

VALUE ADDED COMPENSATION • MAJOR COURT RULING ON NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

# Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

SPRING 2008

VOTE  
BALLOT  
INSIDE



TEXAS ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

**Let's fix it  
for the kids**

# Political Diversity in the NEA



Have you ever had a colleague say they didn't like NEA because they believed NEA only endorses Democrats? I have. For years, some conservative and moderate members of NEA have felt they were not represented, they were outnumbered, and the best thing to do was to "suffer" in silence. Things have changed. In August, NEA held its first-ever Republican Leaders Conference in Minneapolis. The day after the devastating bridge collapse in the Twin Cities, construction began on a new "bridge" of understanding and cooperation between the leadership of the NEA and Republican members. NEA has reported that one million of our 3.2 million members are Republican. The other 2.2 million members are evenly split between Democrat and Independent. Change is taking place in the NEA and in TSTA that will forever focus political efforts away from political party lines and more toward those candidates who support public education and educators, regardless of party. Have you noticed the change?

Half of the candidates endorsed and supported by TSTA's Political Action Committee in the 2006 Texas Primary Election were Republican. For the first time in the history of TSTA, the association did not endorse a Democrat for the office of Governor of Texas. At the 2007 NEA Representative Assembly in Philadelphia, Republican Presidential candidate Mike Huckabee spoke and received a standing ovation from over 10,000 delegates and guests. One of the three NEA Directors for Texas is a Republican. Two of the three elected representatives from Texas on the NEA Resolutions Committee are Republican, and one is the chair of the TSTA Republican Educators' Caucus. The chair of the national NEA Republican Educators' Caucus is from Alvin, Texas. Two of the five members of the TSTA Board of Directors' Advisory Committee are Republican. We are becoming more bipartisan than ever before!

It is time for all members of TSTA and NEA to become involved in their respective political parties to advocate pro-public education ideas. How? It's easy!

- 1) You must register to vote.
- 2) Volunteer to help candidates where you live.
- 3) Contribute money to the campaigns of pro-public education candidates by becoming a continuing contributor to the TSTA Political Action Committee ([www.tsta.org/legislative/update/pac.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/legislative/update/pac.shtml)).
- 4) VOTE! If you don't vote in November, don't complain in January.
- 5) Do a computer search to find the name and contact information for the chair of your county's political party. Email the chair of your county political party stating that you want to be involved and ask them how.

We need to do more than lobby our elected officials after they get elected. We need to be involved in helping pro-public education candidates get elected first, and we need to be involved in shaping the political platform within the party structure.

2008 promises to be an interesting and very active campaign year. Whether you are a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent, be a part of the process. This is America – exercise your hard fought right to work in campaigns and vote!

Change is taking place in the NEA and in TSTA that will forever focus political efforts away from political party lines and more toward those candidates who support public education and educators, regardless of party.



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# Advocate

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# Improving Education



Accountability was a hot topic at our Educational Issues Conference, where the Select Committee on Public School Accountability's Rob Eissler was a keynote speaker.

When you attend TSTA's Educational Issues Conferences, you hear the news straight from the newsmakers. This January's conference, "A Celebration of Great Teaching," was a prime example: participants heard about accountability from a co-presiding officer of the Select Committee on Public School Accountability, Chairman Rob Eissler of the House Committee on Public Education.

Since its creation several years ago, the state public school accountability system has shifted from assisting students and teachers to punishing them. Recognizing the need for reform, the legislature created the Select Committee and 15 members were named to the task force in January, with Eissler and Chairwoman Florence Shapiro of the Senate Education Committee at the helm.

Although at the time the committee had

not met, Eissler spoke about accountability and other issues facing the legislature. A few of his thoughts:

"End of course exams may be the answer throughout K-12. I just hear too much anecdotal evidence from teachers who say all they're doing is teaching to the test."

"We hear you. The way elections are going and politics is going, I think you're going to have an easier time in the next session."

"Texas collects more data than any other state and does less with it. I think you'll like the direction we're going. We can use (the data) to actually drive achievement—utilize the data and find out what is really happening in the schools and what needs to happen."

"Why don't we correct ratings for demographics instead of having it cost you? ... There are districts that are doing much



Clockwise: TSTA President Donna New Haschke with Senator Leticia Van de Putte; Response to Intervention Workshop trainers Dottie Goodman and Barbara Kaatz, Division of IDEA Coordination-Texas Education Agency; and Harvey Kronberg of the Quorum Report.

"This is a voice that is absolutely needed. You did a fabulous job in the 2006 elections in the Texas House," she said. "I'm very proud of what you have been able to accomplish even in the most difficult times. We have been under attack. Those that support public school vouchers never let up."

better with what they have...those are the people we need to recognize and reward."

"What do we do with the schools that aren't doing well? Rather than bringing in a hit team, we're going to say, you know...there's six schools that have the same demographics as you and we're going to have you talk to them."

Another keynote speaker, Senator Leticia Van de Putte, encouraged participants to be active in the political arena to protect public schools. "Teachers, you've found your voice," she said, encouraging them to be "an integral part of TSTA, an organization that keeps tabs on me and my colleagues pretty well.

She said vouchers would again be the defining issue in the 2009 legislative session. "You're either for us or you're against us. It's easy: do you support vouchers? Yes or no," Van de Putte said. "We know what doesn't work, and that's vouchers. We know what does work, and that's well-compensated, well-trained, certified public school teachers."

Former Lt. Governor Bob Bullock called our third keynote speaker, Harvey Kronberg, "the Capitol's most astute observer." Kronberg, the writer, editor, and publisher of the Quorum Report, has been covering Texas politics since 1989. In addition to the Quorum, he is also a political commen-

## TEIC: FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS REACT



"It's interesting to learn the dynamics of Texas politics. I never thought about it much before. That's really where it all happens in Texas for education. I'm looking forward to continuing to be active in the political arena with TSTA. The tools I've learned here are very helpful for local teachers associations and will help us expand our membership."

— Brian East, Beaumont Teachers Association



"I learned a lot about Texas politics, because I'm new to Texas. I think I'll be more politically active than I have been in the past. I got some good strategies on how to recruit members, too. I joined TSTA/NEA when I moved here in July from New York State, because I wanted to make sure I was in the organization that protected our rights."

— Jessica Powers, North East Teachers Association, San Antonio



"I'm learning a lot. I went to the session on limiting your liability and how to protect yourself as a teacher. I also enjoyed hearing from Rob Eissler. It was interesting hearing the plans they have for improving education. I'm relatively new, but I'm trying to be pretty active. I'm getting lots of information here to share with other members."

— Ronnie Castro, Laredo United TSTA

tator for News 8 Austin, a 24-hour news channel serving central Texas. The Quorum Report describes itself as “fast breaking news along with institutional memory and a healthy skepticism as befits a publication whose subscribers include most of Texas elected officials, most of the lobby as well as most law firms with a legislative practice.” Check it out at [www.quorumreport.com](http://www.quorumreport.com).

Professional development and legislative workshops are always a highlight of the TSTA Educational Issues Conference, and this year was no exception. Response to Intervention was the hot ticket this year, led by Texas Education Agency staff. Other workshops

addressed liability, social studies in the time of high stakes testing, national board certification, pre-kindergarten, extreme strategies for extreme behavior, identity theft and cyber security, theatre as core curriculum, turning teachers into leaders, childhood obesity, workplace safety, healthy bodies/healthy minds, and more.

- Hear excerpts from Eissler and Van de Putte’s speeches at TEIC: [www.tsta.org/news/current/08TEICpodcasts.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/news/current/08TEICpodcasts.shtml).
- Read TSTA’s report and recommendations on accountability: “Fixing a Badly Flawed System,” page 10 of this issue.

## Who’s Serving on the Select Committee on Public School Accountability?

- ▶ House Education Chair: Rob Eissler, R-The Woodlands
- ▶ Senate Education Chair: Florence Shapiro, R-Plano
- ▶ One Representative: Diane Patrick, R-Arlington
- ▶ One Senator: Tommy Williams, R-The Woodlands
- ▶ Commissioner of Education: Robert Scott, Austin
- ▶ Commissioner of Higher Education: Raymond Paredes, Austin
- ▶ One from the business community or public, appointed by the Lt. Governor: Ron Steinhart, Dallas, former CEO of Bank One Commercial Banking Group
- ▶ One from the business community or public, appointed by the Speaker: Salem Abraham, owner of a futures trading company and school board president, Canadian
- ▶ Two from the business community, at least one of whom has a child in

- public schools, appointed by the Governor: Larry Kellner, Houston, chairman and CEO of Continental Airlines Inc.; Sandy Kress, Austin, attorney, chairman of the Commission for a College Ready Texas, counsel to the Governor’s Business Council, board member of the Texas Business and Education Coalition, and former advisor on education to President George W. Bush
- ▶ One current teacher: Susan Lewis, elementary math teacher, Northside ISD, San Antonio
- ▶ One current principal: Dalia Benavides, South Elementary, Midland ISD
- ▶ One current superintendent: David Splitek, Lackland ISD, San Antonio
- ▶ Two people employed in public education: Thomas Randle, superintendent, Lamar CISD, Rosenberg, and Texas Association of School Administrators president; Beto Gonzalez, deputy superintendent, Brownsville ISD, and former Acting Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Dept. of Education

## DEFINED BENEFIT OR DEFINED CONTRIBUTION?

Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst gave the Senate State Affairs Committee an interim charge to “analyze the advantages and disadvantages of phasing in a defined-contribution pension for future employees versus the defined-benefit pension plan.” Rather than change a system that has worked well for the last 70 years, TSTA will be working with the Legislature to improve the defined-benefit system by recommending a permanent annuity increase for retirees in 2009. Read TSTA staff member Jack Kelly’s reasons on our staff blog entry for February 1 at [www.tstaweb.net/sblog](http://www.tstaweb.net/sblog).

## VOLUNTEER FOR A COMMITTEE

The TSTA president is charged with appointing individuals to a number of statewide and special committees, including task forces, each year. All members are eligible to serve. The committees are Community and Instructional Advocacy, Legislative and Political Advocacy, and Credentials, Bylaws, and Elections. Other task forces and special committees are formed from time to time; please indicate your particular area of interest or expertise whether listed or not. You may also recommend a colleague for consideration. Send your request to Carol McCord at [carolm@tsta.org](mailto:carolm@tsta.org) or 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701 or call 877-ASK-TSTA.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN EDUCATOR?

Hear your NEA colleagues—classroom teachers, bus drivers, nurses, librarians, and others—reflect on school life and what inspires them to remain in the finest profession in the world. Then join in: upload your own video answer to YouTube and send an email to [clong@nea.org](mailto:clong@nea.org) to be added to NEA’s “I Am An Educator” channel. [www.nea.org/nea\\_today/i\\_ama\\_neducator.html](http://www.nea.org/nea_today/i_ama_neducator.html)

## BEST PRACTICES NOW ONLINE

Get ideas for classroom instruction, dropout prevention, district business, resource allocation, and financial issues at the new online clearinghouse, [www.tea.state.tx.us/bestprac](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/bestprac). Campuses, districts and charter schools rated Exemplary or Recognized by the state are invited to share their best practices at this site.

## TSTA LOBBIES IN WASHINGTON ON SOCIAL SECURITY

In January, representatives of TSTA joined other NEA members from across the country on Capitol Hill to advocate for changes in Social Security provisions that unfairly penalize retired educators. TSTA Vice President Ann Heuberger, Stephen Smallwood from North Lamar, Joyce Roberta Miller-Alper from Spring Branch, and TSTA-Retired President Letha Grace McCoy from Burleson emphasized the need for these changes in conjunction with a U.S. House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security hearing on the Social Security Fairness Act. That bill, HR 82, would eliminate the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO).

The WEP penalizes individuals who spent part of their careers in jobs not covered by Social Security. Some have seen their Social Security benefits reduced by as much as \$328 a month. The GPO affects people who are eligible for a pension from public sector employment not covered by Social Security and Social Security’s survivor/dependent benefit. The offset reduces their survivor/dependent benefit by two-thirds of their public pension.

“If Congress is serious about encouraging professionals from the private sector to answer the call to teach, it must repeal these offsets.” NEA President Reg Weaver said.

Read the latest and find out how you can get involved at [www.nea.org/lac/socsec/index.html](http://www.nea.org/lac/socsec/index.html).



## PAC Supports Pro-Education Candidates

TSTA-PAC has recommended a slate of pro-education candidates in the 2008 elections, and members all over the state staged press events to present the checks. Local associations that submitted photos and their candidates:

House candidate Donnie Dippel with Fayette County members; Rep. Juan Escobar (D-Kingsville) with Harlingen TSTA/NEA; Charles Stafford, candidate for the Texas Senate, with Denton Education Association members; Rep. Byron Cook (R-Corsicana) with Corsicana Educators Association; Rep. Paul Moreno (D-El Paso) with El Paso area locals; Rep. Pat Haggerty (R-El Paso) with El Paso area locals; and Rep. Delwin Jones (R-Lubbock), with Lubbock TSTA members.

Elected officials make many of the decisions that affect your profession, especially the level of salary and benefits you receive. That is why TSTA is involved in the political arena and created the TSTA Continuing Contributor Program. Through this program, you can contribute money to help elect public officials who are supportive of educators and public education and who will vote for salary and benefit increases. You can contribute either through bank draft or payroll deduction, or make a one-time contribution to the fund.

Download a new continuing contributor form at [www.tsta.org/legislative/update/PACnew.pdf](http://www.tsta.org/legislative/update/PACnew.pdf); write to Continuing Contributor Program, TSTA-PAC, 316 W. 12th St., Austin, TX 78701; call 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1257; or send an email to Adriana Montoya at [adrianam@tsta.org](mailto:adrianam@tsta.org).

# Major Court Ruling on No Child Left Behind

BY JOEY MOORE, GENERAL COUNSEL, AND MOLLY LEDER, TSTA HELP CENTER ATTORNEY



On January 7, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit ruled that Secretary Spellings is violating the Spending Clause of the Constitution by requiring states and school districts to spend their own funds to comply with No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

In April 2005, NEA, TSTA, and Laredo ISD, along with seven other school districts, eight other state affiliates, and one local association, filed suit against the U.S. Department of Education to:

- seek a declaration that states are not required to comply with requirements of NCLB when federal funds do not cover the cost of compliance, and
- get an injunction prohibiting the Department of Education from withholding from states and school districts any other federal funds to which they were entitled simply because the states refused to comply with the unfunded requirements.

Section 9527(a) of the law says, “Nothing in this Act shall be construed to...mandate a State or any subdivision thereof to spend any funds or incur any costs not paid for under this Act.” NEA, TSTA, Laredo ISD and the other plaintiffs argued that this section of the law prevents the federal government from requiring states and school districts to spend their own funds to comply with the law’s mandates.

The lawsuit does not challenge the laudable goals of the law or call for its dismantling. Instead, it simply argues that any federal mandates in this law must come with tools and resources to get the job done. Otherwise, educators can’t be expected to do more with less. The court agreed, holding that the Education Department’s interpretations of NCLB, requiring that states and school districts devote their own funds to NCLB compliance, “violate the Spending Clause.”

While the District Court dismissed the suit in November 2005, the 6th Circuit reversed that decision and ordered the case to be sent back to the District Court for trial.

“The court’s message couldn’t be more clear: If the president is sincere about continuing No Child Left Behind, he needs to put his money where his mouth is,” said NEA President Reg Weaver. “The president refuses to budge on NCLB, his flagship domestic policy, but unless he takes action it is clearly a sinking ship.”

Secretary Spellings has announced that the Department of Education will seek an appeal of the decision. Look for developments in the case in future TSTA Briefings.

## NEW FMLA LEAVE PROVISIONS FOR ACTIVE-DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES

On January 28, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 was signed into law by President Bush. This Act is the first expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) since its enactment in 1993. The Act provides additional leave to employees who have family members who are serving active duty.

The Act has created two new categories of leave: active duty family leave and injured service member leave.

**Active Duty Family Leave:** This provision will allow employees to take leave “because of any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the spouse, or a son, daughter or parent of the employee is on active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty) in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation.”

A “qualifying exigency” has been left to the Secretary to define by regulation. While no definition of “qualifying exigency” has been provided, it is arguable that leave to care for minor children or assistance with moving might qualify.

Leave under this new provision may be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule. The employer may require certification of active duty.

**Injured Service Member Leave:** This provision amends the FMLA to give more leave to employees whose family members are injured while serving in the military.

“An eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or a covered service member shall be entitled to a total of leave during a 12-month period to care for the service member. The leave described in this paragraph shall only be available during a single 12-month period.” (emphasis added)

The act extends the original 12-week leave to 26 weeks of leave to care for an injured service-member. The second change is that the group of eligible employees is broadened to include the “next of kin,” defined by the Act as “the nearest blood relative of that individual.”

The injured service member need not have a “serious health condition” as required by the other health-related leave conditions. The new provisions of the Act define “serious injury or illness” as “an injury or illness incurred...in the line of duty on active duty...that may render the member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member’s office, grade, rank or rating.”

**USERRA:** Military personnel are also protected by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). The purpose of USERRA is to encourage non-career military personnel to volunteer in the uniformed services. USERRA tries to minimize or eliminate any hardship the military service may cause to the individual’s civilian career and employment. USERRA does this in two ways, by providing reemployment rights to returning service personnel and by prohibiting discrimination of employees and potential employees based on their past or current service in the uniformed services.

The Act applies to all public and private employers in the United States, no matter their size. Service is defined as the performance of a duty whether it is on a voluntary or involuntary basis. This includes active duty, active duty for training, inactive duty for training, National Guard duty, the time a person

is absent to determine their fitness to perform any duty, and time absent to perform funeral honors duty.

When an employee returns from military service and asserts their reemployment rights under USERRA, whenever possible, the employer is expected to reemploy them in the position they would have been in had they never left. The employer is responsible for providing reasonable efforts to qualify the employee for the position that they should be placed in. This is known as the “escalator principle.” The employee steps off the escalator when they leave for duty, but the escalator keeps moving while they are out. When they return they should be able to step back on the escalator at the same step that they left on. A person reemployed under USERRA is entitled to the same seniority, rights and benefits they would have earned if they had kept working.

An important additional right provided by USERRA is that if an employee has served in the uniformed services for more than 30 days, they cannot be terminated except for cause for a specified period of time after their reemployment under USERRA. The period of time is different depending on how long they were absent. If the employee was absent for service for longer than 180 days, they are protected for one year after their reemployment. If they were absent for more than 30 days but less than 181 days, they are protected for 180 days after their reemployment.

What this means is that non-contracted employees, such as bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers may not be terminated at will. The district must have cause. Cause under USERRA is established when an employer proves that it was “reasonable to discharge the employee for the conduct in question, and that he or she had notice, which was express or can be fairly implied, that the conduct would constitute cause for discharge.”

If you have questions about your leave rights in relation to your or a family member’s military duty, please contact the Help Center at 877-ASK-TSTA.

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit Says NCLB is Unconstitutional; Appeal Expected

# Fixing a Badly Flawed System

## How to Make Texas School Accountability Meaningful and Accurate

BY DR. PAUL HENLEY, TSTA TEACHING & LEARNING SPECIALIST

Accountability is an important component of the public education system in Texas. The parents, the public and the Legislature need a process to know what schools are teaching and how well students are learning.

Improving accountability deals with how we best assess learning. Improving education deals with how intelligent and capable we make our children. Tests will not make students smarter. Every minute a student spends with a high-stakes test that has little if any diagnostic value is a minute that his or her education stagnates. In fact, this out-of-control testing actually distracts from the most important activity in the classroom: learning.

In the original accountability system, tests were used as a support for schools and the communities they served and to provide diagnostic information to teachers. This idea seemed to work, and it was one reason that George W. Bush became the 43rd president of the United States. Likewise, his educational initiatives became the new focus of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the so-called No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The purpose of NCLB is to have all students performing at grade level by the year 2014. Under NCLB, each state has developed and implemented measurements for determining whether its schools and local educational agencies are making adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP is an individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100% of students

achieving to state academic standards in at least reading/language arts and math. It sets the minimum level of proficiency that the state, its school districts and schools must achieve each year on annual tests and related academic indicators. Although it is significantly under-funded, NCLB is far less punitive than the Texas model has become.

Over time, the Texas model has become increasingly negative and punitive in its approach to school accountability. What began as a diagnostic tool to help parents and schools know how students were doing has evolved into an entire chapter, Chapter 39, in the Texas Education Code. Instead of determining student strengths and weaknesses, and areas to improve the curriculum and instruction, tests have now become the primary focus of public education rather than providing students a broad based, quality education.

The question, then, is when testing came to be the primary focus of public schools in Texas. In 1995, then-state Senator Bill Ratliff and the Texas Legislature put school accountability standards in place. The standards were initially meant to be diagnostic in nature. If there were problems, schools were given assistance to correct any issues. Only after it was determined that significant help was needed was a school labeled "low performing."

The federal program and the state program have some characteristics in common. They are based on the same test. They follow the same sanction pattern. They both focus on the concept of "leaving no child behind." But in many ways, they are different. Most notably, Texas rules for school sanctioning are significantly more strident than those of the federal government.

### LET US COUNT THE WAYS

The Texas system of educational evaluation administers TAKS tests to the following grades in the following subjects:

reading (grades 3-9), writing (grades 4 and 7), English language arts (grades 10 and 11), mathematics (grades 4-11), science (grades 5, 8, 10, and 11), and social studies (grades 10 and 11).

Schools are also evaluated on the percentage of students who attend school on a daily basis, as well as the percentage of students who drop out of school and the percentage of students who receive high school diplomas. In all, districts are accountable for as many as 36 different standards. These standards apply to individual schools as well as districts. That is, each school could be accountable for 36 variables, as well as an aggregate number for the district.

Upcoming end-of-course examinations, which the Texas Legislature mandated in 2007's Senate Bill 1031, will add two more tests for high school students.

Texas Education Agency (TEA) further disaggregates the information by the following subgroups: bilingual education/English As a Second Language students, Limited English Proficiency students, Career and Technical Education students, American Indian students, Asian students, Black students, Hispanic students, White students, male students, female students, economically disadvantaged students, at-risk students, and special education students.

All of these results must be presented to the public, giving parents, students and community members large quantities of data to absorb and limiting transparency.

While Texas uses the above categories, NCLB uses six general categories that significantly overlap: race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, disability, limited English proficiency, migrant status, and gender.

These categories also overlap with those used in the Texas accountability system. However, they are two different systems. A school can be rated Exem-

plary by the state and fail the federal Adequate Yearly Progress standards (AYP). Also, a district may be Academically Unacceptable while meeting AYP.

Under the current framework, Texas schools are accountable under several systems with a host of overlapping measures included in each. The specific measures for each of these systems often overlap, but are not always defined in precisely the same way, and educators and the public must keep track of roughly 430 pages of documentation to understand their ratings under these various approaches.

### THE PENALTIES FOR SCHOOLS

The NCLB legislation is designed to avoid school disruption and sanctions, but it does contain such sections. The following is a series of progressively more aggressive steps used to sanction schools under NCLB:

**In Year One:** A school is going about its business as usual.

**In Year Two:** A school finds out that it did not make AYP for the previous school year. Under the law, there are no consequences for not making AYP for one year. Schools and districts should use this information to identify areas that need attention and make necessary adjustments, but nothing happens under NCLB.

**In Year Three, In Need of Improvement:** If a school does not make AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject, it is identified as in need of improvement. Schools must identify the specific areas that need improvement and work with parents, teachers and outside experts to develop a two-year plan to raise student achievement. Parents need to be notified and given the option to transfer their children to a higher performing school in the district. Priority needs to be given to the lowest achieving low-income students in that school. Student transfers are paid for exclusively with a set-aside of federal funds.

The TAKS has turned into a punishment tool. It is used to punish teachers. It is used to punish schools. It is used to punish students. I think it's just absolutely gone berserk.

—Former Lieutenant Governor Bill Ratliff



In Year Four: If a school fails to make AYP for another consecutive year, then tutoring and other supplemental educational services must be made available to low-income students at that school. Like student transfers, supplemental services are paid for with federal funds.

In Year Five, Corrective Action: If a school does not make AYP for four years, it is identified for corrective action. Children can continue to transfer to other schools or to receive tutoring and other services. In addition, the district and school are required to implement at least one of the following corrective actions:

- Appoint an outside expert to advise the school.
- Institute a new curriculum, including appropriate professional development.
- Extend the school year or the school day for the school.
- Restructure the school's internal organizational structure.
- Significantly decrease management authority at the school level.
- Replace the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP.

In Year Six, Plan for Restructuring: If the school fails to make AYP for five years, the school must continue corrective action and develop an alternate governance plan, which must include one of the following:

- Reopen the school as a public charter school.
- Replace all or most of the staff responsible for the lack of progress.
- Enter into a contract with a private company to operate the school.
- Turn over operation and management of the school to the state.

- Implement other fundamental reforms approved by the state.

In Year Seven, Restructuring: If a school does not make AYP for six years, the alternate governance plan that was developed the previous year must be implemented.

### TEXAS RAISES THE STAKES

House Bill 1, which the Texas Legislature passed in 2006, increased penalties and raised the stakes. TEA can now take over and run individual campuses through intervention teams and require the school district to pay for the services while having no input or oversight in the process. Under the law, any campus that is low performing or that would become low performing based on the passing standards for that year will be assigned a campus intervention team. The teams have extraordinary authority and are required to come in and analyze the current campus and look at numerous factors in trying to determine a plan that improves the school's rating. Any campus that is low performing for two years must be reconstituted. Any principal that has been on the campus for those two years must be reassigned. The intervention may keep only those teachers who have demonstrated they have improved student learning on the campus. It allows but does not require a teacher who is not retained on the campus to be assigned to another position in the district. It allows the state commissioner of education to turn a campus over to a non-profit entity if it is determined that the campus is not following the intervention plan or if they have not become academically acceptable two years after they have been reconstituted. The school district must pick up the cost of the program.

There are key differences between the Texas accountability system and the federal accountability system. Unlike NCLB sanctions, which are paid by Title I funds, Texas sanctions come at

the expense of the school district and local property taxes. Whereas NCLB orders a school takeover as late as the seventh year of failure, Texas now mandates that some schools will be saddled with an alternate governance plan before the school has failed.

With such a system, school districts are not made aware of problems until the first year of failure is almost complete. Test results arrive at the end of the school year, and TEA analysis requires more time. Such a system forces an immediate change in curriculum and an immediate abdication of school control. The focus on specific test scores often becomes the entire curriculum, and all other aspects of a child's education are lost for at least one year.

Further, a school can fix the initial problem and still be labeled "failing" if another issue arises. For example, a school deficient in 4th grade black male mathematics scores can increase these scores but drop in 5th grade science scores. That school is now in a second year of failing.

School districts must report their performance ratings in a public forum. The report, called the Academic Excellence Indicator System, is presented by a school's administration to the school board in a public meeting. The same forum presents data from the Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System. This information, as well as financial information and other information, can also be found in the district's Public Education Information Management System report.

One such school district, as an example, presented the public with a 38-slide PowerPoint presentation. When finished, the presentation elicited three questions from the school board. None of the public attendees asked questions. As more and more layers of test-based accountability measures are put in place, the reports become longer and more difficult to understand. What

was once a transparent, community-friendly school report has become far too detailed.

### A NECESSARY REACTION TO A SCARY SITUATION

The current system's philosophy is based on fear and sanctions. The premise is that punishing a school or district, or threatening to do so, will result in more and better attention for each child. Our current experience shows this is not the case. Rather than treat children as individuals and celebrate each learning triumph, schools react out of fear, fear that works to the detriment of children.

The TAKS test is not the only standardized test anymore. School districts, haunted by the specter of a low accreditation rating, administer practice tests to children. Each of these tests takes one day, and the practice tests are given twice each year.

Other districts focus even more on their upcoming test scores. They have implemented a diagnostic system called a Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA). Every six weeks, districts use CBAs to test children on the TAKS subjects they will face during the year. Fifth grade students, for example, will test on reading, mathematics and science every six weeks.

Since CBAs, like TAKS tests, are not timed, they can take up to a full day of school to administer. The tests function as preparation for high-stakes tests, and they are treated accordingly. If six CBAs are administered in four subjects, a total of 24 days of school time can be devoted to CBAs. TAKS tests, in sets of three, each take a full day to administer. This is true of the practice TAKS tests, as well. Three TAKS tests/practice tests times four administrations add another 12 days of lost instructional time.

Such an approach is not uncommon in Texas. Schools may spend 36 out of 185 days (nearly 20%) administering

standardized, high-stakes tests and practice tests to students, all based on a district's fear of failure. This number does not account for the time spent tutoring for the tests, taking field tests to help TEA prepare future tests, additional time with students who did not pass all sections of the tests, and taking re-tests. It also ignores the hundreds and hundreds of pages that teachers must read to correctly administer all of the tests. This scenario also ignores many other tests administered to students during the school year. Most of these other tests are administered to students who use English as a second language and students with other special needs. Sadly, those students who

**We need to scrap the whole system and adopt a system that is positive in nature, that doesn't concentrate on the negative. And to make it simple. Make it where parents and teachers can understand it.**

—Former Lieutenant Governor Bill Ratliff

need the most instruction are the very students that lose the most instruction time to testing.

More testing is not a solution to a testing problem. Our legislators recognize this, and they passed SB 1031 with a provision mandating schools to spend no more than 10% of their school year on testing. Even that much time taken away from classroom instruction interferes with teaching and learning. Unfortunately, districts still may feel forced to engage in more excessive standardized testing because there are no reasonable options for them. Sup-

plemental Education Services (SES) are offered by the state to failing schools and often used as justification for any punishment. Unfortunately, these attempts have hit-and-miss track records when it comes to student success. Many for-profit companies have conducted their own research to prove their programs work. Many Texas districts, desperate for success, have contracted for these services. When an SES fails, the focus turns back to the district, not to the SES provider.

Texas has always worked hard to maintain high standards in its education system. What matters right now are not standards, though. What matters is the test.

### A REVOLVING DOOR

The number of Texas teachers has increased by 13.3% over six years. At the same time, campus administrators (principals, assistant principals) increased by 26.1%, the Austin American Statesman reported in February.

The increase in teachers makes sense. It takes more teachers to teach more students. To some extent, the increase in principals could be expected, too. They are a necessary reaction to the increased number of schoolchildren in Texas, and they are the initial test score monitors. What is most remarkable is the dramatic increase in upper administration. This number has jumped 32.5% in this same time frame. One reason for this could be that districts need people who can focus on testing data to ensure that test scores are high, or at least high enough to pass. Under Texas' seriously flawed school accountability system, schools need to hire additional personnel to deal with standardized testing, diverting resources that could be devoted to teaching and learning in their classrooms.

Principals are no longer hired based on leadership skills, collaboration skills, or child-friendly approaches. Instead of these, principals are hired based on

what they have done in previous years to raise test scores. In many cases, principals learn to run schools in such a way as to avoid state punishment, no matter the approach. Such a system rarely bodes well for teacher-principal relationships, as teachers are told they are failures and principals are, too.

Often, these principals are drawn from other districts, especially those with schools that need “quick turnarounds.” The focus becomes solely test scores, and students from these schools are shorted many of the other programs offered at non-failing schools. In other words, these schools become drill-and-kill training centers instead of places where children can learn about the world around them.

Such principals, and their “success,” are in high demand, and they command very high salaries. At the same time, there is an overall shortage of principals in Texas. The shortage becomes more acute each year. Being a principal in Texas is a very difficult job in the “test-and-punish” accountability system. As a result of this seriously flawed system, principals leave—just like teachers leave—just like students leave.

### SOLUTIONS IN A SANCTIONIZED WORLD

The federal government may have jurisdiction over much of America’s education system, but the state of Texas has the final word in almost every substantive educational decision. Under NCLB standards:

- States determine what all students should know and be able to do.
- States calculate the starting point for AYP.
- States set specific targets to measure whether all groups of students are making AYP in language arts and math.
- States measure the performance of students and schools.

- State officials retain vast discretion to tailor improvement efforts to the unique circumstances in each school.

There are alternative ways of accomplishing these goals, approaches that differ from what the state of Texas is doing, alternatives that have shown promise and proven their worth. However, implementing worthwhile changes will require an investment of resources for capital improvements and true and comprehensive professional development; redefining school success in Texas to a focus on relevance to both the student and society; and developing a compensation structure that actually attracts trained teachers and keeps them teaching.

The Texas accountability system has become one of the most punitive in the nation, and the state cannot look to federal legislation as reason for such aggressive and hurtful approaches. It is incumbent on our state leaders, in both elected and appointed positions, to move forward with positive solutions and leave a “test-and-punish” approach system behind.

The seriously flawed Texas school accountability system requires dramatic change, change that would make it:

1. **Be diagnostic, not punitive.** Testing has value when it identifies student needs. But under the current system, tests assess students when it is typically too late to fix any problems. Such an approach makes our accountability system unhelpful to Texas children. Moving testing from the spring to the fall, to allow more time to be devoted to addressing student needs once they are identified, will make testing more valuable as a diagnostic tool.
2. **Be compatible with the federal accountability system.** Texas must institute a school appraisal system that matches that of the U.S. Department of Education. Right now, districts and schools find themselves

faced with criteria from both the state and federal level. While there is significant overlap, there are also many differences. An academically recognized school may fail criteria from the NCLB law and be punished accordingly. A more streamlined overall accountability system will reduce the need for resources devoted to testing, rather than to teaching, and will make the accountability system more understandable, and thus more accountable, to parents and the public generally.

3. **Measure growth.** Students are not numbers, but we treat them that way. We test them. We judge them. Then we walk away because we already have the numbers we need. If we need to learn more, we assign more numbers to them. There is a push to move beyond TAKS scores to even more scores in an attempt to determine a child’s “college-readiness.” Many numbers. Little understanding. Assessment has to become more meaningful to meet the needs of Texas’ children. Unfortunately, too few policy makers understand the crucial distinction between meaningful and rigorous.

Students have names. We denigrate them by ignoring their individuality. Our assessment needs to be more personal, more authentic and more meaningful. It doesn’t matter how many numbers we assign to a child. The child isn’t fully described by numbers.

The U.S. Department of Education is backing away from the existing one-day “snapshot model” of evaluation and is moving toward providing more states with better tools to measure student progress. The department believes that “these models hold promise as reliable and innovative methods to measure student achievement over time.”

Accountability systems should re-

ward success and support educators to help students learn. Tracking individual student growth is more helpful than the current approach. This year, all states meeting certain federal criteria will be allowed to develop “growth models” to meet the requirements of the NCLB Act. Texas is very close to meeting all requirements, and U.S. Department of Education approval is attainable. Texas officials should adopt and institute a growth model to evaluate schools.

North Carolina has used a growth model together with a test-based state accountability model for years. As one education expert noted, “Comparing cohort groups as they make progress is much better than the all or nothing AYP model. You have to know that teachers want to be able to demonstrate that students have made progress based on data and not just one test score.”

4. **Evaluate necessary skills rather than irrelevant content.** Under Texas’ seriously flawed accountability system, students are being tested on Phoenician ink and the “Why?” of subatomic particles. This “Jeopardy!” knowledge might help win game shows, but it has little consequence outside of the test. Such knowledge will not help our children in their battle to maintain intellectual and economic superiority. The four core classes should continue; however, school curricula should allow students to experiment both within and outside of these subject areas. The current accountability structure needs to allow for creativity, as well as knowledge. To do that, the TAKS examinations need to focus on more meaningful and necessary information as well as the legitimate and basic skills to become Texas citizens, parents, taxpayers and contributors.

With every generation, workers change jobs more and more. Devel-

oping countries, particularly those that are increasingly challenging this nation’s economic dominance, are focusing their higher learning institutions to act as career training centers. Generally, they don’t flip jobs like Westerners can. In a global

**We need to back up, rethink it, and get a system that is right for the parents, right for the students, right for the school, right for the government entities involved, right for the public—that everybody can understand and that helps the student, that’s not in business to penalize the student or to make the schools look bad, which some people like to use it for. So, yes I am for accountability and testing, but I think we’ve gone overboard and need to rethink the whole thing.**

—Charles Butt, Chairman and CEO of H-E-B, San Antonio Express-News, January 31, 2008

economy in which the ability to adapt quickly to ever-changing circumstances is a key component of success, employers need “soft skills” from their employees. How creative and adaptable is a new employee?

Can a new employee work with a team? Can a new employee contribute in multiple ways to the company? How much direct instruction will this new employee need?

To succeed in the new global economy and to ensure a high quality of life, the state of Texas also needs to focus on teaching students the soft skills and the flexibility they will need to function in the 21st century. Schools that a seriously flawed accountability system force to focus too narrowly cannot do this.

5. **Have local control rather than remote control.** Accountability measures, including funding, move from the local, to the state, to the national level. Decisions from Washington and Austin dictate cafeteria-style accountability measures in a very diverse state. These strategies make it difficult to truly measure children as people. Like all people, children are complex. The community, district and school are the best places to meaningfully measure the whole student. It is time to commit resources and focus from statewide strategies to more meaningful approaches that work for children in specific communities with specific local needs. For effective dropout prevention interventions to work, they need to come from the location of the situation, not the remote seat of policy making. For achievement gaps to close, communities need to be the focus of the accountability process.

Accountability regards measurement, not achievement. Any changes to the Texas accountability model must begin with this premise. So TSTA recommends a system that measures student learning more accurately, focuses more time on instruction and improves education for all of Texas. We hope teachers, community members and policymakers work together constructively to bring more accurate and meaningful accountability to our state.



# NEA Representative Assembly

July 1-July 6, 2008 • Washington Convention Center • Washington, D.C.

The 2008 NEA Representative Assembly (RA) will be held during the first week of July at the Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C. The RA, held in conjunction with the NEA annual meeting, is NEA's highest decision-making body. Delegates to the RA debate issues that impact American public education, elect top officers, and set association policy. Delegates to the RA are elected both locally and statewide (see state ballot and voting information in this issue).

Texas delegates attending the 2008 NEA-RA will receive an information packet in early May. Additional information updates regarding the RA will be posted on TSTA's website at [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org).

## LODGING

The official hotel for the Texas Delegation is the **Crystal Gateway Marriott** in Arlington, VA. Located minutes from Reagan National Airport in Virginia's vibrant Crystal City district, the hotel is convenient to many area shops and restaurants. The hotel also connects to underground shops, a food court, DC's Metro, and the Crystal City Marriott.

Hotel reservations should be made through TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance (CEG) rather than through the hotel in order for delegates to be included in the TSTA room block. The room rate per night is \$159 single/double, \$179 triple, and \$199

quad, not including tax. (At the current 12.25% tax rate, the total costs per night would be \$178.48, \$200.93, and \$223.38, respectively.) The reservation form is included at the end of this article. **The deadline to submit your reservation to TSTA is May 26, 2008.**

Completed reservation forms **MUST** include the first night's deposit. Deposits may be made by including your credit card information on the form or by enclosing with your form a check (for the total cost of one room night) made payable to: Crystal Gateway Marriott. If an incomplete credit card number and/or no credit card or check is submitted, your reservation will not be made. **Deposits are refundable for cancellations if notice is given to the hotel by 6 p.m. the day of your scheduled arrival.**

All rooms will be assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis. Delegates should submit their reservation forms as soon as possible to ensure space in the TSTA room block at our guaranteed rate. Delegates who do not have a roommate but would like to share lodging expenses may indicate this on the reservation form. Although a roommate cannot be guaranteed, TSTA will attempt to pair delegates who request such assistance.

Hotel check-in time is 4:00 p.m. Check-out time is 1:00 p.m. Daily parking rates are \$19 for self-park and \$25 for valet. Room service is available from 6:00 a.m. to midnight. The daily check cashing limit for personal checks is \$50. Persons intending to pay cash for their lodging expenses should be prepared to pay all room, tax, and, if applicable, parking

fees at check in. This is a smoke-free hotel.

## TRANSPORTATION

From **Reagan National Airport** [DCA], **complimentary shuttle service** is available to and from the hotel every 15 minutes from 6:00 a.m. to 11 p.m. Cab fare from this airport to the hotel is about \$10. Other area airports—Dulles International [IAD] and Baltimore-Washington International [BWI]—are approximately 30 miles from the hotel. One-way cab fare from these airports is estimated to run about \$45-\$90. SuperShuttle runs from both IAD and BWI. Price quotes and reservations can be made by calling 1-800-BLUE VAN (258-3826).

Transportation to/from the hotel and convention center will be provided (in the form of either a group bus or individual Metrorail passes for each delegate). Travel time to and from the convention center, depending on mode of transportation and traffic, takes 20-45 minutes.

## TEXAS CAUCUS MEETINGS

All Texas Caucus meetings will be held at the Texas Delegation hotel. The first Texas Caucus meeting will be Tuesday, July 1, at 1:00 p.m. Thereafter, the Texas Caucus will meet at 7:00 a.m. daily. Morning meetings will include coffee service and a light break. **NOTE:** Delegates must register at the Texas Caucus meeting and with NEA. Registration at the first Texas Caucus meeting will begin 30 minutes before the start of the meeting. Please review the Tentative NEA Meeting Event Schedule for the NEA registration times.

## CLUSTERING TO ELECT NEA DELEGATES

Delegate allocations are based on NEA membership as of January 15, 2008. NEA local affiliates are allocated delegates on a ratio of one (1) delegate for each 150 (or major fraction thereof) active, NEA life, and educational support members of NEA. Local associations with 75 or fewer NEA members must cluster to elect an NEA delegate. If your local has 75 or fewer NEA members and is interested in clustering to elect an NEA delegate, contact the TSTA CEG as soon as possible so that elections may be held. Submit your written request to cluster by **email** to: [sandras@tsta.org](mailto:sandras@tsta.org), by **fax** to: 512-486-7053, or by **mail** to: TSTA Center for Executive and Governance, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

## TEXAS TRADITION

Texas delegates capture the eyes of the entire nation at each NEA RA by dressing uniformly in Texas flag attire. All Texas delegates should wear a "Texas" vest or shirt—i.e. Texas flag design with a white star on the right front chest—with white or navy blue pants/skirt/shorts (no stone washed jeans).

All Texas delegates are expected to wear the official "uniform" on the days the NEA RA is in session (July 3-6).

## NEA-RA INFORMATION

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Candidate Statements . . . . .	p.22

**Your ballot and return envelope for State NEA Delegates are inserted between pages 20 and 21.**

# TENTATIVE NEA MEETING EVENT SCHEDULE

**The schedule outlines all of the activities of the 2008 NEA Convention. Information packets will be mailed to all Texas delegates in early May. The first Texas delegation meeting is scheduled for July 1 at 1:00 p.m.**

## Pre-Convention Schedule

**Thursday, June 26**  
8:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. . . . . NEA Student Leadership Conference

**Friday, June 27**  
8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Ethnic Leaders Meetings  
8:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. . . . . NEA Student Leadership Conference  
noon-5:00 p.m. . . . . National Council of Urban Education Associations Meeting  
2:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m. . . . . NEA-Retired Annual Meeting

**Saturday, June 28**  
8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . NEA Student Leadership Conference  
8:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . NEA-Retired Annual Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . National Council of Urban Education Associations Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . Joint Conference On Concerns of Minorities and Women  
9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . Resolutions Editing Committee Meeting  
4:15 p.m.-5:15 p.m. . . . . Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Hearing\*  
5:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . Women's Issues Hearing\*

**Sunday, June 29**  
8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. . . . . NEA Student Leadership Conference  
8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. . . . . Joint Conference on the Concerns of Minorities and Women  
8:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . NEA-Retired Annual Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-noon . . . . . The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-noon . . . . . National Education Employees Assistance Fund Annual Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. . . . . National Council of Urban Education Associations Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. . . . . Constitution, Bylaws and Rules Committee Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . Resolutions Editing Committee Meeting  
1:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . National Council of State Education Associations Meeting  
4:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m. . . . . Constitution, Bylaws and Rules Committee Meeting with Candidates for NEA Office

**Monday, June 30**  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Candidates Interview Day  
9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . Resolutions Committee Meeting  
10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. . . . . Read Across America  
1:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Board of Directors Meeting  
3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Credentials Committee Meeting

**Tuesday, July 1**  
8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. . . . . Open Hearing on Resolutions  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Exhibits; Campaigning  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Credentials Committee Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Delegate, Successor Delegate, Non-Delegate Registration  
10:00 a.m.-noon . . . . . Parliamentary Procedure Training  
1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. . . . . First Texas Caucus Meeting (New delegate orientation 1:00-1:30 p.m.)  
4:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m. . . . . Special Interest Caucus Meetings  
4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . National Council for Higher Education Conference

4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. . . . . National Council for Education Support Professionals  
7:00 p.m.-10:30 p.m. . . . . Special Guests' Dinner

**Wednesday, July 2**  
7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. . . . . State Delegation Meetings  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Delegate, Successor Delegate, Non-Delegate Registration  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Exhibits  
9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . Credentials Committee Meeting  
10:00 a.m.-noon . . . . . Open Hearing on Budget & Strategic Planning  
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. . . . . Resolutions Committee Meeting  
noon-1:00 p.m. . . . . Special Interest Caucus Meetings  
1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. . . . . Legislative Open Hearing  
1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. . . . . Open Hearing on Constitution, Bylaws and Rules  
2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. . . . . Elections Committee Meeting  
3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Parliamentary Procedure Training  
5:00 p.m. . . . . Board of Directors Meeting  
6:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m. . . . . Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner  
ALL DAY . . . . . Campaigning

## Convention Schedule

**Thursday, July 3**  
7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. . . . . State Delegation Meetings  
9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. . . . . Exhibits  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Credentials Committee Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Non-Delegate Registration  
9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. . . . . Special Interest Caucus Meetings  
11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Representative Assembly  
ALL DAY . . . . . Campaigning  
Friendship Night

**Friday, July 4**  
7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. . . . . State Delegation Meetings  
8:30 a.m.-noon . . . . . Voting for Officers  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Credentials Committee Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Non-Delegate Registration  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Non-Profit Fundraising Activities  
9:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m. . . . . Special Interest Caucus Meetings  
10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Representative Assembly  
LUNCH BREAK . . . . . Special Interest Caucus Meetings

**Saturday, July 5**  
7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. . . . . State Delegation Meetings  
8:30 a.m.-noon . . . . . Voting on Amendments and Runoff Elections (if necessary)  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Credentials Committee Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Non-Delegate Registration  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Non-Profit Fundraising Activities  
9:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m. . . . . Special Interest Caucus Meetings  
10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . Representative Assembly  
LUNCH BREAK . . . . . Special Interest Caucus Meetings

**Sunday, July 6**  
7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. . . . . State Delegation Meetings  
9:00 a.m.-noon . . . . . Non-Delegate Registration  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Credentials Committee Meeting  
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. . . . . Non-Profit Fundraising Activities  
9:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m. . . . . Special Interest Caucus Meetings  
10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. . . . . Representative Assembly  
LUNCH BREAK . . . . . Special Interest Caucus Meetings

# HOTEL REGISTRATION FORM FOR NEA CONVENTION DELEGATES

**July 1-6, 2008 • Crystal Gateway Marriott • Arlington, VA**

*Complete all requested information and return to TSTA by **May 26, 2008**. Check-in time 4:00 p.m.—Check-out time 1:00 p.m.*

**DO NOT CONTACT THE HOTEL DIRECTLY**

(PLEASE PRINT)

### CRYSTAL GATEWAY MARRIOTT

(Texas Delegation Hotel)  
1700 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Arlington, VA 22202  
Phone: 703-920-3230  
Fax: 703-271-5212

### ROOM RATE

\_\_\_\_\_ Single room (1 person—1 bed) .....\$159.00  
\_\_\_\_\_ Double room (2 people—2 beds) .....\$159.00  
\_\_\_\_\_ Triple room (3 people—2 beds).....\$179.00  
\_\_\_\_\_ Quad room (4 people—2 beds).....\$199.00

Cut-off date for ALL rooms and room rates is May 26, 2008. All rooms are subject to an additional 12.25% tax.  
Rooms not booked through TSTA may be charged at the hotel rack rate.

I will arrive (June/July) \_\_\_\_\_, 2008 at \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.) and I will depart July \_\_\_\_\_, 2008.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Day phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Home email: \_\_\_\_\_ School email: \_\_\_\_\_

List ALL individuals per room (one name per line) and accommodations desired:

	Circle Room Type	Room No. 1	Circle Room Type	Room No. 2
Single	1.	_____	Single	1. _____
Double	2.	_____	Double	2. _____
Triple	3.	_____	Triple	3. _____
Quad	4.	_____	Quad	4. _____

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not have a roommate but am interested in sharing accommodations with another delegate.

First night's room and tax is due upon receipt of reservation. Deposits can be made by major credit card or check.  
Make check payable to **Crystal Gateway Marriott**. Should cancellation be necessary, you must advise the hotel before 6 p.m.  
on your scheduled arrival date. If the hotel is not advised, you will be responsible to pay for space held.

Approved major credit card: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to: TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701, fax 512-486-7053**

# Voting for State Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly

**PLEASE NOTE:** Most members will mark three ballots this year for State Delegates to the NEA RA. One is for Category II delegates, one will be a Statewide Ballot and one will be a Delegate District Ballot. Please read this before marking your ballots.

We have completed all of the calculations for allocating State Delegates for the NEA RA and have divided the state into Delegate Districts, based on TSTA Regions, in a manner that maximizes our opportunity to elect a full delegation while still complying with the NEA one-person, one-vote requirements. As explained in The Delegate Story on the facing page, we will be electing three Category II delegates on a statewide basis, one other delegate on a statewide ballot, and 38 State Delegates from nine Delegate Districts.

First, all members should mark the ballot for Category II delegates (supervisory and Active Life Active candidates). Next, every eligible member should mark the ballot for Statewide delegate, which includes the TSTA Vice President as an automatic candidate.

The rest of the ballots are divided into Delegate Districts in a manner to meet the NEA requirements for equal representation based on the one-person, one-vote principle. Members in Regions 1A and 1E should mark the

Delegate District 1 ballot. Members in Regions 1B, 1D, 4A and 4E mark the Delegate District 2 ballot. Members in Regions 1C, 4B and 4D mark the Delegate District 3 ballot. Members in Regions 2A, 2B and 2F mark the Delegate District 4 ballot. Region 2C members mark the Delegate District 5 ballot. Members in Regions 2D, 3C, 4C and TFA mark the Delegate District 6 ballot. Members in Regions 2E and 3E mark the Delegate District 7 ballot. Region 3A members mark the Delegate District 8 ballot. Finally, members in Regions 3B and 3D should mark the Delegate District 9 ballot. The ballot will list the Regions in each Delegate District.

**There is a special insert in the magazine with a return envelope and the ballot. If you lost or didn't get a ballot, call TSTA immediately (1-877-ASK-TSTA) and ask for Sandra.**

In the return address portion of that envelope most members will find printed "Del Dist" followed by some number up to 9; this indicates the Delegate District in which you should

vote. Also printed is a code designating your membership category. *If your envelope shows only the membership category and does not have a Del Dist designation, then you are eligible to vote only on the Category II ballot.* Everybody else should mark three ballots: the Category II ballot, the Statewide ballot and the appropriate Delegate District ballot. **If you believe your envelope is incorrect, call TSTA immediately (1-877-ASK-TSTA) and ask for Sandra.**

Check the return address portion of the envelope to determine which Delegate District ballot you should mark. First, mark the Category II ballot (vote for three). Next, mark the Statewide ballot (vote for one). Then, find the ballot for your Delegate District. The number of delegates for each Delegate District is determined on the basis of the one-person, one-vote principle. The ballot for your Delegate District will tell you how many votes you may cast. On all three ballots, you may vote for the printed name(s), or you may write in a name and vote for the write-in. In order for write-in votes to be counted on the Delegate District ballot, the write-in candidate must be a member in a region included in that Delegate District.

We encourage write-in votes, espe-

cially in districts where fewer are running than there are delegates allowed. Even in other districts, write-in votes can provide an alternate pool.

Once you have marked your ballot, separate it from, and seal it in, the envelope provided. **The printed information on the envelope verifies for the Elections Committee your right to vote, so you MUST return your ballot in this envelope.**

In order to encourage more members to vote, some locals collect the sealed envelopes and mail a group of envelopes together. This is acceptable, but you still must seal your ballot in the special envelope before you turn it in. Check with your local president to see if your local is collecting and mailing ballots as a group.

**Whether you mail it yourself or your local collects and mails envelopes, ballots must be RECEIVED at TSTA headquarters in Austin by 5 p.m. on Friday, April 25, 2008. If the ballot is not in the provided envelope, your vote will not be counted.**

This issue of the Advocate includes brief statements from many of the candidates for State Delegate. TSTA policy provides for printing statements from those candidates who file such a statement before the established deadline. TSTA policy also permits any candidate to have an observer present when the Elections Committee canvasses the ballots on April 26 at the TSTA headquarters in Austin. Please contact Carol or Sandra at 1-877-ASK-TSTA if you are a candidate and want an observer.

## THE DELEGATE STORY

NEA Bylaws and policies determine the allocation of delegates to the NEA RA. TSTA is allocated one state delegate for every 1,000 NEA active and educational support members. Allocation and election of these delegates must comply with the NEA requirements about open nominations, secret ballots and the one-person, one-vote principle.

Once NEA notifies us of the number of state delegates to be elected, TSTA Board policy controls how we will allocate those delegates. Because of the variance in the number of members across TSTA Regions, we can not allocate delegates only to individual Regions and still pass the one-person, one-vote tests applied by NEA. Instead, we have combined Regions into Delegate Districts in a way to maximize the likelihood of filling all delegate slots while still complying with the one-person, one-vote requirement. One delegate must be elected statewide in order to provide a method for the TSTA Vice President to seek election as a delegate.

TSTA is allocated 42 state delegates for the 2008 NEA RA. Based on proportional representation, three delegates must be elected as "Category II" delegates, representing supervisors and NEA Active Life Active members. After setting aside one delegate for the statewide ballot, we looked at different ways to combine Regions in order to meet the one-person, one-vote requirements while electing the remaining 38 state delegates. As the numbers worked out, we were able to stay with only one delegate on the statewide ballot, keep the three delegate positions for the Category II ballot, and divide the other 38 delegates among nine Delegate Districts as shown on the ballot.

Local associations are allocated one delegate for each 150 active and educational support NEA members or major fraction thereof. Locals with fewer than 76 NEA members may cluster to form delegate units. Presidents of locals that have 76 or more members should receive from NEA in late February the number of delegates to be elected to the 2008 NEA RA with an accompanying form that is due at TSTA by April 10 and a copy of guidelines to assure proportional representation by educational position. Local presidents should send the state and NEA copies of the local delegate report forms to TSTA as soon as possible after they conduct their local NEA delegate elections or by April 10. Members from locals of 75 or fewer members also may seek election as "cluster" delegates. If you are interested in this option, please contact Sandra Solimine at 1-877-ASK-TSTA or by email at sandras@tsta.org.

One of the core values for both NEA and TSTA is appropriate representation for ethnic minority members. Locals are encouraged to seek and elect ethnic minorities as delegates to help TSTA meet our goals for ethnic minority representation.

TSTA is pleased to announce that each of the 42 elected State Delegates will be eligible to receive a \$250 stipend. While this amount is only a small percentage of the total cost for a delegate, this is the first time in several years that TSTA has been in a financial position to provide any stipend. The TSTA Board will be adopting a policy defining the caucus and RA attendance expectations that delegates will need to meet in order to receive the stipend.

**BALLOTS MUST BE RECEIVED AT TSTA HEADQUARTERS IN AUSTIN BY 5 P.M. ON FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 2008.**

## CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

### Category 2

- Bobbie Duncan, Caucasian. My experiences as an active member and now as a retiree qualify me to represent you on active and retired issues. I appreciate your vote.
- Ignacio Salinas, Jr., Hispanic. I am Benavides ISD Superintendent. It would be a privilege to serve as a State Delegate to the 2008 R.A. I ask for your vote.
- Gwendolyn Samples, Black. Houston ISD Partnership Coordinator, has been a teacher, Teaching Academy coordinator, university supervisor of student teachers, ExCET Committee member, and university professor.
- Ernest H. Singleton, Caucasian. I am Director of C&I and Elementary Principal in Benavides ISD. I ask for your vote for State Delegate to the R.A.
- Eddie Spence, Caucasian. I like to stay active and involved in my professional organizations. I would appreciate your support and vote. Thank you.
- Jerry Watkins, Caucasian. Dedicated to advancing the TSTA agenda. TSTA-R Region 4C President. Fort Worth Education Assn., Past President. Past TSTA/NEA delegate.

### Statewide

- Ann Heuberger, Vice President of the Texas State Teachers Association.

### Delegate District 1 (Regions 1A and 1E)

- Eliza M. Garcia.
- Elizabeth Michelle Adams, Caucasian. Highly successful middle school teacher, 29 years old. Work with at risk youth in a low socioeconomic area of Texas.

- Kathy Gomez, Hispanic. Born: Baytown, Texas. Married 26 years. Three children. First family member to obtain college degree. University of Houston, 1986, B.B.A. St. Mary's University, 2006, M.A.
- Maria Magdalena Inglett, Hispanic. Local Vice President 2006—Present, State LPAC member. Would be honored to represent our region at the 2008 RA. Thank you!
- Yolanda C. Molina, Hispanic. I am committed to all members. As your state delegate at the NEA Convention the decisions I make will be in your best interest.

### Delegate District 2 (Regions 1B, 1D, 4A and 4E)

- Eula Axe, Caucasian. I would appreciate your vote as a state delegate. I am a four-term Regional president, past local president, and grievance chair. Thank you.
- Rebecca Cerliano, Caucasian. Active 30 years, from a growing local, 15 years as regional secretary, I would like to continue to represent Texas at the NEA-RA.
- Doris Hill, American Indian/Alaska Native. I would be honored to represent you at the NEA in 2008. I am the Grand Prairie president and an TSTA Ambassador. Thanks.
- Winifred Jackson, Black. Active member since 1989, region 4A Vice President, past 3F President—TSTA board director, dedicated to actively advocating for members in public education.

- Jana Prince, Black. Undergrad: University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Graduate school: University of Missouri-St. Louis. Years of teaching: 6. Grades taught: 3rd, 6th, and 1st.

- Stephen Smallwood, American Indian/Alaska Native. I am a proven leader with productive local, state, and national experience. I am committed to representing TSTA nationally in this critical election year.
- Linda Winfrey, Caucasian. As a lifetime member, I am aware of critical educational issues. Commitment to children and to our profession calls me to active service in TSTA.

### Delegate District 3 (Regions 1C, 4B and 4D)

- Angela Davis, Black.
- Linda A. Mosley.
- Charles Turner.

### Delegate District 4 (Regions 2A, 2B and 2F)

- Gilbert F. De La Rosa, Hispanic. I have represented TSTA and my local as a delegate and PAC Chair. I would appreciate your vote of confidence to represent all TSTA members.
- Norma De La Rosa, Hispanic. I have represented TSTA and my local for 30 years with pride. I would appreciate your vote of confidence to continue representing all TSTA members.
- Robert C. Fierro, Hispanic. Previous NEA Resolutions member. Previous NEA-RA Delegate. I need your vote to continue serving Texas.

### Delegate District 5 (Region 2C)

- John Duncan, Caucasian. TSTA/NEA member 33 years—Currently on the TSTA Board, Region 2C President. I would appreciate your vote and consider it an honor to represent you.

### Delegate District 6 (Region 2D, 3C, 4C, TFA)

- LaDonna Brackens.
- Israel Cortez Jr., Hispanic. Ambassador 2003. Hispanic Caucus. ESP Caucus. Former Vice-President, Deer Park Education Assn. Former Board of Directors ESP at large 2005-2007.
- RoShon Jackson, Black. I am currently a teacher in Texas. I have taught for five years. I obtained my Master's Degree in 2007 from Tarleton State University.
- Dolly Texada Spencer, Black. I want your support and vote to elect me to represent our members as a voting delegate at the NEA Representative Assembly this summer. Thanks.
- Louise Watkins. NEA Board of Directors 2004-07. NEA Minority Af-

fairs Committee. TSTA Board of Directors. Fort Worth Education Association, Past President. NEA Peer Trainer.

### Delegate District 7 (Region 2E and 3E)

- Dayne Antwine, American Indian/Alaska Native.
- Jane R. Champagne, Hispanic. Educational experience: paraprofessional, special education inclusion teacher, and educational diagnostician. Master of Education in Special Education degree. Personal Goal—to be a special education director.
- Rhonda Schell, American Indian/Alaska Native.
- Kimberly Walker, Caucasian.

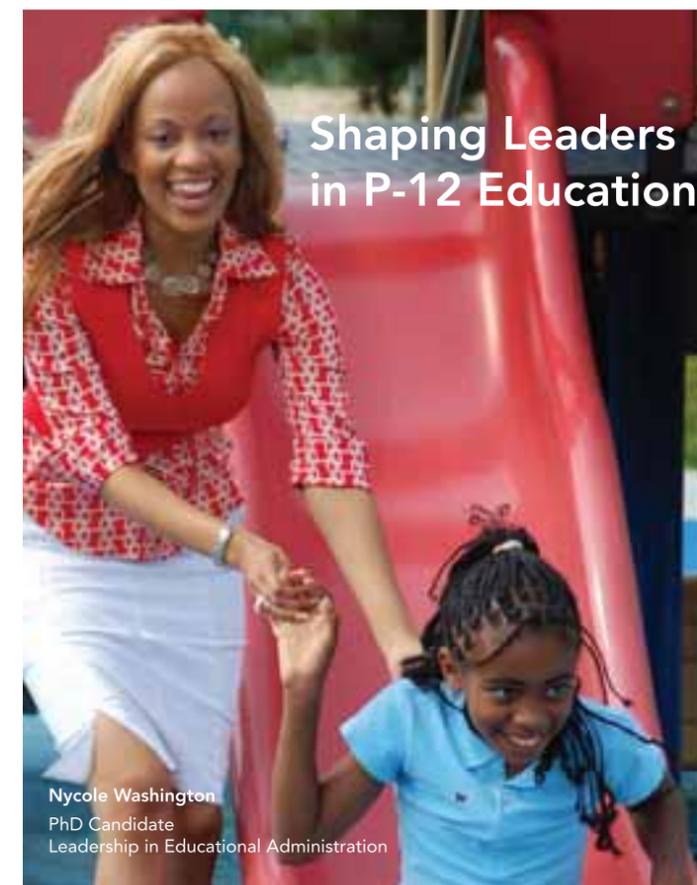
### Delegate District 8 (Region 3A)

- Maxine E. Guidry, Black. GEATSTA/

NEA member since 2002; Local President of GEA 2005-2007; Regional 3A President 2006-2008; NEA Delegate since 2004; and NEA Black Caucus Member.

### Delegate District 9 (Region 3B and 3D)

- Henry Adeoye, Black. Accord me the privilege of being your voice at this year's NEA-RA in Washington, DC. Thanks.
- Cindy Hillman.
- Roseanna Rawlins, Caucasian. I am Western Regional Director of the Peace and Justice Caucus. I am against tying teacher evaluations to their students' test performance.
- Davey G. Vela, Hispanic. With over 30 years in TSTA, electing me to the NEA assembly will give you a strong voice.



Nycole Washington  
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<sup>1</sup>PhD requires attendance at colloquia. ©2007 Capella University



## 129th Annual TSTA Convention Delegates Help Shape Future of TSTA

Delegates attending the 2008 TSTA annual convention will vote in several key elections. The votes cast will determine the TSTA officers—i.e. President and Vice President; the NEA Director, Place 3; and alternate NEA Directors. All races are contested. Delegates will also vote on five proposed bylaws amendments pertaining to: (1) state and local executive officers, (2) student member dues, (3) NEA board members from Texas serving as ex officio members on the TSTA board, (4) the composition of the Credentials, Bylaws and Elections committee, and (5) emergency amendments to the bylaws.

Delegates are elected at the local level, except for certain supervisory delegates elected regionally and voting members of the TSTA board who are automatically delegates because of their position. All delegates must have their credentials and a picture ID with them in order to vote.

Registration opens Friday, April 18, from 7:00 a.m. through close of the first General Session, and re-opens Saturday, April 19, at 6:30 a.m. Delegates planning to arrive on Saturday should allow plenty of time to register and vote. Voting begins Saturday at 8:30 a.m. Delegates must have completed registration and be in the voting line no later than 9:30 a.m. to be eligible to cast their ballot.

Information about lodging and the schedule of events appeared in the winter 2007-08 Advocate and is available on the TSTA website, [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org). Any updates to this information will be posted on the website. The convention hotel is holding a room block for TSTA attendees. Delegates are responsible for making their own hotel reservations. The housing deadline is March 26, 2008.

The annual TSTA Convention will be in Plano on April 18-19, 2008. All convention events will take place at the Marriott Dallas/Plano at Legacy Town Center, a beautiful hotel nestled among unique shops and award-winning restaurants.

**TSTA PRESIDENT**



**BAYARDO ARELLANO**

Professional Training: Enterprise State Junior College, AS, 1986; University of the State of New York—Regents College, BS, 1993;

Texas A&M University at Commerce, MS, 2000

Professional Experience: Dallas ISD, bilingual teacher, 1993-present; Dallas ISD, adult basic education instructional coordinator, 1995-present

Professional Education Associations: Dallas NEA

Offices Held: Dallas NEA Board of Directors, District Director for #6, 2004-06; Democrat Precinct Chair/Election Judge, Dallas County

Campaign Statement: Fellow members, we are in position to claim Texas back from special interest groups that Republican leaders in Austin sold out to. A strong, active Democrat TSTA president is needed in Austin in order to reclaim our profession from brain-dead Republican politicians, in education matters. Dallas County is now blue. It took hard work and sweat but we did it. We can make Texas Blue again. We should remember how we were when the majority of the State House and the Senate were Democrats. Your support for my election is the beginning of the end of the mess we have in Austin today. I know I do not need to rub details in your face? A vote for me is a slap to politicians who don't care about children in Texas. I could go on endlessly, but this is a well known fact.

**TSTA PRESIDENT**



**RITA C. HAECKER**

Professional Training: University of Texas at Austin, BS (Education), 1988; University of Texas at Austin, Bilingual Education En-

dorsement, 1990; University of Massachusetts at Amherst, MS (Union Leadership and Administration), 2007

Professional Experience: Austin ISD, first grade bilingual teacher, 1988-2003; Austin ISD, consultation chairperson, 2002-08; Austin ISD, charitable fund board president, 2003-08

Professional Education Associations: National Education Association, Texas State Teachers Association, National Council of Urban Education Associations

Offices Held: Education Austin, vice president, 1999-2008; Austin Association of Teachers, vice president, 1998-99; TSTA Region 27 vice president 1998-2000 and president 2000-03; NEA Resolutions Committee member 2000-04; NEA Director for Texas, Place 1, 2004-08; TSTA Community and Instructional Advocacy Committee vice chair, 2000-02

Campaign Statement: I have had the privilege of serving TSTA for the last 10 years at the local, state and national level. I have traveled our great state and worked side by side with you, our leaders, and like you, I face the challenges and issues that will bring us together to represent our members. TSTA needs a leader that is doing the heavy lifting of representing all our members. I am committed to strengthening the collaboration between TSTA and local associations by emphasizing shared resources and shared responsibility. I will work to assure that all TSTA locals are supported in their efforts to build their capacities in organizing, leadership development and membership growth. I have strong relationships with elected local, state and national leaders, which will serve the association well in the coming years. I ask for your support and vote in electing me president of the Texas State Teachers Association.

**TSTA PRESIDENT**



**ANN J. HEUBERGER**

Professional Training: East Tennessee State University, BS, 1968-1972; University of Georgia, MEd, 1976-78; Sam Houston State

University and Texas A&M University, additional studies

Professional Experience: College Station ISD, middle school/intermediate school librarian, 1980-2002; Cobb County (Georgia) Public Schools, elementary media specialist, 1975-80; Bristol (Virginia) City Schools, junior high librarian, 1972-75

Professional Education Associations: National Education Association, Texas State Teachers Association, Texas Library Association

Offices Held: TSTA vice president 2002-present; TSTA Budget Committee chair 2002-present; TSTA Student Program Coordinator 2007-present; TSTA Board of Directors and Advisory Committee member 1993-present; TSTA Region 25 president 1993-96 and vice president 1992-93; TSTA District VI president 1990-92 and vice president 1988-90; NEA Board of Directors 1996-2002; Western Region Leadership Conference co-chair; Western Region Leadership Conference Planning Committee; NEA Library, Information, Technology Caucus vice chair 1997-2001; College Station Education Association president 1985-86 and 1992-94, vice president 1984-85, membership chair 1995-2001, association representative, Grievance Committee

Campaign Statement: TSTA is on the move! As a member of your leadership team, it is exciting to be a positive force in TSTA's growth and vision. TSTA needs leadership to continue this growth and our momentum. I have served as a local president and vice president, an NEA director and currently serve as your TSTA vice president. I know the challenges of serving as president and vice president of a region with multiple locals. I am the seasoned, experienced candidate for the presidency of TSTA. I believe in the legacy and future of TSTA, a powerful, member driven, pro-active association, whose members must be empowered to move forward in a collaborative spirit to achieve excellence. With my experience, commitment, integrity, and proven leadership, I am ready to lead TSTA forward as we continue to increase membership, strengthen financially, and use our resources to broaden our power and influence for public education.

**TSTA VICE PRESIDENT****JOEL ROSENZWEIG**

Professional Training: University of Southern California, BA (Humanities), 1970

Professional Experience: Richardson ISD, drama specialist/AP social studies, 1999-present

Professional Education Associations: Association of Richardson Educators/TSTA/NEA

Offices Held: Association of Richardson Educators vice president 1999-2003 and president 2003-present; TSTA Legislative and Political Advocacy Committee member 2004-present and Collective Bargaining Task Force member

Campaign Statement: When I decided to run for TSTA vice president I recalled the words of Robert Kennedy, "I seek the office...because I want...to stand for reconciliation among men." My greatest talent; I like working with everyone. My greatest discipline; I can work with anyone. The challenges facing public education, and therefore this state's greatest advocate for teachers, are huge. We cannot allow ourselves to be pitted against each other, big vs. small, urban vs. rural, we must have leadership which will bring us all to creating and maintaining effective locals which affect school governance as well as state and local politics. I am inspired to run because of what you've said to me in workshops, committees, task forces and conventions. Building effective locals is my platform. Working with you all is my plan. The only endorsement I want is yours. Vote Joel Rosenzweig for TSTA vice president.

**TSTA VICE PRESIDENT****JASON R. HILLMAN**

Professional Training: Sam Houston State University, BS (Psychology), 1990-92, and additional studies in teaching, geology, 1992-96; NHCC, 1988-90; Tarleton State University, 1987-88

Professional Experience: Klein ISD, classroom instructor, 1994-present

Professional Education Associations: Texas State Teachers Association

Offices Held: Klein EA president 2006-present and vice president 2004-06; TSTA Legislative and Political Advocacy Committee vice chair 2005-07 and chair 2007-present

Campaign Statement: As the vice president of TSTA, I will work to achieve our Strategic Goals. TSTA is an association designed around the principle of empowerment and our members must have the resources available to become the best leaders in the business. I will work with our organization to inform, train, and support our professional and paraprofessional staff members throughout their careers. Furthermore, I will work to create the best retirement options available for those that have spent a lifetime educating and helping our youth. I welcome the many challenges that we face. In order to elevate TSTA's influence, I will continue to work side-by-side with the members, TSTA leadership, and the NEA. We will have to work diligently to improve the public's perception of public education, and our rewards will be many as we do. As we move forward, I guarantee first-class representation for the best professional organization in Texas.

**TSTA VICE PRESIDENT****FRANCES ANNE SMITH**

Professional Training: University of Iowa, BA (English with secondary education certification), 1969; University of Wyoming, MA

(Curriculum and Instruction with emphasis on secondary reading), 1975; University of Houston, EdD (Curriculum and Instruction with emphasis on teacher education)

Professional Experience: Faxon (OK) School District, seventh/eighth grades, all subjects, 1969; U.S. Department of Defense/Army, GED-social studies/English classes (classes for GIs on base- Kitzingen, Germany), 1970-72; Laramie (WY) Public Schools, sophomore English, 1972-76; Ponca City (OK) Schools, seventh/eighth grade remedial reading, 1977-80; University of Houston, TA (taught senior level teaching strategies course) and Assistant Director of NASSP Principal's Assessment Center, 1981-89; Cypress Fairbanks ISD (Houston), sophomore, junior, and senior English at Cypress Falls HS and Cypress Ridge HS, 1992-present

Professional Education Associations: Delta Kappa Gamma, TSTA

Offices Held: CyFair TSTA/NEA vice president 2000-02 and president 2002-present; TSTA Region 3B president 2006-present

Campaign Statement: TSTA's vitality, strength, and effectiveness are best represented by its leaders who work to protect member rights, initiate legislation, and promote exemplary public education. I am such a leader who passionately defends public schools as the foundation of this country's democracy. I am president of Cy Fair TSTA/NEA—and have helped double its membership, Region 3B president, on TSTA's Board of Directors and have the overall qualifications to best represent you. For three years, I have met monthly with our superintendent in a collegial environment and spoken at Board meetings. I have been a public school teacher for 21 years in four states, the last 16 in Texas, and my degrees in education support my understanding of teachers and schools well. Hard work, professionalism, and an informed voice will be my hallmark as your vice president of TSTA.

**TSTA VICE PRESIDENT****WANDA NEALY-WARD**

Professional Training: East Texas State University, BS (with speech and hearing therapy and language and/or learning disabled certifications); Texas A&M University—Commerce, MEd (with educational diagnostician certification)

Professional Experience: Corsicana ISD, special education teacher 15 years, speech and hearing specialist 10 years, and special education diagnostician 5 years

Professional Education Associations: TSTA/NEA, Corsicana Educators, TSTA-R life member, NEA-R life member, Texas Educational Diagnosticians Association

Offices Held: Corsicana Educators, building rep, president (current) and AR/Grievance chair (current); TSTA Region 25 vice president and president; TSTA state HoD delegate, Board of Directors member, Black Caucus treasurer, and Women's Caucus treasurer; NEA delegate to the Representative Assembly, Resolutions Committee member, Board of Directors member, Western Region Coordinator for the Women's Caucus, and held several NEA committee assignments while on the board

Campaign Statement: My agenda in this election is to use the office of vice president to involve all members to increase the power and influence of TSTA/NEA in the arena of public education. Experience has shown that we are strongest when each of us is committed to the same goal. I believe our goal should be to ensure great public schools, which provide excellent instruction in a safe and nurturing environment for every child. The goal of our association should be to provide our members the knowledge, skills, confidence and empowerment they need to both serve and advocate for the children. I have witnessed our power when we are united. Power also comes from our diversity and we must never fail to show appreciation and respect for our individuality. I believe that when we stand side-by-side, hand in hand, respecting each other and working together, we can do anything. Yes, we can!

**NEA DIRECTOR PLACE 3****GINNY EVANS**

Professional Training: University of Texas at Dallas, BS; Southern Methodist University, Economics Institute; University of North

Texas, graduate work

Professional Experience: Lewisville ISD, Hebron High School, lead ESL teacher; Lewisville ISD, ESL mentor teacher; Ebby Halliday Real Estate, realtor; Collin County Community College, adjunct PE tennis instructor; Plano ISD, social studies/special education/inclusion teacher

Offices Held: NEA Board of Directors, Place 3; NEA RA delegate; TSTA HoD delegate; TSTA Republican Educators Caucus secretary/treasurer; Lewisville EA, Hebron High School AR; TSTA Region 4B president; Lewisville Education Association president; TSTA Community and Instructional Advocacy Committee chair; NEA Fund for Children and Public Education chair; 2002 NEA Host Committee member; Plano EA school board liaison; Plano EA Clark High School AR

Campaign Statement: As your NEA Board Director, I take concerns to Washington and work with our Texas directors to lobby Congress on issues like NCLB, Social Security, and IDEA. Much has been accomplished—25 members of Congress from Texas support Social Security fairness yet changes to NCLB are needed to remove burdens from schools, teachers and students. Our work isn't finished. We must ensure that: our schools leave no child behind, including those whose language, culture, and lifestyle are different from our own; all educators—current and retired—enjoy a living wage rather than one that consigns them to poverty; and salaries and benefits keep the best of our college graduates as educators. Our work is noble. We reach out and touch tomorrow every day. Our hopes are high, our dreams are big and why shouldn't they—we are the NEA! Vote Ginny Evans for NEA Director.

**NEA DIRECTOR PLACE 3****WINIFRED JACKSON**

Professional Training: University of Texas at Tyler, graduate course, 1989 and 1992; Wiley College, BS, 1981-84

Professional Experience: Longview ISD, second grade teacher, 1992-present; Gladewater ISD, second and third grade teacher, 1989-92; Hughes Springs ISD, second grade teacher, 1986-89

Professional Education Associations: Longview Educators Association, Texas State Teachers Association, National Education Association

Offices Held: Longview Educators Association vice president 2005-present, president 2000-05, secretary 1998-2000, treasurer 1994-98, building AR 1994-present; TSTA Region 4A vice president 2007-present; TSTA Region 3F president 2003-07; TSTA Legislative and Political Advocacy Committee 2003-07; TSTA Board of Directors 2003-07; TSTA Advisory Committee 2004-07; TSTA CB&E Committee 2000-03 and chair 2002, 2003; NEA Black Caucus secretary 2005-present; NEA Minority Affairs Committee member 2005-present

Campaign Statement: Each one of us has a certain passion that lights a fire in us to achieve more and do better. The fire that I have involves advocating on behalf of both the members and the students of this state for great public education. Public education not only needs to improve but it needs to be safer for our children and educators so that they may continue to learn and grow as individuals of our society. In recent years, our profession and professional organizations have faced many obstacles, challenges, and changes. I want to be a voice for the small local as well as the large merged local. I am capable of making wise decisions because I have the ability to actually listen to members' concerns, opinions, and questions with an open and honest mind. Then I make the decisions after reflecting on how they will affect the whole organization.

Voting begins Saturday at 8:30 a.m. Delegates must have completed registration and be in the voting line no later than 9:30 a.m. to be eligible to cast their ballot. Delegates must present their credentials (badge and ribbon) and a photo ID in order to vote.

**THIRD ALTERNATE NEA DIRECTOR**

George E. Borrego—No form, statement, or picture submitted

Winifred D. Jackson—see information, statement, and photo under NEA DIRECTOR PLACE 3

# Proposed Bylaws Amendments

Wording in **Bold and Underlined** — Proposed Additions

Wording in ~~[Brackets with Strikethrough]~~ — Proposed Deletions

**1** INTENT: To clarify the application of certain membership qualifications and restore the original purpose of providing a membership mechanism for executive officers.

## ARTICLE III, Members

### Section 2. Qualifications and Conditions of Membership

There shall be nine (9) classes of membership: Active-Professional, Life, Active-Educational Support Professional, Substitute, Student, Staff, TSTA-R, Subscriber, and Reserve.

#### A. Active-Professional Members

##### 1. Qualifications

- a. Active-Professional members shall:
  - 1) Be employed in a professional capacity in a public school and hold a Texas teaching certificate or credentials appropriate to the respective professional duties; or
  - 2) Hold a regular appointment on a Texas college or university faculty; or
  - 3) Hold a position in a private educational institution that would require a Texas teaching certificate if employed in a like position in a public school; or
  - 4) Serve under contract for a full year as a substitute teacher; or
  - 5) Serve as an **executive** officer of TSTA or one of its affiliates.

#### And, further:

#### C. Active-Educational Support Professional Members

##### 1. Qualifications

Active-Educational Support Professional members shall:

- a. Be employed by an educational institution and not eligible for Active membership; and
- b. Serve as an **executive** officer of TSTA or one of its affiliates; or
- c. Maintain membership in the National Education Association and the TSTA local affiliate when eligible under the constitution or bylaws of the local affiliate; and
- d. Support the goals and objectives of TSTA and abide by these Bylaws.

#### And, further:

ARTICLE XII, Parliamentary Authority and Definitions

### Section 2. Definitions

#### **L. Executive Officer:**

**Any elected officer employed full-time by TSTA or one of its affiliates.**

**Maker:** Credentials, Bylaws and Elections Committee

**Rationale:** In order for TSTA to survive, thrive and carry out its mission, it is important that leaders be members employed by Texas school districts. The only exception to this basic principle should be for those mem-

bers who are employed as full-time officers of TSTA or its affiliates. This bylaw amendment clarifies this intent.

**Vote Required:** Two-Thirds (2/3)

**Financial Impact:** None

**CB&E Recommends:** Support

**2** INTENT: To set annual TSTA dues for student members at \$10 and grant authority to the TSTA Board to establish a policy providing no student dues for certain members and multi-year dues arrangements that will encourage student membership.

## ARTICLE III, Members

### Section 2. Qualifications and Conditions of Membership

#### E. Student Members

##### 2. Dues

Student members shall pay annual dues of **ten dollars (\$10)** ~~[five dollars (\$5)]~~. **The TSTA Board of Directors shall provide that those student members who have been members for two consecutive years shall pay no TSTA dues during the school period when they begin student teaching and may provide for such other multi-year dues arrangements as the Board believes will encourage student membership.**

**Maker:** 2007 House of Delegates, CB&E 1, with modification by CB&E Committee

**Rationale:** The NBI as passed by the

2007 House of Delegates would recognize student teacher members who have been student members for two years by granting them free TSTA dues; the modification by the CB&E Committee would allow the Board to establish other multi-year dues arrangements that could encourage student membership. This will allow TSTA to come into alignment with recent changes made by NEA in student dues.

**Vote Required:** Simple majority

**Financial Impact:** The biggest impact would be the increase from \$5 to \$10 in basic dues. Based on current membership, this would produce an additional \$3,400 annually. On average, there are about 40 student members who would qualify each year for the “free” TSTA dues as proposed, for a loss of \$200. That makes a net gain of \$3,200. However, if this amendment works as intended, more students would join as members for two years before beginning student teaching, which would provide an additional gain in revenue. The impact of any policy adopted by the TSTA Board would depend on that actual policy and cannot be calculated at this time.

**CB&E Recommends:** Support

**3** INTENT: To add non-voting NEA Board members who are TSTA members to the TSTA Board of Directors as non-voting members.

## ARTICLE VII, Board of Directors

### Section 1. Board of Directors

#### A. Composition

1. The Board of Directors shall be composed of the following voting members: The TSTA President, the TSTA Vice President, the TSTA Regional Presidents, the TFA President, the President of

TSTA-R, the President of TSTA-SP, the NEA Directors for Texas and elected TSTA At-Large Board of Directors members.

2. The following TSTA members shall be ex officio members of the Board of Directors without the right to vote or to make motions: NEA Executive Committee members elected by the NEA RA; NEA At-Large Board of Directors members elected by the NEA RA; NEA Directors elected by NEA-SP **and non-voting members of the NEA Board of Directors.**

**Maker:** 2007 House of Delegates, CB&E 2

**Rationale:** Other at large members of the NEA Board serve as non-voting members of the TSTA Board. It is a matter of respect to recognize and honor any member who is chosen to represent a specific constituency on the NEA Board of Directors.

**Vote Required:** Simple Majority

**Financial Impact:** Minimal cost to TSTA, NEA provides funding to these Directors in the same manner as other members of the NEA Board.

**CB&E Recommends:** Support

**4** INTENT: To increase CB&E from seven to nine members in order to provide for three members on each of the sub-committees.

## ARTICLE IX, Committees

### Section 1. Statewide Committees

#### A. Composition

3. The Credentials, Bylaws and Elections committee shall be composed of **nine** ~~[seven]~~ members. **Five** ~~[Three]~~ members shall be appointed in odd

years, and four members shall be appointed in even years.

And, further:

#### B. Purpose

##### 3. Credentials, Bylaws and Elections Committee

This committee shall receive all amendments to these Bylaws and put them in the proper form for submission to the Board of Directors and House of Delegates. This committee shall serve as the Elections Committee for all TSTA statewide elections **including those held at the annual House of Delegates. The President shall select three members of this committee to serve as the Credentials Committee for the annual House of Delegates and name one of those as chair of that committee. The Credentials Committee shall rule on the seating of any delegate and on any challenges to the election of local delegates. The President shall select three members of this committee to serve as the Elections Committee for the annual House of Delegates, and name one of those as chair. The Elections Committee shall conduct all elections at the House of Delegates and shall certify the results to the House of Delegates. The remaining three members shall be the Bylaws Committee, with one named as chair by the President. The chair shall present any proposed amendments to the House of Delegates and all three members shall be available to answer questions about the amendments.** ~~[The President shall select the Credentials and Elections Committees for the annual House of Delegates from this committee.]~~

**Maker:** Credentials, Bylaws and Elections Committee

**Rationale:** With the TSTA elections now being held at the House of Delegates, and with the growing size of the attendance, it is increasingly difficult for members of the Credentials Committee and the Elections Committee to fulfill their assigned duties and still be available when Bylaws are being presented and discussed. Adding two members will allow three Committee members to be available during the discussion on proposed Bylaw Amendments, while the members of the Credentials and Elections Committees can continue to meet their responsibilities.

**Vote Required:** Two-Thirds (2/3)

**Financial Impact:** Assuming a cost of \$500 for each of the two new members to attend each of two Committee meetings and \$1,000 each for the House of Delegates, the additional cost would be about \$4,000.

**CB&E Recommends:** Support

**5** INTENT: To provide an option to declare certain proposed Amendments to the Bylaws as emergency Amendments.

#### ARTICLE XIII, Amendments

##### Section 1. Proposal of Amendments

A. Amendments may be proposed by a member, an affiliate, the Board of Directors, the state House of Delegates, or committees of the Association.

B. Amendments to the Bylaws shall be drafted by the proponent and submitted to the Credentials, Bylaws and Elections Committee no later than **October 1** [September 15], except as otherwise provided for in **this** Article [XIII, Section 1, D

and Section 2, C of the Bylaws].

C. The Credentials, Bylaws and Elections Committee shall communicate with the proponent of the proposal to clarify the intent and rationale, may make nonsubstantive changes with the permission of the proponent, shall group amendments according to topic, shall prepare amendments for printing, may make recommendations, and submit to the Board of Directors and state House of Delegates.

D. Proposed amendments to the Bylaws received by December 1 shall be printed in an all-member publication prior to the annual state House of Delegates and in the state House of Delegates agenda booklet. Proposed amendments not meeting this deadline may be resubmitted for action by the state House of Delegates in the succeeding association year **unless declared an emergency amendment as provided in Section 2 of this Article.**

##### Section 2. Adoption of Amendments

A. Proposed amendments written by the Credentials, Bylaws and Elections Committee at the direction of the previous year's state House of Delegates and published as prescribed in Section 1 shall be adopted by a majority vote of the state House of Delegates.

B. Proposed amendments submitted by **October 1** [September 15] shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the state House of Delegates.

C. Proposed amendments submitted after **October 1** [September 15] and which meet the December 1 deadline shall require a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the House of Delegates.

D. **Proposed amendments submitted after December 1 may still be considered by the House of Delegates if declared an emergency amendment by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Credentials, Bylaws and Elections Committee with agreement by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the TSTA Board of Directors. A copy of any emergency amendment shall be posted at the registration table and provided to each delegate at registration. Emergency amendments shall require a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the House of Delegates.**

E. All voting on amendments shall be by secret ballot with the exception of editorial and extraneous language changes which will be approved by majority voice vote of the state House of Delegates.

F. [E.] Amendments shall become effective sixty (60) days after adoption unless a proviso is adopted specifying a different effective date or a referendum is called.

**Maker:** Credentials, Bylaws and Elections Committee

**Rationale:** On rare occasions, it is possible that after the deadline (December 1) for proposing bylaw amendments, we could discover a problem with the TSTA Bylaws that needed to be fixed sooner rather than later. This would allow such an amendment to be declared an "emergency amendment" by a two-thirds vote of the CB&E Committee and a three-fourths vote of the TSTA Board. It would require approval by three-fourths of those voting at the TSTA House of Delegates.

**Vote Required:** Three-fourths (3/4)

**Financial Impact:** None.

**CB&E Recommends:** Support



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# Chasing Test Scores

## Value Added Experiments in Texas Hurt Kids

DR. PAUL HENLEY AND JOE BEAN, TSTA PUBLIC AFFAIRS



The latest buzz in pay for performance is “value added” compensation. Dallas and Houston have already implemented value added merit pay systems, and Fort Worth is formally working on it, even though value added assessment is at this time completely theoretical and experimental.

The application of most value added models involves both intricate statistical methodology and knotty questions of interpretations.

At the conclusion of value added analysis, a number is associated with each teacher. That number, expressed in scale score points, may take on both positive and negative values. It describes how different that teacher’s performance is from the performance of the typical teacher, with respect to the average growth realized by the students in their classes. It is often referred to as a measure of “teacher effectiveness.”

A problem arises because the word effectiveness denotes a causal interpretation: If a teacher with an effectiveness of +6 were replaced by a teacher with an effectiveness of only +2, we should expect that the test scores in a typical class would be lower by an average of four points.

Obviously such a change can never be directly observed because the same class cannot be simultaneously taught by two different teachers. So it must somehow be inferred, from the data we do have, what the relative contributions of different teachers would be.

Many economists cite the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System as the most successful value added model. In education circles, TVAAS is referred to as the “black box.” Tennessee doesn’t open up the formula for rigorous scrutiny. Test scores go into a black box. Teacher evaluations and salaries come out. This secret process determines what teachers are paid. Yet under the TVAAS, Tennessee has the largest differential between state test

scores and national test scores. What looks good by Tennessee standards fails in the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

In November, NEA-Dallas President Dale Kaiser and TSTA Vice President Ann Heuberger spoke to the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees, urging rejection of the proposed Teacher Performance Pay Pilot Program. The pilot program is driven by student achievement calculated by the district’s Classroom Effectiveness Indices and School Effectiveness Indices.

The Dallas school board passed that value added merit pay plan, which utilizes a complex ratings system to determine which teachers will receive bonuses and how much they will be. But the district’s administration refuses to make public the ratings upon which those bonuses will be based. The Texas attorney general’s office rejected a Dallas Morning News open records request for that information.

“We opposed the Dallas ISD incentive pay plan and asked our employees in those 59 pilot schools to opt out. Next year, the district will extend the plan to all other schools,” said Kaiser.

“The district embarked on a full-fledged PR campaign including professionally produced DVDs, letters and emails from principals and a week full of robo-calls urging employees to opt in,” Kaiser added.

Fort Worth ISD has a district-wide task force putting together a value added merit pay plan. Fort Worth Education Association has two members on the task force, President Dave Robinson and Treasurer Louise Watkins. The plan has three components:

- Bonuses for teachers hired by FWISD and willing to work in the targeted schools (roughly 15-30 low-performing schools). Amounts have yet to be determined.

“Merit pay based solely on student scores on standardized tests only further serves to legitimize high stakes testing”

- Bonuses for teachers working within the district who are willing to transfer to the low-performing targeted schools (core classes only).
- The district wants some kind of TAKS component as well. The administration is pushing for a value added model developed by the district’s research and assessment department. A TAKS component similar to what the present governor’s grants do has also been suggested.

“Fort Worth Education Association opposes using TAKS as a value added instrument. We have indicated that we could support student growth or learning objectives similar to the Denver Public Schools plan. We think we have enough votes on the school board to defeat a TAKS component, but it will be close,” Robinson said.

“Merit pay based solely on student scores on standardized tests only further serves to legitimize high stakes testing,” Robinson added.

The Fort Worth task force has not yet presented any proposals to the school board.

The real question is, “What do we value?” The whole value added concept is based on test scores because economists understand them and policy makers love them. We know our children aren’t numbers. They’re people. So are our teachers. In the end, most education researchers stand against this method, while the economists stand behind it. Schools are either about kids or about money.

# Is Your District Trying to DATE You?

In May 2006, the third special session of the 79th Legislature passed House Bill 1, which included two teacher incentive programs, the Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG) and the District Awards for Teacher Excellence (DATE).

TEEG provides approximately \$100 million annually to economically disadvantaged campuses that demonstrate the highest levels of student achievement or improvement; campuses must use 75% to award incentives to classroom teachers. DATE is a non-competitive grant available to all school districts to create or continue a system of awards for educators demonstrating success in improving student achievement.

Five cycles are planned for the merit pay programs. The Texas Education Agency is now administering Cycle 3 of TEEG and Cycle 1 of DATE. The Texas legislature appropriated \$97.5 million for the third cycle of TEEG and \$147.5 million for DATE for the 2007-08 school year. The funds will be distributed to campuses and districts for both plans next fall. TEEG grant applications are due by May 8, and DATE applications are due by April 8.

By early February, 518 districts had filed notices of intent to participate in DATE. TEA will award each district with an approved grant of \$51 per student based on average daily attendance. If districts decide not to file a grant application by the April 8 deadline, award amounts will increase; however, the matching requirement for the district applying will stay the same based on the current estimated figure of \$51 per student.

All districts that participate must commit to a two-year grant cycle and must provide matching funds of no less than 15% in year one. TEA intends to re-

quire a district to match grant funds by 25% in year two, but TEA staff has indicated that it may drop the match back to 15%. Regardless, the program creates an unfunded mandate without legislative or other legal authority.

The district-level planning and/or decision-making committee for each district will develop a district awards plan and determine which campuses are eligible to participate. Districts do not have to include all campuses in the plan for incentive pay. If a district does not select all campuses, a majority of those selected must be targeted campuses.



Target campuses must meet at least two criteria established by TEA: receiving an academically unacceptable rating, lower performance than district average on TAKS, receipt of comparable improvement rating in the bottom quartile relative to other campuses in the district, or experiencing above average dropout.

Of the districts intending to participate, 90% have requested assistance from TEA in developing an effective performance measure, as plans are required to identify meaningful, objec-

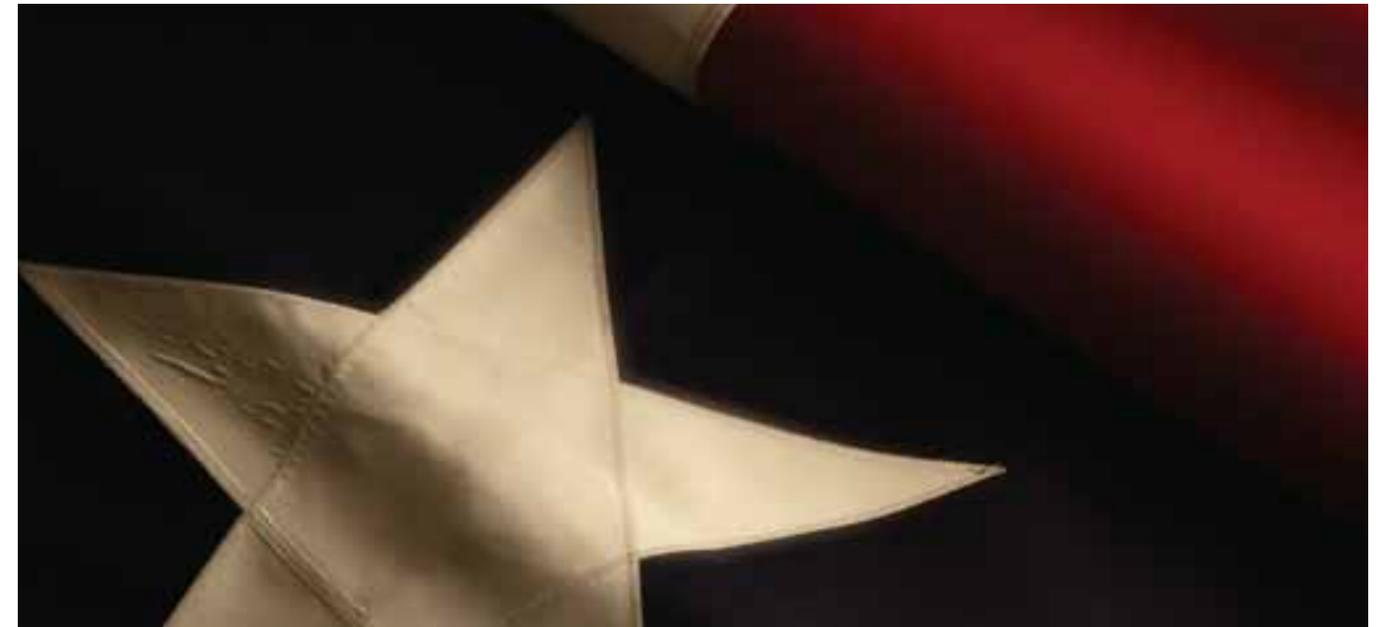
tive, goals and performance measures which relate directly to student academic achievement or improvement and/or student growth. This measure allows for the use of only the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test to determine if an educator is entitled to merit pay under DATE.

TSTA filed comments on this rule and others and objected to using only the TAKS test as a measure of teacher performance because it is an arbitrary test that has no meaningful relevance to how a teacher performs in the classroom. Performance pay based on a standardized test has no place in the field of education.

DATE has other important problems:

- It mandates that local awards plan be developed by the “district-level planning and/or decision-making committee” but does not indicate the amount of actual teacher participation required. And DATE does not require any vote of teacher approval.
- It requires the local school board to approve the local awards plan, any changes and the grant application, which is without statutory authority and contrary to the judgment of the district level committee.
- It restricts the grievance process for any local awards decision by the school board. This includes grievances over award amounts and exclusion from an award. Educators should be assured that there is an avenue for appeal when they are victims of unjust actions. Otherwise, merit pay can become a tool for administrators to selectively reward and punish educators.

TSTA members should find out if their district is developing a plan under DATE and get involved. —Portia Bosse, TSTA Public Affairs



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Donna TSTA/NEA members (left to right) Rogelio Gomez, Carlos Esparza and Rogelio Ramos show how to evacuate a special-needs bus.

## TSTA Members Teach Bus Safety to Donna Students, Teachers

School buses are one of the safest forms of transportation in the United States. Traveling on one is calculated to be about seven times safer than traveling in a car or light truck. Fatality accidents involving school buses are rare.

“School bus-related accidents are involved in less than one-half of 1 percent of all injury-producing accidents on Texas highways,” according to the state Department of Public Safety.

Yet school bus accidents do happen, and state lawmakers wanted students to be better prepared for them. So the 80th Legislature last year passed House Bill 3190, mandating twice-yearly school bus emergency evacuation training for students.

As one of the first school districts in South Texas to begin the required bus-safety training, Donna ISD put its bus drivers in charge of the program. Most of the 18 drivers involved in the training effort are Donna TSTA/NEA members.

Each of the district’s campuses hosted a training session, with students watching a short film, then going outside for further training on buses.

When the Texas Legislature mandated bus safety training for students, bus driver members of Donna TSTA/NEA took the leadership in providing that in their South Texas school district.

In both parts of the training, students learned evacuation procedures for a bus’s front door, hatches and windows, rear door, side doors and, if the bus is equipped with it, wheelchair exit. They also learned what they need to do if a driver asks for their help in evacuating other students in an emergency.

“Training students before an accident is important so they don’t panic” if one happens, said Rogelio Ramos, who has driven Donna ISD buses for 18 years.

“When the driver says it’s an emergency, students need to be quiet, listen to the driver and follow instructions,” said Carlos Esparza, who has driven Donna ISD buses for 12 years.

As the fall training was under way, the drivers were already thinking ahead to the spring sessions.

“We’ll use the time between the training to learn more and then add to what we did in the fall,” said Rogelio Gomez, who has driven Donna ISD buses for 14 years.

This could include how to act if the driver is incapacitated by an accident or a health crisis.

“Students need to learn how to call for help and how to choose a safe area” after they get off of the bus, Esparza explained.

Teachers, as well as students, are getting training in bus safety. “As bus drivers, now we’re teaching the teachers,” Gomez said.

Most of the questions students ask the drivers during the training sessions are routine and expected. But a few took the drivers by surprise.

“One student asked about a bomb threat,” said Esparza.

Students are not likely to encounter that while riding on Donna ISD school buses. And most will not have to use the state-mandated bus-safety training they’re getting from Donna TSTA/NEA members.



TSTA Ambassador Academy graduates attended TSTA’s Educational Issues Conference in January. For details on the academy, go to [www.tsta.org/inside/calendar/ambassador.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/inside/calendar/ambassador.shtml).

“Hopefully, we’ll never need to do it, but they’ll be trained to evacuate a bus if they need to. Saving even one life is worth the effort,” Ramos said.

### BUS DRIVERS WIN GRIEVANCE

The Brownsville ISD school board has granted the grievance of two school bus drivers who wanted four years of bus driving recognized as such for purposes of seniority credit for route assignments. During the four years in question, they were officially employed as bus monitors. The board voted 5-2 to grant the grievance, which was brought by the Association of Brownsville Educators.

### TEXANS GIVE THE MOST TO PAC

At the January NEA Western Regional Leadership Conference in Austin, TSTA topped all states by raising \$5,649 for the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. Find out how you can be a continuing contributor to our state political action committee and impact the upcoming elections by visiting <http://www.tsta.org/legislative/update/pac.shtml>.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO C.O. CHANDLER

C.O. Chandler celebrated his 100th birthday in February. Back in 1963, Chandler was president of TSTA. From

1955 to 1974, he was the much-loved superintendent of Victoria ISD, where an elementary school is now named for him. Here’s wishing you many more happy years, Mr. Chandler.

### JOIN THE ESP ADVOCACY GROUP

The National Council for Education Support Professionals is a special interest council whose general purpose is to represent its members in all issues relating to education support professionals. Read more at [www.nea.org/es-phome/members/ncesp.html](http://www.nea.org/es-phome/members/ncesp.html).

### TSTA-STUDENT PROGRAM NEWS

Don’t forget to check [www.nea.org/student-program](http://www.nea.org/student-program), the NEA-Student Program website, for news and features. Did you know there are grants you and your chapter can apply for?

**CLASS Grant:** Your chapter can apply for up to \$1,000 to fund your local community outreach efforts. Application deadlines are August 31 and January 31.

**SOAR Grant:** Need help organizing and recruiting new members? Apply for this grant. Application deadlines are August 31 and January 31.

**Jack Kinnaman Scholarship:** This scholarship offsets the tuition of an NEA student member. Application deadline: April 7.



TSTA-Retired President Letha Grace McCoy and member Jerry Watkins with NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen and the Cat in the Hat at the NEA Western Region Leadership Conference in Austin.

### TSTA-RETIRED NEWS

The repeals of the Social Security Offset and Windfall Elimination Provisions are moving in Washington, D.C.: a Senate committee heard testimony in November relating to S 206, and a House subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee held a hearing in January on HR 82, which has 336 co-sponsors. Letha Grace McCoy, president of TSTA-Retired, attended the January hearing with three TSTA members including Vice President Ann Heuberger. The next step could be a vote before the House.

April is a busy month for the Retired. The TSTA House of Delegates will be in Plano on April 18-19. With 21 delegates, we will present several new

business items including one for TSTA to work to safeguard the "defined benefits" teacher retirement annuities and oppose efforts to move the Teacher Retirement System to a "defined contri-

bution" system (for details, see TSTA's Gravity & Wagery blog entry for February 1 at [www.tstaweb.net/sblog](http://www.tstaweb.net/sblog)). With the elections to take place at the convention, TSTA-Retired has endorsed candidates for the TSTA president and vice-president positions. Several of our members have made plans to attend the NEA-Retired Western Regional Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico on April 22-24.

Our next busy months will be June and July. With all members invited, the NEA-Retired Meeting will be in Washington, D.C., on June 27-29 prior to the NEA Representative Assembly on July 1-6. This Active Life magazine or [www.nea.org/retired](http://www.nea.org/retired) will have more information.

Really big plans are being made for our Convention and Retreat. The Convention will be on June 16 with all TSTA-Retired members who attend serving as delegates. The Retreat will offer many activities including workshops relating to retired issues and fellowship; it's June 17-18 in Salado. Salado is rich in history, character, and legend plus it has dozens of specialty shops! We are staying at the Holiday Inn Express. Visit [www.tsta.org/inside/retired](http://www.tsta.org/inside/retired) to discover more about our meetings. A copy of the registration form is here for you to complete. Pre-retired and retired members are invited to attend. We hope to see you in Salado!

### TSTA-RETIRED RETREAT REGISTRATION FORM

June 17-18, 2008 • Holiday Inn Select • Salado, TX  
(Please print and use one form per participant)

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 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 early bird registration enclosed (due by June 2, 2008).  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Retired Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 late registration/on-site registration fee enclosed.     | <input type="checkbox"/> Guest/Non-Member   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Count me in. I will attend the House of Delegates on June 16. |   |

**RETURN TO:** TSTA-Retired, 316 W. 12th St., Austin, TX 78701, Attention Kara Knorpp

# Help us get the word out!



This spring, TSTA will be offering a great deal to first-time new members. We need your help as a member to get the word out to your colleagues. You know how valuable your membership is to you and your profession, but many of your colleagues haven't experienced the value yet.

Please share the word with your non-member colleagues that beginning April 1, 2008, TSTA is offering a special deal for first-time new members.

Here's the deal: someone can join TSTA/NEA and the local association, agree to remain a member through August 2009, and enjoy 17 months worth of membership for 12 months of dues deductions. What a deal!

But, non-members won't know what a deal this is unless you help us share the good news.

Why do we do this, you ask? We're confident that once people try us they'll never leave. So, we are offering 5 months of membership for free.

One can join as early as April 1, 2008, and not pay dues until the first payroll deduction in the fall of 2008.

Membership forms can be accessed from the TSTA website, [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org), or obtained from your local membership chairperson or president. We believe that you are the best person to ask a colleague to join TSTA. Please ask someone to join your local association, TSTA and NEA this month. Just download or print the form from the website, fill in the potential member's information (as much as you know) and ask him or her to join your organization. Be sure to share your experiences as an involved, committed member with your colleague.

**Thanks for your help in making TSTA/NEA and your local association stronger.**



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