

Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

Fall 2011

Taking it local

The state pushes the fight for the future of public education to the local level. We're ready.

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LOCAL ACTIVISM

Three local associations make gains despite budget cuts.

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50 years in the classroom?

Paul Foerster says he was hooked on that 'ah-haa' moment.

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TELL US YOUR STORIES

How did you help a struggling student succeed? The public needs to hear about the good things happening in school.

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New challenges, opportunities...

The beginning of another school year is the perfect time to commend all educators in the public schools for the work that you do, for making a positive difference in children's lives. **By Rita Haecker, TSTA President**



next two years also gave local school boards the authority to create a "Pandora's Box" of potential trouble for teachers and other school employees.

Thanks to Senate Bill 8, which passed during a special session in June, districts now have more control over your salaries and working conditions. They can order you to take furloughs, reduce your class preparation time, cut your pay, and even fire you with little opportunity for recourse.

It is extremely important for teachers and ESPs to become engaged with their local school boards and active in the election campaigns that determine who the board members are.

TSTA is here to help you do that. As a TSTA member, you do not need to feel outnumbered or overpowered. We offer educators in your school district the opportunity to join together in a single, strong advocacy organization.

If you are a TSTA member who hasn't already renewed his or her membership for the new school year, please do so now. If you are not a TSTA member, please join us.

TSTA is big enough and strong enough to bring policy changes benefitting educators and students to the table and to fight policy proposals that would have a negative impact on your livelihood or weaken the educational opportunities afforded your students.

We are big enough and strong enough to recruit pro-education candidates for your school board, help them win election, and then hold their feet to the fire.

TSTA also offers other member benefits, including assistance with employment grievances and assistance from a staff of attorneys ready to take your calls on a toll-free hotline.

TSTA is an affiliate of the 3.2 million-member National Education Association and its strong network of educational and political resources.

There is strength in numbers. Let TSTA help you exercise it.



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School connectedness is the belief by students that adults and peers in their school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

26 TSTA State Convention Delegate Elections

The TSTA Convention is April 20-21 in Dallas. If you would like to be a retired delegate or you qualify to seek election as a cluster delegate, see this section for forms.

28 National Delegate Elections

The NEA Representative Assembly will be in Washington, D.C., next summer. Here you'll find a request form for local cluster elections, and state and retired delegate nomination forms.

Advocate

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PRESIDENT
Rita Haecker

VICE PRESIDENT
Noel Candelaria

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Richard Kouri

DIRECTOR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Ed Martin

EDITOR
Debbie Mohondro

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST
Clay Robison

PRODUCTION TECHNICIAN
Susan Martin

ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER
Leann Kloesel

ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY
Claire Moore

SECRETARY/ADVERTISING
Vacant



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NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
316 West 12th St., Austin, Texas 78701
www.tsta.org • (877) ASK-TSTA

1 CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!

The new www.tsta.org is here. Please check in frequently for education and association news, and sign up for the Briefing electronic newsletter while you're there. A few pointers on the new website:

- If you can't find what you're looking for, mouse over the extensive drop-down menu. If you still can't find it, use our new, improved search feature.
- News about local associations, legal, member benefits, and affiliates (TSTA-Student Program, TSTA-Retired, and Texas Faculty Association) can be found in the "For Members" section.
- Legislative news is now called "Issues & Action."
- Education News has not changed names, but the link is now www.tsta.org/news-center/education-news, for those of you who had it bookmarked.

If you have a local association win, event, or program you'd like us to feature on our website, please email the details and a high-resolution photo (in other words, not one taken with your phone) to debbiem@tsta.org.



2 HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Much of this issue of the Advocate is about the changes we must bring about in state and local government to restore respect for public education employees. Your involvement is central to that change. Go ask five people to join your local association. Up your contribution to TSTA-Political Action Committee. Get involved in campaigns in your community. Step up when a leadership position opens in your local. It's going to take all of us, pulling together, but as Executive Director Richard Kouri says on page 12, "The stakes are high, but I know that we are up to the task."



3 WHAT DID YOUR TSTA LEADERS DO THIS SUMMER?

They were busy signing up members, working with local leaders, and representing you at the NEA Annual Meeting.

Shown here are TSTA President Rita Haecker, visiting with NEA Executive Committee member Princess Moss at the NEA Representative Assembly; TSTA Board of Directors members Bobby Lerma and Jeannette Garcia-Avila raising money for TSTA-PAC, our political action committee; and Vice President Noel Candelaria recruiting a member in Amarillo.

4 HONOR SOMEONE IN THE MEDIA OR YOUR COMMUNITY

Each year, through our awards programs, TSTA recognizes teachers, educational support professionals, and individuals outside the field of education who support public education in their communities. Know someone deserving of an award?

Detailed information, instructions, and nomination forms are at www.tsta.org/news-center/awards-grants or call the Center for Executive and Governance or the Center for Public Affairs at 877-ASK-TSTA.

Our Schools, and Our Members." The Women's Leadership Training and Minority Leadership Training Conference are Jan. 18-20 at the same site. You'll find details at www.nea.org/wrlc starting in late October.

6 WE'RE LOOKING FOR SUCCESS STORIES

We know educators are not inclined to pat themselves on the back. You and your colleagues work miracles every day, but no one ever hears about it. Everyone has at least one story of a student whose life was turned

around by someone who cared about them at school — a teacher, a bus driver, a counselor, or other staff member. The public needs to hear those stories. If you would like to share a story about how you or a colleague helped turn a student's life around, please contact debbiem@tsta.org or clayr@tsta.org. We'd love to hear from you.

7 REPRESENTING YOU ON RESOLUTIONS

At NEA's annual meeting in July, the Texas Caucus re-elected Winifred Jackson of

Longview and elected Barbara Davis-Staley of Tyler and Robert Fierro of El Paso to the NEA Resolutions Committee.

The Resolutions Committee prepares and presents to the NEA Representative Assembly resolutions proposed for adoption.

8 LOW-COST INTERNET FOR YOUR STUDENTS

Comcast's Internet Essentials program offers internet service to students and their families for \$9.95 a month plus tax; an opportunity to buy a computer at initial enrollment for \$149.99 + tax; and free internet training online, in print, and in person. For details, visit www.internetessentials.com or www.internetbasico.com in Spanish.

9 LIVE FEARLESSLY

That's the theme of the Texas Conference for Women, cosponsored by TSTA on Nov. 17 in Houston. Expect community and connection, information and inspiration, motivation and momentum. www.txconferenceforwomen.org

5 WESTERN REGION LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The Western Region Leadership Conference is Jan. 20-22 at the Renaissance Oklahoma City Hotel, with the theme "NEA Leaders: Standing Strong for Our Students,



10 TSTA ON MSNBC

In comments picked up by MSNBC, TSTA President Rita Haecker said in September that Gov. Rick Perry is "all hair and no cattle" when it comes to education policy, warning that Perry's under-funding of public schools and universities "undermines Texas' ability to adequately prepare young people for the jobs that will make or break the state's future."

- news release: www.tsta.org/sites/default/files/Perry-starving-public-education.pdf
- video: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/44367288#44367288

Turning respect for educators into votes

**TSTA Director for Public Affairs
Ed Martin, Sept. 13, 2011**

“Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.”
—President Franklin D. Roosevelt

President Roosevelt was not the first to observe that nothing is more essential to our democracy and our freedom than education. Thomas Jefferson once wrote that “if a nation expects to be ignorant and free...it expects what never was and never will be.”

From the first day a teacher walks into the classroom, she is on the front line of the battle to safeguard an informed democracy.

From the first time a teacher gives up an evening or a weekend to grade papers or prepare lesson plans, he is on the front line of the fight to provide students the skills and the knowledge needed to meet the responsibilities that come with a job and a family.

There is no more important profession than teaching.

Without citizens who have the ability to think critically, our democracy suffers.

Without the skilled workers needed to compete globally, our economy suffers.

Without a healthy respect for teachers who seek and transmit knowledge, future generations will suffer.

Unfortunately, in the current political climate, too many decision makers seem to care only about the next elec-

tion and appeasing those who shout their ideology the loudest.

How else can one explain cutting \$5.4 billion from schools while leaving \$6 billion in a “Rainy Day Fund” savings account that will grow even larger during the next two years?

How else can one explain rejecting solid science and rewriting history to suit an extreme political agenda?

Elections do have consequences, but together, we can teach politicians who may be struggling with their responsibilities a lesson about discipline and respect, but only if we organize.

Thomas Jefferson also said: “All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent.”

We cannot afford to remain silent when the enemies of education are shouting loudly.

Almost every voter remembers a teacher who made a difference in his or her life, and when a teacher sees a former student who says “I’m doing well” and “thank you,” the essential value of the profession is tangible and rewarding.

We want voters to hear your stories about your struggling students who turned things around and succeeded. Those real stories can serve as a very effective reminder about why voters respect educators and support our public schools, and we welcome you to send them to us at debbiem@tsta.org or clayr@tsta.org.

Working together, we can turn public respect for educators into votes at the polls, in the Legislature and on local school boards. For the sake of our democracy, we can afford to do no less.

Too much testing

**State Board of Education Member
Thomas Ratliff, Sept. 12, 2011**

In the fourth week of this academic year, I would like to borrow and tweak a quote from Shakespeare’s Hamlet to describe what is happening in public schools all over Texas, “The State Doth Test Too Much, Methinks.”

Educators and school board members across the state are becoming painfully aware of how much testing the Texas Legislature has inflicted on our local schools and our children.

Did you know, this year our public schools will spend almost one out of every five days conducting tests for the State of Texas? Yes, that’s right, an average of almost one day a week, or nearly 20% of the school year. According to the Texas Education Agency, Texas public schools will spend 34 days out of the 185 day long school year conducting tests mandated by state government, an average of four days per student. Keep in mind; this figure doesn’t include the number of days spent taking other tests (six-weeks tests, weekly quizzes, semester exams) or getting students ready to take the state’s tests. Due to the high stakes nature of these tests, schools spend extra time getting their students ready to take the test by working on testing strategies, and other things that take away from learning the material. I think this is over the top.

We have all heard politicians talk about wanting government to run like a business. If a business had its employees take 20% of their time to fill out government reports about how they are doing their job, that business wouldn’t be around very long. It’s not productive and adds little value. As the old saying goes, “A cow doesn’t get heavier the more you weigh it.”

To put a dollar figure on this problem, consider this. Texas spends \$44 billion per year on public education. Of that, almost \$1 billion is spent on testing days, just for the state. If you are looking for ways to make public education more efficient, this seems like a good place to start.

To be clear, I support accountability. Should there be some general measure of how our public schools compare to one another? Absolutely. But I also believe the State of Texas should be accountable to the parents of public school students and explain why we must endure so much TESTING at the expense of LEARNING.

What these figures tell me is very simple. The Texas Legislature doesn’t truly believe in the term “Independent” School District. The Texas Legislature apparently believes that if THE STATE doesn’t test the kids, NOBODY will. I couldn’t disagree more. I believe in our local schools and trust them to do what’s best for their students. We don’t need more mandates or rules from Austin or Washington. We need less.

There was a day when the Texas Legislature set the standard of student expectations and left the rest up to the local school districts to get the students to meet or exceed that standard. But just like the days of Shakespeare, those days are long gone.

Obama’s job plans for Texas

**TSTA Public Affairs Specialist
Clay Robison, Sept. 9, 2011**

President Obama’s jobs proposal would pay for as many as 39,500 educator and first responder jobs in Texas and provide additional funding for school

renovation and community college modernization, which would create thousands of additional jobs, according to an analysis distributed to Congress.

The potential numbers clearly dispute the political blah-blah issued by presidential wannabe Rick Perry after the president’s speech.

“This proposal offers little hope for millions of Americans who have lost jobs on his (Obama’s) watch and taxpayers who are rightly concerned that their children will inherit a mountain of debt,” Perry said.

Perry, as we in Texas already know, is killing education jobs — thousands of them — with a new state budget that slashes education funding. Obama, meanwhile, is proposing the creation of thousands of jobs for educators and other working Texans.

Here are some details, according to information given to Congress:

- More than \$2.5 billion to Texas to support as many as 39,500 educator and first responder jobs.
- More than \$2.3 billion to Texas for improving classrooms and upgrading public schools. This funding would support as many as 30,300 additional jobs.
- More than \$458 million in funding to modernize community colleges in Texas.
- Other steps to create thousands of additional infrastructure jobs and help 329,000 long-term unemployed workers, including teachers, in Texas get back to work.

- Tax cuts for millions of working Texans, including teachers, who are fortunate enough to have jobs.

What about that “mountain of debt” that Perry says that Texans are worried about their children inheriting?

Most unemployed and under-employed Texans are more worried about the mountains of personal debt they and their families are accumulating while political naysayers continue to play rhetorical games, both in Congress and on the GOP presidential trail.

Texas’ Pinocchio budget writers

**TSTA Public Affairs Specialist
Clay Robison, Sept. 1, 2011**

In the interest of politeness, I am reluctant to use the word, “lie.” But if state leaders continue to deny that they slashed \$5.4 billion from the public education budget, which took effect Sept. 1, their noses soon will stretch from Austin to El Paso. The numbers in the worst public education budget that Texas has seen in Gov. Perry’s lifetime are indefensible.

The article linked below regurgitates a couple of recent untruthful statements by Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and a Perry spokeswoman, and they doubtlessly are being repeated with annoying regularity.

“We tightened the belt on administration. We reduced some of the spending for the Texas Education Agency, but we put more money in the classroom, because we know good teachers are the key,” Dewhurst recently told an audience in Houston.

Bull-corn.

The relevant test here is whether the governor and the Legislature enacted a public education budget that fully

funded the state's school finance requirements, including an anticipated enrollment growth of 170,000 over the next two years. They flunked miserably.

More money in the classroom? Not when teachers are losing their jobs, and class sizes are growing.

For the first time in more than 60 years, the public education budget fails to fund the state's financial obligations to districts and meet enrollment growth. That failure is a \$4 billion shortfall. Additionally, the budget cuts \$1.4 billion from education grants for such important programs as full-day, pre-kindergarten and dropout prevention.

The total is a \$5.4 billion cut, all the ridiculous revisionism to the contrary.

Paul Colbert, a school finance guru and former legislator, says state leaders who talk about increasing funding to schools "are being conservative with the truth."

Colbert is too kind. They are throwing truth out the window. <http://bit.ly/oMdNuy>

When does corporate assistance become meddling?

**TSTA Public Affairs Specialist
Clay Robison, August 26, 2011**

Businesses have been contributing money to public schools for a long time, and in most cases the financial help has been put to good use. But in recent years, with legislators in Texas and other states cutting back on school aid, a new pattern of corporate giving has been emerging.

According to an article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, linked below, corporate donors have started writing

curricula for schools, designing and teaching classes, and training principals.

The story cites several examples, including IBM's involvement in opening an inner-city public high school to prepare young people for entry-level technology jobs, possibly at IBM.

Many budget-strapped educators are welcoming this privatization of the public schools, but others are worried about what kinds of strings are attached and the ultimate effect on the role of public education.

Susan Linn, director of Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, a Boston advocacy nonprofit, is concerned that some of these public-private partnerships will benefit sponsoring companies more than the schools and their students.

"It gets down to an ancient debate about what the purpose of education is," Linn said. "Is it to create a literate population who can think critically... or to train a workforce?"

Some would argue the purpose of education is to accomplish both goals, but corporate money and its potential strings also raise other questions.

If bankers begin helping schools draft curricula for money management classes, what will they want students to learn about the role the banking industry played in the recent financial meltdown? Will they want them to learn anything about it at all? What will oil company sponsors want science students to learn about global warming? Will they demand it be omitted from a public school's curriculum?

Corporate intrusion into the classroom, regardless how well-intended, is full of potential problems, although it obviously is very tempting for many educators. <http://bit.ly/rm7TyQ>

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What's ahead?

We've had many changes in recent months — both in Texas public education and in TSTA leadership.

At the state convention this year, Rita Haecker won a second term as TSTA state president, and Noel Candelaria, president of Ysleta Teachers Association (El Paso), was elected vice president. Their terms began July 15.

Richard Kouri, TSTA's assistant executive director for public affairs, moved up to executive director on Sept. 1, succeeding E.C. Walker, who retired after 11 years. Kouri was state TSTA president and vice president from 1989-93, and president of Austin Association of Teachers (now Education Austin) before joining the TSTA staff.

TSTA's new director of public affairs is Ed Martin, a longtime political and public affairs strategist in Austin, former legislative chief of staff, and former executive director of the Texas Democratic Party. He started Sept. 1.

Another recent addition to the management team is Patrick Harvey, who was a community and field organizer and coalition-builder in Illinois and Missouri, most recently serving as director of field services and organizing for Missouri NEA. He is TSTA's new director of affiliate and leadership development.

We asked TSTA's new leaders what they believe this school year will hold for the state of Texas, and what changes members might expect to see in the association.



"We have a whole different landscape in public education in this state. The Legislature set that pace for us. The state's pretty much relinquished their responsibility for schools to the local school districts — not just on the budgetary issue, which is shameful, but due process and teacher contracts and minimum pay scales. That was never in their purview, but now it is.

"As a result, our locals must be prepared and knowledgeable and have the skills they need to impact decisions at the school district level. We will be spending more time this year mentoring, supporting, and coaching our local members on what they need to do to bring change.

"We are under attack, not just here but on a national level. In the legislative session, there were external groups working to change public education in Texas, and they were successful. And those groups are still out there; our locals are going to encounter them in their own communities.

"Our local leaders will have a double job this year — to grow their own capacity in their organization and to influence the outside circle that influences the school district. It's a new world for them.

"Another focus this year is on preparing the next generation of leaders. TSTA has grown significantly in the number of members we have who are under the age

of 35. We have to increase their participation. We must prepare them to lead and learn how best to interact with them; this will be a big

focus for both me and Noel this year. This group's future in the classroom is going to be very different."

— Rita Haecker



in the schools is really on them.

"One of the challenges we're going to be facing is not only for locals to communicate more with their members but also to think about how they communicate. Part of my role will be helping the local leadership identify various sources of communication, whether it's using social media or other forms of communication, to help them reach as many of their members as possible.

"We have to get members to be more active and more involved. That's one of the biggest things I'll be working on this year, is helping locals meet their communication potential.

"With communication comes the mo-

bilization we need to impact decisions made at the local school board level and to impact the next election cycle.

"In my local association, the most successful tools we used were email messaging and online e-newsletters. As soon as something new came out from Austin, my members had it within an hour of it happening. We also used Facebook and Twitter to let members know what was happening at local school board meetings — real-time updates. Communicating real time with our members is going to be critical. Also having live links they can click on to support what we're working on."

— Noel Candelaria

"I am fortunate to be following an executive director who leaves TSTA well-positioned at the forefront of the fight for the future of public education in Texas.

"TSTA has been fighting to improve public education for 131 years, but the stakes are higher than ever. The next three years may very well determine if public education will survive.

"Will public schools have the money to con-

tinue to operate? Will they have the freedom to prepare our students to compete in the global workplace, not just pass standardized tests?

"We must help our fellow educators and the parents of our students understand how important the next elections really are — and encourage them to become active in the fight. The stakes are high, but I know that we are up to the task."

—Richard Kouri



"Since 2006, the legislative majority has enacted policies that pass the buck and attempt to place the blame for a school funding crisis on local school districts. However, in 2011, the blame game escalated into an unprecedented assault on

public education, as the state of Texas failed to meet its basic funding obligations for student enrollment for the first time since the school finance system was put in place in 1949.

"School funding formulas were shortchanged \$4 billion and \$1.4 billion in Texas Education Agency grants for things like pre-K programs were slashed, as the Governor and legislative majority chose to

balance the state budget on the backs of students, teachers, and local taxpayers.

"When the state pushes the battle down to the local level, we have to engage there, too. Our Public Affairs team will put a greater emphasis on school board races this year, as well as local legislative races, highlighting the impact that anti-education policies have on local schools and communities. We'll be working with our field staff and our locals to bring these stories home to the majority of voters who oppose cuts in public education.

"We are in a battle for the future of our public schools. We didn't start this battle, but for the sake of our students and our future, we'll fight to win."

— Ed Martin



We are in a battle for the future of our public schools. We didn't start this battle, but for the sake of our students and our future, we'll fight to win.

"You're going to see much more emphasis on your local association and your school district this year. Even the policy issues we usually think of as being disconnected from the local school district and taking place in Austin will be debated and organized around in the local.

"You're going to see a higher activity level in the buildings. We'll be strengthening our already strong association representative network — our building rep network.

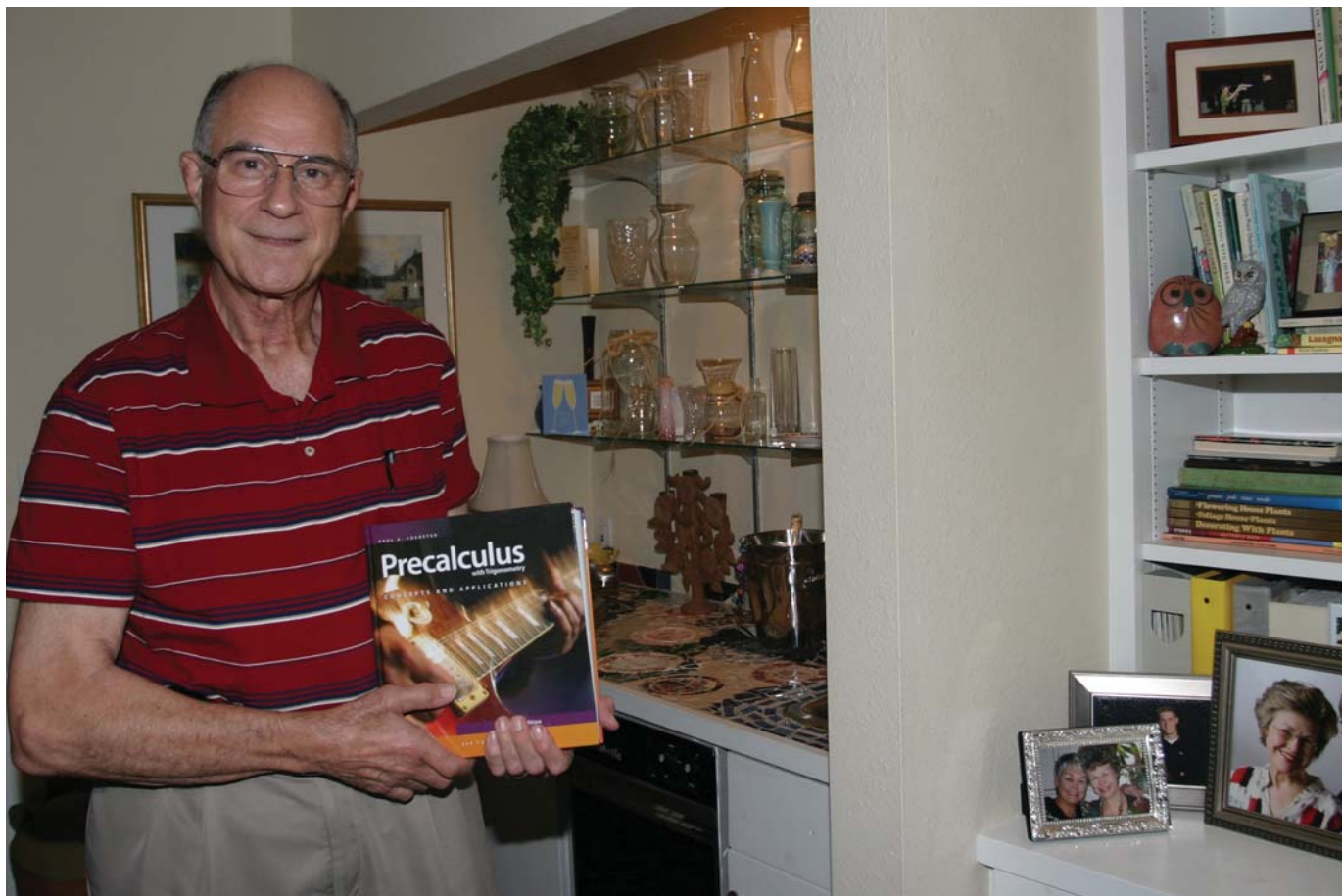
"You'll see a more engaged, more excited, and in a lot of ways, even better trained building rep in your building.

"And you'll be called upon to be even more active yourself — as an individual member, with the state association, and with your local association — in standing up for educators' rights in an environment where those rights are under attack.

"We see that as a fight that's going to take place school by school, classroom by classroom, school district by school district, so it's going to be a lot closer and a lot more visible to the average member than it's ever been before."

—Patrick Harvey





Shedding students' fear of numbers for 50 years

John F. Kennedy was president, Vietnam was still a relatively obscure, faraway place, the Cold War was hot, and the computer was a futuristic novelty when Paul Foerster applied for a teaching job at Alamo Heights High School in San Antonio. **By Clay Robison**

It was 1961, and Foerster, fresh from a four-year stint in the U.S. Navy, where he had worked in the nuclear propulsion program with the famed Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, wanted to teach chemistry. But Alamo Heights needed a math teacher, so he took that job.

And, he stayed a while.

Fifty years, several principals, and an estimated 6,000 students

later, the job ended only last spring when Foerster, now 76, retired. If his half century at one campus isn't a record for a public schoolteacher, it undoubtedly is close.

Much, of course, changed in the classroom during his distinguished career. Calculators, for example, began to provide math students with shortcuts that weren't available in 1961. But the concepts of algebra, trigonometry, pre-calculus, and

calculus — Foerster's specialties — remained essentially unchanged. And, the veteran educator never lost his appreciation of his favorite thing about teaching — the light-bulb expression on a student's face the moment that a concept or a lesson he was explaining hit home.

"That ah-haa moment," he said.

Early on, he also learned something else that served him well in the classroom: "Take your students seriously and take yourself with a grain of salt."

Foerster, a TSTA member who also is a nationally renowned author of mathematics textbooks, believes each of his many students was a "unique individual." Often, he said, the most important thing they gained from his instruction was "shedding their fear of numbers."

Several hundred of his former pupils honored him last spring at a reception at the high school. They represented varying degrees of mathematical ability, but each had high regard for their former mentor.

"Mr. Foerster never assumed that girls couldn't do math," recalled Jan Preston, a 1973 Alamo Heights graduate who participated in math competitions and would become one of the first women to earn a degree in mechanical engineering from Rice University.

She now is deputy director of the National Biodefense Analysis and Countermeasures Center, part of the Department of Homeland Security, in Frederick, Md.

Linda Duffy, a 1976 graduate, struggled in Foerster's class but persevered and now is a special education teacher at

the Alamo Heights ISD's Howard Early Childhood Center, only a few blocks from the high school. She has been teaching special education for 31 years and has won several awards, including Texas Teacher of the Year.

As a new teacher some years ago, Duffy was surprised when Foerster would regularly introduce her to colleagues as "one of my best students." She assumed he had mistaken her for someone else.

The veteran educator never lost his appreciation of his favorite thing about teaching — the light-bulb expression on a student's face the moment that a concept or a lesson he was explaining hit home. "That ah-haa moment," he said.

"Do you remember I made a 'D' in your class?" she finally asked him one day.

"Yes, I remember that," he replied. "You were one of my best students because you never gave up."

San Antonio restaurateur Cappy Lawton entered Alamo Heights as a freshman the same year that Foerster first arrived on campus.

"We all thought he was very smart and a little nerdy. We called him Tall Paul," Lawton said. "For the next four years, I was his nemesis."

Eventually, though, Foerster convinced him to quit bucking the system.

Foerster kept his Alamo Heights yearbooks and regularly attends class reunions — after first pulling out the appropriate yearbook and doing a little memory-jogging research.

Some of his better-known former students include Texas House Speaker Joe Straus (an Algebra II student), U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Edith Holland Jones of Houston, and Cecelia Burke, former Travis County tax assessor-collector.

Burke said she did better in math after Foerster helped get her switched from a morning to an afternoon class.

"I'm not awake in the mornings," she told the teacher.

Years later, after she was first elected tax collector and started handling hundreds of millions of dollars in receipts each year, Foerster jokingly asked Burke, "Who does the math in your office?"

Another former student is Foerster's wife, Peggy, a 1963 graduate who was the only girl (among 10 boys) in the first calculus class that he taught. As far as he knows, it was the first calculus class to be taught in a public high school in San Antonio.

Foerster and Peggy, who later taught English at Alamo Heights, both lost their first spouses to cancer. They got reacquainted at a class reunion, married in 1994 and now live only a few blocks from the high school.

Foerster started teaching the children of former students as early as 1981. In recent years, he typically had as many as eight or more offspring of former

students in his classes. He also taught at least two grandchildren of former students.

The future teacher was born in Birmingham, England, where his father, A.W. Foerster, worked for an American tool manufacturing company. He received much of his early, formal education, including a healthy exposure to mathematics, in England.

“You grew up with it,” he recalled.

Foerster graduated from high school in Floresville, south of San Antonio. He was so advanced in his studies that he graduated just before he turned 16, two years earlier than other students his age.

He earned a chemical engineering degree from the University of Texas at Austin, where he also completed the Navy ROTC program. He served four years in the Navy, three of them with Rickover, the “Father of the Nuclear Navy.” As an engineering duty officer in Washington, Foerster was involved in the design, construction, and testing of nuclear-powered submarines.

On the side, he also started tutoring students to make extra money to purchase tools for a home workshop, and, pretty soon, he was hooked by that “ah-haa moment.”

He left the Navy, took some education courses at Texas A&M University and signed on to teach high school math at Alamo Heights in the fall of 1961. Except for the 1966-67 school year, when Foerster took a leave to get a master’s degree in math from UT-Austin, that is where he stayed for two generations.

Despite his long tenure at the same school, he never served as chairman of the math department.

“I studiously avoided everything that

smacked of administration,” he explained.

But other teachers, as well as his students, learned from him, said Susan Thomas, who taught math with Foerster at Alamo Heights for more than 30 years.

“He is nationally known and revered for what he has done for math education,” she said.

His “true gift of teaching” and his “innovative curriculum,” including “Tarzan swinging on a rope” math problems, kept students engaged and colleagues in awe, she added.

In 1983, Foerster received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math Teaching from President Reagan at a ceremony in the White House. There were two honorees, one in science and one in math, from each state.

Foerster would wheel around the classroom in a desk chair, giving students individual instruction, and keep them alert with witticisms that became known as “Foersterisms.” An example: “In my classroom, if you come in late you’d better be panting.”

In 1983, Foerster received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math Teaching from President Reagan at a ceremony in the White House. There were two honorees, one in science and one in math, from each state.

Foerster is the author of five textbooks — on Algebra I, Algebra II, trigonometry,

pre-calculus, and calculus — used in the public schools. Each has been reissued in multiple editions.

The books grew out of his practice of writing his own problems for his students after finding that “typical problems in (other) math books were not how problems were solved in the real world.”

Over the years, slightly more than one million copies of his books have been sold.

“Now, how many students have actually read them, I don’t know,” he grinned.

Foerster has three children, all graduates of Alamo Heights High School. His daughter, Jill Clark, teaches first grade at Hill Elementary School in Austin.

The veteran educator prefers to call his departure from the classroom his “graduation,” rather than retirement, and intends to remain busy. He will continue updating his textbooks and speak to professional groups, as long as he feels he is current in mathematical and educational developments.

During this summer alone, he spoke to a National Council of Teachers of Mathematics workshop in Orlando, Fla., and addressed calculus teachers at the Annual Advanced Placement Conference in San Francisco.

He also will work on getting certified as a master gardener.

Will he miss the classroom?

“Ask me later. Right now, it still seems like summer vacation,” Foerster said during an interview shortly before returning faculty were to have their first meeting of the new semester.

“That’s when things will start to soak in. Hey, I’m not going to be teaching this year.”

When **texting** in class is a good thing

How can you use mobile phone technology to change the way your students learn?



To teach the concept of summarization to his seventh graders, McAnear compared it to texting. “If you are texting to your friend what happened at the mall or what ‘so-and-so’ wore to school, you do not recount every intricate detail, you summarize. Within the summary, there is a mention of what happened in the beginning, middle, and end (BME).”

McAnear also incorporated texting into a reading assignment. Each student texted a summary of a passage to a classmate, who translated it into grammatically correct English and forwarded it back. The original author then reviewed it and sent it to the teacher.

“This idea successfully taps into the interests, the elusive motivations, and the attitudes of adolescents. They now see learning as a process that is in their control, that meets them in the world in which they live,” McAnear said. “Just as their cell phone is an extension of their mind and will, so is learning when experienced through this medium.”

After the assignment, he reported that students performed well on test questions dealing with summary and main idea, and formative assessments and essay assignments markedly improved.

His ultimate goal, he said, is to help students understand that “learning” is not just what happens at school but rather a constant internal process.

See more of the NEA Foundation’s innovative work and grant opportunities at www.neafoundation.org.

Lubbock teacher Keith McAnear’s answer to that question won him \$1,000 in the C2i: Challenge to Innovate, a collaboration of the NEA Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Consortium for School Networking.

The Foundation wanted to see innovative approaches to teaching, and to

enable educators to share and build on those ideas to improve student learning. “The use of mobile phone technologies provides an incredible opportunity for educators and students to learn in new and different ways,” the Foundation website said. “The cell phone’s usefulness and utility include everything from data collection to student engagement.”



Members pack the board room: Donna TSTA/NEA officers, wearing blue shirts, are Treasurer Jeannette Garcia-Avila, President Linda L. Estrada, and Vice President Irene Portillo.

Local activism: why it matters

TSTA members proved the value of local activism in August in at least three locations.

Donna TSTA/NEA members packed the board room in August. “We were there to speak on behalf of the employees, trying to reinstate five local sick days that we lost with the restructuring plan approved in March,” President Linda Estrada said. “This plan was based on the shortfall we would experience due to the state not funding public education. We decided to fight for what we lost, especially since they were hiring new people and giving out raises to certain employees.” The board reinstated five contract days and five local days, increased the budget for substitutes, and rehired library aides.

In Laredo ISD, all employees will get a salary increase this year. A reporter asked TSTA President Rita Haecker how local

members did it, given the budget cuts that are happening across the state. “We do have a very strong team of leaders in our local that speak up for their members and employees, and they really understand during these economic times that we’re going through as a state and a country that people that don’t get paid very much to begin with, working in public schools, don’t deserve to have a big whack in their budget,” Haecker responded.

In San Marcos, local TSTA officers attending the school district’s open budget workshops this summer discovered extra money in the budget. Urged by the local to “give back to employees,” the board agreed to give all employees a \$500 stipend in their November paycheck.



NEA CHIEF FLIES IN FOR DUNCAN TRIBUTE

NEA Executive Director John Wilson flew to Midland from Washington, D.C., this summer to pay tribute to John and Bobbie Duncan. Together, the couple logged 79 years in the teaching profession.

John worked 17 years in the oil industry before beginning his teaching career. He taught 36 years at Austin and Blanton Elementary Schools in Ector County ISD, while also serving as a football, baseball, and basketball official.

“His greatest contribution to the field of teaching, next to his devotion to his students, was his service in TSTA, where he stood out as a beacon for others to follow,” Ector County TSTA/NEA President Sharyn Smith said.

“A member for over 30 years, he served in a multitude of valued positions, including regional president, treasurer, and delegate. His incalculable wisdom and never-ending compassion for teaching drove him to serve over 25 years in the TSTA House of Delegates and 20 years

in the NEA Representative Assembly, where both his Texas work ethic and vast experience were utilized extensively to improve the field of teaching for Texas educators across the state,” she said.

Bobbie taught 43 years, all but one in Ector County ISD. She taught third and fifth graders for 17 years, then worked the rest of her career with homebound students who could not attend regular classes for medical reasons.

“Bobbie was instrumental in the formation and supervision of the Ector County ISD Sick Leave Bank that allows teachers to donate their unused sick days to other teachers who are suffering catastrophic illnesses, helping countless teachers economically in their time of crisis,” Smith said. “She also was a prominent leader in convincing the ECISD school board to implement site-based decision making workshops via an NEA grant, before the Texas Legislature required it for all districts.”

Bobbie served as the local TSTA/NEA president twice; as TSTA region secretary and president; and on the TSTA Board of Directors for six years. She

was on the NEA Resolutions Committee four years and the NEA Board of Directors six years. While on the NEA Board, she was elected to the Internal Concerns Committee of the Board, and in 1993 she was elected to be a delegate to the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession and the chartering of Education International in Stockholm, Sweden. This summer she will attend her 42nd NEA Representative Assembly, as an elected delegate for the 40th time.

In 2002, the Heritage of Odessa Foundation awarded its Community Service Award in the Field of Education to Bobbie. She is politically active and has served on the National Democratic Party Platform Committee and as a delegate to the 1992 Democratic Convention. Bobbie is currently the Ector County Democratic Party chairperson.

“The Duncans’ devotion to countless children and teachers is truly an inspiration to those whose lives were touched and to those seeking to enter the teaching field,” Smith said.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Joy Killough of Round Rock is a finalist in the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching program, which recognizes seventh through twelfth-grade mathematics and science teachers whose innovative methods bring teaching to life in the classroom.

Larry Horton was nominated by his AP Spanish students for the Claes Nobel Educator of Distinction Award for two years in a row. Each year students who are members of the National Society of High School Scholars may nominate a teacher who has influenced their lives. “It is a great honor to be recognized by the students in your class and to receive an award for the hard work that we share together,” Horton said.



NEWS FROM TSTA-RETIRED

OFFICERS: TSTA-Retired officers for 2011-2012 are President Johnetta Williams, Dallas; Vice President Jay-Ann Rucker, El Paso; Secretary Paul Haupt, El Paso; Treasurer Jo Ann Peschel, Houston; and Immediate Past President Letha Grace McCoy, Burleson.

MEETING: The NEA-Retired Annual Meeting was held at the Swissotel in Chicago June 26-28, featuring a variety of workshops, speakers, a business session, and intergenerational activity through Outreach to Teach (see related article).

Elections were conducted for NEA-Retired president and representatives to the NEA Board of Directors and NEA Resolutions Committee. Tom Curran of Maine was elected president, leaving the vice president position vacant. John

Jensen of Nebraska was elected as the new vice president.

TSTA-Retired members attending were Betty Jo Brown, Houston; Ricardo Casiano, San Antonio; and Letha Grace McCoy, Burleson. Brown and Casiano represented TSTA-Retired as voting delegates at the Annual Meeting. McCoy served on the Elections Committee.

From June 30 to July 5, 9,000 delegates from across the United States and overseas met for the NEA Representative Assembly. Betty Jo Brown and Frank Colbert Jr., served as TSTA-Retired delegates. Retired member Bobbie Duncan attended as an at-large delegate.

NOMINATIONS: Nominations are currently in order for the following TSTA-Retired positions:

- secretary for a two-year term, July 15, 2012 to 2014;
- treasurer for a two-year term, July 15, 2012 to 2014;
- at-large delegates to the 2012 TSTA House of Delegates in Dallas (no funding is provided by TSTA or TSTA-Retired); and
- delegates to the 2012 NEA Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C. (TSTA-R offers \$300 to each elected delegate in this category).

All elections will take place in March 2012. Members may nominate themselves or others, making additional copies of the form to nominate for more than one position. Remember, you must obtain written permission to nominate someone other than yourself, and a candidate must be a Retired Active Member to nominate and serve as a delegate or alternate.

All forms must be completed and returned by Jan. 17, 2012, to TSTA-Retired, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701. The form will be on the TSTA-Retired website and in the winter Advocate.

QUILT GIVEAWAY: The TSTA-Retired Board of Directors is gearing up for its first ever handmade quilt giveaway. TSTA shirts were collected and beautifully arranged with coordinating fabric. The trim is red, white, and blue; it's patriotic and a Texas theme. It uses the Texas flower, the bluebonnet, in a



field of Indian paint brush wildflowers. The quilt was made by Gail Dunham, a retired member from Burleson, and measures 77 inches by 77 inches. It will make a beautiful throw or an elegant wall hanging.

Members of the TSTA-Retired Board are eager to sell you tickets. For more information, email Letha Grace McCoy at legrbrmc@att.net or Johnetta Williams at townview@swbell.net; they'll tell you where to send your check or money order. The drawing will be in Dallas on Saturday, April 21 during the TSTA House of Delegates. You do not need to be present to win.

OUTREACH TO TEACH!

Almost 400 student and retired NEA members volunteered on June 28 to repair and refresh Charles Dawes Elemen-

tary, which serves 365 kindergarten through fifth-grade students in Evans-ton, Illinois, near Chicago. The students and educators of Dawes returned this fall to find their learning spaces painted, organized, and decorated.

Each year, the NEA-Student Program sponsors a school makeover in the vicinity of the NEA Representative Assembly. Outreach to Teach began in 1996 as a way to give back to the community hosting the Representative Assembly. The first school was in Atlanta, Georgia; since then, during the week preceding the NEA Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly, NEA-Student Program members, with support from NEA-Retired Conference attendees and other NEA members, have volunteered at schools in need of rehabilitation.

What did you do this summer?



Toured Chinese schools: David Bolster of San Antonio spent 10 days on an educational and cultural tour of China. As one of 26 recipients of the NEA Foundation's Awards for Teaching Excellence, Bolster toured schools in Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, and had a chance to observe instruction and interact with Chinese teachers and administrators.



Attended a national leadership conference: TSTA-Student Program's chapter at Lone Star College-Kingwood received an award for outstanding local excellence at the NEA Student Leadership Conference in Chicago.



Volunteered to help tornado victims: Two TSTA members from Abilene — Mark Grose, a teacher at Madison Middle School, and Beth Hamaty, a teacher at Abilene High School — went on a church mission trip in June to help the community of Joplin, Missouri, recover from the May tornado.



Recruited members at new educator orientations: Lois Stephens, Sandra Hudson, and Winifred Jackson signed up new members for the Longview Educators Association.



School Connectedness

A growing number of studies recognize the significance of protective factors to improve the well-being of our children, including helping them avoid behaviors that place them at risk for adverse educational outcomes. **By Bryan Weatherford, M.Ed.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) define protective factors as the individual or environmental characteristics that reduce the effects of stressful life events, increase a person's ability to avoid risks or hazards, and promote social and emotional competence to thrive in all aspects of life.

Protective factors may also minimize the potential harm of negative situations, such as exposure to violence.

One protective factor that is gaining prominence is school connectedness. School connectedness is the degree to which students and their families feel part of the school community. Students and families feel more connected when they believe that faculty and staff care about them and when responsibilities for effective school function are shared. School connectedness is also influenced by peer relationships within the school setting.

WHY IS SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS IMPORTANT?

Students are much more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and experience success in school when they feel connected to others in the school environment. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health looked at the impact of protective factors on adolescent health and wellness among more than 36,000 7th through 12th grade students.

The study found school connectedness to be the strongest factor for both boys and girls to decrease substance use, school absenteeism, early sexual initiation, violence, and risk of unintentional injury (e.g., drinking and driving, not wearing seat belts). In this same study, school connectedness was second in importance, after family connectedness, as a protective factor against emotional distress, disordered eating, and suicidal ideation and attempts.

Research has also demonstrated a strong relationship between school connectedness and educational outcomes, including school attendance; staying in school longer; and higher grades and classroom test scores. Furthermore, students with higher grades are significantly less likely to carry a weapon, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, or engage in other risky behaviors than students with low grades.

FACTORS THAT CAN INCREASE SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

1. Adult support

According to research by Blum and colleagues, children and adolescents' beliefs about themselves and their abilities are shaped by the extent to which they perceive that the adults in

their lives care about them and are involved in their lives. When they feel supported by important adults in their lives, they are more likely to be engaged in school and learning. This support and care is manifested when they see school staff dedicating their time, interest, attention, and emotional support to them. Students need to feel that adults care about them as

Effective classroom management is critical to establishing a positive school environment and increasing school connectedness. When classrooms are well managed, relationships among students and between teachers and students tend to be more positive, and students are self-engaged in learning.

individuals as well as about their academic achievement.

2. Belonging to a positive peer group

Students' educational outcomes are influenced by the characteristics and behaviors of their peers, such as how socially competent peer group members are or whether the peer group supports positive social behavior (e.g., engaging in school activities, completing homework assignments, helping others). A stable peer network protects students from being victimized or

bullied. It is important to remember, however, that if the norms of the peer group support socially negative behavior (e.g., bullying, graffiti), then students are less likely to be involved in school activities, and their sense of connectedness to school and achievement levels can suffer.

Strong interpersonal skills enable students to maintain healthy relationships. Students who report feeling most connected to school also report having the most friends at school and having friends from several different social groups that are integrated by race and gender. Conversely, those students who report feeling less connected to school have more friends from outside school than inside or are socially isolated, reporting few friends either inside or outside of school.

3. Commitment to education

It is important that both students and adults are committed to learning and are involved in school activities. Students' dedication to their own education is associated with the degree to which they perceive that their peers and important adults in their lives believe that school is important and act on those beliefs. Students who personally invest in school and believe that a good education is important to reach life goals spend more time on schoolwork and in school activities and have a greater sense of connectedness to school. Students who are engaged in their own education exhibit behavioral traits such as persistence, effort, sustained attention to tasks, and a higher level of preference for challenge and mastery.

School staff who are dedicated to the education of their students build a school community that allows students

to develop emotionally, socially, mentally, and academically. Committed adults engage students in learning, foster mutual respect and caring, and meet the personal learning needs of each student.

4. School environment

Connectedness is enhanced by a healthy and safe school environment and a supportive psychosocial climate. A clean and pleasant physical environment (e.g., one free from graffiti) raises expectations for safety and sets the stage for positive, respectful relationships.

This psychosocial climate is influenced by such factors as policies related to discipline (and bullying), opportunities for meaningful student participation, and teachers' classroom management practices. A harsh and punitive discipline climate can actually decrease the sense of student connectedness. A positive school environment, often called school climate, is characterized by caring and supportive interpersonal relationships; opportunities to participate in school activities and decision-making; and shared positive norms, goals, and values.

Effective classroom management is critical to establishing a positive school environment and increasing school connectedness. When classrooms are well managed, relationships among students and between teachers and students tend to be more positive, and students are self-engaged in learning. Teachers and administrators who promote mutual respect in the school and the classroom foster a sense of safety and connectedness by reducing the threat of being embarrassed or teased.

HOW CAN SCHOOLS INFLUENCE FACTORS THAT INCREASE SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS?

Six factors have been identified to help schools foster a sense of school connectedness among students and even

staff. Increasing school connectedness is a significant undertaking that requires a commitment from all stakeholders in the school community.

1. Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement; academic achievement; and staff empowerment.
2. Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children's academic and school life.
3. Provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.
4. Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.
5. Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to

meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children and adolescents.

6. Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families, and communities.

Children and adolescents are establishing patterns of behavior and making lifestyle choices that affect both their current and future health. Families, schools, and communities should work together to create an environment that facilitates healthy lifestyles for children and adolescents.

For more information on school connectedness, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/adolescenthealth/connectedness.htm.

Bryan Weatherford is TSTA's Teaching and Learning Specialist.

Risk Factors are individual or environmental characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that increase the likelihood that a negative outcome will occur.

Protective Factors are individual or environmental characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that reduce the effects of stressful life events; increase an individual's ability to avoid risks or hazards; and promote social and emotional competence to thrive in all aspects of life now and in the future.

School Connectedness is the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.

—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2009.

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TSTA state convention delegate elections

TSTA members who have no opportunity to join a local association or who belong to a local that is not eligible to elect a delegate are still eligible to seek election as a delegate through a cluster election. Contact TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance to participate in a cluster election.

This year's state convention is April 20-21, 2012, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dallas. State delegate allocations for local associations (including the Texas Faculty Association) to attend the TSTA House of Delegates are sent to local presidents the last week of January. Delegate allocations are also posted on the TSTA website.

LOCAL DELEGATES

Delegates are allocated to locals in a ratio of one (1) delegate for each fifty (50) members, or major fraction thereof, based on the local's Active Professional, Active ESP, and TSTA Life membership on January 15, 2012. However, a local may conduct their election for delegates prior to January 15

by keeping a list of delegates in the order of votes received, then reporting the top vote getters as delegates and listing the remaining vote getters as alternates. The forms for reporting local delegate elections, available online and sent to local presidents with the allocations, are due to TSTA by March 15, 2012.

CLUSTER DELEGATES

TSTA members who have no opportunity to join a local association or who belong to a local that is not eligible to elect a delegate are still eligible to seek election as a delegate to the TSTA House of Delegates through a cluster election. The member must notify the TSTA Center for Executive and

Governance of his or her interest in seeking election as a cluster delegate no later than February 22, 2012.

RETIRED DELEGATES

Retired at-large delegates are allocated to TSTA-Retired members in a ratio of one (1) delegate for each seventy-five (75) members, or major fraction thereof, on January 15, 2012. In order to run for a TSTA-R at-large delegate position, the candidate must be a member of both TSTA-R and NEA-R. Nomination forms are due to TSTA no later than January 17, 2012. Ballots for the election will be sent to members in early February. The deadline for returning ballots to TSTA is March 1, 2012.

BUDGET PLANNING

Locals and/or individual delegates may want to start planning now for travel expenses to the state convention. The hotel's nightly room rate for members in the TSTA convention room block is a flat \$149, plus taxes (currently 15%). Guests may opt to increase the room

rate \$5 per person per day to receive one food and beverage voucher (a \$15 value) per guest per day for use at any of the food outlets on the property except Five-Sixty. The hotel is offering a discounted valet parking rate of \$14/day.

QUESTIONS

Contact Anezka Carmona in the Organizing Center for Executive and Governance at 877-ASK-TSTA, extension 1514, or anezkac@tsta.org if you have questions regarding the elections.

CLUSTER ELECTION REQUEST FORM

TSTA HOUSE OF DELEGATES—APRIL 20-21, 2012

The deadline for receipt of this nomination form at TSTA's Headquarters is February 22, 2012. (This form is also available online at www.tsta.org.)

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name _____

School District _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Last 4 Digits Soc. Sec. No. _____

Check the appropriate box:

☐ There is no TSTA local in my area.

☐ My local has fewer than 50 people and is not eligible to elect a delegate.

Signature of Nominee _____

Send to: Anezka Carmona, TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance, by mail: 316 W. 12th St., Austin, TX 78701; email: anezkac@tsta.org; or fax: 512-486-7053.

RETIRED DELEGATE NOMINATION FORM

RETIRED AT-LARGE DELEGATE POSITIONS—TSTA HOUSE OF DELEGATES—APRIL 20-21, 2012

The deadline for receipt of this nomination form at TSTA's Headquarters is January 17, 2012. (This form is also available online at www.tsta.org.)

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Day Phone _____

Email _____ Last 4 Digits Soc. Sec. No. _____

ETHNIC GROUP: (Check all that apply)

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Asian ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Multi-ethnic

☐ Black ☐ Hispanic ☐ Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin) ☐ Other _____

☐ Check here if you do not want your ethnicity printed

☐ Enclosed is my biographical sketch of 25 words or less which will be sent with the ballot. (Note: If your statement exceeds 25 words, it will be cut at 25 words.)

☐ Check here if you will be a first-time delegate

Send by fax to 512-486-7043 or mail to: TSTA-Retired, 316 W. 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701

Signature of Nominee _____



National **delegate** elections

We're headed to the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C. for the 2012 NEA Representative Assembly (RA) July 2-5. Pre-RA meetings and workshops begin on June 24, and the first Texas caucus will be on June 30.

The number of Texas delegates is determined by our TSTA/NEA membership on January 15, 2012. TSTA is allocated one (1) state delegate for every 1,000 Active members, as defined in NEA Bylaws, and locals are allocated one (1) local delegate for every 150 Active members, or major fraction thereof.

MINORITY REPRESENTATION

NEA policy encourages ethnic-minority representation reflective of the ethnic make-up of the state's population. TSTA's goal is to elect at least 55% of our total delegation from among our ethnic-minority members. We rely on all of our leaders and caucuses to help recruit ethnic-minority candidates to run for delegate positions at both the state and local levels.

FUNDING & COSTS

TSTA does not fund state delegates to the NEA-RA, though they may receive a small stipend, budget permitting. A few

regions and locals provide partial funding for state or local delegates, but most do not fund delegate expenses. Candidates for NEA delegate should verify whether or not there is funding available with the state or their specific local when seeking nomination.

Delegates can plan ahead for certain expenses. The Texas delegation hotel is the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, VA. The nightly room rate is \$186 single/double occupancy, plus taxes. Thereafter the room rate increases \$20 per additional guest. Self parking is \$22/day and valet parking is \$27/day. The hotel offers a complimentary shuttle to Reagan airport and connects by tunnel to the D. C. metro.

STATE DELEGATES

NEA requires open nominations and secret ballots for all elections for state and local delegates. At the end of this article

you will find a nomination form to seek election as a state delegate to the 2012 NEA RA. An online form also is available on the TSTA website. If you would like to run for a state delegate position, please complete the form and return it to TSTA.

Each candidate on the ballot for state delegate is entitled to have his or her name and ethnic status published in the Advocate, along with a short statement (25 words or less). In order for your name to appear on the printed ballot, **TSTA must receive the nomination form in the Center for Executive and Governance no later than January 6, 2012.**

Members should receive the Advocate containing ballots for election of state delegates by late March 2012. The deadline for return receipt of ballots at TSTA is April 27, 2012, by 5:00 p.m.

Although we cannot know the exact number of delegates to be elected until after January 15, typically we elect one state delegate on a statewide ballot and the remaining state delegates are assigned to individual regions, clusters of regions or, possibly, statewide in a manner consistent with NEA rules on one-person, one-vote, and in accordance with TSTA policy.

CATEGORY 2 DELEGATES/ SUPERVISORY MEMBERS

NEA also requires proportional representation for supervisory and non-supervisory members. In order to insure this is not violated, supervisory members are not eligible to run for state delegate as outlined above. Instead, all supervisory members are eligible to run in a separate election for Category 2 State At-Large Delegate (which also includes NEA Active Life Retired members).

Supervisory members who also are

members of a local additionally may run in the statewide supervisory cluster election, unless their local is not a part of that cluster. TSTA removes locals from this cluster only if inclusion would cost the local a non-supervisory delegate. Locals will be notified in February if they have been removed from the cluster.

Supervisory members seeking election as a delegate should complete and return the nomination form at the end of this article (marking the box designated for Category 2 delegates), along with their 25-word maximum statement. Supervisory members who return the form and who are eligible to run in the Supervisory Cluster will automatically be included on the ballot for that election as well.

LOCAL DELEGATES

NEA will notify locals by early February of the number of delegates allocated for each local. NEA will send official forms to each local in order for the local to report who their elected delegates and alternates ("successor delegates") will be. In order to insure delegates have proper credentials at the NEA RA, **the forms are due to TSTA by April 10, 2012.**

Locals must conduct an election that provides for open nominations and secret ballots. This can be accomplished either by (1) delivering a nomination form to each member (using a local newsletter is permissible), then insuring each member receives a ballot with the names of those who returned the nomination form, or (2) by holding an all-member meeting, with proper notice of the meeting sent to each member, and accepting nominations at the meeting, then voting by secret ballot.

LOCAL CLUSTER DELEGATES

A local must have at least 76 members

(Active and Life) to qualify for a delegate. Locals with fewer than 76 members may cluster together for the purpose of electing local delegates. TSTA coordinates these cluster elections, so any member interested in seeking election as a cluster delegate must notify the TSTA Center for Executive and Governance (CEG). To request a cluster election, return the request form at the end of this article or contact Anezka Carmona in the TSTA office.

RETIRED DELEGATES

NEA allocates one delegate for the first 50 TSTA-R/NEA-R members, and one (1) additional delegate for each 1,000 TSTA-R/NEA-R members thereafter. To seek election as a retired delegate, **return the Retired Delegate Nomination Form to TSTA by January 17, 2012.** The form is available at the end of this article and online at www.tsta.org.

A member who was an NEA Active Life member while teaching, but is now retired, has the option of seeking nomination as a Category 2 state at large delegate rather than a retired delegate. However, anyone eligible to run in both elections must choose; he or she may only file in one election. To run as a retired delegate, complete the Retired Delegate Nomination Form. To run as a Category 2 delegate, complete the State Delegate Nomination Form and check the Category 2 box. Remember, retired delegate nominations are due January 17. State delegate nominations are due January 6.

QUESTIONS

Anyone with questions about the elections, or needing other information about the process, should contact Anezka Carmona at TSTA, 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or email anezkac@tsta.org.



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—TSTA President Rita Haecker

Please donate to TSTA-Political Action Committee, or, if you already contribute, please consider increasing your donation. You can do that today by visiting www.tsta.org or calling 877-ASK-TSTA.

Helping Change the Players

