

Advocate



Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

WINTER 2006-07

Living with Autism

A parent of an autistic child and an educator with autism tell what it's like.

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READING
ROCKS
Poster

TSTA Takes 93% of House Races • 10 Inclusion Ideas • Energize Your Local

Caring Enough to Get Involved



**Just as our schools
and our students
succeed when we have
parents get involved
in their education,
our involvement in
the elections makes
government work
better for us.**

2006 was a year of great contrast and challenges for Texas teachers and all Texans who care about our children's education. With the November elections behind us now, a glance back at this tumultuous year shows that we succeeded and met those challenges because so many cared enough to get involved.

In January, TSTA began planning for the upcoming election year in the context of a failed 2005 regular session followed by two failed special sessions that were marked by the shameless bashing of public schools and public school employees by certain state leaders, and especially those who controlled the Texas House. As we geared up for the March Primary Election, we felt the frustration from those sessions carry over to the campaigns. More members were engaged and involved in campaigns than at any other time I could recall in a long personal history of political involvement.

Still, we all worried that millions of dollars from the Republican money machine of voucher advocate James Leininger, mega donor Bob Perry, and Texans for Lawsuit Reform would overwhelm our efforts.

It didn't. The Chair of the House Public Education Committee, Kent Grusendorf, along with three other hostile incumbents and four candidates backed by the extreme right were all defeated.

The November General Election followed a post-primary special session that led to what the Governor and others called a school finance "success"—including a teacher pay raise that still left us almost \$5,000 below the national average.

That didn't work either. All our friendly incumbents won. We held three open seats that will remain represented by friends of Texas teachers and we defeated four hostile incumbents.

The key to our success was your involvement in the process. Just as our schools and our students succeed when we have parents get involved in their education, our involvement in the elections makes government work better for us. Absent our involvement, the millions that a few individuals can spend trying to elect their hand-picked candidates will prevail. In dozens of House races in 2006, we learned that we can make a difference.

Looking ahead to 2007, when those newly-elected representatives will take office, your involvement will again be the key when the legislature addresses the very serious long term funding needs of our public schools.

And because you cared enough to get involved this year, I will venture one prediction for the New Year—that we will see a lot less bashing of the public school and public school employees in 2007. And that, my friends, will be real success!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donna".



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Advocate

Vol. 26, No. 2 Winter 2006-07

TSTA Advocate is an official quarterly publication of the Texas State Teachers Association, affiliate of the National Education Association.

How to Contact Us: Call 877-ASK-TSTA, visit www.tsta.org, or write to TSTA, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701. Please send address changes to the attention of Membership Records or membershiprecords@tsta.org.

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TSTA-Backed Candidates Win 82 of 88 House Races

TSTA-backed candidates swept to victory in the Texas House of Representatives in November. Highlighting the key races:

Incumbents Mark Homer, Chuck Hopson, Jim McReynolds, Robby Cook, Yvonne Gonzalez Toureilles, Scott Hochberg, and Hubert Vo all held off better-funded challengers to win reelection.

Democratic challengers held on to three Democratic open seats. Solomon Ortiz Jr. won the race to fill Vilma Luna's open seat. Joe Farias held on to the seat that was left vacant when

Carlos Uresti won a seat in the Texas Senate. And in a close race, Joe Heflin beat Jim Landtroop to hold on to Pete Laney's open seat. Both Farias and Heflin beat opponents that were heavily funded by private school voucher activist James Leininger of San Antonio.

Valinda Bolton (D) beat Bill Welch (R) to capture a seat previously held by Terry Keel (R).

Four Democrats unseated incumbent Republicans. Allen Vaught defeated Bill Keffer, Paula Hightower Pierson defeated Toby Goodman, Ellen Cohen

defeated Martha Wong, and Juan Garcia defeated Gene Seaman.

In other races:

- Twelve of the 14 recommended congressional candidates won. Nick Lampson claimed the seat previously held by Tom DeLay.
- All eight TSTA-supported candidates for the Texas Senate won.
- Three of the four TSTA-backed candidates for SBOE won.

See TSTA's Legislative Agenda for the 80th session (subject to committee approval in January) on pages 18-19.

Public Education Wins Nationwide

NEA and public education took many wins in the November elections. NEA-recommended candidates won in 14 of 21 targeted gubernatorial races, in 14 of 15 U.S. Senate races, and in 18 of 25 U.S. House races.

Four high-profile recommended candidates who won (Ted Strickland for Ohio governor, Chet Culver for Iowa governor, Harry Mitchell in Arizona's Eighth Congressional District and Tim Walz in Minnesota's First Congressional District) are current or former NEA members.

Of the 27 recommended Senate and House candidates who are Republican incumbents, 26 won. Among them

were Senators Dick Lugar of Indiana and Susan Collins of Maine, and Jim Gerlach of Pennsylvania's Sixth Congressional District, who was in one of the nation's closest races.



Minimum wage ballot measures won in each of the six states in which they were on the ballot: Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, and Ohio.

Other victories: the so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR), a back-door attempt to starve public services—especially public education and public safety—went down in defeat in the three states where it appeared on the ballot, as did the notorious “65 Percent Solution” in Colorado. (See our website for more on the 65% plan, which, after failing to pass the legislature, was implemented in Texas.)

November 2006 Election Results

TSTA Political Action Committee recommended the following candidates in the General Election.

Governor

Carole Keeton Strayhorn **(Lost)**

Congressional

09 Al Green (I)
 14 Shane Sklar **(Lost)**
 15 Ruben Hinojosa (I)
 16 Silvestre Reyes (I)
 17 Chet Edwards (I)
 18 Sheila Jackson Lee (I)
 20 Charles Gonzalez (I)
 21 John Courage **(Lost)**
 22 Nick Lampson
 25 Lloyd Doggett (I)
 27 Solomon Ortiz (I)
 28 Henry Cuellar (I)
 29 Gene Green (I)
 30 Eddie Bernice Johnson (I)

Texas Senate

01 Kevin Eltife (I)
 13 Rodney Ellis (I)
 14 Kirk Watson
 15 John Whitmire (I)
 19 Carlos Uresti
 22 Kip Averitt (I)
 25 Jeff Wentworth (I)
 29 Eliot Shapleigh (I)

Texas House

001 Stephen Frost (I)
 003 Mark Homer (I)
 007 Tommy Merritt (I)
 008 Sharon Cade Davis **(Lost)**
 011 Chuck Hopson (I)
 012 Jim McReynolds (I)
 014 Fred Brown (I)
 016 Brandon Creighton
 017 Robby Cook (I)
 019 Mike "Tuffy" Hamilton (I)
 021 Allan Ritter (I)

022 Joe Deshotel (I)
 023 Craig Eiland (I)
 027 Dora Olivo (I)
 031 Ryan Guillen (I)
 032 Juan Garcia
 033 Solomon Ortiz, Jr.
 034 Abel Herrero (I)
 035 Yvonne Gonzalez Toureilles (I)
 036 Kino Flores (I)
 037 Rene Oliveira (I)
 038 Eddie Lucio III
 039 Mando Martinez (I)
 040 Aaron Pena (I)
 041 Veronica Gonzales (I)
 042 Richard Raymond (I)
 043 Juan Escobar (I)
 044 Edmund Kuempel (I)
 045 Patrick Rose (I)
 046 Dawnna Dukes (I)
 047 Valinda Bolton
 048 Donna Howard (I)
 049 Elliott Naishtat (I)
 050 Mark Strama (I)
 051 Eddie Rodriguez (I)
 052 Karen Felthausen **(Lost)**
 054 Jimmie Don Aycock
 057 Jim Dunnam (I)
 069 David Farabee (I)
 071 Susan King
 072 Drew Darby
 074 Pete Gallego (I)
 075 Chente Quintanilla (I)
 076 Norma Chavez (I)
 077 Paul Moreno (I)
 078 Patrick Haggerty (I)
 079 Joe Pickett (I)
 080 Tracy King (I)
 083 Delwin Jones (I)
 085 Joe Heflin
 090 Lon Burnam (I)
 093 Paula Hightower Pierson
 094 Diane Patrick

095 Marc Veasey (I)
 099 Charlie Geren (I)
 100 Terri Hodge (I)
 101 Thomas Latham
 102 Harriet Miller **(Lost)**
 103 Rafael Anchia (I)
 104 Roberto Alonzo (I)
 106 Katy Hubener **(Lost)**
 107 Allen Vaught
 109 Helen Giddings (I)
 110 Barbara Mallory Caraway
 111 Yvonne Davis (I)
 116 Trey Martinez Fischer (I)
 117 David Leibowitz (I)
 118 Joe Farias
 119 Robert Puente (I)
 120 Ruth Jones McClendon (I)
 123 Mike Villarreal (I)
 124 Jose Menendez (I)
 125 Joaquin Castro (I)
 129 Sherrie Matula **(Lost)**
 131 Alma Allen (I)
 133 Kristi Thibaut **(Lost)**
 134 Ellen Cohen
 137 Scott Hochberg (I)
 139 Sylvester Turner (I)
 140 Kevin Bailey (I)
 141 Senfronia Thompson (I)
 142 Harold Dutton Jr. (I)
 143 Ana Hernandez (I)
 145 Rick Noriega (I)
 146 Borris Miles
 147 Garnet Coleman (I)
 148 Jessica Farrar (I)
 149 Hubert Vo (I)

State Board of Education

01 Rene Nunez (I)
 03 Rick Agosto
 09 Maggie Charleton **(Lost)**
 15 Bob Craig (I)

(I) = incumbent



SHEPHERD NOMINATED FOR NATIONAL AWARD

Texas Teacher of the Year Karen Shepherd has been selected as Texas' nominee for the NEA Member Benefits-NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, a national award that recognizes teachers for their instructional expertise, creativity and innovation in the classroom, as well as for their leadership skills. Plano Senior High School will receive a \$1,000 gift from the NEA Foundation as a result of her nomination.

Each state may nominate one educator for the award. All nominees will be honored at an NEA Foundation sponsored gala on February 8 in Washington, D.C.; five finalists will receive a personal gift of \$10,000 from the NEA Foundation and The Horace Mann Companies. (Last year, TSTA member and special education teacher James Harris of Lubbock was one of the finalists.)

One finalist will be selected to receive the NEA Member Benefits-NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence and an additional \$25,000.

Plano Senior High Principal Doyle Dean recommended Shepherd, a

teacher and science department chair, for the nomination. "Karen is a leader on our campus and in the district, and she challenges her students tremendously," he said. "Her Advanced Placement Biology program is the largest AP science program on our campus and more than 80 percent of her students have scored 3, 4 or 5 on the AP exam in biology over the past few years."

TSTA President Donna New Haschke, who nominated Shepherd for the award, said, "It is rare to encounter a teacher who is as gifted and caring as Karen. Her many awards and accolades attest to the fact that she is recognized as an expert within her field. She is an instructional leader known throughout the school district and the science community."

The NEA Foundation was created by NEA and is sustained by an annual \$1 contribution from each of NEA's 3.2 million members as well as contributions from corporate partners. For more information about Karen, see the Winter 2005 *Advocate*, online at www.tsta.org/news/current/advocate.shtml; for more information about the Foundation, visit www.neafoundation.org.

IMPORTANT NOTICE ON ELECTIONS

Watch closely for the next issue of the *Advocate*. Ballots for electing TSTA state delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly will be printed in that issue. You should receive your next issue by late March and the deadline for the marked ballot to be received at TSTA Headquarters is 5 p.m. CDT, Friday, April 20.

CANDIDATES ANNOUNCE FOR NEA DIRECTOR

Nominees for NEA Director for Texas, Place 1 are Rita Christine Haecker, Education Austin, and Reagan Hawkins, Nederland Teachers Association.

The filing deadline was September 15 with the election to be conducted at the State House of Delegates in El Paso in April. Candidate statements and biographical information will appear in the Spring 2007 *Advocate*.

TFA: STATE-OF-THE-ART DISPUTE RESOLUTION SYSTEM

Texas State Technical College System (TSTC) and the Texas Faculty Association (TFA) are creating a new state-of-the-art dispute resolution system.

The joint venture between TSTC and TFA stems from the settlement of a lawsuit that TFA, a TSTA affiliate, filed against TSTC a few years ago. "TSTC and TFA decided then to leave our confrontational past behind and to work together to create a program that utilizes mediation as a way of resolving problems," TFA Executive Director Dr. Charles Zucker said.

TSTC Chancellor Bill Segura has designated Vice Chancellor Jonathan Hoekstra to invigorate and spearhead the project while working closely with TFA representatives to address their concerns. As TSTC and TFA envision the process now, the new dispute resolution system will entail the following major components:

- Non-binding mediation as early as possible between parties in disagreement or conflict. TSTC has agreed to send sufficient people to 40-hour mediation training to cover all of its campuses.
- The creation of a grievance committee to hear complaints should mediation or other measures fail. Currently, grievants have only their supervisory chain to which they can appeal.
- The creation of a procedure to check up on grievants after the process is complete to guard against retaliation.

NEA AUTO INSURANCE EXPANDS TO TEXAS

Beginning this fall, the NEA Members Auto Insurance Program is available in Texas through NEA Member Benefits. Underwritten and serviced by California Casualty Management Company, it provides auto insurance with discounted rates and excellent service for TSTA/NEA members and their families. They provide TSTA members a quote when called at 800-877-7345.

The 2005 Consumer Complaint Study conducted by the California Department of Insurance names California Casualty (the underwriter of the NEA Members Auto Insurance Program) as the highest-rated auto insurance company in the state. The study assists consumers with their insurance purchase by ranking companies according to their justified complaint ratio. The study concludes that California Casualty had zero justified complaints for the 2005 study year. For more on the study, visit www.insurance.ca.gov and click on consumers.

Because the company has found educators to be conscientious and responsible, they qualify for special rates not available to the general public, and they are guaranteed that rate for 12 months. Rates can be lowered further through good student, accident free, passive restraint, and mature driver discounts. Exclusive features not offered to the general public include:

- personal property covered up to \$500 whether your vehicle is locked or not
- covers anyone who drives your car with your permission and it also covers you while driving other cars—borrowed or rental
- convenient payment plans including the Summer Skip Option for educational employees
- custom equipment coverage for all

- non-factory equipment installed
- optional unlimited towing and roadside assistance available
- 24-hour emergency claims service available 365 days a year
- zero deductible for vandalism on or within 500 feet of school property or while away from school during a school-authorized activity or function
- optional loan/lease payoff coverage available if car is a total loss

NEA Releases 12-Point School Dropout Plan

U.S. Rep. Ruben Hinojosa (D-Texas) joined NEA in October to present a 12-point plan that engages parents, educators, business leaders and lawmakers in a concentrated effort to reduce the nation's disturbing dropout rate. Others at the podium included the president elect of the National PTA and the co-author of a new study, "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts."



Despite a number of targeted efforts, the nation's high school dropout rate remains high. Some experts say that nearly one third of all public school students fail to graduate with their class. According to "The Silent Epidemic" study, "the national graduation rate is between 68% and 71%; the graduation rate for Black, Hispanic and Native American students is about 50%, while graduation rates for Whites and Asians hover around 75% to 77%, respectively."

Dropping out of high school places students at a long-term disadvantage. A high school dropout earns \$260,000 less over his or her lifetime and is 72% more likely to be unemployed. Dropouts are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system: 80% of individuals in prison do not have a high school diploma.

"In the Hispanic community, we have struggled with high dropout rates, and low graduation rates for a very long time, but with little national attention, and even less action," said Hinojosa. "Today, however, I am hopeful that with the NEA initiative and our efforts in Congress, we will find the will to put in place the policies and investments necessary to ensure that all of our students are able to attain a high school diploma, preparing them for postsecondary education and careers."

NEA's 12-point plan to stem dropout rates includes mandatory high school graduation or equivalency for everyone below the age of 21; workplace options that allow parents to participate in their child's education; and early intervention through high-quality universal preschool and full-day kindergarten programs.

Go to <http://www.nea.org/newsreleases/2006/nr061003.html> for the news release and links to the 12-point plan and tips for schools, families, businesses and communities.



Living with Autism

It was clear from the beginning that something was different about Augie. When he was seven days old, he kicked his way across the crib. Toys that made sounds bothered him. The only way to calm his incessant squirming and kicking was to walk him up and down the hall while bouncing him. He wouldn't make eye contact, he didn't like to be held, and he had trouble sleeping. His pediatrician said he was fine.

When he was 18 months old, Augie lost the few words he had learned and began to spin in circles. The pediatrician said he was hyperactive and lacked "connectiveness"; he referred the family to a neurologist.

Although they had worried that something might be wrong, Augie's parents, Dianne Doggett and Gary Fagelman, were shocked. They vowed that if, as they feared, the neurologist's diagnosis was attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, they were not putting their son on Ritalin.

They never imagined that the neurologist would diagnose Augie, at 22 months, with autism.

Dianne refused to believe it. How could Augie have a disability, when he was advanced in so many ways? He began walking early and “he knew the alphabet literally backwards and forwards,” she said. “He knew the names of all the colors and how to make them: not just primary colors but turquoise and grey and peach.”

The neurologist advised them to interact with their son as much as possible and get him into speech therapy. They were on their own to figure out what to do from there.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “autism spectrum disorders are a group of developmental disabilities defined by significant impairments in social interaction and communication and the presence of unusual behaviors and interests.” The spectrum ranges from the milder Asperger Syndrome to autistic disorder.

No one knows what causes autism or how to cure or prevent it, but researchers are making inroads.

They know that genetics predispose some individuals to it. “Autism is one of the most heritable mental disorders. If one identical twin has it, so will the other in nearly nine out of 10 cases,” the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports. “If one sibling has the disorder, the other siblings run a 35-fold greater-than-normal risk of having it.”

They’re learning what areas of the brain it affects. In August, a study conducted by scientists in a research network supported by the NIH found evidence that autism affects the functioning of virtually the entire brain, that it is a “global disorder affecting how the brain processes the information it receives.” Previously it was believed that autism affected only the areas of the brain governing social interaction, communication and reasoning; now they know that it also affects the areas involved with sensory perception, movement, and memory.

They’re searching for the cause. A team of researchers, whose findings were published in the October 16 *Scientific American*, explored the possibility that “mirror neurons” may be disrupted in individuals with autism. (Motor command neurons in the brain fire when you take an action; mirror neurons fire when you watch someone else take the action, and they help us understand the intentions of others.) Another study, reported in August by the NIH, found that inactivating a gene called Pten in a mouse model produced disturbances in social interaction and brain organization that closely mirrored human autism and related disorders.

Additional funding is needed to solve the mystery of autism spectrum disorders, which CDC says strike between 1 in 500 and 1 in 166 children.

New Funding

There’s good news in Congress for parents of autistic children: with the November shift in power, the Combating Autism Bill is expected to finally move out of the Energy and Commerce Committee. The current committee chair, Rep. Joe Barton (R-Texas), had

blocked HR 2421 which carries almost \$1 billion, including \$45 million for research on possible environmental causes, such as vaccines and mercury. The companion bill, S 843, had already passed the Senate, but Barton was preventing HR 2421 from reaching the House floor, and angry parents were protesting.

According to the *Dallas Morning News*, Barton’s legacy as chair includes holding hearings this year to challenge the scientific basis of global warming; unsuccessfully pressing the Environmental Protection Agency to leave Ellis County out of a regional smog plan that required pollution cuts from North Texas’ biggest industries; and seeking exemptions from environment rules for refineries, limits on pollution lawsuits involving the gasoline additive MTBE, and extensions of federal deadlines for fighting urban smog.

With the Democrats in power, Rep. John Dingell (D-Michigan) is expected to become the new chair; his voting record includes pushing for tougher clean water laws, protection for endangered species and their habitats, and an investigation of Vice President Dick Cheney’s energy task force.



AUGIE AND HIS FAMILY: dad Gary Fagelman, sister Natasha, and mom Dianne Doggett.

Searching for Help

Early intervention is key, NIH says.

"Individualized, intensive behavioral interventions, preferably beginning before age two-and-a-half or three, have provided the most dramatic and lasting improvements, in some cases resulting in normal to near-normal functioning. Any delay in diagnosis and referral to services can diminish the benefits of intensive, early interventions." Yet they estimate that only 50% of autistic children are diagnosed before kindergarten.

Parents, desperate for help, will flock to anyone with a new theory. They have formed parent groups all over the country and online to share what has worked for them.

"When Augie was diagnosed, the idea that diet could help was spread parent to parent or through the internet. Pediatricians would act like you were nuts if you brought it up," Dianne said. "A group of doctors and scientists, many of whom had autistic children of their own, started meeting as Defeat Autism Now to try vitamins, minerals—anything that wouldn't hurt the children—and they were finding things that helped. The feeling was, 'I can't wait 10 years to find out if this vitamin works. Let's try it.' Every child is different, too, so what works for one may not work for another."

In the seven years since his diagnosis, Augie's parents have tried the Hanen Program of interaction; brushing his skin and compressing his joints every two hours under the Wilbarger Protocol; a diet free of wheat, dairy, and artificial colors, preservatives and sweeteners; an anti-fungal drug; intensive vitamin therapy; eliminating aluminum foil and cookware; chelation, in which drugs bind to mercury and extract it from the body; cod liver oil to improve eye contact; the Feingold Diet, which removes foods high in salicylates, such as strawberries; intravenous infusions; medications to increase blood flow to some parts of the brain and decrease it

in others; relational development intervention; neurofeedback; and a variety of other medications and supplements.

They moved from Austin to Oregon to enroll Augie in an Applied Behavior Analysis program; they flew to California every six weeks for a four-hour intravenous immunoglobulin treatment; they spent two weeks in intensive sensory integration therapy in Colorado.

Some things worked, some didn't and some, they just couldn't tell. Dianne swears by the gluten-free, casein-free diet that Augie's been on for six years. "He quit spinning in circles," she said. "His hyperactivity was greatly diminished and he began to understand what we were saying to him. The food he had been eating seemed to have an opiate effect: he couldn't feel pain before,

he'd walk barefoot on sharp rocks. After we put him on the diet, he fell down and you could see the surprise in his eyes, because suddenly it hurt. Now he wears shoes."

Oddly, while he was insensitive to pain, he was hypersensitive to light and sound. Augie didn't sleep through the night until he was seven years old. "We'd be up every night for an hour or two," Dianne said. "The smallest sounds would wake him up. Our brains screen out the unimportant stuff but theirs don't."

The little holes in the window shade where the cord threads in and out: Augie saw light through them and couldn't sleep. The tiny flicker in a fluorescent lightbulb: Augie obsessed over it. The shades were exchanged for room-darkening ones, the fluorescent bulbs were



'We're Wired Differently'

Dr. Rachele Jones is uniquely qualified to talk about educating autistic children. The Lubbock educator has a masters in communication and a doctorate in special education—and she is autistic herself, as are her husband and two of their three children.

At a recent workshop in Ruidoso for TSTA members, she talked about the differences and similarities between autistic and typical learners.

"We're wired differently," she said of autistics. "We're really good at details and mathematics. We're not real good at the social aspects."

In Western culture, she said, it's a problem that autistics are uncomfortable looking other people in the eye. "I have to look you in the eye and count to 10 before I can look away," she said.

"We have problems understanding facial expressions. That's because we're looking at all the details. We watched the movie 'Holes'; I know what type of tennis shoes the kids were wearing, eye color, nose shape. But if you look at communication theory, none of that matters. We're not getting the big picture when we're looking at you."

Other people may see autistics as cold or aloof but it's a misunderstanding, she said. "We don't see the social cues. When someone smiles, you process it in 1/20th of a second. I process it in a formulaic process, similar to $A+B=C$. If we're passing in the hall and you smile at me, by the time I process it, you have passed by and you're thinking, 'How rude.'"

"Autism is a communication deficit with neurological backing," she summarized. "I talk a different language. I had to learn a foreign language to be able to talk with you."

When autistic children hit puberty, they realize that they are different from other people and the isolation is devastating, Jones said. She put together a system called SAA RED, based on communication theories, to try to help them. "It says, 'Here are the important details you look at, here's how you do it,'" she said. (You can read more about SAA RED at http://etd.lib.ttu.edu/theses/available/etd-04222006-191118/unrestricted/Jones_Rachele_Jayne_Diss.pdf.)

replaced. His parents adapt, constantly.

Earlier this year, they tried a hyperbaric oxygen chamber. The theory is that it gets oxygen to parts of the brain that haven't been getting enough. Over a six-month period this year, Augie spent 120 hours in the chamber, one hour at a time. It went into the column of "things that work." "When he went back to school in the fall, his teacher said he was a different kid," Dianne said.

The School's Role

Inclusion in a public school setting helps autistic children to grow academically and socially, experts say.

"If students are to learn appropriate behaviors, they will need to be in the inclusive environment to see and hear

how their peers talk and act," Chicago educational consultant Dr. Paula Kluth said. "Inclusion is more than a set of strategies or practices, it is an educational orientation that embraces differences and values the uniqueness that each learner brings to the classroom."

Inclusion is also required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act "to the maximum extent possible." For it to work, teachers need training and support, something that sometimes is lacking. But when all the elements are in place, an inclusive classroom can work magic for a child.

"We had Augie in private school the first half of kindergarten but for him it was a disaster because he couldn't stay in his seat," Dianne said. "They kept him with kids who were at a much

lower cognitive level. He really missed being with the typically developing kids or 'typicals,' as we call them in the autism community."

Accompanied by an aide, Augie now attends their neighborhood school, Forest Trail Elementary in the Eanes ISD. "At the beginning of the year, the counselor and I met with the kids and talked to them about autism and Augie, when Augie was out of the room. We talked about his strengths and weaknesses. I showed them pictures of him doing interesting things—roller skating, at an amusement park, rock climbing, swimming, at a birthday party, at a cooking class—so they'd know he's a three-dimensional kid. The kids need information so they won't fill in the gaps with their own suppositions and so they won't be afraid."

Dianne credits Augie's first grade teacher with smoothing the transition for him. "She made him a celebrity in the class. She did everything she could to point out to the other kids how great it was to have him there," Dianne said. "The kids would fight over who got to sit with him. We tried to thank her, but she said, 'Oh, no, we were so lucky to have him in our class! The kids learned so much from him!'"

Today Augie is 9 and in a regular second grade class for specials, lunch, recess, science and reading. He reads at grade level and, although his comprehension is significantly behind, he's catching up. He has math and language arts in a resource room with typical kids who need extra help, and he's at the top of his resource class.

But the best news for his mom, who has struggled for nine years to have as normal a life as possible for her son, may be social. "There's a typical boy in his class who wants to be Augie's friend. He's been to our house to play," she said with a smile. "He's Augie's best friend."

Her suggestions for working with autistic students:

- Say what you mean and mean what you say. Just be straightforward. Do it with the parents, too, because there's a good chance one or both have an autism spectrum disorder.
- Establish routines and verbally reassure the student.
- Provide a safe place to go when they are experiencing overload.
- Keep explanations in short spurts to allow for mental processing time. "All of us in the spectrum will smile and look at you and nod, pretending to understand, because we don't want to look stupid," she said. Although her short-term memory is poor, Jones said, "my long-term memory is amazing. I can tell you things that happened when I was three."
- Use concrete examples and explanations. "Autistic students really don't get abstracts. Or they'll debate you if it's in their area of interest, and it is possible they may know more about it than you do," she said.
- Determine if there are sensory issues and what they are, then work to desensitize them.
- Do not give timed tests; if you have to, do not overemphasize the fact that the test is timed to the student. "I had to learn how to take the bathroom door off its hinges because my son's teacher emphasized the timing, and he wouldn't come out," she said.
- Keep the classroom structured and consistent.
- Give lots of drill and review in deficit areas.
- Do not use corporal punishment; always check the student's Behavioral Intervention Plan.
- Cue him/her to important information by repeating it, changing your tone of voice, or saying, "write this down."
- Keep a calm, unemotional affect.
- Eliminate rote homework.

Dr. Jones' parting thought: "Hans Asperger had a very positive attitude towards those who have the syndrome and wrote: 'It seems that for success in science or art, a dash of autism is essential. For success, the necessary ingredient may be an ability to turn away from the everyday world, from the simply practical, an ability to re-think a subject with originality so as to create in new untrodden ways, with all abilities canalized into the one specialty,'" she said. "Because we see things differently, with your help, we can make things better. Wouldn't that be cool?"



SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM: 10 Ideas for Inclusive Classrooms

As I speak with colleagues in primary and secondary schools, I have noticed that many teaching veterans understand how to include students with learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, emotional disabilities, and physical disabilities in general education classrooms; but they remain puzzled at how to support and teach students with autism in these same environments and learning experiences.

These tips are designed for the teacher who is just beginning to work with a student with autism. These simple

ideas may work for a myriad of students but they are particularly helpful for educating students with autism, Asperger's syndrome, and other spectrum labels. They can help a teacher of any grade level or subject area plan lessons and engineer a safe and comfortable classroom for students with autism and other unique learning characteristics.

LEARN ABOUT THE LEARNER FROM THE LEARNER

Oftentimes, educators needing information about a student will study the

individual's educational records. While these documents are certainly one source of information, they are seldom the most helpful source of information. Teachers wanting to know more about a student with autism should ask that student to provide information. Some students will be quite willing and able to share information while others may need coaxing or support from family members. Teachers might ask for this information in a myriad of ways. For instance, they might ask the student to take a short survey or sit for an inter-

view. One teacher asked his student with autism to create a list of teaching tips that might help kids with learning differences. The teacher then published the guide and gave it out to all educators in the school.

If the student with autism is unable to communicate in a reliable way, teachers can go to families for help. Parents can share the teaching tips they have found most useful in the home or provide videotapes of the learner engaged in different family and community activities. These types of materials tend to give educators ideas that are more useful and concrete than do traditional educational reports and assessments.

Observing the student in another classroom setting can also be useful. In particular, these observations should focus on the student's successes: What can this student do well? Where is she strong? What has worked to create success for the student?

SUPPORT TRANSITIONS

Some students with autism struggle with transitions. Some are uncomfortable changing from environment to environment, while others have problems moving from activity to activity. Individuals with autism report that changes can be extremely difficult, causing stress and feelings of disorientation. Teachers can minimize the discomfort students may feel when transitioning by:

- Giving five and one minute reminders to the whole class before any transition.
- Providing the student or entire class with a transitional activity such as writing in a homework notebook or for younger students, singing a short song about "cleaning up."
- Ask peers to help in supporting transition time. In elementary classrooms, teachers can ask all students to move from place to place with a

partner. In middle and high school classrooms, students with autism might choose a peer to walk with during passing time.

- Give the student a transition aid. Some students need to carry a toy, object, picture, or other aid to facilitate their movement from one place to the next.

GIVE FIDGET SUPPORTS

Oftentimes, learners with autism struggle to stay seated or to remain in the classroom for extended periods of time. While allowing learners to move frequently is one way to approach this need, some students can be equally comforted if they have an object to manipulate during lessons. One student I know likes to pick apart the threads on patches of denim. Another folds and unfolds a drinking straw during long lecture periods.

Students having such a need might be offered Slinky toys, Koosh balls, straws, stir sticks, strings of beads, rubberbands or even keychains that have small toys attached to them.

Allowing students to draw can be another effective "staying put" strategy. Many learners with and without identified needs appear better able to concentrate on a lecture or activity when they are given the opportunity to doodle on a notepad, write on their folders, or sketch in a notebook.

HELP WITH ORGANIZING

While some students with autism are ultra-organized, others need support to find materials, keep their locker and desk areas neat, and remember to bring their assignments home at the end of the day. Consider implementing support strategies that all students might find useful. For example, students can attach a small "going home" checklist to the inside of their lockers or be re-

minded to keep a small set of school supplies in each classroom instead of having to carry these materials in their backpacks. Teachers can also:

- Have students copy down assignments, pack book bags, put materials away, and clean work spaces together. Specific skills can even be taught during this time (e.g., creating to-do lists, prioritizing tasks);
- Ask all students to do two-minute clean-up and organization sessions at the end of class; or
- Provide checklists around the classroom—especially in key activity areas. For instance, a checklist can be placed near a classroom assignment "in box" (e.g., Did you complete the assignment? Is your name on the paper?) or on the front of the classroom door (e.g., Do you have a pencil? Notebook? Homework?).

ASSIGN CLASS JOBS

Many students with autism are comforted by routines and predictability. Class routines and jobs can provide this type of structure while also serving as opportunities to provide instruction and skill practice. A student who likes to organize materials might be put in charge of collecting equipment in physical education. A student who is comforted by order might be asked to straighten the classroom library. In one elementary classroom, Maria, a student with autism, was sometimes given the chore of completing the lunch count. Counting the raised hands and having to record the right numbers in the right spaces helped to build Maria's literacy and numeracy skills.

PROVIDE BREAKS

Some students work best when they can pause between tasks and take a break of some kind (walk around, stretch, or simply stop working). Some

learners will need walking breaks; these breaks can last anywhere from a few seconds to 15 or 20 minutes. Some students will need to walk up and down a hallway once or twice, others will be fine if allowed to wander around in the classroom.

A teacher who realized the importance of these instructional pauses decided to offer them to all learners. He regularly gave students a prompt to discuss (e.g., What do you know about probability?) and then directed them to “talk and walk” with a partner. After 10 minutes of movement, he brought the students back together and asked them to discuss their conversations.

FOCUS ON INTERESTS

Whenever possible, educators should use interests, strengths, skills, areas of expertise, and gifts as tools for teaching. For instance, student strength areas can be used to facilitate relationships. Some students who find conversation and “typical” ways of socializing a challenge, are amazingly adept at connecting with others when the interaction occurs in relation to an activity or favorite interest.

One of my former students, Patrick, had few friendships and seldom spoke to other students until a new student came into the classroom wearing a Star Wars t-shirt. Patrick’s face lit up upon seeing the shirt and he began bombarding the newcomer with questions and trivia about his favorite film. The new student, eager to make a friend, began bringing pieces of his science fiction memorabilia to class. Eventually, the two students struck up a friendship related to their common interest and even formed a lunch club where students gathered to play trivia board games related to science fiction films.

Any of the interests students bring to the classroom might also be used as part of the curriculum. A student who loves weather might be asked to write a story about tidal waves, investigate

websites related to cloud formation, or do an independent research project on natural disasters. A student fascinated by Africa might be encouraged to write to pen pals living on that continent or asked to compare and contrast the governments of certain African nations with the government of the United States.

RETHINK WRITING

Writing can be a major source of tension and struggle for students with autism. Some students cannot write at all and others who can write, may have a difficult time doing so. Handwriting may be sloppy or even illegible. Students who struggle with writing may become frustrated with the process and become turned off to paper/pencil tasks.

In order to support a student struggling with writing, a teacher may try to give the child gentle encouragement as he or she attempts to do some writing—a word, a sentence, or a few lines. Teachers might also allow the student to use a computer, word processor, or even an old typewriter for some lessons. In addition, peers, classroom volunteers, teachers, and paraprofessionals can also serve as scribes for a student who struggles with movement and motor problems, dictating as the student with autism speaks ideas and thoughts.

GIVE CHOICES

Choice may not only give students a feeling of control in their lives, but an opportunity to learn about themselves as workers and learners. Students, especially those who are given opportunities to make decisions, know best when during the day they are most creative, productive, and energetic; what materials and supports they need; and in what ways they can best express what they have learned.

Choice can be built into almost any part of the school day. Students can choose which assessments to complete, which role to take in a cooperative

group, which topics to study or which problems to solve, and how to receive personal assistance and supports. Examples of choices that can be offered in classrooms include:

- Solve five of the 10 problems assigned.
- Raise your hand or stand if you agree.
- Work alone or with a small group.
- Read quietly or with a friend.
- Use a pencil, pen, or the computer.
- Conduct your research in the library or in the resource room.
- Take notes using words or pictures.
- Choose any topic for your term paper.

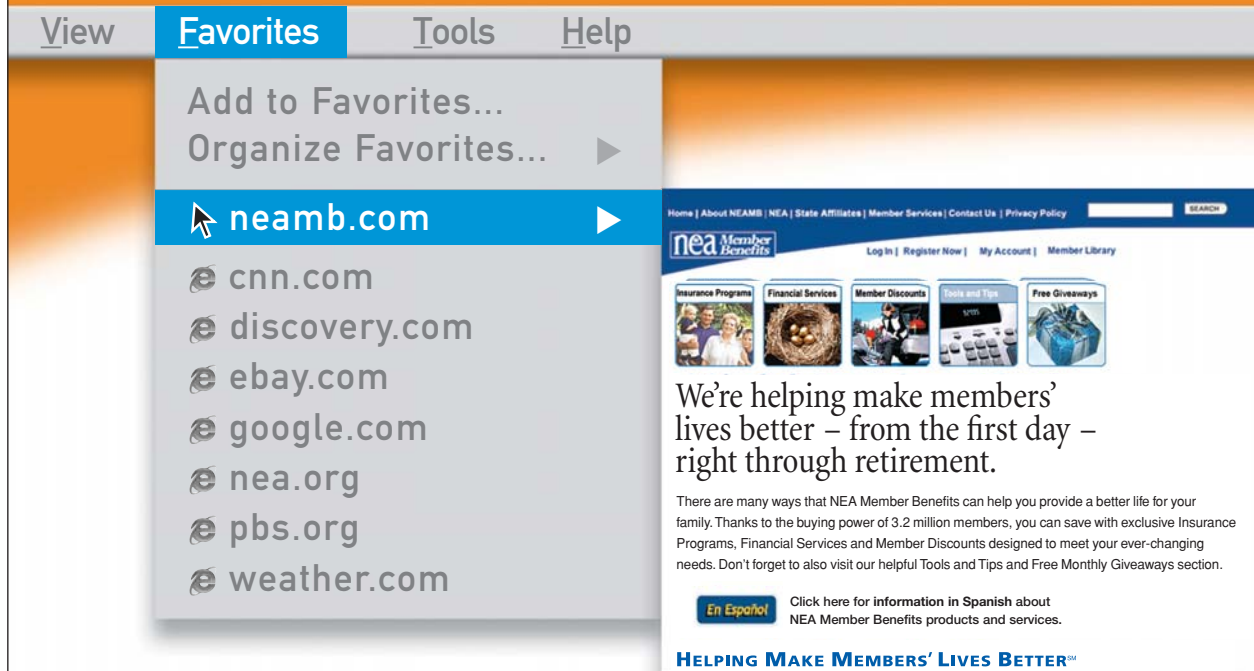
INCLUDE

If students are to learn appropriate behaviors, they will need to be in the inclusive environment to see and hear how their peers talk and act. If students are to learn to social skills, they will need to be in a space where they can listen to and learn from others who are socializing. If students will need specialized supports to succeed academically, then teachers need to see the learner functioning in the inclusive classroom to know what types of supports will be needed.

If it is true that we learn by doing, then the best way to learn about supporting students with autism in inclusive schools is to include them.

© 2005 Dr. Paula Kluth, adapted from her book *You’re Going to Love This Kid*. Kluth is an education consultant and adjunct instructor in Chicago, who has earned an M.Ed. in Educational Policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a Ph.D. in Special Education from the University of Wisconsin. Her professional and research interests center on differentiating instruction and on supporting students with autism and significant disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

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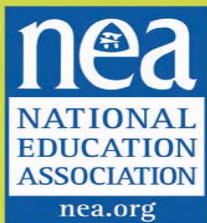
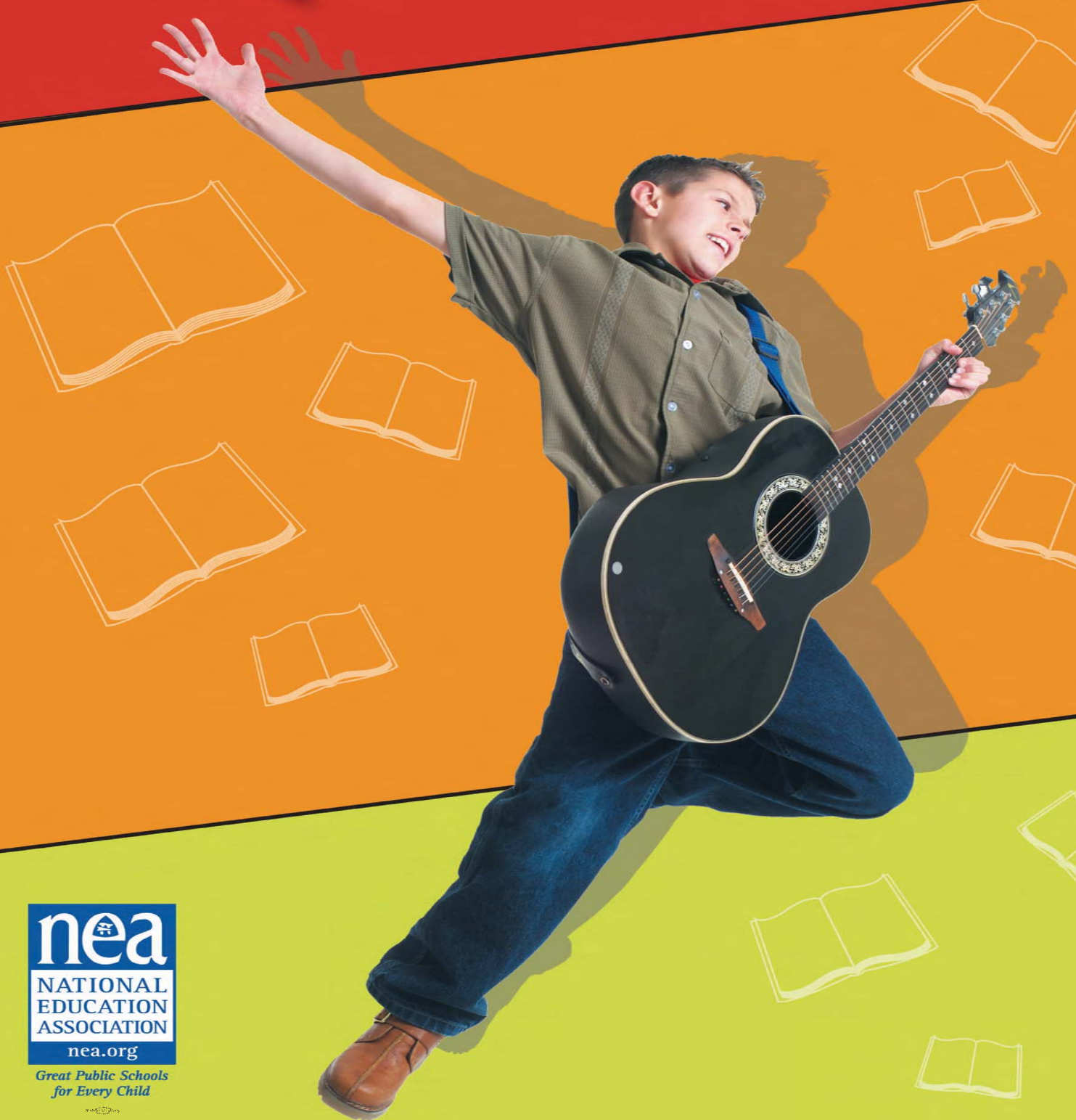
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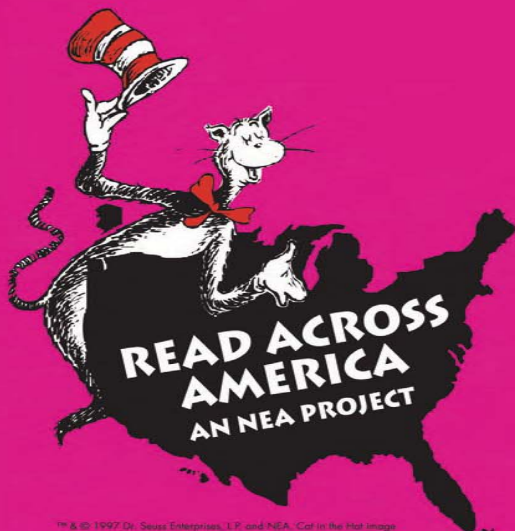
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The TSTA Legislative Agenda

The greatest challenge facing public education is the need to enact a school finance plan that will provide our public schools the resources necessary to give every child the opportunity to be prepared for college, the job market and life in the 21st century. TSTA and the public agree that legislators must make a genuine, long-term commitment to meet the educational needs of the children who are the future of our state.

ENDING THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

The average teacher salary in Texas has dropped to 33rd in the nation and is more than \$6,600 below the national average. A significant across-the-board pass-through pay raise is overdue. Merit or incentive pay schemes are not a valid alternative to a state pay raise that cannot wait another two years.

To end the massive shortage of appropriately certified teachers in Texas, TSTA will support:

- Legislation to give teachers significant across-the-board pay raises that will be passed through directly to teachers to help recruit and retain appropriately certified teachers in every classroom.
- Legislation that requires high standards for certification and provides prospective teachers with a better understanding of how to teach and practical experience before entering the classroom.
- Legislation that provides mentors for new teachers. Mentors should be trained, compensated, and pro-

vided release time to work with new teachers.

- Legislation to protect and enhance Teacher Retirement System benefits.

TSTA will oppose:

- Legislation that would create incentive or merit pay plans based on standardized test scores.

CREATING A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

The educator's working environment is also the student's learning environment. Employees consistently list working conditions as a major reason for leaving the profession. TSTA believes that all educational employees deserve reasonable working conditions, salaries, and benefits.

In order to provide a positive working and learning environment, TSTA will support:

- Legislation that provides employees with a meaningful voice in the important decisions that relate to their working conditions and students' learning environment. TSTA supports strengthening site-based decision making at the campus level, mandating consultation at the district level, permitting collective bargaining in individual school districts after a local option vote, and repealing the prohibition against collective bargaining.
- Legislation mandating a reduction in paperwork and limiting the number of meetings.

- Legislation to maintain safe and orderly schools. Educational employees must have the authority to remove disruptive students and maintain discipline.

- Legislation that restores the \$500 health insurance stipend and provides insurance benefits for all employees, comparable to those provided state and higher education employees.

- Legislation that provides all public school employees with a living wage.

- Legislation to provide all employees with employment contracts and strong due process provisions regarding contractual, statutory, and constitutional rights.

TSTA will oppose:

- Legislation designed to restrict the ability of TSTA to organize and provide services to employees.
- Legislation that would allow school districts to be exempt from or to roll back the current standards that protect the quality learning environment for students.

INCREASED SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Our public schools have made tremendous progress over the last decade. Texas cannot stand still or turn away from successful, proven programs in the name of so-called "reforms" that would shortchange our schools and set up our students for failure. Moving forward requires vision and the will to commit the necessary resources to



provide a quality public education for all students.

In order to improve the public schools in Texas, TSTA will support:

- Legislation that creates a long term, equitable school finance solution that generates substantial new revenue for public education, including sufficient revenue to pay for a substantial across-the-board teacher pay raise. A revised tax system must have the capacity to generate sufficient additional revenue in the future as our student population increases and additional funding needs arise.

TSTA will oppose:

- Legislation that would shift public tax dollars to private entities.
- Legislation that turns management of public schools over to for-profit companies.

ENHANCING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

The public schools in Texas have dramatically improved over the last decade. Educators know that with all we have accomplished there is still room for improvement. Schools with high populations of low socioeconomic students have test scores that lag behind the rest of the state and unacceptable dropout rates.

In order to improve the public schools in Texas, TSTA will support:

- Legislation that establishes a fully funded full-day kindergarten program.
- Legislation reducing class size across grade levels.
- Legislation requiring full-time registered nurses, counselors and librarians on every campus.

- Legislation expanding the Children's Health Insurance Program.
- Legislation supporting teacher preparation programs that balance content knowledge and pedagogy.
- Legislation minimizing the use of standardized assessments in our schools.
- Legislation funding effective, subject-specific technology training for educators.
- Legislation limiting class size for self-contained classrooms for emotionally disturbed and special education students to a maximum of ten.
- Funding and support for programs to assist English language learners.

—*Subject to committee approval in January*



Finding Fellowship in Ruidoso



ABOVE: James Harris thanks Andy Cleveland (left) for mentoring him and urges participants to do the same for young colleagues.

OPPOSITE PAGE, SMALL PHOTOS, LEFT TO RIGHT: Chris Comer, Nancy Morgan, and Cathy Breckenridge.

Once a year, when the nights turn crisp in Ruidoso, New Mexico, a group of Texas educators gathers for a weekend of learning and fellowship.

By day, engaging speakers broaden their knowledge of current issues in education, but evenings are reserved for fun and relaxation to build camaraderie. As the invitation says, “Attendance is limited to those who have a positive attitude, are fun minded and have a hearty appetite.”

Autism was the focus of this year’s TSTA Region 4A Ruidoso Retreat, sponsored by Lubbock Educators Association (LEA) and organized by Lubbock teachers James Harris and Russell Teeter, with assistance from LEA President Clinton Gill

and Region 4A President Nancy Morgan.

“I was told I would never amount to anything, that I should work at McDonald’s, but I had a few teachers who believed in me,” Dr. Rachele Jones, an educator who is on the autism spectrum, said. Her husband and two of her three children also are on the spectrum. “My hope is I will inspire you to help somebody. Not only that, but I will give you the tools with which to help them move forward.” Jones offered insights into the ways in which autistic students are different—and the same—as typical learners. (Read more on page 10.)

Cathy Breckenridge, a Lubbock ISD music therapist, demonstrated the use



of songs and instruments to reach autistic and other students.

"How did you learn your ABC's?" she asked. "You learned through music. You were able to recall it better because of the rhythm."

Breckenridge said autistic children often feel bombarded in a social setting but "music is so organized that everyone gets to participate in their own way and it's a nonthreatening situation."

James Harris talked about LEA's involvement in politics, particularly school board elections, for 33 years. "We pick the right people for the right reasons," he said. "We have never lost an election."

Harris introduced one of LEA's candidates, Chris Comer, who won election to the Lubbock ISD School Board. Comer recalled how LEA sent out 3,000 postcards for him. "They were

doing things people wouldn't hardly even do for their own campaigns," he said. "They took every opportunity to help. Their support and expertise and guidance put me in this position."

TSTA Executive Director E.C. Walker talked about TSTA's membership history and used data from the last six years to show how both recruitment and retention were important to membership gains this year and last.

TSTA Governmental Relations Specialist Jack Kelly shared news about the Teacher Retirement System and Social Security and answered many questions.

The day ended with an auction that raised over \$1,000 for scholarships.

The fall Ruidoso Retreat is open to all TSTA members; contact James Harris at jdharris@nts-online.net or Russell Teeter at rteeter@nts-online.net.

How Do You BOOST MEMBERSHIP?

We asked that question of DeAnn Henley of Pflugerville, whose local association has grown from 20 members last February to almost 150 members now.

"My first focus is how Pflugerville Educators Association can positively impact teachers and bridge the distance from teacher to administration," Henley replied. "Positive experiences get passed on from principal to principal and that opens the doors to the other schools, because our district allows the principals of each campus to decide if teacher organizations can recruit in their buildings."

Henley regularly attends school board meetings, meets with the superintendent and reviews the board minutes.

"TSTA's Teaching and Learning Division has played a big part," she said, noting that staff member Paul Henley has done a teaching and learning presentation at her school.

Part of the membership growth stems from the district's growth, as Pflugerville ISD has been adding roughly 1,000 students a year. "We opened two schools last year, one this year and will be opening one next year," she said. "Many teachers are coming from school districts where TSTA is strong or they were members at their last school district."

Henley said they have also "recruited a few experienced teachers that had issues with the district in the past and not much success with the organization they were with at the time."

Tell us how you increased membership by emailing debbiem@tsta.org.



HOW TO MAKE YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION VIBRANT AND ENERGETIC

Our local association had gone dormant and is now vibrant and energetic. We started with about five members, some of them lifetime members. We now have 61 members and we're still growing. Here is what we did:

- We became visible! We began by giving members what they pay for: an active voice. We hold regular, planned, open, visible meetings about relevant issues, with an agenda that is announced each month.
- We move our meetings from building to building.
- We always have a significant person as a keynoter and we always announce the topic that will be addressed.
- We are proactive and brutally honest about the issues that affect us. We are willing to address the issues and become involved.
- We attend the board meetings as much as possible and make ourselves accessible to the local board as a resource. We have developed a good working relationship with the board of education and they view us

as a positive companion for local educational issues.

- We draw a direct link between North Lamar, Austin, and Washington, D.C. Our members know that they are represented at all levels—local, state and national. We make no apologies about our association; we are proud that we are associated with the NEA. We make no apologies about the cost of membership; we simply explain that “you get what you pay for” and make sure that they do!
- Our mission has been to provide answers, advocacy, benefits, and professional representation for all of our education professionals.
- We provide avenues for our members to become involved. They have become willing to work actively in the community to promote the election and reelection of our friends. Our membership has grown because our members respect the local leadership and want to be associated with strong educators who offer a seasoned, credible perspective that is free of backbiting and infighting. Of course we still deal with the “you are too expensive” and “you are too liberal” mantras of our detractors but those who want a true education association have flocked to North Lamar TSTA/NEA.

- We continually ask people to join. We never take for granted that professionals don't want to join us. Additionally, each year we vie for all of the new hires and we captured most of them this year. I personally write a handwritten note, welcoming the newcomers to our district and inviting them to join us. Thus, they know who we are when we show up at the New Employee Orientation with positive, supportive information that we present in a creative, professional, tasteful, and well done manner. Many of them are waiting for us.

- Our numbers have grown directly proportionally to the degree that we have offered our services. We volunteer for committees and trainings and offer North Lamar TSTA/NEA services whenever the need arises. We never miss a regional meeting, regional or state House of Delegates. We have representatives at the NEA Western Regional Conference and at the national NEA Representative Assembly. We sent a member to the Ambassador Academy last summer. Other teachers notice and always want to be a part of what we do. We have a motto: We are the association of attraction.

—Stephen Smallwood, president of North Lamar TSTA/NEA

TSTA-STUDENT PROGRAM

Student Program President Leigh Anne Meeks reports the following news:

State Convention: The State Executive Committee began planning in September for the TSTA-Student Program State Convention. It was a very productive meeting and we have some terrific ideas going for the convention so far. The dates are March 23-24, 2007, so mark your calendars and plan to attend! We are going to work very hard to make this the best convention we've had so far! I can already tell you that the hotel where the convention will be held this year is outstanding! We will be at the Airport Hilton in Austin and it really is a beautiful hotel. All of the state officers are very excited about having the convention there! I would love to hear what kind of workshops or topics you would like to see at this year's convention so please send them to me at leighanne21@ev1.net.

New Blog: Check out the new Student Program blog at <http://www.tstaweb.net/spblog>.

San Jacinto Community College: SJCC invited Ginger Lay, a recruiter for the Pasadena ISD H.O.S.T.S. (Helping One Student to Succeed), to speak at a recent meeting.

North Harris Community College: NHCC invited teachers from all levels to speak to them about their teaching experience. They signed 25 new members at the school's Involvement Fair.

University of Houston-Clear Lake: A big congratulations to the University of Houston-Clear Lake chapter for winning second place in the university-wide bulletin board contest! The board was created by the local's publicist, Rose Pettijohn.

District III: District III's convention was a full day of first class professional development. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the District III offi-

cers, especially President Kim Kissell, for their tremendous efforts in putting the event together. All of the workshop presenters were excellent!

TSTA-RETIRED

Retired Elections: Nomination forms were in the Fall 2006 *Advocate*. The forms included positions for President, Vice President, TSTA State Convention delegates and NEA Convention delegate. The deadline for filing is Tuesday, January 16, 2007. All elections will be conducted in February-March 2007.

January-May 2007: The 80th Texas Legislature will be meeting! Please read the TSTA *Advocate*, Briefing, and website and keep updated. Our Retired issues—including an increase in state contributions, a cost of living adjustment, and an available, quality, affordable health care with pharmacy benefits—are only a few of our concerns.

April 18, 2007: The TSTA-Retired State Convention will begin with registration at 2:00 p.m. The Convention will convene at 2:30 p.m. with the banquet at 5:30 p.m. All of the meetings will be at the TSTA Building, 316 West 12th Street in Austin. All TSTA-Retired members are delegates and invited to attend. There is not a registration fee but please RSVP to Nina Armstrong at 512-476-5355 or 877-ASK-TSTA or ninaa@tsta.org.

April 20-22, 2007: Watch for articles in *This Active Life* magazine for more information about the NEA-Retired Western Regional Conference. The Conference will be at the Hyatt in Austin! This will be a very good opportunity for you to attend an NEA-Retired activity.

April 26-28, 2007: The TSTA State Convention will be in El Paso. At Large Elected Retired Delegates will be an important part of this convention. Please make that extra effort to attend this important meeting.

CONGRATULATIONS!

- Whenever new laws pass, there are provisions that are subject to interpretation. Deer Park Education Association initiated the process to clarify legislative ambiguities in the salary provisions of HB1, as they relate to their district. As a result of the collaborative efforts of DPEA President Jocelyn Sanders, the DPI SD central administration and legal counsel, and the TSTA legal staff, the DPI SD administration recommended and the school board approved an additional \$650 for this school year for teachers, librarians, nurses, and counselors, and an additional 2.7% for other employees based on the midpoint for their position pay.
- In its annual "Best of Austin" list, the *Austin Chronicle* newspaper names "Teacher" as the best job, citing the 11.5% salary increase Education Austin secured as the reason. "This year, we'd like to specifically congratulate the union and the school board for coming together to present a landmark—and so well-deserved—pay raise for your favorite public school professionals," the *Chronicle* says.
- Gloria Moreno was inducted into the Austin ISD Hall of Fame during ceremonies marking the 125th anniversary of Austin ISD. Moreno was a teacher for 25 years and took part in the desegregation of AISD minority facilities. She retired in 1993 but still serves on the TSTA and Education Austin legislative committees.
- Felecia Owens of Education Austin has been chosen to be a member of the NEA Diversity Cadre Training team and Ethene Jones of NEA Dallas is the coordinator of the NEA Minority Community Outreach Project.



TSTA AMBASSADOR ACADEMY, CLASS OF 2006

Expand Your Leadership Potential!

Do you want to know more about TSTA and NEA? Would you like to discover more about yourself as an individual? Are you interested in learning problem-solving skills? Would you be willing to utilize those skills in your local association?

If you answered yes to all of the above, we've got the program you're looking for: the TSTA Ambassador Academy.

We're currently putting together the sixth class of Ambassadors, who will be trained July 9-13, 2007 in Austin. To apply, you must have worked in the public school system less than 10 years and be willing to become an active leader.

If you are selected, you'll spend a week

in Austin, being trained by TSTA and NEA staff — and having fun! You'll build your communication and decision-making skills and learn about the association's structure through NEA's acclaimed Personal Assessment Leadership Skills (PALS) program. You'll experience the inner workings of the state association and get to know the staff at TSTA Headquarters. You will develop a plan of action, which will enable you to use your skills in your local association. And you'll build relationships with other Ambassadors from across the state.

When you return home, you'll be expected to become an active leader in your local and implement the goals

you set for yourself at the Academy. It can be a life-changing experience!

Questions? Email Nina Armstrong at ninaa@tsta.org or Deshaunta Kearns at deshauptak@tsta.org. If you don't have access to a computer, call 877-ASK-TSTA and ask for Nina Armstrong.

The application form is online at www.tsta.org/inside/calendar/ambassador.shtml; download it, fill it out, and email, fax, or mail it, along with letters of recommendation, so that they will be received at TSTA Ambassador Academy, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701 by June 1, 2007.

Apply to be a TSTA Ambassador; it's an experience you'll never forget!

WESTERN REGIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

NEA's Western Regional Leadership Conference is January 12-14 in Overland Park, Kansas. The Minority Leadership Training Seminar precedes it January 11-12.

This year's theme is "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right for Every Child—Making it Happen." The agenda includes state and special interest caucus meetings, education sessions, an ESEA discussion, open hearings, and "Making It Happen" sessions. Speakers include NEA Officers Reg Weaver, Lily Eskelsen, and Dennis Van Roekel.

You can check for updates, find travel discounts, make hotel reservations, and register online at www.nea.org/members/wrlc.html. Early registration (on or before December 8) is \$110; after that, registration is \$150. The registration fee covers group meals, breaks and conference materials.

EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS CONFERENCE

The 2007 NEA Education Support Professionals Conference is March 9-11 at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. This conference is a great opportunity to develop new skills and learn more about relevant, important issues. Training sessions and workshops will empower ESP members with the skills and information they need to assist with closing the achievement gap, organizing, building stronger locals, promoting membership recruitment, enhancing professional development and student achievement, and establishing strong internal and external relationships. Conference participants are challenged to share their learning and information with members in their state and local associations.

Important notes: All participants are encouraged to attend the living wage session, "It's Not Selfish to Be Self-Sufficient" on March 9.

You must preregister for pre-conference events, which include a President's/Leader's Workshop, a Family-School-Community Workshop, a Diversity Workshop, an Emerging Leaders Workshop, and a National Council for ESP Meeting.

The \$150 conference registration fee includes continental breakfast and

lunch Friday and Saturday; a reception, dinner and entertainment on Friday; and brunch on Sunday. Register online at www.nea.org/esphome/members/espconf07.html or obtain a paper registration form by calling Mareena Nephew at 202-822-7159.

Call the Renaissance Nashville Hotel at 800-327-6618 or 615-255-8400 to reserve a room. The conference rate is \$181.66 single or double, including tax, per night. Valet parking is \$20 plus tax per night, but public parking also is available. Room rates are guaranteed

TSTA/NEA EVENT DATES

JANUARY

- 5-6 TSTA Legislative Conference, Hilton Austin Airport Hotel, Austin
- 7 TSTA Legislative and Political Advocacy Committee, Austin
- 11-12 NEA Western Region Minority Leadership Training Seminar, Overland Park, KS
- 12-14 NEA Western Regional Leadership Conference, Overland Park, KS
- 12-13 NEA All Committee Weekend, Washington, DC
- 26-27 TSTA-Retired Board of Directors, TSTA Headquarters
- 31 TSTA School Bell Award Deadline

FEBRUARY

- 1 Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy/NEA Teaching Excellence and Professional, Human and Civil Rights Awards Deadline
- 2-3 Texas Future Teachers of America State Convention, Hilton Austin Airport, Austin
- 3-4 TSTA Board of Directors, TSTA Headquarters
- 5-6 NEA Executive Committee, Washington, DC
- 9-10 NEA Board of Directors, Washington, DC
- 9-12 TSTA Ambassador Academy Reunion
- 20-21 NEA Resolutions Committee (internal editing), Washington, DC
- 22-25 NEA Resolutions Committee, Washington, DC

MARCH

- 1 TSTA Pride in Communications Award Deadline
- 2 NEA's Read Across America
- 9-11 NEA ESP Conference, Nashville, TN



Nominate Your Media for a School Bell Award!

Community understanding and support for public education have been significantly advanced by Texas newspapers and local radio and television stations through their interpretation of issues affecting public schools in our state.

TSTA takes pride in sponsoring the annual TSTA School Bell Awards competition to recognize these outstanding contributions.

Local associations will receive forms and instructions to submit entries in the various classifications and categories listed below.

Entries must have been aired or pub-

lished Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2006 and must be received no later than midnight, Jan. 31, 2007 at the TSTA Center for Public Affairs, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

First place winners in each category will receive prestigious School Bell trophies to be awarded at the 2007 TSTA convention.

CLASSIFICATIONS

NEWSPAPERS

A. Dailies

- o1. Circulationover 100,000
- o2. Circulation.....99,999-50,000
- o3. Circulation.....49,999-25,000
- o4. Circulation.....under 25,000
 ___ Metro or Suburban Market ___ Medium or Small Market
- o5. Political Cartoon

B. Semiweekly

- o1. Metropolitan or Suburban Market
- o2. Medium or Small Market

C. Weekly

- o1. Metropolitan or Suburban Market
- o2. Medium or Small Market

D. Magazine

- o 1. Monthly
- o 2. Weekly

RADIO

- oA. County populationover 100,000
- oB. County population.....99,999-25,000
- oC. County population.....24,999-10,000
- oD. County population.....under 10,000

TELEVISION

- oA. Metropolitan Market
- oB. Other: _____
- oC. Special Consideration

NOTE: *Television Metropolitan Market includes Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, Austin and Corpus Christi. All other stations will compete in the second classification.*

CATEGORIES

PRINT MEDIA

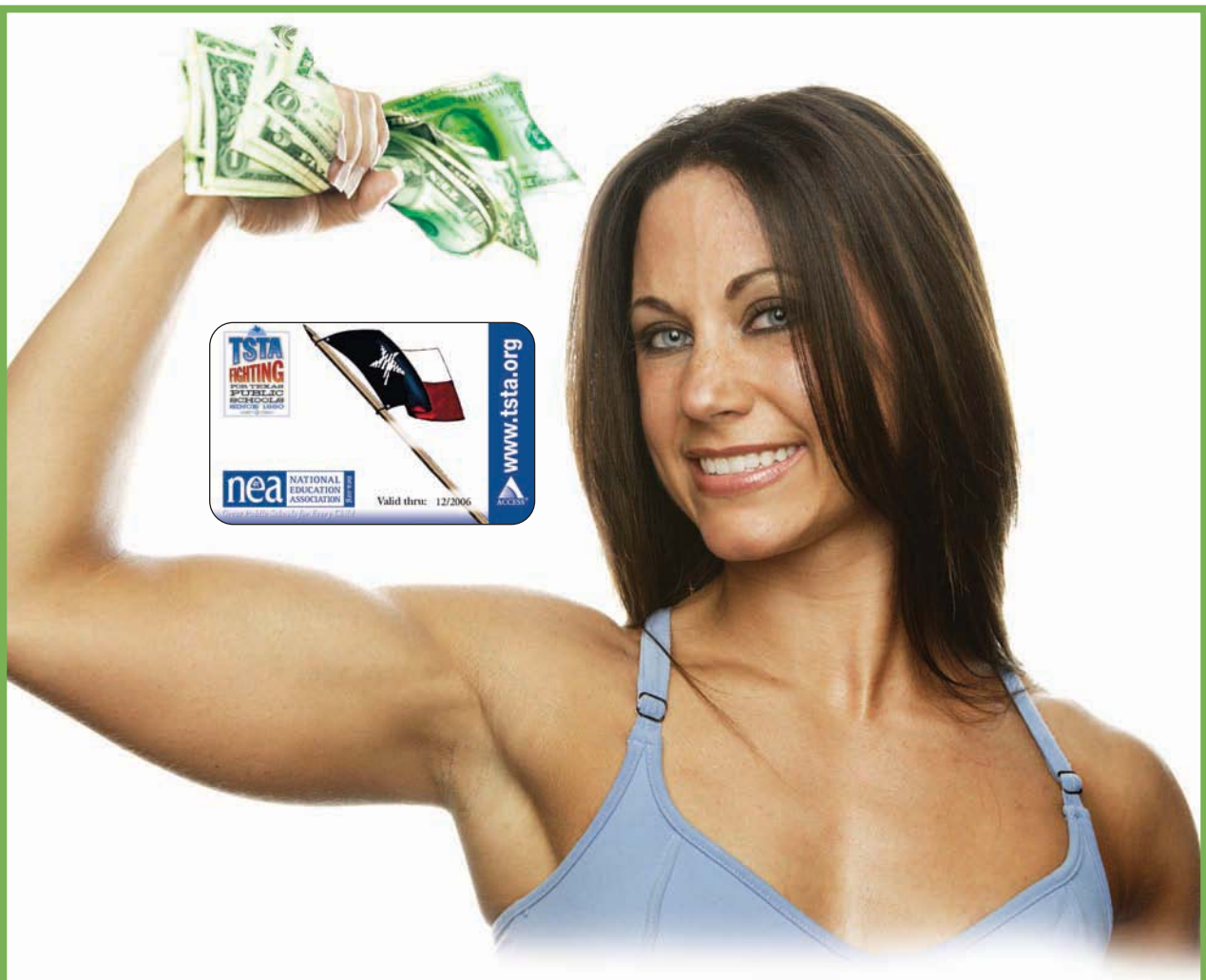
- o1. Outstanding continuous coverage of education news, increasing public understanding of school achievements, problems and programs
- o2. Outstanding feature story interpreting school programs and education issues
- o3. Outstanding collection of feature stories or a single topic interpreting school programs and education issues
- o4. Outstanding feature series interpreting school programs and education issues
- o5. Outstanding editorial interpreting school achievements, issues, and needs
- o6. Outstanding collection of editorials interpreting school achievements, issues, and needs
- o7. Outstanding continuing column interpreting school programs and education issues
- o8. Outstanding special supplement featuring special events and educational programs
- o9. Outstanding regular supplement featuring special events and educational programs

- o10. Outstanding magazine article featuring stories interpreting school programs and education issues
- o11. Outstanding political cartoon
- o12. Special consideration
Description: _____

☐ RADIO

☐ TELEVISION

- o1. Outstanding continuous coverage of education issues and events
- o2. Outstanding locally produced single program interpreting school programs or education issues
- o3. Outstanding locally produced program series interpreting school programs or education issues
- o4. Outstanding station editorial interpreting school achievements, issues and needs
- o5. Outstanding collection of station editorials interpreting school achievements, issues and needs
- o6. Special consideration
Description: _____



WHIP YOUR BUDGET INTO SHAPE.

Use your TSTA/Access card and sweat to the savings at places like:

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www.danskin.com

Curves



jazzercise
It shows.

Footlocker.com 



VISIT **www.tsta.org** AND DISCOVER 150,000
LOCATIONS WITH BIG, STRONG SAVINGS.



128th Annual TSTA Convention

The annual TSTA Convention will be in El Paso on April 26-29, 2007. Convention events take place at the Camino Real Hotel as well as the El Paso Convention Center. As events are finalized, TSTA will post updates at www.tsta.org (link on right column). Review the website for information on the schedule, workshops, open hearings, lodging, transportation and the House of Delegates (HoD) meeting. Elected delegates to the HoD will receive detailed information prior to the convention but are encouraged to periodically review the website for general information. Due to publication deadlines and in order to assist members in planning for the convention, TSTA must address some of the events in this *Advocate*.

HOST COMMITTEE

This year, TSTA staff will be working with the TSTA Host Committee appointed by President Donna New Haschke. The Host Committee is very excited to welcome their fellow members to the El Paso area. The headquarters hotel (Camino Real) is adjacent to the El Paso Museum of Art and Insights Museum, six blocks from the Mexican Border, four blocks from the Union Train Station and across the street from the El Paso Convention Center (one block walk as the back of the hotel faces the Center).

WANT TO BE A DELEGATE?

If you are interested in being a delegate, please contact your local president to

get details on when and how delegates are elected in your local. Regional presidents may cluster members without a local or in small locals that choose not to elect a delegate. The date for local delegate allocations is January 15 with local presidents being notified of the number of eligible delegates soon thereafter.

PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

Delegates who have special needs must contact the Center for Executive and Governance (CEG) at 800-324-5355, ext. 1510, 1514, 1543, for assistance

with seating arrangements at the HOD and various convention events. Payment for special needs requests such as wheelchairs and/or transportation is the responsibility of the member and/or delegate; however, TSTA will assist with arrangements and services. If you are a physically challenged delegate, please contact CEG no later than April 20. The hotel only has two handicapped accessible sleeping rooms, so delegates needing one are encouraged to make reservations as soon as possible.

HOUSING

A room block is being held at the Camino Real Hotel. Make reservations directly with the hotel by March 30 by completing the lodging form at the end of this article. After that date, rooms not reserved in the TSTA block will be released and reservations will be processed upon availability. Please note: The hotel DOES NOT have to honor the convention rate after March 30, 2007. Members who wish to share accommodations may request that the

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Thursday, April 26

8:15 a.m. Advisory Committee Meeting
1:30 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting
6:00 p.m. Candidates Meeting

Friday, April 27

7:00 a.m. Registration
8:00 a.m. Special Interest Exhibits
8:00 a.m. Open Hearings
9:15 a.m. Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)
11:00 a.m. Press Conference
11:00 a.m. Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)
12:30 p.m. School Bell Awards Ceremony
1:00 p.m. Parliamentary Procedures Workshop
1:45 p.m. Caucus Meetings
2:30 p.m. House of Delegates Opening Ceremony

Saturday, April 28

6:30 a.m. Registration
7:00 a.m. Regional—TSTA SP—TSTA R Meetings
8:00 a.m. Special Interest Exhibits
8:30 a.m. Voting/Elections
10:00 a.m. House of Delegates Meeting
12:30 p.m. Lunch and Caucus Meetings
2:00 p.m. House of Delegates Meeting

Sunday, April 29

9:00 a.m. Local Presidents Summit Meeting

CEG assist by providing the name and phone number of members who are willing to share accommodations; mark the item "Roommate Desired" on the lodging form under "Room Type, Rate and Special Requests."

REGISTRATION

Registration and certification of delegates, non-delegates/alternates and guests will be in the Rio Grande Lobby of the El Paso Convention Center. Registration begins on Friday, April 27, at 7 a.m. While any member and guests are welcome to attend the HoD and convention, only those delegates with proper delegate badges are allowed in the designated delegate section and

voting area. Non-delegates/alternates and guests are also encouraged to register. Further registration information will be posted on the website.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Several workshops for continuing education credit will be offered on educational and association issues on Friday, April 27 in the Rio Grande Room of the El Paso Convention Center and at the Camino Real Hotel from 9:15-10:45 a.m. and from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

TRANSPORTATION

The airport is approximately 15 minutes from the Camino Real Hotel and the hotel provides complimentary

shuttle service. The hotel also provides underground secured parking at a discounted rate of \$5 per car, per day based upon space availability. The hotel parking garage has 200 parking spaces.

OPEN HEARINGS

Open hearings will be conducted on Friday, April 27, on Proposed 2007-08 TSTA Budget, Proposed Bylaws Amendments and Proposed NEA Resolutions. Other topics may be scheduled as well.

LOCAL PRESIDENTS SUMMIT

Make plans to attend the Summit for Local Presidents on Sunday, April 29, at 9 a.m. at the Camino Real Hotel.

HOTEL RESERVATION FORM

TSTA 128th Annual State Convention

Camino Real Hotel • El Paso, Texas • April 26-29, 2007

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL REQUESTED INFORMATION AND RETURN TO THE HOTEL BY MARCH 30, 2007.

Check-in time for the hotel is 3:00 p.m. and check-out time is 12:00 noon

CAMINO REAL HOTEL

(TSTA Headquarters Hotel)
101 S. El Paso St., El Paso, TX 79901-1107
Telephone: 915-534-3099 or 800-769-4300
FAX: 915-534-3024
Reference #: Texas State Teachers Association

ROOM TYPE, RATE AND SPECIAL REQUESTS—MARK ACCOMMODATIONS DESIRED

____ Single room (1 person—1 bed).....\$ 85.00
____ Double room (2 people—1 bed, 2 beds)\$ 85.00
____ Triple room (3 people—2 beds)\$100.00
____ Quad room (4 people—2 beds)\$115.00
____ Roll Away Bed (\$15 per night) _____ Refrigerator (\$15 per night)
____ Handicapped Room _____ Roommate Desired

Cut-off date for ALL rooms and room rates is March 30, 2007. All rooms are subject to a 15.5% room tax.

I will arrive April _____, 2007 at _____ (a.m./p.m.) and will depart April _____, 2007.

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Day phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

Email: _____ Fax: _____

LIST ALL INDIVIDUALS PER ROOM (ONE NAME PER LINE) AND CIRCLE ROOM TYPE (SINGLE, DOUBLE, TRIPLE, QUAD):

Room No. 1

Single 1. _____
Double 2. _____
Triple 3. _____
Quad 4. _____

Room No. 2

Single 1. _____
Double 2. _____
Triple 3. _____
Quad 4. _____

A deposit equal to the first night room rate per room is due at the time reservations are submitted. Room deposits can be made by major credit cards or check (payable to Camino Real Hotel) and is refundable up to 48 hours prior to arrival. This will assure your reservation. Should cancellation be necessary, you must advise the hotel 48 hours prior to your arrival date. If the hotel is not advised, you will be responsible to pay for space held.

Approved major credit card: _____ Credit card #: _____

Exp. date: _____ Name in which credit card is issued: _____

Election of TSTA At-Large Board Of Directors Members

One of the "core values" for TSTA is that certain groups (minorities and ESPs) should be insured an appropriate voice in the organization, while other groups (administrators) should not be allowed to have influence beyond their numbers. TSTA has adopted Bylaws and policies to insure that the organization operates in a way that reflects this value.

As specified in the Bylaws, we do a calculation each January 15 to determine what proportion of our membership is in each of those three (3) categories so we can make appropriate decisions about Board elections. Based on recent membership numbers, TSTA membership shows 28.3% of our members as ethnic minorities, 17.8% as ESPs and 3.5% as supervisory. If those percentages hold true on January 15, 2007, since our Board has 27 members that count for this purpose (President, Vice President, Regional Presidents, including TFA President, and NEA Directors for Texas), that would mean TSTA would need at least eight (8) minorities, five (5) ESPs and one (1) supervisor.

Even when we have the January 15 numbers, TSTA cannot know until after the regions complete their elections at the regional houses of delegates whether or not TSTA will need to have at-large elections for minority and/or ESP Board members. However, in order to be prepared, TSTA must seek nominations now. The elections (if necessary) will be held at the 2007 House of Delegates on April 28. The persons elected will serve July 15, 2007 through July 14, 2009.

TSTA currently has three (3) ESP at-large Board members and one (1) ESP serving as a regional president; all four (4) of these terms are finished on July 14, 2007. Based on this fact and the current percentage of ESP members, we will need an ESP at-large election, though we cannot know with certainty the number we will elect until after the Regional HoDs. While we cannot know for sure until we have the January 15, 2007 membership numbers and the results of the elections for Regional Presidents, based on the number of minority Board members whose terms will continue, it appears unlikely that we will have to hold an election for any minority at-large Board members.

We still must be prepared by seeking nominations now. For the supervisory at-large position, we will not need to hold an election. The current supervisory at-large member of the Board has a term that will expire on July 14, 2008.

Based on all of the above, we are including the nomination form for two positions. If you are interested in running for either of these positions, in the event the position you are interested in actually requires an election, please complete the form and mark the appropriate box.

The TSTA Board of Directors Policy EP-6 stipulates that all nomination forms must be mailed to TSTA by **CERTIFIED MAIL WITH RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED, FAXED, OR DELIVERED IN PERSON WITH A RECEIPT ISSUED BY TSTA BY THE DEADLINE ESTABLISHED EACH**

YEAR IN THE ELECTION TIMELINE ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

as stated below. Nomination forms that are received through the regular mail will not be accepted and will be returned to the sender.

Based on TSTA's Bylaws, TSTA will mail a packet detailing the responsibilities of a Board member to each person who files a nomination form. The packet also will contain a form the candidate must sign and return stating the candidate has read the packet and will accept the responsibilities if elected. The candidate statement form does not have to be returned with the nomination form, but must be signed and returned before ballots are distributed and within the timeline as stated in this article.

Please make sure that the NOMINATION FORM with this article is COMPLETELY filled out and SIGNED by the nominee. In order to comply with the approved election timeline, candidates will need to comply with the following timeline:

March 27 (Tuesday)—Nomination Form postmark deadline if mailed by certified mail with return receipt requested

March 29 (Thursday)—Nomination Form receipt deadline of 4:45 p.m. CST for filing by fax or in person

April 6 (Friday)—Deadline for receipt of flyers to be included in delegate packets

April 20 (Friday)—4:45 p.m. CDT deadline for receipt of signed statement by candidate

April 28 (Saturday)—Election to be held at the TSTA State House of Delegates

April 28 (Saturday)—Runoff Election (if necessary) at the TSTA State House of Delegates

Qualifications:

- Be actively engaged in the education profession within the state at the time of election
- Have held Active, ESP or TFA, or any combination of Active, ESP, TFA or life membership in TSTA for at least three (3) consecutive years preceding the election
- Be actively employed as a non-supervisory member and for the ESP position, be a member in the ESP category
- Maintain membership status and educational position in TSTA during term of office
- Sign and return the form accepting the responsibilities of a Board member

If mailing a nomination form, send by certified mail with return receipt to TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701 or fax to 512-486-7053. Hand delivered nomination forms must be received by the Center for Executive and Governance with a hand written receipt being issued. Questions regarding the election are to be directed to the Center for Executive and Governance by calling 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or 1510, or emailing sandras@tsta.org or connier@tsta.org.

NOMINATION FORM

TSTA Board of Directors Ethnic Minority or Educational Support At-Large Positions

- ☐ I am filing for an ethnic minority position and certify that I am a non-supervisory member of TSTA.
☐ I am filing for an educational support position and certify that I am a non-supervisory member of TSTA.

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Day Phone _____

Email _____ SSN _____

Local Association _____

Work Site _____ TSTA Region _____

Position _____ School District _____

ETHNIC GROUP: (Please Check)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Ethnic | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian (not of Hispanic Origin) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

When mailing by certified mail, the nomination form must be postmarked on or before **March 27, 2007** with return receipt requested. Mail to: TSTA, Center for Executive and Governance, 316 West 12th Street, Suite 510, Austin, Texas 78701

If faxing or delivering in person, the nomination form must be received on **March 29, 2007 by 4:45 p.m. CST** by TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance with a return receipt being issued. Fax to 512-486-7053 or hand deliver to Suite 510 at TSTA Headquarters, 316 West 12th Street in Austin.

Signature of Nominee _____

TSTA/NEA

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

877-ASK-TSTA • www.tsta.org

2006-07 ENROLLMENT FORM

Please return this completed form to your Association Representative or mail to TSTA Membership Department,
316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701-1892. If you have questions, call **877-ASK-TSTA**.

<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>					
NAME			SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER			DATE OF BIRTH					
<input type="text"/>						<input type="text"/>					
ADDRESS						LOCAL ASSOCIATION					
<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>				
CITY			STATE		ZIP		NAME OF ISD				
<input type="text"/>						<input type="text"/>					
EMAIL AT HOME						CAMPUS/WORKSITE					
<input type="text"/>						<input type="text"/>					
EMAIL AT WORK						POSITION (I.E. CLASSROOM TEACHER, LIBRARIAN, BUS DRIVER, ETC.)					
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>			
AREA CODE		HOME PHONE		AREA CODE		WORK PHONE		ETHNICITY			
								<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native		<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	
								<input type="checkbox"/> Black		<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	
								<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic		<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-ethnic	
								<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin)		<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
								<input type="checkbox"/> Asian			
<small>Ethnicity information is optional and failure to provide it will in no way affect your membership status, rights or benefits in NEA, TSTA or any of their affiliates. This information will be kept confidential.</small>											
METHOD OF PAYMENT											
PAYROLL DEDUCTION AUTHORIZATION (BELOW)											
I hereby authorize the _____ School District to deduct the total amount of the annual obligation as set by the appropriate Association governance bodies in _____ equal payments in order to pay my dues to the professional associations and organizations listed and for political action contributions indicated. The authorization will continue in effect for this school year and future years, including any increase that may occur, until I give written notice to the local by September 15 to revoke. I further authorize any unpaid annual balance to be deducted from my final check. The Local Association or TSTA/NEA will notify School District officials of the annual dues amounts for all levels of the Association each year.											
_____ Please check if you would like to receive TSTA's electronic newsletter, the <i>TSTA Briefing</i> , which is distributed by email at least once a week. Send to: <input type="checkbox"/> home email address <input type="checkbox"/> work email address											

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ANNUAL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS	AMOUNT	
	1. Professional Dues—TSTA/NEA (Active)	\$391.00	
	Professional Dues—New to the profession	\$268.00	
	2. Educational Support Dues—Full-time	\$203.50	
	Educational Support Dues—Part-time	\$105.50	
	3. NEA Fund for Children and Public Education (suggested amount \$15.00)		
	4. TSTA-PAC (see disclaimer below)	\$ 9.00	
	5. Region Dues		
	6. Local Association Dues		
	TOTAL		
NOTE: Membership must include local and region dues if eligible.			

DISCLAIMER: The TSTA Political Action Committee (TSTA-PAC) and National Education Association Fund for Children and Public Education collect voluntary contributions from Association members and use these contributions for political purposes, including, but not limited to, making contributions to and expenditures on behalf of friends of public education who are candidates for federal office. Contributions to TSTA-PAC and The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education are voluntary; making a contribution is neither a condition of employment nor membership in the Association, and members have the right to refuse to contribute without suffering any reprisal. Although the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education requests an annual contribution of \$15, this is only a suggestion. A member may contribute more or less than the suggested amount, or may contribute nothing at all, without it affecting his or her membership status, rights, or benefits in NEA or any of its affiliates.

Contributions or gifts to The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, TSTA-PAC and local PACs are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.

Federal law requires political committees to report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer for each individual whose contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year.

Federal law prohibits The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education from receiving donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families. All donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families, will be returned forthwith.

"I decline to contribute to TSTA-PAC and I understand this will not in any way affect my membership status or rights." _____ INITIAL _____

Annual membership dues to NEA include \$4.65 for NEA Today, \$2.60 for NEA-Retired and/or \$19.00 for the Higher Education publications. The NEA publication(s) received by members are based on membership category. Annual membership dues to TSTA include subscription to the TSTA Advocate. Membership is open only to those who agree to subscribe to the goals and objectives of the Association and to abide by its constitution and bylaws. To be eligible for TSTA legal defense funding, a member must have been a TSTA/NEA local member at least thirty (30) calendar days before the member knew or should have known of the events or occurrences upon which the action complained of is based. Exception may apply to first year employees who are members.

Former student member?
____ YES _____ NO

MEMBER SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

LOCAL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE _____



Congratulations, Dana!

Dana Kristin Boyd, a teacher at Dolphin Terrace Elementary School in the Ysleta ISD in El Paso and member of TSTA, has been chosen as the Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year and will represent the state in the National Teacher of the Year competition!

Boyd, a six-year teaching veteran, is the first African-American ever selected as the Texas Teacher of the Year, an award that has been given annually since 1969. Watch for an article on her in the spring issue of the *Advocate*.

Please share this copy of the *Advocate* with others

Texas State Teachers Association

316 West 12th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

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