



# TSTA NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 15, 2020

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## Molina, Estrada take office as TSTA's new top leaders

President Ovidia Molina and Vice President Linda Estrada took office today as the Texas State Teachers Association's new top leaders, vowing to guide TSTA members safely through the biggest challenges of their educational careers — the COVID-19 pandemic and a reconfiguration of the public school system.

Molina, a former English-as-a-second-language (ESL) and history teacher to middle-schoolers in Alief ISD, has been TSTA's vice president for the past six years. In her new job, she succeeds Noel Candelaria, who was term-limited after serving as TSTA president for six years and vice president three years before that. Estrada, a former elementary school secretary in Donna ISD, succeeds Molina to become the first education support professional to be elected a state officer of TSTA.

"Right now, our number one priority is the health and safety of our educators, our students and our communities as Texas works to bring a deadly health crisis under control. The governor and the Texas Education Agency must slow down the school reopening process and listen to educators," Molina said.

"I want to thank Noel Candelaria for his leadership and inspiration. I will continue the job we started of helping to reinvent a public education system that protects every student, every teacher and every school employee and gives every child the attention and resources necessary for a great education, whether on-campus, remotely or a combination of the two," she added.

Estrada said teachers and other school employees must be directly involved in planning how and when school buildings will reopen.

"Teachers and support staff are the heart of the public school system and at the greatest risk, along with their students, if schools are reopened prematurely. We must be at the table when decisions affecting our health and profession are made," Estrada said.

She added: "Teachers should have the option to teach remotely if they believe they will risk their health by returning to classrooms. And all educators and students who choose the remote option must have all the support and resources they need for effective teaching and learning."

The new TSTA leaders also vowed to continue the fight for more state funding for public education — building on the success of the 2019 legislative session, despite the pandemic — and against vouchers, expansion of corporate charter chains and other forms of school privatization. Public schools are the key to reviving the Texas economy in the wake of this emergency and securing the state's future.

Molina, who didn't speak English when she immigrated to the United States from El Salvador at the age of seven, also will lead TSTA's continued fight against high-stakes standardized testing, beginning with a suspension of STAAR testing for the upcoming school year.

"High-stakes testing is the last thing we need to impose on students and educators working to recover from this pandemic. STAAR is particularly unfair to students still learning English and children suffering from learning disabilities," she said.

Estrada has been a Donna ISD employee for 33 years and a long-time leader of TSTA and the National Education Association at the local, regional, state and national levels. She has successfully advocated for better educator salaries, teacher conference periods and due process rights for school support staff, among many issues.

Molina did not have an opponent and was declared president-elect last September. Estrada was elected as part of TSTA's first virtual House of Delegates meeting, or state convention, this spring.

The Texas State Teachers Association is an affiliate of the National Education Association.