

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

# ADVOCATE

Summer 2014

Great leaders  
for great schools



**Davis, Van de Putte**  
Candidates fire up convention

**Takeover attempt in Dallas**  
Contracts, class size at risk

**Prekindergarten for all or a few?**  
It's a key issue in the gubernatorial race

# It's been a wonderful journey



It has been an honor to serve as your TSTA president for the past six years. It has been a wonderful journey, seeing the progress our locals have made in terms of membership growth, building leadership capacity, and making a difference for our public schools and students.

We have used the power of issue organizing to impact important state and local issues that matter to our members. Last year, we convinced the Legislature to restore most of the funding cut from public school budgets in 2011, and many of our locals put that funding to work for our members. We succeeded in reducing the number of high-stakes standardized tests. And we have elected school board members who work with our locals on pay and employment issues.

Of course, a great deal of important work remains to be done. We still have too much high-stakes testing, and privatization interests are scheming to convert neighborhood schools into profit centers. But because of you, TSTA is well-positioned to lead the fight to strengthen our public schools.

The key to strengthening our clout in Austin and with school boards is our focus on issue organizing. Many of our locals — from Austin to Lubbock to Donna and many more — have provided examples of great organizing. We have made strides these past six years to foster an organizing culture. That's why NEA leaders see TSTA as a great investment for the future of NEA. Perhaps most importantly, organizing is a great investment in the future of Texas public schools.

During my presidency, TSTA has made changes to engage local leaders in supporting and guiding the work of their fellow leaders in the development of local plans. By helping each other design local plans through a constructive compliance process, we develop stronger local associations.

TSTA must continue to be forward-thinking and visionary, and TSTA's foundation is the local association, where we must build strong relationships between local and campus leaders and insure financial integrity to sustain our success. We must have that foundation to be the most influential organization for public school employees and public school policy.

Effective leaders understand that leadership is strongest when it is shared. Whatever the issue, we must give our members opportunities to be heard. The work that many of you have been doing truly pays off when you engage individually with your members and have them engage with each other.

Building the TSTA leadership bench is also critical to sustaining TSTA's success. Recruiting potential leaders has been a priority of mine, and it must remain a priority. The leadership curriculum that TSTA created during the past six years has trained individuals who will be leaders for many years to come, and every leader must share the responsibility to mentor and train the next generation of TSTA leadership.

We have prepared more than 350 new TSTA leaders through our regional trainings. For all our hard work, I say bravo and thank you. We can truly view the future positively when we bring new talent and energy into our association.

The past six years have been a great journey, as we have faced both opportunities and difficult challenges together. I look at those years as the beginning of TSTA's journey and look forward to seeing you take the next steps, as TSTA members doing your part to prepare another generation to lead our state to a vibrant future.

—Rita Haecker, TSTA President



MEMBERSHIP AWARDS: David Ring, president of Lubbock Educators Association, accepts awards for membership growth from TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria, NEA Secretary-Treasurer Becky Pringle, and TSTA President Rita Haecker. Read more about the awards presented at the state convention on page 8.

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## ADVOCATE

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# ‘You are my heroes,’ Davis tells TSTA delegates

**“With an economy as strong as Texas’, we should at least be paying our teachers the national average.”**

By their enthusiastic welcome, delegates to the TSTA Convention in San Marcos showed Wendy Davis and Leticia Van de Putte that they appreciate the work both have done on behalf of public schools, students, and educators and their determination to do more as governor and lieutenant governor, respectively.

The feelings clearly were mutual. “Everyday heroes. That’s who you are,” Davis said to the more than 500 teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and

other school employees in the crowd on April 12. “You are my heroes.”

Davis said she will continue to turn to educators on matters that concern schools. “My education vision is informed by the people in this room. You are the experts on education in this state,” she said.

To much applause and chants of “Wendy, Wendy,” Davis said she was “proud” to have filibustered against the \$5.4 billion in school budget cuts



in 2011. She and Van de Putte, both state senators, were instrumental in getting much of that funding restored last year and will continue advocating for public schools in higher office. Both candidates are endorsed by TSTA.

Davis contrasted her plan to provide pre-kindergarten for all eligible children to Republican gubernatorial candidate Greg Abbott’s proposal to create a limited pre-K program that could force 4-year-olds to take standardized tests (see related story, page 10).

“Four-year-olds should be coloring with crayons, not filling in bubbles with number two pencils,” she said to a standing ovation.

Davis also discussed her plan for en-

couraging the best and the brightest students to become teachers, and she called for better teacher pay.

“With an economy as strong as Texas’, we should at least be paying our teachers the national average,” she said. Teacher pay in Texas now lags about \$7,000 below the average.

Van de Putte, whose family members include several teachers, criticized Republican leaders for seeking to privatize public education and “rob our schools of precious resources.”

“Teaching is what will keep Texas strong,” she said. And she thanked teachers “for every time you dug into your pockets for school supplies or field trip money for those (students) who didn’t have it.”

“We heard our parents,” Van de Putte said, referring to a new state law, which she and Davis helped to pass, that reduces the number of end-of-course exams high school students must take to graduate. But, she warned, the fight against too much standardized testing isn’t over, particularly with Abbott now suggesting testing for pre-K students.

“For 4-year-olds? Really?” she said.

EDUCATION’S CANDIDATES: Sen. Wendy Davis (main photo, p. 4) and Sen. Leticia Van de Putte (main photo, p. 5) are TSTA’s endorsed candidates for governor and lieutenant governor, respectively. Both addressed delegates in San Marcos on April 12. Photos by TSTA staff and Wayland D. Clark, <http://wfotos.com>.





TSTA/NEA LEADERS: Vice President Noel Candelaria, who becomes president on July 15; Linda Estrada, who becomes an NEA director Sept. 1; TSTA President Rita Haecker; Ovidia Molina, who becomes vice president on July 15; and TSTA Executive Director Richard Kouri.

# TSTA/NEA officers change this summer

At the April state convention, President Rita Haecker recounted her successes during six years as TSTA's leader, including the recruitment of more than 30,000 new members and establishing a "pipeline" for training and developing upcoming leaders.

"Our members join us to create a better world for themselves and their students in our public school system," she said. "That is our vision, and that is the work that is the focus of our time, our energy, and our resources."

Following the speech, TSTA staff surprised Haecker with a moving video

tribute that was narrated by her long-time friend Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, whose sister, Annabelle Garcia, taught next door to Haecker for several years.

The video included heartfelt messages from the top NEA leaders with whom she has worked to advance TSTA and NEA goals. Haecker currently serves as a member of the NEA Leadership Design Team, which is led by NEA Secretary-Treasurer Becky Pringle.

In voting held during the convention, Noel Candelaria was elected TSTA president and Ovidia Molina, vice president. They begin three-year terms on

July 15. Linda Estrada was elected to the NEA Board of Directors for a three-year term that begins Sept. 1.

Candelaria, who has been TSTA vice president since July 2011, previously was president of the Ysleta Teachers Association and a special education teacher in Ysleta ISD.

He said he is "ready to lead the members of TSTA, organize all educators who teach our five million students, and urge our students' parents to join us in helping to shape a quality public education system in Texas."

Candelaria told his hometown newspaper, the El Paso Times, that he will focus on recruiting and retaining quality educators, encouraging members to be involved in school board elections, and urging officials to rethink standardized testing.

"We need to use testing for what it was intended — to analyze our instruction so we can adapt it to meet our students' needs," he told the Times. "Now it's used as a punishment instead of seeing what the needs of the campus and the students are."

Ovidia Molina is a TSTA Advisory Board member, vice chair of the TSTA/NEA Hispanic Caucus, Region 3B president, and treasurer and former president of Alief TSTA/NEA. She is an ESL and history teacher at O'Donnell Middle School in Alief ISD.

"Life has taught me to never give up... to speak up for myself, to stand up for what is right, and to help others," Molina said in her campaign statement. "I will work diligently to advance our great association."

Linda Estrada is a member of the TSTA Board of Directors and Advisory Committee, chair of the TSTA ESP Committee, and president of Donna TSTA/NEA. She is a campus secretary at Runn Elementary School in Donna ISD.

"I am looking forward to this new platform from which to continue my advocacy work for public schools, our students, and my fellow education employees," Estrada said.

Delegates also elected Ivette Gonzalez of the Ysleta Teachers Association to the administrator at-large position on the TSTA Board of Directors.

## OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS

Elections were held on April 12 at the TSTA House of Delegates in San Marcos.

Noel Candelaria of the Ysleta Teachers Association and Dale Kaiser of NEA-Dallas ran for TSTA president and first alternate NEA director. Candelaria was elected to a three-year term beginning July 15.

Ovidia Molina of Alief TSTA/NEA and Rae Nwosu of Education Austin ran for TSTA vice president and second alternate NEA director. Molina was elected to a three-year term beginning July 15.

Linda Estrada of Donna TSTA/NEA and Barbara Davis-Staley of Tyler Education Association ran for NEA director place 3. Estrada was elected to a three-year term beginning Sept. 1.

Ivette Gonzalez of the Ysleta Teachers Association ran unopposed for the administrator at-large position on the TSTA Board of Directors. She begins a two-year term on July 15.

## NOTICE OF FILING DEADLINE FOR NEA DIRECTOR

Nominations are open for NEA director for Texas place 2. The successful candidate will serve a three-year term on the NEA Board of Directors beginning Sept. 1, 2015, and will be a voting member of the TSTA Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 15, 2015.

The election for NEA director for Texas place 2 will be held at the April 2015 House of Delegates. Filing forms are available online at [tsta.org](http://tsta.org) under "TSTA Elections" in the Members Only area. Candidates may file for office no later than Sept. 15. For additional information, contact TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance at 316 West 12th Street, Suite 510, Austin, Texas 78701, or 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or 1510.

## BRIEFING: TIME TO SWITCH TO HOME EMAIL?

If you are receiving the Briefing electronic newsletter through your school email and would like to continue hearing from us during the summer, please email your name and home email address to Claire Moore at [clairem@tsta.org](mailto:clairem@tsta.org).

## Missed the state convention?

- Watch a slideshow of photos and videos: <http://tinyurl.com/m3qze2d>
- See our photos on Flickr: [www.flickr.com/photos/tstapublicaffairs/sets](http://www.flickr.com/photos/tstapublicaffairs/sets)
- View video clips on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TSTAeditor>



# Honoring the best

It's a tradition at the TSTA convention to honor a top teacher and education support professional; acknowledge excellent work by the media; and recognize outstanding efforts in social justice, communication, membership, and political action fundraising.

This year, Monica Washington, the Texarkana English teacher who was named Texas Teacher of the Year, won the Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award. The Winter 2013 Advocate included a cover story on her; it can be found online at [www.tsta.org/sites/default/files/preview.pdf](http://www.tsta.org/sites/default/files/preview.pdf).

The Ronnie Ray ESP Advocate of the Year Award went to Bobbie Cunningham, a custodian at Cypress Springs High School in Cypress Fairbanks ISD (see page 19).

Social Justice Awards were presented to:

- El Paso Teachers Association for its two-day community forum to discuss problems in the district and work on solutions;
- Education Austin for a wide range of projects, including efforts to stop charters, keep a school open, and support immigrant students; and
- Ruben Cortez, a member of the State Board of Education who has worked to stop vouchers and privatization.

TSTA's Pride in Communications Awards recognize outstanding communication efforts by local or regional associations. Edgewood Classroom Teachers Association won the award for best newsletter; Cy Fair TSTA/NEA won best website;



and Lubbock Educators Association won best electronic newsletter. Membership Awards were presented to Laredo United, Southwest Educators Association, Alice Local Association, NEA-Dallas, and Pecos-Barstow-Toyah (one award each); Lubbock Educators Association (two awards); Edinburg Local Association, Del Valle Education Association, New Caney Local Association, and Socorro Education Association (three awards); and Pharr-San Juan-Alamo TSTA Professional Association (four awards).

Winning Iggy Awards for political action fundraising during the convention

were Region 1B (most new continuing contributors), Region 2G (most upgrades), and Region 3D (greatest increase in contributions).

School Bell Awards, for outstanding work by the media in covering education issues, were presented to Alex Hinojosa, Andrew Kreighbaum, and Robert Moore, El Paso Times; Mark Wiggins, KVUE-TV, Austin; Terrence Stutz, The Dallas Morning News; Morgan Smith, Texas Tribune; Natalie Gross, Lubbock Avalanche-Journal; Ericka Mellon, Houston Chronicle; O. Ricardo Pimentel, San Antonio Express-News; and Sandra Sanchez, The Monitor.



ERMALÉE BOICE INSTRUCTIONAL ADVOCACY AWARD (opposite page): Monica Washington, Texas Teacher of the Year

PRIDE IN COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS: Edgewood Classroom Teachers Association (Lety Barbosa), Cy-Fair TSTA/NEA (Mary Stoner), and Lubbock Educators Association (Heather Gatlin).

SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARDS: Education Austin (Trasell Underwood), El Paso Teachers Association (Norma De La Rosa), and State Board of Education member Ruben Cortez (who was unable to attend but is shown on the screen in the El Paso photo).

POLITICAL ACTION AWARDS: Region 1B (Selena Valdez), Region 3D (Jessica Powell), and Region 2G (Norma De La Rosa).

SCHOOL BELL AWARDS: Alex Hinojosa of the El Paso Times, TSTA Public Affairs Specialist Clay Robison, and Mark Wiggins of KVUE-TV, Austin.



# Does pre-kindergarten really matter?

The two major party candidates for governor offer markedly different visions for the future of education in Texas, starting with the very beginning of a child's introduction to a classroom.

Republican nominee Greg Abbott has proposed a plan that would provide limited funding for a few half-day pre-kindergarten programs that agree to submit to state assessments of their effectiveness two times a year. The Abbott campaign suggested standardized testing for 4-year-olds as one assessment option, then tried to back away from that possibility in the face of a strong, hostile reaction. But Abbott stopped short of ruling it out entirely.

Recognizing the importance of early education to a child's academic success, Democratic nominee Wendy Davis, by contrast, has called for universal access to full-day pre-K and an expansion of early childhood reading programs. Davis' plan would include not only the lowest income children but also children from families that make more than 185 percent of the federal poverty level. They would pay for pre-K based on a sliding income scale.

"Every child in Texas deserves that fair shot, that good start," Davis told a cheering TSTA House of Delegates in San Marcos on April 12.

TSTA has applauded Davis' plan, which also is supported by Leticia Van de Putte, the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor. TSTA has endorsed both Davis and Van de Putte in their races for the state's top two offices.

"I know, without question, that early childhood education and pre-kindergarten programs provide a foundation that shapes a child's career in school and in life," said TSTA President Rita Haecker, a former first grade teacher.

Research has shown consistently that pre-kindergarten really does make a difference. Full-day pre-K has a greater impact than half-day. And pre-K is especially promising in closing the achievement gap for Hispanic and African American children, according to a brief issued by the National Education Policy Center on the academic and financial benefits of universal preschool programs.

"Wendy Davis has offered a 'Great

Start' education plan that recognizes every child is worth his or her weight in gold," Haecker said.

Abbott, meanwhile, has proposed a selective, so-called "gold standard" plan that would exclude thousands of students while making school districts that want to receive additional pre-K funding jump through two assessment hoops each year. And Abbott's plan would be limited to half-day programs.

The pre-K plan released by Abbott suggested three options for assessing pre-K students. First on the list were "norm

**Abbott's office continues to defend in court the state's inadequate and unfair school finance system, including \$5.4 billion the legislative majority cut from school budgets in 2011.**

referenced standardized tests," followed by observations and children's work examples.

Davis, who — along with many parents — opposes excessive standardized testing, sharply criticized the idea of "subjecting 4-year-olds to another intrusive, state-mandated requirement."

Haecker and other education leaders held a news conference in Austin to attack the idea of testing 4-year-olds and to take Abbott to task for suggesting pre-K programs allowed to operate without new state assessments were a "waste" of money.

"If you're serious about pre-K and

'waste,' stop going to court to defend the \$200 million cut from pre-K programs and settle the school finance lawsuit," Haecker challenged the attorney general.

Abbott's office continues to defend in court the state's inadequate and unfair school finance system, including \$5.4 billion the legislative majority cut from school budgets in 2011. Those cuts included \$200 million to pre-K programs, and Abbott's pre-K plan would provide less funding than the cuts he has defended.

Michelle Cardenas, a TSTA member and pre-K teacher at Hillcrest Elementary School in Del Valle ISD, knows firsthand the benefits of early childhood education. As soon as children enter the first grade, she said, "You can see the difference in kids who were in pre-K and those who weren't."

After a year in pre-K, she said, children "have started reading, they know their letters, they know their numbers. Many of the kids who didn't go to pre-K can't even hold a pencil correctly."

More than 90 percent of her students, Cardenas said, are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, the same as a growing majority of public school students statewide. She considered Abbott's remark about "waste" in pre-K programs an "insult."

"There's so much we do to help the kids improve their lives," she said. "People think that all we do at pre-K is play, but that's not true....We help give kids the great start they need."

*Clay Robison is TSTA's Public Affairs Specialist.*







# Hostile takeover attempt in Dallas ISD

By Clay Robison, Public Affairs Specialist

Names, as most people in the educational community already know, can be deceiving. This is particularly true in the continuing effort to privatize Texas public schools under the guise of so-called “education reform.”

On the March 4 primary election day, people representing a group called “Support Our Public Schools” showed up at polling places in Dallas, urging voters to sign petitions to “improve” schools in Dallas ISD.

“Support Our Public Schools,” of course, is a much more positive-sounding name than “Hijack Dallas ISD.” But the latter would have been more honest, because the real goal of the group is to convert DISD into a home-rule charter school district with a new governance structure that could abolish all employee contractual and grievance rights, ignore the minimum salary schedule, and repeal important learning standards, including class size limits.

What’s more, one of the group’s big financial backers is John Arnold, a former Enron trader, hedge fund manager, and Houston billionaire who also wants to abolish the defined-benefits pension plans that teachers and other public employees have earned. He wants to replace them with risky, 401(k)-style investment plans that, in a bad economy, could evaporate on the eve of a teacher’s planned retirement.

The conversion of a school district into

a home-rule charter district is allowed under a 1995 state law that has never been used. Such a change requires the approval of a district’s voters, but hardly any DISD voters knew “Support Our Public Schools” even existed until Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings announced he was supporting the home-rule goal. The mayor, who had been meeting privately with members of the group, told The Dallas Morning News that the effort was all about giving Dallas schools “flexibility,” including a longer instruction year.

It turns out, though, that Dallas ISD already can lengthen the school day or the school year under existing law. Some years ago, the district created a number of year-round schools but gave up on that idea after little noticeable improvement in overall student performance.

What the mayor calls “flexibility” under a home-rule charter would allow additional changes, including many that could be harmful to taxpayers, school employees, and the classroom learning environment. Depending on how a charter is written, these changes could include:

- Replacement of the elected DISD school board with an appointed governing board, which could be weighted to advance the interests of school privatization advocates.
- Elimination of employee contract rights, including due process and procedures for nonrenewals.
- Elimination of teacher planning and preparation time and duty-free lunch.
- Wiping out the state salary schedule.
- Elimination of class size limits, except for campuses rated “academically unacceptable.”
- “Freedom” to ignore state stu-

dent discipline and parental rights requirements.

To get the home-rule issue on the November ballot in Dallas, “Support Our Public Schools” must collect about 25,000 signatures or 5 percent of the DISD’s registered voters. If the petition drive is successful, the Dallas ISD board would have to appoint a charter review commission of 15 members to draft a proposed charter, spelling out how the district would be governed and operated. The state education commissioner also would have to approve the charter before it is placed on the ballot.

The results of the petition drive had not been announced when this issue of the Advocate went to press.

But the surprise announcement of the charter effort and the mayor’s endorsement of the proposal were greeted with a lot of anger from educators, parents, taxpayers, and other community leaders in Dallas, all of whom were taken by surprise and, like TSTA, immediately suspicious of the group’s motives. Some city council and school board members pushed back, and Dallas ISD Superintendent Mike Miles said such a radical transformation wasn’t necessary to improve the district.

When concerned citizens began questioning Mayor Rawlings about the effort at a community meeting, he walked out. The mayor later apologized for the handling of the charter idea. But supporters of the proposed radical change still had not fully explained what they wanted to do, why they had not consulted beforehand with the real education experts — teachers — and why they felt the need to be sneaky about advancing an idea

with huge implications for students, educators, and taxpayers.

TSTA Public Affairs Director Ed Martin called the home rule campaign a “front to let a Houston billionaire named John Arnold and the mayor take over neighborhood schools and impose a system that hands them over to profit-driven charter operators.”

The people behind this effort, he added, “are openly hostile to those who teach and work every day to educate young people and provide them a safe and healthy learning environment.”

Martin said the pro-charter group has shown no interest in the three key factors that research has consistently shown to improve student performance:

- universal full-day pre-kindergarten for all children
- smaller class sizes
- guaranteeing a qualified teacher for every child and classroom

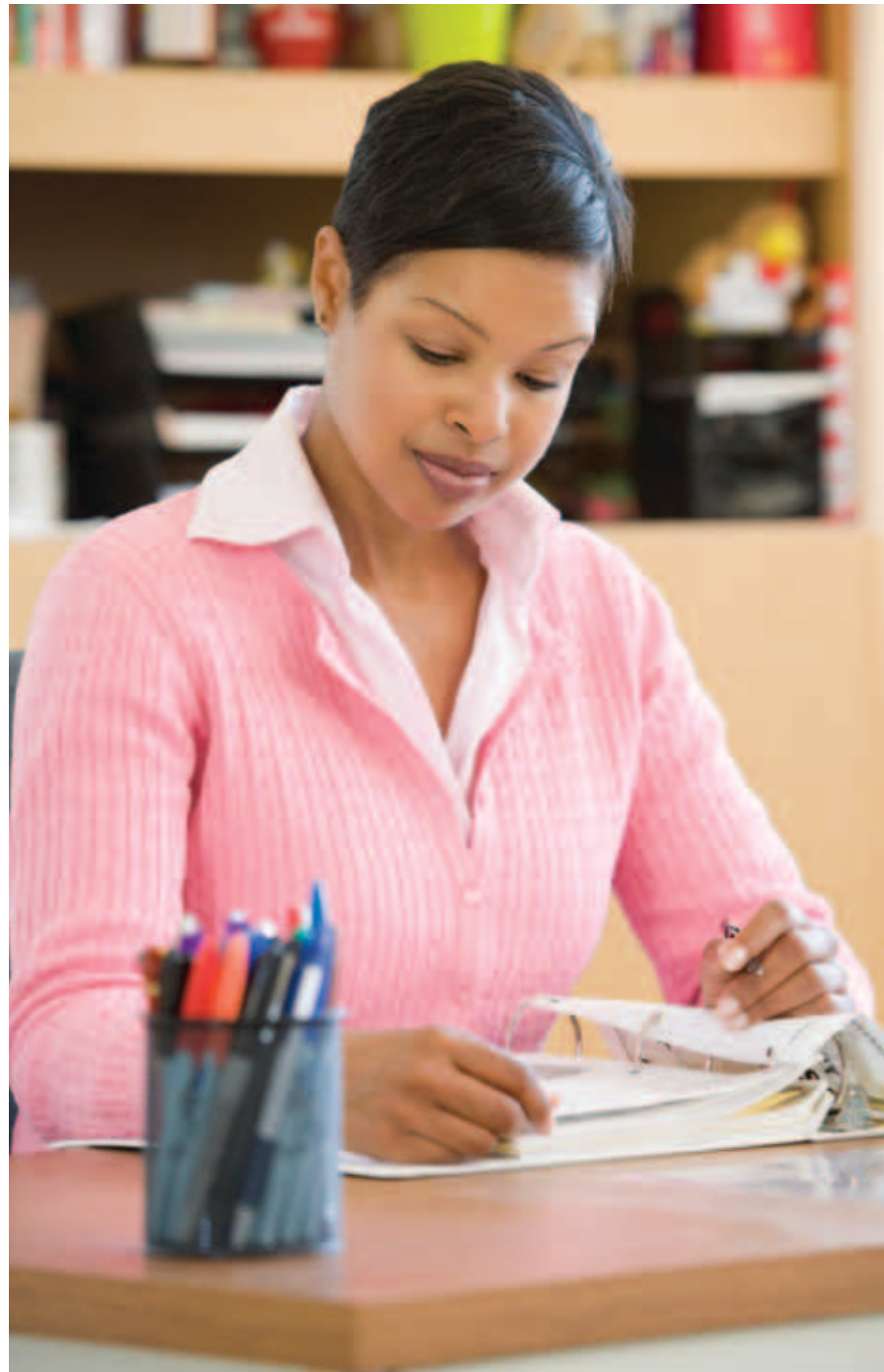
In 2011, the legislative majority cut \$108.4 million from Dallas ISD and \$5.4 billion from school districts statewide. The cuts resulted in teachers losing their jobs, the closing of 11 Dallas ISD schools, and thousands of DISD students being placed in overcrowded classrooms.

“Where were Mayor Rawlings, John Arnold, and the other leaders of ‘Support Our Public Schools’ when the budget cuts came down?” asked NEA-Dallas President Angela Davis. “Instead of demanding that state legislators give our public schools the real support they need — an adequate and fair funding system — they are promoting radical, unproven changes that would undermine the learning environment for Dallas children.”



# Four rights you may not even know you have

By Elizabeth Poole, TSTA General Counsel



Whether you are a seasoned professional or new to the classroom, you may be unaware that you have the following rights:

## ASSAULT LEAVE

The Texas Education Code makes clear that any employee of a school district who is physically assaulted while performing his or her duties is entitled to up to two years of paid leave to recuperate from all physical injuries sustained as a result of the assault.

An employee who believes he or she is entitled to assault leave must be proactive in requesting that his or her absence from work be considered assault leave. Upon receipt of the request, the district is obligated to place the employee on assault leave. However, the district has the right to investigate the incident and determine if assault leave is appropriate.

A person is physically assaulted if the person who caused the injury could be prosecuted for assault. That means that he or she acted intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly. It is considered an assault under the Texas Education Code even if the person causing the injury could not be prosecuted for assault because of age or mental incapacity.

Leave taken pursuant to assault leave cannot be deducted from the

employee's accrued personal leave, and the district is required to coordinate with any workers' compensation benefits that the employee receives so that the employee is receiving 100 percent of his or her rate of pay.

## REMOVAL OF A STUDENT FROM CLASS OR THE BUS

Teachers and bus drivers have the authority to remove unruly students from their classroom or bus. A teacher may send a student to the principal's office to maintain effective discipline in the classroom. Similarly, a school bus driver transporting students to or from school or a school-sponsored activity may send a student to the principal's office to maintain effective discipline on the bus. In both cases, the principal is required to respond by disciplining the student in accordance with the district's student code of conduct.

A teacher has the right to seek permanent removal of a student from class if the student has been documented by the teacher to repeatedly interfere with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the other students in the class or with the ability of the student's classmates to learn. A student may also be removed following a one-time event that the teacher determines is "unruly, disruptive, or abusive." If a student's behavior is keeping his or her classmates from learning and is interfering with the teacher's ability to teach, it may be necessary to seek the removal of the student. In order to make the removal happen, the teacher should provide the principal with documentation of the incident(s), and then ask that the student be removed in accordance with the Texas Education Code.

A student cannot be returned to class unless the teacher consents or the campus's Placement Review Committee determines that returning the student is the best or only alternative. The Placement Review Committee is a three-person committee that is made up of two people chosen by campus faculty and one person appointed by the principal. The teacher who is seeking the removal of the student cannot serve on the committee.

## DUTY-FREE LUNCH

Classroom teachers and full-time librarians are entitled to a 30-minute lunch period free from all duties and responsibilities connected with the instruction and supervision of students. A district cannot even require the teacher or librarian to remain on school property during his or her lunch break.

There are only a few exceptions to the right to a duty-free lunch. If the district is experiencing a personnel shortage, extreme economic conditions, or an unavoidable or unforeseen circumstance, the district may require a classroom teacher or librarian to supervise students during lunch. Even then, the district may only require this lunch duty one day a week.

Statewide testing is not unforeseen! When it comes to testing, it's best to plan ahead. Teachers and librarians should collaborate with administration to create a testing schedule that protects their right to a duty-free lunch.

## PLANNING AND PREPARATION TIME

Within each two-week period, a classroom teacher is entitled to at least 450

minutes of time for instructional preparation, which includes planning, parent-teacher conferences, and time to evaluate students' work. Frequently, teachers are given one 45-minute period every day, but it is also acceptable for planning and preparation periods to occur less frequently but for a longer length of time, e.g., 90 minutes every other day.

A district cannot schedule the planning period before or after school, or cobble together 45 minutes out of several smaller breaks during the day, because the law requires that a planning period may not be less than 45 minutes long, and it must be scheduled during the instructional day.

Planning and preparation time is reserved for the teacher, and he or she may not be required to participate in any other activity. That means a district cannot require a teacher to participate in team meetings or ARDs during time that is designated for planning and preparation. A teacher can always agree to participate in meetings, but should not be pressured into doing so.

The TSTA legal services department hopes that your school district respects your right to a safe work environment and allows you the time you need to fully prepare for your students; however, if you feel that your rights are being violated, you can discuss your concerns with your local association or with the TSTA Help Center by calling our toll-free number, 877-ASK-TSTA.

*Elizabeth Poole is TSTA's General Counsel and Director of Legal Services.*



# El Paso program Tú Libro gives books to children not served by libraries

By Ramón Rentería, El Paso Times



Some children call Georgina C. Perez the libro lady.

At 39, Perez — an eighth-grade language arts teacher at Riverside Middle School — is emerging as a literacy folk hero of sorts.

Perez is the founder and inspiration behind Tú Libro, a grassroots effort to collect and distribute free books to children across El Paso County, especially in impoverished rural areas and colonias where libraries often do not exist.

“Anywhere there’s a kid, there should

be books,” Perez said. “You cannot have a healthy lifestyle without nutrition or education.”

Perez became a literacy activist in recent years when she started working with Chicano author Dagoberto Gilb and other educators urging Texas to include Mexican-American literature and culture in the public school curriculum.

Ana Reza is the program director for Books Are Gems, an El Paso nonprofit organization that gives free books to children, teachers, home-school

parents, and others. She has been setting aside books for Tú Libro.

“She’s doing literacy activism, so it just seemed like a natural fit for us,” Reza said.

An outspoken individual and teacher, Perez said she became increasingly ticked off when the El Paso City Council voted in August to establish fees ranging from \$25 to \$50 for non-city residents who check out materials from city libraries.

“The city just pissed me off,” Perez said. “How do you tell little kids, ‘No, you can’t take this book home because of your address?’”

Perez figured the city’s decision is counterproductive to what teachers are doing to try to improve high school dropout rates and low literacy levels in a region that also has struggled historically with high poverty rates.

“Do we really need to be taxing literature?” she said.

So, Perez launched Tú Libro to promote literacy, especially in outlying areas where some families do not have a home library. Tú Libro also serves as a platform to advocate for including Mexican-American literature and culture in public schools.

Perez used social media and launched

a website, TuLibro915.com, to promote the cause and tell people where they can donate or drop off books. Her garage is rapidly filling up with boxes overflowing with donated books.

“People sometimes don’t realize what’s happening to kids because of a lack of libraries in their communities,” she said. “If you love to read, you’ll love education. And if you love education, you become an active participant in the world that you live in.”

Perez’s idea is that children who receive a free book can either keep it or share it with a cousin or friend. She often urges people to buy or donate books or money or collect books to help support literacy in rural areas.

Jaime Abeytia, in charge of El Paso County’s constituent services and outreach in Precinct 3, said he’s trying to set up some Tú Libro book giveaways in the Lower Valley.

Nancy Hill, associate library director for technical services at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), often donates surplus or no longer needed books to the Tú Libro campaign.

“Being a library in an educational institution, we feel literacy is of primary importance. And we’ll support reading efforts whenever we can,” Hill said. “Reading is important throughout life.”

Dennis Bixler-Márquez, the director of Chicano studies at UTEP, has set up a Tú Libro collection box near the program’s offices.

“The colonias have a young population that generally does not have the

same level of access to books and audio visual materials that the urban population has,” he said. “There’s other efforts going on, but I don’t think there’s anything like Georgina has undertaken. It’s a very laudable effort and we’re glad to support it.”

Perez grew up in a large extended family in El Paso’s Lower Valley, where she spent much time with her father and maternal grandmother after her parents divorced. She said her father — Joe Perez, a former Texaco refinery worker now in the railroad industry — served as an inspiration.

“My dad has always been labor and union and helping people that need help and fighting for people who don’t have a voice,” she said. “If you had more than enough, then you had an obligation and responsibility to help others. Growing up, it was just a way of life.”

Perez acknowledged that she was not a model student until Mike Martinez, then a teacher at Eastwood High School and now the Riverside High School principal, urged her to change her negative attitude. She graduated in 1982 from Eastwood.

“Before him, my dream was to not get in a fight before the end of the school day,” she said. “Even with all the love at home, I was still insecure and had low self-esteem and was getting in trouble.”

In high school, Perez always argued that she and other Mexican-American students could not relate to the literature they were being taught.

Perez also is the El Paso coordinator of

Librotraficante, a Texas activist organization seeking to restore banned Mexican-American literature in Arizona public schools. Most recently, she joined other educators at a Texas State Board of Education meeting in Austin to emphasize the importance of Mexican American studies in public schools.

Gina Nuñez, an associate professor of sociology and anthropology at UTEP, also has endorsed Tú Libro as a worthy cause.

“Georgina’s effort to bring books to these communities is quite commendable,” Nuñez said. “The effort to gather books is really important, particularly books that are significant culturally or historically to our population.”

Nuñez suggests that part of the problem for rural communities and colonias is that they often lack libraries and that if they have them the libraries tend to be small or underfunded.

“We have very few children’s books written about and for Latinos. If children don’t see themselves represented in books, how are we going to expect them to embrace literacy?” Nuñez said. “Literacy has implications for the quality of life in many societies.”

So, Perez keeps advocating on behalf of children and books, keeps asking anyone who will listen to support the cause.

“All I’m doing is taking books to kids,” she said. “Knowledge is the one thing that no one can take away from you.”

*Georgina Perez is a member of the Ysleta Teachers Association. Reprinted with permission from the El Paso Times.*





# ESP hold statewide conference

**“We need to make sure that politicians at every level know us. When we stand together and speak with a united voice, they hear us.”**

“We don’t stick up for ourselves,” Donna Schulze of Maryland, the 2013 NEA Education Support Professional of the Year, said at TSTA’s statewide ESP Conference April 13 in San Marcos.

“We need to be standing front and center when budget issues come up. We need to raise our voice. We need the local school boards to know we deserve a living wage,” Schulze, who has been a paraeducator for 24 years, said.

“We know that all positions have a direct impact on the quality of our schools and the quality of education our students receive,” she continued.

“We need to make sure that politicians at every level — in local, state, and federal government — know us. When we stand together and speak with a united voice, they hear us.”

This year’s conference theme was “Education: we are all in this together,” and in her address, TSTA President Rita Haecker emphasized the importance of having the entire education family involved in the association.

She reported that, for the fourth year in a row, TSTA has led all NEA state affiliates in recruiting ESPs.

“Power is built through relationships, and strong relationships are built upon shared values. Our values inspire us to lead the fight for positive changes in our schools and for our members,” she said.

“Our working environment is our students’ learning environment. When we improve one, we improve both. In doing so, we will create a great public school for every child in Texas,” Haecker said.



ESPS OF THE YEAR: NEA ESP of the Year Donna Schulze and TSTA ESP of the Year Bobbie Cunningham.

## ESP OF THE YEAR OFFERS STUDENTS HOPE AND MOTIVATION

“It has been awesome being a custodian,” said Bobbie Cunningham — or, as she is better known at Cypress Springs High School, “Miss Bobbie.”

“I just love the interaction with the children. It boosts me up,” she said. “I hear ‘Miss Bobbie’ all day long. ‘Good morning, Miss Bobbie.’ ‘How are you doing, Miss Bobbie?’ ‘Miss Bobbie, we heard about your award!’ All day long!”

She starts each day by greeting students as they arrive for class and making coffee for the staff. “They look forward to the little things I do for them,” she said. “I just love serving Cy Springs.”

Cunningham’s nurturing personality

draws students to her. During the 2013-14 Seniors’ Awards Night, a former student spoke about the difference she made in his life, describing her as “a beacon of light that gives hope and motivation coupled with the truth to the Cypress Springs High School family.”

“The children that have passed my way in the past 17 years...I can’t even begin to tell you the stories,” Cunningham said, but there is one young man that she said stands out in her memory.

“He had written a poem about his father, and it was 6:30 in the morning and he asked me to listen to it,” she said. “He was talking from his heart — it was a broken family — and I just started crying.”

Cunningham apologized, but he shook his head. “Let me stop you and tell you right now: you can’t hide who you are. It’s okay to cry,” he told her.

“The more I think about that — you can’t hide who you are — you can’t,” she said. “It’s impossible. The more you try to cover up, the more it’s going to come out.”

Since that day, she has shared his words with other students and staff who are going through a difficult time, to encourage them to be proud of who they are.

Cunningham, who has worked for Cypress-Fairbanks ISD since 1985, received the association’s top honor for ESPs, the Ronnie Ray ESP Advocate of the Year Award, at the TSTA Convention in April.

She has always been a union member and advocate for worker rights, starting in Alabama, where she worked in the medical field. When she moved to Texas, she looked for a new union home.

“When I heard about the TSTA, I said, ‘Wow, I’ve got to join that,’” Cunningham said. “I found out the TSTA really helps all employees, not just the teachers (but) everybody...and I just got in it because I knew it was something I needed to do to help serve better.”

## Did you know?

The TSTA ESP of the Year is Texas’ nominee for NEA ESP of the Year. Get the details at [www.nea.org/home/46497.htm](http://www.nea.org/home/46497.htm) and [www.tsta.org/news-center/awards-grants#esp](http://www.tsta.org/news-center/awards-grants#esp).





# Read Across America starts in Texas

CELEBRATING LITERACY: Clockwise from bottom left are scenes from Laredo, Austin, Donna (with NEA Executive Committee member Princess Moss), and Edinburg. Photos by TSTA Vice President Noel Candelaria.

NEA chose Texas to kick off its national “Cat-a-van” tour for Read Across America. NEA’s award-winning literacy program is celebrated across the nation on or near the March 2 birthday of Dr. Seuss (whose “The Cat in the Hat” was the inspiration for the tour’s name).

The Texas tour — carrying an ever-changing roster of NEA leaders, TSTA President Rita Haecker, and Vice President Noel Candelaria — started at Rivas Elementary in Donna on the last week of February.

Other stops included Jefferson Elementary in Edinburg; Milton and Muller Elementaries in Laredo; Spicewood Park and Vestal Elementaries in San Antonio’s Southwest ISD and Harlandale ISD; Metz Elementary in Austin; and Hillcrest Elementary in Del Valle.

At each stop the celebration was slightly different, but most included guests reading to students, an appearance by Thing 1 and Thing 2, presentation of a \$500 check to the school’s library, and a pledge by the children to read and brush their teeth — because this year’s tour was sponsored by Renaissance Dental ([www.renaissance-dental.com](http://www.renaissance-dental.com)).



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES: Corina Cortez, Delia Garcia, and Diane Gonzales Bertrand discuss women’s leadership.

## WOMEN LEARN LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN SAN ANTONIO

TSTA President Rita Haecker welcomed more than 30 TSTA/NEA leaders from the San Antonio area to Women’s Leadership Development Training April 5.

Participating on a panel about challenges and opportunities for women’s leadership were Diana Gonzales Bertrand, writer in residence at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio; Corina Cortez, special assistant to NEA Executive Director John Stocks; and Delia Garcia, senior liaison in NEA’s Center for Advocacy and Outreach.

Catherine Beane, senior policy analyst in NEA’s Human and Civil Rights Department, and Jill Showman, an English teacher in Alaska, talked about “Leading for Change.”

Andy Hernandez, community development manager for Methodist Health Care Ministries of San Antonio, and Rebecca Viagran, a member of the San Antonio City Council, spoke about “Taking Action in Texas.”

Other speakers included Christian Clark of the Institute of Texan Cultures and Municipal Court Judge Sharyll Teneyuca.



## LUBBOCK APPROVES 45-DAY NOTICE OF NONRENEWAL

Following a presentation by Lubbock Educators Association President David Ring, the Lubbock ISD school board voted 5-0 in February to reinstate 45-day notice of contract non-renewal. LEA, the superintendent, and board members had been meeting on language for several weeks.



## EDUCATION AUSTIN WINS THREE-YEAR CONTRACTS

Effective organizing — and school board election wins — resulted in a huge victory for Education Austin this spring, when the Austin ISD school board voted 5-4 to restore three-year contracts for teachers and librarians. At a rally outside the meeting, members wore red stickers that said, simply, “3.”



## SOLIS WINS H-E-B ELEMENTARY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Nicholas Solis won the Elementary Leadership category of the H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards Program. It carries a \$10,000 prize and \$10,000 for his school, Hillcrest Elementary in Del Valle ISD. See [facebook.com/HEBExcellenceinEducationAwards](https://facebook.com/HEBExcellenceinEducationAwards) for details.



## ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON EDUCATION

Sen. Wendy Davis met with Sen. Jose Rodriguez and a group of TSTA members from El Paso for a roundtable discussion on education and other issues in March. To learn more about the gubernatorial candidate’s platform on public education, visit her website, [www.wendydavistexas.com](http://www.wendydavistexas.com).



## IN MEMORY OF GEORGE BORREGO

Delegates to the state convention honored longtime TSTA leader George Borrego of Brownsville who died in October. He was an economics teacher at Gladys Porter High School and a member of the Association of Brownsville Educators.



## WIN UP TO \$3,000 FOR ATHLETICS

Adams High School in Dallas received a \$1,500 California Casualty Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant. The grants support public high school sports programs that have suffered budget cuts. Applications are due Jan. 15. [www.calcas.com/web/calcasathleticsgrant](http://www.calcas.com/web/calcasathleticsgrant)





AT THE STUDENT PROGRAM CONVENTION: TSTA staff liaison Clinton Gill, TSTA SP President Brandon Swaringim and President-Elect Katie Bruno, TSTA President Rita Haecker and Vice President Noel Candelaria. NEA Student Program Chair David Tjaden was the keynote speaker.



# Students urged to stand up for public schools

We are inspired by banquet speakers but we seldom put what they say into action, NEA Student Program Chair David Tjaden said at the TSTA Student Program Convention March 21-23 in Austin.

He urged the student leaders to use the training and information they received at the convention to “engage students on your campuses, build a stronger program, and build a stronger voice for future educators.”

“We have the opportunity to say that no longer are we going to let corporate interests or a politician’s agenda... tell us our schools are failing,” Tjaden said. “We are professionals, and we deserve to start being treated like it; we deserve to start being paid like it; and we deserve to start getting autonomy over our classrooms and our schools, because, darn it, we are great teachers.”

While at the convention, the student leaders were trained in legal rights, team building, classroom management, and technology in the classroom.

They also elected new officers to one-year terms that begin July 15:

- Katie Bruno, University of Houston at Clear Lake (UHCL), state president
- Kaitlin Nickolas, UHCL, state vice president
- Shelby Murphy, Lamar University, state secretary
- Shannen Miller, Texas A&M University, District 2 president
- Evelyn Flores, UHCL, District 3 president
- Nicole Griffin, Texas Wesleyan University, District 4 president
- Effy Stockton, Texas Tech University, District 5 president

- Brenda Vidana, University of Texas at El Paso, District 6 president

Speakers for the event were Tjaden, TSTA President Rita Haecker, and Vice President Noel Candelaria. Awards were presented at the Saturday night banquet:

- Local excellence: UHCL
- Student leader: Katie Bruno, UHCL
- Local advisor: Dr. Jana Willis, UHCL
- Scrapbook (large local): UHCL
- Scrapbook (small local): San Jacinto College
- Newsletter: Texas A&M University
- T-shirt: UHCL
- Project: UHCL

For more information on the Student Program, see <http://tsta.org/for-members/affiliates/tsta-student-program>.

## CLEAR LAKE SHINES AT STATE MEET

“This is the largest group we’ve had in awhile, and I think it’s because the kids are all engaged,” Dr. Jana Willis said of the student chapter at the University of Houston at Clear Lake (UHCL).

The chapter’s energy was evident at the TSTA Student Program’s state convention in Austin, where UHCL swept the awards program, taking six top prizes including local excellence.

Willis was named outstanding local advisor, and Katie Bruno, outstanding local student leader. UHCL members won three state positions, as well: Bruno, state president; Kaitlin Nickolas, state vice president; and Evelyn Flores, District 3 president.

Willis said holding meetings that students actually *want* to attend has helped build the chapter. “We make sure every meeting includes professional development, which they have to have for most of their methods classes and to put in their portfolios,” she said.

Although the college has an outstanding faculty, “The kids have all seen them, so there’s not that draw,” Willis said, so she brings in outside speakers from neighboring school districts.

For example, the human resources person from Pearland explained how to write a resume, what to expect from a job fair, and how the hiring process works. Another speaker held a “make-and-take” session in which students created decorations for the classroom.

This year’s breakout sessions at the district convention included working with gifted and talented, how to handle the first day of school, and using iPads in the classroom.



Last summer, the chapter sent two members, Nickolas and Bruno (shown above in the front row, right end), to the NEA Representative Assembly.

“They got so excited about seeing people from all over the United States who were like them, who were really passionate about education and wanted to be the kind of teachers they want to be,” Willis said.

They were so inspired by Outreach to Teach, the annual event in which delegates renovate an area school, that they replicated it on a smaller scale in two classrooms at Lawhon Elementary in Pearland ISD and two classrooms at Longfellow Elementary in Alvin ISD.



Volunteers created bulletin boards, decorated walls and doors, hung curtains for a reading area, built stools — and raised \$1,000 to buy the materials.

The interaction with practicing teachers was invaluable, Willis said.

“It’s good for them to see what first year teachers are struggling with,” she said. In one of the classrooms the students worked on, the teacher quit mid-year and her intern became the teacher. The intern had just graduated in December, so she was very close in age to the UHCL students.

“They’re realizing they’re almost teachers now,” Willis said. “This is what their world is going to be like.”





# Retired members have been busy!

**In the news:** One of the hot issues now is TRS Care health insurance. On Feb. 3, several TSTA-Retired members attended an Austin Teacher Retirement System subcommittee meeting on the issue. This is a continuous battle for retired as well as active TSTA members, and TSTA-Retired encourages all educators to follow the debate and take action when needed. You can learn more on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/TSTAR.NEAR>, and the TRS website, [www.trs.state.tx.us](http://www.trs.state.tx.us).

**NEA-Retired National Organizing Conference:** On March 25-27, approximately 300 retired members from all over the United States attended the NEA-Retired National Organizing Conference, which was hosted by TSTA-Retired at the Westin Galleria in Houston.

Our work began in January, when Houston area retired members —

chaired by Betty Jo Brown, assisted by JoAnne Peschel — began compiling materials. They not only put together fantastic host bags filled with Texas goodies, they planned a “Taste of Texas” bus tour to give out-of-state guests an opportunity to see some of the sights of Houston and taste local cuisine. Attendees loved the materials and host bags and commented on how well the conference was organized. TSTA-Retired appreciates all the members who came out to help.

**Meetings and elections:** On Feb. 24, TSTA-R staff member Gerald Haschke and President Louise Watkins held an organizing meeting in San Antonio to bring together members from several retired locals. The meeting was successful, and those present elected regional officers for the next two years — Barbara Franklin as president of Region 1B and Patricia Budak as

president of Regions 2D-E. They will represent their regions on the TSTA-R Board of Directors.

Elections for state TSTA-R treasurer and secretary also were held this spring; Katherine Milano was reelected secretary, and Diane Wilkerson was elected treasurer.

Three delegates will represent TSTA-R in Denver at the NEA-Retired national meeting: Louise Watkins, Johnetta Williams, and Bobbie Duncan.

Twenty-four elected delegates attended the state TSTA convention April 11-12 in San Marcos. Many retirees came in early for the TSTA-R Annual Meeting, which began on April 8; they participated in workshops, one by TSTA staff member Mark Maldonado on how retired members can become more involved in the association, especially in such areas as politics, and an-



other by Antonio Galindo of NEA Member Benefits on how your membership can save you money (see [www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com) to learn more).

**Quilt fundraiser:** Once again, the major fundraiser for the year was a quilt raffle, and it was a huge success. The quilt was an exceptionally gor-


geous one, and ticket sales went extremely well. The quilt, which sported a Texas theme, was given away at the end of the TSTA convention to one of our own retired members, Lois Stephens of Longview. The quilt raffle would not have been as successful without the hard work of the chair of the fundraising committee, Johnetta Williams.

**SPRINGTIME ACTIVITIES:** Left page, TSTA-Retired delegates attended the TSTA Convention, President Louise Watkins met Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, and Lois Stephens won the quilt fundraiser. Right page, Texas hosted the NEA-Retired National Organizing Conference in Houston.

**Please update your contact information:** TSTA-R is in the process of updating its membership files. If you have had a change of address, phone number, or email address, please call it in to the TSTA office using the toll-free number, 877-ASK-TSTA.

If you initially joined TSTA-Retired as pre-retired, you may have submitted your school email address, which no longer works.

*Louise Watkins is president of TSTA-Retired.*



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\*National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Digest of Education Statistics, 2011.

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# The engines of intellect

What would you think if I told you questioning is an integral part of the practice of teaching, but not so much a part of today's profession of teaching?

By Bryan Weatherford, Teaching and Learning Specialist

The importance of effective questioning in the learning process is well researched. Teachers are schooled in how to frame questions, how to respond to questions, how to interpret questions, and how to use them as an instructional strategy to assess learning. Teachers also understand the significance of students asking and answering questions, especially ones that demonstrate a deeper level of thinking and a higher degree of understanding.

Equally important, however, are the questions teachers ask in the context of their profession outside of the class-

room — the questions they ask of decision-makers, supervisors, and one another. Innovation guru Clayton Christensen has observed that questioning is often seen as “inefficient” by those who are anxious because they feel they don’t have time to question what they are doing. Still others fear questioning could jeopardize their job security, should the act of raising a hand and asking a question be viewed as uninformed, challenging, or even insubordinate.

The unspoken maxim “yours is not to question why, yours is just to do or

die” illustrates the culture of conformity and obedience mandated by the standardized “one size fits all” of the high-stakes testing era rather than one of innovation and risk-taking. Furthermore, it runs counter to the expectations of what should happen in the classroom, where students are expected to demonstrate varying degrees of risk-taking in the learning process. Indeed, learning is risk-taking, and the questions teachers ask should have a profound impact on what is happening in their classrooms.

In his book “Beyond the Obvious,” Phil McKinney writes that we make the er-

roneous assumption that the person who has the answer is smarter than the one who asks the questions. Questions, not answers, spawn innovation. Questions, not answers, move us to a deeper level of knowledge. And questions, not answers, help us find solutions. Getting to the right answer begins by asking the right questions.

The desire to ask questions shows a higher level of thought than answering the question, because it demonstrates an acceptance and awareness that our own knowledge is not complete. Here are a few questions — some obvious and some not so obvious — that teachers should ask as part of their professional practice.

- Why are we doing this? Clarity and understanding minimize confusion, engender commitment, foster accountability, and emphasize results.
- Why are we not doing better? The answer to this question is not “We just need to work harder.” The answer to this question begins with an honest understanding of what challenges one faces and a frank dialogue about that with all stakeholders.
- What’s trending in public education and best practices for the classroom? Teachers must develop an awareness of what is changing in their profession and the content they teach so they are transformative rather than reactive in their practices.
- How do we transform our school culture to tap into the creativity and imagination of all stakeholders? The word “transform” is a scary word in an environment as hierarchical as our public schools, and the question itself challenges the current paradigm where teachers are seen more as

widgets and less as thinkers.

- Why am I suddenly the villain? There is a propensity to “blame the teacher” when our schools don’t perform, because the lion’s share of the work in our public schools is done by the teacher. Polling shows the public holds teachers in high regard, but “accountability” measures tend to blame teachers, even though accountability is a two-way street — you can’t teach in the 21st century without the resources needed to reach and teach today’s students.
- Why don’t we value teachers? This question touches on both the tangible and intangible “value.” From a tangible perspective, the average salary for a Texas teacher was \$50,967, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (May 2013), compared to an average salary of \$80,895 for those in Texas with a job requiring a bachelor’s degree. From an intangible perspective, teachers are least likely to feel that their input has value in their workplace according to “The State of America’s Schools: The Path to Winning Again in Education.”
- What about my own children? Teachers have families, yet too often the mandates placed on them to meet, plan, train, and tutor take teachers away from their own families. We want parents engaged in their children’s education, and we must also allow teachers the time to be engaged with their own children’s education.
- Are you passionate about what you do? How would your principal respond to this question? Just as teachers are feeling the pressure to “conform to perform,” so do principals. If your passion for teaching is waning, your principal’s passion as

an instructional leader may be doing the same thing.

- How might we reignite our passion for teaching? Public education accountability has reduced teachers to FTE (full-time equivalents) and students to WADA (Weighted Average Daily Attendance) units. In this era, it is easy to understand why that passion for teaching and learning is waning, but teachers and their students must find ways to rediscover it, together.
- What are you going to do to help me be successful? This question shifts the relationship between teacher and appraiser by placing the onus of responsibility for improving teacher effectiveness on the appraiser as an instructional leader. Enhancing teacher effectiveness should not be punitive, and it should not be a journey the teacher takes in isolation.

The historian David Hackett Fischer stated that questions are “the engines of intellect, the cerebral machines which convert energy to motion, and curiosity to controlled inquiry.” As practitioners in a thinking profession, we cannot stay on autopilot, doing only what we are told and accepting what we are told at face value.

In education, demographics shift; funding fluctuates; requirements and mandates create additional burdens — all to the point that change is a constant. Across this sea of change, inquiry is perhaps the most powerful tool for reform and transformation that we possess because it forces us to do the one thing we want our students to do: THINK. Rather than fear it or dismiss it, we need to embrace the art of questioning and let it work for us.

*Bryan Weatherford is TSTA’s Teaching and Learning Specialist.*





a child has many feelings...



hunger shouldn't be one of them.



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- We are fighting efforts to base teacher evaluation and pay on standardized test scores.
  - TSTA’s “Fair Share” health insurance campaign stopped a mid-year premium increase while demanding that the state and local school districts pay their fair share of the rising cost of health insurance.
  - Through our “Respect” campaign, we are working for due process and a salary schedule for all school employees.
  - TSTA protected the Teacher Retirement System “defined benefit” retirement plan and won the first cost-of-living adjustment for retirees in 12 years.
  - Our “Stop the Cuts” campaign helped restore over \$3.4 billion in state school funding cuts, and TSTA locals demanded that local school boards use those dollars for better pay.
  - TSTA defeated vouchers and is fighting corporate charter takeover of neighborhood schools.

## TSTA: Power in Numbers



TSTA/NEA

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION/NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

877-ASK-TSTA • www.tsta.org

2014-15 ENROLLMENT FORM

Please return this completed form to your Association Representative, fax to 512-486-7052, or mail to TSTA Membership Department, 316 W. 12th St., Austin, Texas 78701-1892. You can also join online at <https://www.mytsta.org>. If you have questions, call 877-ASK-TSTA.

NAME

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

DATE OF BIRTH (M/D/Y)

ADDRESS

LOCAL ASSOCIATION

HIRE DATE (M/D/Y)

CITY

STATE

ZIP

NAME OF ISD

EMAIL AT HOME

CAMPUS/WORKSITE

EMAIL AT WORK

POSITION (I.E. CLASSROOM TEACHER, LIBRARIAN, BUS DRIVER, ETC.)

AREA CODE

HOME PHONE

AREA CODE

CELL PHONE

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ANNUAL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS	AMOUNT
	1. Professional Dues—TSTA/NEA (Active)	\$481.00
	Professional Dues—New to the profession	\$332.00
	2. Educational Support Dues—Full-time (more than 20 hours/week)	\$259.50
	3. Educational Support Dues—Part-time (up to 20 hours/week)	\$141.50
	4. NEA Fund for Children and Public Education (suggested amount \$15.00)	
	5. TSTA-PAC (see disclaimer below)	\$ 9.00
	6. Region Dues	
	7. Local Association Dues	
	TOTAL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS	

NOTE: Membership must include local and region dues if eligible.

ETHNICITY/GENDER

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native

☐ Black

☐ Hispanic

☐ Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin)

☐ Asian

☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

☐ Unknown

☐ Multi-ethnic

☐ Other

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

This 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.

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.

FOR STAFF/LOCAL USE ONLY

ISSUE CAMPAIGNS

CAMPAIGN ISSUE \_\_\_\_\_ ACTION REQUESTED \_\_\_\_\_

The TSTA Political Action Committee (TSTA-PAC) and the 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. Only U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents may contribute to the NEA Fund. Contributions to the NEA Fund 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

Former student member?  
☐ YES ☐ NO

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.

Dues payments are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Dues payments (or a portion) may be deductible as a miscellaneous itemized deduction.

**Legal Liability Coverage:** Members of TSTA/NEA are automatically covered by \$1,000,000 of professional liability insurance (\$300,000 for civil rights claims) while acting within the scope of their educational employment. This coverage is underwritten by the Nautilus Insurance Company, or successor provider selected by NEA. Coverage is subject to the terms, conditions and exclusions of the policy which is available to members upon request by calling the TSTA Help Center at 877-ASK-TSTA. These insurers may not be subject to all the laws and regulations of Texas. The insurance solvency guarantee fund may not be available to you or to TSTA.

**Employment Defense:** To be considered for legal services for job protection, membership is required for at least 30 days before the member knew or should have known of the events or occurrences leading up to the action complained about. Pre-existing conditions will not be pursued, except by discretion of TSTA.

MEMBER SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZER \_\_\_\_\_

www.tsta.org | Summer 2014 31



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



[www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org)

<http://twitter.com/txstateteachers>

[www.facebook.com/texasstateteachersassociation](http://www.facebook.com/texasstateteachersassociation)



**Join TSTA/NEA! Scan this code  
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U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Texas State  
Teachers Assoc.



**"I think we'll see this period as a turning point — a turning point that gave parents and kids and working families hope, because TSTA stepped up to lead and the voices of education would not be silenced. And for that, we say, 'Thank you, Rita.'"**



— Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, speaking in a video tribute to outgoing TSTA President Rita Haecker

<http://youtu.be/uAzi9Q1JZ2A>