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# Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

Winter 2010-11

## You've got to move to learn

10 practical classroom  
applications for educational  
neuroscience

## A day with Tom Musselman

As the mayor of Fredericksburg,  
he embodies the principles  
he teaches

## LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

Changing behaviors  
and shaping culture  
through TSTA



# The election is over

Now, the real work begins, and it won't be easy. By **Rita Haecker**, TSTA President

Gov. Rick Perry and the winners of legislative races on Nov. 2 face a mountain of work during the upcoming legislative session, which convenes Jan. 11. The overriding issue — the elephant in the room — is a looming revenue shortfall projected to be as high as \$25 billion. But, even in the midst of a budgetary crisis, our state leaders cannot neglect our public schools, and our educators cannot let them.

During his re-election campaign, Perry vowed to close the budget gap with spending cuts — and spending cuts, alone. And, that theme was endorsed by most of the successful Republican legislative candidates who will give the Texas House an overwhelming 99-51 Republican majority in January.

The governor also bragged about maintaining a favorable business climate, making Texas a destination state for businesses offering high-paying jobs. But Texas cannot cut its way to a prosperous future, particularly by cutting the education budget. And, budgetary experts already have warned that lawmakers cannot make the spending reductions of the size indicated by Perry without slashing spending for the already underfunded public schools.

Texas ranks 38th among the states in money spent on per-pupil instruction and 34th in average teacher pay, hardly the level of commitment to inspire business confidence in the ability of Texas' future workforce. Budget cuts would plunge Texas' rankings — and job prospects — even lower.

The last time the governor and the Legislature tried to “fix” the school finance system, they reduced local property taxes, put strict limits on school districts' ability to impose future tax increases and then failed

to adequately pay for the alleged tradeoff. The result was an annual “structural” shortfall in the state budget of \$4.5 billion, which adds to the Legislature's revenue problems now.

School districts throughout the state are suffering serious budgetary problems. Classrooms have become more crowded, health insurance premiums for educators have been increased and as many as 2,000 school employees lost their jobs at the end of the



last school year. More will join them — perhaps you or someone you know — if the state education budget is reduced.

There are ways to minimize budget cuts, and the governor and the Legislature must take them.

- For starters, the governor must quit playing politics and reapply for the \$830 million in federal funds allocated to Texas under the emergency education jobs bill that Congress enacted during the summer. The state's first application was rejected by the Department of Education because Perry refused to comply with a

simple congressional requirement of assurance that Texas would continue its own budgetary commitment to the public schools.

- In writing the next budget, the Legislature must make maximum use of every other available federal dollar and spend the entire Rainy Day Fund, a state savings account worth more than \$8 billion. The Rainy Day Fund was created for fiscal emergencies, and this emergency is of monsoon proportions.
- The Legislature must enact an adequate and equitable revenue stream sufficient to meet the state's growing educational and other public needs.

Every Texas educator must demand that our leaders take these steps. And more than ever before, educators must remain engaged in the political process that will continue throughout the legislative session.

Opposition, although short-sighted, will be strong from private school advocates, home schoolers and others who really don't care how poorly funded our public schools have become. And they will be encouraged by the huge, new conservative majority in the statehouse.

All the purported reinventions of education “reform” to the contrary, the vast majority of Texas school children — our future workforce — will continue to be taught in traditional public schools by dedicated educators whose working conditions and very jobs are now on the line.

TSTA will be active in the legislative process. We face an uphill fight, but our effectiveness will depend on your involvement, your commitment to our goals and your sense of outrage over any attempt to weaken or undermine public education.



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## Advocate

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# 10 things you should know



## 1 TEXAS' SECONDARY TEACHER OF YEAR IS A TSTA MEMBER

Beth Huckabee, a science teacher in the Flour Bluff ISD near Corpus Christi, was named the 2011 Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year. Huckabee will receive a \$5,000 cash award, a technology package valued at more than \$16,500, a computer, a trophy, a travel allowance and other prizes. She and Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year Daniel Leija, a fifth-grade teacher in San Antonio's Northside ISD, learned of their awards Oct. 15 during a luncheon in Austin. In the photo are Dr. Raymond Glynn, state deputy commissioner of school district leadership and educator quality, Huckabee and Commissioner of Education Robert Scott.

## 2 SXSW ADDS AN EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT

South by Southwest Interactive and Texas Education Agency are teaming up to launch the inaugural SXSWedu conference March 8-10 in Austin. It will focus on Project Share, the agency's e-learning initiative. Read more about Project Share in this issue's "In the Classroom" section.

- Project Share: <http://projectsharetexas.org>
- SXSWedu: <http://www.sxswedu.com>

## 3 KNOWING WHO NEEDS HELP WITH ALGEBRA

Convinced that many students need more support to fully understand pre-algebra, the Texas Education Agency has launched a program aimed at students in grades 5-8, called Middle-school Students in Texas: Algebra Ready (MSTAR). The most recent addition to the program is the MSTAR Universal Screener to help teachers identify which students need extra support. [www.tea.state.tx.us/index.aspx](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index.aspx)

## 4 CONTRIBUTE TO TSTA-PAC USING PAYPAL

Now it's even easier to make a one-time contribution or become a continuing contributor to TSTA-Political Action Committee.

You can donate by bank draft or by using our new PayPal option, a secure online method of paying with a credit card or directly from your bank account. [www.tsta.org/legislative/update/pac.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/legislative/update/pac.shtml)

## 5 CONFUSED ABOUT STAAR?

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) will replace the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, beginning with the 2011-12 school year. STAAR includes the 12 end-of-course assessments and the new grade 3-8 assessments. Resources are available online at [www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar).



## 6 SALT LAKE CITY HOSTS WESTERN REGION LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

NEA's 2011 Western Region Leadership Conference will be at the Hilton Salt Lake City Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, Jan. 14-16. Register online through Jan. 5; the fee is \$135 through Dec. 14, when it increases to \$175. A special room rate of \$139 per night is available until Dec. 20 or the room block is sold out, whichever comes first. The Women's Leadership Training and the Minority Leadership Training Conference will be Jan. 12-14 at the same location. Register for all three events at [www.nea.org/wrlc](http://www.nea.org/wrlc).

## 7 CANDIDATES FOR TSTA AND NEA OFFICE

The filing deadline was Sept. 15, so the following list is final. The order of the candidates was determined by a drawing.

- TSTA President: TSTA President Rita Haecker is unopposed in her bid to seek a second term.
- TSTA Vice President: Candidates are Jason Hillman (Klein Education Association), Noel Candelaria (Ysleta Teachers Association) and David Michael DeLuca (Fayette County Educators Association).
- NEA Director, Place 3: Candidates are Rae Nwosu (Education Austin) and Glenda Hawthorne (Socorro Education Association).
- Alternate NEA Directors: TSTA President and TSTA Vice President candidates are, respectively, automatically candidates for First and Second Alternate NEA Director. Third Alternate NEA Director candidates are George Borrego (Association of Brownsville Educators) and Tony Uzzell (Waco TSTA/NEA).

Elections will be at the State House of Delegates in El Paso on April 16. Candidate statements and biographical information will appear in the spring 2011 Advocate.



## 8 EDUCATION SUPPORT STAFF TO MEET IN D.C.

The 2011 NEA Education Support Professionals Conference will be March 11-13 at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. Support professionals will be updated on important issues, and they will learn about organizing and how to build stronger local associations. For registration and other information, go to [www.nea.org/grants/31430.htm](http://www.nea.org/grants/31430.htm).



## 9 ONLINE MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS

In addition to opportunities for continuing education and the leader-to-leader program, the NEA Academy now offers nearly 50 different online master's degree options in four categories: general, administration, curriculum and instruction, and counseling. Members may also receive tuition discounts of up to 20 percent, fee waivers and access to scholarships. See [www.neacademy.org](http://www.neacademy.org) for details.

## 10 WANT TO WORK WITH THE WHITE HOUSE CHEFS?

First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Campaign challenges school nutrition professionals, chefs, students, parents and interested community members to create new recipes for school lunch menus across the country. There are prizes as well as the chance to work alongside White House chefs. The deadline is Dec. 30. [www.Recipes-ForKidsChallenge.com](http://www.Recipes-ForKidsChallenge.com)





# Storm clouds gathering over 82nd Legislature

A state revenue shortfall, now estimated as high as \$25 billion, already has sucked optimism from the 82nd Legislature, which convenes Jan. 11.

The outlook for educators and the public schools is particularly sobering, considering the worsening inadequacies of a school finance system overdue for an overhaul. That overhaul won't happen next year, despite the admission by key lawmakers that the current system is broken.

Even under ideal budgetary circumstances, legislators historically have avoided significant school finance changes unless ordered by the courts, and it will take awhile for the next lawsuit — which many school funding experts believe

is just around the corner — to work its way through the judicial system.

If Gov. Rick Perry and the increased Republican legislative majority have their way, the revenue shortfall will be bridged with budget cuts alone, budget cuts deep enough to worsen the already strained finances of school districts, put thousands of teaching and other education jobs in jeopardy and undermine the futures of thousands of school kids. Texas already ranks in the bottom third nationally on both average

teacher salaries and per-pupil expenditures on instruction, and we can't afford to sink any lower.

TSTA will fight to minimize the budget reductions and try to convince legislators to spend all of the Rainy Day Fund (an estimated \$8 billion to \$9 billion) first and enact a new adequate, equitable revenue stream for education and other critical public needs.

The fight, however, will be extremely difficult, exacerbated by the widespread losses of pro-education legislators on Election Day; the influence of the anti-government Tea Party movement over many of the new, conservative lawmakers; and the governor's courtship of the Tea Party in hopes of launching, some believe, a race for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination.

Here are some other education battles that also will be fought in the Capitol over the next several months:

## CLASS SIZES

Some key legislators — including Sens. Florence Shapiro and Dan Patrick, the chair and vice chair of the Senate Education Committee — already have begun talking about lifting the 22-1 class-size limit for grades K-4, an important reform that has been law since 1984. They say giving school districts flexibility over class sizes could save money without sacrificing quality. And some superintendents, eager to save money by laying off elementary teachers, have jumped on board.

TSTA will fight to keep the 22-1 cap because we believe it is important to effective teaching in the primary grades. The smaller the class size, the more individual attention a teacher can give to each student. Studies from Tennessee, Wisconsin and other states have demonstrated that students assigned to smaller classes in the primary grades

do perform better than do their peers in larger classes.

Instead of debating removal of the 22-1 cap for K-4, legislators should be considering class-size limits for the higher grades as well, particularly in low-performing schools. Under current law, schools that find 22-1 is too great a financial burden can ask the Texas Education Agency for a waiver. Such waivers are routinely granted.

## TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM

TSTA is extremely concerned about allegations that Perry appointees on the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) board have pressured TRS managers to make potentially risky investments with firms whose executives were major political donors to the governor. The allegations were raised by a TRS administrator-turned-whistleblower and revealed during the recent gubernatorial race.

Those allegations must be thoroughly and independently investigated, and legislation enacted, if necessary, to guard against such political favoritism and irresponsible investment practices in the future. The TRS provides a hard-earned nest egg for retired educators. It was not intended to be a slush fund to reward the governor's friends.

In 2009, Perry vetoed a bill that would have provided more representation by educators and retired educators on the TRS Board. TSTA will press for legislation this session to provide more accountability for the board.

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

TSTA is optimistic that a handful of election results this year will make the State Board of Education a more moderate body than the right wing-driven faction that embarrassed Texas by interjecting extremist beliefs into the history curriculum standards last spring.

We also expect several legislative proposals to be filed to restrict the board's authority, and we will monitor those for possible support.

## STATEWIDE PROPERTY TAX

Some legislators, including Senate Finance Committee Chairman Steve Ogden, are proposing a statewide property tax as a solution to the school finance problem. The proposal would require voters to approve a constitutional amendment. Presumably the tax would replace most of the school property taxes now levied locally by school districts. But it raises many questions, including whether districts would still be allowed to impose some level of local taxes for "enrichment" purposes. We won't know until the actual legislation is drafted and filed. TSTA will wait for that legislation before taking a position on this proposal.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

TSTA supports accountability in the public education system, but we need an accountability system that is based on several meaningful factors, not just on a student's ability to pass a high-stakes test. Already, there are problems with the new end-of-course exams that will replace TAKS. Only 57 percent of nearly 102,000 students who took the Algebra I end-of-course exam in a test run in May met the passing standard. Only 12 percent reached the "commended performance" level by correctly answering most of the questions. Results were similar on several other end-of-course exams administered in districts throughout the state.

Accountability does not start with school kids and teachers. Accountability starts at the top — with the governor and the Legislature — and they have fallen woefully short of funding an education system that gives every child access to a first-class education.

# Teaching with the brain in mind

10 tips for incorporating brain research into the classroom by Eric Jensen



Brain-based education is actually a “no-brainer.” Here’s a simple, but essential premise: The brain is intimately involved in, and connected with, everything educators and students do at school. Any disconnect is a recipe for frustration and, potentially, disaster. Brain-based education is best understood in three words: engagement, strategies and principles. You must engage your learners and do it with strategies that are based on real science. (I’m a big fan of cognitive science, neuroscience, psychology and other mind/brain sciences.)

What is brain-based education? It’s simple: It’s the engagement of strategies based on how our brain works.

How reputable is brain-based education? Harvard University now has both master’s and doctoral degrees in this field, known as the “Mind, Brain and Education” program. There’s also a peer-reviewed scientific journal on brain-based education, which features research reports, conceptual papers, reviews, debates and dialogue. Now that I’ve reminded you that brain-based education is the “real deal,” there’s one more thing.

There are what you and I might call “macro strategies” and “micro strategies.”

The micro strategies are very situation specific. For example, when you are giving directions, only give one at a time, because the brain needs time to process the location, the action and the qualities of the action (“Go find your team-mates and wait quietly at your team stations”). I provide these in our actual workshops because they require demonstration and context to maximize the understanding and transfer. Here, we’ll focus on macro (the “big picture”) strategies. These are the “biggies” that reap huge rewards. But you’ll need to use your own experiences to customize them for your situation. Trust me; they all are achievement boosters, so here they are.

## EXERCISE AND MOVEMENT ARE CRITICAL TO LEARNING

It’s confirmed: Physical education, recess and movement are critical to learning. How? We now know that we can grow new neurons throughout our lifetime and that they are highly correlated with memory, mood and learning. This process can be regulated by our everyday behaviors, which include exercise. The optimal activity is voluntary gross motor, such as power walks, games, running, dance, aerobics, team sports and swimming. We also now know that early childhood movement wires up the brain to make more efficient connections. Schools can and should influence these variables.

**Practical school application:** Support more, not less physical activity, recess and classroom movement. It raises the good chemicals for thinking, focus, learning and memory (noradrenaline, dopamine and cortisol). Students need 30-60 minutes per day to lower stress response, boost neurogenesis and boost learning. For the first few weeks of school, expose students to a variety of physical activities. Then, offer

choice. That’s critical because voluntary activity does more good than forced activity, which may cause an overproduction of cortisol.

## BRAINS ARE INFLUENCED BY SOCIAL CONDITIONS

It’s confirmed: Social conditions influence our brain in multiple ways we never knew before. School behaviors are highly social experiences, which become encoded through our sense of reward, acceptance, pain, pleasure, coherence, affinity and stress. In fact, poor social conditions, isolation or social “defeat” are correlated with fewer brain cells. Nobody knew this occurred five or 10 years ago.

**Practical school application:** Do not allow random social groupings for more than 10-20 percent of the school day. Use targeted, planned, diverse social groupings with mentoring, teams and buddy systems. Work to strengthen pro-social conditions. Teacher-to-student relationships matter, as do student-to-student relationships.

## BRAINS CONSTANTLY REWIRE AND REVAMP THEMSELVES

The brain changes! All educators should know the brain can and does change every day. In fact every student’s brain is changing as they attend school. The ability of the brain to rewire and remap itself via neuroplasticity is profound. Schools can influence this process through skill-building, reading, meditation, arts and building thinking skills. The evidence is compelling that when the correct skill-building protocol is used, educators can make positive and significant changes in the brain in a short period of time. Without understanding the “rules for how our brain changes,” educators can

waste time and money, and students will fall through the cracks.

In fact, neuroscience is exploding with discoveries about the brain being highly malleable. We used to think about the paradigm as either genes or experience. We now know it can be a hybrid of both. We now know that environments can trigger genes to express themselves in ways we never would have predicted — if you know what to do. You can upgrade a student’s capacity for memory, processing, sequencing, attention and impulsivity regulation. Why not teach these skills to give students the tools to succeed?

**Practical school application:** Give teachers a mandate of 30-90 minutes a day and 3-5 times per week to upgrade student skill sets. Teach attentional skills, memory skills and processing skills. Progress requires focus, “buy-in” and at least a half-hour a day.

## STUDENTS AND STAFF NEED HELP COPING WITH STRESS

Chronic stress is a very real issue at schools for both staff and students. Recent studies suggest 30-50 percent of all students feel moderately or greatly stressed every day. In some schools, the numbers are double that! For those from poverty, the numbers can be higher. These pathogenic stress loads are becoming increasingly common, and have serious health, learning and behavior risks. This issue affects attendance, memory, social skills and cognition. Some stress is good; chronic or acute stress is very bad for behavior and learning.

**Practical school application:** Teach students better coping skills, increase student perception of choice and strengthen arts, physical activity and mentoring. These activities increase a sense of control over one’s life, which



lowers stress. All of these can reduce the impact of stressors.

MAKE DIFFERENCES THE RULE, NOT THE EXCEPTION

Schools are pushing differentiation as a strategy to deal with the differences in learners. That’s close, but not quite the truth. In fact, instead of there being mostly “typical” students with some students with “differences,” brain research tells us the opposite. Let’s find out how common it is to have a “healthy brain.” Of those who responded to the UCLA “healthy brain” student advertisement and considered themselves to be normal, only 32 percent passed the initial telephone screening process. Of those who qualified for the in-person health history and physical examinations, only 52 percent passed these screening procedures.

Now we can do the math: only 11 percent of those individuals who believed they were healthy/normal even qualified for brain imaging. Of the original 2,000 students, just over 200 ended up meeting the criteria. The actual study concludes by saying, “The majority of individuals who consider themselves normal by self-report are found not to be so.” Let me repeat: almost 90 percent of human brains are atypical, damaged or in some way not healthy. That does not mean that many students have not compensated; they have.

**Practical school application:** Make differences the rule, not the exception at your school. Validate differences. Never expect all students (fourth-graders, for instance) to be on the same page in the same book on the same day. That runs counter to an extraordinary research database that shows variations in maturation rates and other brain differences. Allow kids to celebrate diversity, unique abilities, talents and interests. Give them the skill sets, relationships and hope to succeed.

TEACH IN SMALLER CHUNKS FOR BETTER MEMORY

New evidence suggests the value of teaching content in even smaller chunk sizes. Why? The old thinking was that students could hold seven plus or minus chunks in the head as capacity for working memory. But that science is outdated. The new research says two to four chunks are more realistic. In addition to this shorter capacity for working memory, our mid-term “holding tank” for content, the hippocampus, has a limitation on how much it can hold. It is overloaded quickly, based partly on learner background and subject complexity. There are other reasons our students get overloaded quickly with content. Learning and memory consume physical resources such as glucose and our brain uses this quickly with more intense learning.

**Practical school application:** Teachers should teach in small chunks, process the learning, and then rest the brain. Too much content taught in too small a time span means the brain cannot process it, so we simply don’t learn it. Breaks, recess and downtime make more sense than content, content and more content. Here’s the guideline: The less background the learner has and the greater the complexity of the content, make the time chunk of content shorter (use 4-8 minutes). The greater the background knowledge, the less the complexity and the longer you can make the “input” stage (8-15 minutes is acceptable). Under no condition should there be more than 15 consecutive minutes of content input. Share this with your colleagues. But share it in a small chunk, and then allow time for processing it.

ARTS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WE THOUGHT

The role of the arts in schools continues to be under great scrutiny. But five neuroscience departments at five universities (Oregon, Harvard, Michigan,

Dartmouth and Stanford) have recently completed projects studying the impact of arts on the brain. The results suggest that arts are far better than earlier believed. They show that certain arts boost attention, working memory and visual spatial skills. Other arts such as dance, theater and drama boost social skills, empathy, timing, patience, verbal memory and other transferable life skills.

**Practical school application:** Make arts mandatory and give students the choice of several, and support with expert teachers and the time to excel at it. Right now, evidence suggests that you get the most value from 30 to 60 minutes a day, three to five days a week. Arts support the development of the brain’s academic operating systems in ways that provide many transferable life skills.

ONLY SIX EMOTIONS ARE BUILT IN AT BIRTH

Humans have the remarkable capacity to display many emotions, but only six of them are “hard wired,” or built in at birth. This is profound because it tells us that unless children get these emotional states taught to them early (ages 0-3), when they enter school, they’ll be emotionally narrow. Kids rarely ever get the emotional skills built in to be ready for school. This leads to more discipline problems and weakened cognitive skills in school. This means we’ll have kids at school who do not understand appropriate emotional responses (e.g., cooperation, trust, shame and humility) unless we teach them at school. Many kids are not getting these taught at home. Your class should offer quick, daily skill-building with blended-in-daily practice.

Otherwise students will misbehave, not understand directions, fail to be respectful to teachers and show no empathy when others are in pain. There are more early childhood kids in day care (60-80 percent) today

compared with two generations ago (10-12 percent). This is also profound because out of the possible hundreds of emotional states, only a few are good for learning (e.g., anticipation, curiosity, suspicion, confusion). Most states are, in fact, bad for learning.

**Practical school application:** This suggests two things. One, we must teach appropriate emotional states as life skills (e.g., honor, patience, forgiveness and empathy) and, second, it’s important to read and manage the other emotional states in the classroom. In good states, students learn well and behave better. Insist that teachers build social skills into every lesson. Ask that they use the social structures that are advocated in cooperative learning programs every day. The better the social skills, the better the academics. Many good programs are in books, workshops and online. Why put effort into this area? Kids who learn patience, attention, empathy and cooperation will be better students.

LEARN ABOUT RECENT STRIDES IN REHABILITATION

There have been stunning strides in rehabilitation of brain-based disorders, including Asperger’s, learning delays, dyslexia and autism. The discovery that aggressive behavioral therapies, new drugs and revolutionary stem cell implantation can be used to influence, regulate and repair brain-based disorders has been amazing. Innovations suggest that special education students may be able to improve far more than we earlier thought.

**Practical school application:** Make sure all teachers (not just special ed) learn the latest in dealing with special education learning delay recovery. Most kids can be brought back into regular ed classes, but not with inclusion-only strategies. It takes consistent hour-a-day skill-building or the student won’t change. Learn

the right skills and go to it 3-5 days a week.

MEMORIES ARE MALLEABLE, NOT FIXED AS WE BELIEVED

The recent brain/mind discovery that even memories are not fixed but, instead, are quite malleable is powerful. Every time you retrieve a memory, it goes into a volatile, flex state in which it is temporarily reorganized. This is highly relevant for teachers and administrators who are responsible for student learning and classroom testing. Every time students review, they might change their memory (and often do). Yet, without review, they are less likely to recall their learning. It suggests that teachers use several strategies to continually strengthen memory over time instead of assuming that once learned, the memory is preserved.

**Practical school application:** First, teachers should review the content halfway between the original learning and the test. If content is taught Monday and tested on Friday, then review should be on Wednesday. Second, teachers should mediate the review process with students through structured reviews such as written quizzes or group work that ensures quality control. Otherwise the material is more likely to get confused and test scores drop.

*Eric Jensen is an educator who is internationally known for his ability to translate neuroscience into practical classroom applications. He has written more than 20 books, including Teaching with the Brain in Mind. His workshops emphasize connecting brain research to student achievement. Visit [www.JensenLearning.com](http://www.JensenLearning.com).*

APPLYING WHAT WE KNOW



This is a new paradigm which establishes connections between brain function and educational practice. A field has emerged known as “brain-based” education and it has now been well over 20 years since this “connect the dots” approach began. In a nutshell, brain-based education says, “Everything we do uses our brain; let’s learn more about it and apply that knowledge.”

If your question was, “Are the approaches and strategies based on solid research from brain-related disciplines or are they based on myths, a well-meaning mentor teacher or from ‘junk science?’”— now you know the answer. We would expect an educator to be able to support the use of a particular classroom strategy with scientific reasoning or studies.

Each educator ought to be professional enough to say, “Here’s why I do what I do.” I would ask: Is the person actually engaged in using what they know, or simply having knowledge about it, but not actually using it? Are they using strategies based on the science of how our brain works? Brain-based education is about the professionalism of knowing why one strategy is used over another. The science is based on what we know about how our brain works.



Stephen is a science teacher at a low-performing middle school. Each day he sees children come into his classroom struggling for survival; many are hungry, or their clothes are torn. Parents are seldom at the school, in part because the principal fears that their lack of education and motivation will spill over into the school.

Stephen lacks the necessary classroom resources available in even the most basic science labs, yet he is held accountable for increasing student achievement without any expectation of accountability from decision-makers.

Learning is the last thing on his students' minds, as survival and safety take precedence in their lives. As Stephen looks around his campus, he sees teachers just going through the motions, demoralized by the state of affairs in their workplace. The building is in decay, and there is little, if any, support from the administration regarding discipline and instruction. There is no connectedness on the campus: Teachers are isolated from one another, and paraprofessionals are overwhelmed by the demands of the teachers and administration as well as the needs of the students.

Stephen wants to make a difference in his students' lives. He knows that learning is the great equalizer, and he believes that an injustice to one is an injustice to all. Still, he finds himself becoming like some of the other teachers — distant, going through the motions of teaching, and having little empathy for the students and what he perceives to be the miserable existence that awaits them at home. His own pay hasn't kept pace with inflation, and each year he finds it more and more difficult to make ends meet and support his family.

Finally, the testing is driving him crazy. Every week there are benchmarks to be given to students who don't care or can't learn, or who are absent more than they are present. All of this effort, and the school is still labeled a low-performing campus by the state. Stephen knows working on this campus also hampers any opportunity he may have to go to a better school or even a better district.

At home, Stephen is angry and frustrated by what is happening at work, a frustration and anger he takes out on his family. It is at home where he feels he has some semblance of power. During an argument, his wife finally confronts him and tells him that home and family are not the cause of his anger and frustration. As he stops and thinks about this, he realizes the only way to stop the cycle he is in and transform his life is to act more assertively at work: to stand up for what he believes as a teacher; to take ownership for what is happening in his classroom and on his campus; and to help others — staff and students alike — transform their behaviors and change the culture of their environment. He believes if he can do this, he may also make a difference at home, in his community and in the community where the school is located.

Yet, Stephen is afraid, unsure of how to begin and uncertain that he has the inner fortitude to strive toward his goal. In the past, he has often given up because situations overwhelmed him, or he was alone with no support and doubted his own efficacy. And, he needed his job.

One day, he decides to have lunch in the lounge, something he typically avoids as the talk often turns into gripe sessions that reinforce the powerlessness he feels. This time, however, it's different. When Stephen walks into the lounge, he sees a woman he doesn't

**In the past, Stephen has often given up because situations simply overwhelmed him, or he was alone with no support and doubted his own efficacy. And, he needed his job.**

know. As he sits down, she walks over to him and introduces herself as Mary, the president of the TSTA local association and a teacher at one of the elementary schools.

At first, Stephen is hesitant to speak with her. He can barely make ends meet as it is, and he figures all she wants is his membership. She sits down at a table with him, asks his name and what he teaches. She then asks him how things are on his campus and in his classroom. In 10 years of teaching no one has ever asked him this, and he opens up about his frustra-

tions, his anger and his desire to help create a better school.

As he talks, Mary listens. She knows his frustrations as she has lived them; she shares his anger because it is genuine; and she affirms his desire because it resonates with her values as an educator. As Stephen speaks, other staff members filter into the lounge and sit down with him. They, too, share their stories and Mary is touched by the realism she hears.

After listening to them, Mary speaks. She tells her story of the problems at her campus: overcrowded classrooms, not enough textbooks and the loss of planning time. She could have gone on and on. Despite all of this, her tone is not one of anger, but of optimism. She shares the reasons she got involved in TSTA and why she became a leader. She tells how she uses the opportunities TSTA provides her to confront issues on her campus.

Suddenly, they are asking questions about how she did it; did she do it alone; how had she kept her job; and was she successful? Mary explains that TSTA has given her the tools to develop as a leader, tools that gave her the confidence to act and to act boldly. Some shake their heads. It's impossible; it could never happen on this campus, as the principal rules with an iron fist and much of what teachers experience is even beyond his control.

Mary gives them information about TSTA. She shares with them her belief that all members of TSTA are citizens of the association and they have a responsibility to themselves; to others, including their students; and to the association. As citizens of TSTA, they have access to an organization that provides opportunities to help them grow and get the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. She tells them about the local association and what it



is doing and relates the conversations she has with the superintendent.

As Stephen and the others glance at their watches, Mary asks each of them to join and gives them membership enrollment forms. As they stand up to leave, she reaffirms why she believes they could and should be agents for change and how the local association can be the force for that change. She thanks them for their time and tells them when she will be back on campus to collect their forms.

As Stephen walks back to his classroom amid the noise and bustle of the hallway, he reflects on what he has just heard. Has Mary really been able to make some changes on her campus or was she just saying that to seem more powerful than she really is? After all, she is just a teacher.

As the school day ends, Stephen finds himself still thinking about his conversation with Mary. The more he thinks, the more he realizes she is a teacher and an activist: an activist for herself, her students and her profession. Driving home, he stops by her school and goes to her classroom to drop off his membership enrollment form. He tells her he wants to be just as she is — an activist. As he speaks, Mary senses an energy and excitement from Stephen, two traits that will benefit him, the association and the school district.

Mary explains how she got involved and, as she developed her leadership skills, how she is able to persevere in the face of opposition, even from unexpected sources like her colleagues. It didn't happen overnight for her and it wouldn't happen on his campus at all if he didn't take the initiative to change his behaviors, adopt a leader's attitude and take action to make change happen. Mary explains the Leadership Pipeline, a program designed to develop leadership among TSTA's members. She shows Stephen the curricular content of the program, laying out the

various tracks and pointing out the skill sets.

Then she invites him to go with her to a leadership conference and begin his journey of leadership. He thinks for a moment and commits to going with her. Later that evening, he explains to his wife that he wants to be more than just a name on a membership roster, he wants to be an activist.

As Stephen develops skills in personal mastery and how to organize, he also learns of the rights he has as an educator and the responsibility he has to protect and preserve them. He becomes skillful at organizing his colleagues around issues on his campus, and he begins to see progress. It isn't always easy and he grows impatient at times but he remembers what Mary said about perseverance. He perseveres. On campus, his stature grows and he is recognized not just for his accomplishments but also for his leadership and how it has transformed him and his classroom. He realizes that leadership skills are also life skills.

One day, he is asked to go to a meeting with the superintendent to talk about the upcoming budget and the impact it will have on the district. He is at the same time exhilarated and frightened. He is recognized by the superintendent as a leader on his campus and in the district, but he is frightened because the superintendent is, ultimately, his boss. He knows he has to tread carefully. This meeting will take all the skills and knowledge he has learned from TSTA's Leadership Pipeline.

Stephen walks into the meeting with the superintendent and the district's budget director. He is the only association member there. The superintendent is very straightforward: The district budget has to be cut to avoid going into a deficit, and the cuts will mean layoffs for some teachers and ESPs, resulting in larger class sizes. As Stephen listens to this, he realizes he has to take

a stand. This is the crucible where he will be tested as a leader.

After listening to the superintendent and the budget director, Stephen places both hands on the table, palms downward and eyes focused on the superintendent. He speaks words he thought he would never speak to someone in authority: "This is unacceptable to the educators and the children in this school district. This will not happen!"

With a slight laugh, the superintendent informs him that there is little he or anyone else can do about it. The money isn't there. Class sizes will increase across all grade levels. As Stephen leaves the office, he realizes the enormity of his words. He drew a line in the sand, and now he is determined that neither he nor the association will give in on this issue.

Stephen shares his conversation with Mary and other members of the association. He knows the association has to take action and Mary agrees. Some of the other members are doubtful that anything can be done and others are just fearful. They need their jobs.

Stephen spearheads the task force charged with developing a plan to prevent the budget cuts from being made. The timeline is short so they must move quickly. He also knows he has to keep everyone engaged and he finds this difficult. But, determined, he sits down with members on his campus to discuss the issue and get their input on resolving it. He does the same with potential members, and many of them join the association. His frustration mounts, though, because support for what he is doing is not becoming the activism he needs.

In a moment of despair, he pens a simple message and sends it to every educator in the district: "If you can't stand up for yourself, at least stand up for your students." This becomes a rallying point for all educators and soon

this message appears in lounges, workrooms and even bathrooms across the district. Stephen knows that in standing up for the students, they will be standing up against the superintendent.

Over the next several days, Stephen begins to receive emails and phone calls of support from his colleagues; more significantly, some are even expressing a desire to help. This motivates him and the task force to step up their engagement with their colleagues. Phone calls, flyers and emails go out with a straightforward message: "Stand up for our students by standing up at our school board meeting." Colleagues are also told to get the word out to as many people as possible. Stephen and Mary understand that the perception of power is often greater than the actual power. More people standing up at the school board meeting will have a powerful impact.

Finally, the moment of truth arrives. Stephen will speak for the association. Entering the usually empty boardroom, he is thrilled to find the rows packed with his colleagues, all watching him with hopeful eyes. Armed with financial data that shows the district has more than enough money to offset the budget cuts and with right on his side, Stephen steps forward to address the school board. Before addressing them, he turns and looks into the eyes of his colleagues. Choking back emotion, he nods and in unison, they stand up — standing behind Stephen and standing up for their students.

As he addresses the board, he senses anger from the superintendent and discontent on the faces of some board members. Surprisingly, it matters little to him. His voice is clear and he conveys his message with clarity. The message is simple: Our children deserve better than this!

After his presentation, copies of which had been given to the school board and the media, members of the board

pepper him with questions. His responses are on point to reinforce the association's message. He speaks with certainty and acts with confidence. Returning to his seat, he is humbled by the presence of so many of his friends and colleagues at the meeting, all of whom are still standing. It is only when he sits down that they do the same.

The silence in the boardroom is deafening ... and then the school board votes 4-3 to approve a budget that will lead to layoffs and larger class sizes.

Disappointed, Stephen thanks each school board member and, as he turns to leave the boardroom, he sees his wife standing with Mary, both of whom sense his anger and frustration. His wife expresses her pride in what he has done. Mary looks at him with a gleam of satisfaction in her eyes. As he explains to her that all he wanted was to feel empowered, he realizes the school board took that away from him in one fell swoop.

Mary shakes her head and explains a

basic truth about power. Power is not something given to you; rather, it is something you take. Stephen demonstrated his power and that of the association despite the outcome.

Driving home that night and glancing up at the vast and starry Texas sky, he realizes a simple truth of leadership. Leadership is not about winning; it is about acting in a way that transforms behaviors and culture. His simple act of standing up and speaking out inspired others to change their behaviors and shape their culture.

TSTA's Leadership Pipeline shaped Stephen's behavior, and he is now in a position to shape the culture and behavior of his school district. This, in and of itself, empowers him and his association.

*Bryan Weatherford is the leadership development specialist for TSTA, and the state coordinator for the TSTA-Student Program and the Human and Civil Rights Program. He can be reached at [bryanw@tsta.org](mailto:bryanw@tsta.org).*

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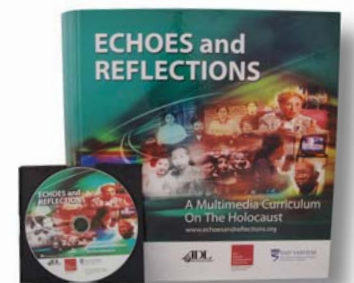
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## A life of public service

Fredericksburg Mayor Tom Musselman uses his lesson plans and his life to teach students why government and history matter.

Rumor has it that a group of high school students will be lobbying the Fredericksburg City Council for a skate park. Mayor Tom Musselman isn't sure if he likes the idea or not, but he loves that the students are working the system to try to get it. "That's government in action," he said with a smile.

For Musselman, it's evidence that the students are listening. In addition to his mayoral role, he is also a government, history and sociology teacher at Fredericksburg High School, and "what we do every day in the classroom is instill the value of citizenship and the importance of being part of a solution."

When Musselman first moved to Fredericksburg 36 years ago, he made his living managing a couple of downtown restaurants. He was happy, but when, after 17 years, the owner decided to close the restaurants, Musselman was ready to move on.

"My wife Kelly asked me what I really wanted to do," he recalled. "I said I wanted to do what I'd wanted to do all my life, but I never thought I could make a living at it, and that was teach. By that time, I didn't care whether I could make a living at it; it was just what I wanted to do."

Musselman already held a bachelor's degree in history and teacher certification in composite social studies, history and special education. He took a position teaching special education for two years, then transferred to social sciences, an area he loves because he believes it teaches students to "be better, live a good life and be productive in society."

"I want them to understand why history is important. I want them to know how government works. I want them to understand why people interact the way we do," Musselman said. "To move forward as a culture and a society, we have to have a firm understanding of how we got to where we are today."





## Why TSTA?

I have been a member of the Fredericksburg, Texas, chapter of TSTA since 1995. My good friend George Burns was the TSTA local president. We got to talking, and I liked the program TSTA had.

I liked the idea of belonging to a professional organization whose goal was to help teachers define their voice in Texas society. I felt that being a TSTA member would help me more in my professional development.

It made me more aware of what was going on in education in the state of Texas and also what — through the affiliation with NEA — was going on in education in the United States, because we can't divorce what's going on in Texas from what's going on nationally.

I think TSTA is the most informed teacher organization in the state of Texas. They put teachers and kids first, and they are always there if teachers need them.

*Mayor Tom Musselman, high school teacher and TSTA member*



Sometimes the answers are hard to accept, they are unpleasant, but they are what they are."

Musselman lines his classroom walls with news clips, cartoons and signs from political campaigns to stimulate his students' interest in studying government.

"As a group, 18- to 24-year-olds have the lowest voter participation of any group in American society today, so I see it as my job to try to teach them why it's important to be involved in politics," Musselman said. His job as mayor adds power to this educational objective: He is a living resource from whom his students can learn how politics affects their everyday lives.

Musselman had served five years on the city council

when the former mayor announced he would not seek re-election. The timing was good.

"My son was out of college and on his own. I had the financial resources and the time to devote to being mayor," he said. "Not that I'm rich or anything like that, but at least my house is paid off."

Musselman was elected mayor in May. "Public service has always been a key part of my life. I guess that's why I'm a public school teacher," he said. "I ran for mayor because I wanted to give back. I have an abiding love for this community. I've seen the changes that have happened here and I wanted to be part of that change."

He says Fredericksburg is fortunate to be a historic town with an economy dri-

ven by tourism. "We are a destination. We are trying to bring people from all over the state and offer them a unique experience," he said. "We have some of the finest festivals anywhere in the state of Texas. We just had our 30th anniversary of the Oktoberfest, and we broke all records. We are indeed blessed as a community."

He steers clear of partisan politics, in the classroom as well as city hall. "I try to teach both sides of the story," he said, adding that, as a social scientist, "I'm very fearful of the drift toward political polarization that I'm seeing happen on the national and state levels. I don't think it's good for our representative democracy."

Although his son, Karl-Thomas, is a well-known

blogger with the Burnt Orange Report, Musselman doesn't blog. He admits he's not high-tech, but says he does maintain a mayoral website, where he reports on city council meetings. He also has a Facebook page and maintains an email list of almost 1,000 people.

"I've only had a cell phone for about a year, and I still don't text," he admitted, but in a town of 11,500, communicating with your constituents is not that hard. "I run into the people who voted for me on a daily basis at Walmart or HEB."

Reflecting on almost two decades in the classroom, Musselman is thrilled about the changes in technology. "Our district does a great job of supporting teachers with

the technology they need to deliver instruction to kids. My planning and my delivery are different now than they were 19 years ago, and I like what we're doing now," he said. "I'm glad to be away from overhead projectors and filmstrips. Now I can walk around the classroom and check on kids. I can make sure they're on task and be more interactive with them."

Other changes that he's seen in public education are not so good. "A sad fact of the matter is, right now in American society, lots of people are working lots of hours, and the schools are being asked to do things that historically were part of the job of the family or society. But that's life," he shrugged. "Life is about change and

adapting to change for the betterment of society."

Another concern now is time. "Teachers are so overburdened by the requirements of today's educational system in Texas," Musselman said. "Every teacher is faced with the same problem, and that is a limited amount of time to do everything that is required of them. Teachers need more time to plan, and they need more time to think and be global."

Still, with the end of his classroom career maybe five years away, Musselman said he's loved every minute. "I wish I had started earlier," he said with emotion. "Teaching is a wonderful profession."

"If there are any young people out there thinking

about teaching, I would advise them not to worry about the money. Money isn't everything, but being able to affect an entire generation by providing them with knowledge that will enable them to better society ... it's something that ... it's hard to explain.

"My job is to do as much as I can to eradicate ignorance so people make good decisions. The people we are teaching today are going to be making decisions for us in 10 or 15 years.

"That's what every teacher wants: to help kids live a good life and be productive," Musselman said. "I'm glad I did what I did on both levels, being involved in politics and also being a teacher."

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# Project Share: Get connected

Sometime near the beginning of the year, you likely received an email from your district's technology division regarding Project Share. Many teachers disregarded the email when they received it, but things have changed. Over half of Texas teachers have logged onto Project Share and with good reasons. **By Dr. Paul Henley**

## ACCESS TO A WIDE AND EXPANDING AMOUNT OF CLASSROOM CONTENT

Project Share has partnered with the New York Times (NYT) Knowledge Network, The Public Broadcasting System's Digital Learning Library, Texas PBS stations and iTunes University. The Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife has provided content, and there are elements of the Reading First program, too.

Much of this material is new to Texas teachers and provides new ways to teach the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) more deeply. Even the material that is already available has been repackaged to make it more accessible. Every student in Texas is required to study the Gettysburg Address.

Using Project Share, Texas students will now be able to access the 1863 New York Times' coverage of the Gettysburg Address.

The NYT database is searchable by keyword; however, the PBS database allows teachers to search the database by entering specific TEKS. If you are having difficulty with a specific content standard, Project Share offers a quick way to remedy the situation.

You may remember iTunes University from a previous Teaching and Learning newsletter. The concept has become more developed, and Texas Education Agency (TEA) now has its own iTU channel. Project Share helps keep these files organized and searchable, as well.

## THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH COLLEAGUES FROM AROUND TEXAS

Project Share uses a wide variety of Web 2.0 tools, and TEA has a video that explains their basic use. You can use some of these tools or all of them. You can create lessons on wikis. You can create and join groups of teachers in similar fields. One feature has an interface similar to Facebook. The difference is that the communication here between teachers is professional and secure from public scrutiny.

This year, the vertical team for technology applications held some of its meetings using the Project Share platform. Documents were placed in a folder that was accessible to all members, then the committee met as a hybrid. Some team members were at the TEA building; others were present via conference call. Still others used their computer's audio and video to join the meeting. All had the same documents in front of them and could see changes as they were made.

Project Share offers you the opportunity to meet with colleagues from across the state of Texas, or it can connect you to other teachers in your district without leaving your building. The high level of sophistication gives you every opportunity for a better meeting.

## ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TIED DIRECTLY TO WHAT YOU NEED

Each summer, TEA provides professional development workshops across the state. Project Share supports it in two ways. First, it creates groups for all teachers who attend the live trainings. Through the communication tools mentioned above, teachers can reconnect to learn what is working and what is not working from the workshop. Second, the new platform gives teachers who could not attend access to the workshops through video recordings. When TEA hires a specialist to train 50

teachers, Project Share can share that training with thousands.

Project Share also provides video from Texas classrooms where teachers are implementing the concepts being taught in these professional development sessions.

## SHOW OFF YOUR BEST WORK

There are folders on your Project Share portal to help you develop a collection of your best work. The ePortfolio folder holds all of your electronic content, whether it is original or from another source; options range from your favorite internet links to your own Showcase folder. It even has a folder specifically for your blog. By using these tools, you allow others to know more about you, your accomplishments and what you are doing. You can always restrict who sees your information through TEA's security features. When permitted, you can also view others' portfolios to find the best sources for your teaching materials.

There are many more wonderful things about Project Share. Look for further ideas, tips and tricks in upcoming Teaching and Learning newsletters.

## THE BIG KICKOFF IS AT SXSW

South by Southwest (SXSW) is an annual music, film and interactive conference and festival held in Austin. In 2011, SXSW Interactive will introduce a new event covering education and technology, called SXSWedu. Its inaugural event will be "Project Share: Knowledge Knows No Boundaries" on March 8-10 at the AT&T Conference Center in Austin. Attendees will see examples of teachers using Project Share to "collaborate, share resources and showcase accomplishments." According to TEA, Project Share may be the only way that teachers learn about the presenters and registration options. Go to [www.sxswedu.com](http://www.sxswedu.com).

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

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The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is proud to announce a new initiative that will explore the development and delivery of high quality professional development in an interactive and engaging learning environment. Project Share utilizes a collection of Web 2.0 tools and applications to provide professional development resources for teachers across the state.

## GET STARTED IN 20 MINUTES!

As a Texas teacher, it is a good idea to discover the different ways that Project Share can help you in your job and your career. The quickest way to do this only takes 20 minutes, and it's easy. Simply direct your web browser to [www.tea.state.tx.us/projectshare](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/projectshare). You will see a link for Texas Tour 1.0 in the middle of the page. It will save you hours of time over the coming years and give you access to things you didn't know existed.





## DONNA TEAMS WORK TO BUILD RESPECT

Morale dropped when the Donna ISD staff was reorganized a few years ago, so Donna TSTA approached the district administration about collaborating on a program to improve attitudes and productivity.

Under the “Respect, Dignity, Professionalism for All” campaign, campus-based teams of one administrator and five participants — representing teachers, principals, custodians, cafeteria workers, secretaries and instructional aides — were trained together, then shared what they learned with their fellow workers.

Principles included listening and communicating effectively, interest-based problem solving, ethics and legal conduct, mutual accountability and responsibility, maintaining a “we” mentality, team-building, diversity, increased employee engagement and commitment, and managing and reducing workplace stress.

For the first time in five years, the turnover rate among teachers in the district is below the state average (12.2 percent in Donna compared to 14.7 percent statewide), and there has been a 5 percent increase in students passing the TAKS test, greater than the percentage increase in Texas and Education Service Center Region 1.

For Donna TSTA, the “Respect” campaign increased its visibility, resulting in a membership increase, and its leaders and members are now engaged in the school improvement and decision-making process.

## TSTA-STUDENT PROGRAM WINS NEA GRANTS

TSTA-Student Program (TSTA-SP) and seven of its local chapters have received NEA CLASS and SOAR grants. CLASS grants of up to \$1,000 are used by local chapters to engage in commu-



nity outreach projects. Chapters receiving the grants are Lone Star College at Kingwood, Lone Star College at North Harris and San Jacinto College-Central.

SOAR grants of up to \$4,000 are used by local chapters for membership recruitment and/or to organize a local chapter. Chapters receiving SOAR grants are Angelo State University, Lone Star College at Kingwood, the University of Texas and the University of Texas at El Paso.

At the state level, TSTA-SP won a SOAR grant to establish chapters at community colleges in the El Paso and Houston areas. For more information on CLASS and SOAR grants, see <http://www.nea.org/home/20268.htm>.

## In other TSTA-SP news:

- Michelle Naquin, a student member at Concordia University in Austin, has been appointed the NEA-Student Program (NEA-SP) student liaison to the NEA Legislative Committee. The appointment was recommended by NEA-SP Chairperson Tommie Leaders and approved by the NEA Board of Directors.
- Mark your calendars: The TSTA-SP Annual Conference and House of Delegates will be March 25-27 at the Omni Austin Hotel at Southpark.
- Don't forget the deadline for entering the TSTA-SP Awards Program is March 4.

# Harlandale fights for help with health care

While the cost of health insurance increased by 7.9 percent in Harlandale ISD this year, salaries increased by only 1.5 percent.

Supported by more than 35 members in the audience, Harlandale Education Association (HEA) President Cathy Stein spoke at the October school board meeting on the rising cost of health care.

Two local members — Diana Mancha, HEA insurance committee representative, and Olga Vega, HEA transportation member — also spoke.

While the cost of health insurance increased by 7.9 percent in Harlandale ISD this year, salaries increased by only 1.5 percent.

“During the convocation, the superintendent asked the employees to ‘see’ the students in the way the indigenous people of the movie Avatar used the phrase ‘I see you,’” Stein said. “We do see our students. Do you see us?”

She cited sobering statistics, including that Harlandale ISD ranks 13th among the 14 San Antonio school districts in teacher salaries, and that some employees’ take-home pay is less than in previous years.

“Do you see our struggle to make ends meet? If you do see us, we are asking you to do something now and not wait for next year,” Stein said. She urged the board to address the issue at its November meeting and to fully fund health insurance for district employees.

For employees who are currently enrolled in HISD health insurance, “The increase is \$19 a month per employee, for a cost of \$406,000. There are many options to address this issue. We hope you will be like Jake Sully, the warrior in Avatar, and stand up for what is right for the Harlandale family,” Stein said.





Speakers were Iona Holloway (left middle photo) and Paula Monroe (right middle photo).

### SUPPORT STAFF MEET IN HOUSTON, IRVING

TSTA held two conferences for education support professionals this fall in Irving and Houston.

The Sept. 25 meeting at Cypress Ridge High School in the Cypress-Fairbanks ISD featured Paula Monroe as the keynote speaker. A California high school secretary, she serves on the NEA Executive Committee.

The speaker for the Oct. 16 conference at Irving's Crockett

Middle School was Iona Holloway of Louisiana, the first education support professional to serve on NEA's Board of Directors.

Training sessions covered leadership and assertiveness, organizing in the digital age, working with children of different backgrounds and essential rights of ESPs.

Links to photos of both events and video of the Irving meeting are at [www.tsta.org/inside/about/photoalbum.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/inside/about/photoalbum.shtml).

### TSTA-RETIRED MEETS

In September, the TSTA-Retired (TSTA-R) Board of Directors held its first meeting of the membership year and took the following actions:

- approved the audit report
- adopted the 2010-11 budget

- amended the calendar by deleting the December meeting
- reaffirmed its commitment to intergenerational activities
- held a lengthy discussion on membership growth and pre-retired members
- voted to move forward with a quilt project

**Regional meetings:** Some regions hold monthly meetings from September until May; others hold quarterly meetings or set their own schedules. TSTA-R President Johnetta Williams attended the meetings of Region 4C (Fort Worth area), where Jerry Watkins is president, and Region 4D (Dallas area), where Frank Colbert is president. Regions 2A and 2B in the El Paso area are electing new officers. Region 2C in the Midland/Odessa area held a meeting to reorganize, which Williams attended by speaker phone. They met all the requirements and will have a representative on the TSTA-R Board of Directors.

Please check the website or call TSTA-R to locate a group near you. Some groups have a wide variety of activities, such as speakers and tours, while others take day trips and still others just meet and eat. If there is no organized group in your area, we can help you start one.

**Upcoming events:** TSTA-R's Board of Directors meets Feb. 3-4 at TSTA Headquarters in Austin in the Antoinette Miller Room. You are invited to attend.

The TSTA-R Annual Meeting (formerly the TSTA-R House of Delegates) is April 13-14 in El Paso. All members are eligible to attend and vote. Take part in the business and fun! More information will follow.

The NEA-Retired (NEA-R) West Conference date is to be determined. Watch the retired section of [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org) or This Active Life magazine for information.

The TSTA-R officers will attend the NEA-R East Conference March 25-27 at the Omni William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA. You are welcome to come; watch the NEA website or This Active Life magazine for registration information. You must register online; if you need assistance, call the officers or the TSTA-R office. NEA-R will pay two nights' lodging for one person with double-room occupancy to increase the involvement of a newly active member by helping him or her attend this conference. 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 to Johnetta Williams at [townview@swbell.net](mailto:townview@swbell.net). You may also mail your information to TSTA-R, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701. To be considered for the giveaway, your information must reach us by Feb. 1.

The NEA-R Annual Meeting is June 26-28 in Chicago. Watch the NEA website or This Active Life magazine for information. Registration is only offered online. All members are encouraged to attend and participate in the business of the association.

**Elections:** Filing forms are due at the TSTA office in Austin, postmarked by Jan. 15, 2011, for the following positions:

- TSTA-Retired president and vice president. The filing form is below. Ballots will be mailed in early February. Each position carries a two-year term running July 15, 2011, to July 14, 2013.

• TSTA-Retired/NEA-Retired delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly June 30 to July 5 in Chicago. The form is in the fall TSTA Advocate and on the TSTA-R web page, [www.tsta.org/inside/retired](http://www.tsta.org/inside/retired).

• TSTA-Retired at-large delegates to the TSTA House of Delegates April 15-16 in El Paso. The form is in the fall TSTA Advocate and on the TSTA-R web page.

All elections will take place by mail ballot between Feb. 5 and March 3. Members may file for a position themselves or nominate another member (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 retired sections of [tsta.org](http://tsta.org) and [nea.org](http://nea.org), and click on TSTA's legislative page for a glimpse of the upcoming legislative season and how you can help.

*TSTA-R President Johnetta Williams*

### TSTA-R NOMINATION FORM

Check box beside office this nomination is for: ☐ TSTA-Retired President ☐ TSTA-Retired Vice President  
**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 \_\_\_\_\_

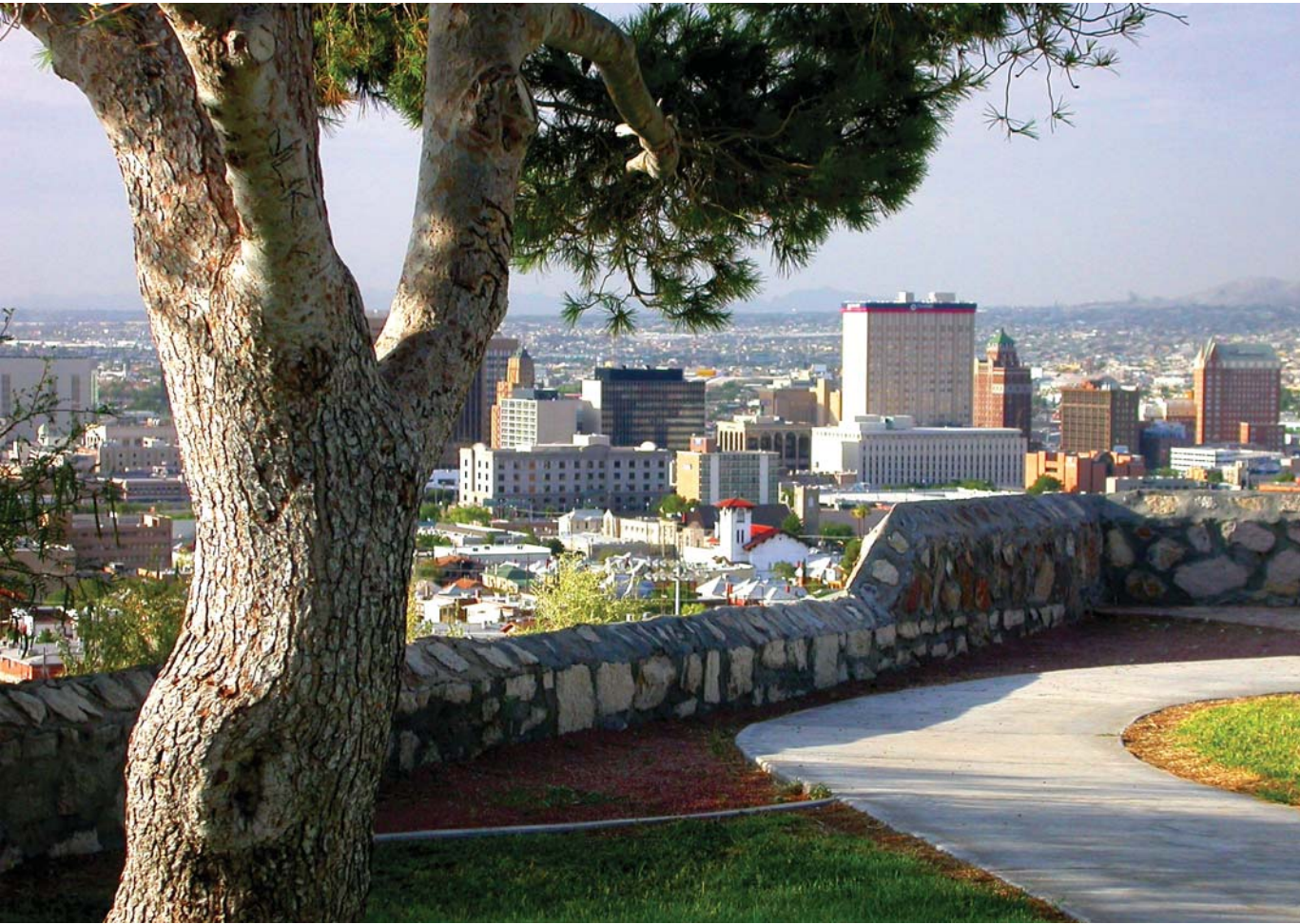
Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Day phone \_\_\_\_\_

***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, 2011, to TSTA-Retired, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701.





# 132nd Annual TSTA Convention

The annual TSTA Convention will be in El Paso, Texas, on April 15-16, 2011. Convention events will take place at the historic Camino Real Hotel as well as the Judson F. Williams Convention Center in revitalized downtown El Paso.

Periodic updates about convention schedules and events will be posted on the TSTA website in the “members only” area under “TSTA House of Delegates Information.”

**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 by-laws, and act on recommendations from the TSTA officers, board or committees.

This year delegates will elect TSTA officers; the NEA Director

for Texas, Place 3; the Third Alternate NEA Director; and, if necessary, any at-large members of the TSTA Board of Directors.

Please contact your local president for details on how to become an elected delegate 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 and certification of delegates, non-delegates/ alternates and guests will be in Hall A (entering through the Mount Franklin Lobby) at the convention center, beginning at 7:00 a.m. on Friday, April 15, and continuing to Saturday,

April 16. 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.

**HEARINGS AND WORKSHOPS**

Open hearings will be held Friday morning on the proposed 2011-12 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.

**HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION**

The Camino Real Hotel is holding a room block for TSTA convention attendees. Reserve your room directly with the hotel by March 24, 2011, to ensure your room at the group rate of \$88.00 (plus applicable taxes currently at 15.5 percent). Self-parking for hotel guests is \$6.00 per day based on availability. Hotel shuttle to and from the airport is complimentary.

Make your reservation by calling 800-769-4300 or 915-534-3099 from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (MST), Monday through Friday. Identify yourself as a participant of the “TSTA Annual Convention” at the time you make your reservation to obtain the group rate. **Please note:** A first night room deposit secured with a major credit card is required for all reservations. (TSTA cautions individuals not to use a debit card, or a card that can be used as a debit card, to secure your reservation.) Cancellations must be made with the hotel 48 hours before your scheduled arrival to avoid a charge for the first night.

Local associations who wish to pay by check should be aware that payment by check is only an option if reserving

a room block of 10 or more, and an approved credit application is on file at the hotel. Payment of estimated charges is due 10 days in advance. If you are interested in this option, please contact TSTA’s Center for Executive and Governance (CEG) at 800-324-5355, ext. 1510 or 1514.

**SPECIAL ASSISTANCE**

Physically challenged or special needs delegates should contact TSTA’s CEG no later than April 5, 2011, to arrange assistance during the convention. Payment for special needs requests such as wheelchairs or transportation is the responsibility of the delegate, but TSTA will help make arrangements for services.

Members who do not have a roommate

but would like to share accommodations should contact the CEG before making their hotel reservation. We will attempt to match members who want to share expenses, but we cannot guarantee a roommate for everyone.

**TSTA HOST COMMITTEE**

TSTA would like to thank this year’s host committee, appointed by President Haecker, for their efforts to help ensure a successful and fun convention. HoD Host Committee members are: Region 2A, George Cordova, Remi Garcia, Pete Jimenez, Juan Moreno, Angelica Soto, Sylvia Weaver; Region 2B, Shelley Lincoln, Arlinda Valencia, Ysrael Valencia; TSTA-SP, Crystal Estrada; and TSTA-R, Jay Ann Rucker.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE	
<b>Thursday, April 14</b>	
8:00 a.m. ....	Advisory Committee Meeting
1:30 p.m. ....	Board of Directors Meeting
6:00 p.m. ....	Candidates Meeting
<b>Friday, April 15</b>	
7:00 a.m. ....	Registration
8:00 a.m. ....	Special Interest Exhibits
8:00 a.m. ....	Open Hearings
9:15 a.m. ....	Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)
10:30 a.m. ....	Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)
11:30 a.m. ....	Candidate Forum
12:30 p.m. ....	Tentative Special Event
1:00 p.m. ....	Parliamentary Procedures Workshop for New Delegates
1:45 p.m. ....	Recognized Caucus Meetings
2:30 p.m. ....	House of Delegates Opening Ceremony and Meeting
<b>Saturday, April 16</b>	
6:30 a.m. ....	Registration
7:00 a.m. ....	Regional/TSTA-Student Program/TSTA-Retired Meetings
8:00 a.m. ....	Special Interest Exhibits
8:30 a.m. ....	Voting/Elections
10:00 a.m. ....	House of Delegates Meeting
12:30 p.m. ....	Lunch and Recognized 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 minorities and education support professionals (ESPs) a meaningful voice in the organization, while preventing supervisory staff from having influence beyond their numbers.

As specified in our bylaws, every Jan. 15, TSTA calculates the proportion of its membership in these three categories to determine the need for additional board elections. Recent membership numbers show 37.8 percent of our members are ethnic minorities, 20.8 percent are ESPs and 3.5 percent are supervisory. The board has 28 members that count for this purpose — including president, vice president, regional presidents, the Texas Faculty Association (TFA) president, the TSTA-R president, the TSTA-SP president and NEA directors — so if those percentages stay the same on Jan. 15, 2011, TSTA will need at least 11 minorities, six ESPs and one supervisor on the board. After the election of regional presidents at the regional houses of delegates, we will know if we need additional elections.

**ESP:** TSTA currently has six ESP board members; three were

elected at-large and three are regional presidents. The term of one of the regional presidents continues through July 14, 2012, and the other two presidents are eligible to run again. However, all of the at-large ESPs' terms are ending, and they are not eligible for re-election. We can predict that we likely will need an ESP at-large election, but we will not know how many at-large positions will be needed until after the regional houses of delegates elections.

**Minority:** If current membership percentages hold on Jan. 15, 2011, it is possible but unlikely that we will need to elect minority at-large board members due to the present number of minority board members with unexpired terms.

**Supervisory:** The term of the current at-large supervisory board member expires July 14, 2012, so no election will be needed.

Based on all of the above calculations, we have included a nomination form for the ESP and minority positions. If required, those elections will be held at the 2011 House of Delegates on April 16, and individu-

als elected will serve from July 15, 2011, through July 14, 2013. If you are interested in running, please complete and return the form below.

TSTA Policy EP-6 stipulates that all nomination forms must be submitted by the deadline adopted by the board (see below). The form can be delivered by any means that provides verifiable evidence that 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 send a packet detailing board members' responsibilities to each person who files a nomination form. The packet will contain a form stating that the candidate has read the packet and will accept the responsibilities if elected; each candidate must sign and return the form 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:

**Thursday, March 24:** Deadline for receipt of nomination form

**Monday, March 28:** Deadline for receipt of candidate flyer (for inclusion in delegate packets)

**Friday, April 8 at 4:45 p.m. CDT:** Deadline for candidate statement/late nomination form (for candidate's name to appear on ballot)

**Saturday, April 16:** Election at the TSTA State House of Delegates

**Saturday, April 16:** Runoff election, if necessary, at the TSTA State House of Delegates

### QUALIFICATIONS

Candidates must:

- 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
- 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-delivering, 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 carolm@tsta.org. For questions regarding the election, call (877) ASK-TSTA, ext. 1510, or email carolm@tsta.org.

NOMINATION FORM

TSTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS AT-LARGE POSITIONS

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

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

(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 24, 2011**, by TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance. Send to: TSTA, Organizing Center for Executive and Governance, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701; or email to carolm@tsta.org or fax to (512) 486-7053.

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

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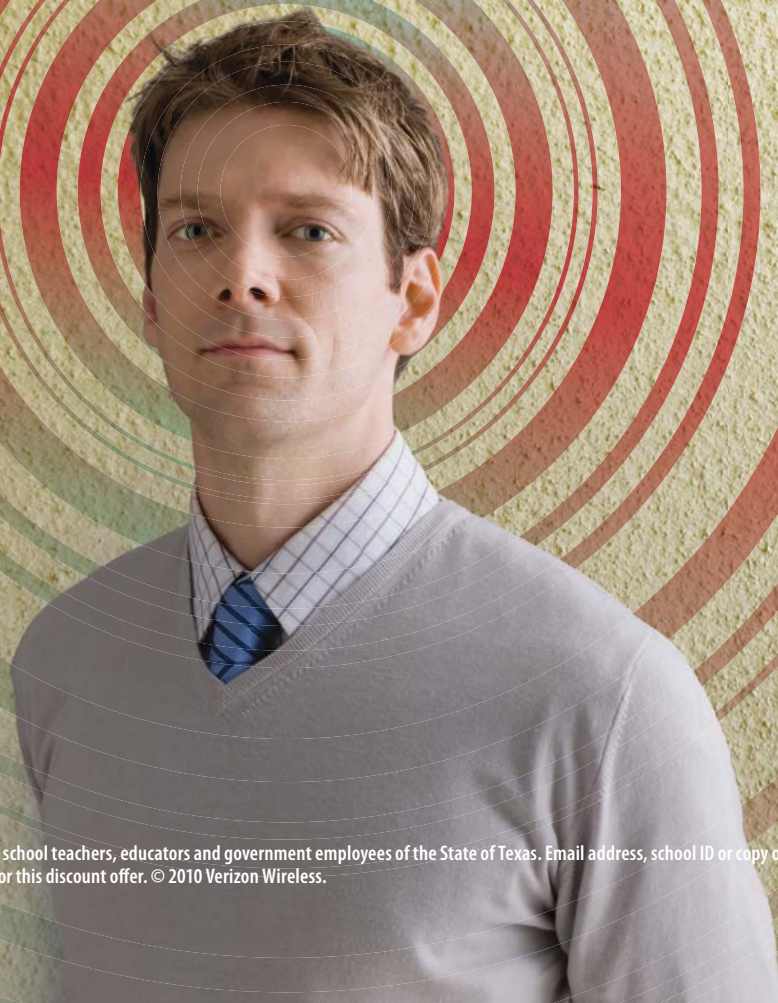


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