

Advocate

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Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

Summer 2010

Inadequate and inequitable

The poor economy has worsened a longstanding problem: a school finance system that has been neglected

SOCIAL STUDIES WARS

Another attempt to impose political dogma by the State Board of Education

Convention highlights

Featuring Bill White and NEA's Dennis Van Roekel



Making the most of membership

More than 20 years ago, I joined TSTA, an organization that not only listened to my issues but did something about them. By **Rita Haecker**, TSTA President

TSTA is the only organization that can take its members on a journey that will teach them how to grow in their profession and become great leaders.

More than twenty years ago, I embarked on the greatest journey that anyone could make. I became a classroom teacher. Little did I know then that every student that I taught would influence where I would go next for professional development. As any new teacher can do, I asked a million and one questions about how to improve our profession and increase the support that our students need in the classroom. My questions were recognized, but they were not always answered. This led me to TSTA, an organization that not only listened to my issues but did something about them. I joined and saw first-hand the level of support that local leaders can give a new teacher.

What impressed me the most were their knowledge and skills in dealing with difficult issues. The leadership of the local was educated and well-versed in all aspects of the school district's politics and programs. Their level of expertise was

unmatched by any other organization. I knew that I had made the right choice.

I also was given opportunities to develop my own leadership capabilities. The core belief of our association is



that we must continue to grow and cultivate new leaders to further our goal of supporting great public schools for all our students.

My responsibilities in TSTA increased, and soon I was prepared to take an elected

office. The value that we bring to our members is that we understand that members and leaders need ongoing professional development. We are committed to investing in the future of the association by growing

the best leaders to take on the challenges that lie ahead.

As teachers, we also must recognize the influence that we have on our students and our state's future. We spend hundreds of hours with our students and their parents

each year. With their parents, we are among the greatest influences on these young people's lives and are key determinants of their future success.

Congratulations on the successful completion of another school year. I hope all of you enjoy a well-deserved break from the classroom, a time to relax, reflect and prepare for next year's challenges and opportunities.

Then, let us all anticipate that very first day of school next fall — the excitement of a new group of students who will challenge us to be the best educators that we can be. We also will have the opportunity to introduce the new educators on our campuses to a professional organization that will continue to invest the energy and time to improve the lives of thousands of public school employees. Let's engage in the critical conversations that will increase our capacity to build the leadership teams in all our locals and assure TSTA's strong impact for many more years to come.

Have fun this summer and be successful next school year!



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10 things you should know



1 HAECKER TAKES ON THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Frustrated by the State Board of Education's role in "rewriting not only the social studies portion of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards, but in rewriting history itself," TSTA President Rita Haecker was blunt when she testified at a public hearing called by the Mexican American Legislative Caucus in April.

"The ultra-conservative members of the State Board of Education have a narrow, ideological view that not only ignores history but also ignores the changing world we call America. They are constantly painting Hispanics in negative terms as foreigners and illegal immigrants, and they are discounting the roles of African Americans as well," Haecker said. Read more on page 6.

www.tsta.org/news/current#Haecker

2 ANOTHER SCHOOL FINANCE LAWSUIT?

David Thompson, an attorney for the Texas Association of School Administrators, told a legislative committee in May that another lawsuit challenging the state's school finance system could be filed within the next two months or so. The committee is charged with coming up with recommendations on how to improve the school funding system. Read more about Texas' school finance system on page 12.



3 FLORIDA TEACHER FIRES BACK

When people were attacking her and her fellow public school teachers, Florida fourth-grade teacher Jamee Miller got mad. And then she got to typing. "I was just getting so enraged because there was such ignorance from the people attacking teachers, especially these misconceptions about what it is we can actually control as educators," Miller said. Among other things, Florida legislators were trying to mandate that standardized testing be the primary basis for teachers' employment, certification and salary. Miller's essay, "I Am a Teacher," has attracted nationwide attention on Facebook and blogs. www.educationvotes.nea.org/2010/04/22/florida-teachers-essay-becomes-rallying-cry-for-educators-seeking-respect

4 TEXAS ATTORNEY GENERAL SAYS NO TO PAC DEDUCTIONS

It is illegal for school districts to deduct contributions to TSTA's political action committee from employees' paychecks, the Texas attorney general says. TSTA believes his May ruling violates a teacher's constitutional right to political participation and is considering legal options.

Deductions for TSTA membership dues aren't affected by the opinion. www.tsta.org/news/current#Attorney

5 WE TWEET AND WE'LL FRIEND YOU, TOO

Get updates on news and events by following us on Twitter (twitter.com/txstateteachers) and friending us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/texasstateteachersassociation). We currently have 545 followers and 391 friends.

7 CONVENTION ELECTION RESULTS: FRANCES SMITH, J.L. MARTINEZ WIN OFFICE

Frances Smith of Cypress-Fairbanks TSTA/NEA will serve a three-year term as NEA director for Texas, place 1, beginning Sept. 1, and J.L. Martinez of the Association of Brownsville Educators will serve a two-year term on the TSTA Board of Directors as a supervisory at large member beginning July 15. Both Smith and Martinez were unopposed and were declared winners in their respective races at the 2010 House of Delegates. Delegates also voted on several amendments to the TSTA Bylaws.

8 FILE NOW FOR TSTA OFFICER, NEA DIRECTOR

TSTA officers: Nominations are open for TSTA president and vice president, for a three-year term beginning July 15, 2011. File for either office and you are automatically filed for alternate NEA director for Texas.

NEA director: Nominations are also open for NEA director for Texas, place 3, and for three alternate NEA directors. The NEA director for Texas, place 3, will serve a three-year term on the NEA Board of Directors beginning Sept. 1, 2011, and will sit as a voting member of the TSTA Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 15, 2011.

All the elections referenced above will be held at the April TSTA convention in El Paso. Filing forms are on www.tsta.org (see "TSTA Elections" in the Members Only area) or call the number below. The filing deadline is Sept. 15. For more information contact TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance at 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or 1510.

6 TEXAS POLITICS: GET A DEEPER PERSPECTIVE

Clay Robison, former Capitol bureau chief for the Houston Chronicle, is on the TSTA staff now, and he blogs at least twice a week on current news. Check out Grading Texas at www.tstaweb.net/mtstatic. Our teaching and learning specialist, Dr.

Paul Henley, also offers thought provoking blogs on Thinking Again at www.tstaweb.net/sblog.



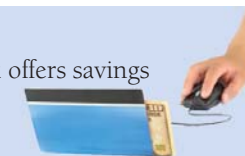
9 NOMINATE AN ESP FOR RECOGNITION

TSTA is accepting nominations for the Ronnie Ray Education Support Professional Advocate of the Year award until 4:45 p.m. Sept. 30. Nominees should demonstrate outstanding accomplishments in one or more of the following areas: (1) support of the day-to-day educational process, (2) professional achievements in his/her classification, (3) promotion of public education in the community, (4) involvement in the local, state or national association and (5) enhancement of the ESP image within the association, work site or community.

The nominee must have been a TSTA ESP member for at least three years as of Jan. 15, 2010, and nominations must be submitted by a TSTA regional or local affiliate. Nomination forms are available online or by calling 800-324-5355, ext. 1510. Send completed forms to the ESP Award Committee c/o TSTA President, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. www.tsta.org/news/current/awards.shtml

10 JUST CLICK AND SAVE

NEA Click & Save is an exclusive shopping service for NEA members and their families. It offers savings on brand name merchandise from hundreds of top retailers, online stores and local merchants, including Target, Hewlett Packard, Ann Taylor, Brooks Brothers, Philips, Restaurant.com and many more. You just sign up and start shopping. You can request email reminders from your favorite merchants about upcoming sales and discounts, as well. www.neamb.com/clickandsave





State Board of Education makes a mockery of the educational process

A strong conservative spin has been added to the Texas social studies curriculum. **By Clay Robison**

Surely you still can recall how badly the State Board of Education mishandled the English and language arts and science curricula standards a few years ago, to the dismay and embarrassment of Texas educators and the delight of TV comedy hosts.

Unfortunately, however, those were merely warm-up drills. We didn't witness the full ability of the SBOE's arch conservatives to make a mockery of the educational process until they started ravaging the social studies curriculum, willfully tossing

out scholarship in favor of their own right-wing philosophy and historical viewpoints.

They finished the job on Friday, May 21, congratulating themselves for putting a strong conservative spin on how we got where we are today. Along the way, though, they considered more than 400 amendments to what their own "writing groups" had recommended in January, repeatedly ignored recommendations from educators and historical experts, and invited legislative outrage.

In short, as more than 1,200 college historians noted in a letter, the SBOE has distorted history.

The new social studies standards for high school, middle school and elementary grades were approved on identical 9-5 party-line votes, with the board's five Democrats in the minority. Winning unanimous approval were new economics standards for high school.

According to the state's current schedule, the standards will be applied to classroom

materials and tests beginning in the 2011-12 school year, but the Legislature will have a chance to be heard first. It remains to be seen what, if anything, lawmakers will try to do about the SBOE's controversial work during next year's legislative session. But several legislators, mainly Democrats, had urged the board to delay a final vote, and some lawmakers already are promising to sponsor legislation to rein in or even abolish the SBOE.

With the Legislature facing a huge revenue shortfall next

session, it also is unclear how soon new history textbooks will be issued. The Legislature already has given schools authority to replace or supplement old textbooks with online materials.

With several new members joining the board in January, a revamped board may try to reopen the social studies debate, but it is too early to know for sure.

Two of the board's conservative leaders, whose influence over the history rewrite was substantial, will be leaving the board at the end of this year. Don McLeroy of College Station was unseated by a more moderate candidate, lobbyist Thomas Ratliff, in the Republican primary, and Cynthia Dunbar of Richmond didn't seek reelection.

The SBOE continued to amend the standards right up until its final vote. One of the more significant, late changes involved the right-wing's effort to deny the separation of church and state principle. High school government students will be required to "compare and contrast" the First Amendment guarantee of religious freedom with the phrase, "separation of church and state."

Yielding to enormous national ridicule, the board restored Thomas Jefferson's name to high school world history standards. The writings of Jefferson, an early advocate of the separation of church and state, are to be taught alongside the

works of Thomas Hobbes, Voltaire, John Calvin, Thomas Aquinas, William Blackstone and others.

Encouraged by state Education Commissioner Robert Scott to adopt the standards, the SBOE ignored the pleas of thousands of parents, educators and concerned citizens to delay final adoption or pay more heed to experts.

Critics included two U.S. education secretaries — one an appointee of President Obama and the other an appointee of

Former U.S. Education Secretary (and former Houston ISD Superintendent) Rod Paige personally testified before the board to urge a postponement of final adoption because he believes the standards don't adequately address the roles of slavery and civil rights in American and Texas history.

According to the standards, slavery is the third reason for the Civil War, after sectionalism and states' rights. A late amendment also added the names of more

standards. Earlier, the proposed standards had referred only to the election of the first black president without listing his name. TSTA President Rita Haecker first called public attention to that omission in a hearing hosted by the Mexican American Legislative Caucus April 28. Several legislators then picked up Obama's cause.

Dr. Paul Henley, TSTA's teaching and learning specialist, testified before the SBOE on May 19 about its preliminary decision in March to replace Santa Barazza, the famous Hispanic border painter, with cartoonist "Tex" Avery. Avery is famous for Bugs Bunny, but Henley pointed out he also is infamous for racist depictions of blacks and Hispanics, including the cartoon character Speedy Gonzales. The board then voted to delete Avery, but conservatives refused to include a minority painter in his place.

Perhaps the best summary of the SBOE's work was offered by Lawrence Allen, a Democratic member from Houston who voted against the social studies standards.

"We need to admit that we don't know how to write curriculum," Allen said. "We pass curriculum."

To keep up with future developments involving the SBOE, its curriculum rewrite and elections, check out TSTA's "Grading Texas" blog at www.tstaweb.net/mtstatic.

"We do a disservice to children when we shield them from the truth, just because some people think it is painful or doesn't fit with their particular views."

—Education Secretary Arne Duncan

former President George W. Bush — who warned that the board was off track.

"Curricula should be written by educators who know the subject matter, know the standards and know what it takes to prepare our children for college and careers in the global economy," current Education Secretary Arne Duncan said in a statement quoted in the Austin American-Statesman. "We do a disservice to children when we shield them from the truth, just because some people think it is painful or doesn't fit with their particular views."

Confederate generals to the curriculum. Another amendment will require students to compare and contrast President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address to the inaugural address of Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

Black and Hispanic leaders say the standards also ignore or underplay the historical roles of minorities.

Thanks to issues raised by TSTA, however, two improvements were made in late amendments. The board added President Barack Obama's name to the stan-



‘We can’t afford to stand still’

Addressing the TSTA annual meeting, Democratic gubernatorial nominee Bill White, NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and state Sen. John Whitmire all vowed strong political support for educators. White promised, if elected, to give teachers the support they need to prepare Texas’ next workforce for a strong future.

TSTA President Rita Haecker praised convention delegates for their impressive recruitment efforts and challenged them to continue to build on their success.

About 600 delegates and guests attended the convention April 16-17 in San Marcos.

“Nothing is more important for education than great teachers who are respected,” said White, the former mayor of Houston and the son of two public school teachers in San Antonio. He has been endorsed by TSTA in the Nov. 4 governor’s race.

White said educators need more support — and less dictation — from Austin.

“We can’t afford to stand still (on education), and even more importantly we can’t afford to go backwards,” he said.

“My mission as governor will be to help you and support you to make sure all Texans have the skills, the technology, the education to compete for good jobs with a real future.”

White also charged Gov. Rick Perry with misrepresenting one of the more critical problems facing the public schools — a high dropout rate, which the governor’s office has claimed is as low as 10 percent but which experts believe is much higher.

“When 3.2 million kids enter the public high schools as freshmen and only 2.1 million graduate on time four years



From left to right: Gubernatorial candidate Bill White with TSTA-Student Program members, and TSTA President Rita Haecker with NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and Senator John Whitmire.



later, Perry’s math doesn’t add up,” White said.

The Democratic nominee also rapped Perry for appointing a right-wing leader to chair the State Board of Education, which has brought national ridicule to Texas for rewriting history curriculum to reflect a conservative political bias.

“Wouldn’t it be great to have a governor who appoints somebody chair of the State Board of Education who understands you need to leave the curriculum to professionals?” he said.

Van Roekel said the National Education Association was fighting to save education jobs nationwide and to assure that the Obama administration and Congress listen to teachers in reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The ESEA blueprint laid out by the administration, he

said, relies too much on high-stakes standardized testing and competitive grants.

“We (educators) need a good law that we can support,” he added, urging TSTA delegates to be actively involved in this year’s election campaigns.

“It’s all about power,” Van Roekel said. “I want power, the ability to act...I want to make a difference.”

Whitmire, D-Houston, said he worked the state Senate last year to assure that a mandatory pay raise for teachers became law. He said he remains convinced he did the right thing, especially every time he reads a newspaper account of a school superintendent complaining about the pay increase.

Whitmire, who chairs the Senate Criminal Justice Committee, received TSTA’s Frank Tejada Award for Public Service. He said a strong

education system was essential to Texas’ future.

“You either pay now or you pay later,” he said, noting that many school dropouts end up in prison, which cost much more than public schools to build and operate.

Haecker said TSTA “will continue to concentrate our attention and efforts on building our local teams so they can move forward toward a common goal. That goal is strengthening their ability to have a strong impact on issues that matter to their members — pay, benefits, due process and instructional concerns — as well as (securing) an education friendly political climate in Austin.”

Haecker and the delegates gave the current political leadership in Austin failing grades on several education issues, including teacher pay, instructional spending, a high dropout rate and an

over-reliance on standardized testing.

Growing local leadership teams should be a “top priority” for TSTA, and an important part of that effort is developing student leaders, Haecker said.

The TSTA flag is “firmly planted” throughout Texas, the president added. But she cautioned that TSTA’s work is not yet done, particularly in the face of school district budget cutbacks and an uncertain outlook in Austin, including projections of a revenue shortfall as high as \$18 billion when the Legislature convenes in January.

“We have many more stops to make, more places to grow and cultivate, and we aim to do that,” she said. “Let’s roll TSTA together to the next mountain top, the next challenge for the good of the many people who are counting on us.”



The annual School Bell Award Luncheon honors members of the media for outstanding coverage of education issues and events. Attending the luncheon were Terrence Stutz, Joshua Smith (Joe Smith's son and partner in TexasISD.com), Megan Middleton, Nick Georgiou, Emily Peters, TSTA President Rita Haecker, Jenny LaCoste-Caputo, Carla Coleman and Roxan DeRosier (Lamar ISD webmaster).

ESP OF THE YEAR: 'THERE IS POWER IN NUMBERS'

"I believe that if you identify the right person with the right attitude, and give that person proper training and mentoring, the leadership of the local association will remain vibrant and essential to its members," TSTA President Rita Haecker said in introducing this year's TSTA Ronnie Ray Education Support Professional Advocate of the Year at the convention. "Galen Ballard is the living representation of this model."

Ballard — whose background includes military service, studying welding and machine technology and a bachelor's degree in computer science — is a medium maintenance/yard technician at Bonham Junior High in Ector County ISD (Odessa).

"During the spring recruiting drive of 2005, I was approached and convinced of the importance and value of joining TSTA, and I became a member," he said. "This decision has played an important role in my continuing growth and advancement."

In 2007, TSTA Region 2C President

Chuck Isner asked Ballard to be the Ector County TSTA/NEA representative for the maintenance department. "It was in the ensuing meetings that I truly began to understand the need for involvement and advocacy," Ballard said.

When he attended a salary presentation for all district education support professionals, he realized he might be able to help with input that went beyond statistics and trends.

"I have many coworkers that have shared their experiences with me. I knew that I could perhaps make an impact on the local school board," he said. He did the salary portion of the 2008 presentation, which resulted in a much-needed raise for education support professionals.

Ballard was sent to the TSTA Ambassador Academy and elected to attend the NEA ESP National Conference in 2009 in Orlando, Florida, where he gained insight into the challenges faced by ESPs throughout the country and recognized for the first time the power of being part of a national association.

"There is power in numbers; TSTA is

growing and the momentum is building," Ballard said.

President Haecker said he is part of the reason for TSTA's growth. "Galen has a true passion for advocacy and he is always willing to give his time to assist his fellow ESPs," she said.

He served on his local association's by-laws committee, was elected vice president for ESPs in 2009 and now serves as vice president for Region 2C. He is in his second year on the state TSTA Legislative and Political Action Committee, as an appointee of the TSTA president.

"I have earned the reputation for being the spokesperson of ESPs in Ector County," Ballard said. "In addition to my duties for the school district, I recognize my duty as an advocate for the people who need the support and information available through TSTA."

FRIEND OF EDUCATION BRINGS DREAMS TO LIFE

For leading 550 volunteers to complete 30 "dream" projects at four elementary schools in Pasadena ISD, Rev. Wes Holloman, associate pastor of Sagemont Church in Houston, received the TSTA Friend of Education Award.

The schools did not have the resources, manpower or time to complete the projects, so Holloman's team:

- created an outdoor classroom with eight picnic tables and a flower garden at Meador Elementary;
- built a greenhouse, nine park benches and 1,200 square feet of gardens, repaired skirting on portables, and painted and cleaned several rooms at Frazier Elementary;
- provided a garden, bench and five trees, pressure washed the gym and painted the front office at Moore Elementary; and
- made a new playground, painted offices, pressure washed outside

areas, inflated 100 balls and prepared student materials at Stuchbery Elementary.

"In organizing and personally contributing to this huge effort, Holloman and his volunteers proved they are true friends of education and truly deserving of this honor," President Haecker said.

BOICE AWARD TEACHER CAPTURES THE IMAGINATION

"It is clear from reading the nomination letters submitted on David's behalf that he brings a passion to teaching that truly captures the imagination of his students," TSTA President Rita Haecker said in presenting the Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award to David Bolster. "One of his former students, who is now applying to college as a chemistry major, wrote, 'my life direction was changed because of a sixth grade class and a teacher passionate and engaged in his subject matter.'"

Bolster is a science teacher at Harris Middle School in North East ISD; the award he received rewards and promotes teaching excellence.

"Mr. Bolster's relationship with students exemplifies the professional relationship that is needed in the classroom to help students be successful," his principal, Peggy Clemons, said. "He has an innate ability to create interest in science and hook all students into the content every day of the week."

In addition to teaching, Bolster is the science club sponsor, a scoutmaster for the Boy Scouts of America, a YMCA coach and a biologist at a nearby nature center. "No matter what David Bolster is involved in, you can be sure that he is enthusiastic and he makes a difference," Haecker said.

SCHOOL BELL AWARDS HONOR THE MEDIA

TSTA honors members of the media for

outstanding coverage of education issues and events. To find out how to nominate your local media, go to www.tsta.org/news/current/awards.shtml.

Newspapers: outstanding continuous coverage of education news

- Terrence Stutz, Dallas Morning News Austin Bureau
- Gary Scharrer, Houston Chronicle/San Antonio Express-News Austin Bureau
- Tawnell D. Hobbs, The Dallas Morning News
- Eva-Marie Ayala, Fort Worth Star-Telegram
- Emily Peters, Abilene Reporter-News
- Nick Georgiou, Laredo Morning Times
- Joe Gulick, Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

Newspapers: outstanding news or feature story

- Holly K. Hacker, The Dallas Morning News
- Moises Mendoza, Houston Chronicle
- Brian Thevenot, The Texas Tribune
- Emily Peters, Abilene Reporter-News
- Megan Middleton, Tyler Morning Telegraph

Newspapers: outstanding collection of news or feature stories based on a single subject or theme

- Jenny LaCoste-Caputo, San Antonio Express-News

Newspapers: outstanding editorial

- Robert Rivard, editor, San Antonio Express-News

Electronic media: outstanding education website

- Joe Smith, TexasISD.com

- Carla Coleman, North Lamar ISD

Electronic media: outstanding education blog

- Tawnell D. Hobbs and Diane Rado, Dallas ISD Blog, The Dallas Morning News



Top: Galen Ballard, TSTA Ronnie Ray Education Support Professional Advocate of the Year; Rev. Wes Holloman, TSTA Friend of Education Award; and David Bolster, Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award

Inadequate and inequitable

The problems are so deep and widespread that two Houston-area superintendents, in a recent newspaper op-ed article, warned of an approaching ‘train wreck.’ **By Clay Robison**

Financially, it was a rough school year for many Texas districts, and painful budgetary cuts will spill over into 2010-11. The recession certainly hasn't helped. But the poor economy has only served to worsen the basic, longstanding problem — a school finance law that falls woefully short of meeting the needs of most schools and teachers.



Hundreds of teachers and other education professionals are losing their jobs, and important programs in districts large and small are being reduced or eliminated. Here is a small sampling of recent, bad-news headlines:

- Facing a \$7 million budget shortfall, Houston ISD, the state's largest district, laid off 414 employees, including about 90 teachers, reorganized some other positions and raised the price of school lunches.
- Fort Bend ISD eliminated 463 staff positions, then transferred to other positions 216 employees whose jobs were cut.
- Nearby, the Pearland ISD announced plans to gradually replace registered school nurses with health care assistants, and La Marque ISD trimmed 58 jobs, including 40 teaching positions.
- In San Antonio, North East ISD planned to cut about 100 jobs, a combination of classroom, administrative and support positions.

Other districts throughout Texas have delayed opening new schools, increased class sizes, reduced bus routes, increased health insurance premiums for employees, dipped into reserve funds or asked local voters for property tax increases.

The problems are so deep and widespread that two Houston-area superintendents, in a recent newspaper op-ed article, warned of an approaching “train wreck.” And, they didn't blame the economy. They blamed something more basic — an under-funded and inequitably funded school finance system that has been neglected for far too long in Austin.

“A long-term fix must be found since school districts throughout the state are facing financial challenges that threaten the

very core of public education and, in some cases, the future viability of public schools,” wrote Stafford Municipal School District Superintendent H.D. Chambers and Alief ISD Superintendent Louis Stoerner in the article published in the Houston Chronicle.

But facing a projected revenue shortfall of as much as \$18 billion when it convenes in January, the Legislature isn't likely to provide significant relief for education budgets. Educators, instead, likely will have their hands full fighting off further cuts.

The governor and the Legislature missed a big opportunity in 2006, when the Texas Supreme Court — ruling on the latest lawsuit brought by school districts — ordered lawmakers to fix the school finance system. But in a special session that year, state leaders made property tax cuts — not improved education funding — the focus of their attention. And schools and their students and teachers are still suffering the consequences.

At that time, the Legislature ordered local school operating (M&O) taxes reduced by about one-third and set a new M&O tax cap at \$1.04 per \$100 valuation. School districts can raise that cap by another 13 cents per \$100, but only with voter approval, often a difficult

proposition, especially in a struggling economy.

Lawmakers approved new state revenue sources — mainly an expanded business tax, a \$1-per-pack increase in the state cigarette tax and improved collection of sales taxes on used cars — but the new revenue sources didn't fully cover the recurring costs of the property tax cuts. And, the Legislature

Facing a projected revenue shortfall of as much as \$18 billion when it convenes in January, the Legislature isn't likely to provide significant relief for education budgets. Educators, instead, likely will have their hands full fighting off further cuts.

worsened the problem during the 2009 session by granting additional exemptions to the new business tax.

Consequently, each year the state is about \$4.6 billion short of paying for the property tax cuts, a problem that will be compounded by the huge revenue shortfall when lawmakers meet in January.

Thanks to federal stimulus funds, legislators avoided

deep budgetary cuts in 2009 and even approved a mandatory \$800 pay raise for teachers. But they didn't increase state funding for other educational costs — such as transportation, utilities or supplies — for a public school population that is growing by about 75,000 students a year, a number roughly equivalent to adding a school district the size of a Fort Worth

or Austin ISD each fall.

To make matters even worse, those stimulus dollars won't be available to lawmakers next year.

“The state has walked away from its responsibility to public education,” said Dick Lavine, a researcher for the Center for Public Policy Priorities, a nonprofit that advocates for policies important to low- and middle-income people.

“By failing to raise enough money to replace the lost property tax revenues, the Legislature dug such a deep hole that it can't keep up with the need for growing investment in our students and teachers,” he added.

Instead of fixing education funding next year, the legislative leadership already has signaled that it will focus on cutting spending, potentially putting important education programs in jeopardy and deepening the budgetary problems for many school districts. Speaker Joe Straus recently told the House Appropriations Committee that it was “imperative” that lawmakers cover the state's revenue shortfall without an increase in state taxes.

The state's budgetary hole will make it more difficult for the Legislature to meet demands under the current school finance law to increase state aid to school districts that are suffering recessionary declines in local property tax revenue.

Some legislators — including Sen. Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, and Rep. Rob Eissler, R-The Woodlands, the Legislature's education chairs — also are considering lifting the 22-pupil limit on kindergarten through fourth grade classes, an important part of education reforms enacted in 1984.

Sen. Dan Patrick, R-Houston, the vice chairman of the Senate Education Committee, also is a strong advocate of replacing that cap with an average class size that would leave specific class sizes up to the discretion of local administrators. Patrick contends the 22:1 student-teacher ratio is too costly and hasn't produced any evidence that it improves student achievement, despite widespread research that smaller class sizes do improve student performance.

Some superintendents and school board members are expected to support Patrick's proposal — they have advocated for similar changes in the past — but TSTA be-

lieves it is important that the 22:1 ratio be preserved. Current law already allows school districts to seek waivers from the Texas Education Agency if they find the cap too expensive for their budgets.

Not only is the Texas school finance system inadequate, it also is inequitable — more than 20 years after the Texas Supreme Court first ordered the Legislature to close the funding gaps between property poor and property rich districts. The so-called Robin Hood school funding redistribution plan, first enacted in 1993, has helped, but inequities persist.

More than 100 of the state's approximately 1,040 school

districts, for example, have taxable values of \$100,000 or less per student, while more than 60 districts have taxable values of \$1 million or more per student.

As school finance expert and former legislator Paul Colbert pointed out in an article in the Equity Center's February News & Notes, a district with taxable value of \$100,000 per student can set its M&O tax rate at the maximum \$1.17 per \$100 valuation (if local voters approve) and still raise only about 15 percent of the money that a district with a \$1 million per student base can raise with a tax rate of only 80 cents.

According to TexasISD.com,

a website operated by Joe Smith, a former school superintendent, about 300 school districts had tax rate elections between 2006 and 2009, and about 70 percent of the proposed tax increases were approved by voters. The approval rates, however, fell from 93 percent in 2006 to 62 percent in 2009, reflecting, perhaps, the worsening economy.

The vast majority of the districts holding elections were districts of below average property wealth. About 70 were districts with taxable values of less than \$100,000 per student.

Clay Robison is TSTA's Public Affairs Specialist.

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A young boy and girl are sitting together, looking at a book. The boy is in the foreground, smiling at the camera, while the girl is slightly behind him, looking down at the book. They are both holding the book, which has a red cover. The background is blurred, showing other people in a classroom setting.

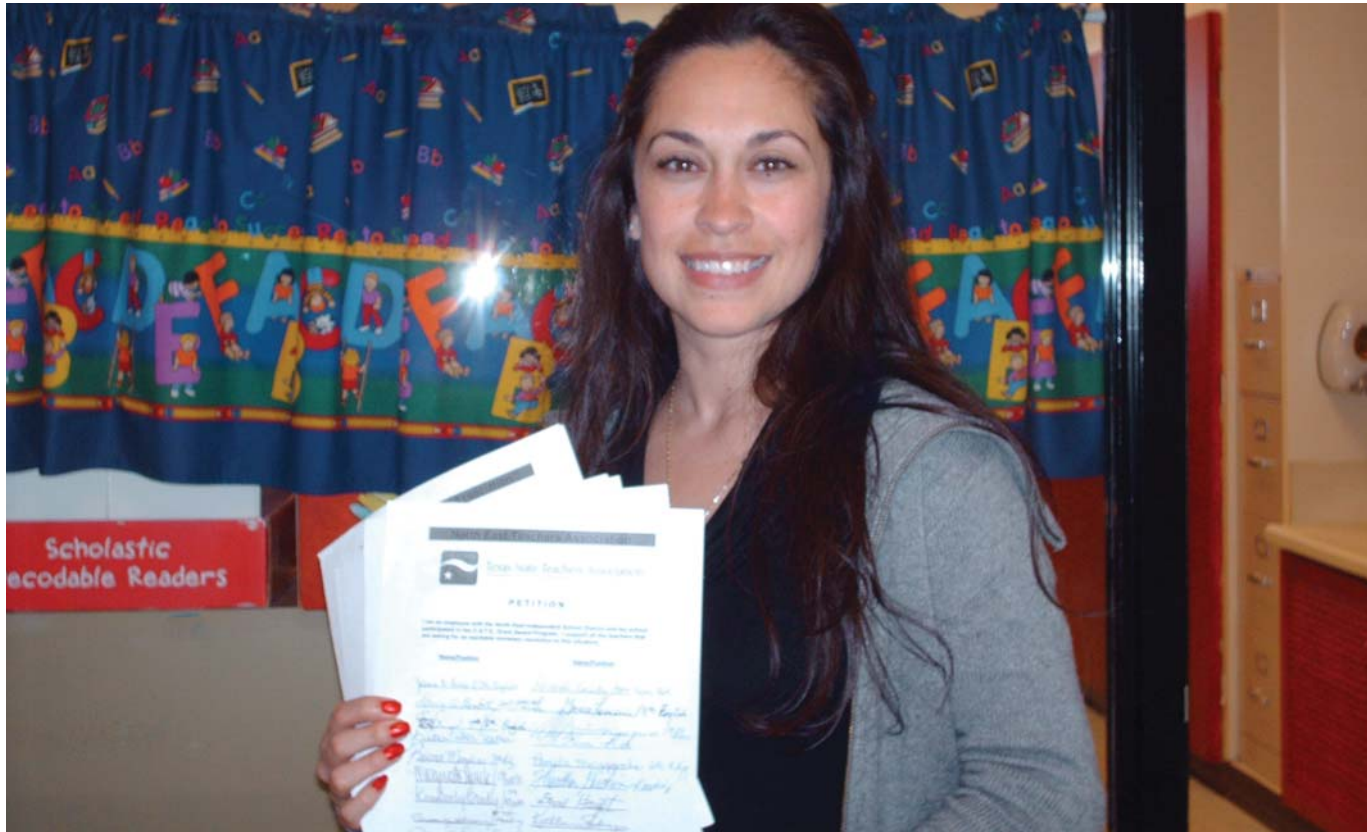
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Teachers spend their days
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Michelle Marquez, TSTA association representative at West Avenue Elementary in North East ISD, holds petitions bearing 280 signatures.

North East wins equal pay for equal work

On December 18, teachers at eligible North East ISD schools in San Antonio expected to receive a nice check through the District Awards for Teacher Excellence (DATE) program.

What they didn't expect was that some would be awarded thousands of dollars, some only \$980 — and some would receive nothing at all.

DATE was created by the 79th Legislature as part of House Bill 1 “to allow districts to create or continue a system of awards for educators who demonstrate success in improving student achievement,” as described by Texas Education Agency.

Earlier in the year when the teachers were told they were eligible for DATE grant money, all of them — including special education, Alternative Learning Environment, English as a Second Language and other elective teachers — were led to believe they would be eligible for the same amount of grant money as core or regular education classroom teachers.

Based on the information given in a draft overview document and in meetings held by North East ISD, campuses voted on

whether they wanted to be included in the grant program. The overview document explained how the grant would be awarded in different circumstances based on TAKS scores, divided employees into different tiers, and listed monetary amounts to be awarded. In good faith, the employees voted on the explanation given in the document.

After the vote, the grant application was sent to Texas Education Agency where certain placement of employees into the different tiers was denied. The document was returned to the district for correction, but the board was not fully aware of the effects of the changes, and employees were not informed of the changes nor given an opportunity to vote on the final product.

It wasn't until disbursement of the grant money in December that special education and other “specialty teachers” realized they weren't going to be paid the same amount as reg-

ular education classroom teachers.

After consultation with TSTA legal counsel, North East Teachers Association (NETA) decided the best way to resolve the issue was to bring it to the attention of the school board. The local organized affected members to attend the February board meeting and explain how they were misled when they voted on a document that was not final. They were encouraged to tell their stories verbally or in writing.

NETA also circulated two petitions. One said, “I am an employee with the North East Independent School District and my school participated in the DATE Grant Award Program. I support all the teachers that are asking for an equitable monetary resolution to this situation.” The other said, “I am an employee with NEISD and my school participated in the DATE Grant Award Program. All regular education, intervention teachers, specialists and special education teachers equally worked with the students to ensure the highest possible TAKS score. When I voted on participation with the DATE Grant, I was lead to believe that regular education, intervention teachers, specialists and special education teachers would be compensated equally based on test scores.”

On February 8, members wearing NETA/TSTA stickers filled the board room. In a calm, respectful manner,

they began to tell their stories. One by one, regular education co-teachers, special education co-teachers, ALE teachers, department chairs, teacher aides — all types of employees — told their stories, and each asked for the same resolution: equal pay for equal work.

The board moved to have administrators report back on DATE eligibility requirements at their next meeting. NEISD Superintendent Dr. Richard Middleton asked NETA to give him a list of all teachers and specialists who were not equally compensated.

In March, Middleton met with NETA President Cindy Marthes and other members who attended the February meeting. He assured them he had taken a personal interest in resolving their concerns and had frozen unused DATE money so that it might be used to compensate employees who had equal responsibility for achieving successful TAKS scores.

Middleton praised NETA's efforts, saying that, “...because of NETA's work in bringing forth anecdotal information and the masses (of members to speak to the North East Board), we were given a clear picture that there was a breakdown in the DATE Grant process.” He thanked the local association for bringing attention to the issue in a “very positive way.”

The resolution: equal pay for equal work. Checks were issued in May.

Congratulations!

- Ovidia Molina, president of Alief TSTA/NEA, was awarded a Horace Mann-Abraham Lincoln Fellowship, based on her answers to the following questions: Why is Lincoln relevant in today's classroom? How will you translate the benefits you receive from this Fellowship Program to your students? She will attend a five-day teacher program at the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois this summer. The program brings together exceptional educators from across the country to study the life of Abraham Lincoln and to develop strategies for applying historical content in the classroom and across the curriculum. <https://www.horacemann.com/resources/fellowships>
- Two Lubbock Educators Association members were selected for the Beaumont Foundation's 2010 Newton Excellence in Education Awards, which include a cash prize of \$10,000. Sue Boyce teaches at Iles Elementary School in Lubbock ISD and Kristina Janeway teaches at Terra Vista Middle School in the Frenship ISD. They are among the first six teachers to receive the honor, which will now become an annual award for six Lubbock County teachers. The Newton Awards were created to celebrate and recognize superior contributions of teachers whose leadership and dedication inspire a spirit of learning in students. Schools and individuals nominate teachers for the Newton Award, which is named after Frank and Nancy Newton. Frank Newton was dean of the Texas Tech School of Law.
- Erika Landaverde, president of the Lone Star College-North Harris chapter of TSTA-Student Program, was named Volunteer of the Year at Black Elementary School in Aldine ISD. She logged 740 hours of service while taking college courses. “Being a volunteer not only helps you as a future teacher, but it allows you to communicate with students of all ages and experience first hand the ins and outs of teaching,” Landaverde said. She volunteered every day of summer school and helped during the school year by reading to students in the library, organizing a Read Across America event, and assisting with almost every event the school held. “Being in charge of so many students helped me realize that I do have the potential to be a successful teacher,” she said.



Shown at the election night party of Dr. Lew Blackburn, who was reelected to the Dallas ISD school board, are NEA-Dallas President Dale Kaiser, Grand Prairie Education Association President Doris Hill, Blackburn, former trustee Dr. Lois Parrott, current trustee Bruce Parrott and former trustee Hollis Brashear.



Clockwise from above: Mercedes Education Association honored teachers of the year Celia Zavala and Rebecca Martell, among others; Cy-Fair honored association representatives and retirees at a banquet; and Harlandale support professionals had a victory on a paycheck scheduling issue.



Mercedes Education Association's Maria Perez (right) signs up a new education support professional member.

NEA-DALLAS WINS BOARD ELECTIONS

NEA-Dallas-backed candidates won in two of three contested elections for Dallas ISD board of trustees this spring.

Dr. Lew Blackburn was re-elected and political newcomer Eric Cowan was elected.

"Hope is now alive because employees and students have a friendly board of trustees for the first time in six years," NEA-Dallas President Dale Kaiser said. "This dramatic change began in December with our candidates, Bruce Parrott and Bernadette Nuttal, winning election. Now we have six trustees who have been elected with the support of educators."

BUSY SPRING IN MERCEDES

Mercedes Education Association was busy this spring with a successful membership drive. The local association also held an end-of-year social in recognition of recent retirees and local teachers of the year in May.

CY-FAIR HOSTS ANNUAL BANQUET

In spite of wind and pouring rain, Cypress-Fairbanks TSTA/NEA hosted 95 members and a few guests at its fourth annual end-of-the-year banquet at a local restaurant May 14.

School board member Bob Covey was the guest speaker. He answered members' questions about school district issues and business for almost an hour.

Association Representative of the Year Awards went to Terry Huckaby, a teacher at Langham Creek High School, and Sharon Smith, an education support professional at Falcon Transportation Center. Plaques were given to retiring members Margaret Brown of Cy Creek High School, Yvonne Sparks of Cy Ridge High School and Ida Southwell of Bane Elementary School.

ECTOR COUNTY HOSTS CANDIDATE FORUM

Sex education, teen pregnancy and pre-kindergarten were the main topics discussed at an April forum for Ector County ISD school board candidates, according to the Odessa American. The forum was sponsored by Ector County TSTA in the

district fine arts auditorium with a local reporter as the moderator. Incumbent Donna Smith and Richard Herrera ran for one position and incumbent Carol Gregg and Luis Galvan for the other; Smith and Galvan won the May 8 election.

IS YOUR LOCAL ON FACEBOOK?

The list of local associations on Facebook is growing. Laredo TSTA/NEA, Pflugerville Educators Association, San Angelo TSTA, San Marcos Educators TSTA/NEA, Socorro Education Association and AOT 4 all have their own pages. If your local association has a page, let us know by emailing debbiem@tsta.org and we'll link to it from the TSTA website, www.tsta.org/inside/locals/locals.shtml.

AN ESP VICTORY IN HARLANDALE

Harlandale Education Association (HEA) education support professionals jumped into action when they learned the school district planned to switch from 26 paychecks to 24 in the middle of the school year. The move would have caused a hardship for employees because they would not have time to make budgeting arrangements.

HEA members expressed their concerns at hearings the district held to explain the change, and they circulated petitions. The result: the superintendent called HEA to say the district had listened to employees and would not be implementing a change in the paycheck schedule this year.



New theme song: Gotta **keep reading!**

NEA's Read Across America, the award-winning literacy program, focuses the nation's attention on how important it is to motivate children and teens to read in addition to helping them master basic skills. The program began in 1997, and its signature event, NEA's Read Across America Day, takes place on or near March 2, the birthday of beloved children's author Dr. Seuss, who epitomizes a love of learning.

If you haven't yet seen it, check out the music video students and staff at Ocoee Middle School in Florida created, based on "I Gotta Feeling" by the Black Eyed Peas. "Gotta Keep Reading" has become NEA's Read Across America theme song, and it's been watched by almost 200,000 people on SchoolTube. It even attracted the attention of Oprah Winfrey, who filmed a show at the school and joined with

Target and The Heart of America to give Ocoee a new library. Watch it at www.schooltube.com/user/NEAreadacrossamerica.

Shown on these pages, clockwise from above, are some Read Across America events that took place in Texas:

- Laredo schoolchildren, teachers and community members grabbed their hats and marched with the Cat in the Hat to celebrate NEA's Read Across America Day.
- Pflugerville's reading event was organized by local vice president Cindy Perkins, a teacher at Windermere Primary; the team traveled to four schools where the Cat in the Hat (aka TSTA Organizational Development Specialist Kristi Taylor) read to classes and participated in a literary parade.

- President Linda Estrada of Donna TSTA/NEA recruited Irene Muñ of the local city council to read.

- In addition to the aforementioned parade, Laredo held a news conference.

- Deer Park ISD board member Ken Donnell read to Jocelyn Jones' home-room class on March 2.

- Celebrating with Read Across America ties at Frankford Middle School in Plano ISD were Karl Gscheidle, Tom Demettrion and Patrick Davis.

- Region 3D TSTA-Retired members Jo Ann Peschel, Linda Foley (shown), Barb Rogers and Firmine Stoerkel read at Cooper Elementary in Spring ISD.

Find resources, activity ideas and instructions on how to create your own reading event, whenever it fits your schedule, at www.nea.org/readacross.





TSTA-Student Program honors members

TSTA-SP members from Beaumont to El Paso and Brownsville to Lubbock took care of association business; participated in professional development on topics ranging from response to intervention to teacher rights; elected officers for the 2010-11 schoolyear; and recognized excellence among their own.

In March, 127 college students and their chapter sponsors were in Austin for the 54th annual TSTA-Student Program state convention. The following were elected to serve on the TSTA-SP Executive Committee:

- President Chris Padron, University of Houston, Clear Lake
- Vice-President Danielle Thorp, Lone Star College, Kingwood
- Secretary Sandy Huddleston, Texas A&M University, College Station
- District 1 Alyssa Cruz, University of Texas-Pan American
- District 2 Serena Cheng, Texas A&M University, College Station
- District 3 Patricia Fonseca, San Jacinto College-Central
- District 5 Rosemary Bohaty, Texas Tech University, Lubbock
- District 6 Melissa Clark, University of Texas, El Paso

TSTA President Rita Haecker was the keynote speaker at the awards banquet where the following received awards:

- Glenn Kidd Award for Local Excellence: small chapter, Lone Star College, Kingwood; large chapter, Texas A&M University, College Station
- Outstanding CLASS project: Lamar University, Beaumont
- Outstanding local student leader: Katy Staff, Texas A&M University
- Outstanding underclassman: small local, Ana Silva, Lone Star College, Kingwood; large local, Valerie Munz, Texas A&M University, College Station
- Outstanding local advisor: Noel C. Bezette, Lone Star College, Kingwood
- Outstanding website: Texas A&M University, College Station
- Outstanding scrapbook: small local, San Jacinto College-Central; mid-size local, University of Houston, Clear Lake; large local, Texas A&M University, College Station
- Outstanding newsletter: University of Houston, Clear Lake
- Outstanding T-shirt: San Jacinto College-Central



Left page: TSTA-Student Program officers President Chris Padron, Secretary Sandy Huddleston and Vice President Danielle Thorp. Right page, from top left: award winners Ana Silva, Noel Bezette, Lone Star College-Kingwood, Katy Staff, Lamar University, Valerie Munz and Texas A&M University.

TSTA-RETIRED NEWS

In the March election, Richard Wilgoren of Round Rock, Bobbie Duncan of Odessa and Paul Haupt of El Paso were candidates for secretary. Jo Ann Peschel of Houston was the only candidate for treasurer; according to the bylaws, if only one candidate files for a position, no election is necessary and the candidate is automatically elected.

Officers for 2010-11, beginning July 15, are President Johnetta Elston Williams, Vice President Jay-Ann Rucker, Secretary Paul Haupt and Treasurer JoAnn Peschel.

The TSTA-R Annual Meeting was at the San Marcos Convention Center April 14-15, and we had five first-time attendees. The highlights were greetings from the San Marcos Chamber of Commerce, the business session, dinner and entertainment by the Wheels and Deals Square Dancers, and workshops.

Attendees donated money to the Jack Kinnaman Scholarship,

operated by the NEA Foundation, which is given annually to a student in the NEA Student Program. If you would like to contribute, make your check payable to the NEA Foundation and mail it to TSTA-Retired, attention Bianca Espinoza, 316 W. 12th, Austin, Texas 78701. Donations will be presented at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in June.

At the TSTA House of Delegates, TSTA-R was represented by 22 elected delegates. Our board of directors presented an amendment to the TSTA Bylaws to include a TSTA-R member on the TSTA Legislative Committee. Our board also offered an amendment to the Legislative Program to work to provide retired school employees with health insurance and benefits comparable to or better than what retired state and higher education employees receive. Both passed without opposition.

Retired delegates collected pre-retired memberships and gave prizes to two lucky

winners. Retired delegates participated in interregional activities by acting as mentors to TSTA-Student Program delegates and as advisors to Texas Faculty Association delegates.

Six Texans attended NEA-Retired's East Regional Conference in Asheville, North Carolina April 20-22, because the dates of the West Regional Conference conflicted with the TSTA Convention. (Two members from Houston Region 3C Retired did attend the West Conference, held in Minneapolis.)

The TSTA-R president and TSTA staff person attended training on Tuesday; other attendees joined the conference for the next two days. There were sessions for personal growth and fun as well as association building. A highlight was the keynote address by NEA President Dennis Van Roekel.

Linda Scurlock of Houston, one of five newly involved members, won a free room from NEA-Retired.

Upcoming events:

June 10-11: The TSTA-R Board of Directors meeting for this date has been cancelled.

June 27-29: NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, New Orleans. The meeting is open to all NEA-Retired elected delegates, members and guests.

June 30-July 6: NEA Representative Assembly, New Orleans Convention Center. The Texas delegation will stay at the Doubletree Hotel on Canal Street.

September 9-10: TSTA-R Board of Directors meeting, TSTA Headquarters, Austin.

You can help form a unit in your region. Help is just a phone call away. Contact Bianca Espinoza at (800)324-5355 or biancae@tsta.org or email President Williams at townview@swbell.net.

—Johnetta Williams, president of TSTA-Retired



Engaging your students

While it may seem that students are engaged, they may not be. The student may be looking at you...or through you. Taking notes...or drawing cats. **By Dr. Paul Henley**

For decades, the education community has wrestled with how to differentiate between good teachers and struggling teachers. Lately, the push has been to judge teachers solely on test scores. It's a plan that's quick, simple and wrong. It doesn't answer the true question: "What does good teaching look like?"

Researchers often look to teachers who are regarded as master teachers by their students and peers. When observing these teachers, they find typical patterns of behavior from them.

There are three key qualities of good teaching:

- 1. A thorough grounding in a subject matter
- 2. Thoughtful planning that frames instruction
- 3. Strong evidence of student engagement

The first two are easier to quantify. You went to college. You graduated. You probably know your subject — science, early childhood development, music. Planning is something that

can be learned in a fairly straightforward way, and you may have had extensive practice in this.

The third characteristic is not as easy to quantify, nor is it as easy to improve. Yet, the Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS) mentions engagement over 250 times in the teacher's manual. Engagement is a key to learning.

Observable behaviors of student engagement include note-taking, eye contact, posture and the amount of time on task. Engaged students ask questions, stay involved throughout a lesson, take initiative and show persistence in their learning. Teachers monitor the effort, attention, focus and involvement to make sure students are engaged. While it may seem that students are engaged, they may not be. The student may be looking at you...or through you. She may be taking notes...or drawing cats.

IDEAS TO INCREASE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

There will never be an exhaustive collection that addresses all possibilities. Student engagement involves student motivation,

and motivations are as unique as your students. Here, though, are some ideas that may be new to you and to those around you.

Create an emotionally and academically safe classroom

Teachers should have rules that discourage mean behavior. Students who have been put down by other students (or the teacher) will be reluctant to engage in any content. Emotion will always trump academics. Begin every activity with a task that 95 percent of the class can do without your help. Success breeds more success. Also, try creating a classroom that focuses on processes more than the right answer. What methods should we use to get this answer? Is there another way? Let students test their higher order thinking skills.

Act as a team

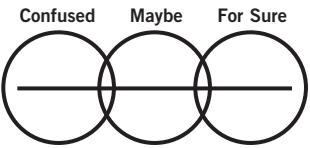
Group work is an effective way for students to keep each other engaged, but teamwork and collaboration are not necessarily instinctive. Teach collaboration skills. Then, when projects get started, things should move more smoothly. For a list of possible teamwork activities, go to the Teaching and Learning page at www.tsta.org.

Let them tell you

You have to ask for feedback. A show of hands lets you know immediately if students understand a topic. Consider using fingers to

show, on a scale of 1 to 5, how well they understand what you're teaching. Set a timer to ring three times during class, reminding you to check after 20 minutes, 40 minutes and at the end of the class. Also, remember to circulate throughout the room. That way, you can see indirect feedback from your students more closely.

Tristan de Frondeville is an education consultant with PBL Associates. He told Edutopia magazine that learning builds on prior knowledge — increasing in complexity over time. Effective learning requires that skills and knowledge are available for quick recall. He states, "Many students let too much of their knowledge float in a sea of confusion and develop a habit of guessing, sometimes without even knowing that they are guessing." He uses this chart to give students the opportunity to show teachers their understanding of a topic.



Document student motivation and engagement

Yes, this one is obvious, but look at it again. Have you written anything down about this girl's motivations? Do you know what that boy's favorite video games are? Teachers document attendance, daily grades and test scores. There is power

in documenting your students as people. After some time, you can begin to more accurately predict your students' individual reactions. After some more time, you can create proactive strategies to increase engagement throughout the year.

The first few weeks will be crucial in making sure you know the behaviors each student exhibits when engaged or disengaged. You need to make a focused, concerted effort for that to happen. You will know how well you did by the number of surprises you get throughout the year.

Change it up

It's true: students have relatively short attention spans. K-2 students can only focus for 5-7 minutes. In grades 3-8, students can focus for 8-12 minutes. High school students (and adults) are able to focus for 15 minutes. Kids need breaks. Try lesson plans with three different types of activities in a one-hour period. That way, variety's power comes into play.

You will never get all students engaged all of the time. People don't work that way, but working for increased engagement is an important goal. Student engagement leads to student learning, and learning is the most important activity in any classroom.

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

Observable behaviors of student engagement include note-taking, eye contact, posture and the amount of time on task. Engaged students ask questions, stay involved throughout a lesson, take initiative and show persistence in their learning.



TSTA's Legal Services team includes, left to right, Mike Harper, Amanda Moore, Julie Chen Allen, Anita Wells, General Counsel Joey Moore, Karen Denton, Chip Waldron, Yolanda King, Charles Axe, Elizabeth Poole and Russell Ramirez.

Getting to know TSTA Legal Services

Members of TSTA have the added benefit of access to highly-skilled attorneys and professionals to assist them with employment-related issues and concerns.

The TSTA Help Center is the first point of contact for any member who has an employment-related concern. When members call the Help Center at (877) ASK-TSTA, they are given the opportunity to speak to a TSTA Member Advocacy Specialist if one is available, or leave a message to be returned at a time convenient for the member if all specialists are busy assisting other members. Members may also email their questions to the Help Center using the link at www.tsta.org. Typically, members receive a response within one business day, if not sooner.

Member Advocacy Specialists are on duty from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. to assist members and leaders with their employ-

ment-related concerns. The Help Center provides members with general information about public school employees' rights and responsibilities. Assistance from the Help Center may come in various forms, including, but not limited to:

- Providing members with information regarding their legal rights and responsibilities;
- Reviewing and editing rebuttals for members;
- Assisting members in making Public Information Act requests;
- Contacting administrators and supervisors on behalf of members;
- In some cases, filing grievances on behalf of members.

The Help Center can also assist members with specific issues, such as responding to criticism and harassment, dealing with appraisal issues, providing guidance if termination or nonrenewal is threatened and answering questions about certification.

The Help Center is staffed by Julie Chen Allen, Charles Axe, Mike Harper, Amanda Moore and Chip Waldron.

Also included in the TSTA Legal Services division are the General Counsel and staff attorneys. General Counsel Joey Moore advises the TSTA Board of Directors and TSTA staff on legal issues that affect the Association and its members. Moore also supervises

the TSTA Legal Services division, represents TSTA members and provides training to local associations.

TSTA staff attorneys Elizabeth Poole and Russell Ramirez represent TSTA members in a wide variety of situations. Teacher and ad-

ministrators who are proposed for termination and nonrenewal receive hearings before the final decisions are made. Poole and Ramirez frequently represent members in these situations before

certified hearing examiners and school boards. The staff attorneys also represent members in grievances with supervisors and before school boards. In some circumstances, those grievances may also be appealed to the Commissioner of Education.

When certification issues arise, the TSTA staff attorneys represent members in negotiations and hearings with Texas Education Agency.

Additionally, TSTA Legal

Services provides training and workshops for members and local associations throughout the state. These sessions range from presentations on employees' essential rights to assisting local associations in developing and implementing their own Member Advocacy Teams.

The Legal Services division is kept running smoothly by an outstanding administrative staff. Yolanda King is the administrative manager. Karen Denton is the paralegal who assists the staff attorneys. Anita Wells is the secretary for the Help Center. Legal Services would not be able to assist TSTA members without them.

If you have any questions or concerns about your employment situation, please do not hesitate to contact TSTA. We are here to help you!

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- 5-day minimum rental
- A Saturday night is a must
- When making reservations, use:
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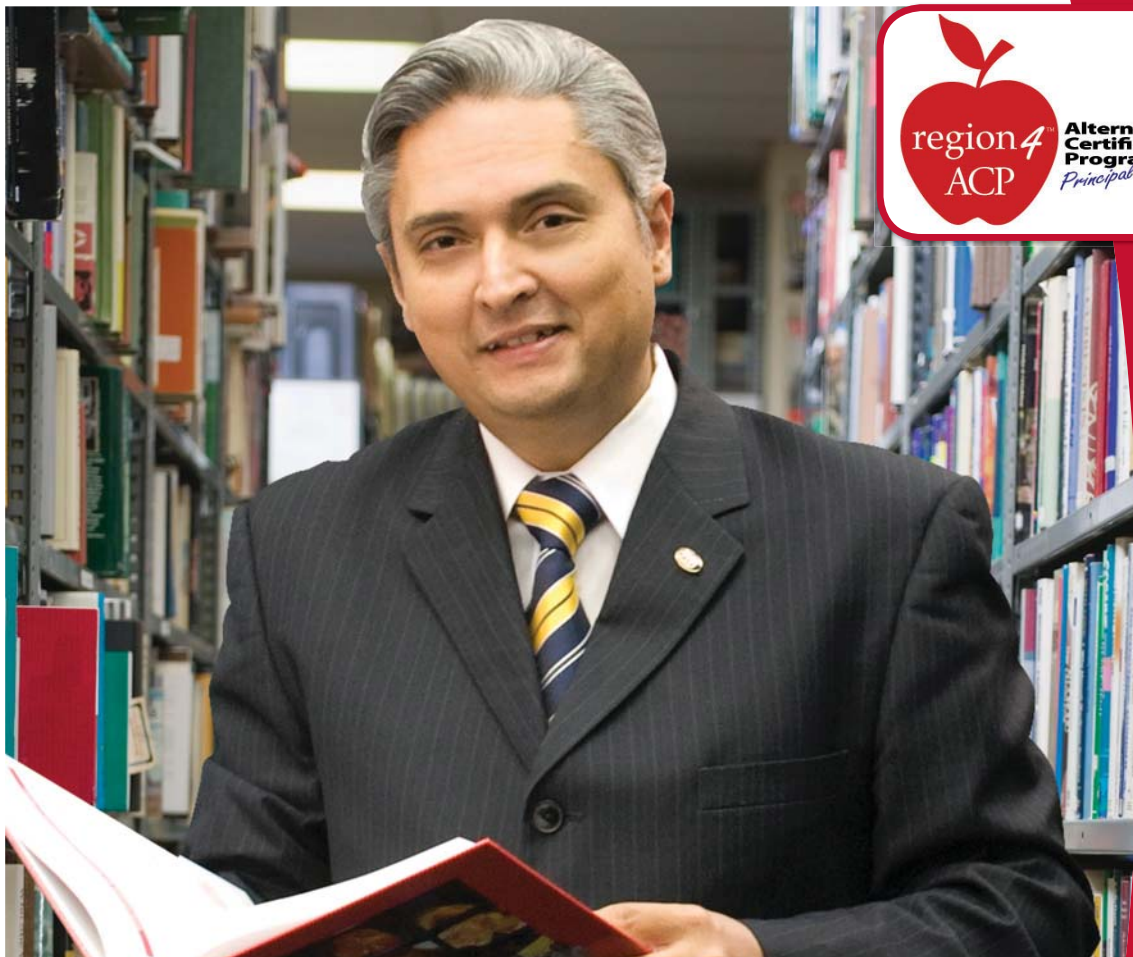
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TSTA/NEA

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION/NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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2010-11 ENROLLMENT FORM

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

NAME

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

DATE OF BIRTH

ADDRESS

LOCAL ASSOCIATION

HIRE DATE

CITY

STATE

ZIP

NAME OF ISD

EMAIL AT HOME

CAMPUS/WORKSITE

EMAIL AT WORK

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

AREA CODE

HOME PHONE

AREA CODE

WORK PHONE

| ✓ | ANNUAL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS | AMOUNT |
|---|---|----------|
| | 1. Professional Dues—TSTA/NEA (Active) | \$456.00 |
| | Professional Dues—New to the profession | \$311.00 |
| | 2. Educational Support Dues—Full-time | \$241.50 |
| | Educational Support Dues—Part-time | \$126.00 |
| | 3. NEA Fund for Children and Public Education (suggested amount \$15.00) | |
| | 4. TSTA-PAC (see disclaimer below) | \$ 9.00 |
| | 5. Region Dues | |
| | 6. Local Association Dues | |
| | TOTAL | |

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

ETHNICITY/GENDER

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native

☐ Black

☐ Hispanic

☐ Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin)

☐ Asian

☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

☐ Unknown

☐ Multi-ethnic

☐ Other

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

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

METHOD OF PAYMENT/PAYROLL DEDUCTION AUTHORIZATION (BELOW)

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

Please check if you would like to receive TSTA's electronic newsletter, the TSTA Briefing, which is distributed by email at least once a week.

Send to: ☐ home email address ☐ work email address

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

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

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

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

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

INITIAL

Former student member?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Annual membership dues to NEA include \$5.65 for NEA Today, \$3.40 for NEA-Retired, \$3.40 for Tomorrow's Teacher and/or \$5.60 for the Higher Education publications. The NEA publication(s) received by members are based on membership category. Annual membership dues to TSTA include subscription to the TSTA Advocate. Membership is open only to those who agree to subscribe to the goals and objectives of the Association and to abide by its constitution and bylaws.

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

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

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

MEMBER SIGNATURE

DATE

LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE

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

Texas State Teachers Association

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Austin, Texas 78701

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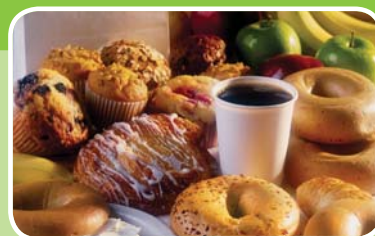
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