What is success?

Three teachers give their answers

Finland schools’ secret strategy
Hint: It involves trusting and respecting educators

Budget fallout
Schools struggle to meet kids’ needs
The fresh vitality of youth

As you have noticed, the cover of this magazine features a photo of Montserrat Garibay, a young leader who not only represents the future of public education in Texas but also the future of TSTA. By Rita Haeker, TSTA President

Our younger members bring youthful enthusiasm to our classrooms, along with fresh perspectives and new ways to tackle old and emerging problems. They are doing so during one of the most difficult and challenging budgetary periods faced by public schools in decades.

TSTA’s more experienced members must help and encourage our up-and-coming leaders. No one is trying to shove seniority aside. We veterans have invaluable experience, and we must find opportunities to share our knowledge, honed through years in the public education, union, and political arenas, with our younger counterparts.

We experienced members must recruit our younger colleagues for TSTA membership and be receptive to their new ideas. Our organization must be dynamic, not to blindly embrace change merely for change’s sake, but to increase our membership, advance our professionalism, improve the Texas public education system, and enhance our students’ opportunities.

Our goal of offering a sound education to our students in a safe and healthy environment — and getting them to and from campus safely — remains the same. But technology has transformed the way our students learn, and our young generation of tech-savvy teachers is at the forefront of these changes. These teachers are not afraid to embrace new ideas and ways of doing things, and we more experienced professionals must encourage and mentor them.

Teachers and other educators know as well as anyone that the future of our state is in our classrooms today. The future of those classrooms is increasingly in the hands of our younger teachers. And so is the future of our profession.

By working cooperatively and blending the wisdom of experience with the fresh vitality of youth, we will assure a strong future for Texas’ public schools and for TSTA.
**1 NEA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPENDS A WEEK TOURING TEXAS**

John Stocks, who became the executive director of the National Education Association on Sept. 1, visited schools and met with members on what he called a “listening tour” of West and South Texas during October. He was accompanied on the trip by TSTA President Rita Haecker, Vice President Noel Candelaria, and Executive Director Richard Kouri. See page 23 for more photos from the tour, courtesy of Miguel Gonzalez, NEA Public Relations.

**2 PRESIDENT OBAMA MEETS TSTA PRESIDENT**

On Nov. 1, TSTA President Rita Haecker was one of 11 NEA leaders who met with President Obama in the White House to discuss the American Jobs Act (AJA). AJA will provide funds to retain and hire educators, rebuild schools, and keep America moving forward toward educational and economic success.

**3 LOYA UNOPPOSED IN NEA DIRECTOR ELECTION**

The filing deadline for NEA Director for Texas, Place 2, was Sept. 15, 2011; this NEA term will run Sept. 1, 2012 through Aug. 31, 2015. Evelina Loya, a member of Garland Education Association, is unopposed in her bid for a second term in this position.

**4 WEBSITE PROMOTES ONLINE SAFETY**

NEA Health Information Network has launched bnetsavvy, a website with resources, tools, and insights that can be used to promote safe and smart Internet behaviors. Check it out at www.neahin.org/bnetsavvy.

**5 ESKELSEN JOINS PRESIDENT’S ADVISORY COMMISSION**

In October, NEA Vice President Lily Eskelsen was sworn in as a member of the Presidential Advisory Commission for the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. The commission will advise President Obama on educational attainment of Hispanic students. See www.nea.org/home/48692.htm for more information.

**6 WHAT’S NEW AT THE NEA ACADEMY?**

The NEA Academy, www.neaacademy.org, offers the best in online continuing education and Master’s degree that will fit your budget, your schedule, and your life. Among the programs you can find there:

- Tuition assistance for laid-off NEA members. Walden University offers qualified members a 50 percent tuition reduction on their first term when they enroll in the M.S. in Education or the M.S. in Instructional Design and Technology program, plus an additional 10 percent tuition savings on the remaining portion of their program.
- A free 1.5-hour course on managing asthma in the school environment that addresses the causes, signs, and symptoms; triggers; key elements of asthma control; and strategies for creating asthma-friendly schools.
- Strategies for classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to use in working with students of limited English proficiency — a five-hour course for $69.

**7 HOW ARE THE BUDGET CUTS IMPACTING YOU?**

Tell us how the budget cuts are affecting your school and your classroom. We know many programs and opportunities for students have been lost this year. Help us compile a list of how budget cuts are impacting Texas’ schools.

We need to help legislators and the public understand. Email your stories to debbiem@tsta.org. (We are also still looking for two other kinds of stories: How you have made a difference in the life of a student and local organizing successes.)

**8 BECAUSE ‘NEWS’ AND ‘QUARTERLY’ DON’T MESH**

For the latest news about education and the association, please check our website at www.tsta.org.

You also can follow us on Twitter at http://twitter.com/txstateteachers and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/texasstateteachersassociation.

**9 IF YOU PLAN YOUR VACATIONS AROUND THE RA**

The NEA Representative Assembly (RA) is the largest democratic deliberative assembly in the world. During the RA, some 9,000 delegates from state and local affiliates gather to set policy and chart the direction of NEA. Here’s where the RA meets for the next eight summers:

2012: Washington, D.C.
2013: Atlanta, Georgia
2014: Denver, Colorado
2015: Miami Beach, Florida
2016: Washington, D.C.
2017: Boston, Massachusetts
2018: Minneapolis, Minnesota
2019: Houston, Texas

**10 ESP Members to Meet in Memphis**

The 2012 NEA Education Support Professionals Conference will be March 9-11 at the Marriott Memphis Downtown Hotel. You’ll leave with the skills needed to build stronger locals, you’ll learn how to forge strong internal and external relationships, organize members, and help them have a positive influence on student achievement. www.nea.org/grants/31430.htm
The stakes have never been higher. For the first time in over 60 years, the Governor and the legislative majority failed to meet the state’s legal responsibility to provide enough state funds to cover projected school enrollment. They left $6 billion unspent in a Rainy Day Fund while shortchanging local schools by over $5.3 billion.

The legislative cuts carried a harmful punch. Thousands of teachers were laid off with even more layoffs expected next year. Local districts have requested waivers to allow over 5,000 crowded classrooms, and stopping the assault on our public schools.

Putting school kids’ health and safety at risk

TSTA Public Affairs Specialist
Clay Robison, Oct. 10, 2011

More than our children’s academic opportunities are jeopardized by the budget cuts forced upon school districts by Gov. Rick Perry and the legislative majority. Our kids’ health and safety also are at risk.

Here are two examples coming to my attention. The first involves cafeteria workers in San Antonio ISD, and the second is about overcrowded school buses in North- east ISD, another San Antonio district.

SAISD cafeteria workers are now required to double up as custodial workers, raising the threat of food contamination and serious illnesses being spread in the district’s cafeterias.

In addition to preparing and serving food, the food service employees also are cleaning and mopping the cafeterias and hauling garbage bags and trash bins to the dumpsters. They are doubling up because the budget-strapped school district (that’s a redundant description these days) tried to save money by cutting custodial positions.

The San Antonio Alliance, TSTA’s local affiliate, has filed a grievance against the district on behalf of the workers, who also risk on-the-job injuries for heavy lifting, pulling and pushing, which they didn’t sign on to perform.

The most critical health risk, however, may involve the students who eat in the cafeteria each school day. With extra duties to perform, even the most-conscientious and careful cafeteria workers may occasionally get in too big of a hurry to perform adequate sanitation. And, SAISD may be one skipped hand-washing away from a bunch of sick kids.

As outlined in the TV story linked below, buses in Northeast ISD are so crowded that some students have to sit on the floor, endangering their safety and even their lives in the event of an accident. Despite the pleas of parents and other safety advocates, the Legislature has never seen fit to order seat belts on most school buses, much less prohibit overcrowding. Districts were supposed to install belts on new buses, but the state cut the funding.

Now, heaven forbid, Northeast ISD is one bus away from a potential disaster.

Budget cuts have real-life consequences, folks. The governor and legislative majority can pretend they don’t, but school employees — and school kids — know better.
When students’ needs take second place

When it comes to class size, especially in the elementary grades, more is less. More students per class means less time for a teacher to give each child the individual attention so crucial to helping the child develop strong learning skills. By Clay Robison

This is why the Legislature in 1984, as part of the landmark public education overhaul known as House Bill 72, enacted a law setting a cap on the student-teacher ratio in each kindergarten through fourth grade class at 22-1. That cap has been routinely granted by the Texas Education Agency, have been increasing in recent years.

But this year, the number of waiver requests may have set a record. Although that is disheartening to many educators and unfair to thousands of young students, it should come as no surprise, following the enactment of the worst public education budget in Texas in more than 60 years.

Gov. Rick Perry and the legislative majority cut $4 billion from the state’s financial obligations to school districts, approving an appropriation that doesn’t cover the 170,000 new kids expected to enroll in Texas’ public schools over the next two years. And they cut another $1.4 billion from public education grants for such programs as full-day pre-kindergarten, while leaving $6.5 billion of the taxpayers’ money unspent in the emergency Rainy Day Fund.

While leaving 22-1 ostensibly intact, the governor and legislators passed the buck for dealing with the impact of the budget cuts to local school districts and the Texas Education Agency. State Education Commissioner Robert Scott then made it even easier for districts to get waivers from 22-1 by adding a new waiver provision — "financial hardship."

By the time the Advocate went to press, 242 school districts, almost one-fifth of the state’s total, had filed waiver requests with TEA. That compared to 168 districts during the 2010-11 school year and 144 in 2009-10. Some districts filed for waivers for multiple classes.

Altogether, some 5,243 classes were included in the waiver requests. That was double the number of classes for which waivers were granted in 2010-11.

And the number of classes larger than 22-1 may continue to increase. Districts can apply for additional exemptions through the school year if their enrollments grow.

Patrick M. Sel, a fourth grade teacher at Andre Elementary School in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD and a member of Cy Fair TSTA/NEA, greeted 27 students on the first day of the fall semester. They included a number of English as a Second Language (ESL) students and six special education students of varying degrees of disability.

“It was a struggle just to manage that many kids in a room,” he said, noting that he often felt like he was babysitting more than teaching. He was forced to borrow chairs from another classroom to have a seat.

“It was very difficult. It was very hard to put them into groups because they were at so many different (learning) levels,” he added. “There were days when I just had to pick which group I was going to work with.”

Consequently, the other kids didn’t get the attention they needed that day.

Six weeks into the semester, Cy-Fair hired an additional teacher for Andre, and Sel’s class was reduced to 22, including the six special education students. He is assisted with the special education kids by a paraprofessional but continues to have his hands full.

Sel, nevertheless, considers himself “kind of lucky” because many other K-4 teachers in the district still have larger classes. Cy-Fair, as noted above, is seeking about 300 class-size waivers from the state.

Legislators and school superintendents looking for an excuse to retreat on 22-1 often claim there is nothing “magical” about a class size of 22. But they ignore the experiences of teachers, such as Sel, and research that repeatedly has shown that the smaller the class, the better the student outcomes on such measurements as test scores and eventual college enrollment.

In one of the most frequently cited studies, the Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) study conducted in Tennessee in the 1980s, students in kindergarten through third grade who were assigned to small classes were found to outperform their classmates assigned to larger classes. Black students, economically disadvantaged students, and boys benefited the most from the smaller classes in that study.
A more recent, follow-up study found that students assigned to small classes at the beginning of elementary school were more likely to be enrolled in college at age 20.

Research also has indicated that the greatest academic benefit is realized when students, particularly disadvantaged students, are placed in small classes in the earliest grades.

The Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) also conducted research strongly indicating that 22-1 has been a positive factor in student and school performances in Texas.

According to TEPSA, the number of class size waivers granted in 2007-08 per campus was in direct inverse proportion to the state accountability rating of that campus. In other words, the higher ranked campuses received fewer waivers to the 22-1 cap. TEPSA derived its finding from the TEA Regional and District Level Report to the 2009 Legislature.

TEPSA found that only about 10 percent of “exemplary” campuses asked for and received waivers allowing larger class sizes, compared to 40 percent of lower-ranked “recognized” campuses and 50 percent of the even lower-ranked “academically acceptable” campuses.

Not only do more waivers mean weakened educational opportunities for Texas’ youngest students, they also mean fewer job opportunities and more layoffs for K-4 teachers.

According to one TV news report, at least one high school in Houston ISD, which is struggling with an $80 million loss of state funding, began the fall semester with more than 100 additional students and 19 fewer teachers. Consequently, there were classes with more than 40 students, although the principal denied reports that some students in packed classrooms were sitting on the floor.

Dallas ISD shed more than 1,000 employees over the summer, many through early retirement, so the district could save money by increasing class sizes in middle and high schools.

Staff cuts in Arlington ISD have forced high school teachers to teach extra classes while getting less conference time.

Meanwhile, increasing class sizes in K-4 is not the only bite financially challenged districts are taking out of the classroom. High school and middle school classes also are larger in some districts, and teachers’ work schedules are more crowded.

According to TEPSA findings, the number of 22-1 waivers may increase next year.

What is success?

Three Austin teachers talk about how they define success in their classrooms and how they overcome obstacles to achieve it. By Clay Robison

MONTSERRAT GARIBAY

When you teach a pre-kindergarten class of 4-year-olds, success requires patience, and it must be measured in small steps. But it can be memorable.

“When they start pre-K, many of my students have never been to school. They can’t even hold a pencil. They don’t know any letters. They don’t know any shapes. They don’t know any colors. And a lot of them don’t have social skills,” said Montserrat Garibay, a bilingual teacher at Austin ISD’s Lucy Read Pre-kindergarten Demonstration School.

Her students, all native Spanish speakers, face the additional challenge of learning English.

Some of the first things the young children learn are how to share and use words to communicate with one another and with their teacher.

“They’re not fighting anymore. They’re listening,” Garibay said of her latest group of charges, several weeks into the fall semester. “Half of my class is starting to write their names. It’s going to be a wonderful year.”

Montserrat Garibay

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“They’re not fighting anymore. They’re listening,” Garibay said of her latest group of charges, several weeks into the fall semester. “Half of my class is starting to write their names. It’s going to be a wonderful year.”

Her school days can run as long as 10 hours, part of her weekend is devoted to class preparation, and the threat of budget cuts is never very far away. But she knows what she is doing is making a positive difference in young lives, and sometimes she is rewarded with a personal reminder.

Clay Robison is TSTA's public affairs specialist.

MONTESSA
She teared up when she recalled running into a former student, now a sixth-grader, at a neighborhood store. “He said that he was learning a lot. He was one of the kids who were struggling with behavior (in pre-K). So it was very nice to see he was very communicative, was very well mannered,” she said. “I think that pre-K really works.”

It works because of Garibay and other dedicated teachers like her.

Now in her ninth year in the classroom, Garibay, a member of Education Austin, begins each school year by reaching out and recruiting the assistance of parents, few of whom speak English themselves but they value the opportunity she gives their children.

She spent the first two weeks of this school year making home visits to the parents of her 20 students. “Home visits are very important to build good relationships with the parents,” she said. “In pre-K, I think that it’s essential that they trust me; they want them to be here,” she said. “So I tend to just put (in) the five, 10, 20, or 40 dollars.”

Pre-kindergarten is credited with building an early foundation that keeps the low-income and English-learning children in school, rather than dropping out, in the later grades.

Garibay doesn’t know how many of her early students, who are now teenagers, are still in school. But, she said, many parents have told her they were grateful their children went to pre-K because now they are happy and excited about school.

“Someone asks you a question, you don’t answer it. You start teaching them how to learn the answer themselves,” he explained. “Teaching for me has always been a joy. It’s always been really fun, as stressful as it gets.”

Grayson enjoys telling students they have answered a question correctly and watching their eyes “pop up” as if they don’t believe it.

“If we could all get it right the first time, we wouldn’t need school,” he said. “It’s not me giving them the information so they can answer correctly. It’s me showing them how they can apply their own understanding to it (a question) and come up with the correct answer.”

Grayson believes the period of American history that his students find most interesting is the 1920s, including Prohibition and a changing culture. Thanks to the emergence of radio advertising, it was the first time that youth became a target demographic.

“The automobile and the radio made teenagers and people in their 20s mobile, and it changed their social interactions and their social dynamic,” he said. “They started to become the culture of the demographic that was looked at as the ‘cool group’ or the one that was ‘in’ at that moment. So the kids really kind of get into that.”

Standardized test scores indicate Grayson is successful at what he does, but he realizes it may be years before a fuller measure of his efforts can be determined.

“I don’t think they (students) are really going to understand and appreciate the need to apply what they learn here until they are truly adults and they have to function in our society as such,” he said. “At this point they’re just absorbing it all, and I’m doing my best to plant seeds so they’ll grow into something meaningful in 10 years, when they realize how much their parents really did (know).”

“IAN GRAYSON
For Ian Grayson, teaching is the “family business.”

“My father was a teacher. My mother is still a teacher. My mother’s sisters, most of them are teachers. My dad’s father was a teacher. It’s just something that kind of happens,” he said.

Grayson, an Education Austin member, teaches U.S. history and economics at Austin High School. He believes the road to success is not reciting answers for his students to memorize but teaching them how to find the answers by thinking through what they know.

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“Telling a student ‘I believe in you’ can make a big difference,” she said.

Mendoza’s contribution to student success includes 13- to 14-hour days, including visits with parents and preparation and grading time at home. She also spends about $100 to $150 a month from her own pocket to purchase school supplies and personal items for her students.

Since many of her students’ parents are struggling financially, she is concerned about conditions at home and the impact that has, not only on the kids’ education but also on their overall well-being.

“So many don’t know how to help their kids” with their work, she said. “Sometimes, I give a lesson to the parents.”

In class, the 28-year-old Education Austin member has her students apply for “jobs” for which they can earn play money. Then they use the “money” to purchase supplies or personal items in a classroom “store.” The idea is to help teach the youngsters how to earn money and let them experience the responsibility that comes with fulfilling a job.

“It (teaching) is not easy. It’s very, very challenging,” Mendoza said. But, she added, it is also very rewarding.

“Seeing their little faces after they finally get something, they’re happy about learning.”
Why are Finland’s schools successful?

The country’s achievements in education have other nations doing their homework. By LynNell Hancock

It was the end of term at Kirkkojarvi Comprehensive School in Espoo, a sprawling suburb west of Helsinki, when Kari Louhivuori, a veteran teacher and the school’s principal, decided to try something extreme — by Finnish standards. One of his sixth-grade students, a Kosovo-Albanian boy, had drifted far off the learning grid, resuming his teacher’s best efforts. The school’s team of special educators — including a social worker, a nurse, and a psychologist — convinced Louhivuori that laziness was not to blame. So he decided to hold the boy back a year, a measure so rare in Finland it’s practically obsolete.

Finland has vastly improved in reading, math, and science literacy over the past decade in large part because its teachers are trusted to do whatever it takes to turn young lives around. This 13-year-old, Besart Kabashi, received something else: the key to royal tutoring.

“I took Besart on that year as my private student,” Louhivuori told me in his office, which boasted a Beatles “Yellow Submarine” poster on the wall and an electric guitar in the closet. When Besart was not studying science, geography, and math, he was parked next to Louhivuori’s desk at the front of his class of 9- and 10-year-olds, cracking open books from a tall stack, slowly reading one, then another, then devouring them by the dozens. By the end of the year, the son of Kosovo war refugees had conquered his adopted country’s vowel-rich language and arrived at the realization that he could, in fact, learn.

Years later, a 20-year-old Besart showed up at Kirkkojarvi’s Christmas party with a bottle of Cognac and a big grin. “You helped me,” he told his former teacher. Besart had opened his own car repair firm and a cleaning company. “No big fuss,” Louhivuori told me. “This is what we do every day, prepare kids for life.”

This tale of a single rescued child hints at some of the reasons for the tiny Nordic nation’s staggering record of education success, a phenomenon that has inspired, muddled along in the past decade, and 10-year-olds, cracking open books from a tall stack, slowly reading one, then another, then devouring them by the dozens. By the end of the year, the son of Kosovo war refugees had conquered his adopted country’s vowel-rich language and arrived at the realization that he could, in fact, learn.

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The transformation of the Finns’ education system began some 40 years ago as the key propellant of the country’s economic recovery plan.

survey by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). “Equality is the most important word in Finnish education. All political parties on the right and left agree on this,” said Olli Luxkkainen, president of Finland’s powerful teachers union.

Ninety-three percent of Finns graduate from academic or vocational high schools, 17.5 percentage points higher than the United States, and 66 per cent go on to higher education, the highest rate in the European Union. Yet Finns spend about 30 per cent less per student than the European Union. Yet Finns graduate from academia and Culture. “We are a physics teacher who is now to take a test,” said Pasi learn how to learn, not how “We prepare children to

Still, there is a distinct absence of these-learning among the famously finnished Finns. They are eager to cerebrate their recent world hockey championship, but PISA scores, not so much. “We prepare children to learn how to learn, not how "We prepare children to learn how to learn, not how..." "We prepare children to learn how to learn, not how..." "We prepare children to learn how to learn, not how..."

There are exceptions, though, however rare. One first-grade girl was not in Rintola’s class. The wisty 7-year-old had recently arrived from Thailand speaking not a word of Finnish. She was studying math down the hall in a special “preparing class” taught by an expert in multicultural learning. It is designed to help children keep up with their subjects while they conquer the language. Kirkkojarvi’s teachers have learned to deal with their unusually number of immigrant students. The city of Espoo helps them out with an extra 82,000 euros a year in “positive discrimina...” "We know each other really well," said Germeroth, who is 10 years older. "I know what Alexei is thinking." The school receives 47,000 euros a year in a positive discrimina..." "We know each other really well," said Germeroth, who is 10 years older. "I know what Alexei is thinking." The school receives 47,000 euros a year in a positive discrimina..." "We know each other really well," said Germeroth, who is 10 years older. "I know what Alexei is thinking." The school receives 47,000 euros a year in a positive discrimina..." "We know each other really well," said Germeroth, who is 10 years older. "I know what Alexei is thinking." The school receives 47,000 euros a year in a positive discrimina..." "We know each other really well," said Germeroth, who is 10 years older. "I know what Alexei is thinking." The school receives 47,000 euros a year in a positive discrimina..." "We know each other really well," said Germeroth, who is 10 years older. "I know what Alexei is thinking." The school receives 47,000 euros a year in a positive discrimina..." "We know each other really well," said Germeroth, who is 10 years old...
are attended by 43 percent of Finnish high-school stu-
dents, who prepare to work in laboratories, restaurants, hospitals, construction sites, and o-
ces. “We help situate them in the right high school,” said then deputy principal Anne Roselius. “We are in-
terested in what will become of them in life.”

Finland’s schools were not always a wonder. Until the late 1960s, Finns were still emerging from the cocoon of Soviet influence. Most chil-
dren left public school after six years. (The rest went to private schools, academic grammar schools, or folk schools, which tended to be less rigorous.) Only the privileged or lucky got a quality education.

The landscape changed when Finland began reforms to remold its bloody, fraction-
ted past into a unified future. For hundreds of years, these fiercely independent people had been peo-
ples — the Swedish monarchy to the west and the Russian czar to the east. Neither had ruled its people some 600 years. The czar created the Grand Duchy of Fin-
lann, a quasi-state with con-
stitutional ties to the empire. He moved the capital from Turku, near Stockholm, to Helsinki, closer to St. Peters-
burg. After the czar fell to the Bolsheviks in 1917, Fin-
land declared its indepen-
dence, pitching the country into civil war. Three more wars between 1939 and 1945 — two with the Uni-
es, one with Germany — left the country scarred by bitter divisions and a pun-
ishing debt owed to the Rus-
sians. “Still we managed to keep our freedom,” said Pasi Salihberg, a director general in the Ministry of Education and Culture. In 1963, the Finnish Parlia-
ment made the bold deci-
sion to choose public educa-
tion as its best shot at eco-
omic recovery. “I call this the Big Dream of Finnish education,” said Salihberg, whose upcoming book, “Finnish Lessons:”, is scheduled for release in Oc-
tober. “It was simply the idea that every child would have a very good public school. If we want to be competitive, we need to edu-
cate everybody. It all came out of a need to survive.”

Practically speaking — and Finns are nothing if not practical — the decision meant that goal would not be allowed to dissipate into rhetoric. Lawmakers landed on a deceptively simple plan that formed the foundation for everything to come. Pub-
lic schools would be orga-
nized into one system of comprehensive schools, or peruskoulu, for ages 7 through 16. Teachers from all over the nation con-
thibuted to a national cur-
riculum that provided guidelines, not prescrip-
tions. Besides Finnish and Swedish (the country’s sec-
ond official language), chil-
dren would learn a third language (English is a fa-
vorite) usually beginning at age 9. Resources were dis-
tributed equally. As the com-
prehensive schools im-
poved, so did the upper secondary schools (grades 10 through 12). The second critical decision came in 1979, when reformers re-
quired that every teacher earn a fifth-year master’s degree in theory and practice at one of eight state univer-
sities at state expense.

From then on, teachers were effectively granted equal sta-
tus with doctors and lawyers. Applicants began flooding teaching programs, not because the salaries were so high but because autonomy and respect made the job attractive. In 2010, some 6,600 applicants vied for 660 primary school training slots, according to Salihberg. By the mid-1980s, a final set of initiatives shook the classrooms free from the last vestiges of top-down reg-
ulation. Control over pol-
cies shifted to town coun-
cils. The national curricu-
lum was distilled into broad guidelines. National math goals for grades one through nine, for example, were re-
duced to a neat 10 pages. Sifting and sorting children into so-called ability group-
ings was eliminated. All chil-
dren — clever or less so — were to be taught in the same classrooms, with lots of special teacher help available to make sure no child really would be left behind. The inspectorate closed its doors in the early ’90s, turn-
ing accountability and in-
spection over to teachers and principals. “We have our own motivation to suc-
cceed because we love the work,” said Louhiussen. “Our incentives come from inside.”

To be sure, it was only in the past decade that Finland’s international science scores rose. In fact, the country’s earliest efforts could be called somewhat Stalinistic. The first national curricu-
lum, developed in the early ’70s, weighed in at 700 stu-
fifying pages. Timo Heikki-
nen, who began teaching in Finland’s public schools in 1980 and is now principal of Kallahist Comprehensive School in eastern Helsinki, remembers when most of his high-school teachers sat at their desks dictating the to the open notebooks of com-
pliant children. It has yet to catch on, Heikkinen admits. Then he added: “But we are always looking for ways to improve.”

In other words, whatever it takes.

LynNell Hancock is H. Gordon Garberhian Professor of Journalism and director of the Spencer Fellowship Program at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. This article originally appeared in the September 2011 issue of Smithsonian magazine.
What you need to know about inclusion

Very few topics in the public education community cause as much consternation as inclusion; still fewer are as controversial or laced with legal minefields. Inclusion, which is not required by IDEA 2004, has replaced mainstreaming as a means of ensuring that children with disabilities have the opportunity for a free appropriate public education with their non-handicapped peers. So why do we talk about inclusion and why do we need to fully understand not only what it is but also what it isn’t?

By Bryan Weatherford, M.Ed.

IDEA 2004 never mentions inclusion. In fact, if you go to idea.ed.gov and do a search of the statute or regulations, the only use of the word “inclusion” is in reference to Bureau of Indian Affairs-funded schools and their inclusion in IDEA to make them eligible to receive funding. IDEA 2004 requires that students with disabilities be educated in “the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate” to meet their needs. In IDEA 2004, LRE consideration typically begins with placement in the regular education classroom. This is different from the initial P.L. 94-142 where placement considerations usually began with special education services.

Not all children, however, can or should be educated in the regular classroom setting. IDEA 2004 recognizes that a continuum of placements must be considered, ensuring that the child with a disability is educated in the environment where he or she has the greatest opportunity for success. When Admission, Review, and Dismissal/Individualized Education Program (ARD/IEP) decisions put children with disabilities into the regular education setting under the guise of inclusion, the environment may not provide enough support for success. The goal of any IEP is to ensure student success and growth so the ARD committee may need to consider a more appropriate environment.

An important rule to remember is that the IEP is developed to meet the child’s unique needs, not to satisfy a parent’s desire for full inclusion or convenience for the district. The program fits the child, not the other way around. The degree of inclusion is driven by the student’s needs, first and foremost. This is necessary to maximize the opportunity for children with disabilities to experience success and lead normal lives.

When does inclusion become exclusion? Too often it seems, children with disabilities are “dumped” into the regular education setting with little or no support for them, their classmates, or their teachers. Time spent with a special education teacher in a resource or self-contained classroom for so many hours a week has given way to time spent by the special education teacher in the regular education setting for fewer hours a week. This practice often leads to a situation where most of a regular education teacher’s students are children with disabilities, in addition to bilingual/ELL and at-risk students — all of whom are entitled to accommodations, adaptations, and different types of modifications.

Just as inclusion is not mentioned in IDEA, neither is exclusion. There is no law or statute that dictates how many children with disabilities may be in a regular education setting at a given time; however, a rule of thumb (and that’s all it is) is that the number of children with disabilities in a regular classroom setting at the same time should not exceed the percentage of children with disabilities in the district. If this is happening, your local association has an excellent organizing issue. Access your district’s Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report at the Texas Education Agency website (www.tea.state.tx.us), or simply contact your district’s special education officer to find out the percentage of special education students in your district.

IMPLEMENTING INCLUSION

Inclusion doesn’t just happen. Schools and school districts must identify appropriate models of inclusion so that they are in compliance with Free and Appropriate Public Education requirements and maximize instruction and learning for all children. In their book “Inclusion and School Reform: Transforming America’s Classrooms,” Gartner and Lipsky identify three models of support for inclusion.

Consultant model: The special education teacher is available to re-teach a difficult skill or to help the student(s) reinforce a newly acquired skill. This is a non-intrusive approach that provides the special needs students with at least two teachers to ask for help with curriculum problems. Regularly scheduled meetings are encouraged rather than communication on an as-needed basis.

Teaming model: The special education teacher is part of a grade-level or content area team and provides student information, possible instructional strategies, modification ideas for assignments/tests, and behavior strategies to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The team meets on a...
regular basis, establishing consistent communication among the team members. All team members work together and broaden their knowledge in various areas.

Collaborative, co-teaching model:
The general education and special education teachers work together to teach students with/without disabilities in a shared classroom where both are responsible for instruction planning and delivery, student achievement, assessment, and discipline. Students receive age-appropriate academics, support services, and possible modified instruction. This model provides a minimum of scheduling problems, continuous and ongoing communication between educators, and lower student to teacher ratio than the teaming or consultant models.

Professional teams — teachers, ESPs, professional support — working with children with/without disabilities enhance success by remembering four basic elements of collaboration, as outlined by Canter, Voytecki, Zambone, and Jones in “Teaching Exceptional Children”:

1. Create a foundation of mutual respect and understanding;
2. Create a focused purpose for collaboration;
3. Generate a written plan for collaboration; and
4. Plan collaborative activities of mutual responsibility.

Effective inclusion is carefully and deliberately thought out prior to its implementation. Teachers and education support professionals are informed and trained in the process of inclusion. Children are educated about it and what they can do to make inclusion successful. Parents understand what to expect for their children as a result of inclusion. IDEA requires the ARD committee to consider placement in the regular education classroom as a beginning point for determining appropriate placement for the child with disabilities. As the ARD committee makes its decision, it needs to consider the following questions:

1. Is the program individualized on the basis of the student’s assessment and performance?
2. Is the program administered in the least restrictive environment?
3. Are the services provided in a coordinated and collaborative manner by the key stakeholders?
4. Are positive academic and non-academic benefits demonstrated?

Inclusion, however, doesn’t begin with the ARD decision; rather, it is an instructional practice that is already rooted in the culture and behaviors of the school and the school district.

Bryan Weatherford, M Ed., is TSTA’s teaching and learning specialist.

INCLUSION IS

➤ Students learning together with supports to be successful.
➤ Each child’s needs being met.
➤ Children with and without labels having facilitated opportunities to interact and develop friendships.
➤ Collaboration between general and special education.
➤ Support for general education teachers who have children with disabilities in their classrooms.
➤ Children learning side-by-side even though their educational outcomes and objectives may be different.

INCLUSION IS NOT

➤ Dumping children into general education classrooms without appropriate supports.
➤ Trading quality of education or intensity of supports for inclusion.
➤ Ignoring the needs of any child.
➤ Sacrificing the education of any child.
➤ Everyone learning the same thing, at the same time, in the same way.
➤ Eliminating or cutting back special education services.
➤ Expecting general education teachers to teach students with challenging needs alone, without support to teach effectively.
Political action tops Region 4 agenda

Forty presidents and leaders from throughout Region 4 — the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex and East Texas — attended the Presidents and Leaders Summit Oct. 15. The summit focused on political action and what it means to TSTA members.

TSTA President Rita Haecker gave opening remarks, followed by TSTA Public Affairs Director Ed Martin, who talked about the local impact of legislative decisions, why TSTA members should be involved in campaigns, how to be involved in campaigns, and what locals’ duties are in relation to political action. School board members Charles Wilson from Marshall ISD and Bruce Parrott from Dallas ISD answered questions from members about budgets, teacher RIFs, excessive paperwork, and local taxes. TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria closed the summit by talking about the Pandora’s box legislators opened for education. Photos from the event are posted on TSTA’s Flickr page at http://bit.ly/uAImPB.

NEA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR VISITS TEXAS

The second week of October, NEA Executive Director John Stocks came to Texas for a “border listening tour” of Brownsville, Laredo, San Antonio, San Elizario, Socorro, and El Paso. He talked with local leaders, met with superintendents, toured schools and missions, and spoke at an “Under the Same Sun” celebration for El Paso area education support professionals. But mostly, he listened.
BLowing their Own Horn in Donna

Donna TSTA/NEA held a “Welcome Back Social” at the end of September at Don Pancho’s Restaurant. The theme was “Let’s Celebrate,” and the more than 50 members in attendance were encouraged to blow horns every time an association representative or member reported something positive.

San Antonio Food Service Takes on Custodial Duties

When San Antonio ISD cut custodial positions this school year, duties previously performed by custodians — in- creased to half of food service employees. The San Antonio Alliance, concerned about employee safety and the risk of food contamination, has filed a group grievance on behalf of food service employees.

Legislator Addresses San Antonio Local

Rep. Drew Darby talked about public school finance and the constitutional amendments on the November ballot at an October meeting of the San An- gelo TSTA local chapter. TSTA lobbyist Portia Bosse also addressed the group.

TSTA-Retired: Events and Elections

The TSTA-Retired Board of Directors held its first meeting of the 2011-12 membership year in September. The directors approved the audit report; adopted the 2011-12 budget; amended the calendar by deleting the December meeting; rafirmed their commitment to the TSTA and TSTA-R Mission and Vision Statements; kicked off the Quilt Give-A-Way Project; reviewed a distribution plan for membership posters; listened to a presentation by staff on “Keeping a Lock on Pandora’s Box”; and welcomed a newly organized region.

Upcoming Events: The next board meeting will be Feb. 2-3 in the An- tonette Miller Room at TSTA Head- quarters. All are invited to attend.

The TSTA-R Annual Meeting (formerly known as the TSTA-R House of Delegates) is April 18-19 in Dallas. All members are eligible to attend and vote. The retired host committee is working with the active host commit- tee on an entertaining time for partici- pants. You are invited to take part in the business as well as the fun parts of the meeting. Watch for details in the spring issue.

The NEA-Retired Delegates to the NEA RA, you will hold dual voting rights as a dele- gate to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA RA. The Re- tired Annual Meeting is June 26-29, and the NEA RA is June 30 to July 5. Both events are in Washington, D.C.

All elections will take place by mail ballot between Feb. 5 and March 1. Members may file for a position or nominate another member. Written permission must be obtained from your nominee. For information on duties and responsibilities, contact the TSTA-Retired Office.

TSTA-Student Program: NEA Chairperson Coming

The TSTA-Student Program had a very busy fall, full of planning and recruit- ing. TSTA staff member Clinton Gill, former president of the group, is now the staff liaison, along with TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria.

The SP Executive Committee met Oct. 3 to plan events for the year, including the 56th annual TSTA-Student Program Conference and House of Delegates, which will be held March 23-25 at the Omni Austin Hotel Southpark in Austin. Tommie Leaders, NEA-SP chairperson, will start things off at the opening session Friday night, followed by professional development opportuni- ties Saturday to help prepare mem- bers for the classroom. One focus of the conference will be civic engage- ment, to teach SP members about ways they can be involved in political and legislative activities.

On Oct. 22, the District 3 Student Program held a picnic in Houston’s Hermann Park. NEA-SP coordinator Kimberly Anderson and TSTA-SB Lauren Clinton Gill spoke with student leaders about state and national issues. The event allowed time for the leaders in District 3 to meet and hear ideas from one another on many different topics, including recruiting and fundraising. Congratulations to Keely Drewnowski from the University of Houston-Clear Lake who spoke to the group about how she tripled mem- bership on her campus in just a matter of days!

The Student Program encourages all active TSTA members to talk with student teachers and field based teachers on their campuses about joining TSTA-SP. They can sign up online at http://bit.ly/1vR8PV or get more infor- mation by contacting Clinton Gill at clinton@tsta.org

TSTA-R Nomination Form

Check box beside office this nomination is for: ☐ TSTA-Retired Secretary ☐ TSTA-Retired Treasurer

QUALIFICATIONS: Must be an active member of TSTA-Retired and NEA-Retired

Nominee’s name _____________________________________________________________________________

Nominee’s signature ____________________________

Send by U.S. Mail (or FAX to 512-486-7043) by Jan. 17, 2011, to TSTA-R, 316 W. 12th St., Austin, TX 78701.

TSTA-Retired Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly will be elected by professional development opportu- nities Saturday to help prepare mem- bers for the classroom. One focus of the conference will be civic engage- ment, to teach SP members about ways they can be involved in political and legislative activities.

Winter 2011-12
The 133rd Annual TSTA Convention will be in Dallas on April 20-21. All convention events will take place at the landmark Hyatt Regency Dallas at Reunion. The hotel is adjacent to the heart of downtown, near premium shopping and entertainment venues, and connects via an underground concourse to historic Union Station.

To access periodic updates about convention schedules and events, be sure to visit the “For Members” area of the TSTA website and enter your “Leaders Login” information (first-time users may need to register for access to this area of the site).

**BECOME A DELEGATE**

The House of Delegates (HoD) serves a vital role in the governance of TSTA and helps to shape the future of our organization. The HoD may establish goals for TSTA, amend its bylaws, and act on recommendations from the TSTA officers, board, or committees. This year delegates will elect the NEA Director for Texas, Place 2, and if necessary, 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. Delegate allocations are based on membership totals as of Jan. 15, and local delegate election results must be reported to TSTA by March 15.

If you do not have a local in your area or your local is not eligible to elect a delegate, you may request to become a cluster delegate. The deadline to seek nomination as a cluster delegate is February 22. Complete and return the form printed in the Fall 2011 issue of the Advocate or contact TSTA’s Center for Executive and Governance (CEG).

**REGISTRATION**

Registration and certification of delegates, non-delegates/alternates, and guests will be in the Reunion ballroom lobby, beginning at 7:00 a.m. on Friday, April 20, continuing to Saturday, April 21. 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.

**HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION**

The Hyatt Regency is holding a room block for TSTA convention attendees. Reserve your room directly with the hotel by March 18, 2012, to ensure your room at the group rate of $149.00 (plus applicable taxes currently at 15 percent). Guests may opt to increase the room rate $5 per person per day to receive a $15 daily food voucher for use at most food outlets on the property. Valet parking is $14/day. Self-parking is available without in and out privileges at either $10 or $5 per exit (depending on which parking lot is used).

The hotel is approximately 10 miles from Dallas Love Field and 20 miles from DFW International Airport. You must make your own arrangements for transportation. One-way transportation costs from Love Field average $17 on SuperShuttle and $25 by taxi. One-way transportation costs from DFW to the hotel average $19 on SuperShuttle and $45 by cab. Also, the Trinity Railway Express (TRE) runs from DFW to Union Station and costs about $5 for a pass. From the airport you would board the airport’s Remote South parking lot shuttle then connect to shuttle buses serving the CenterPort/DFW airport train station to catch the TRE to Union Station.

Groups traveling together should also check with SuperShuttle for available discounts.

**HEARINGS AND WORKSHOPS**

Open hearings will be held Friday morning on the proposed 2012-13 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.

**REGISTRATION**

Open hearings will be held Friday morning on the proposed 2012-13 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.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Apr 19</td>
<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Advisory Committee Meeting</td>
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<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Board of Directors Meeting</td>
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<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Candidates Meeting</td>
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<td>Friday, Apr 20</td>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Special Interest Exhibits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Open Hearings</td>
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<td>9:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)</td>
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<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Parliamentary Procedures Workshop for New Delegates</td>
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<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Recognized Caucus Meetings</td>
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<td>2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>House of Delegates Opening Ceremony and Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, Apr 21</td>
<td>6:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Regional/TSTA-Student Program/TSTA-Retired Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Special Interest Exhibits</td>
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<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Voting/Elections</td>
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<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>House of Delegates Meeting</td>
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<td>12:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch and Recognized Caucus Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>House of Delegates Meeting</td>
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Election of TSTA at-large Board of Directors members

TSTA bylaws, policies, and procedures guarantee that specific groups—e.g., ethnic minorities and education support professionals (ESPs)—have a meaningful voice in the organization, while other groups, such as administrators, are prevented from having influence beyond their numbers.

Each Jan 15, TSTA calculates the proportion of our membership in these three categories to help determine the need for at-large elections to the TSTA Board of Directors. The Board has 28 members that count for this purpose—officers, regional representatives, Texas Faculty Association-NEA representatives, TSTA-retired president, TSTA-Student Program president, and NEA directors for Texas. Both the Jan 15 calculations and the results of regional elections held at the regional houses of delegates determine whether at-large elections are necessary.

Although it is possible elections will not be held, TSTA is seeking nominations for these positions now in case elections are required. Elections will take place at the 2012 TSTA House of Delegates on April 21.

Individually elected would serve from July 15, 2012, through July 14, 2014.

Recent TSTA membership numbers show 38.6 percent of our members are ethnic minorities, 5.2 percent are ESPs, and 3.3 percent are supervisory. If the recent percentages hold true on Jan 15, TSTA would need at least 11 minorities, six ESPs, and one supervisor on the Board.

Minority: If current membership percentages hold on Jan 15, it is possible but unlikely we will need to elect minority at-large board members due to the recent presence of minority board members whose terms will continue.

ESP: TSTA currently has seven ESP board members: one whose term expires July 14, 2012, and who will re-run for another term, and six whose terms will continue. Preserving membership percentages on Jan 15 remain consistent with recent levels, we probably will not need to hold an election for ESP at-large board members.

Supervisory: The term of the current supervisory at-large board member expires on July 14, 2012. There will be an election for this position. The current supervisory at-large member is eligible to run for another term.

All nomination forms must be submitted by the deadline established annually by the Board of Directors (see below). TSTA will send each nominee information detailing board members’ responsibilities, along with a form stating the candidate has read the information and will accept the responsibilities if elected. The candidate must sign and return this form within the timeline adopted by the board for the candidate’s name to appear on the ballot. Candidates who fail to return this form are ineligible for election.

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 29: Deadline for receipt of nomination forms

Monday, April 2: Deadline for receipt of candidate filler (for inclusion in delegate packets)

Friday, April 13 at 4-45 p.m. CDST: Deadline for receipt of candidate statements/notation nomination (for candidate’s name to appear on ballot)

Saturday, April 21: Election at the TSTA State House of Delegates

Saturday, April 21: Runoff Election (if necessary) at the TSTA State House of Delegates

QUALIFICATIONS

• Be actively engaged in the education profession within the state at the time of election

• Have held Active, ESP, or TPA, or any combination of Active, ESP, or TPA, or membership in TSTA for at least three consecutive years preceding the election

• Be actively employed as a non-supervisory member, unless seeking the supervisory at-large position

• Maintain membership status and educational position in TSTA during term of office

• Sign and return the form accepting the responsibilities of a board member

The nomination form may be submitted by any means providing verifiable evidence that it was timely filed and includes the nominee’s signature. Nominations received through regular mail will not be accepted.

Deliver forms to TSTA’s Center for Executive and Governance (CEG), 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. If hand delivered, be sure to get a hand-written receipt from the CEG. Fax forms to 512-486-7035 or email a PDF version to anezkac@tsta.org. For questions regarding the election, call 877-TASK-TSTA, ext. 1514, or email anezkac@tsta.org.
Texas State Teachers Association
316 West 12th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

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