

# Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

Summer 2012

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## Advocacy in ACTION

TSTA members  
lead 'Stop the  
Cuts' campaign to  
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# The future of public education is in your hands

With public education under an unprecedented attack, TSTA must continue to promote a quality learning environment for our students and a fair, respectful working environment for teachers and educational employees. Educators — the real educational experts — must be full partners in the development of public school policies. **By Rita Haecker, TSTA President**



Our success, and the future of public education in Texas, will be determined in battles being fought at the local level. Local voters elect the legislators who set state education and budget policy. And locally elected school boards set district policy and decide how districts will address state policy directives.

That is why strong local associations with effective local leadership are the foundation of TSTA's strategic plan and mission. Success will require strength,

and TSTA is only as strong as local members who are ready to shape the future with their own hands.

TSTA is blessed with many strong and effective leaders, but leadership development is a continual process. As a member-driven organization, a self-sustaining TSTA must constantly replenish our leadership, building on experience while tapping into the vitality and innovation of young members and bringing them into leadership positions.

In this issue of the Advocate, you can read accounts of TSTA members whose locals have organized to win important victories for educators' rights and working conditions and improved learning conditions for their students.

These locals not only scored important victories for their members and their students, they also energized their organizations and laid the foundation for more victories to come.

I applaud these locals and their leaders for the hard work they have done, the

leadership they have exercised, and the successes they will have in the future. But I know they are not alone. Other locals also have success stories to share, and even more will have victories to celebrate in the next school year.

Please tell us about your victories, and how you achieved them, so we can share the good news and your good ideas with other members throughout the state.

TSTA is ready to help you, but the fight for strong public schools and a healthy working environment for teachers and educational employees must be won at the local level — with strong local leadership. Our public schools face challenges from an anti-government ideology intent on privatizing education, and it is not an exaggeration to say that the future of public education is in the hands of our local leaders.

We can't sit out this battle. The more hands we have on deck, and the stronger they are, the better.



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If you ask teachers about the single biggest challenge they face, chances are they'll say classroom management. It's a process that begins prior to the school year.

## Advocate

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**How to contact us:** Call 877-ASK-TSTA, visit [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org), or write us at TSTA, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. Please send address changes to the attention of Membership Records or [membershiprecords@tsta.org](mailto:membershiprecords@tsta.org).

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PAC ENDORSEMENTS: Jim Jordan, TSTA Region 3C president; Ana Mercado, Deer Park Education Association president; Mary Ann Perez, candidate for Texas House; and Gordon Gauthier, former TSTA board member. TSTA leaders are handing out checks and meeting with candidates to coordinate grassroots assistance

## 1 SUPPORT THE CANDIDATES WHO SUPPORT EDUCATION

This fall, we have the opportunity to cast a vote for candidates who will work with us to stop the cuts that are harming our schools. Look for a list of candidates who support education in the members only area of [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org).



## 2 ARE YOU FEELING THE BUDGET CUTS?

Here's a sample of what we're hearing:

- I'm a music teacher. With

all the cuts that have taken place in my school district, our fine arts director can't purchase the instruments that I so need each year for my students. Each year we do an end-of-year inventory for my school to see what instruments are needed for the fall, but this year that did not happen. So I have to use my money to purchase instruments and other needed musical items. But I realize things could be worse, and I could not have my position as a teacher.

- Less time per class. More teaching periods per day.

More students. Less (paid) prep time.

- Budget cuts have affected my job. My district asked teachers to add one more class, giving up one of the two periods for conferencing and planning. I am putting that 55 minutes in after school every day.

Tell us your story by emailing [debbiem@tsta.org](mailto:debbiem@tsta.org).

## 3 SEND US YOUR HOME EMAIL ADDRESS

It's time to shift our Briefing mailing list to home email addresses so you'll still receive it over the summer.

Just send Sheryl Fisher ([sherylf@tsta.org](mailto:sherylf@tsta.org)) your name and home email address. If you don't receive the Briefing, it's one of our electronic newsletters, and you can sign up for it on our website, [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org).

## 4 LOOKING FOR DISCOUNTS THIS SUMMER?

Take a Smithsonian Journey, stay at a Red Roof Inn, rent a car at a discount, and find out how to avoid cybercrime while away from home.

It's all in NEA Member Benefits' travel section, [www.neamb.com/travel.htm](http://www.neamb.com/travel.htm).



## 5 SCROLL THROUGH TSTA'S PHOTO ALBUM

See photographs of recent events, including the state House of Delegates, statewide Education Support Professionals Conference, Save Texas Schools rally, and more at [www.flickr.com/photos/tstapublicaffairs/sets](http://www.flickr.com/photos/tstapublicaffairs/sets).

## 6 CONVENTION ELECTION RESULTS

At the April House of Delegates in Dallas, delegates adopted two amendments to the TSTA Bylaws, and the following candidates were unopposed in their respective races and declared elected.

- Evelina Loya, Garland Education Association, will serve a second three-year term as NEA Director for Texas, Place 2, beginning Sept. 1.
- J.L. Martinez, Association of Brownsville Educators, will serve a second two-year term as the supervisor at large representative

on the TSTA Board of Directors beginning July 15.

## 7 APPLY FOR NOMINATION TO A COMMITTEE

TSTA has 11 statewide standing committees: TSTA-PAC; Legislative; Compliance; Credentials, Bylaws & Elections; Teaching Profession; Education Support Professionals; Member Advocacy; School Board Policies; Special Education; Communications & Community Outreach; and Governance. These committees are appointed by TSTA President Rita Haecker with board approval. If you would like more information about these committees or

would like to be considered for appointment to a committee, please contact the TSTA Center for Executive and Governance.

## 8 ESP OF THE YEAR NOMINATIONS DUE SEPT. 30

TSTA is accepting nominations for the Ronnie Ray Education Support Professional Advocate of the Year Award. Any ESP who has been a TSTA member for at least three years as of Jan. 15, 2012, is eligible for nomination. For application guidelines contact TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance at 877-ASK-TSTA ext. 1510 or 1514 or see our website: [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org).

## 9 FILING DEADLINE IS SEPT. 15 FOR NEA DIRECTOR

Nominations are open for NEA Director for Texas, Place 1. The individual elected will serve a three-year term on the NEA Board of Directors, beginning Sept. 1, 2013, and will sit as a voting member of the TSTA Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 15, 2013. This election will be held at the TSTA convention in April 2013. The filing deadline is Sept. 15. For more information, contact TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance at 877-ASK-TSTA ext. 1514 or 1510.



## 10 DENISE IMHOFF IS RETIRING

You may not know her, but she's been working for you for 29 years. Originally hired in communications to assist with the newspaper, Denise ended her career as TSTA's human resources administrator. In addition to personnel matters, she also manages the print shop and facilities, and provides logistical support for the state convention, where she was honored onstage this year for her service. She is shown with Babs Didner.





# School Funding: The Big Lie

Even well-intentioned elected officials are not above exaggerating or spinning some facts occasionally to bolster a political argument, enhance their records, or preserve their reputations. But such exaggeration usually involves an element of truth. **By Clay Robison**

State officials who slashed \$5.4 billion from the public schools last year have gone way beyond traditional political “spin.” Ashamed and/or afraid in an election year to admit the truth about their attack on public education, they have manufactured a whopper. It goes something like this: “The Legislature actually added \$1.6 billion in extra funding for public education over the previous budget period.”

The number may vary from storyteller to storyteller, but the bottom line is the same. It is a Big Lie, and about the only people swallowing it are folks who think we live in Fantasyland. The 25,000 school employees, including almost 11,000 teachers, who have lost their jobs certainly don’t believe it.

Republican Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, who bypassed the Senate’s rules to

force approval of the education cuts in the face of strong Democratic opposition last spring, has told the Big Lie. So have a number of legislators who voted for the reductions. And so has Comptroller Susan Combs, who didn’t cast a vote on the budget but certainly knew better than to claim, as she did recently, that the Legislature didn’t cut education funding but increased it by \$2 billion.

“It was not less, but it was not as much,” she told a Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce forum in April, according to the Bryan-College Station Eagle.

The comptroller didn’t fool a couple of school administrators in the audience. Superintendent Eddie Coulson of College Station ISD said his district will receive \$7 million less from the state for the 2012-13 school year than it received in 2010-11. Superintendent Thomas Wallis said Bryan ISD was hit with a \$9 million cut.

“We are already to the cuticle,” Wallis said. “We’re as far down as we can go.”

And Combs didn’t fool the Austin American-Statesman’s fact-checking PolitiFact Texas columnists, who slapped her with their “Pants on Fire” designation, reserved for the worst falsehoods uttered by political figures.

“Lawmakers cut public school aid,” PolitiFact Texas concluded. “To say otherwise is inaccurate, misleading, and by a wide margin ridiculous.”

PolitiFact Texas also branded state Rep. Myra Crownover, R-Lake Dallas, with its “Pants on Fire” tag for claiming on her campaign website that the Legislature had increased funding for education by \$1.6 billion. In truth, Crownover joined with the Republican legislative majority to cut state public school aid by \$5.4 billion for the current budget period.

Other legislators who are seeking reelection this year also deserve the “Pants on Fire” designation, but PolitiFact can’t devote all its time to chasing the Big Lie about education funding when campaign season and overactive political imaginations are in full bloom on a range of issues.

The Texas Association of School Boards contrasts the Big Lie with budgetary re-

ality in a summary on a special website it has created, [www.truthaboutschoools.org](http://www.truthaboutschoools.org).

In drafting the previous two-year state budget, Gov. Rick Perry and the Legislature in 2009 used \$3.4 billion in one-time federal stimulus money to help pay for the Foundation School Program, the state’s basic school funding source. Perry loves to bash Washington and especially the Obama Administration. But he readily accepted the federal handout because it helped cover a school funding shortfall lawmakers created in 2006 when they didn’t raise enough state revenue to cover deep cuts they ordered in local school property taxes.

**Combs didn’t fool the Austin American-Statesman’s fact-checking PolitiFact Texas columnists, who slapped her with their “Pants on Fire” designation, reserved for the worst falsehoods uttered by political figures.**

The school shortfall was still there in 2011, but the federal money wasn’t. Also missing was any interest on the part of the Governor and the legislative majority in adequately funding the public schools. They partially compensated for the loss of \$3.4 billion in federal funds with \$1.6 billion in state general revenue (the source of the Big Lie). But as simple math confirms, they still fell \$1.8 billion short of what they had budgeted for the Foundation School Program the previous session.

The new public education budget also neglected to account for the 160,000 to 170,000 additional students who are projected to enroll in Texas public

schools during this budget period at an increased cost of about \$2.2 billion. That brought the shortfall, or cut, in public education funding to \$4 billion for the Foundation School Program alone. Add to that amount an additional \$1.4 billion that was cut from education grant programs, and the total reduction in state funding for public schools for this budget period was \$5.4 billion.

This was the first time in more than 60 years (Perry’s lifetime), perhaps ever, that the Legislature has not provided funding for projected enrollment growth. The Governor and the legislative majority left more than \$7 billion in the Rainy Day Fund, more than enough money to avoid the education cuts without raising state taxes. But they were driven by an anti-government ideology intent on shrinking essential public services.

The Governor has also spread the Big Lie, or at least a variation of it. After returning to Texas earlier this year from his failed presidential campaign, Perry told reporters that Texas was still spending about \$10,000 per student. In reality, Texas spent \$8,908 in state and local funds per student during the 2011-12 school year, a \$538 drop per student from the \$9,446 spent the previous year — before lawmakers took an axe to the budget.

These figures, based on average daily attendance (ADA), were compiled by the National Education Association, using Texas budgetary data. Texas is now more than \$2,500 per student below the national average in ADA spending. While Texas spending was dropping, the national average for ADA was increasing from \$11,305 in 2010-11 to \$11,463 this year. Texas ranked 41st among the states last year and probably is lower now.

The teaching jobs that were lost to the





SENATOR RODRIGUEZ SIGNS PETITION: Silvia Adame, TSTA-Student Program president, University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP); Sen. Jose Rodriguez, D-El Paso; Ana Martinez, Young Democrats president, UTEP; Norma De La Rosa, El Paso Teachers Association (EPTA) president; Delia Camacho, EPTA membership chair; Cesar Rossatto, Texas Faculty Association chapter president, UTEP; and Georgina Nuñez, Texas Faculty Association member, UTEP.

budget cuts mean class sizes have increased. More than 8,400 kindergarten through fourth grade classes are larger than the 22-student cap set by state law because the state education commissioner made it easier for districts to get waivers by pleading financial hardship. Thousands of elementary students are no longer getting as much individual attention as they need from their teachers.

The classroom assaults are likely to worsen in 2012-13 because some school districts will suffer deeper budget cuts in 2012-13 than they did this year. In one of the worst examples, the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees already has voted to close 11 schools in the state's second largest district, beginning next year, and lay off more than 170 additional employees, including about 60 teachers.

Yet Perry continues to ignore TSTA's Stop the Cuts Now campaign. Thou-

sands of teachers, parents, school board members, superintendents, and other concerned Texans have signed TSTA's petitions urging the Governor to call the Legislature into special session

**The Governor has also spread the Big Lie, or at least a variation of it. After returning to Texas earlier this year from his failed presidential campaign, Perry told reporters that Texas was still spending about \$10,000 per student.**

to appropriate \$2.5 billion from the Rainy Day Fund and restore money that was cut from 2012-13 school budgets. Instead, the Governor is promoting among legislators a right-wing "Texas

budget compact" that would cut education funding even more, while letting Rainy Day funds continue to grow.

Deeper education cuts would be disastrous for many districts, particularly fast-growing districts, such as Del Valle ISD in southeastern Travis County. Del Valle — which has many students who are economically disadvantaged, English-language learners — lost 40 teachers during 2011-12, about 5 percent of its teaching staff.

"This has been a very difficult year," said Michelle Cardenas, a pre-kindergarten teacher at Hillcrest Elementary and the president of the Del Valle Education Association, TSTA's local.

"Where's the money?" was her response to the Big Lie.

Cardenas taught two half-day pre-K classes this year. One class had 24 students, and the other had 26 four- and five-year olds for most of the year. She



FUTURE EDUCATORS SUPPORT TSTA CAMPAIGN: TSTA-Student Program members took time out from their convention to sign petitions and participate in the Save Texas Schools rally and march.

didn't get a full-time aide until December and, even with the help, she was unable to give the children all the individual attention she believed they needed.

"I hated treating them like they were in daycare, but when you have that many, it's almost like daycare," Cardenas said.

TSTA member Eloy Lopez used to be one of two welders employed by McAllen ISD in the Rio Grande Valley. Now he is the district's only welder. His former colleague accepted a financial incentive from the district and quit. The district also lost about 50 teachers this past school year.

"They (administrators) want more from us (school employees). But we don't have enough people, and they know it,"



HAECKER STANDS WITH LEGISLATORS: Appearing at a "Stop the Cuts" press conference were Reps. Trey Martinez Fischer and Joe Farias; Sen. Leticia Van de Putte; TSTA President Rita Haecker; two superintendents, Dr. Lloyd Verstuyft of Southwest ISD and Dr. Brian Gottardy of Northeast ISD; and TSTA local leaders from Judson Education Association, Harlandale Education Association, North East Teachers Association, and Southwest Educators Association.

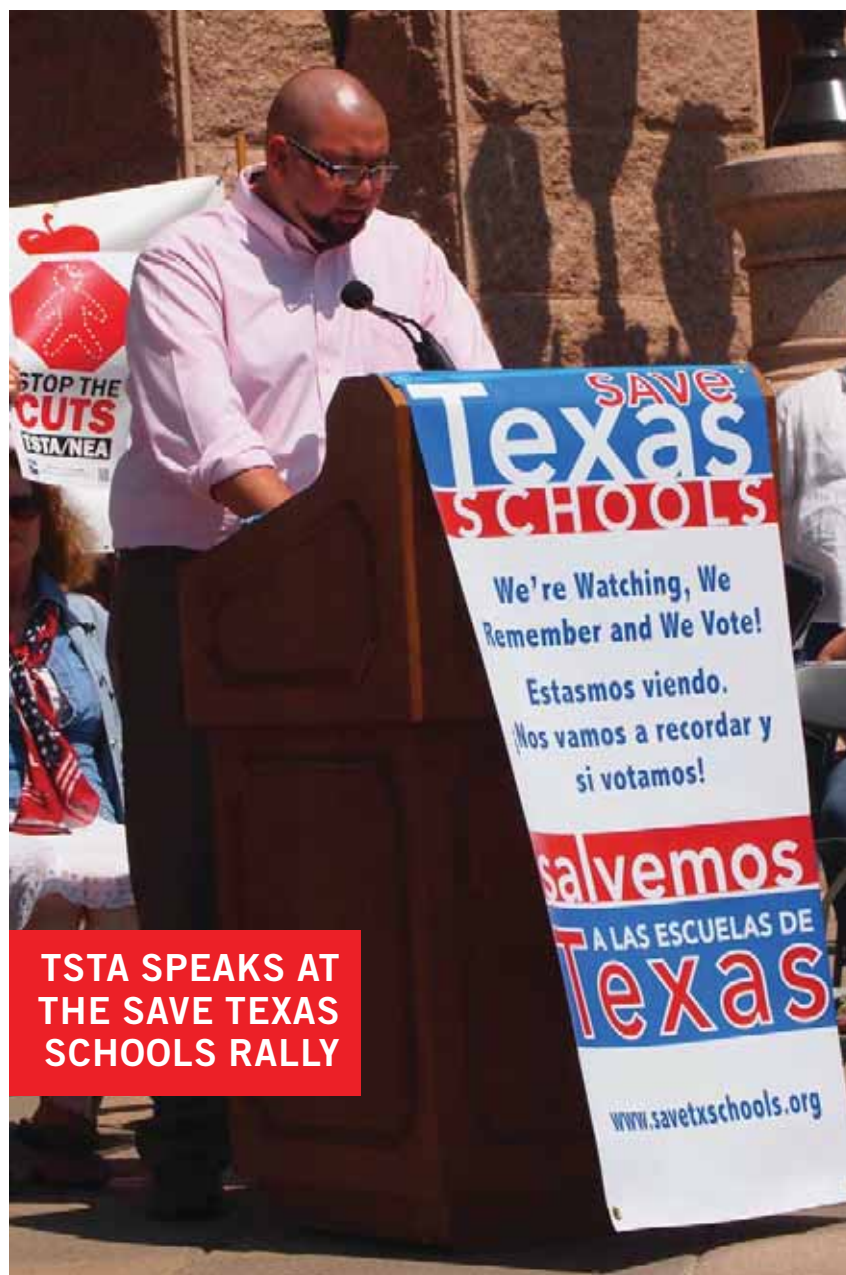
Lopez said. "I see our teachers. They are stressed. They have more kids in their classes, more pressure. That's not right."

He said state government must quit slashing the education budget and "give the kids what is theirs." If not, he fears many young people in South Texas are

going to be deprived of a quality education. "Then what are they going to be doing? Working in the fields?"

If given the opportunity, Lopez said, he would deliver a simple, truthful message to the Governor: "I think you're wrong, sir."





**Teachers give everything.** They load up on supplies at Walmart for those kids who can't afford them. They buy clothes and gifts for students in need. They buy food for those kids they know are going to an empty home and an empty refrigerator.

**They are there for all their students,** to lend an ear, provide a safe place for them to learn, and open their students' eyes to a world of possibility.

**Make no mistake:** educators are heroes. And how does our state reward their efforts? By laying off more than 10,000 educators due to budget shortfalls and threatening to lay off even more next year. By increasing the size of their classrooms. By raising expectations on state tests.

**But when you cut their funds,** when you raise the bar, (and) say, "You need to be up here, but we're going to take more money away from you," that is not right.

**Legislators never mention** that Texas is one of the lowest when it comes to the amount of money we spend per student.

**We hear about** this Rainy Day Fund. Don't let this weather trick you. It is pouring, and our children and our schools are drowning.

**It is up to us to say enough** is enough, because the truth of the matter is all these budget cuts do not hurt teachers, they hurt our children.

## Arturo Villanueva

Arturo Villanueva is a fifth grade math and science coordinator at Mission Valley Elementary in Ysleta ISD. A member of Ysleta Teachers Association, Villanueva is a former Teacher of the Year for both his school district and Region 19.

**Here we are again,** at our State Capitol, where the Governor and a legislative majority, for the first time in at least 60 years, refused to provide the funds needed to educate all Texas students. And what's worse, they even changed the law to say they don't have to pay to educate all our kids.

**Governor,** last session you signed a budget that cut \$5.4 billion from our children's classrooms. Now there's \$7 billion, maybe \$9 billion, sitting in the bank in the Rainy Day Fund, and it's time to put it to work in the classroom.

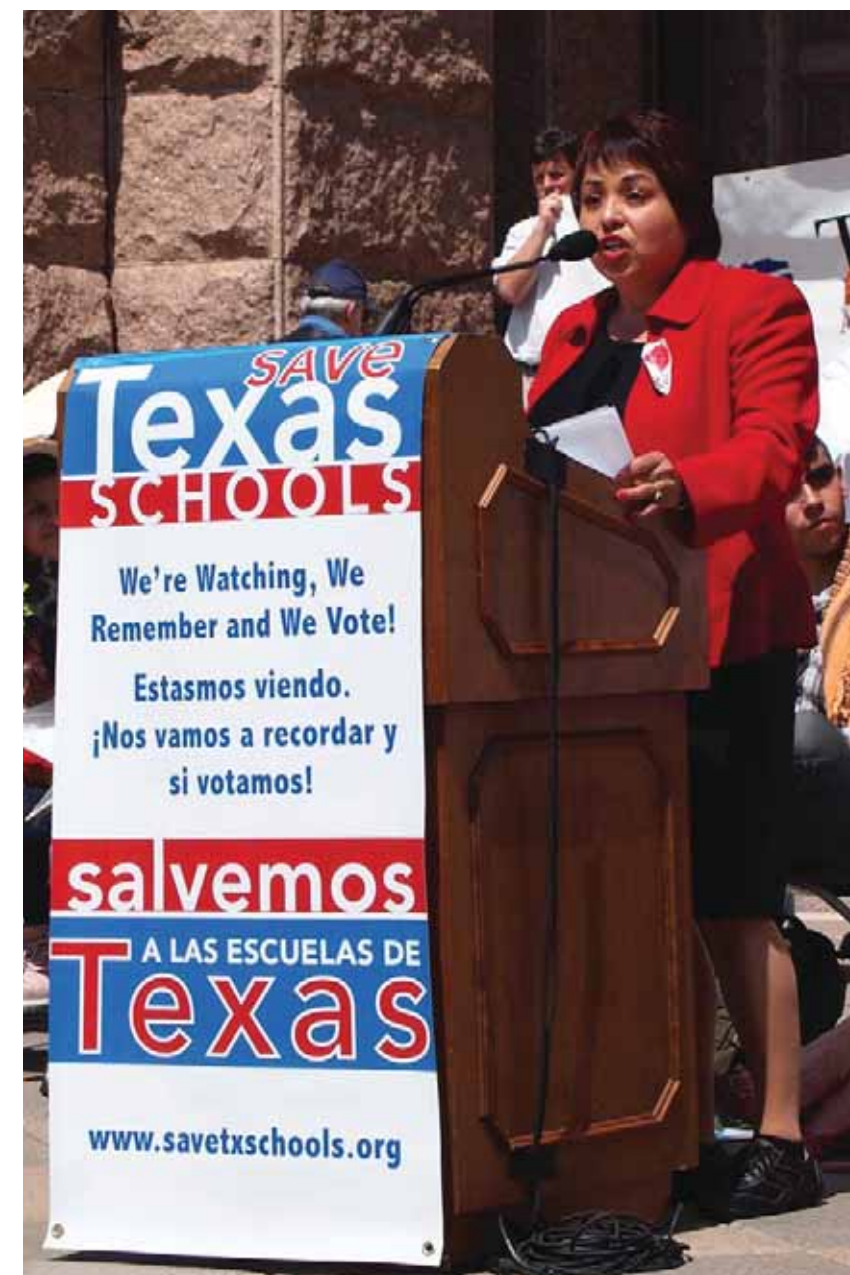
**Already 25,000 school employees,** including almost 11,000 teachers, have lost their jobs. And more cuts will cost more jobs in the next school year.

**This year, 8,400 students** in kindergarten through the fourth grade are being forced to learn in crowded classrooms that exceed class size limits.

**The state is now spending** \$538 less for each child in our public schools than it was spending a year ago.

**Thousands of parents,** teachers, educational employees, and taxpayers all over Texas have signed the Stop the Cuts petition — not because of money, but because we care about our kids, and it's time to save their schools.

**When we leave here today,** we have to take our cause back to our communities and to the ballot box. Together, we can stop the cuts and save our schools.



## TSTA President Rita Haecker

TSTA's state president, Rita Haecker, was a first grade bilingual teacher in Austin ISD for 15 years. At the national level, she serves on the NEA Leading the Profession Committee (nea.org/leadingtheprofession) and NEA-PAC Advisory Committee.





BEAUMONT: Beaumont Teachers Association celebrates its 200 new members and 600 signatures for the Stop the Cuts Now petition drive.

# TSTA locals key to organizing success

Strong and successful TSTA local associations with effective local leadership are the foundation of TSTA's strategic plan and mission. Public education is under attack, and the battles that will shape its future are being fought at the local level.

Several TSTA locals have organized to win important victories for their students and education employees. Others have built Member Advocacy Teams to stand up for members' rights and working conditions. (If your local is interested in forming a Member Advocacy Team, call 877-ASK-TSTA.)

Here are the stories — as told by members in their own words — that illustrate how TSTA locals are improving the working and learning conditions that define better schools.

## BEAUMONT SIGNED UP ALMOST 200 NEW MEMBERS, FOR A TOTAL OF 1,000 MEMBERS

We had a major organizing success in Beaumont in May. For our spring membership drive, four TSTA staff, four part-time staff, and one leader, TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria, visited 16 work sites in four days.

We signed up almost 200 new members (half teachers, half education support professionals), got more than 600 Stop the



SAN MARCOS: San Marcos Educators TSTA/NEA stopped language that could have left employees vulnerable to working extra hours without extra pay.

Cuts petition signatures, and made a great “visibility impact” on behalf of the local organization. We now have more than 1,000 members in our local association.

We personally contacted every association representative (the TSTA contact at each campus). If they were not able to attend our campaign meeting, they received a packet with very specific instructions on what to do the day of the visit.

We sent a “we are coming” mailer to all association representatives two weeks prior to the campus visit. One week prior to the visit, we sent an email to each campus with the date and time we’d be there, and we sent a follow-up email two days before the visit.

We emailed all 3,500 BISD employees and invited them to talk about education issues in the lounge that day.

If non-members joined, they got a T-shirt that said “We are one” with the local, state, and national TSTA/NEA logos.

We had fun. A combination of team-

work, good planning, and timing made this a successful spring campaign.

## > Beaumont Teachers Association campaign committee

## SAN MARCOS PROTECTED EMPLOYEES FROM WORKING EXTRA HOURS

At my monthly meeting with the superintendent in January, I was told that the board of trustees would be considering several issues, and one of them was implementing the Texas Association of School Boards model contract language that would open the door to teachers being required to work week-ends, holidays, and unlimited evenings, as well as days not designated on the school calendar.

We talked to staff members first thing to see how they felt about it; we do a lot of member-to-member contact. They started calling the administration and board of trustees to voice their concerns, which resulted in the human resources director calling me to say the district did not intend to implement the additional working hours or calen-

dar day language for the 2012-13 contracts. The item never appeared on the board agenda, and we understood the matter to be closed.

But when teachers received their contracts, the language was included. I requested an urgent meeting with the superintendent, where I learned that, although the board of trustees did not vote to implement the change, the board president signed the changed language contracts. The superintendent said it was not an issue, and their intent was not to change any of the current practices.

Our feeling was, if it’s not an issue, why include it? I explained that we had been told the language would not be included and that this was a huge issue to TSTA members and other district employees. We just wanted to make sure our educators were protected from not only our current administration but future administrations and their decisions.

I shared that TSTA locals in two neighboring districts had been successful in removing the language from teacher contracts, and I showed the superintendent the Hays CISD statement of clarification, the Del Valle addendum, and the 2012-13 contracts for those districts, showing that the language was removed.

He did see our point. We offered a letter of understanding and also a contract addendum. We gave them two choices that were both acceptable to us, in order to help mediate this problem for the best interest of our teachers. We have a great working relationship with our superintendent and our board. We believed that meeting to discuss the issue and working toward an acceptable compromise was in the best interest of our employees and the district.

We recently received notice that teachers are allowed to strike that language





LUBBOCK: Lubbock Educators Association is one of the TSTA local associations that started a Member Advocacy Team to stop problems at an early level.

out of their contracts and that it will not be in the 2013-14 contract. We're very glad and excited that we could partner with our district in getting this contract language removed and protecting the teachers in our district.

> **Susan Seaton, San Marcos Educators TSTA/NEA**

### DONNA SAVED FIVE DAYS OF SICK LEAVE

Our school board tried to take five sick days from Donna ISD employees. Our education support professionals confronted them at a public meeting and won the days back.

We packed the boardroom with more than 100 people from the community. Along with those sick days, we were also able to reinstate five contract days that some employees had lost, and reinstate librarian and pre-kindergarten aides who had been terminated.

We not only improved the lives of our education support professionals but also the quality of education for our students.

> **Linda Estrada, Donna TSTA/NEA**

### KILLEEN HELD A SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE FORUM

This is the first time Killeen Education Association has organized a forum, but

it went really well. We held it at the Killeen Community Center.

All five candidates for the Place 7 seat on our school district's board of trustees participated.

The audience asked a lot of questions, but most of the discussion was around a proposal that was before the current board to end our longevity stipends.

Killeen ISD encourages experienced teachers and staff to stay with the district by giving them a stipend for every five years of service. Some school board members wanted to save money by ending the stipend, but at the forum, KEA effectively made the case for longevity pay, winning the vote on the issue two weeks later by 4-3.

> **Killeen Education Association President Stacy Stoll, First Vice-President Ann Fitzgerald, and Secretary David Bass**

### HAYS STOPPED A CHANGE IN NONRENEWAL NOTIFICATION TIMELINES

The power of collective action never ceases to amaze me. When individuals stand alone, we are too often taken for granted, but together we command respect. Such is the power of our union.

Like many districts across the state,

Hays CISD was considering a Texas Association of School Boards recommendation that districts change the deadline for nonrenewal notification to give teachers less notice.

Given the alarming effect this proposed action would have on educators, we put together a video with the assistance of our TSTA representative Jason Wylie, explaining the issue in detail, and we emailed it to every teacher in our district.

Using change.org, we also created an online petition calling for the board to reject the proposed changes and for the continuation of the existing 45-day policy. The volume of comments and petitions filling their inboxes caught the attention of board members and was noted during the board's discussion.

After long and detailed consideration, the board made a bold decision to reject the proposed policy change, and teachers now have a written guarantee that the district will inform educators of any intent to not renew their contract no later than 45 days before the last day of instruction.

I am proud to be part of a school district that values its workforce, makes a commitment to employee morale, and takes the extra step to forge partnerships with unions and employee organizations; that demonstrates a clear respect for educators and support staff. Our local leadership meets at least monthly with the superintendent, and this collaborative relationship enabled us to get the bad contract language removed.

Hays Educators Association and TSTA commend the Hays CISD board of trustees and administration for making teachers' concerns a priority and courageously providing an example for neighboring districts to follow.

> **Esperanza Orosco, Hays Educators Association**



KILLEEN: Killeen Education Association held its first school board candidate forum – which turned out to be a forum on longevity pay, as well.

### LUBBOCK AND DONNA CREATED A TEAM TO ADVOCATE FOR MEMBERS

I have defended about 15 people through our local's Member Advocacy Team. I assisted them in their grievances.

The first grievance I ever had, the school attorney was there, so I was very, very nervous, but I didn't show that, or I don't think I did.

We ended up winning that case — we settled in level two — and the employee was very happy, so that was my first victory.

After that, the word gets out that you've assisted and you've won, so then you get the calls.

It then becomes easier. And there's respect from school officials and board members, like "Okay, this one really knows what she's talking about, so let's sit down with her and see what she's got to say."

> **Jeannette Garcia-Avila, Donna TSTA/NEA**

We got the original training from TSTA General Counsel Joey Moore, but through collaboration amongst the TSTA Member Advocacy Team members, we've been able to self train a little bit, too. When we get to see the email exchanges when one member of the team handles a situation, we take

and learn from each other how to handle situations in the future.

It's been especially helpful to see individual members who aren't on the MAT team bolster themselves up through the advocacy process.

They become advocates for themselves as well as people on their campuses because they're seeing we're just teachers in the district. They're able to be advocates for themselves as well as other people once they see it's not difficult.

> **Alice Keller, Lubbock Educators Association**

We chose Member Advocacy Team members who were at different campuses and across different grade levels — elementary school, middle school, high school. We thought that was important, because to an elementary teacher, there are different issues than you're going to find with a high school teacher, in particular, student problems, parent problems, discipline problems.

Sometimes I think they open up a little bit more because they're not talking to a lawyer, they're not talking to a TSTA representative; they're talking to a teacher that can say "I've been there, done that." I think for some teachers they'll be more forthcoming when they know they're talking to another teacher.


> **Lu Ann Gatlin, Lubbock Educators Association**

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## LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS COLLECTED THOUSANDS OF SIGNATURES

“Hundreds of members and leaders across the state have circulated, and are continuing to circulate, the Stop the Cuts Now petition,” Patrick Harvey, director of TSTA Affiliate and Leadership Development, said.

Stop the Cuts Now is TSTA’s campaign and petition drive to demand that the Governor call the Legislature into special session to restore state formula and Texas Education Agency grant funding to local school districts for the 2012-13 school year.

“Association representatives are passing the petition around in their buildings,” Harvey said. “We have a member in Mercedes who collected signatures at the local mall, and a member in Brownsville who has been taking petitions with her to bingo.”

The petition drive is still going strong. When the Governor recently said he wanted to cut public education funding even further through his Texas budget compact initiative, it made our locals renew their efforts.

If your local hasn’t participated yet, it’s not too late to join the campaign. You can download the petition from [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org).

Thanks to great work by TSTA local associations, the superintendents of six school districts signed the petition in North Lamar, Garland, Alief, Beaumont, Socorro, and Lubbock.

And the full membership of seven school boards signed the petition in Garland, Beaumont, Amarillo, Fabens, Socorro, Lubbock, and El Paso.

And the school boards of six school districts passed the resolution in La Grange, Donna, Deer Park, Galveston, San Benito, and El Paso.

And many, many local associations have collected thousands of signatures. Here are just a few examples of local activity:

**Amarillo:** At their booth at the Make-A-Wish car show, Amarillo Education Association collected 846 signatures from community members in just two days, for a total of 1,326 signatures.

**Beaumont:** Beaumont Teachers Association has collected 630 signatures.

**Brownsville:** The Association of Brownsville Educators collected 961 signatures in one building sweep.

They presented a workshop for 140 student teachers at the University of Texas at Brownsville; the presenters incorporated a segment on the Stop the Cuts initiative and collected 140 signatures from student teachers and university education advisors/faculty.

**Dallas:** NEA-Dallas netted 738 signatures in a four-day sweep of the schools by local President Angela Davis, TSTA President Rita Haecker, Vice President Noel Candelaria, and TSTA staff.

**Donna:** Donna TSTA/NEA (and Region 1E) President Linda Estrada brought 899 signatures on Stop the Cuts petitions to the TSTA House of Delegates in April.

**El Paso:** At a town hall meeting sponsored by University Democrats and the TSTA Student Program Chapter from the University of Texas at El Paso, guest speaker Sen. Jose Rodriguez talked about the education cuts and signed the Stop the Cuts petition.

**Laredo:** The ‘Stop the Cuts’ resolution was adopted by both Webb County and the City of Laredo, thanks to Laredo United. The local gathered more than 1,500 signatures by asking all association representatives, both in Laredo ISD and United ISD, to distribute the petition.

**Region 1E:** Members and leaders from TSTA Region 1E, led by Regional President Linda Estrada, attended a town hall meeting on education funding in Edinburg to gather signatures for the Stop the Cuts petition. The meeting was sponsored by Sen. Eddie Lucio of Brownsville, who signed the TSTA petition.

**Socorro:** By the end of March, Socorro Education Association had collected 1832 signatures, including those of the Socorro ISD board, superintendent, and cabinet. The local held a drawing for a gift card; schools in which 70 percent or more of the employees signed the petition could enter.

## POST YOUR PHOTOS TO OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

Locals that are working on the Cuts campaign can now post photos of their efforts directly from their phones to the Stop the Cuts Facebook page. Here’s how:

1. Create a new contact on your phone — maybe naming it “Stop the Cuts Now”? — and give it the unique email address Facebook generated for our page: [lye731skewer@m.facebook.com](mailto:lye731skewer@m.facebook.com).
2. Take a photo of the event with your phone.
3. Email the photo as an attachment to the contact you just created. Write a photo caption in the subject line.
4. The photo will show up on the wall at [www.facebook.com/stopthecutsnow](http://www.facebook.com/stopthecutsnow).

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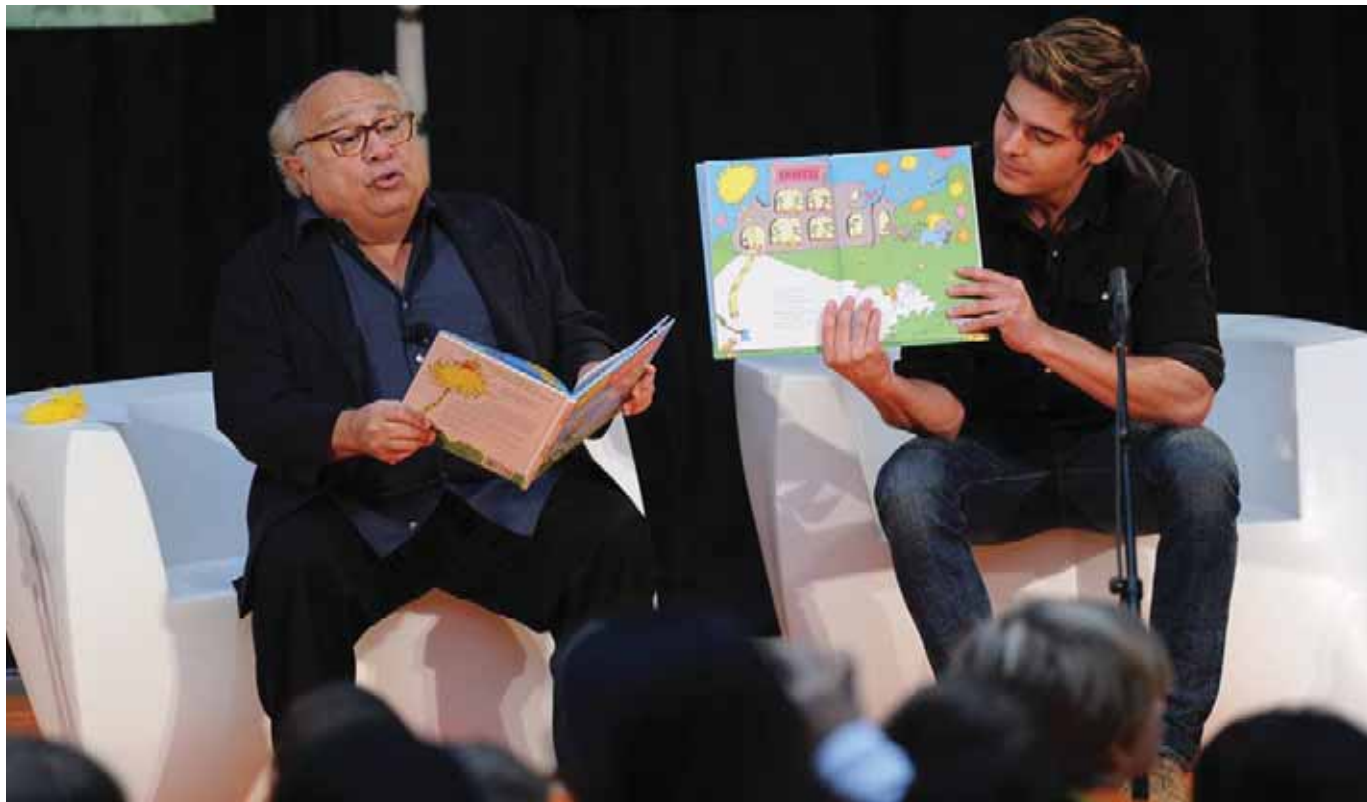
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## Read Across America: literacy and fun

If students admire and want to be like their favorite celebrities, who better to have on your team to promote reading than Zac Efron and Taylor Swift?

Efron, Swift, Betty White, Danny DeVito, and Ed Helms — the vocal stars of *The Lorax* movie — were co-chairs of NEA's Read Across America celebration on March 2.

Even the President of the United States got involved, issuing an official proclamation calling on “children, families, educators, librarians, public officials, and all the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.”

“From infancy through adulthood, reading enriches the human experience and illuminates the path to learning, opportunity, and success,” the President said. “By sharing the beauty and power of books with our children, we make a vital investment not only in their future, but also in an America that leads the world in educating its people.”

Now in its 15th year, NEA's annual reading extravaganza is light-hearted and fun while reinforcing important messages about literacy and the importance of parental involvement in education.

DeVito and Efron read at the national kickoff in the New York Public Library while the 5,000-mile Read Across America tour, carrying the Lorax himself (or a costume donned by a volunteer at each stop), visited 12 states and 18 cities, including Dallas and Austin. In addition to providing two cars and drivers for the tour, Mazda pledged up to \$1 million in support of the nation's public school libraries: for each test drive of a Mazda vehicle between Feb. 21 and April 2, the company donated \$25 toward grants. Mazda dealers in Austin and Dallas also donated \$1000 to local school libraries.

Schools across Texas held their own celebrations, some featuring character parades, guest readers, Cat in the Hat costumes, green eggs and ham, and cake for Dr. Seuss, whose birthday is March 2.

Find out how you can participate in Read Across America next year at [www.nea.org/readacross](http://www.nea.org/readacross).



PREVIOUS PAGE: Actors Danny DeVito and Zac Efron read to public school students at the Read Across America national kick-off celebration in New York.

TOP ROW: TSTA President Rita Haecker and The Lorax read at Rodriguez Elementary in Austin; TSTA-Retired members Janet Buxkemper, Barb Rogers, Connie Reed, Margaret Brown, Jo Ann Peschel, and Linda Foley visit McDougale Elementary in Klein (quilt by Firmine Stoerkel).

SECOND ROW: Jones-Clark Elementary teacher Glenda McCray organizes a celebration in Beaumont with librarian Clemeteen Dodd and Lamar University athletic director George Price, with the help of students from Lamar University and Taylor Career Center; Mazda presents the McShan Elementary library in Dallas with \$1,000.

THIRD ROW: Airmen from Lackland Air Force Base visit schools with TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria and Southwest Educators Association officers Diana Rodriguez, Jessica Aragon, and Beverly Botti; President Aragon helps an airman put on his “Cat in the Hat” makeup.

BOTTOM ROW: TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria, President Rita Haecker, and Education Austin Co-President Rae Nwosu with The Lorax at Austin's Metz Elementary.





# Giving back to the future

“TSTA/NEA has given me confidence. Knowing that I am a part of something bigger than myself, all of us working toward the same goal, is comforting in today’s society.”

Last year, Loryn Windwehen taped a photo of Beth Huckabee, the 2011 Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award winner, to her mirror. “I said, ‘That’s going to be me one day,’” Windwehen, who won the award this year, said.

A science teacher and technology coordinator at Harris Middle School in North East ISD (San Antonio), Windwehen comes from a long line of teachers. Her grandmother and aunt were teachers, and her mother teaches life skills to high school students with special needs in Cuero. But it’s her dad, who died while she was in college, that she describes as her “first and greatest teacher” and her inspiration for becoming a teacher.

“I decided to give back to the future the way my dad gave to me,” she said. “I realized not everybody has someone to love

them, and I needed to go out and love the world through teaching.”

It’s clear from the comments of her colleagues why Windwehen won the Boice Award, which rewards and promotes teaching excellence.

“Loryn has a personal love of learning and the natural talent for motivating learners of all ages to catch her enthusiasm,” assistant principal Mary Baker said. “She has a wonderful relationship with her students, parents, and staff.”

“She uses active, hands-on science to draw students into the activity and real-world connections to draw them into the content,” Mary Poarch, science program supervisor for North East ISD, said. “A good example is her school garden, which provides students with first-hand, authentic science experi-



ences while teaching required content. She checks for student understanding and misunderstanding and always has a plan in place to help students catch up and move ahead as necessary.”

The garden is a one-acre outdoor learning area, a collaborative effort with art teacher Lacey Trevino.

“In the beginning we just had this field of weeds and ants and dirt, and we didn’t really know where to start,” Windwehen said. Slowly it came together through grants and donations.

Most of the funding came from HEB and the school district’s education

foundation, but the community helped with money and materials. Lowe’s provided wooden benches; Vulcan Materials donated rocks; Sodexo gave fruit trees; an eagle scout added picnic tables.

Student involvement began with recruits from study hall and grew into a new gardening and environmental science class, better known as The Green Team. They installed the plants, pavers, and beds — and fences to keep the rabbits out — and maintain the area throughout the year.

Student applicants are chosen on grade

point average, respect for others, teamwork, and “whether they are okay with getting dirty.” They love the class.

“When you pick the strawberries or pull up the carrots, all the hard work pays off. It’s so cool,” one boy said.

“When we see pictures from before of the garden, and there was nothing here — it’s crazy how much work we did,” another student added.

“It’s not like any other class. You can get dirty and work with your hands in the soil,” a third student explained.

“What was once an acre of dirt and weeds behind our school is now soil filled with life that fosters memorable life experiences,” Windwehen said. “It’s where hundreds of students and dozens of teachers go to learn, work, and relax.”

There’s a swing and arbor for counseling sessions; a bed for plants to eat (squash, cucumbers, jalapenos, banana peppers, strawberries, onions, and tomatoes), a bed for plants to sell (watermelons, okra, tomatoes, and peppers), and a composting site.

“John Gardner once said, ‘Much education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often we are giving young

*(Continued on page 31)*





# ESP of the Year: Karen Barnes

One of Karen Barnes' proudest moments came on April 22, when the turnout for TSTA's first statewide conference for education support professionals was so large the staff had to scramble to make extra copies of training materials.

The event was one of Barnes' goals. "I strive very hard to advocate for all ESPs in my local and in my state," she told the House of Delegates in Dallas when she accepted the TSTA Ronnie Ray ESP Advocate of the Year Award, TSTA's highest honor for support professionals. "We are an integral part of making schools function and be successful. Without us, children would not get to school, be fed, or learn in a clean, safe, and healthy environment."

From the podium she revealed a new statistic of which she is very proud: "Texas is number one in ESP growth in the entire NEA and in the top 10 percent of total members in the country for ESP!" she said to loud applause.

When she left military service in 1994, Barnes went to work for Austin ISD as a school bus driver. She was promoted to driver coordinator in 2002 and is currently assigned to the

Nelson Bus Terminal, where she oversees the operation of some 40 buses and the personnel assigned to them.

It's her job to train new drivers and bus monitors, and she teaches CPR, first aid, and wheelchair and car seat securement. She takes classes to stay current on training methods, equipment, and laws, especially as they apply to special needs kids.

"One of my greatest passions is making sure children with special needs are able to safely ride in our buses," Barnes, who visits students' homes for wheelchair maintenance and advocates for students with wheelchair companies, said.

Her supervisor, Stephen Stripling, said he saw Barnes take the initiative last summer to design and build a special needs wheelchair securement training station. It allows her to train more employees at one time, and the bus no longer has to stay running. Barnes also made a video for participants to watch before they begin the hands-on training.

"The project was so well-received by the department that a request was made of Karen to have another one built for our South Transportation Terminal. Both are used on a regular basis for the safety and security of all of our mobility impaired students," Stripling said. "Our students here at Austin ISD are truly fortunate to have Karen in the capacity she serves them on a daily basis. We are all driven to be better professionals as we note Karen's example of work ethic and true professionalism."

Charlot DeHoyos, assistant supervisor at Nelson Terminal, called Barnes her "go to" person. "She will always find a solution, know whom to contact, or how to get it fixed. Once she is

assigned a duty or task, you will not have to wonder if it is done."

Barnes joined Education Austin in 1999 and immediately became active. She's represented members in grievances and on the consultation team; served on local and state committees and boards of directors; and been a delegate to every TSTA convention since 1999 and NEA convention since 2003.

"Karen has lobbied state representatives and senators at the Capitol on several occasions, and she has gone to Washington, D.C., to lobby our Texas

**"Texas is number one in education support professionals' growth in the entire NEA and in the top 10 percent of total members in the country for ESP."**

congressmen," TSTA President Rita Haecker said. "She even spoke before a Senate committee about the safety and training differences between school buses and large charter company buses, which resulted in the Department of Transportation implementing stricter manufacturing requirements for the safety of passengers.

"Karen is a highly effective leader and is always involved in some form of advocacy, whether for the profession, for members, or for students," Haecker said.

"My involvement in Education Austin

and TSTA has helped me grow personally by giving me the voice to speak my mind in a way that has a positive impact on others," Barnes said. "I continue to speak up — and encourage others to do so — against unfair actions and to fight to change things that need to be changed. Many voices are louder than one voice. Every employee of the school district should join the union to become an active citizen of the district in a professional way that is proven to work."

Barnes' interest in helping disadvantaged youth extends into her personal life. As state ESP of the Year, she is automatically entered into the national competition for ESP of the Year; should she win, she plans to give half the monetary award to Candlelight Ranch for children who are at-risk, disabled, or from homes with domestic violence.

"My work there is truly a labor of love," Barnes said. "It is so important to me to see kids get over their fears and gain confidence. It is an extraordinary feeling to see children who have suffered abuse or have conditions such as autism be able to learn from each other, grow, and conquer fears. I have been privileged to help this organization, and I know that the work I am helping accomplish is making a difference."

Her advice to others entering public education? "Stay informed, look for opportunities to advance through trainings and promotion, always keep a professional attitude, and use your voice in a way that will help make the workplace better and the public education system better for all students regardless of their background."

Or, in more direct terms, "Grow, speak up, advocate, and fight."





## Education support professionals hold a statewide conference

Eighty-one people attended the TSTA Education Support Professionals Statewide Conference on April 22 following the TSTA House of Delegates in Dallas.

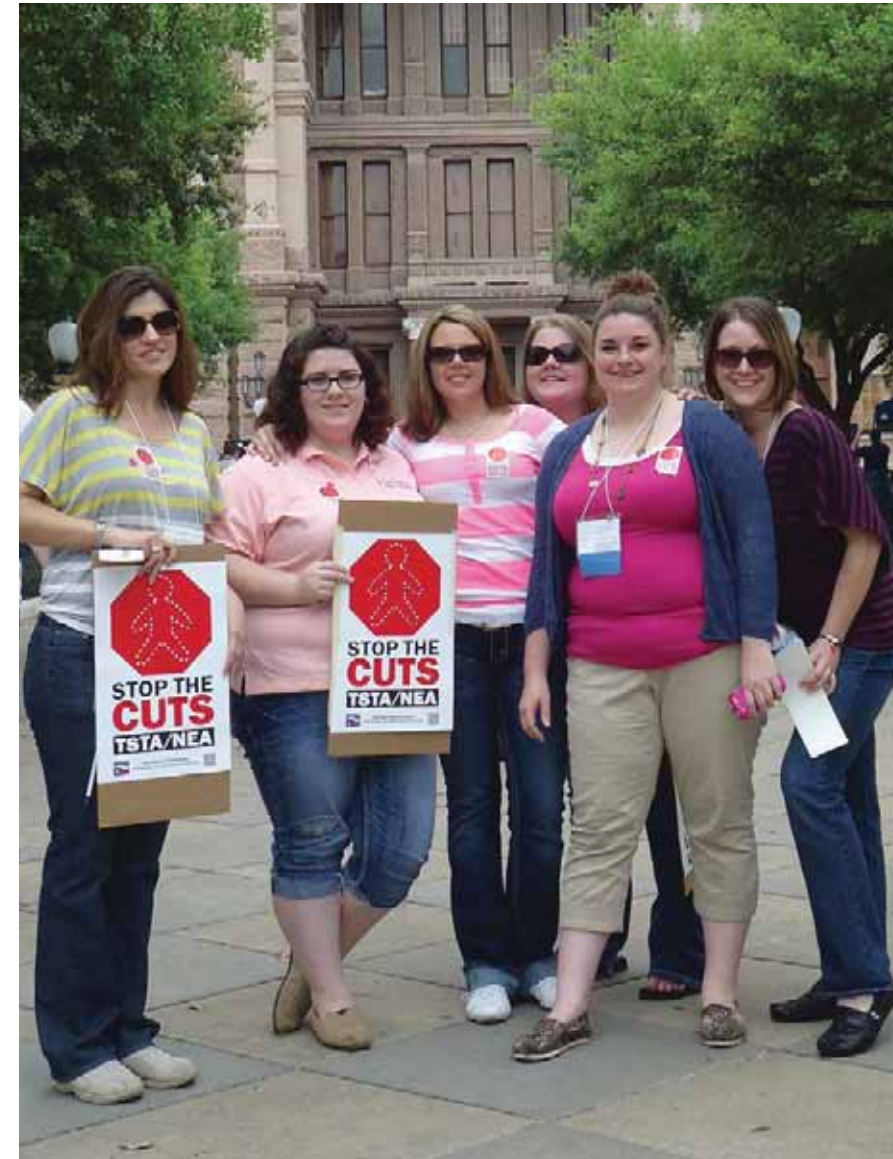
NEA Executive Committee member Paula Monroe, a California high school secretary, gave an inspirational keynote speech. She recognized Texas as the NEA affiliate with the fastest growing ESP membership and applauded Texas ESPs for taking leadership roles at the local, regional, state, and national levels.

Two workshops from TSTA's Leadership CORE Curriculum Training were offered: one on advocacy by TSTA General Counsel Joey Moore, and another on organizing by Education Austin member Karen Barnes and TSTA Organizational Development Specialists Kristi Taylor and Steve Sianez.

Two electives — workshops aligned with CORE but more in-

depth — also were offered by TSTA organizational development specialists. Member recruitment was presented by Gerald Haschke and Clinton Gill, and basic unionism by Sandra Hudson and Marita Palmer.

CORE is four training sessions on advocacy, organizing, local capacity, and politics and communications. Each is an intensive and interactive three-hour course that aligns with TSTA's Strategic Plan. CORE was offered in the Rio Grande Valley and Houston metropolitan area in 2011-12, and it's coming soon to El Paso County, West Texas, the Beaumont area, Dallas Metroplex, Austin/San Antonio, and Laredo. Contact [patriciam@tsta.org](mailto:patriciam@tsta.org) for more information.



ESPs AND STUDENTS: ESPs meet in Dallas, and students take time out from their convention to rally.

### TSTA STUDENT PROGRAM ATTENDS ANNUAL CONVENTION AND RALLY

More than 100 college and university students came to Austin March 23-25 for business and fun at the annual TSTA Student Program state convention and house of delegates.

The agenda for the meeting at the Omni Southpark Hotel included professional development sessions, election of new officers, an awards banquet, and leadership training.

Guest speakers were TSTA President Rita Haecker and Tommie Leaders who is a student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and chairman of the NEA Student Program.

Danielle Thorp was re-elected president of the TSTA Student Program; Eric Phelan was elected vice-president; and Lisa Benson was re-elected secretary.

On Saturday, students took a break from meetings to join TSTA and TSTA-Retired members at the Save Texas Schools rally at the state Capitol.

### UTEP STUDENT GROUP INVITES SENATOR TO SPEAK

The University Democrats and the TSTA Student Program Chapter from the University of Texas at El Paso sponsored a town hall meeting in April with Sen. Jose Rodriguez as guest speaker.

"Members of the two organizations along with members of the Texas Faculty Association chapter and the El Paso Teachers Association were present to hear Sen. Rodriguez speak about the legislative process, which included information on the budget, the cuts to education, and his role in serving his constituents in El Paso County," El Paso Teachers Association President Norma De La Rosa said.

"While talking about education and answering questions about the cuts, and issues and concerns coming up in the next legislative session, Sen. Rodriguez stopped and confirmed his commitment to education by signing the Stop the Cuts petition," De La Rosa said. "He stated that, without education, our children would not be able to buy the houses or the automobiles that the automobile dealers and realtor companies are trying to sell. He also stated that education needed to be everyone's priority."

### TSTA HELPS WITH STUDENT TEACHER CONFERENCE

Twice a year, the University of Houston hosts a student teacher conference for area universities. TSTA is the only professional organization that participates in planning and conducting the conference, whose official title is "Student Teaching Inter-Institutional Conference and Job Fair."

TSTA had a registration table where student teachers filled out a registration





form with their graduation date, email address, and any current professional organization memberships. During the Job Fair, school districts had signing tables for openings in their districts. On hand were representatives from 35 Texas school districts, districts as far away as Denver and Little Rock, and the Taiwan Embassy.

Dr. Frances Smith, NEA Director for Texas, always gives the welcome from TSTA and NEA; this year, she spoke on the Stop the Cuts Now campaign, which resulted in more than 350 of the student teachers signing the petitions.

TSTA staff members conducted two sessions: “Bullying Awareness” by Bryan Weatherford and Mark Maldonado, and “Tap Dancing on Legal Quick-sand” by Sam Blackman and Dardon Ann Hayter, a part-time staff member from Pasadena.

### NORTHSIDE BUS DRIVERS DEMAND A RAISE

Northside ISD has proposed a two percent raise for all employees, but Troy Mason, Northside TSTA member and Culebra Station association representative, and TSTA Organization Develop-



SPEAKING OUT: Houston student teachers sign the petition, and Northside bus drivers address the board.

ment Specialist Susan Salinas said it’s not enough, because employees have not had a pay increase in years.

“The 2011 poverty rate for a household of four is \$23,000,” Salinas said, noting that the average hourly rate for Northside drivers is \$13, and they work, on average, about 30 hours a week and 187 days a year. “Their average annual salary at the midpoint is \$12,155, and senior drivers make an average of \$14,633. This means that transportation employees who are supporting a family of four are the working poor. They are not making a living wage.”

At press time, the board had not voted.

### MEMBER PUBLISHES A BOOK

Gerard Cervantes, a teacher at Ben Brite Elementary in Brownsville ISD, has written a book for children that he says supports the “concepts that are taught throughout the curricula in a Brownsvillian sort of way.” The book, “Hilda Bee’s Special Home,” is illustrated by another Association of Brownsville Educators member, John Aguilar, who is an art instructor at Garcia Middle School.

The Governor’s Committee on People with Disabilities has nominated the book for the Barbara Jordan Media Award. You can find it online through Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

### NEWS FROM TSTA-RETIRED

**Elections:** In February elections, TSTA-Retired gained two new officers who assume office July 15: Secretary Ann Price-Ouzts of Irving, and Treasurer Paul Haupt of El Paso. Other officers for 2012-13 are President Johnetta Elston Williams of Dallas and Vice President Jay-Ann Rucker of El Paso. In 2013, elections will be held for president and vice president.

**Annual Meeting:** The 21st Retired Annual Meeting was held in Dallas in the African American Museum at historic Fair Park, with the Cotton Bowl as its backdrop. The board met April 18, followed by the every-member business session. The group accepted reports from state committees, heard a candidate for the legislature, took a poll, made last minute quilt raffle ticket purchases, and donated to the political action committee and the Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Fund, which is sponsored

by the NEA Foundation. After the business meeting, the group had a Cajun theme dinner party at the Old Mill Inn Restaurant. Entertainment was provided by Dallas resident Cheryl Tyre, a professional in interpretive Shakespearean Theater.

Retiring officers who were honored and received framed certificates for their service included Paul Haupt, who served as secretary for two years; JoAnn Peschel, who was treasurer for four years; and Frank Colbert Jr., who served as Region 4D director and represented Retired School Personnel of Dallas for four years.

On day two of the Annual Meeting, the group was entertained by Danny Mack, chaplain at the Christian Care Hospice and nursing facility, with his workshop, “The Art of Happiness.”

Antonio Galindo, Texas representative for NEA Member Benefits, taught members how to gain the most from benefits, from rental cars and hotels to hearing aids and home appliances. Brandon Watson, California Casualty Insurance representative, spoke about his company’s auto and home insurance.

**TSTA House of Delegates:** 21 delegates represented us at the TSTA HOD. Retired delegates took an active part in the business sessions. Everyone was in place during Friday’s opening ceremony, where Frank Colbert Jr. of Dallas led the pledges to the flags. Delegates were at the 7 a.m. Saturday caucus; participated in a lively and thoughtful discussion of new business; stood in long lines to vote on bylaw changes; and were ready on the delegate floor to offer solutions and vote.

We gave away a \$50 American Express gift card to one of our pre-retired members, Barbara Reed of Arlington. After a yearlong display of that beautiful quilt made by member Gail Durham of

Burleson, we finally held the drawing, and first-time delegate Joana Heronema of San Angelo won.

“Join in a flash” was the pre-retired membership campaign slogan, because everyone who joined at the HOD received a 4 gb flash drive. The membership drive with flash drive was extended until Aug. 31, when dues will increase from \$450 to \$500. If you are currently working and/or planning to retire soon, you can join in the pre-retired category. If you are already retired and are paying annual dues, you can join Retired Life. Call Sarah Kang in the TSTA-Retired Office, 877-ASK-TSTA, for payment options.

**NEA-Retired:** NEA-Retired combined its two regional conferences into one Leadership and Organizing Conference March 27-30 at Bally’s Hotel in Las Vegas. President Williams and TSTA staff member Gerald Haschke attended training March 27-28, then were joined by other Texans for a couple of days of sessions on association growth and development and social networking. Texas was represented by nine registered members. Carrie Cotton of Houston, Region 3C-Retired, received a free room for two nights, provided by NEA Retired. The room is offered for a newly involved member.

### Upcoming events:

- June 6-7: TSTA-Retired Board of Directors Meeting, cancelled
- June 10-12: TSTA-Retired Board of Directors Retreat and Goal Setting Session, Austin
- June 28-30: NEA Retired 29th Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill.
- Sept. 1: Tickets go on sale for the 2013 T-shirt Quilt Give-A-Way, culminating in a drawing April 2013.

—TSTA-Retired President Johnetta Elston Williams



### BUILDING MEMBERSHIP

The following TSTA local associations won membership awards at the April TSTA House of Delegates in Dallas. Congratulations!

- >Mission Education Association
- >Del Valle Education Association
- >San Angelo TSTA/NEA
- >El Paso Teachers Association
- >Southside Education Association
- >La Marque Education Association
- >Northside Education Employees Association
- >Port Arthur Teachers Association
- >Irving Education Association
- >Education Austin
- >Fort Worth Education Association
- >Donna TSTA/NEA
- >Marshall Education Association
- >PSJA TSTA Union One
- >Association of Brownsville Educators
- >PSJA TSTA Professional Local Association
- >Lubbock Educators Association
- >Socorro Education Association
- >Edinburg Local Association
- >Refugio County Local Association
- >La Porte Education Association





## Classroom management: you can do it!

If you ask teachers about the single biggest challenge they face every day, chances are they'll say classroom management. If you probed a little, you might discover they really meant discipline, which is part of classroom management. **By Bryan Weatherford**

Classroom management is a process that begins prior to the school year, based on these key principles of behavior:

- Misbehavior is a symptom of something else.
- Behavior is impacted by communication.
- Behavior serves a purpose.
- Behavior occurs in patterns.
- Behavior can be influenced.
- Influencing behavior can cause behavior to change.

Understanding misbehavior: Typically, children act out for one of four reasons: to satisfy a sensation, escape a situation or task, get attention, or gain something tangible. Understanding what motivates a student is critical to addressing the misbehavior, because you do not want to reinforce the misbehavior. Here's an example: You ask students to take out their journals and write. One student doesn't like to write, so he takes his journal and throws it across the classroom. You respond by sending him to the office.

Let's break down this behavior through a process of ABC-R. A is the antecedent that triggered the misbehavior. B is the misbehavior. C is the consequence (what you did). R is the reinforcement your student got for his misbehavior.

- A** = telling students to take out their journals and write
- B** = student throwing his journal across the room
- C** = sending student to the office
- R** = student not having to write (which is what he wanted)

You reinforced the student's misbehavior; he didn't want to write, and when you sent him to the office, he didn't have to. Why doesn't the student like to write? That is the real issue.

Principles of effective classroom management: The good news is 80 percent of the misbehavior in your classroom is caused by 20 percent of the students, and effective classroom management will minimize even that. Here are some tips:

1. Create community in your classroom: Successful students are engaged in their learning because they feel connected to the people in the classroom. Take time to get to know your students and give them the opportunity to get to know you within the boundaries you set. Simple things such as greeting them at the door, making eye contact, or calling them by name provide affirmation, and this creates that sense of connectedness. It also models appropriate behavior for your classroom.
2. Establish rules and procedures: These need to be taught. When you teach your students the rules (and consequences) and practice the procedures, it reduces their uncertainty and makes it easier for them to focus on their learning. Doing this at the beginning of the year allows you to spend more time teaching content and less time teaching procedures later in the school year.

Some key points about rules:

- Keep them positive so they establish the expectation for behavior. "Walk down the hallway" tells students what the expectation is, whereas "No running in the hallway" just tells them they can't run in the hallway, which means they can skip, somersault, etc.
- Limit the number of rules to five, as too many rules confuse you and the students.
- Teach them what the rules mean.
- Discuss the consequences for breaking the rules (and make sure you follow through).

3. Utilize reinforcers: Students have to make the transition from tangible to intangible reinforcers. Tangible reinforcers help shape student behavior and learning, moving them closer to the desired outcome. But students take responsibility for their own learning when they are intrinsically motivated — when they have the skill set to do the task, and they have episodic success doing it. When they're not successful, it opens the door for misbehavior. Assess their skill sets and provide opportunities for them to experience success. Success is the strongest reinforcer.
4. Control transitions: Every transition opens a door for misbehavior. Effective transitions are well-planned and explained PRIOR to taking place so that students know what, where, when, and how to do it. There are also smaller transitions — a student going to sharpen a pencil or leaving the room to take medicine — that can shift the focus from you to that student. Structure your classroom so that if a student has to move around, they can do so without disrupting the others.

5. Polish and practice your techniques: Think about how you interact with students when they misbehave. What does your voice sound like? Is it excited or calm? Is it high-pitched or controlled? Take time to reflect on your response to misbehavior and practice how you respond. Every profession engages in some sort of practice or rehearsal: attorneys prep witnesses; surgeons practice surgeries; scientists create simulations and models. Teaching is no different. Practice is part of preparation.
6. Engage parents: Always keep parents informed about what their children are doing in school, especially misbehavior. Often, the behavior you see at school happens at home. Engaging the parents will help to resolve any behavioral issues at school and at home and allow the parents to reinforce desired behavior at home. It also makes the parents your strongest allies!
7. Deal with difficult behavior: Behavior is situational, so there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach. Still, there are some common themes. When dealing with difficult behavior, you want to minimize it while maintaining the student's self-esteem, keeping the focus on the lesson. It sounds difficult, but when you handle misbehavior quietly, calmly, and privately, you achieve your objective.

Classroom management is a planned process that starts before you begin your school year and results in a classroom that has momentum and flow. Momentum is the energy that causes students to engage in their own learning; your class then achieves a flow in which you and they are in the "zone" of learning. And this is not a bad place to be!





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(Continued from page 21)

people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants,” Windwehen said. “This is what I get to do. I teach students to take ownership of their education. I teach them to grow their own plants!”

She believes enthusiasm and flexibility are key to keeping students engaged. “I understand that their iPad is more fascinating than I am, so instead of begging them to get into my world, I find a way to get into theirs,” she said.

“To be a powerful and memorable educator for the kids, especially in this day and age, you have to show you’re excited about your job, even on days when you are exhausted,” she said. “They feed off our energy, whether it’s positive or negative.”

She learned that from a colleague she considers her mentor, David Bolster, who won the Boice Award two years ago. “Since my first day as a teacher five years ago, he has always offered to help me in any way, and he just reminds me to stay passionate despite all the changes we’re facing as educators,” she said. “He has so much energy and always puts the kids first. He makes sure learning is fun.”

Windwehen gives back as well, helping colleagues in ways that range from sending out technology tips and tricks to selling concessions after school for weeks so two teammates could attend a conference.

“Education and talent are useless unless they are shared,” Windwehen said. “I learned from my Dad to share every chance I can.”

She is as committed to TSTA/NEA as she is to her students.

“I was a member of another organization before, but I didn’t really feel that they had a strong enough voice,” Windwehen said. “I talked to some colleagues and said, ‘Look, what’s the best organization?’ They said TSTA.

“TSTA/NEA has given me confidence. Knowing that I am a part of something bigger than myself, all of us working toward the same goal, is comforting in today’s society,” she said. “It is a must for every teacher, especially a new teacher, because retention of passionate professionals is vital to the future of education. NEA helps with this retention by giving us the freedom to teach, which is something I would not trade for anything.”

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“I think it’s important that members realize that contributing to the PAC however much they can, whether it’s \$10 a year or \$10 a month, goes a long way. It doesn’t seem like a lot, \$10 to one person, but when you take \$10 from 50 people, that could be the difference between somebody who’s friendly to our cause winning and somebody who is hostile. It makes a big impact, especially in our local elections, which is where everything starts and finishes when it comes to education in this state.”

—David Ring, high school government teacher, Lubbock







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