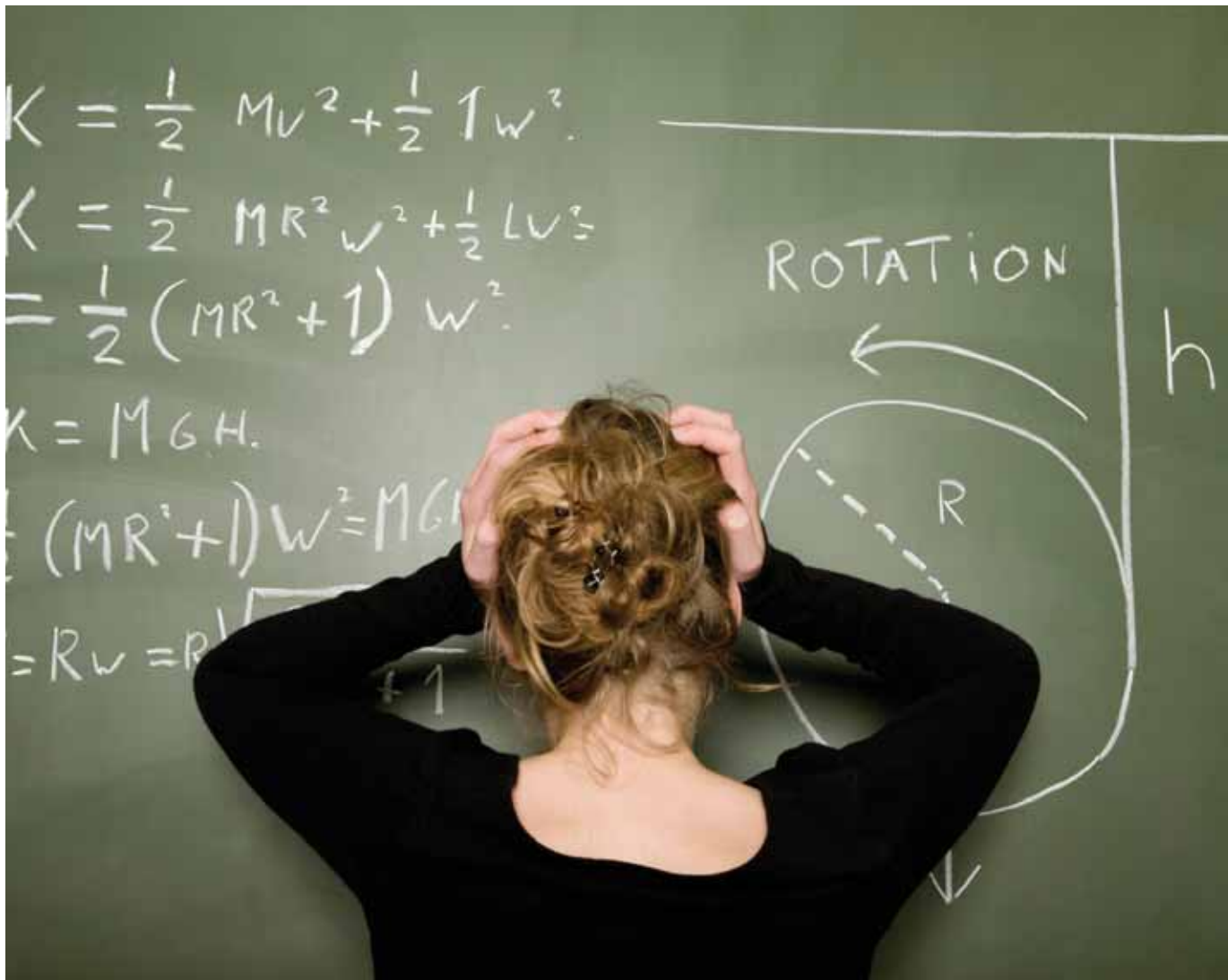
Perhaps, but right now local libraries and current curiosity levels are not producing the success students and teachers both need. It is difficult to be curious when you are anxious, and the stigmas associated with the subject may be part of the issue.

Math anxieties could be broken into two categories. Type I (math aspect) and Type II (psychological aspect). Type I math anxiety is caused by certain math symbols, concepts, or terms which make mental blocks in the learning process. Type II math anxiety is triggered by socio-cultural factors. Fighting math anxieties while also teaching the subject matter may be a reason for lower student achievement. Take heart. Students in other countries don’t seem to like math, either.

Lack of Direction: The DOE sponsors the What Works Clearinghouse, but it does not offer meaningful research on any mathematics teaching strategy.

The Texas Education Agency operates a Best Practices Clearinghouse, but it only has two entries for mathematics. Both spoke to data-driven decision-making, early intervention, and a small student to

“Math is the great equalizer. You don’t have to be rich or privileged to excel at it. Some of the greatest mathematicians started out as sons or daughters of poor, rural families. Curiosity and a local library are all you need to get you on your way.”



teacher ratio. While TSTA advocates for all three of these approaches, none will help a current, contained classroom in and of itself.

Textbooks are also evaluated by the DOE. All but one major textbook series failed to show any measurable student improvement. The most promising program is Everyday Mathematics. Unfortunately, the State Board of Education (SBOE) specifically chose to eliminate that textbook series from approval.

In other words, the SBOE specifically chose to ban the one effective series.

Generation Gap: Math anxiety may have played a role in this ban, which came from a very conservative group of SBOE members who see Everyday Math as a threat to the basic principles they were taught. Everyday Math requires students to find answers on their own, using higher-order thinking skills. That means that a mother with a math minor in college may find that she cannot help her son study as he tries to complete his high school coursework. As one reporter, Joe Sharkey, put it, “Parents are getting frustrated because the method is totally opposite than what we were taught. The children are frustrated

because it takes their parents time to understand the method, then explain it to the child.”

WHAT TO DO?

Nevertheless, there are some suggested approaches that can lead to meaningful gains in mathematics at each level. By keeping things as sensory as possible—and shining a positive light on math—teachers might be able to improve student interest, and achievement, in mathematics.

Elementary School Students: At this age, students need to learn the facts of math. The facts come first, before

larger concepts. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, an 18th century Swiss educator, theorized that learning is best when experience comes before theory. He was right.

Using money, fact cards, races, games, and manipulatives can make learning fun. Variation is key to learning at younger ages, and mathematics offers teachers many different opportunities. Try “Math Facts Race” from NEA’s website (www.nea.org/lessons/2005/tt050322.html) or “Operation: Math” (www.nea.org/lessons/2004/tt040323.html).

Middle School Students: Students learn using three basic means: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. In other words, some students learn by seeing (visual); some students learn by hearing (auditory); still others learn by touching (kinesthetic). While elementary-age students use manipulatives, middle schools tend to phase them out. Giving students opportunities to see, hear, and feel gives all students a chance at learning.

Keep math as “real” as possible. Students like to ask why they need to learn something. Make sure you have a reason. Consider statistics pages like “Numbers in Search of a Problem” (<http://score.kings.k12.ca.us/junkdrawer.html>). If it’s not important to learn something, why teach it (TAKS excepted)?

Many of the lessons suggested for elementary students are easily transferred to middle school situations. In fact, both are listed as compatible for grades K-8.

High School Students: High school students have reached a point where they should have the knowledge, comprehension, and application skills. The whole point of high school mathematics may be using math facts to learn and use math concepts. Like Pestalozzi said, experience should come before theory. High school is the time to learn those theories, as well as the critical thinking skills those theories offer.

There are still kinesthetic learners in high school. Students’ learning styles rarely change.

Algebra may be learned more quickly if students are allowed to use anything physical to learn a concept. This may include magnets on a magnet board or anything tactile. For an example, see the “Figure with Sticks and String Half an Ellipse” at www.geometryexpressions.com (search for Ellipse).

One way to get upper-level students thinking on higher levels is by simply changing roles, turning algebra students into problem solvers. Begin with a question and have students speculate about possible approaches. Such an approach gives students higher-order thinking skills like reversibility, flexibility, and generalization. Discussing logic in algebra helps prepare students for the similar demands from geometric proofs they will experience the next year.

It’s not about beating another country, and it’s not about a school’s label. Perhaps math is the great equalizer, but we won’t know until everybody is able to do it.

RESOURCES ONLINE

- “Fun Mathematics Lessons” was created by Cynthia Lanus, formerly of Rice University. It’s hosted by the Rice University Math Department. <http://math.rice.edu/~lanus/Lessons/index.html>
- For native Spanish speakers, AAA Math presenta una amplia variedad de lecciones interactivas de aritmética. La práctica ilimitada en cada tema facilita alcanzar un amplio dominio de los conceptos. La variada gama de lecciones (de jardín de infantes a octavo grado) posibilita el aprendizaje o la revisión para cualquier alumno en su propio nivel. www.aaamaticas.com
- You’ll find lessons devised by classroom teachers and including a variety of concepts on the website of the Colombia Education Center of Portland, Oregon, a private educational service organization. Lessons are divided by grade bands (K-5, 6-8, 9-12), and each includes a materials list, stated objective, and a section to help teachers “tie it all together.” www.col-ed.org/cur/math.html
- Problems, games, and articles are updated each month on the NRICH website, hosted by the University of Cambridge. This site is very interactive and of interest to teachers as well as students. Use the search bar to access their extensive archives. <http://nrich.maths.org/public>
- NASA’s Rocket Math offers problem-solving space challenges to young students. It’s part of a larger project titled, “3... 2... 1... Liftoff!” Search for “Rocket Math” at NASA’s website. www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/k-4/programs/index.html



One Elected Official at a Time



Socorro Education Association worked to elect school board members Tony Ayub and Joe Sarabia.

With “Improving Education One Elected Official at a Time” as their motto, Socorro Education Association helped elect two new, pro-education school board members, Joe Sarabia and Tony Ayub.

SEA President Glenda Hawthorne said members worked tirelessly in the campaigns.

“Our members helped with the voter registration drive, gave up their Saturdays for two months to stand at intersections with signs, manned the early voting sites, and braved sun, wind, and sandstorms in the process,” she said. “They talked to their friends, families, and neighbors about our recommended candidates and came out to vote during the most stressful week of the whole school year, TAKS.

“It was a long and hard-fought road to victory for these two fine men, but with the help of families, friends, and SEA, we were able to prevail,” Hawthorne said.

The local association is looking forward to working with the new board. “Confidence, communication, and community involvement must



Pasadena Educators Association had a table at Staples Teacher Appreciation Day.

and will be, I am sure, high priorities in Socorro ISD once again,” she said.

BLOGGING FROM JAPAN

In October, Kathryn Brothers will depart for Tokyo as a participant in the Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program. She was selected from over 1,700 applicants to spend three weeks in Japan to promote greater intercultural understanding.

Brothers is the chair of the TSTA Community and Instructional Advocacy Committee, vice president for teacher affairs for NEA-Dallas/TSTA/NEA, and a teacher at Lagow Elementary in Dallas ISD.

Follow her blog at www.trimmingthebonsai.blogspot.com or read more about the program at <http://www.fulbrightmemorialfund.jp>.

LAREDO LOCALS CLOSE TO 3,000 STRONG

As the Advocate went to press, TSTA’s Laredo local associations — Laredo TSTA/NEA, Laredo United TSTA/NEA, and Laredo United ESP — were only 33 members short of their 3,000-member goal.

Many new members signed up at this fall’s new teacher orientations and job orientations for support professionals, but the locals also got a big boost from the spring campaign, when 443 new members were recruited in two weeks.

Local leaders are Rene De la Vina, president of Laredo TSTA/NEA; Blanca Balboa, president of United TSTA/NEA; Juanita Gomez, Laredo United ESP president; and Hilario Cavazos, Region 1C president.

PASADENA EDUCATORS APPRECIATE STAPLES

Patrick Hernandez, president of Pasadena Educators Association and treasurer of Region 3C, contacted his local Staples office supply store after reading about its August 16 “Teacher Appreciation Day” in TSTA’s electronic newsletter for local presidents.

“I spoke with the manager about setting up a table with our TSTA promotional literature and brochures,” he said. “We were given permission with no problem.”

Hernandez’s local association emailed all its members to remind them of Teacher Appreciation Day and to ask them to bring a teacher who might not yet be a member.

“Periodically throughout the year, we will be able to remind our members of



Hilario Cavazos, Region 1C president, and Rene De la Vina, president of Laredo TSTA/NEA, promote membership in Laredo.

Staples' support and commitment to public education," Hernandez said. "We hope to have a working relationship with Staples with this as a first step. And of course, we will promote to our members the importance of spending their education dollars at a business that supports public education."

FROM TSTA-RETIRED

A message from TSTA-Retired President Letha Grace McCoy: Membership for TSTA-Retired/NEA-Retired is a way to continue your support for TSTA/NEA.

If you are eligible to receive a pension and were employed by a school district for at least five years, you can join us! Active members may pre-pay TSTA/NEA Retired Life membership. Contact TSTA at 512-476-5355 or 877-ASK-TSTA or go to www.tsta.org for more information.

We, TSTA-Retired, are working! With state and national elections in November, we encourage everyone to be active in the campaign and vote! Surveys

indicate that NEA-Retired members lead the way in voting. That's us! With the state legislature convening in January, we will need to be active in Austin supporting retired issues, working for increases in our Teacher Retirement System annuities, and keeping our health insurance a true benefit. At the national level, we need to continue to work on social security issues including the elimination of the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision.

TSTA-R officer elections are a part of our association's agenda. Elections will be conducted for the TSTA-Retired president and vice-president. Officers are elected for two-year terms beginning July 15, 2009. Elections for Retired delegates will be conducted for the TSTA State Convention (Intercontinental Hotel, Houston, April 17-18, 2009) and the NEA Representative Assembly (San Diego, CA, July 1-6, 2009). Nomination forms are in this Advocate and the deadline for filing is January 16, 2009.

TSTA-RETIRED IN 2009

March 31-April 3

NEA-Retired Western Regional Conference, Portland, OR

April 15-16

TSTA-Retired Annual Meeting, Houston

April 17-18

TSTA State Convention, Intercontinental Hotel, Houston

June 27-29

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA

July 1-6

NEA Representative Assembly, San Diego, CA

Watch the NEA-Retired magazine, This Active Life, for more information about the NEA-Retired meetings. If you have questions about registering online, please call TSTA at 512-476-5355 or 800-324-5355.

Meet Tawna Pitts

"I love everything that TSTA has to offer: the networking, the pre-professional development workshops, and the introduction to the legislative and political side of education," Tawna Pitts, the new president of TSTA Student Program, says. "It all appeals to me, not only as an individual, but as a TSTA member, and a future educator. The decisions and actions of people today affect the outcome of tomorrow and the future of my classroom."

The Advocate asked Pitts, a student at San Jacinto College, about her background and goals for TSTA Student Program, TSTA's affiliate for college and university students who plan to teach.

I got involved in TSTA Student

Program because: I went to a meeting at San Jac TSEA where they were finalizing plans for the trip to the Student Program State Convention in Austin. They said that you had to be a paid member to be able to attend the convention, so I wrote a check that day. At the next meeting they were holding officer elections for the following year, so I jumped right in, ran for local president at San Jac, and was elected.

I went to the convention and got hooked! I loved the workshops, the networking opportunities, and getting to meet up with people from other colleges around Texas that had made the same career choice I had.

I remember the keynote speaker that year was former NEA President Reg Weaver, and he told a story about

one of his students that just touched me to the core. When I left that convention, I was fired up for education and wanting more of what the association had to offer.

I ran for state president of the student program because:

I wanted to continue the work that was already being done, and I knew I had something to contribute. I had shadowed



President Leigh Anne Meeks for the last year and observed firsthand what issues we really face as students, association members, and future educators. While following in her footsteps, I was also serving as District III president and I was appointed to a position on the NEA-Student Program Advisory Committee. I knew that with these experiences I was more than capable of fulfilling the role of president.

This year, TSTA Student Program will:

be focused on revitalizing the chapters that have decreased in activity and getting those locals that are just starting out established and comfortable to make headway on their own. We will be more politically active and aware, as

TSTA STUDENT PROGRAM

this is a huge election year, and we have a really big campaign going on nationally called "Got Tuition?" This is a campaign really pushing the issue of college affordability.

The Student Program's theme this

year is: "Inspiring the Stars of Tomorrow." There is such a truth to this statement. Teachers don't just educate, they mold, create, and inspire children's lives. I read on a shirt somewhere "without teachers, other careers are not possible." I absolutely love this statement.

I was inspired to teach by:

one of my teachers. I had the chance to honor that teacher, Mrs. Sandra Borrego, at the Fall Connections Conference in Louisville, KY, this past November. She was my 6th-8th grade music teacher at Deepwater Junior High in Pasadena. I just absorbed her passion for teaching and her love for music. Unfortunately, my major is no longer music education. I'm going to school to receive my teaching degree in social sciences grades 8-12.

In my spare time I: really like to just veg out at home with my husband Justin and my dogs. We like to just be an old married couple sometimes and sit at home and watch re-run episodes of Law & Order and HGTV's House Hunters. He's been super supportive of my involvement with TSTA and NEA, and we both look forward to the times when we can both clear our minds of everything and just relax.

For more information about TSTA Student Program, TSTA's affiliate for college/university students, contact Rosie Castillo at TSTA Headquarters at rosiec@tsta.org or 316 West 12th Street, Austin 78701.

Honoring Excellence

The start of the new school year inevitably includes lots of planning. As you put together your annual calendar, don't forget to plan on recognizing your peers and other friends of education in your community. TSTA offers several opportunities to recognize outstanding educators, education support professionals, regional and local associations, media representatives, businesses, and other individuals or organizations that support public education.

For TSTA's
2008-09 Calendar:
www.tsta.org

RONNIE RAY ESP ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR AWARD

Nomination Deadline: September 30

Submit to: TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance

Recognizes a TSTA ESP member whose activities reflect the contributions of educational support professionals to public education, particularly in one or more of the following areas: (1) innovations to support the day-to-day educational process; (2) professional achievements in his/her classification; (3) involvement in promoting public education in the community; (4) involvement in TSTA at the local, state, or national level; and (5) enhancement of the ESP image in their association, work site, or community. Nominees must have been an ESP member of TSTA for three years as of January 15.

INSTRUCTIONAL AWARDS

Plan Deadline: November 1 / Documentation Deadline: March 15

Submit to: TSTA Organizing Center for Public Affairs

Recognizes local associations for planned activities and accomplishments that incorporate certain strands of the NEA Priority Schools Initiative into local planning. Detailed information about the criteria can be found at: www.tsta.org/teaching/current/instructional_awards.shtml.

FRIEND OF EDUCATION AWARD

Nomination Deadline: December 1

Submit to: TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance

Recognizes either (1) an individual, who is not a professional educator, who has made a significant contribution to the cause of public education or (2) an organization/company outside the field of education that has made an outstanding contribution in the field of education.

Any TSTA member, local association, region, or other recognized group—e.g. TSTA committee or caucus—may submit a nominating letter or memo accompanied by supporting evidence detailing why the nominee is worthy of the award.

FRANK J. TEJEDA AWARD FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Nomination Deadline: December 1

Submit to: TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance

Recognizes an individual for service at the state or national political/legislative level on behalf of Texas public school children or educational employees. Nominees must be elected or appointed officials who are not currently employed full time by a school district. Any TSTA member or group of mem-

bers or the award committee may submit a letter of nomination and supporting evidence of accomplishments related to the award.

SCHOOL BELL AWARDS

Nomination Deadline: January 31

Submit to: TSTA Organizing Center for Public Affairs

Recognizes outstanding media coverage of education issues and events. There are several categories of awards for different forms of media and various populations. The instruction book and nomination form are available on TSTA's website.

PROFESSIONAL, HUMAN, AND CIVIL RIGHTS AWARDS

Nomination Deadline: February 1

Submit to: TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance

Individual Award—recognizes an educator who has made outstanding contributions to professional and human rights (nominee must be a TSTA member and be nominated by the local PHCR and executive committees).

Special Award—recognizes an individual or organization inside or outside the area of education for outstanding contributions to professional and human rights (recipient does not have to be a member of TSTA unless eligible but must be nominated by a TSTA affiliated association).

Mickey Leland Memorial Award—recognizes individuals or organizations that have initiated/participated in activities establishing an ongoing program or institution having a widespread social, educational, economic, or political impact, especially those projects that help the needy.

Willie Velasquez Memorial Award—recognizes individuals or organizations that have initiated/participated in activities to eradicate inequities based on race, gender, or ethnicity and to improve inter-group relations and understanding, especially those projects that help

the politically disenfranchised become more involved in the political process.

NEA Awards—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. For NEA forms and information visit: www.nea.org/annualmeeting/hcraawards. NEA Award nominations must be postmarked by December 10, 2008.

ERMALEE BOICE INSTRUCTIONAL ADVOCACY AWARD

Nomination Deadline: February 1

Submit to: TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance

Open to all TSTA members, this award recognizes and promotes teaching excellence based on the following criteria: professional practice, advocacy for the profession, community engagement, leadership in professional development, and attention to diversity. The recipient of this award will be submitted as TSTA's nominee for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, so nominees for the Boice award should comply with the guidelines provided for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence (www.neafoundation.org).

PRIDE IN COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS

Nomination Deadline: March 1

Submit to: TSTA Organizing Center for Public Affairs

Recognizes 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.

Detailed information, instructions, and nomination forms are available on TSTA's website at: www.tsta.org/news/current/awards.shtml. You may also call the Center for Executive and Governance or the Center for Public Affairs at 877-ASK-TSTA for more information.

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Great Discount Programs!

Because NEA is 3.2 million members strong, we are able to get great rates on insurance and investment plans for our members. We also now offer a variety of discount health care programs including dental care, vision care, and pet care. See below for more details.

FREE Discount Prescription Drug Card

TSTA has a new Discount Prescription Drug Card Program for members and it's absolutely free. Go to our members only area and login with your TSTA member ID#, then click on the free Discount Prescription Drug card link and print out your free card and use it today at a participating pharmacy.



Dental Program

- Save 15 % to 50 %* on everything from general dentistry and cleanings to root canals, crowns and orthodontia.
- Over 71,000** available dental practice locations nationwide.
- Save on routine dental services such as X-rays and fillings.
- Save on specialty care such as orthodontics and periodontics where available.
- Dentists are credentialed and recredentialed on an ongoing basis.

*Actual costs and savings vary by provider and geographical area.

** According to the Aetna Enterprise Provider Database as of November 1, 2006.

Vision Care

Coast to Coast (CTC) Vision has contracted with over 12,000 eye care locations nationwide. Members save 20% to 60% on prescription eyeglasses, including frames, lenses and specialty items at participating retail locations nationwide.

Prescription Eye Glasses

- Save 20% to 60% on eyewear at over 12,000 optical locations nationwide.
- Most frames, lenses and specialty items are available.

Ophthalmology Services

- Save 10% to 30% on medical eye exams and surgical procedures, including LASIK at select locations.

Contact Lenses

- Save 10% to 40% on most brands of replacement soft and gas permeable contact lenses including disposables, torics and bifocals through the mail order service.

Pet Care

- Save 25% off veterinary medical services from a growing network of participating veterinarians nationwide.
- Save 10% to 30% on pet-related products and services such as pet food, pet grooming, boarding, and pet supplies from thousands of local and national merchants.

Visit www.tsta.org for more information and to sign up!



Disclosures: This plan is NOT INSURANCE.
This discount card program contains a 30-Day cancellation period.

Member shall receive a full refund of membership fees, excluding registration fee, if membership is cancelled within the first 30 days after receipt of membership materials. Discount Medical Plan Organization, New Benefits, Ltd.
14240 Proton Rd. Dallas, TX 75244. Available only in Texas.

National Delegate Elections



Let's go to San Diego, CA for the 2009 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, 2009. 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.

TSTA does not fund state delegates to the NEA-RA, though they may receive a small stipend budget permitting. 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 late March 2009. Deadline for return receipt of ballots at TSTA is April 24, 2009, 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 2009 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 9, 2009, 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 email 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, 2009, 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. The deadline for submitting a nomination form (and an optional biographical sketch of 25 words or less) is January 15, 2009. 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. (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.

RETIREDELEGATE NOMINATION FORM

NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY TSTA/NEA-RETIRED DELEGATE POSITIONS—JULY 1-6, 2009

Deadline for receipt at TSTA Headquarters is January 15, 2009, 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

2009 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY STATE DELEGATES

Deadline for receipt at TSTA Headquarters is January 9, 2009. (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 17-18, 2009, TSTA House of Delegates will be sent to local presidents on January 23. 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, Active ESP and Active Life membership on January 15, 2009. 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 Center for Executive and Governance at 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514, or sandras@tsta.org with 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, 2009. 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, 2009. Ballots for the election will be sent to members in early February 2009. The deadline for returning ballots to TSTA Headquarters is March 20, 2009.

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 17-18, 2009

The deadline for receipt of this nomination form at TSTA's Headquarters is January 15, 2009. (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

☐ Black

☐ 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

☐ Asian

☐ Hispanic

☐ Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin)

☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

☐ Multi-ethnic

☐ Other _____

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

2008-09 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

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

EMAIL AT HOME

EMAIL AT WORK

AREA CODE

HOME PHONE

AREA CODE

WORK PHONE

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

DATE OF BIRTH

HIRE DATE

LOCAL ASSOCIATION

NAME OF ISD

CAMPUS/WORKSITE

POSITION (I.E. CLASSROOM TEACHER, LIBRARIAN, BUS DRIVER, ETC.)

☒

ANNUAL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

AMOUNT

1. Professional Dues—TSTA/NEA (Active)

Professional Dues—New to the profession

\$430.00

\$295.00

2. Educational Support Dues—Full-time

Educational Support Dues—Part-time

\$228.50

\$120.50

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.

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native

☐ Black

☐ Hispanic

☐ Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin)

☐ Asian

☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

☐ Unknown

☐ Multi-ethnic

☐ Other

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.

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

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

Former student member?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Annual membership dues to NEA include \$5.15 for NEA Today, \$3.10 for NEA-Retired, \$3.10 for Tomorrow's Teacher and/or \$19.50 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 the AIG Companies 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

30 TSTA ADVOCATE

FALL 2008 31

A photograph of Barack Obama speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and blue tie. He is looking slightly to the right and has a microphone in front of him. The background is blurred with purple and blue lights.

Vote for the change our schools need

TSTA's recommended
candidates, page 5.

For the latest news, go to www.tsta.org.

Texas State Teachers Association
316 West 12th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

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