



# TSTA NEWS

TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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## **SOUTHWEST ISD, TSTA WALK TO KEEP STUDENTS IN SCHOOL**

Volunteers will invest a few hours of their weekend to participate in Southwest Independent School District's first annual Reach Out to Dropouts walk Saturday (Sept. 6). But the return on this investment could be huge – for the district, for San Antonio and, especially, for the more than 250 students SWISD hopes to convince to return to school.

Members of Southwest Educators Association, a local affiliate of the Texas State Teachers Association and National Education Association, will be among the volunteer walkers.

“Increasing our graduation rate will benefit San Antonio’s future and the future of each individual with a high school diploma. Young adults who complete their high school education provide a better-prepared and responsible work force contributing to the quality of life and the economic development of our city,” said Dr. Velma Villegas, the Southwest ISD superintendent.

“Every Texan will pay a higher price for human services and criminal justice programs if we don’t significantly reduce the dropout rate. And our members, such as those in Southwest Educators Association, know all too well the high cost young Texans and their families pay when they don’t complete at least high school. We know that high school dropouts earn about \$1 million dollars less on average over a lifetime than college graduates,” said Rita C. Haecker, the president of the 65,000-member TSTA.

“So addressing Texas’ dropout crisis is one of our top priorities as the oldest statewide education organization,” Haecker continued.

The district’s 13 campuses will participate in the Reach Out to Dropouts walk. Then they will be ready to receive those who agree to return to school and get them back on track to succeed and graduate.

Volunteers will report to Christa McAuliffe Middle School, 9093 S.W. Loop 410, at 7:30 a.m. dressed to walk. Walkers will complete a short training session so they will have all the information they need when they visit the assigned homes. Each team will visit five to 10 households. A team will provide information to assist students with any obstacles they may encounter in returning to school.

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TSTA is providing each visited household with a booklet of tips and tools that parents can put in practice to keep their children in school.

In late August, TSTA began running four weeks of public service ads in English and Spanish on San Antonio radio stations encouraging parents to become involved or more involved in the education of their children. Parental involvement significantly reduces the likelihood that children will drop out before completing high school.

The ads, funded by an NEA media grant, are running on WOAI-AM 1200, KONO-FM 101.1, KAJA-FM 97.3, KQXT-FM 101.9, KXTN-FM 107.5, KGSX-FM 95.1, KROM-FM 92.9, KSAH-AM 720 and KCOR-AM 1350.

TSTA is also partnering with school districts, such as Southwest ISD, to support existing dropout prevention and recovery efforts or help develop new programs.

“The dropout problem is not just a school problem. It’s also a community problem, and we need the help of community organizations, teacher groups and businesses to overcome it. Teacher groups especially are here to provide support and help to school districts. TSTA is a partner with Southwest ISD to provide training for parents to reduce dropouts and to encourage students to stay in school,” Superintendent Villegas explained.

“It gives me and SWISD great pleasure to work with TSTA in order to promote the core values of SWISD, ‘Reach All, Teach All and Inspire All.’ I hope that this is just a beginning in the partnership that we will continue to grow with TSTA to assist the students of SWISD,” the superintendent added.

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