

# 2025 TSTA Education Support Professionals Conference



**April 6, 2025**  
**San Marcos, Texas**



EDUCATION SUPPORT  
**ESP**  
PROFESSIONALS  
One Education Workforce  
Serving the Whole Student

# Acknowledgements

## *ESP Committee Members*

**Karen Barnes-Ullrich, Chair**  
TSTA-Retired

**Maritza Barrera**  
San Antonio Alliance

**Lucero Cazares-Rodriguez**  
Garland Education Association

**Norma Guevara**  
Donna TSTA/NEA

**Theresa Heard**  
North East Education Association

**Raul Hernandez**  
Ysleta Teachers Association

**Evelina Loya**  
TSTA-Retired

**Novella McGinnis**  
Klein Education Association

**Sylvia Ortega**  
PSJA/TSTA/NEA

**Lonnie Richardson**  
NEA-Dallas

**Federico Rios, Jr.**  
Donna TSTA/NEA

**Leonor Terrazas**  
TSTA-Retired

**Martha Alicia Villatoro**  
Lamar Educators Association



# Texas State Teachers Association

Affiliated with the National Education Association

Dear #TeamTSTA,

Welcome to the 2025 Texas State Teachers Association Education Support Professionals Conference! This year's conference theme, **ESPs are the Heart of Education**, celebrates the meaningful connections that ESP Educators have with our students, colleagues, and communities.

Our mission, to “provide a quality public school for every child,” depends on our ability to build relationships. Relationships are at the heart of transformational interactions that strengthen our communities, coalitions, and unions. Relationships are the people-power that create the positive changes we need to see to achieve our mission and to defend public education against a private takeover. It is the power needed to stand up to elected officials prioritizing their political interests over the wellbeing of our students and educators.

At the core of building relationships is telling our stories. At this conference, we come together to share our struggles and our successes. We come together in a common mission and with a collective set of values that uphold our union through this hostile legislative session and through the war on our public schools. The power of collective organizing and action to make things better for all of us is the foundation of our union; it is how we accomplish better working conditions for staff and better learning environments for students. We must continue to aggressively seize every organizing opportunity to create a brighter future.

We are living through troubled times as a result of a fact we know well: ELECTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES. We must show up, lobby, call, email, build coalitions, and advocate to ensure that elected officials hear us and truly represent their constituents. We must continue to say no to taxpayer-funded vouchers that will divert resources from our already underfunded public schools. We must also engage our colleagues, families, and friends to contact their elected officials and hold them accountable to do the right thing for all our educators and our students.

You are the heart of education, the experts in your field whose voice and stories are impactful and need to be heard.

Thank you for being here for this conference and being leaders in your union. We are honored to call you our union siblings. Thank you for all you are doing, everything you have done, and everything you will continue to do.

In unity,

Ovidia Molina  
TSTA President

# 2024-25 TSTA ESP of the Year



## Novella McGinnis

Novella McGinnis has been a resident of Klein ISD for 48 years and is deeply committed to the community. She was employed within Klein ISD first as a Crossing Guard, while her daughter transitioned to middle school then to graduate from Klein Forest High School. She has been on staff at Klein Forest High School for the last 25 years, spending the last 23 years in the Attendance Office.

Novella joined TSTA/NEA/Klein Education Association in 2010, knowing that as an educator she needed a partner alongside her to grow in her educational career, to be empowered, and to work with others to make sure that students are given quality public education. She has ensured that if students desire it, they can walk onto any campus in Klein ISD and share the vision that "Every student enters with a Promise and exits with a Purpose." Students are at the center of everything that happens in Klein ISD.

For as long as she can remember Novella has been actively volunteering throughout the district, having been recruited by friends who had older children to help with the many district programs and events. She continues to serve and rally in Austin for our schools and her community. With her Homeowners' Association, she has served as secretary and president and has held other positions over time. She has taught Sunday School at her church and has been involved with the Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council for the past 36 years.

Novella has experienced all things that have happened in Klein ISD since her employment, some bad but mostly good. Students living in Klein ISD envision that "Every student enters with a Promise (the opportunity given) and exits with a Purpose (their dream)" because of the foundation that was set from the beginning.

# ESP CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

## *Session Descriptions*

### **ESP Bill of Rights 2.0**

**Presenters:** Raul Hernandez, Maria Hernandez, Sylvia Ortega

NEA's ESP Bill of Rights is a strategic tool to engage members, create a sense of belonging and build power for the union. ESP Bill of Rights 2.0 will take a deeper dive into identifying the areas needing to be addressed in Texas affecting ESPs' work-life balance. This session will help you to learn the steps in identifying the issue, involvement in the process, and next steps needed in order to organize the most important issues to build a successful campaign.

### **Managing Student Behavior**

**Presenters:** Lucero Cazares-Rodriguez, Novella McGinnis, Karen Barnes-Ullrich, Lonnie Richardson

School and Transportation employees are all concerned about many things that they have little or no control over, but this is not a reason to allow "business as usual" -- especially if it's an issue of safety. We will look at the cycle of behavior both in schools and on the bus. You will receive some strategies you may use to help identify best practices that will help in addressing negative student behaviors that can impact the environment at school and on the bus.

### **Fear Without Anger: Speaking from the Heart**

**Presenters:** Theresa Heard, Malinda McKee

Fear and anger can be triggered by similar situations, both are threat responses. This session is a free space to talk about and share experiences that activate our body's "fight, flight, or freeze" responses. Understanding this relationship can help in controlling the anger we feel and coping with the fear that may come with it. Both fear and anger trigger our threat system. While fear leads us to feel vulnerable and not in control, anger can be energizing and empowering. Let's talk about these emotions and how they are a big part of the life we live today.

# ESP CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

## *Our Presenters*



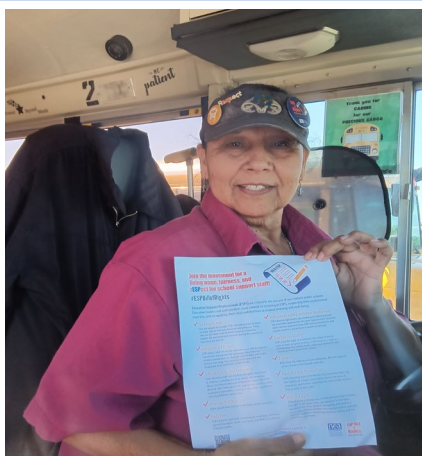
### **RAUL HERNANDEZ**

Raul Hernandez is a Paraprofessional Educator at Riverside Elementary in Ysleta ISD. Whether giving encouragement and support to students and colleagues at school or serving others through his church, he believes that he makes a difference every day for the good of his students, school and the community. Raul's involvement with YTA made him aware of the laws that protect him and all ESPs as well as the upcoming events and changes that can affect ESPs' lives. Raul proudly served as the 2023-24 TSTA ESP of the Year and believes that "If we join together, we can build a stronger union and give Power to ESPs".



### **MARIA HERNANDEZ**

A native of El Paso, Texas, Maria Hernandez is a dedicated mother of three exceptional children and a proud grandmother of five. Her twenty-seven-year tenure as an ESP SSB paraprofessional in the Ysleta Independent School District is a notable achievement. Additionally, Maria Hernandez holds leadership positions as the ESP Vice President of the Ysleta Teachers Association and a representative on the Resolutions Committee for NEA.



### **SYLVIA ORTEGA**

Sylvia is an ESP who has been working as a school bus driver for almost 40 years. She is also a safety and evacuation trainer, giving classes in elementary schools (if there is an emergency Sylvia trains on how to evacuate the bus). Sylvia serves on her district's Transportation Committee, as well as TSTA's ESP Committee.



# ESP CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

## *Our Presenters*



### **LUCERO CAZARES-RODRIGUEZ**

Lucero Cazares-Rodriguez is a dyslexia therapist as well as a certified educational diagnostician, she has worked in education for 20 years, beginning her career as a prekindergarten aide. Lucero is the president of Garland Education Association and Region 18. She loves her job and wholeheartedly believes in the association.



### **NOVELLA MCGINNIS**

Starting with Klein ISD as a crossing guard, Novella has spent the last 23 years in the Klein Forest High School Attendance Office. Deeply rooted in the community, she has actively volunteered in the district, has taught Sunday School at her church, has been involved with the Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council for the past 36 years, and has served as secretary and president of her Homeowners' Association. Novella joined TSTA/NEA/Klein Education Association in 2010, and has sought to set a foundation for students to walk onto any Klein ISD campus and share the vision that "Every student enters with a Promise and exits with a Purpose."



### **KAREN BARNES-ULLRICH**

Karen Barnes-Ullrich has been working in transportation for Austin ISD for 33 years as a Bus driver, coordinator/trainer and as a Dispatcher. She served on her Local board for 16 years, the TSTA Board for a total of 11 years, and on a variety of TSTA standing committees, including the ESP Committee, which she is currently chairing. She has also served on the NEA Board of Directors from 2014 - 2020 as an ESP at Large. She is currently serving on 2 NEA committees: the SOGI Committee, and the Resolutions Committee.

# ESP CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

## *Our Presenters*



### **LONNIE RICHARDSON**

Lonnie Richardson is currently VP for ESP Affairs of NEA-Dallas. He has been a dedicated transportation driver for the past 33 years, taking pride in ensuring that all students get to their destination safely, whether it's home, school, or field trips. He advocates for members to be sure they are properly trained and treated fairly. Lonnie enjoys fishing, growing produce, and working with his hands building wood benches, porches, and more. He is a family man and enjoys spending quality time with his wife, children, grandchildren, and a great-grandchild. You can always find Lonnie planning events to engage his coworkers and union sisters and brothers.



### **THERESA HEARD**

Theresa is a proud Paraprofessional serving for the past 18 years in the Special Education Department in San Antonio NEISD. She has a passion for helping and advocating for her students and co-workers. She's the current ESP Vice President for her local, NEEA, and AR on her campus. She's also the Chairman for the Scholarship Program, where she organizes and fundraises, along with selecting the senior candidates. She loves being a part of making public education a safe place for all and being the voice wherever it's needed.



### **MALINDA MCKEE**

Malinda McKee has been proudly serving as the TSTA ESP State Coordinator since 2013. She was formerly a Teacher Assistant in Sherman ISD and Dallas ISD before beginning her work in Education Advocacy for all school employees. She has been working with TSTA since 2011 as an Organizational Development Specialist in the North and East Texas areas. Malinda enjoys working with the state ESP Committee as they plan and execute the outstanding ESP state conference year after year. In her spare time, she likes to relax and spend time with her goddaughter, great nieces and nephews.



# OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER



## Pamella Johnson

Pamella Johnson, NEA's 2023 Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year, has worked tirelessly since 2012 as an academic and behavioral interventionist at Rochester High School in Rochester, Wash., to ensure students' social and emotional needs are met. She provides advocacy and establishes effective and culturally responsive pathways for students to communicate with their teachers and other adults to support their learning and instill valuable life skills.

Pamella is also the President of the Rochester Education Support Professionals Association, the Vice President of the WEA Chinook Council, a member of the WEA Executive Committee, and an NEA ESP At-Large Board Member.

Pamella is equally active outside the classroom and union environment, serving as a track coach, a lead ESP trainer for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Classroom Management courses in Washington state, and a member of a statewide board that establishes requirements and makes recommendations for paraeducator professional development and advancement.

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# Acknowledgements

## ***TSTA Staff***

Malinda McKee  
Committee Liaison

Tammye Walker  
Committee Liaison

Rosie Castillo  
Administrative Support, OCALD

Tara Trautman  
Administrative Support, OCALD

Kay Williams  
OCALD Administrative Manager

# Conference Schedule

Match the color dot on your name badge

**red** - **blue** - **green**

to the schedule below for the order in which you'll attend the workshop sessions.

<b>7:00 - 7:45 AM</b>	<b>WELCOME / BREAKFAST</b>		
<b>8:00 - 9:00 AM</b>	<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	<b>Fear Without Anger: Speaking from the Heart</b>	<b>ESP Bill of Rights 2.0</b>
<b>9:15 - 10:15 AM</b>	<b>ESP Bill of Rights 2.0</b>	<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>	<b>Fear Without Anger: Speaking from the Heart</b>
<b>10:30 - 11:30 AM</b>	<b>Fear Without Anger: Speaking from the Heart</b>	<b>ESP Bill of Rights 2.0</b>	<b>Managing Student Behavior</b>
<b>11:45 AM – 12:45 PM</b>	<b>LUNCH / KEYNOTE</b>		