

SPRING SEMESTER HAZARDS • ESP CONFERENCES • HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICT

# Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

WINTER 2009



The Freedom Writers way  
**Teaching hope**

**Oscars of teaching**  
MILKEN HONORS AUSTIN TEACHER

**Attention, please!**  
HOW TO KEEP KIDS  
ENGAGED IN CLASS



# Great local **leaders** show they care

Member to member is where the strength of TSTA truly exists

By **Rita Haecker**, TSTA President

My travels across the state have proven how our leaders lead by example. I found one such leader in Clear Creek Educators Association.

It is hard to believe that it was barely a year ago that our members in Clear Creek and many other locals along the Gulf Coast were affected by the devastation of Hurricane Ike.

TSTA immediately stepped up to the plate and started to plan how we could help so many members in need of assistance. We established the TSTA Hurricane Ike Assistance Fund and received donations from NEA and more than 25 local and state affiliates. With their donations, we were able to help more than 300 TSTA members who applied for assistance.

In a visit this year to Clear Creek ISD, I met one of those 300 members who were helped by our relief fund. Denise Graham immediately came up to me, gave me a big hug and said, "Thanks for the help TSTA gave me."

She told me how she had been living in a tent in her

back yard in Galveston for several weeks when our Clear Creek local president and his wife, Tim and Yvonne Tibai, opened up their home and hearts to her and her family. She was so touched that tears came to her eyes as she told me the story. She said she would never forget how our TSTA leaders cared.

Another great example of leaders supporting one another occurred in October when 23 of our TSTA local presidents came together for a Local Presidents Council Meeting. At these meetings, our local leaders share the critical issues they are facing on behalf of their members. Sharing issues prepares us to act quickly and organize collectively because it's often just a matter of time before an issue in one area of the state becomes an issue elsewhere.

So in October, our local presidents created a campaign to help two of our locals in El Paso County advocate for their education support professional members and teachers on the rising cost of health care there. Our members had not been

allowed input, and premiums had skyrocketed—by more than 100%. Our presidents brought their best ideas forward, strategized and formulated a plan that would have the impact needed to bring change for our members in El Paso.

Stories like these remind us that we lead by example—by showing that we care and that we advocate for what matters to us as public school employees. We must look to our members' individual stories to teach us what mo-

tivates them and what will lead them to action.

Individual meetings with members help us identify their interests and those issues that will help us build infrastructures to strengthen our association at all levels. Member to member is where the strength and good will of TSTA truly exists. I am proud of all the good work that all of you do on behalf of TSTA. Keep it up!

Wishing you much success in the New Year.



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## Advocate

Vol. 29, No. 2

Winter 2009

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](http://www.tsta.org), or write to TSTA, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. Please send address changes to the attention of Membership Records or [membershiprecords@tsta.org](mailto:membershiprecords@tsta.org).

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# 10 things you should know



**1 LEADERS VISIT RIO GRANDE VALLEY:** “Too many young Texans in the Rio Grande Valley are dropping out of school,” TSTA President Rita Haecker said at a September news conference. “We’ve come to Donna ISD to underscore TSTA/NEA’s commitment to do all we can to keep our minority children in school and ensure that they succeed.” Haecker was joined by NEA Vice President Lily Eskelsen, an elementary school teacher from Utah. “The face of America is changing, but one thing will not change. Public education will continue to be the key—la llave a la puerta de la oportunidad,” Eskelsen said.



**2 EDUCATION SECRETARY MEETS WITH NEA BOARD:** Watch video excerpts of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s visit to the fall NEA Board of Directors meeting on YouTube. [www.youtube.com/user/NEAABS#p/u/0/tRbAacU4yq8](http://www.youtube.com/user/NEAABS#p/u/0/tRbAacU4yq8)

## 3 NATIONAL ESP CONFERENCE IN LAS VEGAS:

The 2010 NEA Education Support Professionals Conference is March 12-14, 2010, at the Flamingo Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. It’s a great opportunity for ESPs to develop new skills and learn more about important issues facing education support staff. Additional information about the conference and registration will be posted on the NEA ESP website, [www.nea.org/home/ns/31430.htm](http://www.nea.org/home/ns/31430.htm).



## 4 NEA PRESIDENT TESTIFIES IN CONGRESSIONAL HEARING:

“Our nation has the capacity to make sure every child in every high-needs school has great

teachers,” NEA President Dennis Van Roekel testified before the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee at the end of September. A recent NEA report, “Children of Poverty,” documents proven strategies to help recruit, prepare, support and retain teachers in high-needs schools, and NEA has pledged to invest \$1 million per year for six years to pursue strategies to increase teacher effectiveness in these schools. [www.nea.org/assets/docs/children\\_of\\_poverty\\_09.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/children_of_poverty_09.pdf)



## 5 PUSHING FOR A LIVING WAGE:

Through its nationwide salary initiative, NEA is working for an appropriate living wage as starting pay for all education support professionals. “ESPs play critical roles in educating our children and in encouraging the parental involvement that is necessary for student success,” TSTA President Rita Haecker said. “If teachers are the backbone of our Texas public schools, then education support professionals are the muscles that keep the backbone in place. Schools would both literally and figuratively fall apart without ESPs.” [www.nea.org/home/ns/29173.htm](http://www.nea.org/home/ns/29173.htm)

## 6 WANT TO BE A DELEGATE TO THE NEA RA?

Ballots for electing TSTA state delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly will be printed in the spring issue of the Advocate. The deadline for marked ballots to be received at TSTA Headquarters is 5:00 p.m. CDT, Friday, April 23, 2010.



## 7 WESTERN REGION TO MEET IN ARIZONA:

NEA annually hosts regional conferences throughout the United States to enhance the knowledge of K-12 educators, support professionals, higher education, student and retired mem-

bers about their association. The 2010 Western Region Leadership Conference will be held at the Phoenix Marriott Mesa in Mesa, Arizona Jan. 15-17. The room rate is \$149 plus taxes. Register online at [www.nea.org/members/wrlc.html](http://www.nea.org/members/wrlc.html).

## 8 TWO CANDIDATES FOR NEA DIRECTOR HAVE FILED:

The TSTA filing deadline for NEA Director, Place 1, was Sept. 15, 2009. Candidates for this position are: Rhonda Schell of Beaumont Teachers Association and Frances H. Smith of Cypress Fairbanks TSTA/NEA. Elections will be held at the state House of Delegates in San Marcos on April 17, 2010. Candidate statements and biographical information will appear in the spring 2010 Advocate.



**9 PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Have you heard TSTA President Rita Haecker’s public service announcements in your area? Five PSAs, including one in Spanish, were distributed to radio stations around Texas for their use this fall. [www.tsta.org/news/current/09psa.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/news/current/09psa.shtml)



## 10 DO YOU KNOW HOW EASY IT IS TO GET PUBLICITY FOR YOUR LOCAL?

Just send an email to [debbiem@tsta.org](mailto:debbiem@tsta.org) telling us what your local association has been doing and attach a few high-resolution photos if you’ve got them. We’ll run your story in the Advocate. You can also post your photos on TSTA’s flickr site, [www.flickr.com/photos/tstapublicaffairs/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/tstapublicaffairs/); your local president received instructions on how to do that in the October TSTA PR Messenger newsletter.





# 10 ways to increase classroom participation

Kids aren't a whole lot different than adults: If they aren't absorbed by what's going on, they'll find something else that interests them **By Tristan de Frondeville**

Have you ever plunked yourself down in a staff meeting where some of your colleagues were, for lack of a better phrase, not paying attention? Grading homework? Having private conversations? Texting?

As we know all too well, kids aren't a whole lot different than adults: If they aren't absorbed by what's going on, they'll find something else that interests them.

Getting all your students focused, eager and on task at the beginning of class is challenging enough. Equally problematic, once you have them locked in to the lesson, is watching them zone out. There's nothing unusual about that. After all,

anyone who has to sit through a long routine—including a teacher's presentation—is bound to drift off at some point.

Still, unless you manage to capture and keep students' focus, whether at the beginning of or midway through class, the engine of student learning that you are trying to drive simply isn't even in gear.

## FROM DEAD TIME TO ACTIVE LEARNING

I call this lack of engagement dead time. Dead time interferes with students' learning, and it is contagious. It lures those who are on task into wondering, "Why should I pay attention if others aren't?"

I have come to feel that dead time is so pernicious that I will do everything I can to prevent even the hint of an outbreak. If you strive for maximum learning for all your students, then allowing kids to be stuck in dead time feels like a small betrayal—to yourself and to them.

Active learning and active listening—in which students are thoroughly and thoughtfully engaged with each other or the teacher—represents the opposite of dead time. In their book "Inspiring Active Learning," Merrill Harmon and Melanie Toth present a ladder that describes four levels of student motivation.

They call students at level four, the lowest level, the work avoiders, and on level three are the halfhearted workers. Near the top are responsible students, and, finally, come the fully active learners.

As a teacher and a project-learning consultant, I've always paid close attention to these levels of student engagement. I've discovered that it's difficult to keep students focused when the lesson comes from the teacher. But it can be equally difficult when they are engaged as project-learning teams, especially when the independence demanded by project learning is new to them.

Sometimes it's an individual on the team who can't seem to get involved; other times it's the entire group. Over the years, I've come up with a range of strategies to eliminate dead time and move students up the active-learning ladder.

## BUILDING YOUR ARSENAL

Eliminating dead time starts with creating an arsenal of routines and activities. They can be general-purpose activities that apply to various subject areas or styles of teaching, or specific content-oriented activities that allow your stu-

dents to learn by tapping into multiple intelligences beyond the usual listening and recalling.

Some are physical activities that help kids unleash pent-up energy, while others create private thinking time that encourages reflection. Or they can be well-managed student-to-student communication to guarantee that they are all thinking about the work.

Developing these activities initially takes time, but the payoff—in terms of classroom management and overall learning—is more than worth the effort. By building a storehouse of activities to draw on, I'm rarely at a loss to implement one of them to get kids back on track.

Not surprisingly, too, students get to know these strategies and look forward to them. I find they work at the beginning of class to calm kids down or any time they need an energizing way to refocus.

## 10 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

**1 Start class with a mind warm-up**  
A classic warm-up is to ask students to find the mistakes planted in material written on the board. (You can use this idea in any subject area.) But instead of asking them to work silently and alone, and then debrief in a classic question-and-answer session with one student at a time (while many sit inattentively), use a mix of collaboration and competition to eliminate what could potentially become dead time.

**Here's how:** Organize teams of three students and ask them to work together (quietly) and raise their hands when they think they have found all the mistakes. After the first team signals it's done, give a bit more time and then have teams indicate with their fingers—together on the count of three—

the number of mistakes they found in the work. The team that found the most describes its answers until another team disagrees politely or until they are finished.

## 2 Use movement to get kids focused

Ask all students to stand behind their desks and join in simple choreographed physical movement. Because most kids find it invigorating and it's easy to monitor full participation, it may become one of your favorite ways to get kids focused and kill dead time.

### Here's how, for the primary grades:

Teach hand-clapping patterns to accompany a chanted verse or a set of math facts. Add foot stomping or hand clapping with a partner to create variety.

### Here's how, for the middle grades:

Create a rhythm with finger snapping and hand clapping, which you model and they echo back. Vary the rhythm and pattern in intervals of 15-20 seconds to challenge them to pay attention and join in.

### Here's how, for any grade, including high school:

Offer a seventh-inning stretch, or the cross crawl. To do the cross crawl, stand up and begin marching in place, raising the knees really high. As you raise the left knee, reach across your body with your right hand and touch the left knee, then do the same for the left hand on the right knee. Continue this pattern for a minute or more. (You can also vary it by, say, having kids clap their hands over their heads between each set of knee touches.)

## 3 Teach students how to collaborate before expecting success

Doing project learning and other team-based work without prior training can lead to lots of dead time. You can nip much of it in the bud by





teaching collaboration skills before projects get started. You don't need to use an activity related to your subject area to teach teamwork.

**Here's how:** One way is to give teams of students a pair of scissors, two sheets of paper, 10 paper clips and a 10-inch piece of tape, and ask them to build the tallest free-standing tower in 20 minutes.

Prior to the activity, create a teamwork rubric with students, which reviews descriptions of desired norms and behaviors. While half of the teams are building the towers, have the other half of the students stand around them in a circular "fishbowl" as silent observers.

Debrief afterward, and train the observers to give a positive comment before a critical one: "I liked that they

[blank], and I wonder if they could have also [blank]." Switch the observers with the tower builders and see if they can do better, then debrief again.

#### 4 Use quickwrites when you want quiet time and student reflection

When interest is waning in your presentations, or you want to settle students down after a noisy teamwork activity, ask them to do a quickwrite, or short journal-writing assignment.

**Here's how, for primary-grade students:** Ask, "What was most interesting about [blank]?" "What was confusing about [blank]?" "What was the clearest thing you understood?" "What was boring about [blank]?" "What did [blank] make you think of in your life?"

**Here's how, for intermediate-grade students and above:** Try prompts such as the following, or develop your own: "Summarize what you have heard." "Predict an exam or quiz question I could ask based on this material." "Defend one of the positions taken during the prior discussion."

Teachers often avoid giving this type of assignment because assessing them regularly can be overwhelming. Manage this load by having students use a green (or other color) pen to circle one entry from the week you guarantee you will read.

Occasionally, have them write a few sentences next to their entry explaining why they want you to read that particular one. Let them know that you will read the passages marked in green and that, time permitting, you might read the rest if you have time.

#### 5 Run a tight ship when giving instructions

Preventing dead time is especially important when giving instructions. There are a lot of great ways to ask for your students' attention, but many succeed or fail based on how demanding you are of the final outcome.

Whichever method you use, before you begin speaking, it is critical to require (1) total silence, (2) complete attention and (3) all five eyeballs on you (two eyes on their face, two eyes on their knees and the eyeball on their heart). I've done this approach with every class I've ever taught, and it makes a big difference.

**Here's how:** When you introduce this routine to students, do it five times in a row: Announce that in a moment, you will briefly let them talk among themselves, and then you'll give them a signal (you can count out loud from one to three, ring a bell and so on) and wait until they are perfectly ready for you to speak.

In the first two weeks after starting this

routine, remind students often what's expected. To hold everyone accountable for listening the entire time, make it clear that you will never repeat your instructions after you have finished going over them.

#### 6 Use a fairness cup to keep students thinking

The more you can manage your classroom to be a supportive environment, where students are encouraged to take risks without fear of being put down or teased, the easier it will be to use your fairness cup regularly, without feeling that you are setting students up for failure.

**Here's how:** Write each student's name on a Popsicle stick and put the sticks in a cup. To keep students on their toes, pull a random stick to choose someone to speak or answer a question. Important: When you begin using your fairness cup, prepare a range of questions, some of which all your students can successfully answer. This strategy allows the bottom third of your class to get involved and answer questions without being put on the spot.

#### 7 Use signaling to allow everyone to answer your question

To help ensure that all students are actively thinking, regularly ask questions to which everyone must prepare at least one answer—letting them know you expect an answer. Then wait for all students to signal they are ready.

**Here's how:** For example, in math, you could ask, "How many ways can you can figure out 54-17 in your head? (Subtract 10 and then 7, subtract 20 and then add 3, and so on.) Or, to review a presentation, ask, "How many key points of this presentation are you prepared to describe?"

By asking questions that allow for multiple answers or explanations, you are differentiating instruction; everyone is expected to come up with at

least one answer, but some may come up with more.

To convey the number of answers, students can use sign language, such as holding a hand to the chest (so their hands aren't visible to their neighbors) and displaying one or more fingers to represent how many answers they have. This technique precludes students from bragging about how many ideas they thought of or how quickly they are ready. You can then call on volunteers who want to share their answers with the rest of the class.

#### 8 Use minimal-supervision tasks to squeeze dead time out of regular routines

Tasks that require minimal supervision add purposeful activity during moments that might normally revert to dead time. They come in handy when passing out papers, working with a small group of students, handling an unforeseen interruption, addressing students who didn't do their homework, or providing work to those who have finished an assignment before others.

**Here's how:** While you pass out papers, ask students to do a quickwrite (see #4) or to pair up and quiz each other on vocabulary words. Also, train students to fess up if they didn't do their homework. That way, during class homework review, these students won't automatically be in dead time. Instead, they'll immediately move to these pre-arranged minimal supervision tasks.

For example, you can ask them to study a review sheet, summarize a reading passage, read the day's assignment ahead of time, or create and study vocabulary words or other content. You might find students suddenly doing their homework more often rather than face this extra work.

#### 9 Mix up your teaching styles

To keep students involved and on their toes, try to move from

teacher-centered learning to student-centered active learning, and vice versa.

**Here's how:** Introduce a presentation by having students pair up, talk to each other about their prior knowledge of the presentation, and generate a list of four questions for which they'll want to know the answers. Make quick rounds to remind all students to stay on task.

To encourage active listening, provide students with a list of important questions in advance. Interrupt the presentation with a quickwrite (see #4), and then have students "pair-share" by asking them to compare their entries with a neighbor. Pull sticks from your fairness cup (see #6) to choose pairs of students to present their thoughts to the class.

#### 10 Create teamwork tactics that emphasize accountability

By insisting that students "ask three before me," you make it clear that they are expected to seek assistance from all members of their team before they turn to you.

**Here's how:** To reinforce this rule, when a student on a team wants to ask you a question, you, the teacher, always ask another person on the team whether she knows what the question is. If she doesn't, politely walk away, and the team will quickly understand what you expect.

Another way to emphasize accountability might be to say, "When you think your team is done with the task, find me within 30 seconds and tell me." This strategy shifts the accountability to the team for being on task.

*Tristan de Frondeville, a former teacher, heads PBL Associates, a consulting company dedicated to project learning and school redesign. This article, which originally was published in the September issue of Edutopia magazine, is reprinted with permission.*



In 1994, Erin Gruwell's first year as a teacher, she learned she could help troubled students turn their lives around with communication. The book she and her students wrote, "The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them," became a New York Times bestseller and major motion picture.

Gruwell later established the Freedom Writers Institute, a five-day program to share her techniques. She has trained more than 150 secondary school language arts teachers to date. As part of the training, Freedom Writer teachers write about the anticipation, challenges, engagement, disillusionment, rejuvenation and empowerment of teaching; a compilation of the teachers' stories, called "Teaching Hope," was published in August.

One of the Freedom Writer teachers is Marco Franco, a teacher in Laredo ISD and a TSTA member. "My story is No. 29, 'Loss of Innocence,'" Franco said. "It's in the 'Challenges' section of our 'Teaching Hope' book and, like all the 150 stories in the book, it is a true story.

"When I began reading the 'Teaching Hope' stories, I felt some of them were incomplete and needed an ending, but later I came to realize that, as in life, every day is just a continuation of days in sequence, like beads in the rosary of life," he said. "Some of our days are still open. We have open issues; some of our stories are still inconclusive. I saw myself reflected in more than one of the teachers' stories."

Following is an article Franco wrote for the Advocate about his first years in the classroom.



# On becoming a teacher

It's not a generation gap but a trust gap that keeps adults and young people apart **By Marco Franco**

August 22, 2005, was my first day as a high school teacher, and I was frightened. To make things worse, I had hall duty the first day of class during my conference period, which was first block. Even though I held the hall duty instructions on my hand and was constantly asking students, "Where's your hall pass?" and "Sir, please tuck in your shirt," I knew I looked like one of the freshmen.

Several times during my first semester I asked one of the assistant principals to go to my fourth block class and talk to my students about how to behave. But five minutes after he left, the class became a reality show again. Throughout that semester, my fourth block class became my Karma; every day was atonement day. I had my own classroom and my own students, and I did not know what to do.

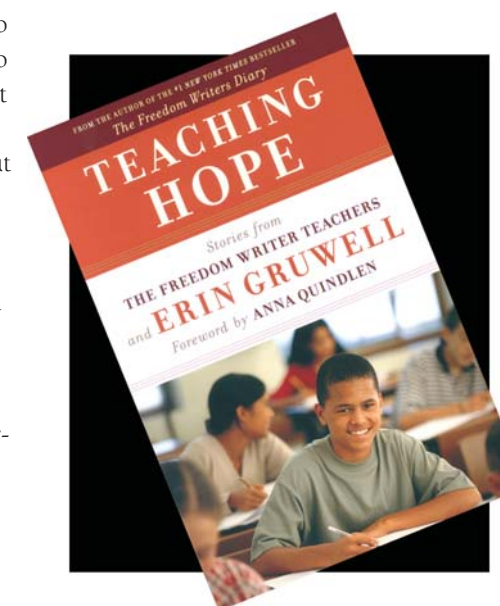
During my second year of teaching, I continued my quest for the "secret formula" to teach "at-risk" students who were forced to attend school by state law. I came home each day feeling totally helpless and frustrated.

Then I stumbled onto Erin Gruwell's Freedom Writers Foundation website, [www.freedomwriters.com](http://www.freedomwriters.com). I applied to the Freedom Writers Institute, and in August 2007, attended the five-day seminar. I came back home completely transformed and eager to try the Freedom Writers method with my students.

Doing the Freedom Writers "Line Game" (see sidebar) in the classroom was fun because my students had the opportunity to do something besides reading and answering questions about

the stories we read in class. Besides, standing up and huddling together provided them the perfect opportunity to be close to their friends and gossip about the latest school news.

Most of them stood on the line when I asked them who had lost one, two or three friends or relatives due to drug cartels' wars; there were no signs of surprise when I asked them if they knew someone who used drugs; and most of them knew someone—a friend



or a relative—who had been kidnapped or disappeared.

When we began reading "The Freedom Writers Diary" in class, I let my students choose the entries, we turned the lights off, and they took turns reading the text projected on the sliding screen in front of the board. We shared the magic experience of someone else's distant reality reflected in our own lives. One voice in the classroom's penumbra diffused our individual personalities and mingled them into a collective

spirit. We were like a fetus, feeling very sensitive and defensive by instinct, waiting for the light to be revealed but avoiding the pain of birth.

Slowly, some of my students walked out from the darkness of masked fears and hopelessness. Slowly they began writing one or two sentences, then one paragraph, and later a complete journal entry. And, with that, they started developing their own voice.

Six weeks into the fall semester, my students and I participated in a writing workshop sponsored by our local university. The students happily attended and even invited their parents to the readings of their journal entries.

Gabriela shared with the audience her feelings of alienation during her first days in school—the cultural shock she experienced as a recent arrival from Mexico and her sense of urgency to learn English. Her voice reverberated in the room when she revealed the family secret about her parents' divorce and the mixed and painful memories she underwent in the process. She looked proud and tall, very self-assertive and at ease, like a swift ship coming out from rough waters.

Three other students shared similar experiences about being in a new country and struggling to learn the language. They described in detail all their parents' efforts and sacrifices to further their education.

Back in class we continued reading "The Freedom Writers Diary" without any misgivings at all—or so I thought until three weeks later I got a call



from Gabriela's mother. She sounded disappointed.

"Why are you teaching 'El Diario de los Escritores de la Libertad,' Maestro?" she sorrowfully questioned me in Spanish. "I don't agree with that because those Escritores were classified as 'remedial' and 'below average,' and my daughter has nothing in common with them."

"Almost all recent arrivals are labeled 'at risk' or 'Limited English Proficient' by the system," I explained. "Gabriela's group average was 44.42 the first two weeks of class and now is 57 points. We're making progress."

"Well, I think that book's themes are too strong for my daughter, and I don't want her to be influenced by them,"

she responded. "Are there any other parents calling you expressing their objections?"

"No, just you," I told her. "I invite you to reconsider your decision and trust your mother's heart and your intuition."

I felt puzzled after we hung up. It took me months to realize "The Freedom Writers Diary" is the key to opening the secret chambers of thoughts and feelings never shared before, and it took me even longer to discover that it's not a generation gap but a trust gap that keeps adults and young people apart.

While some people believe that by keeping the secret they may keep pain at bay, others cannot assimilate the fact of their children transcending their

own limitations and outgrowing their own fears and family environments.

By reading and reflecting on "The Freedom Writers Diary" entries, my students have been empowered. They are learning to express their feelings and their own voices.

As human beings we all share many similar life experiences at different times and with different levels of intensity. We all have a story to tell, and we all are on "The Line Game." We all are continually fighting our demons and struggling to lead a normal, happy life. In the end, we all are survivors in some way.

*TSTA suggests you discuss the Line Game with your principal first. Visit [www.freedomwritersfoundation.org](http://www.freedomwritersfoundation.org) for more information.*

## PLAYING THE LINE GAME

from the resources area of [www.freedomwriters.com](http://www.freedomwriters.com)

### OBJECTIVE

The Line Game is a great opportunity to become more familiar with your class and for your students to learn about each other in a non-threatening and interactive way. This activity enables you to solicit information from your students that they may not feel comfortable sharing with a teacher. Knowledge about your students' lives will enable you to craft relevant lesson plans that effectively engage them in the learning process. Sharing information about each other will also build a sense of community within the classroom that involves everyone's participation. Sometimes it is difficult for students to open up in front of their peers, but the Line Game gives students an opportunity to speak volumes, without ever saying a word.

### DESCRIPTION

Students will split into two lines, facing each other. You will ask them a set of questions ranging from general to specific, from pop culture to family to personal beliefs and experiences. If a student's response is "yes" to any question, they must step on the line.

### MATERIALS

- An empty area large enough to accommodate the whole class
- Something to divide the area into two equal sides (i.e. a bright-colored tape, such as painter's tape)

### PROCESS

Before you begin, it is important to establish expectations. Students should not talk, high-five each other or share details about their experiences between questions. Also, everyone must stand, everyone must participate and everyone must walk on the line when it is relevant. In order for the students to expose their vulnerabilities, it is crucial that the parameters are enforced clearly and specifically at the beginning of the game.

**Step 1:** Have your students move all their chairs against the wall so they have a large enough space to move in. If you move outside of the classroom, move far away from other classes, so your students know no outsiders are listening.

**Step 2:** Place the tape or ribbon

down the center of the area, creating two equal sides.

**Step 3:** Establish ground rules that the students must adhere to during the activity, including the following:

- Absolutely no talking, laughing or joking.
- If their answer to the question is "yes," then they should move forward and step on the line.
- If their answer to the question is "no," then no movement is necessary.

**Step 4:** Use a random method to separate the class into two groups. For example, have everyone say either "one" or "two" as you point to them, then separate the "ones" and "twos" to form two parallel lines of students.

**Step 5:** Begin by asking questions that are simple, silly and obviously pertain to the majority of the students. To make the students familiar with the exercise, the questions should be easy. Keep the game at a brisk pace because a sense of urgency allows more questions to be covered. (See [www.freedomwriters.com](http://www.freedomwriters.com) for more sample questions.)

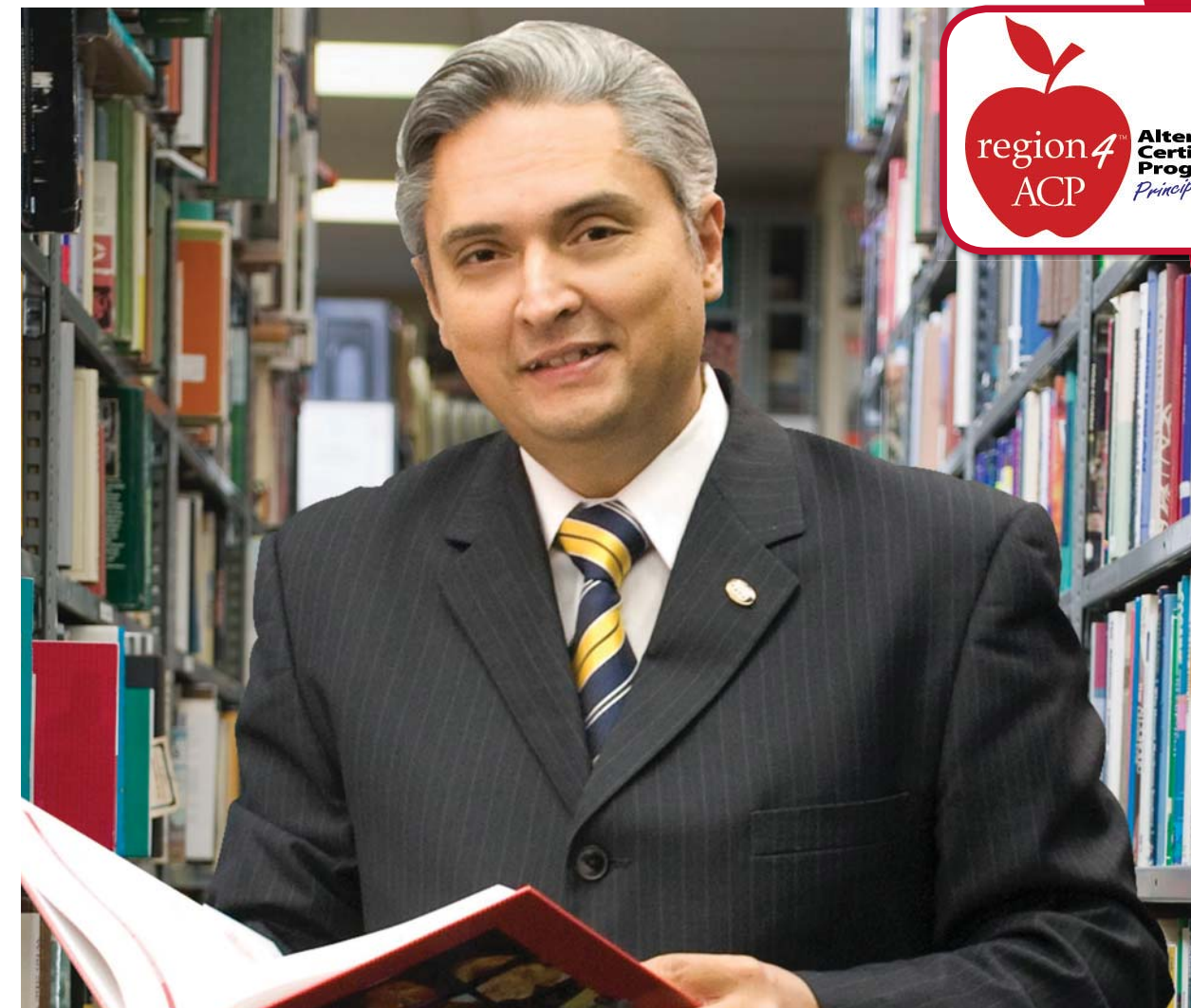
A. These questions should be easy, generally pertaining to

everyday activities (i.e. riding the bus) or pop culture. Sample question: Do you own the new CD by (insert name of a popular artist)?

- B. Judging by the students' level of comfort, these questions should become more specific. Possible topics include school, family and community. Sample question: Do you live with your mom and your dad?
- C. The last set of questions, although sensitive in nature, may be the most enlightening for you and your students. To avoid precarious situations, begin this set of questions with "Do you know someone who...." When you feel that the students are participating fully and are truly engaged, you may start to ask more personal questions. Sample question: Do you know someone who is in a gang?

**Step 6:** Tell the students that they can also ask questions. Volunteers will most likely ask questions that pertain to them, which is an excellent way to learn something that you may have missed, or prompt additional questions from other students. Remind them to ask their questions by saying, "Do you know someone who...."

# Teachers, are you ready for the next level in your career?



Get started online! If you are a certified teacher and would like to become a principal or central office administrator, go with the leader in Texas: Region 4 Principal Certification Online. Visit [www.Region4ACP.net](http://www.Region4ACP.net) to find out more.

## Fast, Flexible, and Affordable.

Internships must be conducted in Texas.

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# Shining a national spotlight

Milken honors Austin member **Maricruz Aguayo-Tabor**



PHOTO: JOE BEAN

**Maricruz Aguayo-Tabor** is a busy woman. In addition to teaching world and European history classes, she's a mentor for new teachers, the sponsor of the math club and the social studies department chair at Austin's Liberal Arts and Sciences Academy High School (LASA).

When her normal schedule was interrupted by an assembly in the gym on the morning of Oct. 22, she had so much on her mind that at first she didn't realize it was her name they were calling from the stage. Students and staff were cheering and applauding—for her?

"I was shocked!" Aguayo-Tabor said later that day. "My mind went completely blank and all I could think was, 'What? What?'"

She is one of 50 educators in the United States to receive the 2009 Milken Educator Award, often referred to as "the Oscars of teaching." Honorees never know in advance that they are under consideration.

The awards were conceived by Lowell Milken, chairman of the Milken Family Foundation, to recognize the importance of outstanding educators and encourage talented young people to enter the teaching profession.

"By shining a national spotlight on these exceptional people," Milken said, "the Milken Educator Awards send a powerful message of the critical role that talented teachers play in preparing young people for a bright future."



"It's such an amazing honor for me," Aguayo-Tabor said. "I work with so many wonderful teachers who inspire me every day, and to be recognized like this is just completely unexpected and exciting. Wow."

Aguayo-Tabor comes from a family of teachers. "My mother, Elvira Ledesma Aguayo, is an English teacher at Weslaco East High School in my hometown of Weslaco, and my sister, Marta Aguayo, is an English teacher with Progreso ISD's Early College program, so you could say that teaching is in the genes, at least in my family," she said.

Her husband, Charles Tabor, teaches AP government at Vista Ridge High School in Leander ISD.

Aguayo-Tabor is humbled by the Milken award. "I need to share my award with my family, with all the teachers I've ever had who inspired me and with those I work with now, who do the same," she said. "It's safe to say we remain teachers because we love what we do, and it's always nice to be recognized for doing something that you just love to do."

It's her passion and excitement that brought her to the attention of the state of Texas and the Milken Foundation. At LASA, a magnet school, she sets up her world history class like a graduate class: students study specific topics in-depth, researching large global issues such as world hunger and disease. In her advanced placement European history

class, students turn their research into a film.

Aguayo-Tabor, who holds National Board Certification, is a recognized leader throughout her school, serving on many campus committees. Although she does not teach math, she sponsors LASA's math club and was named one of the top 25 math teachers in the country by the National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science and Technology because of her tireless sponsorship and support of the math team.

According to the Austin American-Statesman, 100 percent of her students pass the state's social studies high school exit exam and all consistently pass the



Advanced Placement World History exam.

The Milken awards, which alternate each year between elementary and secondary educators, were first presented in 1987 to 12 exemplary California teachers. Milken is now the nation's largest teacher recognition program, having honored more than 2,400 educators from coast to coast with over \$60 million. Forty Texas educators have received the award since the state began participating in 2000; collectively, they have earned a total of \$1 million in prize money.

In May, Aguayo-Tabor will take an all-expense-paid trip to Los Angeles to attend the Milken Educator Forum, where she will receive her award and \$25,000 to spend on anything she wants.

#### FIND OUT:

- About the Milken Awards [www.mff.org/mea](http://www.mff.org/mea)
- About Austin's Liberal Arts and Sciences Academy High School [www.lasaonline.org](http://www.lasaonline.org)



# Spring semester hazards

As the spring semester approaches, there are three issues that consistently plague education professionals throughout the state. No, we aren't talking about spring showers, Texas allergies and tax day. We're talking about TAKS testing, appraisals and contract nonrenewals. TSTA is here to help you with these issues. **By Joey Moore**



## TAKS MADNESS

It seems that when the TAKS testing season rolls around in some districts, everything else is pushed to the way-side—including some of the protections afforded to teachers under the Texas Education Code. It is not uncommon for TSTA to hear about districts that eliminate teachers' planning periods and duty-free lunch during TAKS testing periods. The Texas Education Code does not allow districts to disregard these statutory protections.

All classroom teachers and full-time librarians are entitled to a 30-minute, duty-free lunch. "Duty-free" means just that—a teacher cannot even be required to remain on campus during that 30-minute period. In certain extreme circumstances, a district may recapture a teacher's duty-free lunch, but only one day a week. These exceptions to duty-free lunch, which are defined by legal regulations, do not apply to TAKS testing, though. Simply put, a school district may not legally require a classroom teacher or full-time librarian to give up his or her duty-free lunch just because TAKS testing is occurring.

Similarly, classroom teachers are entitled to 450 minutes of planning and preparation time within each two-week period. During testing periods, districts may be able to rearrange schedules so that teachers do not receive their normally scheduled planning period on testing days. If that happens, however, the teachers must still receive 450 minutes of planning time in the two-week period. If you do not receive 450 minutes of planning time in the two-week period surrounding the testing days, the district has violated state law.

If either of these violations has occurred at your district in the past and are likely to occur this year, you should contact your local association.

The TSTA Help Center is also available for guidance and support.

## APPRAISALS

If your district follows the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS), your summative annual appraisal must be conducted no later than 15 working days before the last day of instruction. Prior to the summative annual appraisal, the teacher is entitled to a classroom observation that lasts at least 45 minutes. A teacher must be provided with a written copy of the summative annual report not less than

five working days before the summative annual conference.

Any documentation that an appraiser intends to use to support the appraisal must be provided in writing to the teacher no more than 10 working days from the date the appraiser knew of the information. If the information comes from a third party, it must be verified and documented. If the appraiser is not the teacher's principal, the information must also be shared with the principal within the same time frame. If a district fails to comply with these procedural requirements, the remedy is normally to declare the appraisal null and void.

## CONTRACT NONRENEWALS

In the spring semester, school districts

begin to decide whether to reemploy probationary and term contract teachers for another school year. If the district chooses not to reemploy the teacher at the end of the contract, the teacher is nonrenewed.

Districts must follow very specific procedural rules in the process. If a district fails to follow proper procedures, the nonrenewal will not be effective, and the district will be obligated to reemploy the teacher for another year.

Districts must provide teachers with a written notice of nonrenewal not later than 45 days before the last day of instruction. Unfortunately, probationary teachers must simply be informed in writing that the board of trustees has nonrenewed their contract; the only recourse a probationary teacher has is to file a grievance against the board. In the same time frame, term contract teachers must be given written notice of the district's intention to nonrenew their contract. At that point, the term contract teacher is given the opportunity to request a nonrenewal hearing. This request must be made within 15 calendar days. Once the request is made, the teacher will receive a hearing on whether nonrenewal is appropriate.

Some administrators will use high pressure tactics against contract employees to secure a resignation, such as telling the teacher he or she will never find another teaching job if the teacher does not resign. You should never resign your contract without first contacting an attorney in the TSTA Help Center at (877) ASK-TSTA to be informed of your options. In some situations, a resignation might be the best alternative, but that needs to be the employee's choice. Resignations should never be the result of high pressure tactics.

*Joey Moore is TSTA's General Counsel and Director of Legal Services.*





# How to manage conflict

Knowing your options for resolving conflict will make you more effective, both inside and outside of the classroom **By Dr. Paul Henley**

Any time two or more people work together, there will be conflict. We all hope conflicts are minor, but we all know that conflict is everywhere. Those who learn to manage it most effectively have a crucial skill in life success.

There is value to conflict. Conflict can move people to action when action is needed. Actual conflicts may require straightforward communication to get resolved. When this happens, conflict may increase your relationships with others. One of the best benefits of conflict is this: you get to see just how important specific issues are to a person.

The first thing is to understand conflict resolutions that people use. You also should know when they are the best, and worst, strategies in a situation. There are really only five conflict resolution strategies: avoiding, accommodating, compromising, competing, and collaboration. Each one has its advantages and disadvantages.

**Avoiding:** Avoiding behavior means that at least one person

opts out of the situation, leaving their needs unmet or their thoughts unshared. This mode usually indicates the person who is avoiding is less inclined to be assertive and/or cooperative. The avoider has no buy-in to whatever decision is made.

It can be good to avoid, though. If the issue isn't important to you, or if you have no chance of "winning" the "battle," avoiding may be the best option for you. Avoiding also gives you the opportunity to cool down, get more information on a topic or let others resolve the issue more effectively.

**Accommodating:** Those who accommodate have even less of a stake in the final decision. This can be called the, "Whatever..." strategy. You accommodate when you give in. You do enter into a conflict, but you resolve it without any of your needs met. When this happens, you may be prone to sabotage the result. It is also possible to lose influence if you defer too much. When running a classroom, accommodation can

be an enemy of classroom management.

Of course, accommodating makes sense, sometimes. There will be times when relationships are more important than whatever issue is at hand. In that case, accommodating is a smart thing to do. There also can be times when you are just flat-out wrong, and you realize it. Accommodate then, as well.

**Compromising:** When people think of conflict resolution, they usually think of compromise. This "split the difference" strategy is usually the first choice. If two, evenly-matched people (or groups) consider the issue moderately important, compromise usually works. This strategy is also one of the quickest ways to resolve a conflict.

Of course, if you compromise, you cannot be fully satisfied with the result. This can lead to bitterness every time you experience or realize what you gave up to reach the compromise. While this is a quick solution to problems, it is also a strategy that can come quickly undone.

**Competing:** Competing involves an assertive and often uncooperative person who will push to get what he or she wants. This is the "me first" strategy, and it doesn't even seem like a resolution strategy but think about this: when the competition is over, the conflict is resolved. It may not be the

most pleasant way to resolve a conflict, but it does the job. Competition can be faster than compromise when decisions need to be made. You should compete when an issue is very important to you or when somebody needs to make an unpopular decision. With some issues, there is a right and a wrong to you, and competition is the only solution.

It is said, "It doesn't matter if you win or if you lose... until you lose." That is the case in competitions. Relationships are damaged and communication is cut. Unless the winner keeps power over the issue, the conflict can pop up again and again. Even if the situation remains the same, "yes men" are all that you have to work with. You should compete only when necessary.

**Collaborating:** Collaboration can be called the "Happy Together" strategy. It is the preferred method of conflict resolution. Although many people see union-management bargaining as a set of compromises, these meetings are usually designed as a collaboration. Each person or party puts their needs on the table, and all sides work together to create a solution that gives each what they want and need. Sometimes a little creativity is needed; sometimes the answer is obvious. In most cases, however, this resolution is the hardest one to achieve.

When collaboration fails, the result often falls to compromise. At times, conflict resolution can dissolve into a competition or an accommodation. Nevertheless, a true collaboration is the best scenario with every conflict.

Of course, you can't actually resolve a conflict until you find the actual conflict. Lack of communication is often the cause of conflict. It may account for most of it. To proactively resolve conflict, full communication can solve conflicts before they arise.

The story is told of two chefs who need an orange for their recipes. After competing for the orange and hurting each other, they decide to consider the other's point of view. In doing so, they realize that one chef needed the orange juice for a sorbet, while the other needed the rind to flavor a wine. If the right questions had been asked, the conflict never would have arisen.

There will always be conflict but knowing what the conflicts are and knowing your options for resolving them will make you more effective, both inside and outside of the classroom.

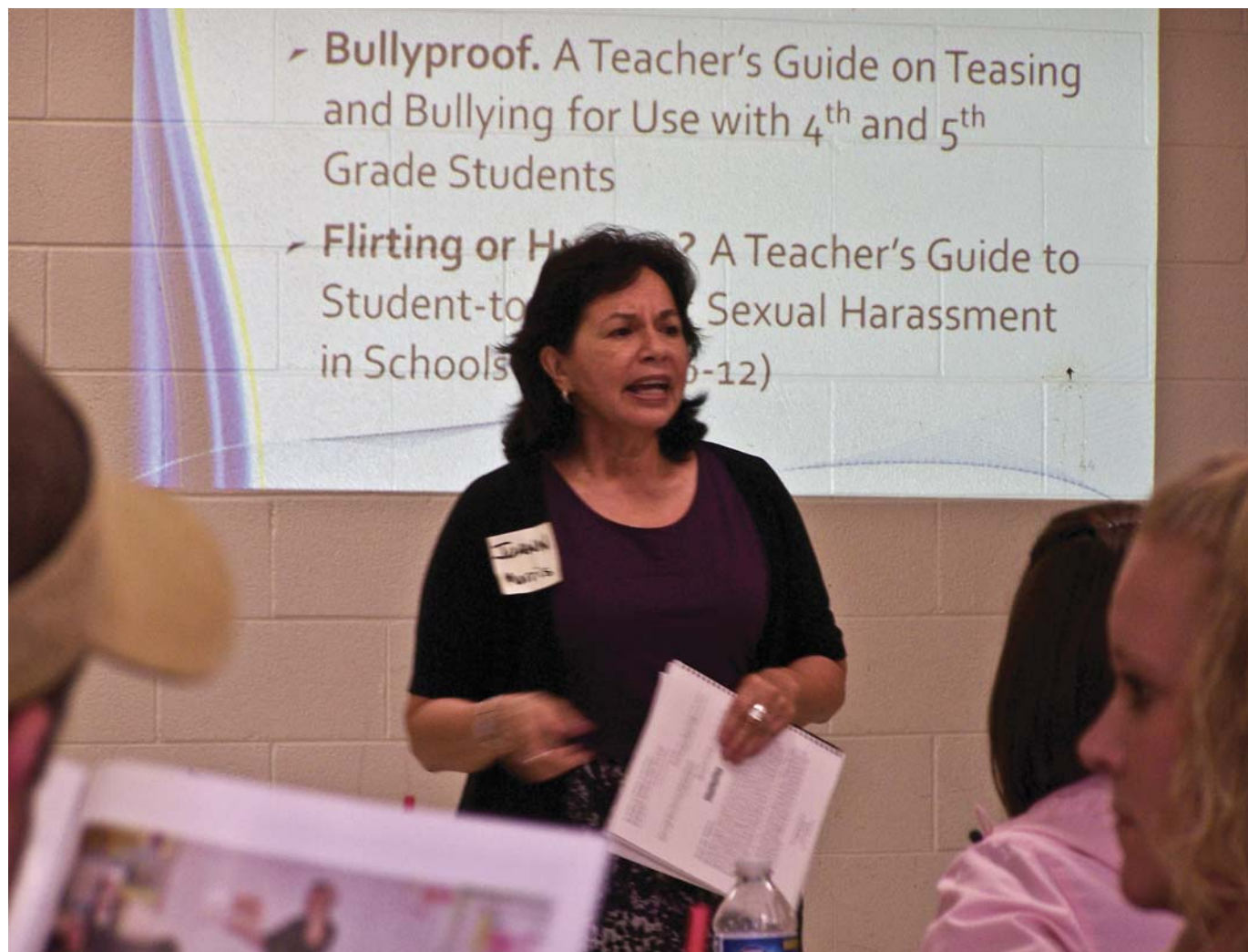
**How do you like to handle conflict?** Go to [www.tsta.org/teaching/current/index.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/teaching/current/index.shtml) to take the Conflict Inventory and learn your natural conflict management style.

*Dr. Paul Henley is TSTA's Teaching and Learning Specialist*

Experience convinces me that the number of conflicts in groups is not at all indicative of how healthy they are. The true index is whether the conflicts get resolved and by what method they get resolved.

—Thomas Gordon, Leadership Effectiveness Training





## NEA brings teachers from five states to train

NEA cadre trainers instructed the entire teaching faculty of Linden-Kildare ISD on "Sexual Harassment, Bullying and Cyberbullying" at the end of September. Students were dismissed at noon so the staff could be trained from 1:30-6 p.m. in two groups, divided into elementary and secondary levels.

"Trainers covered federal legal considerations; state laws, paying particular attention to Texas' anti-bullying legislation; and district policies," Linden-

Kildare Education Association President Becky Cerliano said. "Specific information about what does and does not work in preventing bullying and sexual harassment was provided, and there was time for personal planning to address the problems caused by bullying."

NEA members serving as cadre trainers for the event were Debra Schoonover of New Mexico, Nita Jones of Tennessee, Joann Sebastian Morris of Virginia



(who is on NEA staff), Lynette Henley of California and Meredith Monteville of Pennsylvania.

Photos: Joann Morris of NEA's Human and Civil Rights Division addresses the group; below, the NEA cadre trainers pose with local president Becky Cerliano (far right).



### TSTA HOLDS THREE ESP CONFERENCES

TSTA held two ESP (Education Support Professional) conferences this fall, one in Socorro on Oct. 10, shown in bottom three photos, and the other in Donna in the Rio Grande Valley on Sept. 19. (A third ESP Conference was to be held in Austin on Nov. 7.) Irma Valdespino, 2001 NEA ESP of the Year, was the speaker, and workshops were held on employee rights, professionalism, member benefits, safe schools and a variety of other topics.







BROAD PRIZE FINALIST: Socorro ISD Board President Karen Blaine, Mr. and Mrs. Eli Broad, SEA President Glenda Hawthorne and Superintendent Dr. Xavier De La Torre attended the ceremony in Washington, D.C.

# Socorro president represents teachers at Capitol Hill event

Socorro ISD in El Paso won \$250,000 in Broad Prize college scholarships as a finalist for the nation's most improved urban school district. The \$2 million annual award honors the five large urban school districts that demonstrate the strongest student achievement and improvement while narrowing achievement gaps between income and ethnic groups.

On Sept. 16, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and members of Congress

joined philanthropist Eli Broad on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., to announce the awards. As president of the Socorro Education Association, Glenda Hawthorne was invited to attend the function by the Broad Foundation; she represented Socorro ISD employees.

"Socorro students, teachers, parents, administrators and the community deserve to celebrate today," said Eli Broad, founder of The Eli and Edythe

Broad Foundation. "To be among the top five urban school districts in the nation is no easy feat. It's the result of smart student-focused strategies and hard work on the part of the entire community."

## FIND OUT:

- About the Broad Prize <http://broad-education.org>
- Why Socorro was among the top five <http://www.sisd.net/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=623>

# What do members want?

## Waco TSTA/NEA uses Survey Monkey to ask

Waco TSTA/NEA is once again proving to be a strong advocate for employees in Waco ISD. In the spring, the local conducted an online teacher survey using the popular—and free—Survey Monkey service. They got an overwhelming response, with more than half the teachers in the district taking the survey.

Results were presented to the board, and the local association leadership has been meeting with the ad-

ministration to tackle the issues that emerged.

This school year the local is campaigning for stipends for teachers who hold a master's degree or doctorate.

"Providing such a stipend will make the district more competitive and provide an incentive for our teachers to pursue higher education, as well as reward those who have already obtained a master's degree or doctorate," President Maggie Uzzell said.

Waco TSTA/NEA is circulating a petition calling for the district to introduce a \$2,000 stipend for teachers who have earned a master's degree and a \$3,000 stipend for those who have earned a doctoral degree.

## FIND OUT:

- If Survey Monkey can work for your local [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)
- What else Waco TSTA/NEA's survey revealed [www.wacotstanea.org](http://www.wacotstanea.org)

## Survey Monkey also revealed...

Almost 30 percent of those surveyed in Waco ISD said they spend more than eight hours per week completing lesson plans and grading papers outside of duty hours.

"I'm looking for employment elsewhere because I spend 55 or more hours each week at school and 15+ hours on schoolwork at home, yet I received only a one percent raise because I'm at the top of the salary ladder," one respondent said.

"If I were younger, I probably would seek employment other than teaching," another said. "The paperwork required and the stress of the job are too much. We are very underpaid for the amount of time we put in each week. The classroom teacher is bearing more and more of the burden and getting less and less respect and appreciation."



## GARLAND AIDES: PASS THE TEST OR LOSE YOUR JOB

In April, some Garland middle schools became Title I. Instructional aides at these schools were told they had to pass a test before the beginning of school to keep their jobs and be considered "Highly Qualified."

"This brought back memories of the TECAT," Evelina Loya, Garland Education Association president, said. "Texas teachers in the 80's had to take a test to keep their jobs. We had to prove that we could teach, despite a college degree and certification. TSTA provided workshops to teachers

across the state, and teachers passed the TECAT."

Hearing the instructional aides' concerns, GEA offered members test preparation workshops at three locations before the scheduled tests. "We had a great turnout," Loya said. "ESP members reviewed areas that would be tested, such as English, reading and mathematics. GEA members volunteered their time and expertise to make sure our ESPs felt relaxed, confident and comfortable with the subject matter. Test taking strategies were also given."

After the first test administration, two ESP members who passed the test were invited to attend a workshop and speak to those who were preparing to take their test in July. "Lisa Phinisse and Jessie Cordova not only gave their testimonials and put the instructional aides at ease, but they stayed and helped tutor the others," Loya said.

"Our goal was to assist our mem-

bers at a time when their livelihood was on the line. They were scared. During a time of financial hardships, we had to help them," she said. "To some, it may not have been a big deal but to our instructional aides, it was everything. It took GISD, administrators and GEA members, working together, to make sure that our ESPs were prepared and at ease. No other organization provided workshops to help their members.

"We are proud to say that all the members who attended our workshops passed their exam. Once again, our Association was at work helping members," Loya said.

GEA wants to thank Victor Leos, Jim Ross and Teena Johnson, for clarifying the test procedures and information; the administrators who allowed GEA to use their schools (Michelle Bounds, LaKeisha Rider, Steve Hammerle and Dr. Kim Davis); and member volunteers who assisted in training at the workshops (Christopher Reza,

Carlos Reza, Norma Waters, Evelina Loya and Eula Axe, as well as TSTA staff member Janna Connolly).



## MAVERICK COUNTY MEETS WITH TSTA PRESIDENT

TSTA President Rita Haecker met with Maverick County Local TSTA/NEA leaders to discuss the upcoming year and local events. Sitting: President Jorge Rodriguez, TSTA President Rita Haecker and Norma Lopez. Standing: Juan Moreno, Gilberto Hernandez, Treasurer Sylvia Perez, Sergio Perez, Vice President Dalia Vasquez, Membership Chair Sergio Angulo and Roberto Ruiz.





# Busy fall for TSTA-Student Program

**Executive Committee meets:** TSTA-Student Program’s executive committee met with TSTA Vice President Jason Hillman in October at TSTA’s Austin Headquarters to plan their year. State officers include President Chris Padron, University of Houston-Clear Lake; Vice President Angela Hammonds, Sam Houston State University (Houston); Secretary Nicole Smith, Texas A&M University (College Station); District I President Patty Apresa, University of Texas at Brownsville; District II President Sandy Huddleston, Texas A&M University (College Station); District III President Brian Smith, San Jacinto College (Deer Park); District V President Paige Lynn Shaw, Texas Tech University (Lubbock ); and District VI President Irene Becerra, University of Texas at El Paso. The Legislative and Political Advocacy Committee Representative/Political Advo-

cacy Subcommittee Chair is Angela Hammonds, and the Communications and Instructional Advocacy Committee Representative is LouAnn Thurman, University of Houston-Clear Lake.

**Still ahead at press time:** A group of TSTA-SP members were planning to attend the NEA-Student Program Connections Conference in Seattle, Washington, in November. The group includes Angela Hammonds and Jenny Huang (Sam Houston State University); Araceli Becerra and Irene Becerra (UT-El Paso); Karen Behrend and Nathan Brow (Lone Star College-Kingwood); Nathaniel Escobedo (UT-Brownsville); and Kirstey Martin (Lamar University).

**In local news:** The TSTA-SP chapter at Texas Wesleyan University (Fort Worth) sponsored a Fall Rally for all students in the School of Education.

More than 50 students, faculty and staff attended the rally, which included a fiesta and door prizes.

**Mark your calendars:** the TSTA-SP Convention will be March 26-28 at the Omni Austin Hotel at Southpark.

## NEWS FROM TSTA-RETIRED

**September Board of Directors report:** The TSTA-Retired Board of Directors held its first meeting this school year in early September. At the meeting, TSTA-R adopted a budget for the year, discussed recruiting new members, heard a report on the 82nd Legislative Session and its effects on retirees, cancelled the December board meeting, adopted board policies, heard a presentation from a TSTA Member Benefits representative and greeted Gerald Haschke, the newly assigned liaison from TSTA, who was there in an advisory position.

**Regional meetings:** Regional meetings were held in September. Some regions hold monthly meetings from September to May, and others hold quarterly meetings or what suits their locale. President Johnetta Williams attended three of those meetings—Region 4A in Fort Worth (Jerry Watkins, president); Region 3A in Houston (JoAnn Peschel, president); and Region 4D in Dallas (Frank Colbert, Jr., president). You are encouraged to participate in the activities of a region near you, which include meetings with speakers, local tours and day trips. If there is not an organized region near you, contact the TSTA-R office for help on getting a region organized.

**Upcoming events:** The next Retired Board of Directors meeting is Feb. 4-5 at TSTA Headquarters. Members are invited to attend and observe. For more information call (877) ASK-TSTA.

The TSTA-R Annual Meeting (formerly House of Delegates) is scheduled for April 14-15, 2010, in San Marcos at the Embassy Suites Hotel. All members are invited to attend and participate in the business and fun parts of the meeting. You will receive more information at a later date.

The NEA-Retired Western Region Conference is scheduled at the same time as the TSTA House of Delegates. Texas members are encouraged to attend the NEA-Re-

tired Eastern Region Conference at The Grove Park Inn Resort and Spa in Asheville, North Carolina, on April 20-22, 2010. Registration information will be in an upcoming NEA-R “This Active Life” Magazine. Registration is only offered online, at [www.nea.org/retired](http://www.nea.org/retired). If you need assistance with registration, call one of the officers or the TSTA-R office.

NEA-R is offering a giveaway for a newly involved TSTA-R/NEA-R member to attend the Eastern Region Conference. NEA-R will pay two nights lodging for one person. The reservation is for a double room. If you feel this room has your name on it, submit your name and contact information to Bianca Espinoza at [biancae@tsta.org](mailto:biancae@tsta.org) or Johnetta Williams at [townview@swbell.net](mailto:townview@swbell.net). You may also mail your information to TSTA-R, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. Your information must reach us by Feb. 1, 2010, to be considered for the giveaway.

The NEA-Retired Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 27-29, 2010, in New Orleans. All members are encouraged to attend and participate in the business of the association.

**Elections:** Filing forms are due at the TSTA-R Office, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701, by Jan. 15, 2010, for the following positions:

- TSTA-R Secretary and TSTA-R Treasurer. The filing form is below and online ([www.tsta.org/inside/retired/09nomination-forms.pdf](http://www.tsta.org/inside/retired/09nomination-forms.pdf)). Ballots will be mailed in early February. Both are two-year terms from July 15, 2010, to July 14, 2012, with the opportunity for reelection to a second two-year term.
- TSTA/NEA Retired Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly July 1-6, 2010, in New Orleans. The form was in the Fall Advocate and is online ([\[tired/09nomination-forms.pdf\]\(#\)\).](http://www.tsta.org/inside/re-</a></li></ul></div><div data-bbox=)

- Retired At-Large Delegate to the TSTA House of Delegates April 16-17, 2010, in San Marcos. The form was in the Fall Advocate and is online ([www.tsta.org/inside/retired/09nomination-forms.pdf](http://www.tsta.org/inside/retired/09nomination-forms.pdf)).

All elections will take place by mail ballot between Feb. 5, 2010 and March 4, 2010. Members may file for a position or may nominate another member. Please remember, you must obtain written permission from your nominee. For information on duties and responsibilities, contact the TSTA-R office at (877) ASK-TSTA.

Check out the TSTA and NEA websites, [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org) and [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org), where you can find a link to the retired web site. While at [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org), look into the legislative link for a glimpse of where we stand and what you can do.

—Johnetta Williams, TSTA-R president

TSTA-R NOMINATION FORM	
Check box beside office this nomination is for: <input type="checkbox"/> TSTA-Retired Secretary <input type="checkbox"/> TSTA-Retired Treasurer	
QUALIFICATIONS: Must be an active member of TSTA-Retired and NEA-Retired	
Nominee's name _____	
Address _____ City/State _____ Zip _____	
Home phone _____ Day phone _____	
I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the above information is true and correct.	
Nominee's signature _____	
Nominator's name _____	
Address _____ City/State _____ Zip _____	
Home phone _____ Day phone _____	
I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the above information is true and correct.	
Nominator's signature _____	
Send by U.S. Mail (or FAX to 512-486-7043) by Jan. 15, 2010, to TSTA-Retired, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701.	





# 131st Annual TSTA Convention

NEA President Dennis Van Roekel will be the keynote speaker for the 2010 TSTA annual convention in San Marcos, Texas, on April 16-17. All convention events take place at the Embassy Suites San Marcos, a comfortable, all-suite property including complimentary cook-to-order breakfast and evening manager's reception.

### BECOME A DELEGATE

The House of Delegates (HoD) serves a vital role in the governance of TSTA and helps to shape the future of our organization. The HoD may establish goals for TSTA, amend its bylaws and act on recommendations from the TSTA officers, board or committees. 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 Jan. 15. Local delegate election results must be reported to TSTA by March 15.

### REGISTRATION

Registration for the convention begins at 7:00 a.m. on Friday, April 16, and continues on Saturday, April 17. All TSTA members and guests are welcome to attend the convention, but only delegates with proper delegate badges are allowed in the designated delegate section and voting area. Non-delegates/alternates and guests are encouraged to register.

### CONVENTION EVENTS

Open hearings will be held Friday morning on the proposed 2010-11 TSTA budget and any proposed bylaws amendments or NEA Resolutions. Additional topics may be added. Professional development workshops eligible for continuing education credit also will be offered on Friday.

The HoD begins Friday afternoon and continues throughout Saturday. Voting will take place Saturday morning. Additional information and convention updates will be posted on the TSTA website.

### HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

The Embassy Suites San Marcos is holding a room block for

TSTA convention attendees. Reserve your room directly with the hotel by March 24, 2010, to ensure your room at the group rate of \$154 (plus tax). This rate includes full breakfast and evening reception. All rooms include a separate bedroom and living room with sofa bed, microwave and refrigerator. Self parking is free. The hotel also offers complimentary shuttle service between the hotel and Tanger and Prime Outlet Centers.

Make your reservation by calling 800-EMBASSY or 512-392-6450. Identify yourself as a participant of the "TSTA Annual Convention" or ask for group code "TST" at the time the reservation is made. We will also add a link for online reservations to the TSTA website. Please note: A first night room deposit secured with a major credit card or check is required for all reservations. Cancellations must be made by 3:00 p.m. the day before your scheduled arrival to avoid a charge for the first night.

The hotel is 27 miles from

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. You must make your own arrangements for transportation between the airport and hotel. One-way ground transportation is approximately \$80 for taxi service or \$45 for individual shuttle service. Round trip shuttle discounts may be available. Exclusive van service is \$95 for up to seven passengers or \$105 for up to 10 passengers. Shuttle reservations should be made through SuperShuttle at 800-BLUE-VAN or [www.supershuttle.com](http://www.supershuttle.com).

### 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 their 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 9, to arrange assistance during the convention. Payment for special needs requests such as wheelchairs or transportation is the responsibility of the member or delegate, but TSTA will help arrange for services.

### TSTA HOST COMMITTEE

TSTA would like to thank

this year's host committee for their efforts to ensure a successful and fun convention. The host committee members, appointed by President Haecker, are: Region 1D, Gracie Oviedo; Region 2D, David DeLuca, Susan Seaton, and Maggie Uzzell; and Region 2E, Rae Nwosu.

## Keynote Speaker Dennis Van Roekel



Dennis Van Roekel, a 23-year teaching veteran and longtime activist and advocate for children and public education, is president of the 3.2 million-member National Education Association. As NEA president, he leads the nation's largest labor union and advocate for quality public schools.

Van Roekel grew up in Iowa, where parents, teachers and the

community instilled in him a deep sense of the value of education and the understanding that education opens countless doors of opportunity. His future career path was sealed in the seventh grade when he decided to become a teacher. And for more than two decades he lived his dream: standing in front of high school students teaching math.

Van Roekel is committed to improving student learning and enhancing the professionalism of education employees. And he is guided by his belief in the NEA mission and vision, and inspired to "fulfill the promise of public education" and ensure every child in America, regardless of family income or place of residence, a quality education.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE		
<b>Thursday, April 15</b>		
8:00 a.m. ....	Advisory Committee Meeting	1:00 p.m. .... Parliamentary Procedures Workshop
1:30 p.m. ....	Board of Directors Meeting	1:45 p.m. .... Caucus Meetings
6:00 p.m. ....	Candidates Meeting	2:30 p.m. .... House of Delegates Opening Ceremony and Meeting
<b>Friday, April 16</b>		
7:00 a.m. ....	Registration	<b>Saturday, April 17</b>
8:00 a.m. ....	Special Interest Exhibits	6:30 a.m. .... Registration
8:00 a.m. ....	Open Hearings	7:00 a.m. .... Regional—TSTA SP—TSTA R Meetings
9:15 a.m. ....	Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)	8:00 a.m. .... Special Interest Exhibits
11:00 a.m. ....	Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)	8:30 a.m. .... Voting/Elections
12:30 p.m. ....	School Bell Awards Ceremony	10:00 a.m. .... House of Delegates Meeting
		12:30 p.m. .... Lunch and Caucus Meetings
		2:00 p.m. .... House of Delegates Meeting



# Election of TSTA at-large Board Of Directors members

TSTA bylaws, policies, and procedures guarantee that specific groups—i.e. minorities and ESPs—have a meaningful voice in the organization, while other groups, such as administrators, are prevented from 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 37.8% of our members as ethnic minorities, 20.8% 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), if the recent percentages hold true on January 15, 2010, TSTA would need at least eleven minorities, six ESPs and one supervisor to be on the Board.

Although it is possible that elections will not be held, TSTA is seeking nominations for these 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 2010 House of Delegates on April 17. Individuals elected would serve from July 15, 2010, through July 14, 2012.

TSTA currently has five (three at-large and two Regional Presidents) ESP Board members; all five of these terms continue through July 14, 2011. Based on these facts and if the current percentage of ESP members remains, we will need an ESP at-large election unless another Region elects an ESP President. 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 still must be prepared by seeking nominations now. For the supervisory at-large position, we will need to hold an election. The current supervisory at-large member of the Board has a term that will expire on July 14, 2010. He is eligible for re-election.

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 delivered by any means that provides verifiable evidence it was submitted by the deadline. TSTA must issue a receipt for nominations delivered in person. 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 25 (Thursday):** Nomination form receipt deadline

**April 2 (Friday):** Candidate flier receipt deadline (for inclusion in delegate packets)

**April 9 (Friday)** at 4:45 p.m. CDT: Candidate statement/late nomination form receipt deadline (for candidate's name to appear on ballot)

**April 17 (Saturday):** Election at the TSTA State House of Delegates

**April 17 (Saturday):** Runoff Election (if necessary) at the TSTA State House of Delegates

### QUALIFICATIONS:

- Be actively engaged in the education profession within the state at the time of election
- Have held Active, ESP, or TFA, or any combination of Active, ESP, TFA or life membership in TSTA for at least three consecutive years preceding the election
- Be actively employed as a non-supervisory member, unless seeking the supervisory at-large position
- 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. Deliver forms to TSTA Center for Executive and Governance (CEG), 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. If hand delivered, be sure to get a hand-written receipt from the CEG. Forms may be faxed to (512) 486-7053 or pdf copies may be emailed to sandras@tsta.org. For questions regarding the election, call (877) ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or 1510, or email sandras@tsta.org or carolm@tsta.org.

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NOMINATION FORM

TSTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT-LARGE POSITIONS

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

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Last 4 Digits SSN \_\_\_\_\_

Work Site \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Local Association \_\_\_\_\_ TSTA Region \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_ School District \_\_\_\_\_

ETHNIC GROUP: (Please Check)

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Black ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

☐ Multi-Ethnic ☐ Asian ☐ Hispanic

☐ Caucasian (not of Hispanic Origin) ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Nomination forms must be received by **March 25, 2010**, by TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance. Send to: Sandra Solimine, TSTA, Organizing Center for Executive and Governance, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701; or email to sandras@tsta.org or fax to (512) 486-7053.

Signature of Nominee \_\_\_\_\_



# 'Saving' the holidays

Take the focus off spending by trying something new **By Mary Rowland**

Here come the holidays! As if you didn't know. As if you haven't felt like a prisoner listening to the countdown of shopping days or been exhausted by the quest for the hot toy of the year that is available only online for \$1,100. Or maybe your girlfriend is expecting to become engaged over the holidays or your parents would love to have a grandchild.

Often the year-end holidays are filled with stress and anxiety rather than mistletoe and good cheer. That's because expectations run so high at these annual celebrations—expectations from our kids, from our parents, from husband or wife or sweetheart. And don't forget your own expectations—you want to find the perfect gift for your brother who is overseas, for your parents who unselfishly put you through college, and for that new guy to show him that you care.

Financial advisors always say their toughest job is to manage client expectations: many clients believe they will get rich quick. The advisor must deliver a dose of cold reality about how money and the markets really work. They're not magic.

How to "save" the holidays, avoid stress and even have a good time with your family? Start with your own expectations. Are you expecting your mother, who has really never accepted your spouse, to embrace him? Or for your fiancé to fall in love with your son? Start out by setting realistic expectations. Your mother will still be your mother even though it is Christmas. Plan something that you think she will enjoy and don't be disappointed if she acts like she doesn't. That's Mom!

## FOR YOUNGER MEMBERS STARTING OUT

If you are young and unmarried, just getting started on your career and your life, create a new holiday tradition. Do you have a friend who comes from a different religious tradition from you? Ask if you could attend a religious service or a housewarming service or other ritual with them. Or go to a candlelight service at a cathedral you've never attended. Go caroling or watch a Christmas movie with a friend and think about where you will be on Christmas five years from now.

Go out for a special holiday dinner with friends. Don't fret about gifts for your parents. Get something small and lush, something they would love but never buy for themselves because they think it too indulgent.

## FOR MIDCAREER MEMBERS

If you have a young family, it's a great time to start your own family traditions. Plan with your children to buy or make a new decoration for the tree each year. Choose something that reminds you of that year's vacation or a new family pet or new baby. Write the date on the decoration and talk with the children about it when you put it on the tree. As the children get older, looking at these ornaments collected over the years will become a favorite activity and refresh their memories about family outings. My children talk about each decoration and tell stories about that year.

Perhaps it's time to start drawing names for gifts with your extended families. If the rest of the family agrees, have each child draw a name and talk with them about what that aunt or uncle or cousin was like growing up and what kind of gift might be fun. This can be a good time to tell family stories your children may not have heard about their parents, too.

## FOR PRERETIRED AND RETIRED MEMBERS

If your family is grown and you're nearing or already into retirement, it's not too late to try something new. A change can be a boost to your holidays and the new year. If your children and grandchildren are busy over the holidays, invite everyone to come for a long weekend in January when you will do something low key: go to a movie or ice skating or to the beach, depending on where you live. Don't spend the entire weekend cooking and cleaning. Decide ahead of time that you will order pizza or Chinese.

Is there something you've always wanted to learn but never taken the time? Give yourself a gift: an oil painting class, writing workshop, Italian lessons or a classical music course.

Sometimes the holidays seem difficult because we feel like we are frozen in time, with no past—and especially with no future. December is a busy month. But if you can start reading a new novel from your favorite mystery author or sign up for ski or snowboard lessons that go into the new year, it will help weave holiday time together with real time.

*Mary Rowland is a nationally known business and finance writer, and, a former personal finance columnist for The New York Times.*



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