

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

ADVOCATE

Winter 2013

I'm growing, too

Texas' Teacher of the Year
learns with her students



Rainy Day Fund floods

But none flows to schools

Some are good, some are bad

But all charters rob public schools

Thanking teachers

Campaign expands to San Antonio

Let’s have a real ‘Texas Miracle’



We all have heard Gov. Rick Perry boast — ad nauseam — about his alleged “Texas Miracle,” in reference to the fact that Texas, the second largest state, has led the nation in the creation of jobs. In reality, though, Perry has conjured up a mirage.

In sheer numbers, more jobs have been added in Texas than any other state. Many will argue that no elected official or politician actually “creates” jobs. But leaving that discussion aside, you don’t create an “economic miracle” by giving away millions of taxpayer dollars to political cronies in the guise of job recruitment while you cut funding for public education and other critical public services. That has been the governor’s recipe — along with low business taxes and a lax regulatory climate — and it is not a recipe for long-term economic success.

Much of Perry’s record is built on a low-wage, hand-to-mouth economy that will collapse if the governor and other state leaders don’t begin making some real investments in our state’s future — beginning with public education.

Texas not only leads in job creation, it is also the national leader in the creation of minimum-wage, dead-end jobs. Texans accounted for nearly 13 percent of all minimum-wage workers in the country last year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That was 452,000 Texans who made \$7.25 an hour — or less. For a 40-hour workweek, \$7.25 an hour adds up to only \$15,080 a year.

With all due respect, governor, that is nothing to brag about.

And, as much as we love our great state, it is certainly not a point of pride that Texas has the highest percentage of adults who did not graduate from high school — and leads the nation in the percentage of adult residents without health insurance, about one in every four people.

Many low-wage workers qualify for public assistance, a reality that runs counter to efforts to create a long-term, productive economy. Texas taxpayers spend about \$556 million a year on public assistance for families of workers in the fast-food industry alone, according to a recent study by university economists.

There will always be low-wage jobs, but they are being constantly changed — and displaced — by technological advances that require better-trained workers. And you don’t build a prosperous future for millions of Texans on a flimsy minimum-wage foundation.

You build that future in the public schools, where most of Texas’ future workforce is already being educated. You don’t cut funding from our schools, as the governor and the legislative majority have done, and then demand that students and their teachers be “accountable” while you brag about a “miracle” that could soon disappear, if it ever existed.

Thousands of today’s public school students — probably most of them — are the children of today’s low-wage workers. They are Texas’ future, and if given the educational opportunity they need to succeed, they can show the world what a real “Texas Miracle” is all about.

—Rita Haecker, TSTA President



THANKING TEACHERS: TSTA campaign expands to San Antonio and Facebook.

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Abbott budget plan another slap at Texas school children

In what was billed as the first public policy speech of his gubernatorial campaign, Greg Abbott pledged in October to pursue a state budget policy that would continue the unconstitutional and inadequate school

funding system that he has been defending in court.

"The Abbott plan is another slap in the face of five million public school students, their parents, and more than 600,000 Texans who work in our public

schools," TSTA President Rita Haecker said in a news release. "The Rainy Day Fund, which Abbott wants to 'protect,' is awash in cash and continues to grow, while Texas' school finance system is shortchanging millions of Texas children.

"Someone who wants to be our next governor should put the needs of our children first, not bow to a political ideology intent on starving public education," she added. "Instead of putting billions of tax dollars off limits for Texas schools, our next governor should be working to find a reliable funding source to secure our children's future."

According to a recent report — The Rainy Day Flood — by the Texas Taxpayers and Research Association, the Rainy Day Fund will grow to between \$8.2 billion and \$11.8 billion by the end of fiscal 2015, depending on whether Texas voters approve constitutional amendments that would tap into the fund for water and highway needs.

The report anticipates continued growth, fueled by strong oil and gas production.

But Abbott proposed further restrictions on the Legislature's ability to spend from the fund.

"Those restrictions are wrong and unnecessary," Haecker said. "Our elected legislators should keep their flexibility to tap into the fund as important public needs arise."

Even as the Rainy Day Fund approaches record balances, the legislature still hasn't fully restored the \$4.5 billion cut from public school budgets two years ago. Schools are operating with fewer state dollars than they had during the 2010-11 school year, even though public school enrollment continues to grow by 80,000-85,000 students a year.



Pflugerville wins equitable pay for employees

Acting on a Texas Association of School Boards recommendation, Pflugerville ISD eliminated the salary schedule for employees in 2010, replacing it with a "hiring placement schedule" that lacked transparency — and, the local recently discovered, resulted in veteran district employees being paid less than new employees with the same years of experience.

At the beginning of this school year, Pflugerville Educators Association/TSTA (PEA) organized employees to address the pay inequities and reinstate a transparent salary schedule. As a result of the local's actions, the superinten-

dent called a board meeting to hear employees' concerns.

"Despite our objections, you still voted to take away our salary schedule," Cindy Perkins, a kindergarten teacher, PEA board member, and mother of two students in the district, testified. "We questioned: How were teachers going to know what their salaries were going to be from year to year? How would new hires be compensated without a schedule? Would this open the door for salary negotiations?"

"We weren't told no. We were very uncertain, but we were told 'Trust us; look at the history,'" Perkins, who is shown

in a striped shirt in the photo on page 5, said. “Well, now we have a new history, and that new history says teachers new to our district are paid more than loyal district employees with the same number of years of experience.”

Just one example of the inequities: School librarian Antoinette Ramos testified that she works in the same building as her sister; both are in their seventeenth year of teaching; and she has a master’s degree while her sister does not. Yet, her sister makes \$51,000 while she makes \$48,000.

After the board hearing, PEA leaders sat at the table with district administrators and proposed a solution:

- implement a transparent, equitable salary schedule, created with employee input; and
- adjust the compensation of district employees who are being paid less than their colleagues with the same years of experience.

The result? “Victory! PISD listened to our concerns and solutions,” local president August Plock said. “We are the voice for PISD employees. Together we make a difference.”

By December, salaries will be adjusted for all employees who are paid less than their colleagues with the same years of experience, and PISD will implement a transparent, equitable salary schedule, created with employee input, for the 2014-15 school year.

Watch a video about the win at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdyS9bY8iXA>.

HOW TO THANK A TEACHER

As part of our television and online campaign (page 20), we have set up a Facebook page for members of the public — and members of the association — who want to write a brief tribute to their favorite teachers. Go to www.facebook.com/thankteachers.

TOOLS FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS

Our members work closely with parents to ensure students succeed. Collaborating with the National PTA, NEA has produced brochures with practical tips and tools for parents to use in encouraging student success. You can download the brochures or order up to 10 copies of each at no charge at www.nea.org/parents.

SHARE IDEAS WITH OTHER LOCALS

A Facebook group has been created for TSTA local associations that want to share ideas. You can request to join the group at www.facebook.com/groups/TSTANEA.

DO YOU WORK IN A GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOL?

How do you really know if your school is meeting students’ needs? NEA makes it easy with the Great Public Schools Indicators Framework. It’s an evidence-based set of factors deemed critical to a school’s success, and a vehicle for starting a conversation about how to improve schools in practical terms, close opportunity gaps, and ensure that all educators and schools have the resources and tools they need to get the job done with the help of families and their communities. Find out more about the GPS Indicators here: www.nea.org/gpsindicators.

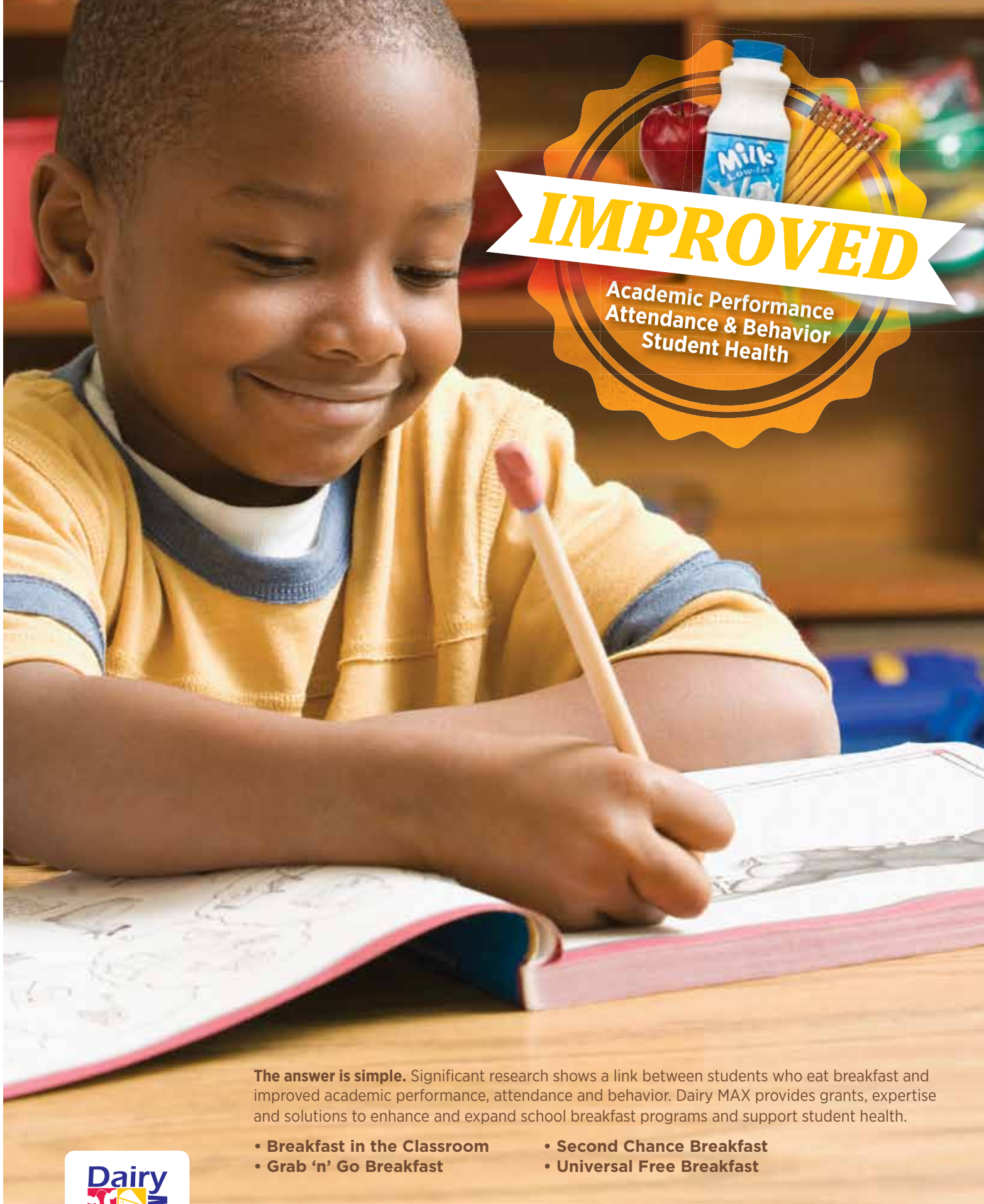


APP updates now available

An update is now available for the TSTA app on your iPhone, iPad, or Android device. Go to the iTunes and Google Play stores to download. Among the improvements:

- We added media sharing to articles in the Today’s News and Grading Texas Blog sections (Facebook, Twitter, email).
- We’ve made the Classroom Tools section more mobile friendly.
- We’ve populated the Upcoming Events (calendar) section.
- It is iOS 7 compatible.

If you haven’t tried the app yet, it allows you to use your smart phone or tablet to join TSTA, get information about upcoming events, find classroom ideas, read insider commentary in the Grading Texas blog, and access discounts. You can sign up to receive instant alerts, too!



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Oil boom fuels Rainy Day gusher

State savings account nears all-time high while teachers take second jobs and consider leaving the classroom

By Clay Robison, Public Affairs Specialist



If your state legislators are among those who plead poverty when it comes to funding public education — “We wanted to do more, but the money just wasn’t there” — don’t believe them.

The money WAS there when the Legislature met earlier this year, it is there now, and even more of it will be there when lawmakers reconvene in January 2015. So much of it is there, in fact, that one of the state’s leading business groups has unofficially renamed the Rainy Day Fund, the state’s savings account, the Rainy Day Flood.

Missing from the legislative majority during the past two sessions — 2011 and 2013 — was the political will to do the right thing for Texas public schools, students, and educators.

Despite the Legislature’s restoration of about 80 percent of the funding cut from public education two years ago, school districts still are operating with less state aid — and thousands more students — than they had in 2010-11. The school finance system is still unconstitutional, a record number of Texas teachers are taking extra jobs to make ends meet — and the Rainy Day Fund is bursting with cash.

Meanwhile, piling insult on injury, the federal government is pressuring the

state to adopt a policy tying teacher evaluations — and ultimately teacher pay — to students’ test scores, and some state officials may be all too eager to comply.

What does all of this mean?

It means Texas educators have a lot at stake in next year’s state elections, beginning with the party primaries in March. Regardless of political affiliation, educators need to ask their legislators and candidates questions — and demand real answers — about their commitment to public education. And TSTA locals need to organize around

these issues, presented in more detail below, to give their members a strong voice in the continuing debate.

TEACHER MOONLIGHTING

Forty-four percent of Texas teachers moonlight during the school year, and 61 percent take extra jobs during the summer to make ends meet, according to an online survey by Sam Houston State University that was commissioned by TSTA.

This is the highest percentage of teachers to report that they are moonlighting since TSTA started sponsoring the survey, “Texas Teachers, Moon-

lighting, and Morale,” more than 30 years ago. In 2010, the most recent year the survey previously was conducted, 40.8 percent of teachers held extra jobs during the school year and 56 percent during the summer. As recently as 2008, only 28 percent of teachers reported moonlighting during the school year.

Perhaps even more troubling, 60 percent of survey respondents said they were seriously considering leaving the profession, a marked increase over the 46.7 percent who were considering a career change in 2010.

Moonlighting: when teaching doesn’t pay enough



Teachers shouldn’t have to work another job to make ends meet, but TSTA’s recent “Texas Teachers, Moonlighting, and Morale” survey found that 44 percent of our teachers are doing exactly that — the highest number in the 30-plus years the survey has been conducted by TSTA and

Sam Houston State University (Huntsville).

The survey, conducted last spring, also found teachers spend, on average:

- \$697 a year from their own pockets on school supplies, an increase of more than \$130 from 2010; and

- \$408 each month on health insurance, an increase of almost \$200 from three years ago.

Survey respondents also reported:

- Working an average 13.6 hours a week at their moonlighting jobs;
- Working an average 18 hours a week outside the classroom on school-related work;
- An average moonlighting income during the school year of \$5,931;
- That their teaching quality would probably improve if they didn’t moonlight (83 percent);
- That they oppose having a standardized test determine

whether a student gets promoted (95 percent); and

- That they believe the worst problems in their schools are discipline (49 percent), paperwork (28 percent), drugs (8 percent), administration (6 percent), other (9 percent).

The average age of the respondents was 48.4 years; 80 percent were female; and 65 percent were married. The online survey included teachers at all grade levels working in urban, suburban, and rural areas. It was conducted by Dr. Robert Maninger, Dr. Sam Sullivan, and Dr. Daphne Johnson of Sam Houston State University.

Texas’ Rainy Day Fund will have at least \$8.2 billion by 2015 and maybe as much as \$11.8 billion. The fund will continue to grow as long as oil and gas production remains strong.

The past few years have been particularly tough on the budgets of both schools and school teachers. During the two years after the legislative majority slashed \$5.4 billion from the public education budget in 2011, the average teacher salary in Texas dropped by \$528. Average teacher pay in Texas, based on data compiled by the National Education Association for the 2012-13 school year, now ranks 38th among the states and the District of Columbia and is \$8,273 less than the national average. Some 91 percent of survey respondents said they would quit moonlighting if they could afford to do so. But they said they would need, on average, an extra \$9,188 in school pay each year to make up for their moonlighting income.

“Dedicated educators shouldn’t have to juggle extra jobs to support their families, but the financial reality of being a teacher in Texas leaves them little choice,” said TSTA President Rita Haecker. “Even so, they remain strongly committed to the needs of their students. Our elected officials need to give these professionals the professional pay that they deserve.”

The average salary of teachers participating in the survey, conducted last spring, was \$50,967 a year, and their average classroom experience

was 16.9 years. Some 64 percent were the major breadwinners in their households.

For more findings from the survey, see the separate story on page 9.

SCHOOL FUNDING AND THE RAINY DAY FUND

When the legislative majority cut \$5.4 billion from public school budgets in 2011, it left several billion dollars unspent in the Rainy Day Fund. “Protecting” the fund became a political litmus test for ideologues intent on downsizing government, and, to them, cutting funds from neighborhood schools was just collateral damage. The result was the loss of 25,000 school jobs — including 11,000 teaching positions — during the 2010-11 school year alone.

Last spring, with an improving economy and rising tax revenue, the Legislature restored much of the money cut two years ago, but the majority refused to cover the entire shortfall remaining from 2010-11. The Legislature also approved two constitutional amendments that would tap into the Rainy Day Fund for water development projects and highways. The \$2 billion water amendment will be on the ballot for voters to approve or reject this November. The highway amendment will be on the ballot in November 2014. A

proposal to let voters decide if they wanted to spend Rainy Day money to boost funding for education was rejected by the legislative majority.

The Rainy Day Fund, approved by Texas voters in 1988, receives 75 percent of all oil and gas severance tax revenue in excess of what the state collected in 1987. Officially called the Economic Stabilization Fund, the savings account can’t get any bigger than an amount equal to 10 percent of the state’s general revenue fund. It never has gotten that big, but now it is well on its way, thanks to the oil and gas production boom currently underway in Texas.

According to a new report — “The Rainy Day Flood” by the Texas Taxpayers and Research Association, a business group — if both the water and highway amendments are rejected by voters, the savings account will grow to \$8.7 billion, an all-time high, by Aug. 31, 2014, and \$11.8 billion by Aug. 31, 2015. If both amendments are adopted, the fund balance will still be \$6.7 billion in 2014 and \$8.2 billion in 2015 — healthy enough to improve the financial strength of public schools and allow enough money to be held in reserve for other, unseen needs.

And the fund will continue to replenish and grow, as long as oil and gas production remain strong, something the Texas Taxpayers and Research Association expects for several more years. Their report projects a Rainy Day Fund balance of \$16.1 billion — its constitutional limit — by 2017, if both

the water and highway amendments fail. If they pass, the 2017 fund balance will be \$11.6 billion, if the Legislature doesn’t tap into the fund for education or anything else.

Voters who approved creating the fund in 1988 didn’t intend for billions of tax dollars to sit idly in the bank while public needs grow, but that’s exactly what many members of the legislative majority seem intent on letting happen. They need to hear from educators.

STUDENT TEST SCORES AND TEACHER EVALUATIONS

After lengthy negotiations between the Texas Education Agency and the federal government, US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan granted Texas a waiver for the 2013-14 school year from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. The waiver means that only the lowest-performing 15 percent of Texas schools will be subject to federal sanctions, including possible campus restructuring, for failing to meet the NCLB requirement that 100 percent of students pass standardized reading and math tests. Without the waiver, most Texas school districts would have been subject to the intervention.

But the waiver came with a big string attached, the condition that Texas work on developing a new teacher evaluation system that could link teacher performance ratings — and pay — to students’ standardized test scores, a proposal that TSTA strongly opposes. Senate Education Committee

Chairman Dan Patrick, who is running for the Republican nomination for lieutenant governor, sponsored legislation on such an evaluation system during this year’s session, but TSTA and other opponents defeated the effort.

Expect to see the issue revived during the 2015 legislative session. As part of the waiver process, the Texas Education Agency agreed to continue considering making test scores part of a teacher’s evaluation. And state Education Commissioner Michael Williams has announced he will offer a new pilot evaluation system in some 40 school districts during the 2014-15 school year.

TSTA believes it is premature to discuss any type of so-called “incentive pay” proposal until Texas provides a base salary for all teachers that is sufficient to attract and retain highly qualified teachers for every classroom. And tying teacher evaluations and “incentive pay” to student test scores ignores how the learning process works.

“Teaching is a collaborative effort, and the educational gains a student makes are the culmination of the instruction the student has received throughout his or her educational career,” said TSTA Public Affairs Director Ed Martin.

“Students learn at different rates.

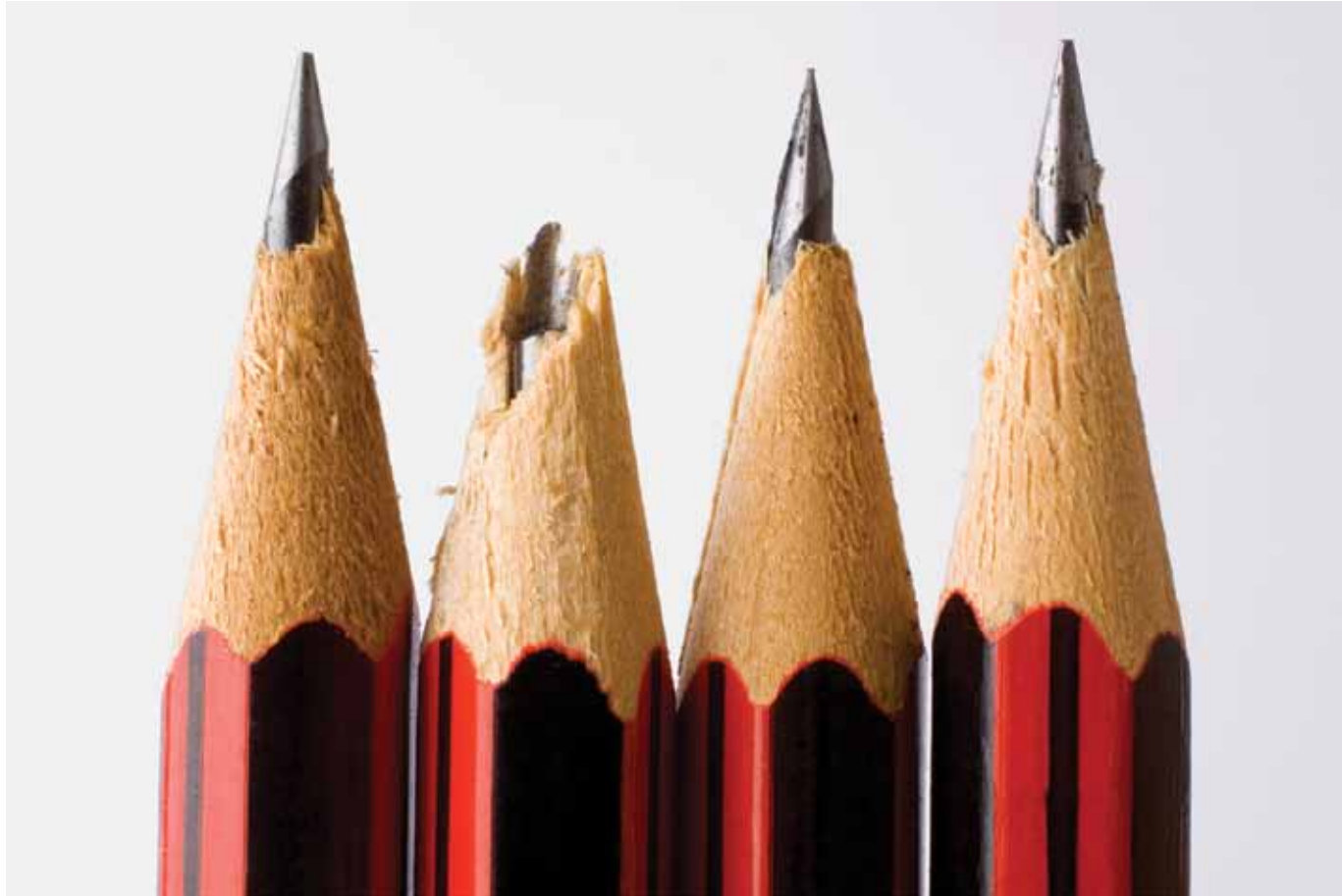
Different classes of students vary in age, maturity, home environment, and background. All these factors influence test scores, and teachers should be allowed to focus on providing quality instruction to all students, not engage in a ‘teach to the test’ competition just to make a living wage,” he added.

Combining “incentive pay” with test scores also can be a corrupting influence on administrators who are more interested in their own livelihoods than they are in student achievement. Only a few years ago, El Paso ISD was wracked by a cheating scandal in which low-income, struggling students were improperly classified and even encouraged to drop out of school in order to artificially inflate the district’s performance on standardized tests.

The then-superintendent had a financial incentive: the higher the test scores, the bigger his bonus. His incentive had nothing to do with improving the learning opportunities for all his students.

That former superintendent went to prison. But the real tragedy was the damage he — and a system that used tests scores as a basis for financial reward — inflicted on who knows how many young people, who either saw their educations delayed or may never have returned to school.

Texas teacher pay has fallen to \$8,273 below the national average; 44 percent of teachers moonlight to make ends meet, and 60 percent are seriously considering leaving the profession.



Not all charter schools were created equally

Some are good, and some are bad. Some make an effort to reach out to struggling, disadvantaged students, while others merely want to skim the best students from other schools and collect tax dollars. And, perhaps most importantly, some public school charters are based in the community and accountable to taxpayers, while others are corporate charters based in other states that are seeking to take over neighborhood schools.

The bottom line for those corporate charters is driven by their business interests, so it's no wonder that more of them are trying to expand here in Texas, where they can tap into public funds for charter operating contracts and leases. All of them — the good, the bad, and the mediocre — will siphon tax dollars from neighborhood schools, which already are underfunded and which will continue to teach the vast majority of Texas children.

Last spring, the Legislature enacted a new law that will gradually raise the cap on open-enrollment charters from the current 215 to 305. The actual number of schools can be more, because each charter holder can operate multiple campuses.

Charters, initially authorized in Texas during the 1990s, are technically public schools and receive state funds based on enrollment. But they are free from some state restraints in order to encourage more innovation in the classroom. At least, that is the idea under which they are promoted.

Some of the bad apples that managed to win charters under the previous charter law from the State Board of Education, however, have shown little innovation beyond the ability to put their owner's relatives on the payroll. Some have failed financially, and others have failed academically. This year, nearly 18 percent of charter campuses failed to meet the state's accountability standards, compared to 8.5 percent of traditional public schools, according to a recent article in the Austin American-Statesman.

Charters will siphon tax dollars from neighborhood schools, which already are underfunded and which will continue to teach the vast majority of Texas children.

Charter schools in Texas perform, on average, more poorly than traditional public schools in measurements of learning gains in both reading and math, according to a study released earlier this year by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University. On average, the study found, students at charter schools in Texas received the equivalent of 22 fewer learning days in reading during the school year than their peers in traditional public schools and 29 fewer instruction days in math.

TSTA opposed lifting the charter cap, testifying that Texas needed to strengthen the regulation of existing charters before spending more tax dollars on additional charter schools. Most charter advocates, though, seemed less concerned with boosting public education than with boosting corporate profits. One misnamed, business-oriented group, Texans for Education Reform (TER), called for removing the charter cap entirely. TER wielded a lot of influence with the legislative majority because many of its leaders and supporters have been affiliated with Texans for Lawsuit Reform, a group that has contributed millions of dollars to legislators and other state officials in a successful war against consumer lawsuits.

Senate Education Chairman Dan Patrick initially filed a bill (Senate Bill 2) that

would have removed any limit on the number of charters that could operate in Texas. But yielding to opposition from TSTA and many rural legislators, whose districts aren't attractive locations for charter operators, Patrick ultimately agreed to the compromise cap of 305, to be phased in through 2019.

The same law also transferred the primary responsibility for approving charter applications from the State Board of Education to the state education commissioner, although the board will have the authority to veto any of the commissioner's recommendations. The law also strengthened the state's ability to shut low-performing charters, and it made it easier for good schools to renew their charters.

A separate new law will allow charter schools with strong financial resources to use the backing of the Permanent School Fund to lower their borrowing costs.

Texas now has roughly 550 charter campuses serving about 4 percent of the state's 5 million public school students. Some charters are operated by school districts with input from the real education experts — teachers and parents. TSTA's local, Education Austin, and other members of the Austin community, for example, were instrumental in the development of the Travis Heights Elementary charter, a new in-district charter. That charter effort con-

Charters are technically public schools and receive state funds based on enrollment, but they are free from some state restraints.

trasted sharply with the IDEA Allan charter in East Austin, which the school board approved despite community opposition and then canceled after voters overhauled the school board on Election Day.

Some charter advocates argue that, despite taking tax dollars, charter schools don't undermine traditional public schools because the public money that charters receive is based on the number of students they enroll. They claim the traditional schools don't "need" that money anymore because their enrollment has dropped. But that argument misses the point that school districts can't simply reduce their costs based on the number of students they lose to charters. The districts lose revenue, but they have fixed costs that remain unchanged, including building maintenance, bus routes, and other costs that cannot be reduced proportionately.

In a recent report, Moody's Investors Service warned that increases in charter enrollments are likely to have a negative effect on school districts in economically weak urban areas, partly because those districts will lose revenue from declining enrollment faster than they can reduce their costs. A state district judge already has declared Texas' school funding system unconstitutional because of inadequacy and inequity in funding among school districts. An increase in cherry-picking, corporate-style charters will worsen the problem.

Outside groups sponsoring charters include non-profits that may turn their school operations over to corporate-style, for-profit operators. Some charter operators are chains headquartered outside of Texas but eager to open campuses here with limited input from local educators.

Three Arizona-based chains in particular, which have started moving into Texas, come with lots of bragging but large doses of bad publicity. Here is a sampling:

GREAT HEARTS

Great Hearts Academies is scheduled to open its first Texas campus next year in San Antonio under an application approved by the State Board of Education, acting under the previous charter law. State Education Commissioner Michael Williams recently approved a Great Hearts application to also expand into the Dallas area, subject to the state board's approval.

Great Hearts has a history in Arizona of serving mainly affluent white students — not the low-income minority children that Sen. Patrick and the other self-styled education "reformers" claim to want to help. At least one Great Hearts school in Phoenix is seeking an average \$1,500 contribution — they don't call it tuition — from each student family during the current school year to meet the gap between public funding and other donations. How many families in San Antonio's

economically disadvantaged community can afford that kind of money?

Last year, the Metro school board in Nashville voted four times to deny Great Hearts' applications there, according to The City Paper, an online media outlet. They reportedly had reservations about several issues, including Great Hearts' commitment to assuring diversity in student admissions. Initially, Great Hearts proposed separate schools for students of different economic backgrounds, an idea viewed by some as a throwback to the bad old days of separate-but-unequal segregation.

CARPE DIEM

The Carpe Diem charter chain has distinguished itself for high student test scores in Arizona and for cavernous, cubicle-filled classrooms that resemble call centers. Commissioner Williams recently approved its application to open a school in San Antonio, a decision that will be reviewed by the State Board of Education.

The Carpe Diem Collegiate High School and Middle School in Yuma operates under a so-called "blended learning" model, a combination of online and face-to-face instruction. In Carpe Diem's case, it is decidedly more online because, the Arizona Republic reported, students spend most of their time at computers. In one recent school year, each major subject had only one teacher who was responsible for 240 students in grades six through 12.

That model may be fine, some educators believe, for highly motivated students who are self-starters. But what

about all those struggling students, the ones the education "reformers" purport to want to rescue with charters?

In spring 2010, the Arizona Republic reported, Pearson Education, the company that administers the Arizona student achievement test, flagged the reading test taken by Carpe Diem sophomores for having a higher-than-average number of wrong-to-right error marks. The school denied any cheating, and the state apparently didn't increase monitoring.

Earlier this year, The Journal Gazette in Fort Wayne reported that the Indiana Charter School Board rushed to approve a new Carpe Diem school in that city despite strong community opposition. The newspaper also reported that the local Carpe Diem landlord will be paid \$1,000 for each student who enrolls, up to 550 students, plus "associated property costs." The landlord is a political contributor to the Indiana governor and the father of the governor's economic development director.

BASIS

BASIS, which opened its first Texas campus in San Antonio this fall, boasts on its website that its schools are "among the best in the world." And it lists information about rigorous curriculum, high test scores, and top notch teachers that seems to back the claim. BASIS charges no tuition, requires no entrance exams, and claims to admit any student for whom there is space — or who can win a registration lottery.

BASIS was organized as a non-profit, but its founders have since formed a

separate, for-profit company that operates the schools.

BASIS' "open-enrollment" claim is, in reality, something else, according to David Safier, a former teacher turned Arizona blogger. Safier wrote that the chain, at least in Arizona, requires students who are accepted to take a placement test. The parents of students who score low are advised their children will be moved back a grade if they still want to enter the school.

Safier also reported a high dropout rate for BASIS, which helps explain the large percentage of high test scores. Students who can't keep up with the school's rigorous curriculum are "winnowed" out. At BASIS' first charter campus in Tucson, Safier reported, the graduating class of 2012 had an enrollment drop of 66 percent between sixth and 12th grade. Every year, based on Arizona Department of Education data, the number of students at the chain's Tucson and Scottsdale campuses fell between 60 percent and 71 percent from sixth to 12th grade, the blogger wrote.

BASIS opened a charter school in Washington, D.C., last fall, enrolling 443 students. By April, 43 students — almost 10 percent — had left the school, according to the Washington Post. Seven of the students who left had disabilities. BASIS, meanwhile, got to keep hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax money it had been awarded for the 43 students who dropped out,

while the traditional public schools to which the students likely returned received no additional money for the school year.

In August, the Post reported, the federal Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights had opened an investigation into a complaint that the BASIS school in Washington discriminated against students with disabilities.

BASIS may be great for the best students. But what about the rest of the students in San Antonio and Texas, including those with special needs, who also represent Texas' future? Should BASIS and other corporate-type charters be allowed to cherry-pick students and take state tax dollars from the vast majority of children who will remain in — or return to — traditional public schools? How bad will this practice worsen Texas' long quest for equality in education funding?

San Antonio seems to have become "ground zero" for charter experimentation. Wealthy donors reportedly have contributed large sums to attract these private charter operators. But who are these donors really trying to help? The thousands of low-income children in San Antonio, many of limited English-speaking ability, who need a quality education? Or educational entrepreneurs who want to make large bucks by skimming the best students — and tax dollars — from underfunded public schools?

Charter schools in Texas perform, on average, more poorly than traditional public schools in measurements of learning gains in both reading and math.

Packing their suitcases

Each student needs a different set of tools in his or her bag, this year's Texas Teacher of the Year believes.

Walk into Monica Washington's English classroom at Texas High School in Texarkana, and you might hear a conversation like this:

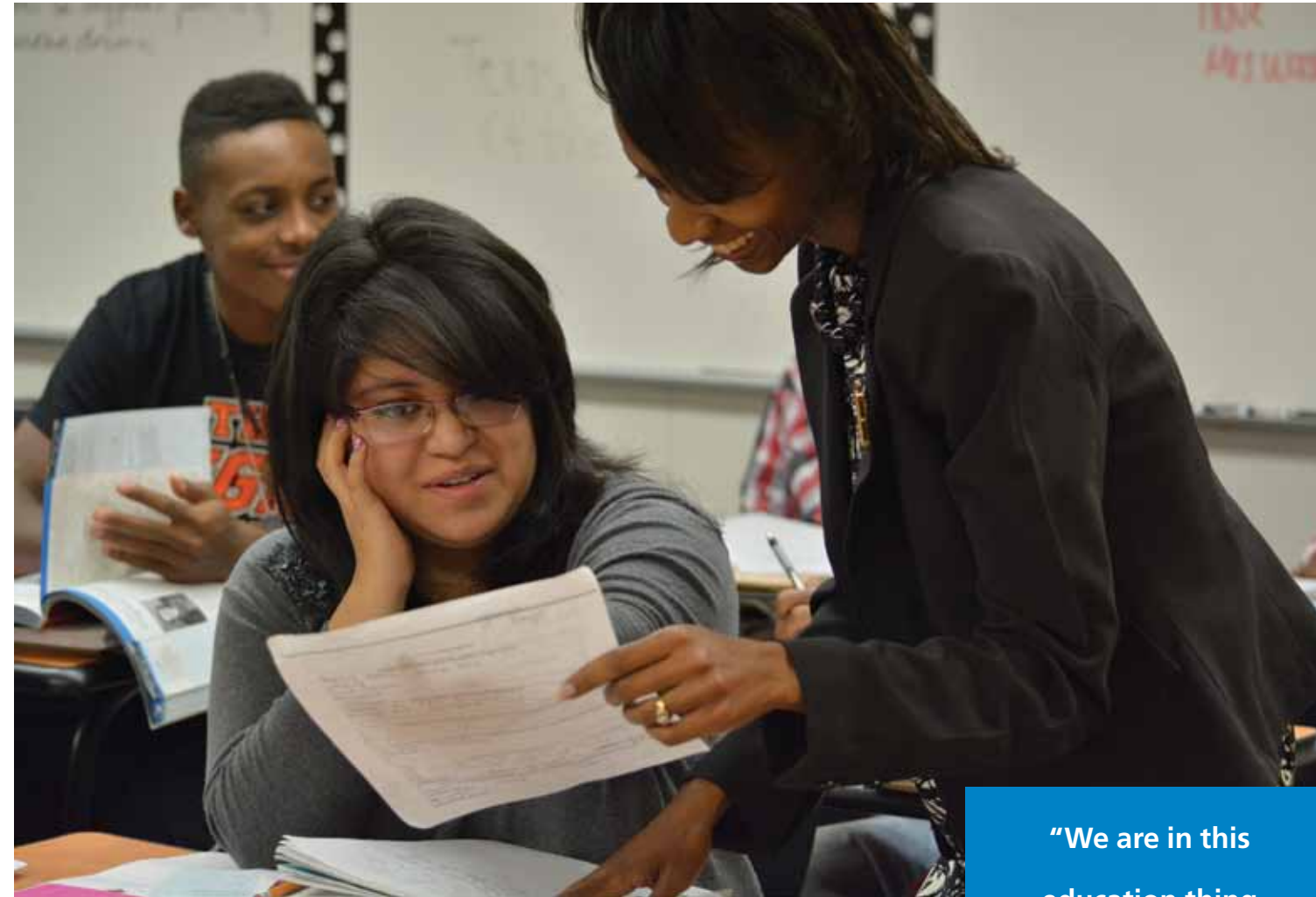
"You missed number two, Mrs. Washington? I got it right."

"Well, how did you get that? Because I have no idea why it's C."

Washington, who was named Texas Teacher of the Year in October, believes teachers should be not only facilitators but participants in the classroom. She reads, writes essays, and prepares for tests alongside her students.

"Those AP multiple choice packets we do to prep for the state test are so hard!" she said. "I work as the kids work, and we discuss the answers as a group."

"We are in this education thing together," Washington said. "I'm growing, too. I never want to present to them that I know everything, because I don't. The minute I start to think that I know everything about English — or I've read every book that's important or know every vocabulary word — is the moment I'm not a good teacher anymore."



Her teaching style is hands on and caring, a rejection of the advice she was given in Tennessee when she began teaching. Some of her colleagues there advised her not to smile or be cheerful. "The students don't have to like you," they said.

"I quickly learned that was bad advice," Washington, who has been teaching in Texarkana since 2007, said. "I believe that the atmosphere of the class directly influences students' desire to learn. Each class can be a family if I guide them to become one."

While students are working in groups, she walks around the room with sticky notes. "Sometimes I'll hand a student a note that says, 'I appreciate what you just said' or whatever. I find that kids keep those notes."

She also carries a clipboard to jot down the insights she hears. "Later on, I will say, 'I heard so-and-so say this,' and they feel so smart. So whenever I walk by, they always try to say something profound," she said with a smile.

"Students have told me my class is

"We are in this education thing together. I'm growing, too. I never want to present to them that I know everything, because I don't."

easy because I break the hard things into pieces," Washington said.

"What I try to do each year is create tools that help students organize complex information. I am never satisfied that I have thought of everything there

is to think of. I try to revise myself weekly and yearly."

As the keynote speaker one year for the national Advancement Via Individual Determination conference, Washington urged participants to "pack their suitcases."

"That was my metaphor for giving students all the tools they need to become successful citizens. Those tools could be tough love, extra tutoring, an ear, anything," she said. "Each student needs different tools in his or her suitcase, and it's up to teachers, the suitcase packers, to stuff those bags."

For some students, the bag must include the will to overcome obstacles in their personal lives.

"Sometimes when kids are struggling, you can just kind of see that something has changed," she said. "You think you know their stories, but sometimes when they start talking to me I'm thinking, 'How is this baby functioning?' I tell them, 'Whatever you see as something you can't get out of, remember everything has a beginning date and an end date. I'm proof of that.'"

When Washington was a freshman in high school and her sister was in kindergarten, their mother, who was in the Army Reserves, was called up to serve in Desert Storm. For eight months, the girls were on their own while their stepfather's drug addiction spun out of control. Sometimes they would come home to find people they didn't know

using drugs. Sometimes their stepfather would disappear for days, taking the grocery money with him. Sometimes there was no electricity.

But Washington didn't let her circumstances stop her from reaching her goals of being valedictorian and graduating magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree and summa cum laude with a master's degree.

"My mom made us make commitments," she said. "Education was a priority. She would never let us use

the word 'if' in the same sentence with 'college.'"

She draws on her own experience to help and encourage students. "I tell them about my struggles and how I got through it. I say that it will get better, whatever it is, and they can always talk to me. I have kids who are going through the same thing I went through, sometimes worse. I think they appreciate that I'm a real person with real issues."

Because she believes volunteering is a

powerful tool for regaining focus and self esteem, Washington posts service opportunities in her classroom.

"I encourage my students to believe that they can be a positive force in the community simply by donating some of their time," she said, "and I model this by working alongside them."

Projects have ranged from highway clean ups and visiting a local nursing home to helping with equestrian therapy for disabled youth and organizing a "Help for Haiti" campaign that raised more than \$3,000 for earthquake victims.

"They think I'm motivating them, but they motivate me," Washington said. "So many of them have gone far beyond what I have taught them. They are doing their own things now, like Aimee Tran who started her own foundation."

Aimee's parents are from Vietnam. She painted "wishing trees" on the walls of two orphanages — one in Texarkana and the other in a jungle dormitory in Dong Nai Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam — and placed a basket nearby for notes to the "wishing fairy." The wishes are funded by donations.

Hoping to expand the program, Aimee was looking for ways to raise more money and turned to Washington for advice. She wanted to write a book, but was afraid it was too much to tackle. "I'm just a teenager," she said.

Sharing her own mother's lessons

about setting goals and making commitments, Washington would not let her student give up. Aimee wrote and published the book, "The Moment Before Rain" — and gave the first copy to her teacher.

"She credits me with it, but oh, my gosh, no, it is so not me. It's her, all her. I'm just so, so proud," Washington said. "Aimee wants to change the world, and she will do it. I know she will." (For more about Aimee and her book, see her website, www.wishingtree.org.)

"We are family," Washington tells each new class, and that relationship doesn't end with the school year.

When students said they wanted to take her with them to college, she had the idea for "Mrs. Washington's Advice." She gives each of her graduating seniors a framed copy with instructions to open the frame when they have a really bad day. Inside they will find a personal, handwritten note.

"So many of them have called me, crying and saying, 'Today was my bad day. Thank you,'" she said.

"What I think are my most significant contributions and accomplishments in education are those things that will never make it to my resume," Washington said. "When I help a student realize how talented and intelligent he is, I feel accomplished. When she recognizes her own power, I feel accomplished. When he realizes college is attainable, I feel accomplished. I am and always will be a suitcase packer."



ON THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS

As soon as something negative happens, as soon as some teacher does something that people think is unbecoming of a teacher, then that's out there.

No one knows that you don't really have a lot of money yourself but you bought someone's prom dress, or these three kids haven't taken the ACT, and they don't have a waiver, but they don't have the money, so their teachers have decided to pay for them to take it.

The public says, 'Oh, you have the summers off,' but we spend the summers prepping for the year, and I can't even say how many hours I spend outside of school prepping for school, especially teaching English. If I have just taken up essays, I may grade 12 hours or more on the weekend. Those are the things people don't know we do for their kids. We impact their lives. During my year as Teacher of the Year, I want to get that message out there.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING

Year one for everybody is crazy. You think you know everything because you've gone to school, but you get in there and it's not really like that.

New teachers are told too much, and they are not told enough. They are given a million acronyms, shown forms and programs, and told the "right" way to do everything. They need to be told that they will mess up and that's okay. They need to be told that no one learns to manage the 100 or more personalities and all of the paperwork in one year. They need to be told by a good mentor that they don't need to try to quickly master all that is shoved at them during orientation.



ON WINNING TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Within 20 minutes of the announcement, I had about 120 emails from different teachers, some from our school and some I don't know. I had video messages of cheering. While I was on stage giving my acceptance speech, my phone was buzzing on the table. It was my students! School wasn't even in that day, but somehow they found out I won and wanted to call me.

When I came back to school on Monday, my friends had draped my whole room in purple, my favorite color. Purple balloons and streamers, purple all the way down the hall. They had Monica Washington Day about a week ago, and the whole school dressed in purple — all the kids, the principals, everybody. It's been great. I keep pinching myself.

I didn't want to go into the interview or essays trying to be somebody I'm not. Who I am is quirky Monica Washington who prances around the room and does high fives with the kids. I may break into a dance. You just never know. I said I'm going to be real and tell the truth, and if the truth gets me the title, great, and if it doesn't, it was meant for somebody else.

In early January, they will announce the final four finalists for the national award. In April, we will spend several days in Washington, D.C., and the next-to-last day is the Rose Garden ceremony with President Obama. He will announce the National Teacher of the Year.





Thank Teachers campaign expands

**Tell us about
your favorite
teacher!**

www.facebook.com/thankteachers

If you are in the San Antonio area, you may have seen a Spanish-language television spot about parents and teachers helping students realize their dreams. The ad is an extension of the TSTA Thank Teachers campaign that began earlier this year.

Sponsored by TSTA and funded by an NEA grant, the four ads featured Stacy Rogerio in Laredo, Celia Saiz-Guerrero in Brownsville, Arisa Carr in El Paso, and now Carilu Hernandez in San Antonio. You can watch all four spots at <http://tsta.org/node/1180>.

In a videotaped interview, Carilu Hernandez (shown above), a second grade teacher in Harlandale ISD, speaks out on education and association issues.



CLASSROOM BUDGET CUTS

"Budget cuts can be difficult, especially coming from a Title I school, because it affects the tools and the resources we have in our classrooms for our kids. You want the best for your students. You want them to have access to technology and the things other schools are able to provide for their students. Teachers go out of their way to buy these materials, especially in the case of science. Science is right now such a limited area; our primary focus is reading and math so a lot of funds are funneled to those areas. I want my kids to have the hands-on experiments. It's a sacrifice you make, but you want your students to experience these things, so you're always reaching into your pocket just to have the extra materials."

FINDING YOUR VOICE

"TSTA has been an advocate for recognizing what teachers do and recognizing that teachers should be paid fairly. Our role was to stand up and be heard — to go to the school board meetings and show that we were a presence, that this was something we believed in, and that we were willing to stand up and speak about it. It made a huge

difference when we had TSTA encouraging us to do so by saying, 'Your opinion counts and you're worthy of this raise, you're deserving of it.' It gives you the strength to say, 'You know, I'm a good teacher and we work hard for this.' A lot of teachers came forth. They mustered the strength to go to these meetings and to find their voice."

JOINING TSTA

"You come in with so many fears. (TSTA was) the first to say, 'We have people to come in and help you prepare your room. We have people to come in and help you with lesson plans, if you need help with that. TSTA also offers their teachers tips on parent conferencing — how to approach it, how to make it a positive experience for yourself and the parents and the child. It was a relief to know I had that network of people to depend on, especially since I was such a new teacher at the time. It's one of the things I would tell a new teacher: You are not alone. There are people to support you and to help you become better at what you're here to do, which is teach."

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

"You had teachers walking neighborhoods and campaigning for our candidates to get a school board that we felt was worthy of speaking for our students. It was a lot of work but it was worth it, because I feel now that we have a school board that is there for the students and is there to give teachers the tools they need to better the future of our students. After advocating and fighting for something you believe in, it is affirming to know that what you have said and what you have done is going to make a difference and that someone out there heard what you had to say, someone out there believed in what you had to say and believed that those children were just as important as you thought they were — and because of that, change was made. It's a great feeling."

POLITICS IN THE CLASSROOM

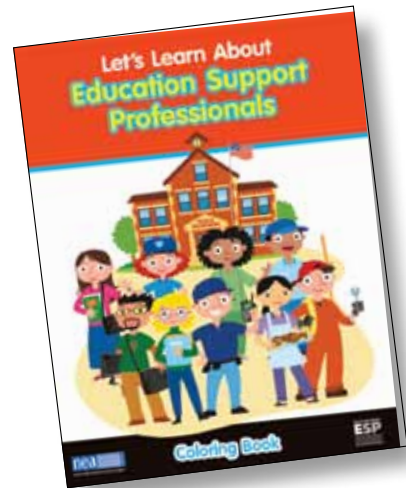
"You want to give each individual student the differentiated support ... and ... time that they deserve from you, but when you have such large classroom sizes, it's so difficult. I think sometimes we forget that, through all that bureaucracy and all that red tape, we've got children there that need us."

WHY I BECAME A TEACHER

"I became a teacher when I had children. I realized that my child was going to be in someone else's care for a large part of their day and a large part of their life. I wanted to be one of those people who made a difference in (students') lives. It makes a difference in your life when you know your child is being taught and cared for in a positive way."



Coloring book shows ESP roles



Education support professionals keep students safe, healthy, and engaged so they are ready to learn. NEA's new coloring book, "Let's Learn About Education Support Professionals," introduces young children to each of the ESP job families and educates them on how ESPs work in their schools to ensure their success.

TSTA's locals in Laredo, Laredo United, and Donna recently distributed more than 500 copies of the 20-page book to students. (You can see the photos on our Flickr page, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tstapublicaffairs/sets/>, "ESP coloring book.")

The coloring book can be downloaded as a PDF at www.nea.org/assets/docs/LetsLearnaboutESPColoringBookNB.pdf.

For information on ordering printed copies, go to www.nea.org/home/2178.htm and scroll to NEA ESP Publications. On that same page, you will find information about grants, conferences, retirement, online courses, NEA's Legislative Action Center, and publications on topics that include bullying prevention, ESP Day, student and school success, safety, legal issues, repetitive stress injuries, job descriptions, mentoring, and more.



Quilt fundraiser begins

It's time for TSTA Retired's annual quilt fundraiser, now in its third year.

The theme of this year's quilt is "Deep in the Heart of Texas," and it was pieced and machine sewn by Carolyn Hesser of Buda.

The red, white, and blue quilt is queen size, measuring 88 inches X 100 inches. In the center is an outline of the state of Texas plus illustrations depicting various historic events. Running along the border of the quilt are Texas wildflowers.

The drawing for the quilt will be held at the TSTA House of Delegates on Saturday, April 12 in San Marcos. You do not need to be present to win.

Tickets are \$2 each and may be purchased from any TSTA Retired regional president or state officer. For additional information, please call 214-398-0500 or email townview@swbell.net or lisac@tsta.org.



A HEALTH CARE WIN IN YSLETA

The actions of Ysleta Teachers Association have resulted in a much smaller increase in employee health care premiums. More than 300 employees came to a recent school board meeting to protest the proposed increase, which would have raised monthly payments by between \$121 and \$336. Under the new plan, payments will increase by \$32 to \$74.



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN SAN ANTONIO

North East Education Association hosted a "Celebrating Diversity" conference this fall to emphasize the need for all ethnicities to be involved in the association. Members from the North East, Harlandale, and Southwest school districts were asked to commit to helping educator-friendly school board candidates win election in May.



SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE IN CY FAIR

Cy Fair TSTA/NEA has been working on its social media presence. The local now is active on Twitter and Facebook, and its website, cyfairtsta-nea.org (which is also available as a mobile app), is loaded with informative articles about issues and goals, photos of members, and links to important documents. They also have a print newsletter, "Tex Messages."



PAPERWORK REDUCTION IN HARLANDALE

Harlandale Education Association/TSTA met with the Harlandale ISD administration to discuss paperwork reduction. At issue was whether teachers were required to use HUTS or Harlandale Unwrapping the TEKS/SE. HEA won the grievance; teachers are not required to use HUTS.



STUDENT PROGRAM NEWS

- The TSTA Student Program is off to a great start this school year! State leaders have planned exciting events and recruited many new members.
- Texas student chapters received more than \$7,000 in grants from the NEA Student Program to help fund projects that included classroom make-overs and chapter building. The chapters that received grants were Texas Wesleyan, University of Houston-Clear Lake, University of Texas-Brownsville, University of Houston-Main, and University of Texas-El Paso.
- State leaders were heading to the NEA Student Program Connections Conference in Las Vegas Nov. 8-10. The theme was to be “A New Generation of Education Leaders.”
- In October, District 2 members met at Texas A&M for their annual convention,

which included four professional development sessions. Holding November conventions were District 4, Texas Wesleyan; District 3, University of Houston-Clear Lake; and District 5, Texas Tech University.

TSTA RETIRED EVENTS

- TSTA Retired’s officers met Sept. 11 and its Board of Directors met Sept. 12-13 at TSTA Headquarters in Austin.
- Their annual meeting will be April 9-10 at the Embassy Suites in San Marcos. The host committee is working to make it an informative and entertaining event. All TSTA Retired members are eligible to attend and vote, and they are encouraged to take part in the business and fun.
- The annual meeting will be followed by the TSTA House of Delegates on April 11-12, also at the Embassy Suites.
- The NEA Retired Leader-




DISTRICT 2 STUDENT CONVENTION: Students at Texas A&M hear Dr. Dennie Smith speak on “The Impact of School Culture on Learning” and Dr. Valerie Hill-Jackson on “Teachers Make the Climate: What We Owe Our Students and Ourselves.” Other speakers included TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria and Conroe teacher Tracy Pettinger.

ship Development and Organizing Conference is tentatively set for March 25-27 at the Galleria in Houston. Watch for more information in the NEA’s This Active Life magazine.

- The NEA Retired Annual

Meeting is scheduled for June in Denver. Information will be available online at www.nea.org/retired and in future issues of This Active Life magazine. All TSTA Retired members are eligible to attend.




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Secrets of motivation

Are your students really motivated? One way to tell is to step outside your room for a minute. If students are on task when you return, they are motivated. If chaos has erupted, they are not, says Larry Ferlazzo.

Ferlazzo is well known in the education community for his Websites of the Day blog (<http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org>), but his day job is teaching English and social studies at Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento. He is also the author of “Self-Driven Learning: Teaching Strategies for Student Motivation” and “Helping Students Motivate Themselves: Practical Answers to Classroom Challenges.”

In the September issue of California

Educator magazine, he shared some of his motivation tips with writer Sherry Posnick-Goodwin of the California Teachers Association (reprinted with permission).

CAN TEACHERS MOTIVATE STUDENTS?

Not really. We’ve all had passionate speakers get us energized to do something, and after they’re gone, we fall back into what we used to do. It’s the same in the classroom. Instead of mo-

tivating students, we can figure out strategies to help students motivate themselves. Some students have that inner spark already because they’ve had role models. Others need help.

WHAT’S THE KEY?

Learn their goals and dreams and hopes for the future. Where do they want to be eventually? When we connect what they’re doing in the classroom to what they want to achieve, students see school as the vehicle to

achieve their goals. Let’s say I have a student whose goal is to be an ultimate fighter. We discuss how he will need self-control when he goes into the ring, and one way to develop self-control is to show it in the classroom. By steering students toward developing self-control and perseverance, higher academic performance follows.

HOW DO RELATIONSHIPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

A perfect example is a ninth-grader who faced many challenges and did very little work in class. Because I knew he was a football fan, I asked him to write a persuasive essay about why the 49ers were the best team in the NFL. He followed appropriate forms, models, and style, and after he was done, he asked if he could write another essay about basketball to make up work he hadn’t done before. His

mother cried because he had never written an essay before. If I hadn’t known that he was a sports fan, I wouldn’t have known what he would like to write about. It’s important for teachers to help students feel they have some degree of power through choice. Teachers can do that by listening and working hard to develop relationships.

IS THERE PRESSURE TO SUCCEED?

A challenge for teachers is helping students understand the difference be-

tween “learning goals” and “performance goals.” A learning goal may be to read a challenging book to learn something new; a performance goal is focusing on doing something to get an A. Students who focus on learning goals lean toward higher academic performance in the long term.

INTRINSIC VS. EXTRINSIC?

Research shows you might get people to do things in the short term through awards and consequences, but over the long term these things don’t en-

Teachers need to ask themselves an important question: Would they want to be a student in their own classroom?

Students want a teacher who cares about them and works hard.

courage higher-order thinking skills or creativity. Obviously, we all use extrinsic motivation now and then, such as rewards, grades, and consequences. The key is leaning more toward the intrinsic, or helping students motivate themselves. To do that, I give lots of life skill lessons about self-control and future rewards. I tell them about the famous “Marshmallow Experiment.”

THE MARSHMALLOW EXPERIMENT?

Years ago, a researcher put young people in a room with one marshmal-

low and told them if they didn’t eat the marshmallow within 15 minutes, they would receive two. A third of the children showed self-control and got two marshmallows. Researchers followed these children and found, over 40 years, they had higher SAT scores, higher income, and more positive outcomes across the board. It’s important to give short lessons about why it is important to have goals and self-control and not eat the marshmallow. Perseverance, grit, and the ability to stick with something you don’t like

are much more accurate indicators of success than getting good grades. I help my students see that. We look at successful role models like Michael Jordan and Barack Obama. It’s more effective than threatening students with negative consequences, such as, “If you don’t do this work I’m going to fail you.”

WHAT ELSE CAN TEACHERS DO?

Teachers need to ask themselves an important question: Would they want to be a student in their own classroom? Students want a teacher who cares about them and works hard. It’s not easy. Do I use extrinsic motivation sometimes? Of course I do. Do I lose my temper sometimes? Of course I do. I’m human; we are all human. But if we really want students to motivate themselves, there are many things we can do differently to help them succeed.



San Marcos hosts the 135th annual TSTA Convention

This year’s convention will be held in San Marcos on April 11-12. All convention events will take place at the Embassy Suites San Marcos, a comfortable, all-suite property including complimentary cook-to-order breakfast and evening manager’s reception. The House of Delegates will begin Friday afternoon and continue throughout Saturday. Voting will take place Saturday morning. Additional information and convention updates will be posted on the TSTA website in the members only, “Leaders Login” area.

BECOME A DELEGATE

The House of Delegates (HoD) serves a vital role in the governance of TSTA and helps to shape the future of our organization. The HoD may establish goals for TSTA, amend its by-laws, and act on recommendations from the TSTA officers,

board, or committees. TSTA statewide elections are held at the HoD annual meeting. This year delegates will elect the TSTA State President, TSTA State Vice President, the NEA Director for Texas, Place 3, and if necessary, at-large members of the TSTA Board of Directors.

Please contact your local president for details on how delegates are elected in your local. Delegate allocations are based on membership totals as of Jan. 15. Local delegate election results must be reported to TSTA by March 15.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the convention begins at 7:00 a.m. on Friday, April 11, and continues to Saturday, April 12. All TSTA members and guests are welcome to attend the convention, but

only delegates with proper delegate badges are allowed in the designated delegate section and voting area. Non-delegates/alternates and guests are encouraged to register.

HEARINGS AND WORKSHOPS

Open hearings will be held Friday morning on the proposed 2014-15 TSTA budget and any proposed bylaws amendments or NEA Resolutions. Additional topics may be added. Professional development workshops eligible for continuing education credit also will be offered on Friday.

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

The Embassy Suites San Marcos is holding a room block for TSTA convention attendees. Reserve your room directly with the hotel by **March 12, 2014**, to ensure your room at the group rate of \$156 (plus tax). This rate includes full breakfast and evening reception. All rooms include a separate bedroom and living room with sofa bed, microwave, and refrigerator. Self parking is free. The hotel also offers complimentary shuttle service between the hotel and Tanger and Prime Outlet Centers.

Make your reservation by calling **800-EMBASSY** or **512-392-6450**. Identify yourself as a participant of the **“TSTA Annual Convention”** at the time the reservation is made. Please note: A first night room deposit secured with a major credit card or check is required for all reservations. Cancellations must be made by 3:00 p.m. the day before your scheduled arrival to avoid a charge for the first night.

The hotel is 27 miles from Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. You must make your own arrangements for

transportation between the airport and hotel. One-way ground transportation is approximately \$80 for taxi service or \$45 for individual shuttle service. Round trip shuttle discounts may be available. Exclusive van service is around \$95 for up to seven passengers or \$105 for up to 10 passengers. Shuttle reservations should be made through SuperShuttle at 800-BLUE-VAN or www.supershuttle.com.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

Members who do not have a roommate but would like to share accommodations should contact TSTA’s Center for Executive and Governance (CEG) at 800-324-5355, ext. 1543 or 1514, **before** making your hotel reservation. We will attempt to match members who want to share expenses,

though we cannot guarantee a roommate for everyone.

Physically challenged delegates or delegates who have special needs should contact the CEG no later than **March 28, 2014**, to arrange assistance during the convention. Payment for special needs requests such as wheelchairs or transportation is the responsibility of the member or delegate, but TSTA will help arrange for services.

TSTA HOST COMMITTEE

TSTA would like to thank this year’s host committee for their efforts to help ensure a successful and fun convention. The host committee members, appointed by President Haecker, are: Trasell Underwood, Susan Seaton, August Plock, Jessica Aragon, and Tysheka Harris.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE	
Thursday, April 10	
8:00 a.m.	Advisory Committee Meeting
1:30 p.m.	Board of Directors Meeting
6:00 p.m.	Candidates Meeting
Friday, April 11	
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)
10:30 a.m.	Professional Development Workshops (CPE Credit)
12:30 p.m.	Parliamentary Procedures Workshop
2:00 p.m.	House of Delegates Opening Ceremony and Meeting
Saturday, April 12	
6:30 a.m.	Registration
7:00 a.m.	Regional/TSTA-Student Program/TSTA-Retired 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 Recognized Caucus Meetings
2:00 p.m.	House of Delegates Meeting

TSTA at-large board of directors elections

TSTA bylaws, policies, and procedures guarantee that specific groups—i.e. ethnic minorities and ESPs—have a meaningful voice in the organization, while other groups, such as administrators, are prevented from having influence beyond their numbers.

Each Jan. 15 TSTA calculates the proportion of our membership in these three categories to help determine the need for at-large elections to the TSTA Board of Directors. The board has 28 members that count for this purpose—officers, regional presidents, Texas Faculty Association president, TSTA Retired president, TSTA Student Program president, and NEA Directors for Texas. Both the Jan. 15 calculations and the results of regional elections held at the regional houses of delegates determine whether at-large elections are necessary.

Although it is possible elections will not be held, TSTA is seeking nominations for these positions now in case elections are required. Elections will take place at the 2014 TSTA House of Delegates on April 12. Individuals elected would serve from July 15, 2014, through July 14, 2016.

Recent TSTA membership numbers show 43.8 percent of our members as ethnic minorities, 23.1 percent as ESPs and 3.3 percent as supervisory. If the recent percent-

ages hold true on Jan. 15, TSTA would need at least 12 minorities, six ESPs, and one supervisor to be on the board.

Minority: If current membership percentages hold on Jan. 15, it is possible but unlikely we will need to elect minority at-large board members due to the present number of minority board members whose terms will continue.

ESP: If current membership percentages hold on Jan. 15, it is possible but unlikely we will need to elect ESP at-large board members due to the present number of ESP board members whose terms will continue.

Supervisory: The term of the current supervisory at-large board member expires on July 14, 2014. There will be an election for this position.

All nomination forms must be submitted by the deadline established annually by the TSTA Board (see below). TSTA will send each nominee information detailing board members’ responsibilities, along with a form stating the candidate has read the information and will accept the responsibilities if elected.

The candidate must sign and return this form within the timeline adopted by the board for the candidate’s name to appear on the ballot. Candidates who fail to return

this form are ineligible for election. The nomination form must be COMPLETELY filled out and SIGNED by the nominee. Candidates must comply with the Board-approved election timeline as follows:

Friday, March 21: Deadline for receipt of nomination form

Friday, April 4: Deadline for receipt of candidate flier (for inclusion in delegate packets)

Friday, April 4 at 4:45 p.m. CDT: Deadline for receipt of candidate statement/late nomination (for candidate’s name to appear on ballot)

Saturday, April 12: Election at the TSTA State House of Delegates

Saturday, April 12: 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 consecutive years preceding the election
- Be actively employed as a non-supervisory member, unless seeking the supervisory at large position
- Maintain membership status and educational position in TSTA during term of office
- Sign and return the form accepting the responsibilities of a board member

The nomination form may be submitted by any means providing verifiable evidence it was timely filed and includes the nominee’s signature. Nominations received through regular mail will not be accepted. Deliver forms to TSTA’s Center for Executive and Governance (CEG), 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. If hand delivered, be sure to get a hand-written receipt from the CEG. Fax forms to (512) 486-7053 or email a PDF version to neochac@tsta.org.

For questions regarding the election, call (877) ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514, or email neochac@tsta.org.



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Texas State Teachers Association
316 West 12th Street
Austin, Texas 78701



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"If we fight for the kids that we represent and if their parents give us the support we need, we will accomplish change. If we give those kids the tools they need, 15 or 20 years from now we won't have to worry whether we have well-prepared leaders to move our society forward."

— Maria Villafranca, Association of Brownsville Educators