Advocacy in ACTION

TSTA members lead ‘Stop the Cuts’ campaign to save our schools
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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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.

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.
   - 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.

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. 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.

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.
   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.

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/tstapublicrelationssets.

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 supervisory or 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.

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. 1510 or 1514 or see our website: www.tsta.org.

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 on stage 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 “spin.” Ashamed and/or afraid in an election year to admit the truth about something like this: “The Legislature have manufactured a whopper. It goes their attack on public education, they gone way beyond traditional political

“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 PointFact 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,” PointFact Texas concluded. “To say otherwise is inaccurate, misleading, and by a wide margin ridiculous.”

PointFact 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 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 Sta- tion 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 Colle- ge 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.

Stop the Cuts

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 teaching jobs that were lost to the 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.

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 — but 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.

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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. Thousands 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 to appropriate $2.5 billion from the Rainy Day Fund and restore money that was cut from 2012-13 school budgets.

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.

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 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,” 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.”
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.

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.

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.
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 for their students and education employees. Others have built strong and successful TSTA local associations with effective local leadership. 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 were able to help create a contract addendum that helped protect our members.

BEAUMONT: Beaumont Teachers Association celebrates its 200 new members and 600 signatures for the Stop the Cuts Now petition drive. 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” email 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 we’d be there, and we sent a follow-up email two days before the visit.

We sent a “we are coming” mailer to all local 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 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 weekends, 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 did a lot of member-to-member contact. They started calling the administration to see how they felt about it; we do a lot of member-to-member contact. We talked to staff members first thing to see how they felt about it; we did a lot of member-to-member contact. They started calling the administration to see how they felt about it; we do a lot of member-to-member contact.

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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 employee concerns a priority and courageously providing an example for neighboring districts to follow.

> Esperanza Orosco, Hays Educators Association

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

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

The team handles a situation, we take the issue two weeks later by 4-3 and the employee was very happy, so that was my first victory.

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> 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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Summer 2012

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

Thanks to great work by TSTA local associations, the superintendents of six school districts signed the petition in North Lamar, Garland, Abilene, 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 1,126 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 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.

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.

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/stophetcutsnow.
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.

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?

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. TSTA President Rita Haecker and The Lorax read at Rodriguez Elementary in Austin; TSTA-Retired members Janet Brahmumper, Beth Rogers, Connie Reed, Margaret Brown, Jo Ann Peschel, and Linda Foley visit McDougle Elementary in Klein (quilt by Firmine Stoerkel). SECOND ROW: Jones-Clark Elementary teacher Glenda McCoy organizes a celebration in Beaumont with librarian Cleomtien 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 Candalaria and SouthWestEd 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 Candalaria, 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. “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 mobile 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.”

Charles 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 congressman,” 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 for more information.

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 Haacke 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 Quicksand” by Sam Blackman and Dardon Bryan Weatherford and Mark Maldonado, and “Tap Dancing on Legal Quicksand” by Sam Blackman and Dardon

NEWS FROM TSTA-RETIRED

Elections: In February elections, TSTA-Retired gained two new officers who assume office July 15: Secretary Ann Price-Outs 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, 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 Ball’s Hotel in Las Vegas. President Williams and TSTA staff member Gerald Haschke attended. The group accepted reports from state committees, heard a candidate for the legislature, took a poll, and were ready on the delegate floor to offer solutions and vote.

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

—TSTA-Retired President Johnetta Elston Williams
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 classroom management. If you probed a little, you might discover they really meant discipline, which is

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

1. Misbehavior is a symptom of something else.
2. Behavior is impacted by communication.
4. Behavior occurs in patterns.
5. Behavior can be influenced.
6. 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.

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:

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.
   - 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.
   - Reinforce desired behavior at school and at home and allow the parents to reinforce desired behavior at home. It also makes the parents your strongest allies!

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!
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.”

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.”

“Stop the Cuts in 2013”

Join TSTA-PAC in 2012

“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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