Members Recover from Ike
NEA, STATE AFFILIATES CONTRIBUTE TO RELIEF FUND

REACHING OUT TO PARENTS
Community Events, a Walk for Dropouts and Radio Ads in Bexar County
Lawmakers Should Make Public Schools Their Top Priority

This new year begins with a newly elected president and, closer to home, the realistic hope that the 81st Texas Legislature will make our public schools a higher priority. New allies of public education won election to both the Texas House of Representatives and the Texas Senate, which should make TSTA a more effective advocate in the upcoming session. Still, a sense of urgency about the future of public education in Texas accompanies the changes in government the historic 2008 election brought.

The way Texas funds our public schools and the way the state measures performance have punished them, their students and their employees for too long. Instead of truly supporting our schools, the state hascrippled them in the name of tax relief and accountability. We must change these systems so we can effectively educate all the current and future students in our state.

How will we make the changes we must have to meet the needs of Texas public school students and employees? We begin by continuing to engage our leaders and members on the issues that they face in their own schools. Organizing ourselves at the local level on the issues that affect us every day is the foundation for bringing about the statewide change Texas needs.

We are the educational experts. We know the best teaching practices for our students. We know what resources we need in our classrooms. If positive change is to come, lawmakers in Austin must heed our voices of experience. But they cannot do that if they do not hear us.

Our local leadership teams are the key to making significant changes this year. Strong, effective locals can influence key legislators so they see the pressing needs of our Texas education system. Our local leadership teams are the key to making significant changes this year. Strong, effective locals can influence key legislators so they see the pressing needs of our Texas public schools and the way the state measures performance have punished them, their students and their employees for too long. Instead of truly supporting our schools, the state hascrippled them in the name of tax relief and accountability. We must change these systems so we can effectively educate all the current and future students in our state.

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At the beginning of this year, we at TSTA exhort students and employees to make their voices heard by organizing themselves with local leaders so they can influence key legislators so they see the pressing needs of our Texas public schools and the way the state measures performance have punished them, their students and their employees for too long. Instead of truly supporting our schools, the state hascrippled them in the name of tax relief and accountability. We must change these systems so we can effectively educate all the current and future students in our state.

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The needs of our public schools and our students are diverse, challenging and rapidly changing. The elected leaders of our state have not done justice to these needs. Many of our school districts are barely staying alive because of inadequate state funding.

Just as the historic 2008 election should result in positive changes for the nation, it also should bring about positive changes for public education in Texas. TSTA members can help drive these changes by working with state lawmakers to make public schools the Legislature’s top priority in 2009.

—TSTA President Rita Haecker

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Republicans still control all the statewide races and still have a substantial majority in the Texas Senate. Six years of policies that have neglected public education, health care, prisons, rising tuition and utility costs, the environment and roads will result in a budget where demand exceeds revenue. School finance is a mess, and small businesses are screaming about the new tax structure that was created to fund education. Meanwhile, no fewer than six committees and special committees are discussing tax cuts and appraisal caps. In short, it is going to be a contentious and difficult session.

**FOLLOW THE MONEY**

Funding for education, teacher pay raises, health insurance and new programs is always a key issue in every session, and the 81st Legislature will be no exception. Skirmishing has already broken out on the budget for the next session and exactly how much revenue will be available. Expect that to intensify during December and on into January. The leadership team of Gov. Rick Perry, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and House Speaker Tom Craddick has made cutting taxes the top priority of state government the last six years, and it has resulted in the state having major fiscal problems in a number of areas.

The school finance plan adopted in 2006 is seriously flawed in several ways. TSTA said that when it was adopted, and time has proven us right. Redoing funding formulas is an expensive and politically bloody process. With all the statewide offices up in 2010, outdated funding formulas are unlikely to get fixed this session. A committee to study the formulas for action in 2010 is the most likely scenario. TSTA is hearing a lot of rumbling about a possible lawsuit over the inequity in the current system; while that is likely to happen, exactly when it will happen is not clear.

Several committees have been meeting during the interim to discuss how to further reduce taxes and limit spending. All of these efforts make additional funding for schools and employee needs even more difficult to pass.

TSTA will be working to fund a pass through teacher pay raise, provide more funds for schools and address the rising cost of health care for educational employees.

**ACCOUNTABILITY BILL WILL BE THE ONE TO WATCH**

After a year of hearings, the Select Committee on Public School Accountability issued a PowerPoint presentation. It may be one of the most expensive 10-page presentations ever produced by a committee. It contains several concepts that TSTA supports but almost no details on what a bill would look like. Because it needs to pass, this bill is likely to become the vehicle for “reform” legislation next session. The potential for mischief is off the scale on this one, including attempts to tie pay raises to value added scores tied to student performance on standardized tests. Look for a big bill that goes to conference committee and gets to the floor very late in the session.

TSTA laid out our detailed proposal, “Fixing a Badly Flawed System: How to Make Texas School Accountability Meaningful and Accurate,” in February 2008 at the first meeting of the committee (www.tsta.org/Pressroom/current/08AccountabilityWEB.pdf). We believe it provides a comprehensive approach to what changes need to be made to the current system to make it less high stakes and more meaningful to students, parents and teachers.

The state must have a new accountability system in place by the time end of course exams are implemented in 2011. You will be hearing a lot about this topic when the 81st Legislature convenes in January.
TRS ISSUES
The last year has been fraught with internal and external turmoil for the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). The TRS portfolio, which the dramatic decline in the stock market has negatively affected, dropped below $100 billion in fall 2008. In the past two years the TRS board has hired a chief investment officer, replaced the fiduciary counsel and hired a deputy executive director that are to work for the executive director but are hired, evaluated and could be fired by the board.

Other issues affecting TRS are the state leadership’s interest in using retirement funds (including TRS) to invest in state infrastructure projects such as toll roads and TRS’s decisions to invest in alternative assets and hedge funds, etc.

The 80th Legislature in 2007 increased the state contribution to TRS to 6.58 percent and pledged that the state contribution would never be less than the employee contribution (6.4 percent). In 2009 TSTA will be seeking a permanent annuity increase. In addition to reduced returns from the stock market, the governor directed TRS to adopt its budget requests for the next two years based on a reduced state contribution of 6.4 percent.

Without a significant increase in the TRS portfolio or a significant increase in the state contribution to TRS, enacting an annuity increase for retirees or any improvements in the active or retired health insurance programs administered by TRS will be very difficult.

CANDIDATES ANNOUNCE FOR NEA DIRECTOR
The TSTA filing deadline for NEA Director, Place 2, was September 15, 2008. Candidates for this position are: Rhonda Schell, Beaumont Teachers Association; and Evelina Loya, Garland Education Association.

The filing deadline for NEA Director, Place 1, is January 9, 2009. This position will fill the unexpired term of Rita Haeckler, who resigned the position upon assuming the office of TSTA President. Candidates who have filed to date are: Frances H. Smith, Cy Fair TSTA/NEA; and Reagan Hawkins, Nederland Teachers Association.

Elections will be held at the State House of Delegates in Houston on April 18, 2009. Candidate statements and biographical information will appear in the spring 2009 Advocate.

IMPORTANT NOTICE OF ELECTIONS
Watch closely for the spring issue of the Advocate. Ballots for electing TSTA state delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly will be printed in that issue. The deadline for the marked ballot to be received at TSTA Headquarters is 5 p.m. CDT, Friday, April 24, 2009.

TSTA/NEA 2008-09 EDUCATORS EMPLOYMENT LIABILITY PROGRAM
As a member of TSTA/NEA you are protected by comprehensive employment insurance against most legal claims while acting within the scope of employment. You are automatically covered by NEA’s $1 million policy ($300,000 employment-related civil rights violations) and by an additional $5 million excess policy.* You are covered:

President
012 Jim McReynolds
Barack Obama
014 Fred Brown
Barack Obama
015 Rob Eissler
Barack Obama
016 Brandon Creighton
Barack Obama
017 Donnie Dippel (Lost)
Barack Obama
019 Mike Hamilton
Barack Obama
021 Allan Ritter
Barack Obama
022 Joe Deshotel
Barack Obama
023 Craig Eiland
Barack Obama
027 Dora Olivo
Barack Obama
031 Ryan Guilien
Barack Obama
032 Juan Garcia (Lost)
Barack Obama
033 Solomon Ortiz Jr.
Barack Obama
034 Abel Herrero
Barack Obama
035 Yvonne Tourelles
Barack Obama
036 Kino Flores
Barack Obama
037 Rene Oliveira
Barack Obama
038 Eddie Lucio III
Barack Obama
039 Mando Martinez
Barack Obama
040 Aaron Pena
Barack Obama
041 Veronica Gonzales
Barack Obama
042 Richard Raymond
Barack Obama
043 Tara Rios Ybarra
Barack Obama
044 Edmund Kuehnelt
Barack Obama
045 Patrick Rose
Barack Obama
046 Dawnna Dukas
Barack Obama
047 Valinda Bolton
Barack Obama
048 Donna Howard
Barack Obama
049 Elliott Naishtat
Barack Obama
050 Mark Strama
Barack Obama
051 Eddie Rodriguez
Barack Obama
052 Diana Maldonado
Barack Obama
054 Jimmie Aycock
Barack Obama
055 Sam Murphy (Lost)
Barack Obama
057 Jim Dunnarn
Barack Obama
066 Brian McCall
Barack Obama
069 David Faraboe
Barack Obama
071 Susan King
Barack Obama
072 Drew Darby
Barack Obama
073 Doug Miller
Barack Obama
074 Pete Gallego
Barack Obama
075 Cherrie Quintanilla
Barack Obama
076 Norma Chavez
Barack Obama
077 Mariisa Marquez
Barack Obama
078 Joe Moody
Barack Obama
079 Joe Pickett
Barack Obama
080 Tracy King
Barack Obama
083 Delwin Jones
Barack Obama
085 Joe Hefflin
Barack Obama
090 Lon Burnambly
Barack Obama
093 Paula Pearson
Barack Obama
094 Diane Patrick
Barack Obama
095 Marc Veasey
Barack Obama
096 Chris Turner
Barack Obama
097 Dan Barrett (Lost)
Barack Obama
098 Charlie Geren
Barack Obama
100 Tim Hodge
Barack Obama
103 Robert Miklos
Barack Obama
107 Carol Kent
Barack Obama
109 Helen Giddings
Barack Obama
110 Barbara Caraway
Barack Obama
111 Yvonne Davis
Barack Obama
112 Sandra Vule (Lost)
Barack Obama
116 Trey Martinez Fischer
Barack Obama
117 David Leibowitz
Barack Obama
118 Mike Rolls
Barack Obama
119 Roland Gutierrez
Barack Obama
120 Ruth Jones McClendon
Barack Obama
123 Mike Villareal
Barack Obama
124 Jose Menendez
Barack Obama
125 Joaquin Castro
Barack Obama
126 John Halliburton (Lost)
Barack Obama
127 Rick Noriega (Lost)
Barack Obama
128 Sherril Maluta (Lost)
Barack Obama
131 Alma Allen
Barack Obama
133 Kristi Thibaut
Barack Obama
134 Ellen Cohen
Barack Obama
137 Scott Hochberg
Barack Obama
138 Ginny McDavid (Lost)
Barack Obama
139 Sylvester Turner
Barack Obama
140 Amando Walle
Barack Obama
141 Senfronia Thompson
Barack Obama
142 Harold Dutton
Barack Obama
143 Ana Hernandez
Barack Obama
144 Joel Redmond (Lost)
Barack Obama
145 Carol Alvarado
Barack Obama
146 Al Edwards
Barack Obama
147 Garnet Coleman
Barack Obama
148 Jessica Farrar
Barack Obama
149 Hubert Vo

TSTA-ENDORSED CANDIDATES WIN OVERWHELMINGLY
TSTA posted a net gain of three more pro-public education seats in the Texas House of Representatives and one more in the Texas Senate in November. Overall, 87.6% of TSTA-endorsed candidates won, 10.08% lost and 2.33% face definite or possible runoffs. (Unless otherwise noted, the candidates below won.)

For Education Austin (EA), blockwalking is always more fun on the big yellow bus. Since 2004, the local has rented a yellow school bus every election year to drop off dozens of volunteers to canvass for TSTA-endorsed candidates in Texas House districts in Austin and surrounding communities.

With specially made banners on either side of the bus proclaiming that teachers stand behind the endorsed candidate, the vehicle acts as a double-sided moving billboard as it winds through neighborhoods dropping off and picking up volunteers.

By Election Day this year, EA volunteers blockwalked using the six buses, three times for Round Rock-area candidate Diana Maldonado, three times for La Grange’s Donnie Doppel in Bastrop and once for Valinda Bolton in southeast Austin.

Blockwalking is “an exercise program with a conscience,” said Gayla Hayne, an EA executive board member and Bowie High School speech and ESOL teacher. “You get to win friends and elections and influence voters, while hearing all the latest political jokes from other volunteers on the bus.”

EDUCATION AUSTIN BLOCKWALKS FOR ENDORSED CANDIDATES
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added an electronic media classification to recognize outstanding education web sites and outstanding education blogs. Local associations will receive forms and instructions to submit entries in the various classifications (by size and/or frequency) and categories. Entries must have been aired, published or posted January 1 through December 31, 2008, and must be received no later than midnight, January 31, 2009, by the TSTA Center for Public Affairs, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

First place winners in each category will receive School Bell trophies at the April 2009 TSTA Convention in Houston. See www.tsta.org/news/current/awards.shtml for details.

JACK KELLY TO RETIRE IN DECEMBER

When Jack Kelly started working for TSTA in August 1976, the average beginning teacher salary was $6,000. As he prepares to retire in December 2008, it’s over $40,000.

It’s one of the improvements he’s proudest of in his 33-year career as the Senate half of TSTA’s government relations team.

Kelly rode the political wave from the mid-70’s, when Texas was almost a one-party Democratic state, through the early 2000’s, when virtually all of the statewide offices and a majority of both chambers were dominated by Republicans, to today’s almost equally divided two-party system.

No matter who was in power, they respected Kelly’s unparalleled understanding of school finance, the Teacher Retirement System and Social Security issues.

He has seen many significant improvements in working conditions and salaries for school employees, as well as the quality of education for students. Among them, in his words:

• “There was no required health insurance for school employees when I started, but now all employees have access to health insurance. Our retirees also have health insurance, which is not even common in other states. That’s one we were a leader on.”

• “Most of the laws on contract termination and non-renewal were written in the last 20-25 years. Before that, virtually everyone was an at-will employee.”

• “Duty-free lunch. Before the 80’s, teachers were required to eat with their kids or the staff. Now we don’t have to.”

• “The first equalization law passed in 1975 right before I joined the staff. They authorized $50 million a year. Now they’re spending billions on equalization.”

Kelly also compiles the annual TSTA Research Bulletin for Salary and Health Insurance, which local school districts and boards use to gauge their ability to attract and retain employees, and, for those who carry their own insurance, to find out who has the best rates and coverage. He also issues the biannual “Moonlighting and Morale” survey of the state’s teachers.

Prior to TSTA, Kelly was assistant director of membership for Texas Classroom Teachers Association (when it was a TSTA department affiliate) and worked on his doctorate in American political and religious history at the University of Tennessee. “I was fortunate to spend a career doing what I was trained to do,” he said, noting that even the math classes, which he took to improve his GPA, have certainly come in handy.

If you are involved in any situation which you believe may be covered by the TSTA/NEA liability insurance, immediately contact the TSTA Help Center.

FOR A SCHOOL BELL

NOMINATE YOUR LOCAL MEDIA FOR A SCHOOL BELL

Community understanding and support for public education are significantly advanced by the media, through their interpretation of issues affecting public schools in our state. TSTA takes pride in sponsoring the annual TSTA School Bell Awards competition to recognize these contributions.

In addition to honoring outstanding Texas newspapers and local radio and television stations, TSTA last year 8 TSTA ADVOCATE
Top Ten Discipline Tips

To minimize disciplinary problems, follow these tips:

1. Be consistent in administering your punishment and rules.
2. Give the student a chance to give an explanation.
3. Be fair in your decisions.
4. Try to tailor your punishment to match the child.
5. Never use physical force (striking or hitting a child).
6. Never humiliate or degrade a student.
7. Discuss with the student your concerns and expectations away from the other students.
8. Never allow a disruption to escalate into a physical confrontation between two students.
9. If misbehavior is constant and disruptive, contact the parents, administration, and guidance.
10. Document all infractions.

Your Rights for a Safe School Environment

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

Many educators and support professionals have complaints regarding discipline issues.

Top educators fear that their jobs will be jeopardized if they are ever in a situation that requires them to use physical force.

Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code provides educators with authority to manage their classrooms or certain situations.

The statute requires the

principal to respond by employing the appropriate discipline management steps outlined in the district's student code of conduct.

For a more permanent solution, a teacher may remove from her/his class a student who has been documented by the teacher to “repeatedly interfere” with the teacher's ability to teach or with the other students' ability to learn.

While this provision requires documentation of “repeated interference,” a teacher may also remove from her/his class students whose behavior is extremely disruptive, aggressive, or unruly, even if it is a one-time occurrence.

To facilitate the removal process, the teacher must simply provide her/his principal with the documentation of the incident(s), and ask that the student be removed according to the Texas Education Code.

Once the student is removed, the student may only be returned to the teacher's class with the teacher's consent or if the campus's Placement Review Committee (PRC) determines that removing the student is the best or only alternative.

The PRC is a three-member committee that is chosen jointly by the faculty and the principal.

The principal may appoint one member, and the faculty may appoint the other two.

A teacher seeking the removal of the student may not be a member of the committee.

USE OF FORCE WITH STUDENTS

If at all possible, physical contact with students should be avoided. In the real world of hallway fights and scuffles on the school bus, though, some physical contact with students is inevitable.

The Texas Education Code realized that physical force with students is sometimes necessary.

As a result, section 22.0512 of the Texas Education Code was passed in 2003. This statute protects most school district employees from discharge or suspension for the employer's reasonable use of physical force against a student.

ASSAULT LEAVE

School district employees who are physically assaulted during the performance of their regular duties are entitled to up to two years paid leave to recuperate from any physical injuries sustained as a result of the assault.

The employee has the responsibility to request assault leave from the district.

Upon receiving the request, the district is required to immediately place the employee on assault leave.

The district may then investigate the claim to determine if assault leave is appropriate.

If the assault leave is approved, days of leave taken under the assault leave provision may not be charged back to the employee's accrued leave.

If the district determines that there was no an assault, or that assault leave is not appropriate for any other reason, the district may charge the days absent to the employee's accrued leave.

If you or any other TSTA member are having difficulties with a disruptive student, have been assaulted by a student, or are facing disciplinary consequences for the use of force against a student, contact the TSTA Help Center immediately.

We are here to help you assert your rights.
"Every Texan will pay a higher price for human services and criminal justice programs if we don’t significantly reduce the dropout rate. And our members, such as those in Bexar County, know all too well the high cost young Texans and their families pay when they don’t complete at least high school. We know that high school dropouts earn about $1 million dollars less on average over a lifetime than college graduates. So addressing Texas’ dropout crisis is one of our top priorities as the oldest statewide education organization. Encouraging parents to become involved or more involved in their children’s education is a key component of this."

—TSTA President Rita C. Haecker

We Want Parents More Involved

TSTA Promotes Parental Involvement in Bexar County Schools

BY JOE BEAN, TSTA PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Her years of teaching in San Antonio’s Harlandale ISD have given Diana E. Mancha plenty of opportunities to see the love parents have for their children. But she also has seen too many times when those loving parents feel inferior because of their own lack of schooling.

“Parents are hardworking and have so much to offer their kids,” no matter how much or how little education they have, said Mancha, the president of the Harlandale Education Association (HEA).

So when the Texas State Teachers Association began planning its campaign to encourage parental involvement in public schools, Mancha wanted HEA and HISD to participate.

If parents become involved in their schools and their kids see that interest, those children are going to be more interested in school, which boosts their chance of success, Mancha explained. That’s important because education is the key to better jobs and better lives.

The Harlandale local was one of three to participate, along with their districts, in TSTA’s Bexar County parental involvement campaign that began as the 2008-09 school year started. The Edgewood Classroom Teachers Association (ECTA) and Southwest Educators Association (SWEA) also participated, along with their respective school districts.

Funded by a National Education Association media grant, TSTA ran four weeks of radio advertising, in both Spanish and English, on San Antonio radio stations. (Last year, NEA funded TSTA Spanish-language parental involvement radio ads in Cameron, Hidalgo, Webb and El Paso counties.) The Bexar County radio ads featured local students talking about their dreams for the future.

“The Texas State Teachers Association and NEA want to remind you that you’re the key to your child’s success—believe it! Take the time to read with them. Give them a ride to school. Sit down with their teachers. Little things add up to help our children dream big,” the conclusion of the English-language spot told parents.

Each of the three participating districts approached the parental involvement effort in different ways, based on their particular local needs.

The first was Edgewood ISD’s Community Back to School Kick Off on Aug. 16. ECTA President Richard Macias helped organize that event, and TSTA President Rita C. Haecker spoke at it. The Community Kick Off also included a TSTA bilingual presentation on parental involvement and featured a variety of booths from community organizations and businesses. Parents picked up school supplies, materials and information to help their children get a good start to the school year, and a mariachi group provided entertainment.

Three weeks later, SWEA members, along
with other volunteers, took to the
streets in Southwest ISD for the dis-
trict’s first annual Reach Out to
Dropouts walk, on Sept. 6. The district
identified 250 students who were no
longer attending classes. The
trained volunteers encouraged those students to return to school and pro-
vided information to assist them with obstacles they might encounter along the way.

Southwest ISD and SWEA subse-
quently hosted parent empowerment events encouraging parents to be in-
volved in the education of their children. The district’s 2008 Lights On After-
School Community Education Resource Expo was Oct. 16. “Clave” (Key) parents meetings took place Nov. 3-6 on three middle school campuses. The Blue Santa Parade on Dec. 13 will emphasize parent empowerment and involvement. SWEA President Rosalinda Casillas coordinated the locals’ participation in these events.

Harlandale ISD and HEA began that district’s campaign on Sept. 20 with a Cultural Arts Event that included a parents walk from Mission San José to the Harlandale Memorial Stadium, pre-
sentations on parental involvement and a variety of booths highlighting HISD and businesses that support education.

Superintendents Praise TSTA’s Parental Involvement Campaign

“Our children are our future. This is especially true about Hispanic chil-
dren. Hispanics are rapidly becom-
ing the largest ethnic group in the United States. Therefore, it is imper-
ative for all of us to ensure that the children in the Edgewood school dis-
trict increase their educational achievement and successfully com-
plete high school. We also know that children whose parents are involved with their education perform better academically.

“Our partnership with TSTA provides us with another avenue to engage our parents in their children’s edu-
cational process. This awareness campaign is targeted to ensure that parents understand the school dropout problem and to enlist their help so all of our children stay in school.”

—Dr. Elizabeth P. Garza, Edgewood ISD

“Increasing our graduation rate will benefit San Antonio’s future and the future of each individual with a high school diploma. Young adults who complete their high school educa-
tion provide a better-prepared and responsible work force contributing to the quality of life and the eco-
nomic development of our city.

“The dropout problem is not just a school problem. It’s also a commu-
nity problem, and we need the help of community organizations, teacher groups and businesses to overcome it. Teacher groups especially are here to provide support and help to school districts. TSTA is a partner with Southawd ISD to provide train-
ing for parents to reduce dropouts and to encourage students to stay in school.”

—Dr. Velma Villegas, Southwest ISD

No Parking, No Crowds, No Lines, GREAT Sales and Home Delivery!

Shopping has never been easier, or smarter, for NEA members thanks to NEA Click & Save.

Log on today and save up to 70% on merchandise from top brands like:

Great Member Features...

• Sign up for email reminders about upcoming sales from your favorite merchants!
• Invite up to four family members to open their own accounts and begin saving!
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Hurricane Ike was a massive storm. At one point, its hurricane-force winds ran 240 miles wide, and its tropical storm-force winds stretched 550 miles. That was considerably larger than 2005’s Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the middle Gulf Coast. At landfall, Katrina’s hurricane-force winds ran 210 miles wide, and its tropical storm-force winds stretched 440 miles.

The eye of Hurricane Ike made landfall on Galveston Island on Sept. 13 at the high end of category 2, its winds downing trees and signs and blowing out windows. Its storm surge was even more damaging to communities along Galveston Bay and eastward. As it traveled inland, Ike continued causing damage through East Texas and all the way up into the Ohio River Valley.

As it washed through the Galveston-Houston-Beaumont area and East Texas, this massive hurricane did not spare Texas public schools or the homes of educators. At least a dozen school districts reported serious damage, and many others suffered some damage.

Galveston ISD was one of the hardest-hit. It did not reopen until Oct. 7, with only eight of its 12 schools holding classes then. Almost two weeks later, the district’s post-Ike enrollment stood at 78% of its student count on the first day of the 2008-09 school year.

A TSTA member who works in the office at a GISD middle school reported that the school was severely damaged by water, and personnel and students had to relocate to another school across town and consolidate classes. “We are doubled up with both staff and students. There is rumor of relocating again due to overcrowding; however, we will make the best of it.”

This member is dealing with difficult workplace conditions while also having to deal with losing all garage contents to saltwater—a vehicle, washer, dryer, freezer and contents, stored clothing and other items.

Many other TSTA members also reported serious damage to their homes and major disruptions to their professional and personal lives. Here are some of their stories:

Teacher in Port Arthur ISD: “My three children and I are currently unable to live in our home due to roof damage and the loss of my electrical pole. We are waiting still for the insurance adjuster. We evacuated for Ike, and now that I am required to be back at work, I am currently driving 150 miles round-trip every day. Normally I do not need assistance with food, but due to all the gas expense, I have no money left, and I am having to borrow money currently to get to work, because of my salary. I do not qualify for..."
and the loss of food in the refrigerator and freezer from Ike. We were gone three days with Gustav, even though it didn’t come to us. We were gone five days with Ike, and when we returned, we had no electricity, so we ran a generator for three days until the electricity was restored. We stayed with a relative, so we didn’t have lodging expenses, but gas and food for four people for five days, and gas for a generator for three days was rather costly, along with replenishing our food supply at home. We are better off than many, but this has made us spend money we didn’t have to spend in the first place. Like most teachers, we live paycheck to paycheck and don’t have a lot of extra money to spend.”

Teacher in Beaumont ISD: “What has put a real strain on our budget is evacuation expenses from two hurricanes and food lost in the refrigerator. Food, gas, and lodging for a week and a half for a family of four living in a hotel put a real strain on our family budget.”

Teacher in Hamshire-Fannett ISD: “Our home was flooded with four feet of saltwater caused by Hurricane Ike for four days. We lost all the interior of our home along with all of the contents. We lost two vehicles and a travel trailer. We are leasing another travel trailer at this time to live in at another location other than our home. It will take six to nine months to repair our home to become livable.”

Librarian in Beaumont ISD: “I lost all the food in my refrigerator, and carpet was ruined. Insurance is not paying for lost carpet and only for a portion of the food lost in the refrigerator. Food, gas and lodging for a week and a half for a family of four living in a hotel put a strain on our family budget.”

Emergency food stamps. We lost everything that I had in my refrigerator, including the refrigerator!”

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Teacher in Dear Park ISD: “We were displaced for five days. Because we have small children, we evacuated 50 miles north. We were forced to stay out of town for an extended amount of time because the roads were flooded, and we couldn’t get home. We had extra expenses for gasoline and food for five people for five days. Thankfully, we did not have lodging expenses as we stayed with a friend. None of these evacuation expenses are covered by our homeowners insurance. We made a claim with FEMA, but since we have private insurance, they will not offer assistance. I know it seems like a menial amount, but it was a hardship for our family.”

TSTA quickly organized its response to the human toll the massive storm exacted from members, creating a Hurricane Ike Relief Fund. On Sept. 26, the National Education Association’s Health Information Network (NEA HIN) Disaster Relief Fund presented TSTA with a $50,000 donation. TSTA moved $25,000 from the reserve fund into the relief fund, and other NEA state affiliates generously responded to the needs of their Texas colleagues. TSTA members and NEA members from other states also generously contributed. By mid-October, TSTA’s Hurricane Ike Relief Fund had received $112,000, and the association was beginning to send checks to qualifying members.

TSTA President Rita C. Haeccker, along with NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and NEA Executive Director John Wilson, accepted the donation from NEA HIN Executive Director Jerald Newberry at a ceremony held at the NEA headquarters in Washington, D.C.

“TSTA members deeply appreciate the NEA family’s generous response to Hurricane Ike. This money will go to help members rebuild their lives professionally and personally. It’s nice to be part of a family that has 3.2 million members helping each other through difficult times,” Haeccker said.

“When a natural disaster like Hurricane Ike strikes, the destruction is much more than structural. One of the greatest tolls is on the children who endure severe emotional and traumatic distress long after the flood waters have receded,” Van Roekel said.

“For many students, school is the one place where they can find a sense of calm and normalcy. The National Education Association fully understands this need and makes every effort to reach out to communities with resources so that public schools can continue to serve as safe havens where children can excel,” the NEA president continued.

“In the wake of a disaster like this, it’s imperative to rely on those closest to you. The NEA family is there to support our TSTA colleagues and provide them with the support and resources they need to begin the recovery process and return to a sense of normalcy. We want all of our members, their families and their communities to pull through these tough times,” Newberry said.

“Often when dealing with a traumatic stressful event like the aftermath of a hurricane, people feel alone and isolated. We want to make it clear to our TSTA brothers and sisters that help is there,” the NEA HIN executive director added. “Any help would be much appreciated. Thanks, TSTA, for all that you do. We used some of the discount services meals due to being a TSTA member,” wrote a member in Beaumont ISD.

NEA has a long-standing commitment in assisting educators, teachers and parents working to help students gain a sense of normalcy after natural disasters.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, NEA provided cash grants to help purchase school supplies, textbooks and other materials needed to accommodate increased enrollment. When Hurricanes Rita and Wilma hit later that year, NEA provided much-needed financial backing and book donations to public schools and their libraries that had been devastated by the storms.

NEA HIN is NEA’s health and safety arm, offering numerous resources for those dealing with traumatic experiences ranging from hurricanes to school shootings. For more information, go to the “NEA HIN School Crisis Guide,” at www.neahin.org/crisisguide.

The network provides health and safety information to members and the students they serve.

NEA HIN serves as a link between public school employees, local, state and national health organizations, and government agencies. The network has addressed numerous health and safety issues, including HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, cancer, teenage pregnancy, mental wellness, nutrition, school safety, asthma and environmental hazards in schools.
Brownsville Wins Top Award for an Urban School District

The southernmost school district in Texas won the nation’s top award for an urban school district. And hard work by members of the TSTA local helped bring about that signal recognition.

The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation awarded the 2008 Broad Prize for Urban Education to the Brownsville ISD. This is the largest education prize in the country, and the foundation annually awards it to the most improved urban school district in the United States.

The Broad (rhymes with “road”) Prize is an annual award that honors large urban school districts that demonstrate the strongest student achievement and improvement in America while narrowing achievement gaps between income and ethnic groups. Each year, 100 of the largest urban school districts nationwide are automatically eligible for the Broad Prize. Districts cannot apply for or be nominated for this award. The foundation began awarding the prize in 2002.

The $1 million award to BISD will go directly to graduating high school seniors for college scholarships.

Brownsville is the best kept secret in America,” said Eli Broad, founder of the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. “In the face of stark poverty, Brownsville is outpacing other large urban districts nationwide because it is smartly focusing all resources on directly supporting students and teachers.

What helped Brownsville ISD win the Broad Prize was that the Board of Trustees, campus administrators and all classified and certified personnel worked as a team. The Board of Trustees provided the resources necessary for teachers to be successful. Another factor was that most of the campus administrators worked with AOE to establish a good educational environment that was conducive to student learning,” Alegria added.

A panel of prestigious jurors selected the 2008 award recipient. The panel’s members included former U.S. secretaries of education (Richard W. Riley and Rodrick Paige), other former U.S. Cabinet members (Henry Cisneros and Lawrence Summers), former governors (Riley, James B. Hunt Jr. and John Engler) and prominent leaders from education, labor and business.

This award is particularly noteworthy because BISD serves one of the poorest urban populations in America – with 94 percent of its students qualifying for free and reduced-priced school lunch.

“Brownsville is the best kept secret in America,” said Eli Broad, founder of the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. “In the face of stark poverty, Brownsville is outpacing other large urban districts nationwide because it is smartly focusing all resources on directly supporting students and teachers. Other school districts can learn a great deal from Brownsville’s success.”

The Association of Brownsville Educators (AOBE) TSTA local is the largest employee organization in the district. Its members were involved at every level in the improvements the Broad Prize honored.

AOBE leadership credited the Brownsville ISD Board of Trustees for establishing the right priorities for the district and for working closely with employees to achieve those goals.

“Trustees are always willing to meet with the AOBE leaders on a regular basis, which shows that the Board of Trustees truly has an open door policy. The board has continually budgeted to increase the number of employees, professional development, educational materials and technology, along with salary increases for all certified and classified personnel,” said AOBE President Albert Alegria.

“What helped Brownsville ISD win the Broad Prize was that the Board of Trustees, campus administrators and all classified and certified personnel worked as a team. The Board of Trustees provided the resources necessary for teachers to be successful. Another factor was that most of the campus administrators worked with AOBE to establish a good educational environment that was conducive to student learning,” Alegria added.

The AOE/TSTA leaders and members assisted Brownsville ISD by attending various meetings and focus groups that were scheduled by the Broad Foundation personnel. These focus groups gave the Broad Foundation valuable insight into what teachers are doing in the classrooms, as well as the relationship of the campus administration with the association. A positive working relationship between the employer organizations and school district was an important criterion in determining the winner of the Broad Prize.

The top reasons Brownsville stood out among large urban school districts are:

- Outperforming other similar Texas districts.
- Greater improvement by ethnic and income subgroups.
- Closing achievement gaps.
- Strong districtwide policies and practices.

It is great to see that the graduates of Brownsville will be able to receive scholarships totalling $1 million. This is a tremendous benefit to the community and especially the students of Brownsville. It is a great honor for AOBE to be an important part of such a fantastic award for the children of Brownsville. This type of recognition will truly have a long-lasting effect on the children of Brownsville,” the AOBE president said.
Budget disagreements between the superintendent and school board in Robstown ISD threatened to delay employees’ paychecks. Superintendent Roberto Garcia wanted trustees to approve a budget that eliminated 48 educational support professionals, but board members were reluctant to approve such a drastic cut for the small district.

The school board failed to approve the budget. Garcia withdrew his objections to issuing the paychecks. As a result of pressure from TSTA and friendly trustees, the board agreed that the district would pay employees on Sept. 11, four days ahead of schedule, in anticipation of having to evacuate the area because of Hurricane Ike. The massive storm subsequently changed course and made landfall farther northeast.

TSTA Pressure Gets Paychecks for Robstown Employees

NEA-retired Western Regional Conference: The NEA-retired Western Regional Conference is scheduled for March 27-29, 2009. More information and details will follow soon.

FROM TSTA-RETIRED

Elections: All nomination forms for TSTA-Retired president and vice president, Retired delegates to the TSTA State Convention, and the Retired delegates to the NEA Representa-
tive Assembly should be received at TSTA-Retired by Jan. 16, 2009. Nomination forms are available online at www.tsta.org/inside/retired. Ballots will be mailed in February. Ballots must be received at TSTA-Retired, 316 W. 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701 by March 11, 2009, to be counted.

Retired Annual Meeting and TSTA State Convention: All members are in-
vited to attend the TSTA-Retired Annual Meeting. This year it will be April 15-16, 2009, at the Drury Inn, 1615 West Loop South, Houston, Texas 77027. Please call (800) 324-5355 or (512) 476-5355 for information. There is an additional tour in Portland. More information can be found on our web page at www.tsta.org/inside/retired.

FROM TSTA STUDENT PROGRAM

The Student Program has much on its calendar these days:

• The District III Convention was held Oct. 18 at Lamar University in Beaumont and was a huge success. Thank you, District III Committee and LU, for all your hard work.

NEA-Dallas charges that the incompetence of Dallas ISD Superintendent Michael Hinojosa and his top aides cost hundreds of employees their jobs. When he finally made a largely meaningless public apology for an $84 million error, the local said, Hinojosa did it so few district employees actually heard it.

“I want to apologize to all the teachers that left and the teachers that stayed,” Hinojosa held an audience of about 100 at a Community Symposium for Justice in Education, sponsored by the Dallas Bar Association and the Dallas Bar Foundation. Teachers the dis-

trait had bashed out were in class then, and

ted to protect as many jobs as possible.

Then, when the DISD board decided that lay-

offs would be necessary, NEA-Dallas/TSTA worked to ensure that they would be done fairly and that the district would not trample on the rights of members, including the im-

pact on their Teacher Retirement System sta-

tus. The association also offered resumed seminars and assisted members with online applications to other districts, and legal staff provided legal counseling.

Incompetence at the highest administrative level in the dysfunctional 120-largest school
district in the nation dearly cost employees, both those who remain to pick up the pieces

and those who had to leave, and DISD’s 160,000 students and their families.
Bloom in the Room

BY DR. PAUL HENLEY, TSTA TEACHING AND LEARNING SPECIALIST

Many teachers will be evaluated using the state’s system, the Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS). Much of this appraisal is based on what is commonly referred to as Bloom’s Taxonomy. More and more, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are being written to reflect this taxonomy. Teachers who know and understand this taxonomy will have a significant advantage when they are being evaluated.

WHAT IS A TAXONOMY, ANYWAY?

A taxonomy is a way to classify or separate things. You have a set structure to differentiate one thing from another. You could describe a taxonomy as a sort of tie rack. You need a place to hang each tie. You decide which ties go with which suits, and you put them in groups that way. When you are arranging ties on a rack, you are putting them in some sort of order. You are classifying them. You are creating a taxonomy.

BLOOM’S TAXONOMY

In 1948, a group of colleagues with the American Psychological Association began discussions that led to a taxonomy of educational goals. The committee was appointed to create taxonomies in three overlapping domains: cognitive, affective (emotional) and psychomotor. Benjamin Bloom was fortunate enough to be listed as the first author on the first publication, thereby forever linking the committee’s work to his name in the public mind. Of the three taxonomies, the cognitive has become the only one that receives much focus. It contains six levels of ‘cognitive domains’ that move from simple activities to complex ones.

The cognitive portion of their work was finished first, in 1956. In their research Bloom’s group found that over 95% of the test questions students encountered require them to think only at the lowest possible level, the recall of information. Things have changed, and the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) are being written more and more to incorporate higher-order thinking into the classroom.

Kenneth E. Vogler recently offered a very short description of Bloom’s Taxonomy’s six levels. Note that the questions or assignment statements become progressively more demanding of a student’s mental activity.

The first level—Knowledge—asks students to recall information. (“Name the three branches of government.”)

The second level—Comprehension—asks students to put information in another form. (“Write the chemical equation for water.”)

The third level—Application—asks students to apply known facts, principles or generalizations to solve a problem. (“Use the Euclidean algorithm to find the greatest common divisor of 42 and 100.”)

The fourth level—Analysis—asks students to identify and comprehend elements of a process, communication or series of events.

The fifth level—Synthesis—asks students to combine, separate, categorize, detect, examine, inspect, discriminate, take apart, generalize, compare, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, criticize, judge, solve, rate, assess, appraise, summarize, utilize, create, invent, produce, modify, extend, design, formulate, develop, build, compile.

The sixth level—Evaluation—asks students to make judgments about knowledge. (“Evaluate the three branches of government.”)

Try, diagram, perform, make a chart, put into action, build, report, employ, relate, draw, construct, adapt.

Summarize, relate, experiment, simple comparisons, demonstrate, explain, reword, discuss.

Tell, uncover, show, list, locate, repeat, define, explain, investigate, recall, name, point to.
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130th Annual TSTA Convention

TSTAs annual convention will be in Houston on April 17-18, 2009. All convention events will take place at the InterContinental Houston, a chic hotel in the prestigious Uptown Houston area and just one block from the Galleria.

BECOME A DELEGATE

The TSTA House of Delegates (HoD) serves a vital role in the governance of TSTA and helps to shape the future of our organization. The HoD may establish goals for TSTA, amend its bylaws and act on recommendations from the TSTA officers, board or committees. TSTA statewide elections are held at the HoD annual meeting.

Please contact your local president for details on how delegates are elected in your local. If you do not have a local or your local does not hold delegate elections, please contact your regional president. Delegate allocations are based on membership totals as of January 15. Local delegate election results must be reported to TSTA by March 15.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the convention begins at 7:00 am on Friday, April 17, and continues to Saturday, April 18. All TSTA members and guests are welcome to attend the HoD and convention, but only delegates with proper delegate badges are allowed in the designated delegate section and voting area. Non-delegates/alternates and guests are encouraged to register.

CONVENTION EVENTS

Open hearings will be held Friday morning on the proposed 2009-10 TSTA budget and any proposed by-laws amendments or NEA Resolutions. Additional topics may be added. Professional development workshops eligible for continuing education credit will be offered Friday morning and afternoon.

The House of Delegates will begin Friday afternoon and continue throughout Saturday. Voting will take place Saturday morning. Additional information and convention updates will be posted on the TSTA website.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

The InterContinental Houston is holding a room block for TSTA convention attendees. Reserve your room directly with the hotel by March 25, 2009, to ensure your room at the group rate of $130 plus tax (currently $162.63). A discounted daily parking rate—self park $8 or valet park $14—with in and out privileges is available to TSTA hotel guests. Non-hotel guests will pay an hourly self-parking rate not to exceed $16 per day or may valet park for $16 per day or $27 overnight.

Make your reservation by calling (800) 316-8645 or (713) 627-7600. Identify yourself as a participant of the “TSTA Convention” or provide our block code “C60” to receive the special group rate. You may also register online. The TSTA website provides a link to the reservation page. Visit www.tsta.org and select the “HoD Information” link from the right column menu options. Please note: A first night room deposit secured with a major credit card or check is required for all reservations. Cancellations must be made 24 hours prior to your scheduled arrival to avoid a charge for the first night. Reservations may only be cancelled by calling the hotel directly and obtaining a cancellation number.
The hotel is centrally located between Houston’s commercial airports—William P. Hobby (15 miles) and Bush Intercontinental (25 miles). You must make your own arrangements for transportation between the airport and hotel. One-way ground transportation costs between $46.51 for taxi service or $23-27 for individual shuttle service, though the cost for additional shuttle passengers on a reservation is $7 per person and groups of 10 or more may reserve a shuttle at deeper discounts.

**SPECIAL NEEDS**

Members who do not have a roommate but would like to share accommodations should contact TSTA’s Center for Executive and Governance (CEG) at (800) 324-5355, ext. 1510 or 1514, before making your hotel reservation. We will attempt to match members who want to share expenses, though we cannot guarantee a roommate for everyone.

Persons who are physically challenged or have special needs should contact the CEG no later than April 10, 2009, to arrange assistance during the convention. Payment for special needs requests such as wheelchairs or transport chairs is the responsibility of the member or delegate, but TSTA will help arrange services.

**TICKET ORDER FORM**

**TSTA Delegates’ Night Out—Friday, April 17, 2009**

Ticket Price: $30 per person

Included in price: Mexican dinner, non-alcoholic beverages, DJ dance mix

(301) 527-3535, ext. 1510 or 1514, before making your hotel reservation. We will attempt to match members who want to share expenses, though we cannot guarantee a roommate for everyone.

Persons who are physically challenged or have special needs should contact the CEG no later than April 10, 2009, to arrange assistance during the convention. Payment for special needs requests such as wheelchairs or transport chairs is the responsibility of the member or delegate, but TSTA will help arrange services.

**TSTA HOST COMMITTEE**

TSTA would like to thank this year’s host committee for their efforts to ensure a warm welcome, volunteer support and a pleasant stay while we are in Houston. This year’s host committee members, appointed by President Haacke, are: Region 3A, Tim Tiba; Region 3B, Keith Dauphinerey and Mary Ann Reuter; Region 3C, Deborah Duffy, Gordon Gauthier, Patrick Hernandez and Jocelyn Sanders; Region 3D, Davey Vela and Betty Berghart; and Region 3E, Becky Vazey.

TSTA board, policies, and procedures guarantee that specific groups—i.e. minorities and ESP—have a meaningful voice in the organization, while other groups, such as administrators, are provided with a forum having influence beyond their numbers.

As specified in our bylaws, every January 15 TSTA calculates the proportion of our membership in these three categories to help determine the need for certain Board elections. Recent TSTA membership numbers show 32% of our members as ethnic minorities, 17.8% as ESPs and 3.5% as supervisory. Because the TSTA Board has 27 members that count for this purpose (President, Vice President, Regional Presidents, including TFA President, and NEA Directors for Texas), the most recent percentages hold true on January 15, 2009. TSTA would need at least nine minorities, five ESPs and one supervisor to be represented on the Board.

Although it is possible that elections will not be held, TSTA is seeking nominations for those positions now in case elections are required. The determination of whether to hold elections is based on both the January 15 calculations and the results of regional elections that are held at the regional houses of delegates. Elections (if necessary) will be held at the 2009 House of Delegates on April 18. Individual elected would serve from July 15, 2009, through July 14, 2011.

TSTA currently has five ESP-at-large Board members, all of these terms expire on July 14, 2009, and are ineligible to run for another term. Based on these facts and the current percentage of ESP members, we will need an ESP-at-large election, though we cannot know with certainty the number we will elect until after the Regional HoDs. Presuming membership percentages on January 15 remain consistent with recent levels, it is unlikely that we will need to hold an election for minority-at-large Board members due to the number of minority Board members whose terms will continue. We will still must be prepared by seeking nominations now: For the supervisory-at-large position, we will not need to hold an election. The current supervisory at-large member of the Board has a term that will expire on July 14, 2010.

Based on all of the above, we are including the nomination form for two positions. If you are interested in running for either of these positions, in the event an election is required, please complete the form and mark the appropriate box.

TSTA Policy EP-6 stipulates that all nomination forms must be submitted by the deadline established each year in the election timeline adopted by the Board. (See below.) The form can be: (1) mailed to TSTA by certified mail with return receipt requested, (2) faxed, or (3) delivered in person with a person with a receipt issued by the CEG. TSTA nomination forms that are received through the regular mail will not be accepted and will be returned to the sender.

TSTA will mail a packet detailing the responsibilities of a Board member to each person who files a nomination form. The packet will also contain a form stating that the candidate has read the packet and will accept the responsibilities if elected, which the candidate must sign and return before ballots are distributed and within the timeline adopted by the Board.

The nomination form must be COMPLETELY filled out and signed by the nominee. Candidates must comply with the Board-approved election timeline as follows:

**March 26 (Thursday): Nomination form receipt deadline**

**April 3 (Friday): Candidate flier receipt deadline** (for inclusion in delegate packets)

**April 10 (Friday) at 4:45 p.m. CDT: Candidate statement/fee nomination form receipt deadline (for candidate’s name to appear on ballot)**

**April 18 (Saturday): Election at the TSTA State House of Delegates**

**Nomination form must be received by the CEG no later than April 10, 2009.**

**Election of TSTA At-Large Board Of Directors Members**

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Be actively engaged in the education profession within the state at the time of election
- Have held Active, ESP, or TSTA, or any combination of these positions, ESP or life membership in TSTA for at least three consecutive years preceding the election
- Be actively employed as a non-supervisory member, and for the ESP position be a member in the ESP category
- Maintain membership status and educational position in TSTA during term of office
- Sign and return the form accepting the responsibilities of a Board member

Submitted forms must have a method of verifying receipt by TSTA. Mail forms by certified mail with return receipt to TSTA Center for Executive and Governance (CEG), 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. Fax forms to (512) 486-7035. Hand deliver forms to TSTA Headquarters but be sure to get a handwritten receipt from the CEG. Direct questions regarding board election to the CEG by calling (877) ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or 1510, or by emailing sandra@tsta.org or carolm@tsta.org.

**TSTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ETHNIC MINORITY OR EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AT-LARGE POSITIONS**

- I am filing for an ethnic minority position and certify that I am a non-supervisory member of TSTA.
- I am filing for an educational support position and certify that I am a non-supervisory member of TSTA.

- **Nomination form must be received by the CEG no later than April 10, 2009.**

- **A runoff election (if necessary) will be held at the TSTA State House of Delegates on April 18 (Saturday).**

**TSTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ETHNIC MINORITY OR EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AT-LARGE POSITIONS**

**Nomination form must be received by the CEG no later than April 10, 2009.**

- **A runoff election (if necessary) will be held at the TSTA State House of Delegates on April 18 (Saturday).**
TSTA'S 2009 AMBASSADOR ACADEMY

Discover Your Voice, Find Your Passion and Begin Your Leadership Journey

TSTA will hold its highly acclaimed Ambassador Academy at the Omni Southpark Hotel in Austin from Tuesday, July 21 through Sunday, July 26. The academy develops leadership skills using interactive group settings for training in personality types, NEA's PALS training and learning about TSTA, its mission and its vision. Participants will also be guided through a leadership paradigm developed specifically for the TSTA Ambassador Academy.

Participation is open to any TSTA member who has not held an elected office in a local association or governance region for more than two years. Selection for the academy is competitive, and the deadline for submission of the application and all supporting documentation is May 15, 2009. For more information, contact Bryan Weatherford, Ambassador Academy Coordinator, at bryanw@tsta.org. Applications will be available online beginning Dec. 1 and will also be available at the TSTA House of Delegates in Houston in April.

WESTERN REGIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

NEA annually hosts regional conferences throughout the United States that are designed to educate members about NEA programs and activities, encourage more active involvement in NEA, develop personal leadership skills and provide opportunities to attend hearings on NEAs budget, legislative program and resolutions.

The 2009 Western Regional Leadership Conference will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel Albuquerque in Albuquerque, N.M. from January 16-18, 2009. The room rate will be $125.

Register online at www.nea.org/members/wrlc.html.

EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS CONFERENCE

The 2009 NEA Education Support Professionals Conference will be held March 13-15, 2009, at the Doubletree Hotel at the entrance to Universal in Orlando, Fla. Preconference workshops will be held March 11-12. This conference is a great opportunity for ESPs to develop new skills and learn more about relevant, important issues facing education support staff.

Detailed conference information and online registration will be available in late fall on the NEA ESP website at: www.nea.org/eshome/members/esp-conf09.html.

For more information go to www.tsta.org
With the historic 2008 election behind us, TSTA looks ahead to the 81st Texas Legislature, which convenes in mid-January.

See page 4.