

Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

Summer 2015



Shanna Peeples

NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

"Thank you, TSTA, for being our gladiators. Thank you for being our fighters. I add my voice to yours to make sure public education stays public."

Fighting a threat and fulfilling a promise



The recent legislative session provided a glimpse of what the future may hold for public education in Texas. We have seen the promise of bipartisan support for communities coming together for great neighborhood schools, and we have seen the threat of school privatization like never before.

What we do back home in our local communities, starting now, will help determine which direction lawmakers follow the next time they convene to set education policy. We must work to fulfill the promise and fight to end the threat.

TSTA’s “Invest, Not Test” campaign is about making the kind of investment needed to fulfill that promise — one that requires educators, parents, and community leaders to work together to make our public schools a place that lifts up our children and our

communities. During the recent legislative session, TSTA supported an effort to expand the community schools concept, an approach for improving neighborhood schools that has worked in schools across the country, including some in Texas.

Instead of turning a struggling school over to a private operator or closing the school, the community schools model brings teachers, parents, local businesses, and non-profits together to develop a plan to provide students and their families with a range of services critical to classroom success. This model was used in two struggling Austin schools, and attendance and academic achievement soared.

Time ran out on the community schools bill, but it won bipartisan support from legislators who value the role that local stakeholders must play in educational success.

Educational success requires an investment of time, talent, and dedication on the part of all stakeholders. It’s also about freeing students and teachers from the excesses of standardized testing, so we can invest more time in teaching and learning.

Testing is necessary, but it should not be used to standardize our kids.

“Invest” is about more than money, but adequate funding is also essential. TSTA is disappointed that the legislative majority put more funds into busi-

ness tax cuts than they gave to properly funding our schools. Lawmakers left billions on the table while providing only an additional \$1.5 billion to public education plus enough to cover enrollment growth.

Texas will continue to spend less per student than most states and pay teachers almost \$7,000 below the national average.

Thanks to your calls, emails, and personal contacts with legislators, we were able to defeat private school vouchers, virtual vouchers, and many other schemes designed to enrich private school operators at the expense of taxpayers and students.

We also defeated a proposal that could have tied teacher pay to test-based teacher evaluation and eliminated experience-based pay raises.

But today’s victories are tomorrow’s challenges. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick will remain a powerful advocate for the so-called “reformers” who see our students and their schools as profit centers. So we must continue to fight the threat as we work to secure the promise.

In locals throughout Texas, educators must strengthen relationships with parents, civic leaders, and the business community, who will join us to nourish vital neighborhood schools. We must identify, support, campaign for, and vote for legislative candidates who we

know will work for adequately and fairly funded public schools and value our expertise and the work we do every day.

We must recruit new members and organize around these issues as we find

and elect local school board candidates who will work with us.

The 84th legislative session made it clear that the future of public education in Texas is on the line, unless we continue to Engage, Organize, and

Lead. Our time is now, and with you on our team, we as #TeamTSTA are ready to take charge of the future of public education in Texas, to ensure every child has access to a great public school.

Trabajando para cumplir la promesa, luchando para eliminar la amenaza

En la primavera de cada año impar, la legislatura de Texas se encuentra en plena acción, y eso significa que es la hora para que los educadores se pongan de pie y protejan los intereses de nuestros estudiantes y de nuestra profesión. Todos ustedes tienen sus manos llenas en sus clases, y apoyan las posiciones que preparan a la nueva generación de Texas, pero recuerden, las decisiones tomadas en Austin pueden tener un impacto duradero en nuestros estudiantes y su futuro.

Tu tienes que ser parte del proceso, y no tienes que venir a Austin para participar. Puedes reunirte con tus legisladores en tu hogar, puedes llamarlos, enviarles email, o contactarlos a través de sus redes sociales oficiales. Cuando un legislador escucha de las personas que votan y trabajan en su comunidad, la sesión legislativa más reciente nos dio un vistazo a lo que el futuro podría traer a la educación pública en Texas. Hemos visto la promesa de apoyo bipartidista para las comunidades que se unen por escuelas vecinales excepcionales, y hemos visto la amenaza de la privatización escolar como nunca antes.

Lo que hacemos en nuestras comunidades locales, a partir de hoy, ayudará a determinar en que dirección irán nuestros legisladores la próxima vez que se reúnan a discutir políticas educacionales. Tenemos que trabajar para cumplir nuestra promesa y luchar para acabar con esta amenaza.

La campaña “Invest, not Test” de TSTA se trata de hacer esas inversiones que son necesarias para cumplir la promesa – requiere que educadores, padres y líderes comunitarios trabajen juntos para hacer de nuestras escuelas públicas un lugar que eleve a nuestros hijos y a nuestras comunidades. Durante la sesión legislativa, TSTA apoyó esfuerzos para expandir el concepto de las escuelas comunitarias, un plan para mejorar escuelas vecinales que ha sido exitoso en escuelas a través del país, incluyendo algunas en Texas.

En vez de otorgarle una escuela en apuros a un operador privado, o cerrar la escuela, el modelo de escuelas comunitarias une a maestros, padres, negocios locales y organizaciones sin fines de lucro para crear un plan para darle a estudiantes y sus familias un rango de servicios críticos para su éxito en el salón de clases. Este modelo se usó en dos escuelas en apuros en Austin, y tanto la asistencia como los logros académicos se dispararon. Se nos acabó el tiempo en nuestra ley de escuelas comunitarias, pero obtuvo apoyo bipartidista de parte de legisladores que les importa el rol que juega la comunidad en el éxito educacional de nuestros hijos.

El éxito educacional requiere una inversión de tiempo, talento y dedicación por parte de todos los que participan en el proceso de educación.

También se trata de liberar a los estudiantes de los excesos de exámenes estandarizados, para así poder invertir más tiempo en enseñar y aprender. Los exámenes son necesarios, pero no deberían ser utilizados para estandarizar a nuestros hijos.

“Invertir” se trata de más que sólo dinero, pero tener los fondos adecuados también es esencial. TSTA está decepcionado que la mayoría legislativa dio más fondos a los cortes de impuestos de pequeños negocios que a financiar adecuadamente a nuestras escuelas. Los legisladores dejaron en la mesa billones de dólares mientras tan sólo le dieron \$1.5 billones a la educación pública más lo suficiente para cubrir el crecimiento de inscripciones. Texas continuará gastando menos por estudiante que la mayoría de los otros estados y le seguirá pagando a maestros \$7,000 menos que el average nacional.

Gracias a sus llamadas, emails y contactos personales con legisladores, pudimos derrotar a los vales privados, vales virtuales y muchos otros planes diseñados para enriquecer los operadores de escuelas privadas con dinero de impuestos. También derrotamos una propuesta que hubiese ligado al pago de maestros con evaluaciones a base de exámenes y hubiese eliminado los aumentos salariales a base de experiencia.

Pero las victorias de hoy son los desafíos de mañana. El vice-gobernador Dan Patrick seguirá siendo un defensor de los llamados “reformadores” quienes ven a nuestros estudiantes y sus escuelas como centros de ingreso monetario. Así que debemos continuar nuestra lucha mientras trabajamos para cumplir nuestra promesa.

En uniones locales a través de Texas, los educadores deben fortalecer sus lazos con padres, líderes cívicos y la comunidad empresarial, quienes se unirán a nosotros para enriquecer nuestras escuelas. Debemos identificar, apoyar y hacer campaña por los candidatos legislativos que trabajarán por financiar adecuadamente a nuestras escuelas públicas y darán valor a nuestra experiencia y al trabajo que hacemos día a día.

Debemos reclutar nuevos miembros y organizar en torno a estos asuntos mientras identificamos y elegimos candidatos locales para comités escolares.

La 84ava sesión legislativa mostró claramente que el futuro de la educación pública en Texas está en juego, al menos que continuemos a Empeñarnos, Organizar y Liderar. Nuestro momento es ya, y contigo a nuestro lado, nosotros en el #TeamTSTA estamos listos para apoderarnos del futuro de la educación pública en Texas, y asegurar que cada niño tenga acceso a una excelente escuela pública.



TSTA launches statewide Invest, Not Test media campaign

In May, TSTA launched a rolling, statewide campaign, beginning with television spots in El Paso, to remind policymakers that our children's education is about much more than teaching to the test.

Invest, Not Test soon became a statewide effort, fueled by social media. It reinforced TSTA's image and mission as the organization that will engage, organize, and lead on important issues that impact our members, our schools, and our communities.

"We don't have standardized students, and education is about more than a standardized test score," TSTA Presi-

dent Noel Candelaria said during the El Paso media blitz that kicked off the campaign. "Testing takes away time that teachers and students need for real teaching and learning. It is time to invest, not test, and that means investing in our neighborhood schools, not imposing so-called reforms that would turn our neighborhood schools over to for-profit operators that aren't accountable to local taxpayers."

He shared results of a bipartisan poll sponsored by TSTA in March. When 800 Texas voters were polled, both Democrats and Republicans said the two most important things that could

be done to improve education were increasing teacher pay — to attract highly qualified individuals to the classroom — and reducing high-stakes standardized testing.

An overwhelming majority also said education funding should be increased. The average teacher salary in Texas is about \$6,900 below the national average, according to recent NEA rankings. Some 83 percent of all respondents to the TSTA poll — and 76 percent of Republican primary voters — said they favored increasing teacher pay by \$7,000 to meet the national average.



SCHOOLS WIN ATHLETICS GRANTS

Burges High School in El Paso ISD and Cypress Springs High School in Cypress-Fairbanks ISD each received a \$1,000 California Casualty Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant in April. The grants support public high school sports programs.

Burges purchased new uniforms for the track team, replacing old uniforms that were damaged in an accident. Cypress Springs bought new uniforms and replaced aging and inadequate equipment for the boys track team. Find out how you can win a grant at www.calcasathleticsgrant.com.

California Casualty provides NEA's Auto and Home Insurance Program. To request a quote, visit www.calcas.com/NEA or call 800-800-9410.

POWELL, MARTINEZ WIN ELECTIONS

Elections were held on April 11 at the TSTA House of Delegates in Frisco. Jessica Powell of CyFair TSTA/NEA and

Doris Hill of Grand Prairie Education Association ran for NEA director place 2. Powell was elected to a three-year term beginning Sept. 1. Dale Kaiser of NEA-Dallas and Jose Luis Martinez of the Association of Brownsville Educators ran for the administrator at-large position on the TSTA Board of Directors. Martinez begins a two-year term on July 15.

NOTICE OF FILING DEADLINE FOR NEA DIRECTOR

Nominations are open for NEA director for Texas place 1. The successful candidate will serve a three-year term on the NEA Board of Directors beginning

Sept. 1, 2016, and will be a voting member of the TSTA Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 15, 2016.

The election for NEA director for Texas place 1 will be held at the April 2016 House of Delegates. Filing forms are available online at tsta.org under "TSTA Elections" in the Members Only area. Candidates must file for office no later than Sept. 15. For additional information, contact TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance at 316 West 12th Street, Suite 510, Austin, Texas 78701, or call 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or 1510.



NEA President speaks at SXSWedu

NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia led one of the featured sessions at SXSWedu, the education portion of SXSW in Austin. Her topic was "A Tale of Two Schools: Time to Close the Opportunity Gap."

"More than 60 years since the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling, we still find separate and unequal schools. Education is a civil right, and we must ensure all students receive the education they deserve. Each and every child, regardless of where they live, who their parents are, or how much money they have, deserves a quality education," Eskelsen Garcia said.

Watch at <https://youtu.be/oriNr1zPskw>.



Volunteer for a TSTA committee

**Ready to get
more involved?
Here's how.**

TSTA relies on member volunteers to serve on its governing committees. There are three standing committees: Legislative, PAC (Political Advocacy), and Credentials, Bylaws, and Elections.

In addition, there are non-standing committees: Education Support Professionals, Special Education, Communications and Community Outreach, School Board Policies, Member Advocacy, Teaching Profession, and Compliance.

The TSTA President has begun the appointment process for 2015-16. All members are eligible to serve. If you are interested in a committee appointment, complete the online form at <https://tsta.wufoo.com/forms/tsta-committee-interest-form>. Be sure to indicate your

particular area of interest and a brief explanation of why you would like to serve on a TSTA Governance Committee. Please contact the Center for Executive and Governance at neochac@tsta.org if you have any questions.

TAKE AN ONLINE COURSE

NEA Foundation courses develop collaborative skills and content knowledge. The courses promote collaboration between the local association and school district as a tool for systems change; they were developed by field experts, using a rich selection of resources.

Use the course content in whatever way
best meets your needs — a whole

course, a single session, or just an activity. Among the courses currently offered are grant writing, assessment as a tool for systems change, leading and sustaining reform, collaborative problem solving, and global education: tools and approaches. New courses are in development and will be posted periodically.

To start today, simply register and login at <http://www.neafoundation.org/pages/courses>.

HELP US KEEP YOU INFORMED

There's a lot going on and we don't want to miss you. Please update your information online at www.bit.ly/TSTAMemberUpdate or fill out the form at right and mail to TSTA Membership Processing, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701.

TSTA MEMBER INFORMATION UPDATE	
Name	_____
Member ID	_____ SSN (last 4 digits) _____
Address	_____
City	_____ State _____ Zip _____
School District	_____
Campus	_____
Home email	_____
Alternate email	_____
Cell phone	_____
Home phone	_____
<p>If your school district were to no longer offer payroll deduction for your membership dues, which of these alternatives would you choose? <input type="checkbox"/> Bank draft (Edues) <input type="checkbox"/> Credit card</p>	
<p>Return to TSTA Membership Processing, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701 or fill out online at https://tsta.wufoo.com/forms/tsta-member-information-update</p>	





PHOTO BY HUMBERTO A. PÉREZ

Taking a stand

Privatization derailed, funding battle looms

When the Texas Legislature convened in January, TSTA was preparing for an unprecedented assault on public education. The tea party and moneyed privatization interests had helped elect a significant number of lawmakers, especially to the most extremely conservative Senate in recent memory. The new lieutenant governor, Dan Patrick, was eager to dismantle public schools with private school vouchers and a host of other for-profit schemes.

These misnamed “reform” and “choice” proposals could have turned campuses and entire school districts over to for-profit operators, taking control of neighborhood schools away from parents and taxpayers. And none of these schemes would have improved the quality of education for the vast majority of Texas students who attend local public schools. What is truly needed to provide real educational opportunity is a genuine state investment in public schools, something that is not

part of the privatization playbook (see article on the state budget on page 13). Instead of making that investment, Patrick engineered a change in Senate rules to remove procedural obstacles to his agenda, and despite the efforts of a few key senators, he rammed most of his program through the Senate within a few weeks. Then TSTA and other public education advocates began to apply the brakes. Your phone calls, emails, and visits



PAYROLL DEDUCTION:
SILENCING OUR VOICES

Senate Bill 1968 was a thinly disguised attempt to silence the voice of TSTA and other public employee unions and professional organizations for educators. This attempt to prohibit membership dues from being deducted from our paychecks would have applied to certain targeted organizations, including all education groups.

We spoke out for the right to decide what we wanted to do with our paychecks and the right to use payroll deduction, which is the most convenient and secure way to pay our dues. The bill's supporters included those who know it could have harmed our ability to advocate against their privatization agenda.

Your emails and phone calls made an impression on key House members and helped kill this legislation. So did the excellent, personal testimony by Pflugerville Educators Association President August Plock and Vice President Cindy Perkins, the first two witnesses to testify against the bill in a packed House committee hearing. TSTA argued successfully that teachers and school employees should keep the freedom to make voluntary dues contributions through payroll deduction in the same manner that districts handle other contributions.



TSTA LOCALS STAND WITH SENATOR: Leaders from San Antonio Alliance and Education Austin join Sen. Jose Menendez to call for a \$4,000-per-year pay raise for teachers.

(Continued from page 10)
with your legislators raised concerns from the real education experts — you! And your voices played a major role in curbing the attack. So did the knowledge and skill of many House members of both parties — including Speaker Joe Straus and Public Education Chairman Jimmie Don Aycok, R-Killeen — whose unwavering commitment to 5.2 million students helped save public schools from being converted into profit centers.

The two privatization
“reforms” that passed provide
local organizing opportunities.

When the session ended on June 1, only two of the dozen proposals on the privateers’ agenda made it to the governor to be signed into law, and both of them provide us local organizing opportunities.

- **A-F Campus Grading System.** House Bill 2804 was designed to reduce the impact of standardized test-

ing on the school accountability system, but it was amended to include an A-F campus grading scale. The A-F plan could stigmatize schools and students in low-income communities and discourage good teachers from taking jobs at those campuses. But the A-F system won’t go into effect until the 2017-18 school year, so we have time to raise our concerns to a new statewide commission and convince lawmakers to reverse course in the 2017 session.

- **Innovation Districts.** House Bill 1842 will allow local school boards to create “innovation districts” that would enable schools with “acceptable” accountability ratings to be free to operate without state standards, such as class size limits and teacher contract protections. But an innovation plan would have to be approved by a district-level, site-based management committee and a two-thirds vote of the school board, after a public notice hearing.

We have work to do, and TSTA’s “Invest, Not Test” campaign will keep up the fight for greater investment in our neighborhood schools and the freedom from punitive, high stakes standardized tests that rob us of time for real teaching and learning. But this session, against long odds, our hard work saved public schools from the biggest privatization effort yet to be attempted in Texas.

Here are the bad bills that
died, but they will be back.

- **Vouchers** — Senate Bill 4 would

have given businesses tax credits for contributing to scholarships — or vouchers — for private school students, and Senate Bill 276 would have appropriated tax dollars directly for private school tuition payments.

- **Virtual vouchers** — Senate Bill 894 would have removed important state limitations and safeguards on the growth of for-profit, online schools in Texas. A costly blank check for virtual operators, it would have expanded the number of students eligible for online courses and eliminated any ceiling on what vendors could

have charged for online programs. It was so expensive that it failed to win even Senate approval.

- **Teacher evaluations, salaries** — Senate Bill 893 and House Bill 2543 would have eliminated the current salary schedule for regular pay increases based on experience and replaced it with a merit pay system tied, at least in part, to standardized test scores. TSTA supported a different bill, Senate Bill 1303 by Sen. Jose Menendez, D-San Antonio, which would have given Texas teachers a \$4,000-per-year pay raise, but that

EDUCATION FUNDING FALLS SHORT

The most important legislative issue is the budget, and at a time when the state is flush with billions of dollars in excess revenue, the Legislature failed to provide adequate and equitable public school funding. A state district court found our school finance system unconstitutional, a ruling now being appealed to the Texas Supreme Court, but the Legislature did little to address school finance. With a court ruling expected before the Legislature meets again in 2017, education funding could be the most critical issue facing the state over the next two years.

Early in the session, we were encouraged by an effort in the House to provide an additional \$3 billion in state funds plus what is needed to cover enrollment growth. But we were disappointed by a final budget that added only \$1.5 billion for public schools, which may not even be enough to cover inflation. Instead of working to develop a sustainable plan to fund public schools, the legislative majority chose to leave billions on the table and divert billions more to tax cuts that the average Texan will hardly notice.

The \$1.5 billion in new education funding for the 2016-17 budget period is less than half the money, \$3.8 billion,

the Legislature devoted to tax cuts, which will continue taking billions of additional dollars from school funding in future budget cycles as well. The tax cuts also are heavily weighted toward businesses, providing a 25 percent reduction in the franchise tax rate. If voters approve a constitutional amendment this November, the standard homestead exemption for property taxes will be raised from \$15,000 to \$25,000, which will save the average homeowner only about \$125 a year.

The Legislature also approved another constitutional amendment that, if approved by voters, will dedicate \$2.5 billion a year in general sales tax revenue to highways, beginning in 2017-18, and a portion of vehicle sales tax revenue, beginning in 2019-20, also to highways. This diverted revenue also would no longer be available for public education.

Shortchanging public schools is the first step the forces of privatization have used in the attempt to take over our schools. TSTA will continue to demand that the Legislature invest the money necessary to sustain a fair and adequate funding system for public education, and we will make this an issue in local school board and legislative races.



SPEAKING OUT: Page 14, President August Plock and Vice President Cindy Perkins of Pflugerville Educators Association (right) on their way to testify before the State Affairs Committee on payroll deduction legislation; Brenda Dominguez of Del Valle Education Association (left) and Nancy Cox of Killeen Education Association also attended; below, TSTA Government Relations Specialist John Grey testifies against vouchers. Page 15, NEA-Dallas and others hold a lobby day at the Capitol.

measure died in the Senate Education Committee.

- **Opportunity School District** — Senate Bill 669 and House Bill 1536 would have stripped parents and local taxpayers of control over their neighborhood schools by allowing the appointed state education commissioner in Austin to manage low-performing campuses throughout the state, without standards for class size, teacher quality and contract protection, and student discipline.

- **Local Control School District** — House Bill 1798 would have made it easier to convert a school district into a local control, or home rule, district governed by a board that could bypass state regulations on class size and school employee protections and the requirement for an elected school board. “Home rule” has been in state law since 1995 but has been attempted only once — an effort that fell short in Dallas last year, thanks to strong community opposition.

- **“Parent trigger” bill** — Senate Bill 14 would have let parents petition to take over a school that was low performing for three years, instead of the five years required in current law. This bill, however, really wasn’t about parents. It was about making it easier for private operators to take over neighborhood public schools. Once a takeover petition was signed, parents would no longer have had a choice in how their neighborhood school would be run.

- **Charter school accountability/ expansion** — Senate Bill 1897

would have repealed some of the accountability provisions placed on charters two years ago in exchange for removal of a previous state cap on charter expansion.

Here is what happened to several other important pieces of education legislation:

- **Limited Pre-K program approved** — Legislators approved House Bill 4, Gov. Abbott’s proposal, which is intended to improve pre-K quality. But it is a very limited program, which would invest only \$130 million in new funding, an amount that won’t even cover the pre-K grant funding that was cut in 2011. TSTA will continue to advocate for full-day pre-K coverage for all eligible Texas children, which could have easily been funded this year.

- **Active educator and retiree health insurance** — Health care costs for active and retired educators have risen dramatically in recent years. The Legislature did not solve either problem.

- Rep. Cesar Blanco, D-El Paso, filed a bill to double the \$75 per month state share for active employee health insurance premiums, an amount that hasn’t been increased since 2002. It did not pass.
- Lawmakers appropriated \$768 million to keep TRS-Care, the retired educators’ health insurance program, solvent for another two years. A long term solution is still needed.
- House Bill 2974 created two studies of educator health care. The first will consider the financial soundness, affordability, and access to providers



for TRS Care and ActiveCare. The second study will determine the feasibility of school districts opting out of ActiveCare to form their own insurance plans and the feasibility of allowing regional rates for health care coverage.

- **School turnaround could include community schools** — In addition to “innovation districts,” House Bill 1842 could increase the involvement of parents and other community stakeholders in devising turnaround plans for struggling schools.

- The state education commissioner would order a school board to develop a campus turnaround plan if the campus has been designated unacceptable for two consecutive school years.
- The law will allow a year for the district to develop a turnaround plan, and the districts could use the successful community schools model, where parents, educators, non-profit organizations, and local businesses form a committee to develop a plan to provide students and families with the support critical to educational

success. TSTA supported separate legislation that would have promoted community schools. It was approved by the House but died in the Senate.

- If a school district failed to develop a realistic campus turnaround plan, the commissioner could appoint a board of managers to run the district for as long as four years.

- **Future assessments, accountability** — House Bill 2804, which includes the A-F system, also reduced the impact of high stakes testing to only 55 percent of the accountability rating, while including numerous other factors that will be in place before the A-F system goes into effect in the fall of 2017. The bill also creates a 15-member “Texas Commission on Next Generation of Assessments and Accountability,” which will recommend changes in testing and accountability. The commission will include legislators and public members, including at least two parents and two educators.

— *Clay Robison is TSTA’s Public Affairs Specialist*



America's top teacher: 'I add my voice to yours'

Shanna Peeples, a member of TSTA and the Amarillo Education Association since 2003, is our National Teacher of the Year, the first time since 1957 that the Texas Teacher of the Year has been selected.

One of the perks of the job is meeting the President at a White House ceremony in April — which TSTA President Noel Candelaria and Vice President Ovidia Molina attended — but President Obama took it to the next level, inviting Peeples to go on a stroll around his neighborhood before the proceedings. You can watch the video, in which they stop at a coffee shop and surprise an elementary class, at <http://bit.ly/1Fj9E2X>.

Peeples will be on leave from her job as an English teacher and instructional coach at Palo Duro High School, a school with many refugees and low-income students, for a year while she travels the nation representing and advocating for educators.

The message she wants to convey to parents while on the tour is, "Teachers go into teaching because they want to make a difference in a child's life — in your child's life. You can never out-source the dedication of a true teacher or write software that simulates the passion that a true teacher has for his or her subject.

"I represent people who love what

they do, who are willing to do whatever it takes to help kids. Who stay after school for hours. Who steal time from their own families to help our kids. Who may be the only person that shows up at games for a kid or at plays or at concerts," Peeples said.

"The title of Teacher of the Year is a way for me to always talk about what teachers do for our kids. And I am exceedingly proud of the honor of representing men and women who pour themselves into this, the most important job there is."

Here are her thoughts on teaching, hope, and the need to fight to protect public education.

I knew I would love teaching in a way that would break my heart

It has shattered in funeral homes as I've tucked letters from classmates into the coffins of their dead friends; as I've seen the once bright and shining boy scowling in an inky mug shot; as I've signed drop papers for children who found more hope on the killing floor at the slaughterhouse than in school.

And yet, sometimes my heart has swelled to see these scenes: Tin — a Burmese refugee who'd shown me a picture of herself as a toddler, being handed over a razor wire fence into a UN refugee camp bound for America — crossing the stage to get a diploma; Viet, who overcame crippling social anxiety, now wearing the T-shirt Harvard gave him with his admission package as he speaks to high school students; and Kayla, who spent most of her childhood gingerly stepping past prostitutes and meth addicts outside her front door, now holding a Gates Millennium Scholarship letter that would take her through Oklahoma University and into a public health fellowship at the University of Kentucky.



Part of my fear of teaching was a fear of connecting to the pain in my own life

Because I had teachers who gave me books and encouraged me to write, I learned there was a world outside of alcoholism and domestic violence.

Mrs. Belton taught me to write when I wanted to scream, when I wanted to hit back, and when I wanted to quit. She taught me that it was possible to read and write my way into another life. Becoming a teacher, I felt, would mean I would have to take up her work and face the darkness in my students' lives.

Parker Palmer wrote that, "by remembering ourselves, we remember our students." This means that when I see a student with his head down on the desk, it might be because he needs a teacher who remembers not sleeping on school nights when neighbors called the police to break up my parents' fights. Or that a girl who suddenly stops turning in work may need a teacher who knows how hard it is to turn in your homework when the electricity's been shut off. And even if I don't know why students are struggling, I remember what Lucille Clifton once said: "Every pair of eyes facing you has probably experienced something you could not endure."

In a sense, I sell hope to my students

I want them to know that writing, if you go deep enough, can help you forget. And I want them to know that they aren't alone, that so many others have faced similar problems.

Even if the story seems old and familiar, we can find ways to fight monsters with help from Beowulf, from Steinbeck, and even the Brothers Grimm. My favorite fairy tale is Hansel and Gretel, and it's one of the books that I use to close the school year. I tell students that, to me, the story is about how we can be our own heroes. Books, I tell them, help us to find our way out of the forest and make peace with our past while showing us the promise of a multitude of futures.



I want teachers to remember they are artists of human potential

We never know where our teaching might take a student's imagination. Like art, learning is messy and takes time. It's easy to feel defeated by the pressure to produce instant results, but to me, if you focus on the inherent creativity that you bring to your classroom every day, you'll feel more mastery over this very messy, very human process. To paraphrase Michelangelo, every student has greatness in them and it is the work of the teacher to help them discover it.

The first thing to remember in working with anyone — big or small, traumatized or not — is that kindness is the first and best lesson. It's hard to learn from someone when you're scared, so smiling is something that not only translates into any language, but also instantly sets people at ease.

Everyone responds to small successes, so it is critical that teachers working with students in trauma create the conditions for, and celebrate, small successes. Small successes build confidence and persistence. You have to ignore it when a child says, "I don't want to," because what they're really saying is, "I don't think I can and I need you to believe in me until I can believe in myself."

Thank you for being our fighters

Article 7 Section 2 of the Texas Constitution says it shall be the duty of the legislature to establish and maintain a system of public free schools. This is the most important promise Texas makes to teachers, to students, and to parents.

A few weeks ago my students and I were practicing uninterrupted silent writing when I heard a child outside shrieking in the breezeway. It was jarring; it sounded as if the screamer were under attack. But I knew this voice. It's a voice that's been in the background of my days for more than a year. It belongs to a teenage boy in a wheelchair. He has developmental delays that keep him from speaking; his voice is strong, however, and he definitely communicates but not with sentences. He shrieks at least three times a day.

I think of his voice as my chime, as church bells, and he's become a signal for various parts of my day. He always makes me smile whatever I am doing when I hear him. That shriek is one of pure delight and pure joy.

He calls me to remember also that public schools exist for students like him. He'll never pass a standardized test. He'll never go to college. But that doesn't mean his deeply committed teachers don't work to help him increase his knowledge and skills.

Without public schools, who would accept him as a student? Who would give him that three-times-a-day joy ride down the breezeway to look at the spring flowers, to dodge the fat squirrels, to feel the wind and the sun on his face?

You have done so much already, but now we all have to come together to help our legislators remember what you already know as teachers. Call on them to remember that public schools exist for gifted students, but they also exist for refugee students, for students making bad choices that land them in jail, for pregnant girls who are trying to graduate for their baby's sake, for students who struggle to form sentences and take seven or more times to pass an EOC test. And yes, public schools exist for the boy who shrieks three times a day and calls me to compassion.

Thank you, TSTA, for being our gladiators. Thank you for being our fighters. I add my voice to yours to make sure public education stays public.

— excerpts from Peeples' remarks at the TSTA Convention, her Teacher of the Year essays, and a news release from the Council of Chief State School Officers



PHOTO CREDITS: Classroom photos courtesy of Holly Shelton, Amarillo ISD communications director; White House photos courtesy of the National Education Association. SHOWN ABOVE WITH PEEPLES: Monica Washington, 2014 Texas Teacher of the Year; TSTA officers and George Sheridan, NEA Executive Committee, at the White House; NEA and TSTA Presidents.



Protecting public education

“The source of our power is the passionate hearts of our members and the pride they take in the work they do, because they know their work matters.”

Legacy, democracy, and recent widespread attacks on public education were predominant themes at the TSTA Convention in April.

“No matter where we live or where we work, educators nationwide face similar challenges from forces that see our schools as a profit center,” TSTA President Noel Candelaria said at the Frisco meeting.

“Profiteers who want to privatize public schools don’t want us to be powerful,” NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia said. “It serves their financial and political interests to have people think public schools are a failed system and their only hope is to turn to privatization, deprofessionalization, and standardization.”

But working together through the Association we are powerful, Garcia said: “The source of our power is the passionate hearts of our members and the

pride they take in the work they do, because they know their work matters.”

National Teacher of the Year Shanna Peeples of Amarillo recognized that power in her address, thanking TSTA members for being “gladiators” for public education.

“This is the commitment that America and its schools offer all of our students: we will be here and we will help you. From its founding in 1880, TSTA has helped build and maintain a long-standing legacy of public education in Texas,” Peeples, who received the TSTA Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award at the convention, said.

“We all believe that every child should be given a chance to succeed because of the promises we’ve made. Our pledge, both to the U.S. and Texas flags, is a promise to treat everyone as significant,” she said. “We are one

state. One people. And because of that we exist as a land of promise for people all over the world.”

Jena Camp, who was named TSTA’s Social Justice Activist, opened her remarks by thanking “all the fighters for social justice.”

“We need to think about our impact and what legacy, as human beings, we’re leaving,” said Camp, who helped organize the 2013 Social Justice Forum, an El Paso Teachers Association effort to engage parents and the community in rebuilding the public schools after a cheating scandal. She also gets out the vote for school board elections; holds family reading circles at housing projects; and works with playwrights to develop mini-dramas on social justice issues.

On page 28 is a list of all the awards presented during the convention to individuals and groups who are making a difference for schools and students.

Serving as a state delegate is one way TSTA members can increase their own impact, whether voting on new business items, getting ideas from other locals, or gaining knowledge and skills in the workshops state committees conduct on legislation, social media, advocacy, influence, and grant writing.

In accepting the Ronnie Ray ESP Advocate of the Year Award, Rosa Oropeza summarized the value of the Association.

“Being an active member of TSTA/NEA has given me great satisfaction in my life,” Oropeza, the cafeteria manager at Bowie High School in El Paso ISD, said. “One little voice can make a difference; many voices make great changes for a better future.”



CONVENTION SPEAKERS: NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia (left page); ESP Advocate of the Year Rosa Oropeza (left) with the TSTA officers and 2014 winner Bobbie Cunningham; National Teacher of the Year Shanna Peeples (third from left) with her fellow Amarillo Education Association members; and Social Justice Activist Jena Camp (left front) with El Paso Teachers Association delegates.



Texas observes Read Across America

It was Dr. Seuss’ 111th birthday and Texas schools celebrated.

NEA’s Read Across America — the nation’s largest reading celebration — has been held on or around the March 2 birthday of the late children’s author for 18 years.

“As educators, we’re constantly striving to connect with each child and discover his passions and unlock her potential. NEA’s Read Across America is just one of the ways that we reach children with a very important message that reading is fundamental to being a lifelong learner,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García.

“With more than 45 million people, young and old, participating every year, NEA’s Read Across America is not

just a phenomenon — it’s a reading movement,” García said.

Specific events vary from school to school but often involve Cat in the Hat headgear for students, celebrity readers, green eggs and ham, costumes, and parades.

This year, NEA sent its Cat-a-Van Reading Tour on a 3,200-mile trek with \$15,000 for school libraries. Stops included Blair Elementary in Dallas, Freeman Elementary in Garland, Parkwood Elementary in Deer Park ISD (Pasadena), and Fehl-Price Elementary in Beaumont.

On board at different points were NEA Executive Committee members Kevin Gilbert, Mississippi; Maury Koffman, Michigan; George Sheridan, California; and Greg Johnson, Oklahoma.

They were joined in Texas by TSTA President Noel Candelaria, Vice President Ovidia Molina, and Executive Director Richard Kouri, as well as the Cat in the Hat, the Lorax, Thing 1, and Thing 2, characters from Seuss’ beloved books.

Photos of the tour, as well as events held in Brownsville, Del Valle, Harlingen, San Antonio, and Southwest (San Antonio), are on TSTA’s Flickr page.

- Photos: <http://bit.ly/1AAKopW>
- Slideshow: <http://bit.ly/1QPGYWY>
- Plan your event, see coverage of the tour, and watch a video of U.S. service members reading “Oh, the Places You’ll Go” at www.nea.org/readacross.



TOP ROW: NEA Executive Committee member Maury Koffman in Garland; San Antonio Alliance; NEA Executive Committee members Greg Johnson and George Sheridan with TSTA President Noel Candelaria.

SECOND ROW: Dallas; Rep. Eddie Rodriguez in Del Valle; Deer Park.

THIRD ROW: Brownsville, Harlingen, Southwest ISD (San Antonio).

BOTTOM ROW AND LEFT PAGE: Beaumont.

Photos from the Cat-a-Van tour courtesy of NEA.



Locals help elect pro-education school boards

A favorable school board allows us to do more for our students, our schools, and our communities.

May 9 was Election Day for many school boards, and the vast majority of candidates endorsed by our TSTA local associations won.

Congratulations to all who took the time to work for these candidates; a favorable school board allows us to do more for our students, our schools, and our communities.

Five locals submitted photos from their candidates' successful campaigns; counter clockwise from the top:

- Socorro Education Association worked to elect Tony Ayub and Michael Najera.
- Port Arthur Teachers Association helped Joseph Guillory and Brandon Bartie win their elections.
- Ysleta Teachers Association-backed candidates Connie Woodruff, Sotero Ramirez, and Mike Rosales won seats.

- Harlandale Education Association (San Antonio) helped school board candidate Ricardo Moreno win by 73 percent.
- Two of San Marcos Educators Association's endorsed school board candidates, Anne Halsey and Juan Miguel Arredondo, were elected.

LOCALS STOP GRIEVANCE POLICY CHANGE

Hays Educators Association, Lubbock Educators Association, Socorro Education Association, Port Arthur Teachers Association, and San Marcos Educators Association have, in their respective school districts, defeated a change to DGBA grievance policy that was recommended in Texas Association of School Board's Update 101.

The proposed language: "Informal resolution shall be encouraged but shall not extend any deadlines in this policy, except by mutual written consent."

In other words, if adopted by your local school board, the new policy will start the grievance timeline before any informal attempt has been made to resolve concerns. Call 877-ASK-TSTA if you need assistance.

DUE PROCESS WIN IN DEL VALLE

The school board and administration of Del Valle ISD have publicly committed to establishing due process for education support professionals in written board policy, an issue Del Valle Education Association had pushed for several months. A committee composed of DVEA representatives, administrators, and school board member Ann Heuberger, a former TSTA vice president, is drafting the language.



ESPs hold statewide conference in Frisco

More than 70 education support professionals attended the ESP Conference that followed the TSTA House of Delegates in April.

Workshops were offered on workplace bullying, kick starting your plan, and due process.

"We face serious issues across the state, and no group of employees in the education community is more challenged by the crisis we face than our ESPs are," TSTA Executive Director Richard Kouri said in his opening speech. Watch the video at <https://youtu.be/ujdntiSIBMM>.



San Marcos campaigns for better benefits

“When neighboring districts offer affordable health care, it’s hard to recruit and retain the quality teachers and staff our students deserve.”

In the wake of its successful school board election, San Marcos Educators Association is running a “Purple Out” campaign for affordable health care and higher salaries.

“San Marcos employees and their families deserve affordable health care,” SMEA President Susan Seaton said. “When neighboring districts offer affordable health care, it’s hard to recruit and retain the quality teachers and staff our students deserve.”

At the May 18 school board meeting, Seaton, members Rose Aponte and Crystal Smith, and a high school student made the case for a five percent pay hike for employees and increasing

the district’s contribution for health care costs. SMEA said neighboring districts contribute almost twice as much as San Marcos toward health care.

Behind the speakers there was a sea of purple T-shirts; every SMEA member who pledged to vote for endorsed school board candidates and attend the board meeting received a purple “We are One” T-shirt.

Pflugerville Educators Association President August Plock and TSTA Vice President Ovidia Molina also attended the board meeting in support of SMEA.

The San Marcos school board was slated to discuss SMEA’s demands in June.



RUNNING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Running for Public Education is a group of public school employees and their friends who participate in fun runs and walks while wearing T-shirts that promote Texas public schools.

Del Valle Education Association members Michelle Cardenas and Brenda Dominguez are the cofounders; proceeds from T-shirt sales will go toward a scholarship for a future teacher from their school district.

You can sign up to join them on a run, follow their blog, or order a T-shirt — whether you’re a runner or not — at <http://runningforpubliced.wix.com/running4publiced>; find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RunningforPublicEducation; or email them at runningforpubliceducation@gmail.com.

TSTA RETIRED ELECTS OFFICERS

TSTA Retired reelected Louise Watkins president and elected Bobbie Duncan to be vice president. Watkins, Duncan, and former president Johnetta Williams were elected to represent TSTA Retired as delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in Orlando this summer.

At the TSTA House of Delegates in April, TSTA Retired was awarded the “Iggy Award” for the most upgrades



in political action committee contributions (Watkins is shown with the TSTA officers in the photo above). These donations allow us to support candidates who support educators. Thanks to all of you who contribute and to those who took time out of your busy schedules to lobby on behalf of educators this legislative session.

Congratulations to Betty Jo Brown who won the 2015 annual quilt raffle during the House of Delegates. Next year’s quilt is already in the works and will have a Texas theme.

In March, the officers and several other members attended the NEA Organiz-

ing Conference in Atlanta. It was a very informative meeting and will help us build membership.

Our membership has increased this year; in fact, we have become one of the fastest growing groups in TSTA. We need your help to recruit new members! If you know retiring educators, tell them about TSTA Retired and let them know how they can join.

Keep up with important news and information on Facebook at www.facebook.com/tstar.near — and while you’re there, please “like” our page.

—TSTA Retired President Louise Watkins



Honoring excellence

TSTA annually honors individuals who make a difference for students, schools, and educators, as well as locals that have increased their ability to effect change by increasing their membership, raising political action committee funds, or improving communication.

ERMALEE BOICE INSTRUCTIONAL ADVOCACY AWARD

Shanna Peeples, Amarillo Education Association

RONNIE RAY ESP ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

Rosa Oropeza, El Paso Teachers Association

SOCIAL JUSTICE PATRIOT

Jena Camp, El Paso Teachers Association

FRIEND OF EDUCATION

Paul Parsons, Austin attorney

PRIDE IN COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS

Harlandale Education Association

Lubbock Educators Association

Cy-Fair TSTA/NEA

REGION ALL-STAR AR/CAMPUS LEADER

Maureen Garcia, Socorro Education Association

Juanita Cano, Ysleta Teachers Association

Laurell Harris Jernigan, Longview Educators Association

REGION LEADERS FOR TOMORROW

Cheryl Becknell Patterson, Socorro Education Association

Sergio Martinez, Ysleta Teachers Association

REGION RONNIE RAY ESP ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

Yvonne “Bonnie” Soria Najera, Socorro Education Association

Jessica Uribe, El Paso Teachers Association

Lois Stephens, Longview Educators Association

Consuelo (Koni) Ramos-Kaiwi, Garland Education Association

Sheila Walker, NEA-Dallas

MEMBERSHIP

Southside Education Association

Pflugerville Educators Association

El Paso Teachers Association

Socorro Education Association

Beaumont Teachers Association

North East Education Association

Lubbock Educators Association

Port Arthur Teachers Association

Ector County TSTA/NEA

Harlandale Education Association

Education Abilene

San Antonio Alliance

Education Austin

Ysleta Teachers Association

Pharr-San Juan-Alamo TSTA/NEA

Hays Educators Association

Judson Education Association

Alief TSTA/NEA

Fort Worth Education Association

Garland Education Association

Association of Brownsville Educators

Edgewood Classroom Teachers Association

Laredo United TSTA/NEA

La Feria Local Unit of TSTA

Donna TSTA/NEA

Del Valle Education Association

SCHOOL BELL AWARDS

Terrence Stutz, The Dallas Morning News

Andrew Kreighbaum, El Paso Times

Ashlie Rodriguez, KVIA-TV Channel 7, El Paso

Bill Melugin, KFOX-TV Channel 14, El Paso

Matthew Haag, The Dallas Morning News

Britney Tabor, Denton Record-Chronicle

Ericka Mellon, Houston Chronicle

Ann Work, Wichita Falls Times Record News

Robert Moore, El Paso Times

O. Ricardo Pimentel, San Antonio Express-News

Sandra Sanchez, The Monitor, McAllen

SAISD Foundation

PAC AWARDS

TSTA-Retired

Ysleta Teachers Association

Cy-Fair TSTA/NEA



Student Program leaders head to Orlando

At the end of June, student members from San Jacinto College and the University of Houston-Clear Lake will attend the NEA Student Leadership Conference in Orlando, where they will engage in professional development, hear inspirational speakers, and participate in an outreach service project. There’s nothing like being with a large group of future teachers who share the same fire in their hearts for making a difference in public education.

The student program has had a great year, with a membership increase and new chapters forming. We plan to grow even more next year! As your locals and regions plan for next year, please consider setting funds aside to support the student program in your hometown. Student members are always working hard to keep our profession alive and well. Many of our chapters are actively involved with TSTA locals and regions. As you plan events, please reach out to the student program members in your area for help!

Congratulations to President-Elect Robert Berger from the University of Houston-Clear Lake (shown in photo above) and his leadership team, who will take office July 15. I know under his leadership, TSTA-SP will continue to grow and have another great year! — *TSTA Student Program President Katie Bruno*



Your four core relationships

“This is the value of the teacher, who looks at a face and says there’s something behind that and I want to reach that person, I want to influence that person, I want to encourage that person, I want to enrich, I want to call out that person who is behind that face, behind that color, behind that language, behind that tradition, behind that culture. I believe you can do it. I know what was done for me.” — Maya Angelou

The Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS) is going away. Some school districts already have moved away from it, and some have never used it, preferring to evaluate their teachers with their own locally developed instruments. This past school year, about 70 school districts participated in

the initial pilot of the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS), and as many as 125 more districts will participate in a refinement process before T-TESS’ statewide rollout in 2016-17. This new era of teacher evaluation mandates a keen focus on four core relationships in the teaching profession.

RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS

The relationship between a teacher and students forms the cornerstone of high-performing schools. More than any other professional in the school setting, teachers have the opportunity, through the classroom experience, to have an impact on students’ academic, social, and emotional development.

T-TESS attempts to measure this impact through these factors:

- the teacher’s impact on students’ social and emotional growth and ability to collaborate with others, and
- the depth of the teacher’s knowledge of the students throughout the teaching process and how this knowledge informs the behaviors and practices in the classroom.

A downside of this approach is the emphasis on student test scores, which diminishes the significance of the teacher-student relationship in favor of a high-stakes testing program that impacts teacher evaluations as well as student accountability.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE APPRAISER

Over time, PDAS changed from being an appraisal instrument designed to “improve the performance of students through the professional development of teachers” to a program demanding a teacher’s compliance with policies and requirements dictated by the appraiser. The relationship between teacher and appraiser became little more than a brief conversation about what the teacher was doing right or (usually) wrong. The appraiser would issue a Teacher In Need of Assistance plan, if necessary, and provide little or no opportunity for substantive feed-

back and development before the teacher was dismissed by the district.

T-TESS attempts to shift the appraisal from simply being a way to identify and remove ineffective teachers to a program that provides sustainable support for teachers needing to improve their craft. This represents a major paradigm shift in the relationship between teacher and appraiser.

A key element of this change under T-TESS is a collaborative dialogue between teacher and appraiser. Tasked with completing one or more observations, the appraiser must gather “unbiased” notes of what occurs during a teacher’s lesson presentation and, at a minimum, have a conference allowing the teacher to explain what occurred in the classroom. The teacher also may be allowed to discuss the thinking involved in designing lesson plans. This type of collaborative dialogue requires a teacher and an appraiser to enter the process without pre-existing judgments. Instead of being a manager intent simply on separating good teachers from bad teachers, the appraiser becomes an instructional leader who uses the appraisal process to help teachers improve.

The success of T-TESS will depend on this shift in the teacher-appraiser relationship. The presence or absence of trust in this relationship will determine whether T-TESS meets its intended purpose, which is to help teachers develop and sustain effectiveness.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY

The T-TESS framework includes language addressing a teacher’s level of engagement with parents, the profes-

A downside of this approach is the emphasis on student test scores, which diminishes the significance of the teacher-student relationship in favor of a high-stakes testing program that impacts teacher evaluations as well as student accountability.

sional community, and the school community. Among other things, it identifies a “distinguished” teacher as one who “leads students, colleagues, families and community members toward reaching the mission, vision and goals of the school.” The concept of teacher as leader is not new, but the recognition of the value of teacher as leader is. Teacher leaders who see themselves as catalysts for change may be viewed as reactionary or even revolutionary by a school community and leadership structure bound to the status quo.

Teachers need to recognize their relationship with the education community as one of knowledge sharing (of their expertise and skills) and advocacy for their students, schools, districts, and profession. This recognition must transform itself into action and transform the teacher and the act of teaching from passive compliance and reliance to active engagement. In short, teachers must increase their comfort for risk-taking.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROFESSION

T-TESS provides teachers the opportunity to step back and reflect on their practices and behaviors as well as direct their own professional growth. Self-reflection requires us to think and deliberate about what is happening in our work and the choices we make throughout its course. The value of self-reflection, though, is in the impact it has on our actions and behaviors

because the process is futile if it doesn’t lead to substantive and sustainable change.

The appraisal process includes two key components designed to foster teacher reflection:

- the quality and depth of conferences with the appraiser. Deep questioning by the appraiser will foster reflection by the teacher; likewise, thought-provoking responses from the teacher will strengthen and extend the quality of the dialogue with the appraiser.
- the structure of the appraisal rubric, which provides for immediate and actionable feedback to help the teacher identify and implement steps to improve areas of practice that may be needed.

Thirty years ago, Texas developed and adopted the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS) in response to a report called “A Nation at Risk.” Twenty years ago, it became PDAS with the intent to improve teacher performance. Now, as teachers stand at the dawn of a new age of teacher evaluation, their enthusiasm may be tempered by a political reality that continues to devalue teachers and teaching as a profession. As teachers transform their four core relationships, they also need to reflect on a fifth and, perhaps, more critical relationship, which is the one they have with their elected officials.

— Bryan Weatherford is TSTA’s Teaching and Learning Specialist

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"When I see students ditching school, getting in trouble, or having problems at home, I talk with them — but always with a positive attitude. I tell them to stay in school, get involved in the community, and go to college, so they can achieve better futures and become great role models for their siblings and others."



Rosa Oropeza, cafeteria manager at Bowie High School in El Paso ISD, serves on El Paso Teachers Association's consultation committee and is the TSTA association representative for her campus. She was named TSTA's Ronnie Ray ESP Advocate of the Year at the state convention in April.