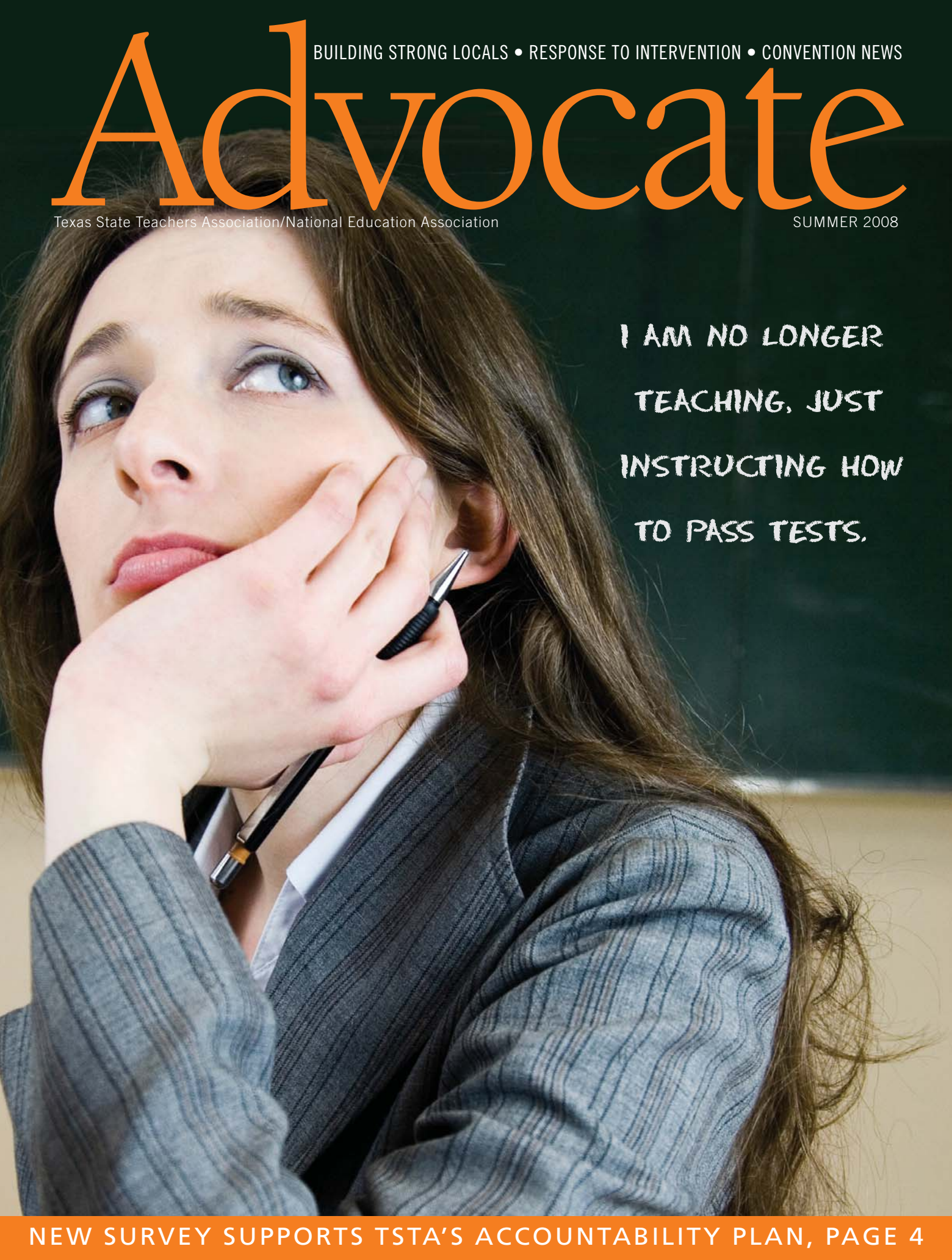


BUILDING STRONG LOCALS • RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION • CONVENTION NEWS

# Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

SUMMER 2008



I AM NO LONGER  
TEACHING, JUST  
INSTRUCTING HOW  
TO PASS TESTS.

NEW SURVEY SUPPORTS TSTA'S ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN, PAGE 4



# A Legacy of Leadership



There comes a time when all good things must end. I cannot describe what my 11 years as a TSTA officer have meant to me, but it is time to try.

As your vice president, I was so proud to be part of the leadership team that brought extreme change to TSTA. President Ignacio Salinas and I worked side by side to “turn the ship around” as we used to say. It was difficult. TSTA had suffered through years of poor management and budgetary woes. But with a strong Board of Directors, we were able to reorganize

TSTA under the new management of Executive Director E.C. Walker and Finance Director (Deputy Executive Director) Roger Montgomery. Their expertise and the collective efforts of our Board, local leaders, and staff members made all the difference. We knew it would take a long time to begin seeing the fruits of our labor and we begged the members’ indulgence to hang in there with us, to believe it could be done, and to help us with all the changes that were being made. That’s how it happened. No magic, no sleight of hand or smoke and mirrors. Just good old fashioned hard work, perseverance, belt tightening, a Vision and Mission Statement made by the stakeholders, and the desire to follow our dreams to success!

Now we are in our fourth year of membership increases, our budget has been in the black for several years, and this year we had a budget surplus! As your president, I am proud to say that we are on the road to restoring TSTA to its former glory: 100,000 members is a goal I believe we will reach in the next several years. Once again, hard work and perseverance have gotten us on the right road where I know we will continue to stay on course.

TSTA Vice President Ann Heuberger and I leave TSTA in capable hands. With your continued help, we will not only keep recruiting members, but we will retain the majority of those we recruit. Not only that, we have been about the business of identifying and training new leaders in the majority of our locals. Our Ambassador Academy does a great job of assisting emerging leaders to move into their locals with strong leadership skills, and this is critically important to the future of TSTA. As the Baby Boomers such as myself continue to retire, we must have an infusion of new leaders to take over!

As I turn over the reins to the new officers, it is my sincere wish that you all continue to fight the good fight. There are so many issues facing educators today and you must never give up, never give in. Your students are counting on you to be the voice for them, the voice they deserve, just as they deserve great public schools.

I have been so honored to represent our profession, the noblest of all professions. It has meant the world to me and I know I am leaving TSTA in better shape than how I found it, with strong leaders who will continue the legacy of leadership to move us forward into further greatness.

*Donna*



TSTA RONNIE RAY ESP ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR: Joanne Frimel trains teachers to use art across the curriculum.

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# Advocate

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# Working Conditions, Pay Fuel Teacher Dissatisfaction

What this report shows is the desperate need for changes in our accountability system, as outlined on our website, [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org), and in the spring Advocate.

Even with teacher salaries in Texas increasing an average of \$4,891 over the past two years—only in small part thanks to what the Legislature did in special session two years ago—44 percent of teachers are seriously thinking about leaving their classrooms, the results of a new study by Sam Houston State University show. That is a minimal drop from 46 percent two years ago.

Texas teachers still earn well below the national average, but twice as many teachers (42 percent) say they are seriously dissatisfied with working conditions as say they are thinking about leaving teaching because of pay (21 percent). Issues related to the misuse of high-stakes standardized testing are integral to this high level of teacher dissatisfaction. Only 4 percent of the teachers in this study believe that a single standardized test score should determine student promotion.

The biennial “Texas Teachers, Moonlighting,

and Morale” report, this year by Daphne D. Johnson, Marilyn P. Rice, Samuel S. Sullivan, David L. Henderson and Abigail Beard of Sam Houston State University, has been conducted every two years since 1980.

“This year’s report is especially disturbing because it shows an increasing need for teachers as an aging teacher corps moves closer toward retirement. At the same time, 50,000 Texas classrooms are staffed by inappropriately certified teachers,” said TSTA President Donna New Haschke. TSTA co-sponsors the biennial survey.

Despite pay gains over the past two years, salaries remain a significant issue for Texas teachers. Only about 5 percent of all U.S. workers have to hold second jobs to make ends meet. In sharp contrast, 28 percent of Texas teachers have to moonlight. They work an average of 11.5 hours a week at their second jobs, even though 71 percent

believe it is having a negative impact on their teaching. Moonlighting teachers make an average of \$8,288 per year, up from only \$4,952 two years ago. Even though 88 percent of those who moonlight would like to quit, each would need a minimum annual raise of \$8,970 to do so.

As the prices of food, fuel and other basics continue to rise rapidly, the extra income teachers earn from moonlighting becomes even more important. The restrictions the Texas Legislature in 2006 imposed on the amount of new money school districts can raise and the Legislature’s own unwillingness to commit new funding to public education further erode the economic well-being of the teachers.

According to the report, the average Texas teacher is a 44-year-old female with a bachelor’s degree. She makes \$47,545 and is married with a working spouse. But 56 percent of teachers are the primary breadwinner in their families. On top of her family expenses, she spends \$719 per year out of her own pocket for school supplies.

Today’s teacher puts in an average of 13.4 hours a week doing additional schoolwork at home. That is the most time spent working at home since the survey began, but 68 percent still don’t feel like they have time to prepare. The top problems she faces are discipline (55 percent) and paperwork (37 percent). Given the stress, the hours, the lack of support and the inadequate salary, it is no surprise that the teacher shortage is getting worse and that experienced teachers are getting out of the profession.

“As the 81st Texas Legislature next year contemplates further reforming school funding and debates making changes in the way we operate our schools, lawmakers need to address issues that are causing our teacher shortage. Legislators also must avoid taking any actions, such as more inequitable and unproven merit pay schemes or elimination of current rights and benefits, that would make the situation worse,” Haschke said. “Changes in Texas public education that don’t focus on creating and retaining a quality teaching force are doomed to fail our students.”

## Comments from the Survey

PEOPLE HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT SOME CHILDREN LEARN AT A DIFFERENT RATE THAN SOME OF THEIR PEERS.

TEACHING IS NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE. I HAVE SEEN MANY THINGS CHANGE IN THE PAST SEVEN YEARS; IT’S NOT ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD ANYMORE, IT’S ABOUT NUMBERS, HOW TO GET DISCIPLINE KIDS OFF OUR CAMPUS, MAKE AYP....

45 MINUTES OF PLANNING TIME IS NOT SUFFICIENT TIME TO PREPARE TO TEACH AND DO ALL THE PAPERWORK REQUIRED, ESPECIALLY WHEN SOMETIMES WE HAVE MEETINGS AND TRAININGS DURING PLANNING.

LESS TIME IN MEETINGS. LESS TIME DOING NON-EDUCATIONAL DUTIES LIKE MONITORING THE HALLWAYS. I WANT TO BE A TEACHER, NOT A POLICEMAN.

WE ARE CONSTANTLY PRODUCING STUDENT DATA TO PROVE THAT WE ARE DATA-DRIVEN, BUT WE DON’T HAVE TIME TO REVIEW AND USE THIS DATA.

THE STATE OF TEXAS IS PUTTING WAY TOO MUCH PRESSURE ON TEACHERS TO PASS STATE ASSESSMENTS. I’M SADDENED AT THE AMOUNT OF PRESSURE THAT IS BEING PUT ON THE STUDENTS AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE.

SCHOOL IS NO LONGER FUN, NO LONGER ABOUT LEARNING, IT IS ABOUT TESTING. WHY HAVE I NOT SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING LEAVING? BECAUSE I TRULY LOVE TEACHING, BUT IT IS GETTING TO THE POINT THAT I AM NO LONGER TEACHING, JUST INSTRUCTING HOW TO PASS TESTS. THIS REALLY GOES AGAINST ALL MY BELIEFS.

THE STRESS OF THE STATE ASSESSMENT AND PAPERWORK TENDS TO EVAPORATE THE PASSION OF THIS PROFESSION TO THE NEW TEACHERS. IN MY YEARS AS A LEAD MENTOR I AM SEEING TEACHERS LEAVE THIS IMPORTANT AND REWARDING PROFESSION IN 3-5 YEARS.

TEACHERS ARE HELD TO CONSTANT PROCEDURES DAILY IN WHAT AND HOW THEY TEACH SO THAT, INSTEAD OF ADDRESSING TRUE STUDENT NEEDS THEY HAVE TO GLOBALLY TEACH THE TAKS. MORALE IS AWFUL.

THERE IS NO WAY TO PREPARE FOR SEVEN CLASSES IN 45 MINUTES, ESPECIALLY WHEN THERE IS MORE THAN ONE PREP INVOLVED. THROW IN THE COUNTLESS AND MEETINGS THAT ARE REQUIRED EVERY TIME YOU TURN AROUND, AND YOU HARDLY HAVE TIME TO TAKE A RESTROOM BREAK.

VETERAN TEACHERS HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF NCLB AND THE STATE LEGISLATURE. WHAT IS EVEN MORE TROUBLING IS THAT NEW, GOOD TEACHERS WANT OUT. UNLESS OUR ANTI-PUBLIC EDUCATION LEGISLATURE STARTS TO IMPROVE THINGS, I’M AFRAID THIS WILL BE THE NORM.







### NEA MEMBER IS NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

The 2008 National Teacher of the Year is known among his students and colleagues for his creativity and innovative teaching techniques. NEA member Michael Geisen, a seventh grade science teacher at Crook County Middle School in Prineville, Oregon, incorporates songs, games, art and humor into his teaching repertoire. He will serve for one year as a full-time national and international spokesperson for education.

“Michael is a wonderful example of how teachers transform the lives of their students every day, engaging them and creating enthusiasm for learning,” said NEA President Reg Weaver. “His extraordinary passion and never-ending quest to find captivating ways of teaching science have undoubtedly inspired his students to realize their potential and achieve their dreams.”

Students say Geisen makes science fun. His unique teaching style has yielded impressive results in and out of the classroom. A class he taught on the deadly effects of microbes on children in developing countries motivated his students to raise money for Third World disease relief. During his first two years as the science department chair at Crook County Middle School,

test scores increased from 55 percent to 72 percent of students meeting or exceeding the state’s science benchmark.

Aside from improving test scores and motivating his students to learn, Geisen is committed to improving elements of Crook County Middle School beyond the four walls of his classroom. A rock-climbing enthusiast, he raised funds and collected donations to build a rock climbing wall and scenic mural to serve as a backdrop for students to enjoy. He also teamed up with other teachers in the science department to create a wildlife garden, representing Oregon’s vegetation zones, in the school’s courtyard.

The National Teacher of the Year program is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers and is sponsored by the ING Foundation. The program focuses public attention on teaching excellence and is the oldest and most prestigious award program for teachers.

### VAN ROEKEL, ESKELSEN TO LEAD NEA

Because the April 15 filing deadline has passed and they are running unopposed, Dennis Van Roekel will be the next NEA president and Lily Eskelsen will be NEA vice president. They are

currently serving as vice president and secretary treasurer, respectively. Read more about them on the NEA website, [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org).

### NOTICE OF FILING DEADLINE FOR NEA DIRECTOR

Nominations are open for NEA Director for Texas Place 2 with nominations being due at TSTA’s Organizing Center for Executive and Governance by September 15, 2008. The election for NEA Director for Texas Place 2 will be conducted at the April 2009 Annual Convention. Contact TSTA’s Center for Executive and Governance, 316 West 12th Street, Suite 510, Austin, Texas 78701, or 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or 1510, for a filing form and information regarding the filing process. The term of office for NEA Director for Texas Place 2 is three years beginning on September 1, 2009.

### NOMINATIONS DUE FOR ESP AWARD

This award recognizes a TSTA educational support professional whose activities reflect the contributions of ESP to public education and show outstanding accomplishments in one or more of the following areas: innovations to support the day-to-day educational process; professional achievements in his/her classification; involvement in the promotion of public education in the community; involvement in local, state, or national association; and enhancement of ESPs’ image in his/her association, work site, or community. Nominations are accepted from regions and/or local affiliates. For a nomination form and packet of information explaining the guidelines for the Award, please contact the Center for Executive and Governance by email ([carolm@tsta.org](mailto:carolm@tsta.org)) or by calling 800-323-5355, ext. 1510. The deadline for submitting nominations is 4:45 p.m. on September 30. Nominations are to be submitted to the TSTA ESP Award Committee, c/o TSTA President, 316 West 12th Street, Austin,

Texas 78701. The nominee must be a TSTA Educational Support Professional member for three years as of January 15 whose activities reflect contributions to public education and show outstanding accomplishments.

### GENERAL ELECTION WILL BE CRITICAL

Twenty-nine incumbents faced primary challengers; 20 of them won. Every one of those primary races, except two, was essentially a general election because the winner will run unopposed or face only a nominal race in November. Only District 78 (El Paso) and District 101 (Mesquite) face a serious November election.

Of the nine who lost, five were Republicans and four were Democrats. Of the five Republicans who lost primary races—Pat Haggerty (El Paso), Thomas Latham (Mesquite), Nathan Macias (Bulverde), Buddy West (Odessa), and Corbin Van Arsdale (Houston)—only

Haggerty was a TSTA-PAC friendly incumbent. Macias, who beat Carter Cassteel by 41 votes in the last election, lost to TSTA-PAC backed candidate Doug Miller by 17 votes.

The four Democrats who lost—Borris Miles (Houston), Paul Moreno (El Paso), Kevin Bailey (Houston), and Juan Escobar (Kingsville)—were all TSTA-PAC friendly incumbents. TSTA has been in contact with the winners in these elections and feels they will be supportive of public schools and public school employees.

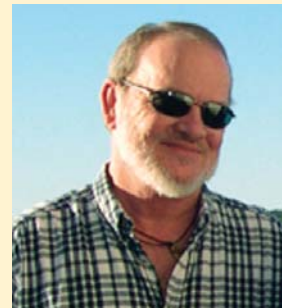
TSTA-PAC recommended candidates who won House races were Byron Cook (R-Corsicana), Delwin Jones (R-Lubbock), Charlie Geren (R-Fort Worth), Donnie Dipple (D-La Grange), Kino Flores (D-Mission), Rene Oliveira (D-Brownsville), Aaron Pena (D-Edinburg), Dawnna Dukes (D-Austin), Roberto Alonzo (D-Dallas), Carol Alvarado (D-Houston), Dora Olivo (D-Fort Bend),

Garnet Coleman (D-Houston), Doug Miller (R-New Braunfels), and Jessica Farrar (D-Houston). Of our recommended candidates in other races, Sen. Judith Zaffirini (D-Laredo) won, as did State Board of Education members Mary Helen Berlanga (D-Corpus Christi) and Pat Hardy (R-Fort Worth).

In the general election, TSTA-PAC will be supporting 31 friendly House incumbents who have challengers. In addition to protecting our friends, we are also involved in more than 14 House races involving unfriendly incumbents and open seats. We will be making recommendations in key statewide, state Senate, and State Board of Education races. We need members to get involved in campaigns and contribute to TSTA-PAC if we are going to be successful in moving the Association agenda.

The next issue of the Advocate will include all of TSTA-PAC’s recommendations for the November general election.

## TSTA Family Suffers a Loss



TSTA Help Center Coordinator Erick Schaudies died on May 3 of a heart attack.

Erick was an art teacher in Harlingen and Lubbock before coming to work for TSTA in 1979 as a UniServ representative, first in Victoria then Corpus Christi. In 1999, he moved to Austin to open the TSTA Help Center.

“Erick was the ‘father’ of the TSTA Help Center, and we will miss his calming, rational, and experienced voice to assist our members with their concerns when they call,” said President Donna New Haschke.

“For almost 30 years, what Erick Schaudies did for our members was to empower them to accomplish things those members did not know they could do. This was especially true for the last nine years as Erick worked in the Help Center,” TSTA Executive Director E.C. Walker said. “From struggling artists to new bus drivers to teachers of the year to fellow staff members, Erick helped us all whenever we gave him the opportunity. His understanding, sensitivity and ability to communicate left behind untold numbers of members empowered by his unflagging passion for and commitment to justice.”

Erick was also a sculptor; he and his wife Raychelle were co-founders of the K Space Gallery in Corpus Christi. He leaves behind a son, JonErick, and two grandchildren, Rowan and Rudy. He was 61. He will be deeply missed by TSTA leaders, members, and staff.

# We're Here to Help You

BY JOEY MOORE, GENERAL COUNSEL AND DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES

The TSTA Organizing Center for Legal Services and Member Advocacy is made up of the TSTA Help Center, litigating attorneys, and support staff. Everyone plays a vital role in protecting our members' employment rights and providing job protection.

## WHAT IS THE TSTA HELP CENTER?

The Help Center is the first point of contact for any member who has an employment-related concern. TSTA members can contact Member Advocacy Specialists from 7 a.m.-7 p.m., Monday through Friday at 1-877-ASK-TSTA. In your busy day, however, you may not have an opportunity to call and speak directly to someone. In that case, you can submit your questions online at [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org), 24 hours a day. Typically, members receive a response to their inquiries within 24 hours.

The Help Center provides members with options for dealing with their concerns or resolving their complaints. Assistance from the Help Center may come in several different forms, including, but not limited to:

- Providing members with information regarding their legal rights;
- Reviewing and editing rebuttals for members;
- Assisting members in making Public Information Act requests;
- Contacting administrators and supervisors on behalf of members;
- In some cases, filing grievances on behalf of members.

The TSTA Help Center also provides support and assistance to local associations that handle member advocacy issues. Many local associations have individuals who are trained to handle member rights issues, or teams of such "member advocates." If your local association has a Member Advocacy Team to assist members with these issues, you can consult with the experts in the TSTA Help Center with any questions you may have.

## TSTA LITIGATION ATTORNEYS

Some situations are more complex and cannot be resolved by consulting with the TSTA Help Center. Those situations are reviewed by the TSTA General Counsel who makes the decision as to whether and to what extent legal funding should be granted. If legal funding is approved, the case is assigned to one of TSTA's staff attorneys or to one of the many outside attorneys around the state with whom TSTA routinely contracts.

The types of cases that may be assigned to a litigating attorney include:

- contract terminations and nonrenewals
- noncontract employee terminations
- certification cases
- complex or class action grievances
- grievances that will likely be presented before the local school board

## COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL COVERAGE FOR MEMBERS

When people ask TSTA members why they should join TSTA, one of the reasons they might hear is "protection." But what does that mean? What kinds of legal protection does TSTA provide?

## EMPLOYMENT DEFENSE

TSTA offers its members legal protection in the form of an unlimited legal defense fund for employment defense

and also liability insurance. While employment defense and liability insurance are both important, they are very different.

Employment defense refers to situations in which a member must take action to protect his or her job, or the rights afforded to him or her under state and federal laws. This might be when a school district is attempting to terminate an employee from his job, or when a supervisor is violating an employee's rights under the Texas Education Code.

TSTA provides an unlimited legal defense fund for all employment defense cases that are approved for legal funding. That means if TSTA is assisting you with a termination, nonrenewal, grievance, or other employment-related issues, you will never be sent a bill for those services. Some associations place a cap on the amount of legal funding a member can receive. In those associations, once the member hits a certain amount in legal fees, the member is responsible for the remainder of the fees, even if the case isn't over yet. A contract termination can easily exceed \$10,000 in attorneys' fees — the cap for some associations. With TSTA, you will never have to worry about the cost of defending your job or protecting your employment rights.

## LIABILITY INSURANCE

As a member of TSTA, you also are covered by a liability insurance policy that protects members against most legal claims regarding actions within the scope of your employment. TSTA members who are sued or are being investigated for a crime related to their employment should contact TSTA immediately so that we may assist them in filing a claim with the insurance.

## WHAT'S MORE IMPORTANT?

Although liability insurance is important, ask yourself how many school employees you personally know who

have been sued for things that happened in the course of their job. Odds are the number is very low, if any. In fact, in the past year, out of over 60,000 members, TSTA received only one liability insurance claim for a civil claim. While people threaten to sue each other every day, the reality is that it is difficult to sue school employees because of the protections afforded by state law.

In contrast, ask yourself how many people you know whose job has been threatened or who have had difficulties with their supervisor? The number is probably pretty high, and in fact, you might be one of those people. By far, the majority of the service TSTA Legal Services provides is related to employment defense. TSTA spends over a million dollars a year helping members defend their jobs and their employment rights.

One example: In the past year, TSTA secured a victory for a teacher's aide who was illegally terminated. TSTA pursued the member's complaint through the district's local grievance policy, an appeal to Texas Education Agency, and finally to district court. After three years and over \$23,000 in legal fees, the member prevailed. The court ordered the district to reinstate her and pay her three years of back pay. The member did not have to pay TSTA anything beyond her dues. In another case, TSTA funded a teacher's case all the way to the Texas Supreme Court, all at no cost to the member.

It's important to be protected from the various types of problems you might encounter when working in public schools. With TSTA you are protected, and protected against the issues that are much more likely to occur. You may only need to consult with someone regarding your rights over the phone, or you may need an attorney to represent you in a termination hearing. Either way, TSTA is here to assist you.

The Help Center provides members with options for dealing with their concerns or resolving their complaints.





# Record Turnout!



TSTA delegates conducted business, elected officers, and honored award winners.



The largest TSTA House of Delegates in this century has chosen new leadership for TSTA. The 632 delegates from around the state of Texas had a full two days of campaigning and voting in Plano in April, with contested races for every position on the ballot.

When the final results were counted, the delegates chose Rita Haecker of Education Austin as the new TSTA president and Jason Hillman of Klein Education Association as the new vice president. Both will take office on July 15. Haecker, who is expected to resign her current role as NEA director for Texas when she takes office as president, also will be the first alternate NEA director and Hillman will be the second alternate NEA director.

President Donna New Haschke is the longest serving president in TSTA history. When she leaves office on July 14, she will have served six years as TSTA president. Prior to that, she served five years as TSTA vice president, so she has been a part of the

TSTA leadership team for the past 11 years. During this time, she and her predecessor, Ignacio Salinas, Jr., and her vice president for the past six years, Ann Heuberger, have changed the way TSTA does business and set the Association on a course for success.

In addition to the president and vice president, TSTA delegates also elected Ginny Evans of Lewisville Education Association to a second term as NEA director for Texas (place 3) and chose Lea Beach of NEA-Dallas to serve as the supervisor-at-large representative to the TSTA Board of Directors, replacing Jack Davis who is retiring. They chose George Borrego of the Association of Brownsville Educators to fill the newly created position of third alternate NEA director.

Delegates heard from Texas Teacher of the Year Paul Cain of El Paso (see feature in the winter Advocate) and Education Support Professional of the Year Joanne Frimel of Spring Branch (see page 22), and political action funds were raised with the help of



North Lamar President Stephen Smallwood (shown in the photo at right).

Lubbock Educators Association won a Pride in Communication Award for best electronic newsletter, and Alief TSTA/NEA won for best association website.

Teacher April Lyn Wilson won the Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award (page 12); Larry Duncan of the Dallas County Schools school board won the Mickey Leland Memorial Award; Gary Hilliard, North Lamar ISD school board member, won the Special Award; and North Lamar ISD teacher Joyce Coulter and National Hispanic Institute founder Ernesto Nieto won Willie Velasquez Memorial Awards.



## SCHOOL BELL AWARDS

Every year, TSTA honors journalists with School Bell Awards. This year's winners were:

- Outstanding News Coverage Editorials and Columns on Tax Rollback Elections: San Antonio Express-News
- Outstanding Education Website: TexasISD.com, Joe Smith
- Outstanding Education Blog: Mike Falick, Spring Branch ISD school board president
- Outstanding Continuous Coverage: Adriana Arce, KGNS TV News, Laredo; Estela Casas, KVIA TV News, El Paso; Tricia Cortez, Laredo Morning Times; Gary Scharrer and Peggy Fikac, Austin Bureau, San Antonio Express-News/Houston Chronicle; Kent Fischer, Tawnell Hobbs, and Terrence Stutz, The Dallas Morning News
- Outstanding Continuing Column: Carlos Guerra, San Antonio Express-News; Clay Robison, Austin Bureau, Houston Chronicle/San Antonio Express-News; John Young, Waco Tribune-Herald
- Outstanding Editorial: Joe Hughes, Lubbock Avalanche Journal
- Outstanding Education Coverage: Vanessa Salinas, Al Dia, Dallas
- Outstanding Feature Story: Kimberly Reeves, Austin Chronicle; Andrew Smith, and Jason Trahan, The Dallas Morning News
- Outstanding Single Program: Peter Daut, KFOX TV News, El Paso



## IN OTHER ELECTIONS

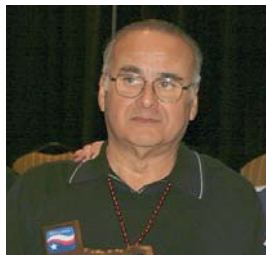
In addition to the president and vice president, delegates to the state convention also elected the following.



**Ginny Evans**  
Lewisville Education Assn.  
NEA Director for Texas Place 3  
(Second Term)



**Lea Beach**  
NEA-Dallas  
Supervisor-at-Large  
TSTA Board of Directors



**George Borrego**  
Assn. of Brownsville Educators  
Third Alternate NEA Director



## BOICE WINNER USES TECHNOLOGY TO REACH STUDENTS

April Lyn Wilson was not a computer geek when she started teaching. But fairly quickly in her 14 years so far as a middle school and high school teacher, she came to understand how technology is changing so many aspects of our daily lives—including how teachers teach and students learn. So she committed herself to harnessing that technology to enhance her classroom effectiveness and the success of her students.

This hasn't always been easy to accomplish. At one school, when Wilson asked where she could find the computer for her classroom, she was told that all classrooms had television sets, but if she believed she needed any other equipment, she could write a grant. She did. As a result, she won the largest grant awarded in that district for a project to allow her students to teleconference with global classrooms. That's the kind of innovation that can breathe new life into what many students see as the distant, irrelevant subjects of world history and geography.

Wilson tailors her lesson plans to meet the different learning styles of her students. For visual learners, she uses PowerPoint presentations, artwork, pictures and video clips. For auditory learners, she uses audio clips of speeches and music. For students who learn best using new technology, she provides many ways of doing that. Making

learning interactive and more fun and stimulating for her students is Wilson's daily goal. And she shares her expertise, technology and materials with her colleagues so they, too, can enhance their classroom effectiveness and the success of their students.

Wilson does not believe that technology will "save" education, but it does add to the available options teachers have to reach more students in innovative ways. That belief, instead of using one-size-fits-all lesson plans that treat all students alike, motivates her to continue her own professional growth. Her example encourages her colleagues who aren't computer geeks to see how they, too, can use technology to benefit themselves and their students.

Wilson long ago committed herself to mentoring beginning teachers and college students who want to become teachers. Her own experience taught her how important that is to classroom success. She also knows how important a strong professional association is, at both the local level and the state level, and she actively participates in the College Station Education Association and TSTA as an advocate not only for other educators, but also for students.

Every day she is in the classroom, April Wilson celebrates being part of a profession that is dynamic, creative and caring, a profession that allows lessons to move, dance and sing with the joy of learning.

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# A Legacy of Leadership

While TSTA has had many fine officers since its inception in 1880, the two who currently hold office have perhaps had the greatest impact on the association.



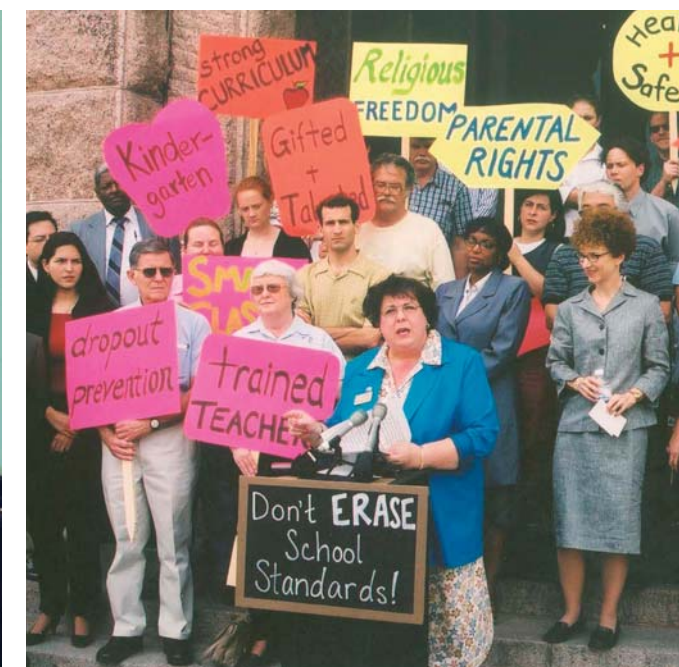
Donna New Haschke was elected vice president of TSTA in 1997 and president in 2002. She is the longest serving officer in the history of TSTA.

Before becoming vice president, she was a Clear Creek ISD English and language arts teacher for five years; before that, she taught for 20 years in Austin ISD. She was the president of TSTA's local association in Austin, Austin Association of Teachers (now Education Austin).

Donna earned a bachelor's in elementary education from the University of Texas at Austin and received graduate-level credit from Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) in San Marcos. She was named Teacher of the Year by the Seabrook Rotary Club in 1997 and first runner-up for Middle School Teacher of the Year by Austin ISD in 1991.

Ann Heuberger was elected TSTA vice president in 2002 and is the longest serving vice president in TSTA history. Before becoming vice president, she was an NEA Director for Texas and served on the TSTA Board of Directors and as Region 25 and District VI president. Earlier, she was president, association representative, and membership chair of the College Station Education Association.

Ann spent 22 years as a school librarian in College Station; previously she was an elementary media specialist in Cobb County, Georgia, and a junior high librarian in Bristol, Virginia. She earned a bachelors from East Tennessee State University and a master's from the University of Georgia.



Over the last six years, the two of them have presided during a period in which the association has had to fight off an unprecedented number of attacks on public education and public school employees.

During those six years, the legislature was in session 11 times, and 10 of those sessions focused on public education. Donna and Ann worked tirelessly to stop an onslaught of bad legislation. In 2006, TSTA was part of a

coalition that defeated a dozen anti-public education incumbents and substantially changed the tone of the Texas legislature in 2007.

Our officers were involved at the national level, as well. NEA filed a lawsuit for full funding of No Child Left Behind (ESEA); Donna served on the NEA ESEA taskforce. The ongoing fight to end unfair Social Security offset provisions has been going on for years and still continues; Donna was asked to testify be-

fore Congress on the issue, and Ann traveled to Washington, D.C., to lobby. Ann also has worked tirelessly to expand the TSTA-Student Program, nurturing the next generation of teachers.

In those same six years, TSTA saw substantial growth in membership, and the association achieved financial stability.

TSTA bids farewell to these hard working and dedicated officers and wishes them all the best in their future endeavors.



# Four Things You May Not Know About Me

TSTA elected a new president and vice president in April. Watch for full interviews in the fall Advocate.

## INCOMING TSTA PRESIDENT RITA HAECKER

- 1 I was a first grade bilingual teacher in Austin for 16 years. I enjoyed teaching first graders how to read and write. I worked closely with my parents to help them teach their children.
- 2 I am a native Texan. I was born in San Antonio but I grew up in Austin and attended elementary through high school in Austin public schools. I graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a BS in elementary education.
- 3 I love being with my family. I have been married for 20 years to James Haecker and we have a 17-year-old son, Jimmy, who will be a senior next year at Bowie High School. I also love spending time with my two nieces, Sara, 5, and Rachel, 2, who live in Austin.
- 4 I believe in being a lifelong learner. I enjoy reading books and publications that address research that will provide me knowledge that addresses the issues we face in our public schools.

## INCOMING TSTA VICE PRESIDENT JASON HILLMAN

- 1 I am a second generation NEA member. Both parents are retired Texas educators and are TSTA-Retired members. My wife is a counselor, and one of my sisters is a French teacher. I have 11 members of the family on both sides, within two generations, that are educators.
- 2 I am a middle school science teacher from Klein ISD. My undergraduate degree is a Bachelor of Science in psychology. I have 40+ hours in geology including work toward my master's degree. I love working with people on education issues, and a strong background in science lets me see things fairly and objectively.
- 3 I am a music lover. I listen to all genres of music with just a few exceptions. If you play it, I am going to like it. I play the piano for fun and have just started learning to play the guitar.
- 4 I like politics. To move our agenda, we have to know how to successfully navigate the process. Every education issue affecting us is played out in the political arena.

**Left photo:** Rita Haecker (center) attends a school board meeting to lobby for more books for Austin school libraries.

**Right photo:** Jason Hillman in 2005 (wearing ballcap) on a zero gravity space flight.



PHOTO CREDIT: MARY KENNEDY







PHOTO CREDIT: MARY KENNEDY

# Tips from Strong Locals

When you ask people why they join TSTA/NEA, they'll tell you about the political clout, the protection, the information. But more often than not, they will also point to a successful local association, a local that has a strong presence in their school district and community. Here are some tips from a few of those strong local associations on boosting your local's visibility and membership.

## AUSTIN: GET INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY

Education Austin has exclusive consultation with the Austin school district, which automatically increases their visibility in the media and the community. But they don't stop there.

Hundreds of parents and children came to Education Austin's "Together We Can! United in the Struggle for School Success" in March. There were workshops for parents and teachers, and activities for children, including a reading by children's author Diane Gonzales Bertrand. Books in Spanish and English, T-shirts, and tote bags were handed out, and a welcoming breakfast was served.

A month later, the issue was books. EA leaders and school library advocates from across Austin ISD spoke out for increased funding for school libraries at the board meeting.

AISD currently requires schools to provide a minimum allocation of just \$2 per student per campus, far below the national average of \$12 per student. The Texas State Library recommends a minimum of \$20 per student annually, which amounts to about the cost of one book per student.

EA has proposed in consultation negotiations that AISD spend an additional \$1.4 million next year on library books and materials. Roughly 100 people turned out in support of EA's proposal at a recent school board meeting, and librarians, teachers, parents, and students urged the board to adopt the standard of \$20 per student per year.

To kick off their book campaign, EA presented the school board with 300 hardback children's books, enough for a set to be given to each elementary and middle school library. "Teachers, librarians, and their union are taking the first step in providing new books to all schools," Education Austin President Louis Malfaro says. "The AISD trustees should follow suit and address this instructional need."

## LUBBOCK: LET MEMBERS KNOW YOU'RE THERE FOR THEM

One of the keys to Lubbock Educators Association's success is President Clinton Gill's relentless effort to keep members informed. "I send out weekly emails on political and educational issues that are important to members," he says. "Since becoming president, I have also implemented a monthly e-newsletter that highlights local,



region, state, and national issues as well as member benefits available.”

Gill says members know that they can get help immediately through the LEA officers if a problem arises. “We have local officers that are trained to assist members in hearings and do so with a lot of success,” he says.

“People in the community know LEA because we are the organization the newspaper and television stations call when they need comments,” Gill says. “They also know that we are the organization that works politically to get school board members and friendly public education legislators elected. While the other organizations say they do everything that we do, the proof is in the product when people actually see the news stories and elected officials thanking LEA for their election win.”

**SPRING BRANCH: SPEAK OUT AND FORM ALLIANCES**

“We’ve gotten known as ‘the group that does things,’” longtime Spring Branch Education Association advocate Joyce Roberta “JR” Miller-Alper says. “There’s nobody else speaking out on those issues,” SBEA President Edie Clark adds. “Issues bring people in.”

In the past school year, “those issues” included supporting passage of a \$597.1 million bond package for Spring Branch ISD; persuading the district not to participate in the state’s District Awards for Teacher Excellence, or DATE, merit pay program; and securing additional, much-needed custodial positions. SBEA leaders regularly meet with Superintendent Duncan F. Klusmann for what Miller-Alper describes as “real interaction” on important issues such as the district’s budget.

SBEA has a long history of backing winning candidates in school board elections and enjoys a positive working relationship with trustees. When the district was considering participating in DATE, for example, board members

were calling Clark to find out the local’s position on the program.

Clark and Miller-Alper credit NEA and TSTA for the valuable training they provide to locals. Clark adds that establishing an alliance with The Metropolitan Organization of Houston (TMO), which works at the grass-roots level on bread-and-butter issues affecting families and communities in Houston, also benefits SBEA.

The Industrial Areas Foundation affiliate was an important ally in the school bond campaign, the rejection of DATE and the addition of new custodial positions. “We have these community allies out there,” Clark explains. “TMO backing really helped.”

**NORTH LAMAR: TAKE ACTION AND EMPOWER MEMBERS**

North Lamar President Stephen Smallwood asked his members why they joined. Here’s what they said:

► I was made to feel very welcome even though I was a member of another professional organization. The meetings were upbeat and positive. Members who spoke were informed yet open to suggestions. Guest speakers spoke on timely issues. While the meetings ended at 5:00, plans were already being implemented for follow up and accountability of problems addressed and solutions proposed. I wanted to support such an active professional teachers’ organization, so now I am a member of TSTA.

► I like how the meetings are organized, an agenda is presented and kept to, frequent emails that let member know what is going on, and an overall concern with educational issues. The other organization I was a member of—I only paid dues once a year and we never had a meeting.

► TSTA is doing something and speaking out about Social Security. They are not sitting back and just whining about it. They are front and center and stepping

up! I like that. I like it that we have had two meetings in our lounge with TSTA on our campus. The other groups have NEVER come to our campus during the school year! I am impressed!

► The high level of professionalism; the concern for pressing issues for all public school employees (social security), and door prizes (just kidding on the last one, but they are nice).

► ACTION! We have proven to make a difference when it counts! We do not stand back and watch and wait—we get involved. Others notice and those that see that they, too, can make a difference respect TSTA and want to become a part of us.

► What makes us grow? Leadership. We have a president who knows what is possible and knows who can make the impossible possible. As a former local president, I would have never thought that a local our size could have a state officer speak at one of our meetings, much less a national officer speak at our banquet or that we could call on state staff to do so much for our local. Our president knew it could be done and knew the people who make things happen. He knew that because he has been very active in local, regional, state and national levels of TSTA/NEA.

Willingness to follow. Our president could not have done this by himself. He happened upon an almost dead local that had hidden talents awaiting some direction. He showed the local members what to do and we did it. We used our talents to begin to create some excitement about being a member of an association of professional educators. Our excitement and energy made North Lamar TSTA the “association of attraction” as our president says, drawing others to join TSTA/NEA.

Developing new leaders. As we continue to grow, it is imperative we create leaders from our members, especially

younger members. For any association to continue to grow, the leadership must replace itself with qualified leaders. To do that we have to give as many members as possible the experiences of leadership. From leading the discussion at a monthly meeting to chairing committees to being a delegate to the TSTA House of Delegates, Western Region or NEA Representative Assembly, these experiences build leadership within the organization. Just as our president is active in all levels of the association, we need to get our members to be active in all levels. That is where they begin to see what is possible, that is where they meet people who can help them get things done, that is how you build leaders who can come back and grow an association.

Meeting the needs of the membership. Let’s face it, if an organization does not listen to the members and try to meet members’ needs, it will shrink, not grow. We try to have an interesting topic to discuss at each monthly meeting. Topics that spring from what members want to hear. Member benefits, Social Security issues, Texas Education Agency policies and politics, state and national legislation issues, retirement, teachers’ rights, No Child Left Behind, you name it we have discussed it. We even invite our superintendent to speak to us about legislative issues affecting public education.

In short, our association has grown because we empower our members. Empowered to think outside the box. Empowered to use what talents we have to build a strong association. Empowered to lead others. Empowered by the information we receive to become an advocate for public education. That’s how we grow our association.

► Our membership and leadership is fun bold kind loyal witty ready eager active caring loving willing helpful patient fervent upbeat reliable positive exciting fearless hopeful focused devoted dynamic listening sensitive



**MEMBERSHIP AWARDS 2007-08**

**MOST MEMBERSHIP AWARDS:** Socorro Education Association (8), Association of Brownsville Educators (7), San Antonio Alliance (5), Donna Education Association (4)

**BEST OVERALL MEMBERSHIP PERFORMANCE:** Teacher—Socorro Education Association; ESP—Association of Brownsville Educators

**HIGHEST NUMERICAL INCREASE:** Teacher—Association of Brownsville Educators; ESP—Association of Brownsville Educators

**LARGEST PERCENTAGE INCREASE:** Teacher—San Marcos TSTA; ESP—Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Union One

**LARGEST INCREASE IN MARKET SHARE:** Teacher—Port Arthur Teachers Association; ESP—DeKalb Educators, Socorro Education Association

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understanding compassionate complementary child advocates accommodating making a difference ready to lend a hand going the second mile engaged and engaging informed and informative committed (and a few should be).

**TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE!**  
(Have some tips of your own? Write us at [debbiem@tsta.org](mailto:debbiem@tsta.org))



# Art Across the Curriculum Reaches At-Risk Students

JOE BEAN, TSTA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Artwork by  
Joanne Frimel



"I haven't met anyone like me doing what I'm doing," Joanne Frimel said. But she wishes other schools and districts would create positions like the one she has filled for 15 years at the Spring Branch School of Choice.

Her title is "art specialist," and she is classified as an education support professional. TSTA honored her with the Ronnie Ray ESP Advocate of the Year award at the 2008 House of Delegates for her work on behalf of the state organization, NEA, and her local, the Spring Branch Education Association.

Frimel's innovative position gives her flexibility to encourage and train teachers to use art across the curriculum. That provides students with alternative forms of learning and blended learning at the alternative school for grades 8-12 that serves a 100% at-risk student body.

"It's very important to have a collaborative, interdependent relationship with teachers," Frimel said.

"Art reflects humanity and our entire world, past and present. This is the key to effective integrating of art across the curriculum. This is embedded in everything I do," she emphasized.

"Art is everywhere," Frimel said. So why not use how it makes abstract expression real to help students master the complete array of subjects the curriculum comprises? That is especially valuable for students who are primarily visual learners.

Students in Joyce Roberta "JR" Miller-Alper's social studies classes drew large caricatures of the 2008 presidential candidates from both parties, displayed in the hallway outside of her classroom. As part of this project, the students also researched the candidates' positions and tracked election results throughout the nominating process.

Frimel worked with Jacqueline Gerbermann, a biology teacher at the Spring Branch school, to help students



visualize genetic traits and better understand that field of life science.

At the school where she previously taught, Gerbermann had students diagram genetic traits. At the School of Choice, Frimel suggested expanding that to three dimensions, through dolls made with socks, modeling clay, paint, yarn, paper, fabrics, etc.

"There's a very close relationship between the arts and science," Frimel said.

When the Advocate spent a day in the Spring Branch art specialist's classroom, she used a painting by her father depicting a scene from the Holocaust to introduce students to the process of interpreting a visual text. "How to read a painting: careful observation of details," she wrote on her chalkboard. That is also a key component of interpreting a written text, the language arts students learned as they then analyzed a poem written in a concentration camp.

The list of examples of how teachers in all subjects can use art is long enough to fill the 300-page "Art Across Curriculum" guide Frimel compiled. She

also teaches workshops to train teachers how to do this effectively.

This approach is "not just art reinforcing the other subjects. It's also the other subjects reinforcing art," she explained. That is important to "maintain the creativity in art so kids can think and invent."

Frimel comes from an artistic family. She majored in illustration at the Cooper School of Art in Cleveland, Ohio, then she worked as an art illustrator and as a finishing artist for a taxidermy studio. Her work brought her to Texas, where her art took her in an unexpected direction when she bartered to exchange art lessons for her daughter's admission to a day care. That hooked her on teaching as a way to share her passion for art, which ultimately brought her to the Spring Branch School of Choice in 1993. She also continues to work on her own art.

"I may be the only ESP art specialist of my kind," Frimel said. "I would like to make more people aware, identify others, and train and produce more like me, including NEA pro-activists."



# Understanding Response to Intervention

DR. PAUL HENLEY, TSTA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Mark is a third grader in Texas. He was told that he would not be promoted to fourth grade unless he got a sufficient score on his TAKS reading test. Though Mark did his best, his scores were not sufficient, and he was retained. Getting retained can be devastating, and it gives students a stigma. If a child is retained in school, the odds that he or she will drop out of school skyrocket.

What's worse, Mark was not a child in need of special education services. Mark was just a kid who needed some special attention.

Not all learning disabled (LD) students need special education. Too often, students are referred for special education services when they aren't needed. Too often, students fall too far behind before schools do anything. Too often, children, students, kids get "left behind" by a system that demands failure before a chance at success.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a system of progressive steps that teachers use to help students learn. As students progress through the stages of RtI, the instruction becomes more individualized and more intensive. The system is designed to give teachers, students, and parents a progressive series of steps between the regular classroom and the special education setting. It's designed to help kids succeed where they are.

TSTA and NEA support the concept of early intervening services (EIS) and RtI because we need to be providing supports for students as soon as they need them. NEA argued throughout the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization that additional funds should be available to implement EIS & RtI. NEA feels a carve-out of IDEA funds dilutes already scarce funds.

## HISTORY

Education circles have been talking about RtI for the past three years or so. Though the concept may seem new to many educators, the concept is not a new one. RtI was developed in the late 1970s by teachers and researchers seeking a method of identifying learning disabilities that avoids the problems of the discrepancy model.

The discrepancy model is often called the "Wait to Fail Model." This model measures a student's IQ and compares it with a student's achievement. If there is a large enough discrepancy, the student is referred to a special education environment. Jim Williams, a Virginia special education teacher, notes, "...before a reading problem is diagnosed, students must establish a record of 'low achievement' (i.e., failing) before anyone bothers to ask why they are not learning."

Unlike the discrepancy model, RtI allows for early interventions in

the regular education setting first. Since these interventions take place before the student has fallen significantly behind, RtI also saves districts money by referring fewer students to special education programs.

The real benefit of RtI, though, is that children do not have to "wait to fail" before they receive help.

Discrepancy measures were once mandated by law. The model caused problems for students, teachers, and taxpayers. (It was too expensive because it labeled too many students.) When Congress reauthorized IDEA, they changed the law about identifying children with specific learning disabilities. The discrepancy model was no longer mandated. RtI began to emerge as a key process to diagnose, measure, and improve student performance before any referral to special education services.

## TWO KEY CONCEPTS

The heart of any RtI model lies in the use of tiered instructional processes. Usually, a school uses a three-tiered pyramid to visualize RtI (see page 26). The three tiers move from in-class enrichment to more intensive small group specialization to individualized instruction specific to the skills and knowledge base a student lacks. One important thing to notice is that RtI deals with behavior, as well as instruction. RtI is discussed in terms of academic achievement, but it matches very well with behavior issues, as well.

A second concept that is key to RtI is Progress Monitoring. All interventions should come from research-based methods. A key to using any such method is keeping track of instruction. This is called Progress Monitoring. It is crucial for two reasons. First, it identifies deficiencies in skill sets and content understanding. Second, it tracks how students respond to interventions. By doing this, you can learn how the student will learn most quickly. You can also draw con-

clusions about which teaching techniques actually work, in general.

## TYPICAL LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

Most schools are moving to a basic, three-tiered model of RtI.

### Tier 1: Screening and Problem-Solving

In all classrooms, teachers are making mental and written notes about students. Using state-mandated tests and informal assessments, teachers can determine which students are potentially at risk of falling behind, academically. At-risk children who have been identified through a standard screening process should receive research-based instruction in this tier. Sometimes this comes in small group instruction; sometimes it is part of a class-wide intervention. What's important at this level is that the school and teacher address any evidence that specific children are having difficulties.

This description is general, because the range of skills in which children may be having difficulties is large. Perhaps Mark, our example third grader, was simply disorganized. He would lose points and fall behind his classmates simply because he wasn't finding time in his day to study. This can be easily solved with a Tier 1 intervention, like creating a specific routine for Mark to follow. He could learn to study at the same time and in the same place each day. Such an issue can be solved easily by small intervention. The key is monitoring Mark's progress, making sure your Tier 1 intervention(s) continue to work.

In the early grades, RtI approaches tend to focus on reading and math and the early building of these critical skills. Later on, though, the process can become more specific to content mastery.

Between general instruction, screening, and small initial interventions, 80% of your students will be just fine. Any Tier 1 interventions should be short, no

longer than eight weeks. If the child has made sufficient progress, then he or she will likely return to more general instruction. However, lacking sufficient progress, the child would move to the second level of interventions.

### Tier 2: Targeted Interventions

The notable differences between Tier 1 and Tier 2 deal with the intensity of intervention. The length of time in this secondary level of intervention is generally a bit longer than in Tier 1, perhaps a full grading period or semester. The interventions may also be more closely targeted to the areas in which the child is having difficulty.

In another example, Mark could have fallen behind his peers temporarily in reading. (Note: Secondary students can have difficulty reading, as well.) If this is the case, Mark could be joined with others in the same situation. Fairly intensive small group instruction could fix Mark's issue. This would allow him to rejoin his classmates in everyday instruction.

Tier 2 should help 10-15% of students, who are ready to return to their normal classroom routine. Once this intervention plan has been completed, the data from both Tier 1 and Tier 2 are evaluated, and another decision is made. If progress is sufficient, the student can return to the regular classroom. If progress is not sufficient, the student is referred to Tier 3. Tier 3 should involve only 5-10% of all students.

### Tier 3: Intensive and Individualized

In Tier 3, the child receives individualized, intensive interventions targeting his or her skill deficits. These interventions are very specific to the student. Classwide activities are no longer considered. The student may move from small group to direct, personal instruction, and the instruction usually becomes more frequent. Progress is closely monitored, at least weekly, and often more frequently. This level of intervention may take longer, but there



should be a deadline set for final evaluation of the intervention(s).

Some schools have specific positions (like Reading Interventionists) to handle Tier 3 issues. Other schools use different approaches, and some of these may involve your classroom directly. In either case, a Tier 3 approach to Mark's reading issue would involve a more substantial effort from the school, including research-based interventions and progress monitoring. Whereas Tier 2 interventions may be standardized, Tier 3 interventions may involve a more personal, problem-solving approach.

At the end of a Tier 3 intervention, the evaluation uses data from all three tiers. This is a time when key decisions get made. If the child has not responded to Tier 3's intensive, individualized, research-based instruction, then he or she will be referred for a special education evaluation. To many, this referral is seen as "Tier 4."

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Across the country, educators are beginning to expand RtI to secondary schools. Middle, junior, and high schools are very different places from elementary schools and, in fact, different from each

other. The approaches used in an elementary school setting will not be the same as those in a secondary school. Nevertheless, a tiered model of instruction makes sense when identifying, assisting, and intervening. The model could crudely be structured this way:

- You notice a student is having difficulty, and you use multiple means to teach the student in the regular classroom.
- You specifically adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of the student. That is, you make in-class accommodations to keep the student on track with peers.
- You offer and execute an individualized tutoring program for the student.

Students at these levels dread any label. RtI may be a way of avoiding this.

Whether or not your school is presently implementing RtI, you will want to be prepared to ask and answer key questions regarding the opportunities RtI presents. You should also be ready to take the lead on implementation.

RtI IN TEXAS

Texas Education Agency (TEA) has a website to help teachers implement RtI

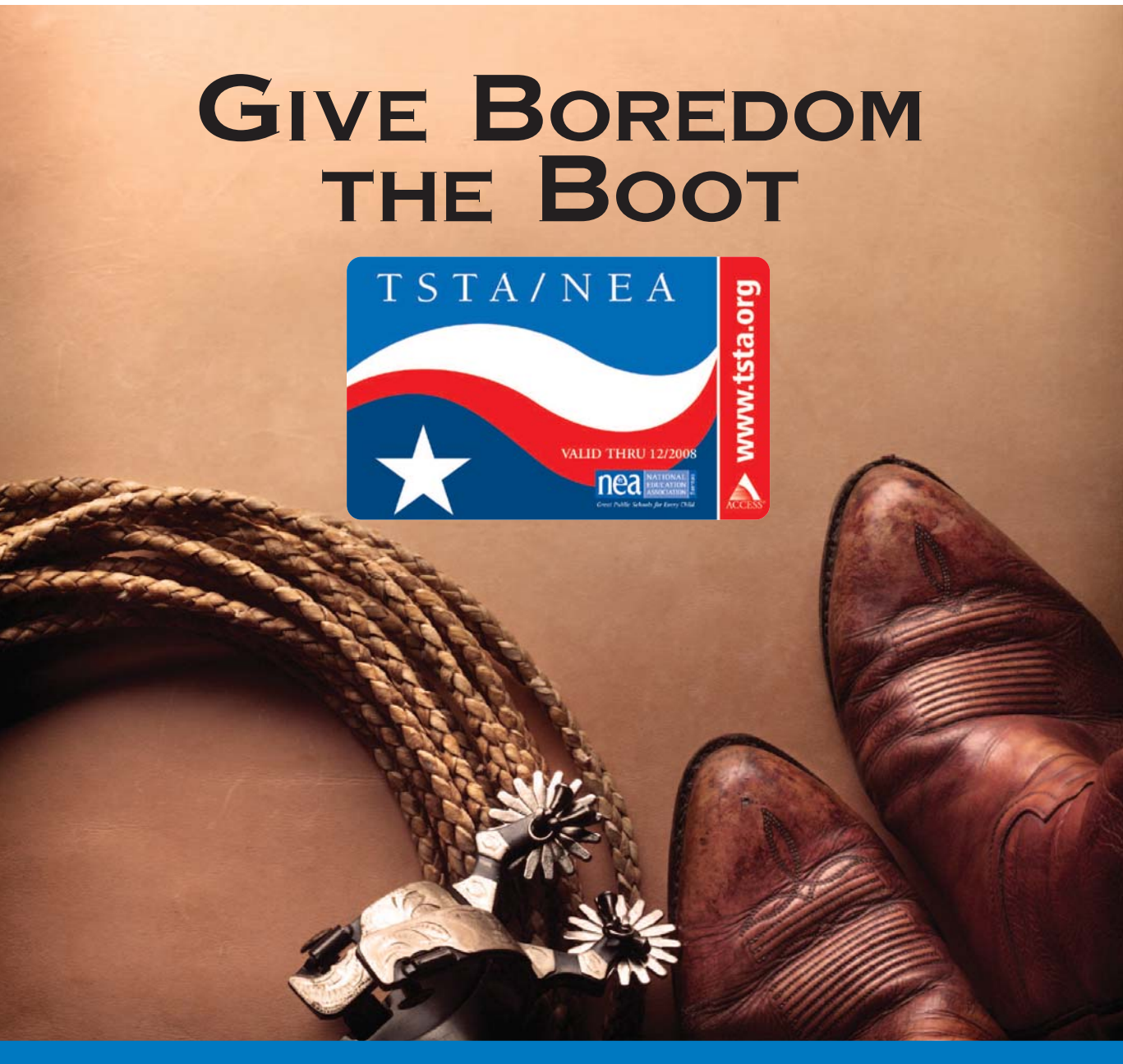
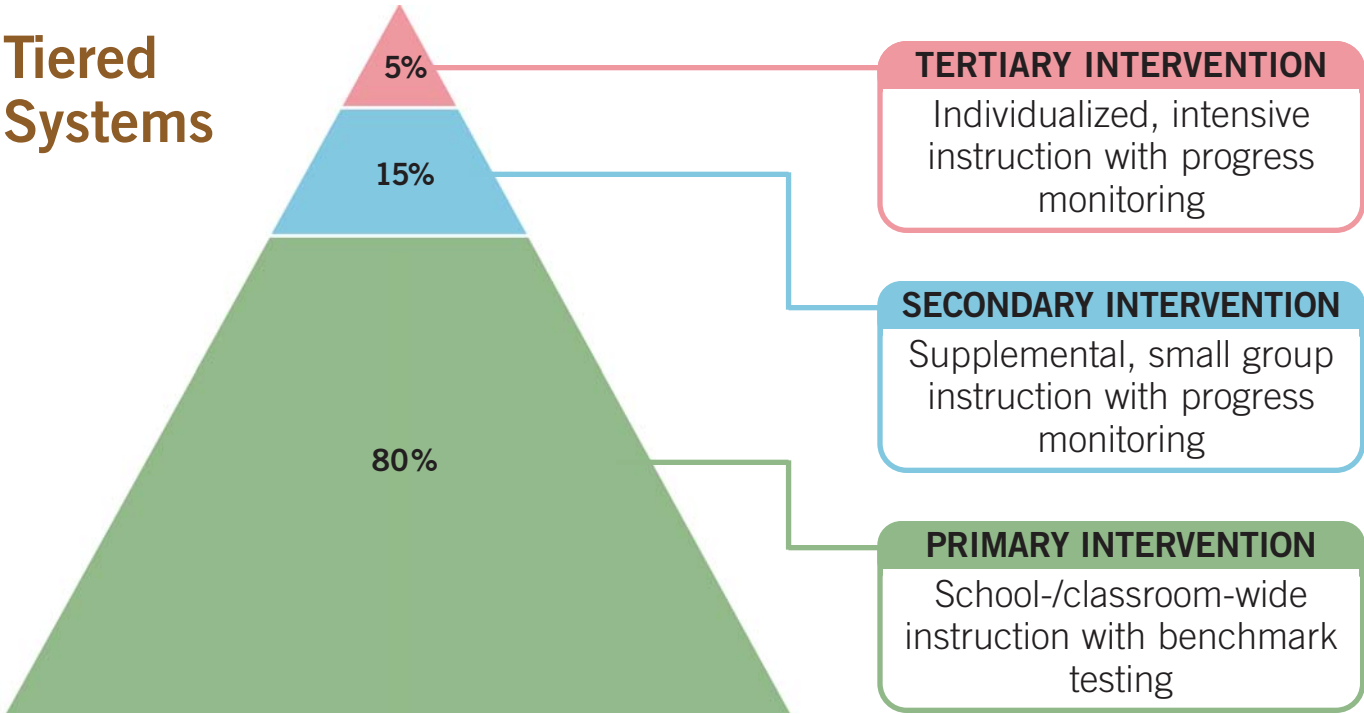
in their classrooms at [www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/RtI/index.html](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/RtI/index.html). The site contains a basic RtI outline, key terms and acronyms, a frequently asked questions list, and the chance to join the TEA RtI listserv. TSTA was one of the key groups designing this site. TSTA also has useful RtI information at [www.tsta.org/teaching/current/rti.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/teaching/current/rti.shtml).

CONCLUSION

Implementation of a tiered approach to instruction and intervention means that a school acknowledges that one size does not fit all and that data can be used to make decisions about who needs what, how much, and when. As RtI takes hold in Texas, teachers gain a significant advantage if they know the key aspects of the model.

When you teach a standard way in a standard class, 70% of your students will understand what you are teaching. Another 10% will get it with just a little help. Good teachers provide that help. Already. Some even provide intensive help for small groups of students and individual kids. Perhaps RtI is just a way to establish that. When you think about it, much of RtI deals with good teaching, and kids like Mark need good teachers.

Tiered Systems



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# A Cat-a-Van Visit



## WANT MORE?

Watch a video of the Read Across America celebration at the Austin Children's Museum at [www.tsta.org/news/current/raa08video.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/news/current/raa08video.shtml).

Look at photos of the celebration—and those of other local associations at [www.tsta.org/inside/about/photoalbum.shtml](http://www.tsta.org/inside/about/photoalbum.shtml)

Read more about NEA's Read Across America at [www.nea.org/readacross!](http://www.nea.org/readacross!)



More than 200 children from Metz Elementary were invited to Austin Children's Museum at the end of February to meet the Cat in the Hat, Thing One, and Thing Two; hear live music; watch a juggler and a magician; and listen to stories read by local celebrities and NEA Vice President—soon to be President—Dennis Van Roekel.

Austin was visited by the Cat-a-Van tour, which took NEA leaders and staff to more than 18 cities to kick off the eleventh year of Read Across America, NEA's reading promotion event held on or near Dr. Seuss's birthday. The Cat-a-Vans provided some 12,000 books and thousands in cash donations to public school libraries, through generous donations from NEA's Books Across America (see [www.nea.org/booksacross](http://www.nea.org/booksacross) for details).

State Representatives Mark Strama and

Eddie Rodriguez, Deputy Sheriff Art Cardenas, and news anchors from three of four local television outlets were the celebrity readers for the Austin event, reading in both English and Spanish.

"NEA's Read Across America sends the message that reading is not just important, but also fun," Van Roekel said. "There's nothing like watching the expressions on children's faces as they listen to someone read to them."


More than 45 million children and adults nationwide donned the Cat's signature red and white striped hat during the week of activities. Many TSTA local associations—including Dallas, Socorro, and Donna, pictured at right—held their own Read Across America celebrations; visit NEA's website at [www.nea.org/readacross](http://www.nea.org/readacross) for more information, reading tips, and book lists.





**Clockwise from far left:** NEA Vice President Dennis Van Roekel; Thing One and Rep. Eddie Rodriguez; President Donna New Haschke and Vice President Ann Heuberger with celebrity readers; local celebrations in NEA-Dallas, Socorro Education Association, and Donna Education Association; Haschke with the Cat in the Hat.



## IDEAS FOR READING

 Our entire K-6 school reads the same book, and parents are invited to read it, too. At the end of the month, we have an evening discussion of the book in the auditorium.

 An elementary school at which I used to work served a small community (a trailer park) of low income families. Many of these children have few books and parents who won't or can't read to them. All through the school year, the reading specialist collects donated used books on every reading level appropriate for elementary school ages. During the summer, a group of volunteer school staff members visits the trailer park, sets up a collapsible tent, spreads out the book collection, and lets all the neighborhood children take whatever they want. One teacher picks up snacks and drinks from the local food bank. We spread out some old blankets and mats and spend a hour reading to the children while they snack.

 On many Friday afternoons students stay after school if they have not been doing their assigned reading or have avoided the Saturday Read to Succeed to which they were previously assigned. One parent in particular was very adamant that reading only had to occur during school hours, that her child could do anything she wanted to otherwise, etc. Our assistant principal insisted that her child stay for the allotted hour and asked if she would like a book to read while waiting. Reluctantly the mother agreed. When the time came for all to be dismissed, many of whom would return on Saturday for the morning Read to Succeed, the children relinquished their books as did the mother. But the mother added, "Could I come tomorrow to finish the book?" One new reading convert and maybe a family that reads!

—ideas from NEA website









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