

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

# ADVOCATE

Fall 2014

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Every candidate talks a good game

**Grading teachers on test scores**  
Teachers and kids aren't standardized

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TSTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS: The 2014-15 TSTA Board of Directors met in September to plan for the school year. They are shown here on the rooftop of our headquarters building with the Capitol in the background.

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# Lip service or true commitment?

At the start of a new school year, extra attention is given to educators. The media reminds everyone how important our jobs are, and students and parents share our excitement about new opportunities for learning.

When the new school year begins just a couple of months before an election, even more attention is lavished on us. Every political candidate who can count votes makes a point of praising educators and the work we do, and some actually mean it.

Others, unfortunately, simply give us lip service.

Politicians love to talk about education because they want to be viewed as advocating for children. But you can't

truly advocate for children without advocating for the educators who work with students day in and day out.

I applaud every teacher, bus driver, cafeteria worker, custodian, and other school employee who is back on the job this fall, despite budget cuts, overcrowded classrooms, toxic testing, costly health care premiums, and needing to dig deeply into his or her own pocket to pay for students' school supplies.

Sadly, at the start of every school year, some of our former colleagues are missing because they can no longer afford to provide for their families while working as education professionals. We cannot afford to let that happen.

Elections have consequences, and for far too long, the consequences have not favored educators and the children who attend our schools.

It is time to make public education a true priority in Austin. To do that, we, as educators, must have an impact on this year's elections. We can start by distinguishing between lip service and a true commitment to educators, students, and our public schools.

#TeamTSTA is ready to help. Our political action committee has endorsed Senators Wendy Davis and Leticia Van de Putte for governor and lieutenant governor, respectively, because they are true champions of public education. They mean what they say, and they

have the legislative records to prove it. They will keep working to restore lost school funding, expand early childhood education, reduce standardized testing, and give educators and students the resources they need for success.

Their opponents, Attorney General Greg Abbott and Senator Dan Patrick, offer only lip service when it comes to education. Abbott keeps filing appeals while defending the \$5.4 billion cut from school budgets in 2011, and Patrick voted for the cuts. And both want to siphon more tax dollars from public schools for unproven privatization schemes for a select few students.

TSTA-Political Action Committee also has endorsed in a number of legislative races around the state; the list is on page 7. Some school districts will be holding local board elections on Nov. 4, and those races are extremely important.

Here's how you can make a difference:

- Try to find the time to volunteer an hour or two each week for our candidates.
- Consider contributing to TSTA-PAC — or increasing your present contribution — because the enemies of public education have strong financial support from individuals and groups that stand to profit from privatization.
- Don't forget to vote. And make sure your family, friends, and neighbors join you in voting for candidates who will work with us to support public education.

Remember, all of us will be living with the consequences, and so will our students.

—TSTA President Noel Candelaria

## ¿De la boca para afuera, o verdadero compromiso?

Al comienzo de un nuevo año escolar se le presta mucha atención a los maestros. Los medios nos recuerdan que tan importante son nuestros trabajos, y los estudiantes y sus padres comparten nuestro entusiasmo de las nuevas oportunidades para aprender.

Cuando el nuevo año escolar comienza tan sólo meses antes de una elección, nos prestan incluso más atención. Todos los candidatos políticos que pueden contar votos hacen un esfuerzo por admirar nuestro trabajo, y algunos incluso lo hacen con sinceridad.

Desgraciadamente, otros sólo lo dicen de la boca para afuera.

A los políticos les encanta hablar sobre la educación porque quieren ser vistos como los protectores de los niños. Pero no puedes proteger a los niños sin proteger a los educadores que trabajan con estudiantes día tras día.

Cada día yo aplaudo a cada maestro, conductor de autobús, trabajador de cafetería, bedel, y otros empleados que van a regresar a su trabajo este otoño a pesar de los cortes de fondos, de las clases repletas, de la cantidad de exámenes, del costo del seguro de salud, y de la necesidad de usar sus propios recursos para comprar suministros escolares.

Tristemente, al comienzo de cada año escolar, algunos de nuestros colegas veteranos no se presentan porque no pueden mantener a sus familias mientras trabajan como profesionales de la educación. No podemos dejar que esto siga pasando.

Las elecciones tienen consecuencias, y por demasiado tiempo las consecuencias no han favorecido a los educadores o a los niños que van a nuestras escuelas.

Es el momento de hacer a la educación pública una prioridad en Austin. Para hacerlo, nosotros como educadores tenemos que tener un impacto en las elecciones. Podemos comenzar con distinguir entre políticos que nos toman en serio, a nuestros estudiantes y a nuestras escuelas públicas, y aquellos que sólo hablan de nosotros de la boca para afuera.

El #TeamTSTA está listo para ayudar. Nuestro comité de acción política está apoyando a Wendy Davis y a Leticia Van de Putte para gobernadora y vicegobernadora, respectivamente, porque son verdaderas campeonas de la educación pública. Crean en lo que dicen y tienen un record legislativo que lo prueba. Seguirán trabajando para restaurar los cortes a fondos educativos, expandir la educación temprana, reducir el número de exámenes, y darle a los educadores y estudiantes los recursos que necesitan para tener éxito.

Sus contrincantes, el Fiscal General Greg Abbott y el Senador Dan Patrick, sólo hablan de la boca para afuera cuando se trata de educación. Abbott sigue introduciendo apelaciones para proteger los cortes de 5.4 billones de dólares a los fondos escolares del 2011, y Patrick votó por esos mismos cortes. Ambos quieren quitarle más dinero a nuestras escuelas para dárselos a las argucias privadas que sólo afectan a unos cuantos estudiantes selectos.

El comité también ha apoyado a un número de candidatos legislativos a través del estado; esa lista se encuentra en la página 7. Algunos distritos escolares tendrán elecciones locales el 4 de noviembre, y esas elecciones son tremendamente importantes.

Esta es la manera como puedes tener un impacto:

- Intenta encontrar tiempo para ser voluntario una o dos horas a la semana para nuestros candidatos.
- Considera contribuir con TSTA-PAC — o aumentar tu contribución actual — porque los enemigos de la educación pública tienen un apoyo económico fuerte de individuos y grupos que quieren hacer dinero de la privatización de la educación.
- No se te olvide votar. Y asegúrate de que tu familia, amigos y vecinos se unan a ti en votar por candidatos que trabajarán junto a nosotros para apoyar la educación pública.

Recuerda, todos nosotros vamos a sufrir las consecuencias, y también la sufrirán nuestros estudiantes.

# School finance: stop the appeals and work on a plan

For the second time in about 18 months, state District Judge John Dietz of Austin has declared the state’s school finance system inadequate and unconstitutional.



TSTA President Noel Candelaria urged state leaders to drop further appeals and immediately begin working on a solution that adequately and fairly funds all of Texas’ public schools.

Dietz’s ruling came in response to legal challenges filed by more than 600 local

school districts after the legislative majority cut \$5.4 billion from public school budgets in 2011. Dietz issued a similar, oral ruling in February 2013, and he reopened the case for additional testimony after the Legislature restored about two-thirds of the \$5.4 billion during the 2013 session. But in

a strongly written, 404-page opinion issued Aug. 28, Dietz said funding still fell short of meeting the state’s constitutional requirements.

“The Legislature has failed to meet its constitutional duty to suitably provide for Texas public schools,” he wrote.

Dietz said the inadequate funding was particularly harmful to economically disadvantaged children and students who are still learning English, groups that now make up a majority of Texas’ 5 million public school enrollment.

The judge also held that the school funding system imposed, in effect, a statewide property tax, which is prohibited by the Texas Constitution, because school districts didn’t have “meaningful discretion” over raising and spending local property tax revenue.

Democrat Wendy Davis, TSTA’s endorsed candidate for governor, called the ruling a victory for public education. As state senators, Davis and Leticia Van de Putte, TSTA’s endorsed can-

didate for lieutenant governor, fought the budget cuts and led the fight to restore funding last year.

But Attorney General Greg Abbott, Davis’ Republican opponent, was expected to appeal Dietz’s ruling to the Texas Supreme Court, a process that may delay a final resolution of the lawsuit for another year or more. Abbott already has spent millions of tax dollars defending the unconstitutional system — including the \$5.4 billion in school budget cuts — in court. Senator Dan Patrick, the Republican nominee for lieutenant governor, voted for the school cuts.

Candelaria urged Abbott to stop appealing and the Legislature to begin work now on a constitutional, adequate, and fair school funding plan that can be passed during next year’s session.

“It’s time for state leaders to stop defending a woefully inadequate school finance system in the courtroom and turn their attention to providing students and teachers the resources they need to excel in the classroom,” Candelaria said.

“TSTA urges Attorney General Greg Abbott to stop wasting time and tax dollars on appeals and calls on legislators to start working now to develop a school finance plan worthy of our students,” he added. “Every day of delay risks the future of another Texas child and the future prosperity of our great state.” — **Clay Robison**

## Vote for the candidates who support public education

Please consider volunteering, contributing to TSTA-PAC, and taking your friends and family with you in November to vote for the following TSTA-PAC endorsed candidates, who are in contested races:

### STATEWIDE

- Wendy Davis . . . . . Governor
- Leticia Van de Putte . . . . . Lieutenant Governor
- Sam Houston . . . . . Attorney General
- Mike Collier . . . . . State Comptroller

### STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Marisa Perez . . . . . SBOE 3
- Lawrence Allen . . . . . SBOE 4

### TEXAS SENATE

- Libby Willis. . . . . SD 10
- John Whitmire . . . . . SD 15
- Rita Lucido. . . . . SD 17

### TEXAS HOUSE

- Susan Criss . . . . . HD 23
- Ron Reynolds. . . . . HD 27
- Bobby Guerra . . . . . HD 41
- Kim Gonzalez . . . . . HD 43
- Celia Israel . . . . . HD 50
- Cole Ballweg . . . . . HD 94
- Nicole Collier . . . . . HD 95
- Susan Motley. . . . . HD 105
- Carol Donovan. . . . . HD 107
- Leigh Bailey . . . . . HD 108
- Milton Whitley. . . . . HD 113
- Paul Stafford . . . . . HD 115
- Phil Cortez. . . . . HD 117
- Gene Wu. . . . . HD 137
- Mary Ann Perez . . . . . HD 144
- Jessica Farrar . . . . . HD 148
- Hubert Vo . . . . . HD 149





# Vote for the candidates who will free you to teach

By Clay Robison, Public Affairs Specialist

**Van de Putte and Davis voted against the 2011 cuts to schools and were instrumental in restoring \$3.4 billion in 2013. They stand in sharp contrast to their opponents.**

As the daughter of a teacher, sister of a teacher, and mother of a teacher, state Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, TSTA's endorsed candidate for lieutenant governor, knows the importance of giving teachers the freedom to do what they do best.

One of her top educational priorities, which she outlined a few weeks before the new school year began, will be to significantly reduce the plague of standardized testing in Texas classrooms to

give teachers the freedom to teach and students the opportunity to learn.

She promises to work to restore full-day funding for pre-kindergarten, reduce class sizes for pre-K, and increase state investments in students and teachers. She also wants to expand student access to broadband while ensuring that online curriculum is aligned with the state's curriculum standards.

"Senator Van de Putte knows that

students aren't standardized. She knows that each student needs a good teacher and the time to learn, because education is much more than a battery of stressful standardized tests," said TSTA President Noel Candelaria. "As lieutenant governor, she will work to restore common sense to Texas classrooms."

Van de Putte believes tests should be diagnostic, providing teachers, students, and parents with the information they need to help children achieve academic success. An over-reliance on testing, she believes, prevents a child from receiving a well-rounded education.

Here is how she proposes to reduce testing:

- Remove high-stakes testing from the school accountability system and replace it with sampling procedures for gathering data on student performance. She says it not only will reduce stress on students, but it also will save Texas millions of dollars in testing costs.
- Minimize the time students in grades three through eight spend preparing for and taking tests. A four-hour test is too long, Van de Putte believes. She will require the State Board of Education to re-evaluate the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum and reduce requirements to a number students can master.
- Fight the federal mandate that forces the testing of every child every year in grades three through eight. Yearly testing in these grades robs students of too many instructional days and wastes taxpayer dollars, Van de Putte believes.

- Replace five end-of-course exams for high school students with one assessment: the Texas Success Initiative (TSI). This test was designed to provide diagnostic information about a student's basic skills and college readiness and already is offered to many high school students.

Van de Putte will work to finish restoring the \$5.4 billion in school funding cut by the legislative majority in 2011 so that local property taxpayers "aren't left carrying the load of the state's constitutional responsibility to educate our children."

TSTA has endorsed both Van de Putte for lieutenant governor and state Sen. Wendy Davis for governor. Both vow to reduce testing, expand crucial early childhood education programs, and increase state support for classrooms. And both believe Texas must make the necessary investment to attract and retain the best teachers, provide affordable health care for them and their families, and quit taking money out of teachers' pockets for classroom supplies.

Van de Putte and Davis voted against the 2011 cuts and were instrumental in legislative restoration of \$3.4 billion of the cuts in 2013. They are the real education candidates, and they stand in sharp contrast to their opponents, Dan Patrick and Greg Abbott. Patrick, Van de Putte's opponent, voted for the cuts, and Abbott, the Republican candidate for governor, continues to defend them in court.

This year's election is about much more than politics. It's about your school and your classroom, your students and your profession.

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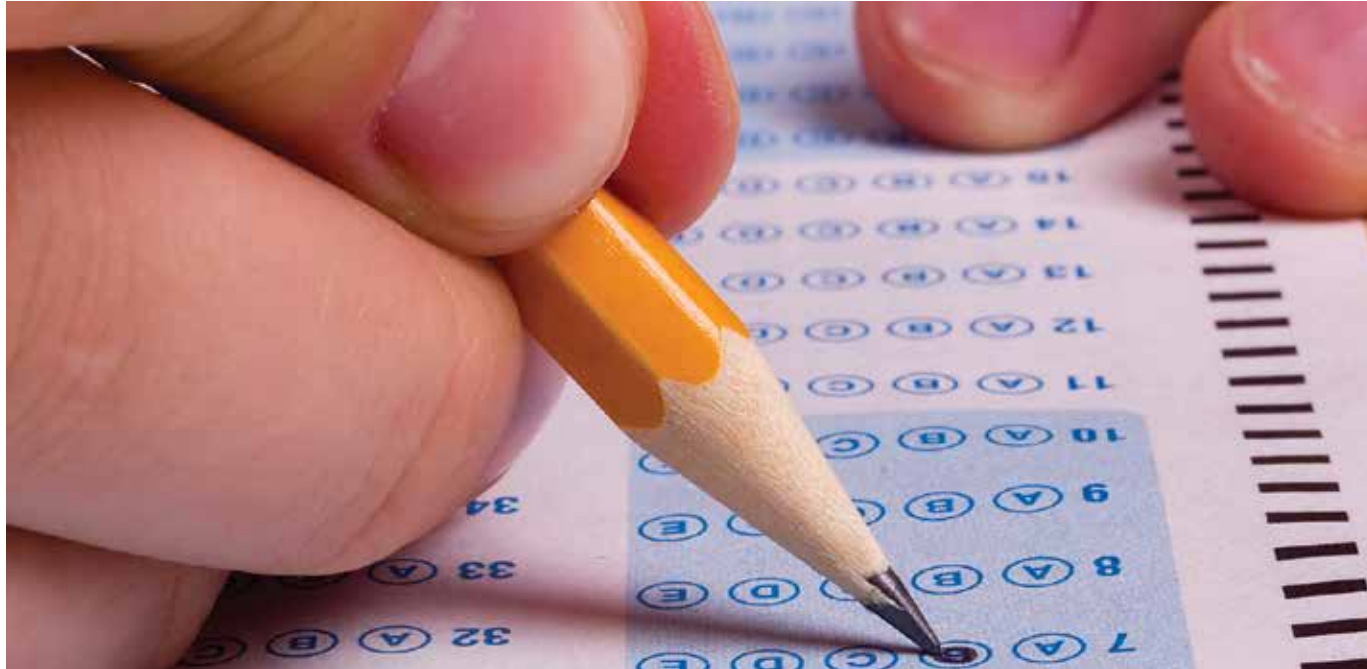
Elected officials make many decisions that affect your profession and your students, including the level of salary and benefits you receive and investments in the classroom priorities that build a strong foundation for student learning.

Because TSTA dues money cannot be used to help elect public officials, we formed the TSTA-Political Action Committee many years ago.

Our Continuing Contributor Program allows members who are active and engaged in the political process to help candidates who are supportive of educators and public education and will vote in the best interest of America's schoolchildren.

Every member who contributes increases our collective strength. Sign up now at <http://www.tsta.org/issues-action>.





# Grading teachers on test scores

Although Texas Gov. Rick Perry and President Barack Obama don't agree on much of anything else, both their administrations have been eager to blindly tie teacher evaluations to test scores, ignoring volumes of research that show this method is an ineffective and unfair way of grading educators.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has been putting pressure on the states to include test scores, used as the basis for so-called "value-added measures" (VAM), in teacher evaluations. He has insisted that Texas comply as a condition for getting a waiver to some provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act. State Education Commissioner Michael Williams took the bait and announced a pilot evaluation program in almost 70 school districts and charter schools, beginning this fall, in which 20 percent of a teacher's evaluation was to be based on test scores.

Despite being recruited by the commissioner, one of the state's largest districts, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, declined to participate after encountering opposition from Cy-Fair TSTA/NEA. Several other districts in which TSTA has members will be part of the pilot, including Arlington, Pflugerville, and Port Arthur. At first, Williams said the program would be for only the 2014-15 school year, but he later added 2015-16 to the pilot period as well.

But even as the Texas Education Agency was preparing to roll out its evaluation program, Duncan and Williams both took actions all but admitting that an over-reliance on testing isn't the way to educate students, a fact that TSTA and other education advocates have been pointing out for a long time.

First, in late August Duncan announced that the federal government would allow states to request a one-year delay

— until the 2015-16 school year — in the deadline for using test results to help evaluate teachers. Then, the very next day, Commissioner Williams suspended the Student Success Initiative (SSI) requirement for this school year, and as a result, students in grades 5 and 8 will not have to pass the STAAR mathematics test to be promoted to the next grade. Williams said he acted because schools were still making a transition to revised curriculum standards in math.

So, by the time this issue of the Advocate went to press, it still wasn't clear to what extent test scores actually will be used to evaluate teachers in the pilot districts, despite what TEA said in its announcement. School district participation in the pilot program is voluntary. The commissioner can't order districts to use test scores in teacher evaluations because state law doesn't give him that authority. But Williams is expected to

ask the Legislature next year to authorize a value-added evaluation system, and TSTA will oppose that effort.

"Education is not about producing standardized kids or standardized teachers," said TSTA President Noel Candelaria. "Most educators don't see the fruits of our labor until 10, 15, 20 years down the road.

"Research has consistently shown that student scores on standardized tests are not valid measures of any one teacher's performance and should not affect employment decisions," he added.

TSTA's task of fighting a value-added evaluation system will be made easier if TSTA's endorsed candidates, Wendy Davis and Leticia Van de Putte, win their races for governor and lieutenant governor. Both candidates have vowed to work to reduce high-stakes testing in public schools.

TEA announced that the pilot program, the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (TTESS), was to base 20 percent of a teacher's evaluation on "student growth" data, 70 percent on classroom observation, and the remainder on self-evaluation.

"Student growth" data, TEA said, would include standardized test scores in grades and classes where tests are administered. In non-testing grades and classes, student growth could be measured through learning objectives or portfolios.

Although Pflugerville ISD will participate in the TTESS pilot at three high schools, one middle school, and one elementary school, August Plock, president of the Pflugerville Educators' Association/TSTA/NEA, said the principal at the high school where Plock teaches social studies assured employees last

spring that test scores will not be used to evaluate teachers there.

"The principal clearly stated that there would be no value-added measures in evaluations," Plock said.

Among the many problems associated with using test scores to grade teachers, Plock added, were the unfair treatment it would impose upon educators who teach high-risk students with greater educational and social needs and lower test scores than other students. Many of these students are still learning English.

A recent editorial in the Houston Chronicle warned that an unfair evaluation system could drive the best teachers from the lowest-performing schools where they are needed the most.

"Great teachers should be encouraged to teach at the schools with the greatest challenges," the editorial said. "If teachers are penalized for their students' environment, poverty, chronic absenteeism, and/or chaotic home environment, then the evaluation system will merely encourage teachers to leave schools that need their skills most."

Acting on its own, the Houston ISD has drafted a value-added evaluation system that is so complicated it requires advanced mathematics to decipher. The Houston Federation of Teachers has filed a lawsuit over it in federal court.

In another recent article, the Washington Post cited at least four separate studies or statements warning of the unreliability of basing teacher evaluations on test scores. They were issued by the American Statistical Association, the Rand Corp., the Educational Testing Service's Policy Information Center, and the Board on Testing and Assessment of the National Research Council

of the National Academy of Sciences.

In a statement issued in April, the American Statistical Association, the largest organization of statisticians in the world, found several problems with value-added measures, including:

- "VAMs are generally based on standardized test scores, and do not directly measure potential teacher contributions toward other student outcomes."
- "VAMs typically measure correlation, not causation: Effects — positive or negative — attributed to a teacher may actually be caused by other factors that are not captured in the model."
- "Most VAM studies find that teachers account for about 1 percent to 14 percent of the variability in test scores, and that the majority of opportunities for quality improvement are found in the system-level conditions. Ranking teachers by their VAM scores can have unintended consequences that reduce quality."

These findings sum up the reality that education is a cooperative, continual process to which many individuals contribute over a child's entire school career. And trying to tie one teacher's worth to a test score is an inaccurate and unfair depiction of that teacher's contribution.

Policymakers who promote testing also are becoming increasingly out-of-step with parents. A recent PDK/Gallup poll showed that 68 percent of public school parents in America are skeptical that standardized tests help teachers know what their students are learning or what to teach. And 61 percent of poll respondents opposed the use of standardized tests in teacher evaluations. — **Clay Robison**





# Transforming lives

TSTA President Noel Candelaria was a seventh grader, helping his dad on a Saturday as he had for four years, before he really understood what he did for a living.

He knew his father made shoes for people with leg and foot deformities, braces, and prosthetics, but on that day, a customer had come from Mexico to try on the shoes he had created for her.

“She took her first steps on her own in almost eight years,” Candelaria recalled. “I saw then that my dad’s work was much more than making and repairing shoes. He transformed people’s lives. I wanted to do that, too.”

He decided to be a doctor – but two events changed his plans.

The first came in eighth grade, when Candelaria was asked if, instead of taking a PE class, he would help students prepare for the Special Olympics.

“I jumped on it,” he said, “and that’s where my love of working with children with special needs really began.” But still he didn’t see it as a career.

The turning point happened when he was an undergraduate at the University of Texas at El Paso and already had been accepted to medical school in Dallas. His wife Patty, a teacher, asked if he would consider substitute teaching on his days off, working with special needs students at a local high school.

Within five months, he had changed his major. “I realized my heart was truly in the classroom and making a difference

in children’s lives,” Candelaria said. “That was where I belonged.”

On his first day of teaching in a behavior intervention classroom at an alternative school in Ysleta, he knew he had chosen the right path.

“Most of the students were bright but needed behavior modification to help them transition back to a regular classroom setting,” Candelaria said. “Robert [not his real name] was my first student. He was there because he had picked up a file cabinet and thrown it at his teacher.”

There were many rules and regulations for the behavior intervention students, including lining up each morning in the cafeteria and emptying their pockets. The trouble started when the principal asked Robert to tie his shoe.

“He blew a gasket,” Candelaria said. “He was flipping over tables and cussing the principal, who bolted to the back of the room. I stayed close enough that I could make sure Robert would not hurt himself or other students.”

When Robert finally collapsed on the floor, exhausted, Candelaria said, “Are you done?” He looked up, surprised, and nodded. Candelaria calmly walked him to the holding room, as required by school policy.

“Because he had a history already, they said the normal procedure would be to handcuff him and take him to a mental hospital,” Candelaria said. “I said that didn’t sound like something I wanted to do.”

The principal agreed to send Robert home in a police car instead, followed by Candelaria.

“When we pulled up, his mom, who was a paraplegic, was sitting on the porch. She started crying when she saw the police car,” Candelaria said. “That day, Robert could not control himself because his mom didn’t have transportation to refill his medication. I gave her my cell number and asked her to please call me if that ever happened again.”

He told her his job was to make sure Robert made it through high school but he would need her help. It would have to be a partnership.

“Robert was also deaf and he had some facial deformities. He was picked on a lot when he was growing up, so his first line of defense was always attack,” Candelaria said. “We worked on his social skills as much as his academic skills. I became almost a father figure to him. We developed a trusting relationship, and he turned out to be one of my best students.”

Robert was the first of his cousins to graduate from high school, and he went on to enroll in community college.

“That is just one example of how teachers are called on every day to do much more than teach academics,” Candelaria said. “Robert will not be a statistic in our justice system. He is moving on and he will be an asset to his community.”

That same drive to advocate for students led Candelaria to become more involved in TSTA.

It started when he was an association representative. “The overwhelming majority of us were working at the alternative school because we wanted to be there – we applied to teach there –

but we began to feel our campus was viewed by the district as a dumping ground, or a place to transfer teachers and administrators they were trying to push out,” he said. “Having a principal who didn’t want to be there wasn’t fair to our students.”

He worked with the superintendent and school board to secure Ysleta Teachers Association representation on the interview team for the school’s next principal.

“That’s when I realized the organization was much more than just filing grievances,” Candelaria said. “I saw that when we worked together we had the collective power to advocate for the children.”

He ran for local vice president, then president, because those offices enabled him to help students and education employees district wide. His influence expanded to the state level when he became a member of the TSTA Board of Directors, then state vice president. On July 15, he took office as TSTA president.

Throughout the years, his goal has not changed. “I want to ensure that we’re creating a system that enables every child, regardless of where they come from, to have a quality education,” he said. “My parents came from Mexico and I didn’t know any English until I started kindergarten. My life was changed by the teachers I had. I want every child to have the same opportunity.”

He believes the biggest block to quality education is the overemphasis on standardized testing and what that has done to the classroom environment

and the profession as a whole. “We talk about ‘thinking outside the box,’ but we’ve created a public education system that’s a box, and we are thickening its walls,” he said.

Education employees work with children every day and know what they need — whether it’s healthy food or an environment that’s conducive to learning or a different approach to learning math — and they must be involved in shaping public education, Candelaria said. And with every member who joins and every leader who is trained, we increase our ability to do so.

“The power is not just in the numbers but in what we do with the numbers,” he said. “We need leaders who understand why we exist as an organization; leaders who are action oriented; leaders who are focused on the issues that matter to our members and engaged in what it means to lead the profession.

“We are taking responsibility for the profession,” Candelaria said. “It’s the difference between reacting to what has already been decided and leading the discussion.”

TSTA’s vision of a great public school for every child is important to him not only as a professional educator but as a father: his son Patrick started kindergarten this year and his seven-year-old daughter Noel is in second grade.

“She’ll be part of the class of 2025, so our TSTA vision of what public education and our association will look like that year is very personal to me,” Candelaria said. “I hope that when my daughter graduates, we have arrived.”





# Brownsville local helps kids prepare for STEM jobs

"I was first selected for the 2013 LiftOff Summer Institute, 'Rockets to Robots,'" Claudia Cortez, a member of the Association of Brownsville Educators (AOBE), said. "It was a life-changing event."

She returned in July for the 2014 institute, "Let's Engineer It," with two other AOB E members, Fabian Salcedo and Delia Benavidez (Cortez is on the right in the photo).

Scientists, astronauts, and engineers working in all areas of space mission design were their instructors for a week of workshops, hands-on activities, and field trips at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. Back home, they worked as a teacher-led team to create lesson plans and two science share fairs for students and teachers. They call their program, which is sponsored by AOB E, "Science Galaxy Xploration," and they have applied for an NEA grant to fund additional training.

"We are using what we learned to teach engineering to both students and teachers and to prepare the next generation of scientists and engineers for Space X," Cortez said. Space X ([www.spacex.com](http://www.spacex.com)) is a private venture that is expected to bring a commercial rocket launch facility — and jobs — to the area within the year.

The LiftOff Institute's goal is to help teachers motivate students and integrate engineering into the curriculum; as the website says, "Your students will be asking why things work instead of 'Why do I need to learn this?'"

The institute motivates teachers, as well: Cortez recently earned an engineering management degree and started a robotics training business ([www.claucoroboticsedu.com](http://www.claucoroboticsedu.com)).

Find out more about LiftOff at <http://www.tsgc.utexas.edu/liftoff>.



## Texarkana teacher to be honored at gala

Monica Washington, who was named 2014 Texas Teacher of the Year and won TSTA's Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award in 2013-14, is adding a national award to her resume this school year, the 2015 California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence.

She is among 39 public educators who will be honored at the NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 13. One of public education's most anticipated events, the gala attracts more than 850 of the nation's leaders from public education, philanthropy, and the private sector.

Each educator's school will receive a \$650 award. Five finalists will be selected to receive a \$10,000 cash award and, at the conclusion of the gala, one finalist will be named the nation's top educator and receive an additional \$25,000. The NEA Foundation and NEA jointly present the awards.

The NEA Foundation is a public charity supported by contributions from educators' dues, corporate sponsors, and others who support public education initiatives. Visit [neafoundation.org](http://neafoundation.org) for more information.

## TEXAS CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN

TSTA supports the Texas Conference for Women Nov. 13 at the Austin Convention Center. Use promotion code SG14TX to save money on your registration at [www.txconferenceforwomen.org](http://www.txconferenceforwomen.org).

## TSTA/NEA AWARDS AND GRANTS

TSTA's awards program honors teachers and education support professionals, as well as individuals and organizations that support public education. Visit [www.tsta.org/news-center/awards-grants](http://www.tsta.org/news-center/awards-grants) or call 877-ASK-TSTA for details.

- All-Star Association Representative Awards recognize exemplary leadership at the building or worksite level.
- Leaders for Tomorrow Awards honor members who demonstrate characteristics of future leaders.
- Instructional Awards recognize local associations for activities and accomplishments that incorporate the NEA Priority Schools Initiative.
- School Bell Awards recognize outstanding media coverage of education issues and events.
- Pride in Communications Awards recognize outstanding local or regional association communication.
- Ronnie Ray ESP Advocate of the Year Award recognizes an educational support professional who demonstrates outstanding accomplishments and contributions to public education.
- Friend of Education Award recognizes an individual, organization, or company outside the field of education that made a significant contribution to public education.
- NEA Human and Civil Rights Award honors an individual, organization, and/or region or local affiliate.
- TSTA Social Justice Patriot Awards recognize Texas educators, TSTA local and regional associations, and other individuals or associations that are friends of education for distinguished service and contributions in promoting and/or encouraging professional and human rights activities.
- Ermalee Boice Instructional Advocacy Award recognizes and promotes teaching excellence.
- NEA Foundation Learning & Leadership Grants allow individuals to participate in high-quality professional development experiences, or groups to participate in collegial study.
- NEA Foundation Student Achievement Grants improve the academic achievement of students in U.S. public schools and public higher education institutions.





# Valley welcomes NEA Back to School Tour

RIO GRANDE VALLEY VISIT: (Clockwise from right) NEA President Lily Eskelsen García, TSTA President Noel Candelaria, and Donna ISD school board member Rudy Perez tour Runn Elementary; García is interviewed by Univision and Fox affiliates in McAllen; García meets with cafeteria staff and kids at Runn. (Photos: Kevin Lock)

School funding, dropout prevention, toxic testing, and immigration were on the minds of members, administrators, and reporters in the Rio Grande Valley when NEA President Lily Eskelsen García and TSTA President Noel Candelaria visited during NEA’s 2014 Back to School Tour Sept. 10-11.

They published an oped in the McAllen Monitor, challenging state government to do its part for children by passing a fair and adequately funded school finance system.

“A district judge in Austin recently ruled that Texas’ current school funding system isn’t fair and violates the state constitution. Instead of pursuing costly appeals in the courtroom, our elected officials should heed the voices of educators and parents who

say our students can’t wait another two years for the people in charge in Austin to provide the funding our students deserve,” the education leaders wrote.

García also was interviewed by the Rio Grande Guardian, News Taco, ABC affiliate KRGV, Univision, Fox, and The Brownsville Herald.

While in the Valley, the leaders held a breakfast meeting with superintendents, invited members from throughout the area to a dinner, and visited Runn Elementary in Donna and Jefferson Elementary in Edinburg.

Read more at <http://www.nea.org/home/60001.htm> and <https://storify.com/NEAToday/nea-back-to-school-2014-texas>.



**A BACK-TO-SCHOOL ‘SUPPLY’ LIST**  
What do teachers really need in order to build a successful school year for their students?

Katie Plemmons, a member of the Del Valle Education Association and eighth grade teacher, answers that question in a September Huffington Post blog she coauthored with Alyssa Hadley Dunn, assistant professor at Michigan State University.

Their list for administrators and policy-makers ranges from up-to-date textbooks and at least one classroom computer to reasonable class sizes, a curriculum that’s not based solely on a standardized test, and respect for the profession — “the intangibles that will help to maintain (teachers’) professionalism, commitment, passion, creativity, and integrity.”

“While some of these things can be purchased at the nearest office supply store, others will not stretch the budget as much as they might stretch your (and others’) ideas of equitable, quality, and meaningful learning,” the educators wrote.

Click here to read their blog now or, if you don’t have a QR code reader, visit <http://huff.to/1uKBSiz>.



## PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

“What schools look like in 2025 is going to depend on the foundation we build starting this November,” TSTA President Noel Candelaria said at the Emerging Leaders Conference and Organizing Institute in July. He alluded to both the statewide and local school board elections set for Nov. 4.

In addition to building leadership skills, teams strategized over local issues that include a well-financed attempt to take over Dallas neighborhood schools and out-of-control health care costs in San Marcos.

“Team TSTA, when we unite and organize, there is no challenge we can’t beat,” TSTA Vice President Ovidia Molina, shown above with graduate Amy Sharp, said.





# Students energized by leadership conference

“Attending the NEA Student Leadership Conference in Denver made us prouder than ever to be members of the TSTA Student Program,” Katie Bruno, president of TSTA-Student Program and a student at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, said. “In every room, you could feel the energy and empowerment. Imagine hundreds of students discussing important issues in education, such as diversity and politics, and sharing the story of how they decided to take the teaching path.”

There were professional development sessions, inspiring speakers, and lots of ideas for improving local chapters, but for the Texas team, the highlight of the trip was Outreach to Teach ([www.nea.org/grants/33394.htm](http://www.nea.org/grants/33394.htm)).

“Remodeling two schools in need was the most massive community service project in which any of us had ever been involved,” Bruno said. “By creat-

ing a more positive learning environment we transformed the school; at the same time, the gratitude of the teachers and community transformed us. Every chapter represented at the conference was so pumped to be part of the revolution to change public education. We returned home with new ideas and a re-defined outlook for our local chapters.”

TSTA-Student Program’s goals for 2014-15 include keeping members informed, reaching out to the community, and making their voices heard. “We have a common goal: creating a public education system to which we are proud to send the students of the future,” Bruno said.

## Retirees busy with local meetings, TRS-Care

The Teacher Retirement System held several meetings during the summer,

and TSTA-Retired President Louise Watkins reports that her members and TSTA staff were there, fighting to make TRS-Care health insurance affordable.

Ten TSTA-R members attended the June NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in Denver, which preceded the NEA Representative Assembly (RA). Three — Bobbie Duncan, Katherine Milano, and Watkins — were delegates to the RA, representing retirees at Texas caucuses and RA business sessions.

Watkins later attended the TSTA Board of Directors’ retreat in Galveston, where she helped set priorities for the upcoming year.

Last year’s quilt raffle was such a success that they’re doing it again. As in the past, Board members will be selling tickets, but if you are willing to help with sales, please contact your regional president.

BUSY SUMMER: Clockwise from bottom left: TSTA-Retired is holding a raffle for this quilt; TSTA-Student Program members helped clean up two Denver schools during NEA’s Outreach to Teach; the TSTA-Retired Board met Sen. Leticia Van de Putte (fourth from left) and Mike Collier, candidate for state comptroller.

Here are a few of the activities that happened at the local level over the summer:

- Region 3D President JoAnne Peschel reported great turnouts at monthly meetings and the August annual membership breakfast. They held two field trips: one to Houston’s historic sites and the other to the Art Car Museum and Asia Society Texas Center.
- Region 4D President Geraldine Palmer organized several meetings and an end-of-year awards luncheon to recognize members. On a field trip, members learned how to quickly and easily commute from Dallas to Fort Worth.
- Region 4C held several meetings to keep members informed. Two members from this region will be representing TSTA-R as a whole on TSTA state committees — President Jack Davis on the Legislative Committee and member Eugene Oehler on the Political Action Committee.
- Patricia Budak is president of Regions 2D and 2E in the Austin area, also known as the Capitol Area Retired Educators (CARE). CARE is encouraging its members to become more politically active.
- Newly elected Region 1B President Barbara Franklin has been working to organize her region, set goals, and increase membership.



## TWO ESPS ELECTED TO NEA BOARD

Rae Nwosu and Karen Barnes, both members of Education Austin, were elected this summer to at-large positions on the NEA Board of Directors to represent education support professionals. The elections were held during the NEA Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly in Denver.



## MERCEDES BUS DRIVERS WIN PAY HIKE

Mercedes bus drivers won a 3.5 percent pay increase at a school board meeting that was attended by 27 of the 30 drivers as well as community supporters and Mercedes TSTA/NEA officers. The local, led by President Maribel Gonzalez, is asking for additional pay to help defray health care increases.



## PFLUGERVILLE GAINS 130 NEW MEMBERS

By the end of August, Pflugerville Educators Association had gained 130 new members. Shown in the photo is former Lubbock Educators Association member Jessica Quap, now a PEA member, signing up former Massachusetts Teachers Association/NEA member Erika Ardito.



## BIG WIN IN HARLANDALE

Thanks to Harlandale Education Association, teachers received a 4 percent pay increase on their salary step; transportation employees, a 5.5 percent increase on the midpoint; and all other employees, a 4 percent increase on the midpoint — plus all employees received a \$750 retention stipend.



## MEMBER LEADS EMPOWERED EDUCATORS DAY

More than 1,000 educators shared the ways they make a difference for students at Empowered Educators Day during the NEA Annual Meeting. Education Austin’s Montserrat Garibay helped lead the event, which was co-sponsored by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.



## LEADERS TRAINED IN RIO GRANDE VALLEY

At the Rio Grande Valley Leadership and Organizing Institute, held this summer at Kennedy Elementary School in Mercedes, 29 new TSTA leaders from La Joya, Edinburg, Donna, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo, Mercedes, Harlingen, Los Fresnos, and La Feria were trained.



# Why did you join TSTA?

**‘What we do in TSTA is try to bring people into a movement, because education takes so many turns in this day and age, and not always for the best.’**



**Monica Washington**  
Texarkana

I was told one day by a veteran teacher that I needed to join because teachers needed to protect themselves. That sounded scary to me, so I joined.

In my 16 years of teaching, I have worked at an inner city school; I have seen No Child Left Behind implemented; I have seen new programs initiated, only to be dropped when something “new and improved” came along. I have had training for effective planning only to be told “just go back to that old format we were using, our old plan will be our new plan.”

It’s through experiences like these that I began to understand the importance of TSTA and NEA, and to understand what that veteran teacher meant when she said that we need to protect ourselves.

What she meant is teachers need to advocate for ourselves. While we are in our classrooms day in and day out, TSTA is doing that, speaking for us in those meeting rooms that teachers are rarely invited into.



**Gregory Davis**  
Conroe

I am a resource paraprofessional and the pastor of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church. The main reason I got involved with TSTA is I believe in advocating for people, speaking up for those who aren’t able — or in some cases, are afraid — to speak up for themselves.

What we do in TSTA is try to bring people into a movement, because education takes so many turns in this day and age, and not always for the best.

Someone has to be able to rally the people together, to motivate them around a cause — something that’s going to benefit everybody — and help them be a part of giving back to public education.

As teachers, as paraprofessionals — it doesn’t matter what you do. All of us have a duty and an obligation to the children we are serving.

What TSTA does for us is bring us together as a unified body of people supporting one main cause. It helps us appreciate one another for our diversity and backgrounds.

It takes all of us working together. Everybody’s job is important. If we didn’t have transportation to bus the kids, we wouldn’t have kids to teach. If we didn’t have nutritionists, the students would have a problem learning, and we would have even more problems in the classroom. If we didn’t have teacher aides, the teachers would be overwhelmed, because we know in most cases our classroom numbers are a bit challenging. It behooves all of us to work together.

TSTA is the catalyst to help us move forward.



**Shari Story**  
Ector County

I got involved with TSTA a number of years ago. I was just a quiet little music teacher, always followed the rules and got nice evaluations, and one day I had a principal who took a dislike to me because she said I didn’t say good morning to her.

She called me in and yelled at me. I said, “I didn’t see you!” She said, “Yes, you did.” I thought, “She just called me a liar.”

My evaluations went down. My life was over. I called TSTA and cried out my little story, and people I didn’t know took up my cause. We filed a grievance and won.

I was just amazed, but mainly I was amazed at all the people who spent their time and effort, and I didn’t even know who they were before that call.

That was years ago. I love my job. I get better evaluations than I think I deserve; they love me and I love them.

Being a member of TSTA saved my job. Now, doing the same thing for other people is kind of like church work for me. People said, “You need to go to leadership training.” I said, “Oh, no, no. I’m not a leader.” But they kept after me, and somehow I ended up on my local executive board. Now I’m local president and bringing other people — who are going, “Oh, no, no. I’m not a leader” — to be trained.

I love the association. I’ve seen what it’s done for people who didn’t know what else to do — good teachers who were working hard and following the rules but seemed to run afoul of an administrator through no fault of their own. Helping them is such a good thing.



**Rachel Zuniga**  
Harlingen

If you don’t ever say, “Hey you know what, this is going on” — even if you’re scared — it’s never going to be dealt with. This will be my second year with TSTA. It’s awesome.



**Winifred Jackson**  
Longview

I became active in TSTA in 1992 through political advocacy. When I lost my conference period, TSTA helped me file a grievance and I won. I’ve used the discounts and insurance. I have reaped many benefits from my membership.



**Rick Ramirez**  
Edinburg

I started getting more involved because of some issues in our district. I knew I had to step up. TSTA is not just about the benefits; it’s about becoming a leader. We have the right to stand up and speak, and TSTA prepares you to do that.



# Leave time: what are your options?

By Elizabeth Poole, TSTA General Counsel



As a school district employee, if you need to take time off for a vacation, an illness, or personal business, you have a variety of options.

**STATE DAYS**

Texas law requires school districts to grant employees at least five days of paid leave per year. These “state days” are transferrable from district to district and can be accumulated without limit.

**LOCAL LEAVE**

In addition to the state days, a school district may provide its employees with discretionary local leave time. The district may adopt a policy for the use of leave days, but it cannot restrict the purposes for which leave may be used, or dictate the order in which an employee chooses to use state or local leave. Check your school district’s pol-

icy for any rules regarding use of leave days. Remember that if you change jobs, local leave does not transfer from district to district.

**FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE**

Some school district employees also are covered by the Family Medical Leave Act, more commonly known as FMLA, which affords them the opportunity to take several weeks off if necessary.

FMLA is a federal law that applies to all public elementary and secondary schools. To be eligible, an employee must have worked for the district for at least 12 months, and must have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12 months immediately before the leave begins.

FMLA leave is unpaid, but while you are out, your job is protected. An eligible

employee may take up to 12 work-weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for the following reasons:

- 1. The birth of a child or placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- 2. To care for a spouse, son, daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- 3. For a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job; or
- 4. For any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that a spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a military member on covered active duty or call to covered active duty status.

An eligible employee may also take up to 26 workweeks of leave during a “single 12-month period” to care for a

covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness, when the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the servicemember. Sometimes it makes sense for an employee to take FMLA on an intermittent or reduced schedule. For example, the employee could take leave in small blocks of time, or could reduce the amount of time he or she works during the day or week. Under the law, an employee who is taking family medical leave for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child must get permission from the district to go on an intermittent or reduced schedule.

The employer can request periodic updates on the employee’s intent to return to work, and, when the employee is ready to return, the district can request certification from the health care

provider that the employee is able to resume work. This certification may include the provider’s review of the employee’s essential job functions.

If you are considering taking FMLA leave, be aware that there are special rules that apply to instructional employees at schools, and be sure to check your district’s leave policy. If you have questions, contact your district’s office of human resources or the TSTA Help Center (877-ASK-TSTA).

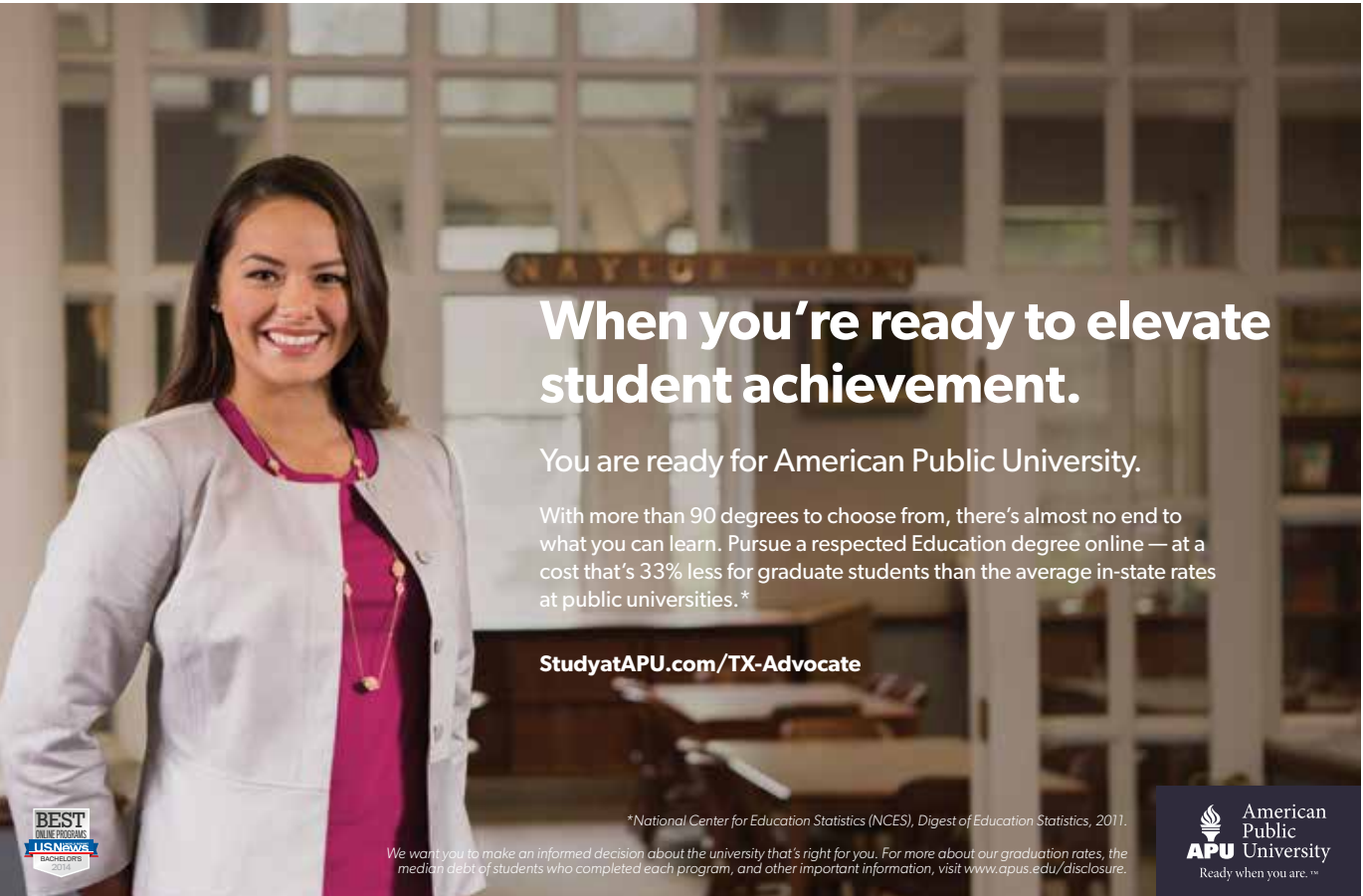
**TEMPORARY DISABILITY LEAVE**

Temporary Disability Leave (TDL) applies to full-time educators — employees who are required to hold certification from the State Board for Educator Certification. Like FMLA, TDL is unpaid but provides job protection.

TDL is available when a full-time educator’s “condition interferes with the performance of regular duties.” It protects the employee who needs time off from work to deal with his or her own medical condition.

To take TDL, you must submit a request to your superintendent and provide a physician’s statement that you are unable to work. The school district board of trustees may establish a maximum length of absence but it cannot be less than 180 days.

Many school districts run temporary disability leave concurrently with family medical leave. If you need assistance making sense of your school district’s rules regarding FMLA and TDL, don’t hesitate to contact the TSTA Help Center at 877-ASK-TSTA.



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# The gathering storm of education reform

By Bryan Weatherford, TSTA Teaching and Learning Specialist

**Toxic testing and acidic accountability systems warn us that this storm will get worse before it gets better unless teachers prepare for it.**

Have you ever observed thunderstorms form? As they form, they have the capacity to transform into multi-cell storms of increasing complexity, severity, and duration. They can also mutate into a super-cell storm. Such a storm has formed over the public education landscape in Texas.

The storm of education reform began almost 50 years ago when a Texan, President Lyndon Johnson, signed the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), upping the role of the federal government in public education. Initially, it rained down some funding for our public schools, and over time, the federal role in our public schools intensified.

In 1988, ESEA shifted focus to include raising achievement standards for low-income students by emphasizing advanced skills rather than basic skills. A few years later, the storm strengthened. In 1993, ESEA came to include reading/language arts and math standards to assess student progress and provide a basis for accountability.

But the storm didn't end there. It took on significant force as it transformed from ESEA to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, when another Texan, George W. Bush, occupied the White House. The new law required all students to be proficient in reading and math by the 2013-14 school year. Under NCLB, standardized testing became

the measuring stick for school performance. If those tests indicated that a school failed to meet the standards, after two years a school improvement process was required, and if the school improvement process failed to bring test scores up to meet the standards, the school had to restructure.

As the reality that 100 percent of our students would not be proficient in reading and math by 2013-14 began to sink in, the storm morphed into a combination of Race-to-the-Top competitive grant programs and waivers from the onerous NCLB. Both carried with them requirements that teacher and principal appraisals include measures of student growth through the use of value-added models. NCLB designations such as adequate yearly progress (AYP) that measured progress toward 100 percent proficiency gave way to priority and focus schools.

Storm clouds were also gathering in Texas. Thirty-five years ago, the Texas Assessment Program was created. In the beginning, students in certain grades were tested on basic skills using the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS). Over time, the test transformed to the Texas Education Assessment of Minimal Skills (TEAMS), an assessment aligned with the Essential Elements, the first statewide curriculum. In an effort to ramp up what the test was supposed to measure, TEAMS gave way to the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).

Then the statewide curriculum changed — from the Essential Elements, which focused on what students were supposed to learn, to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which focused on what teachers were supposed to teach. A new test, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), came into play to ensure students were learning a curriculum that

was aligned with classroom instruction. The TAKS tested more grades and subjects, and students in grades 3, 5, and 8 had to pass TAKS in order to advance to the next grade level. In 2012, the TAKS gave way to the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR), which is designed to assess what students have learned in a certain grade level or content area.

As assessment requirements grew, schools and districts struggled with different accountability programs and school improvement. NCLB measured school performance based on adequate yearly progress (AYP), which included 36 different indicators. State accountability used a four-tiered system across multiple indicators in which campuses and districts received ratings of exemplary, recognized, academically acceptable, or academically unacceptable. In both models, the standards for performance increased annually and no matter how well performance may have been on most indicators, the overall rating was based on the lowest-performing indicator.

In 2013, the storm took on two new dimensions. Texas initiated a new accountability system with two standards — Met Standard or Improvement Required — measured across four indices for student achievement, student progress, closing performance gaps, and post-secondary readiness. Schools and districts only met the accountability standard if they met the standard for each index. Schools and districts are awarded points, which opened the door for schools to be ranked from best to worst.

Texas also received a waiver from NCLB that required the development of a teacher evaluation model linking teacher performance to student growth as measured by either a value-added model

(VAM) formula or student learning objectives (SLO). The VAM would measure student growth for teachers in grades and content covered by the STAAR, and SLOs would be used for the majority of teachers. The waiver did remove Texas schools from the onerous requirements of NCLB but created priority schools (lowest performing Title I campuses and high schools with a graduation rate of less than 60 percent) and focus schools (campuses with the widest achievement gaps).

This year, Texas is piloting the new teacher evaluation instrument that seeks to accomplish two things detrimental to the teaching profession: the alignment of teacher performance with student growth; and the prescription of an algorithm for effective teaching in the misguided belief that teaching and learning are equal to the sum of their parts. This belief that teaching is a routine function deprives teachers of the heuristic aspects of teaching that drive effectiveness — the opportunity to be creative, experiment, solve problems, and identify challenges that need newer and bolder solutions.

Toxic testing and acidic accountability systems warn us that this storm will get worse before it gets better unless teachers prepare for it. Prudent people prepare for storms, even ordinary ones. Teachers must do the same. The current dynamic of our education landscape warrants the active engagement of teachers in the political process at all levels of government.

Teachers, this is your career, your livelihood, and your future. Look at the storm clouds and act with the utmost urgency. We cannot afford to wait it out; rather we must move out in front and ahead of it, and let the light of teaching and learning shine in our classrooms again.





# TSTA state convention delegate elections

**Contact TSTA's Center for Executive and Governance to participate in a cluster election.**

This year's state convention is April 10-11, 2015, at the Embassy Suites in Frisco. State delegate allocations for local associations (including the Texas Faculty Association) to attend the TSTA House of Delegates are sent to local presidents at the end of January. Delegate allocations are also posted on the TSTA website.

**LOCAL DELEGATES**

Delegates are allocated to locals in a ratio of one (1) delegate for each fifty (50) members, or major fraction thereof, based on the local's Active Professional, Active ESP, and TSTA

Life membership on Jan. 15, 2015. However, a local may conduct its election for delegates prior to Jan. 15 by keeping a list of delegates in the order of votes received, then reporting the top vote getters as delegates and listing the remaining vote getters as alternates.

The forms for reporting local delegate elections, available online and sent to local presidents with the allocations, are due to TSTA by March 15, 2015.

**CLUSTER DELEGATES**

TSTA members who have no opportu-

nity to join a local association or who belong to a local that is not eligible to elect a delegate are still eligible to seek election as a delegate to the TSTA House of Delegates through a cluster election.

The member must notify the TSTA Center for Executive and Governance of his or her interest in seeking election as a cluster delegate no later than Feb. 11, 2015.

**RETIRED DELEGATES**

Retired at-large delegates are allocated to TSTA-Retired members in a ratio of one (1) delegate for each seventy-five (75) members, or major fraction thereof, on Jan. 15, 2015.

In order to run for a TSTA-R at-large delegate position, the candidate must be a member of both TSTA-R and NEA-R.

Nomination forms are due to TSTA no later than close of business on Jan. 16, 2015.

Ballots for the election will be sent to TSTA-R members in February.

**BUDGET PLANNING**

Locals and/or individual delegates may want to start planning now for travel expenses to the state convention. The hotel's nightly room rate for members in the TSTA convention room block is

\$156 for a single or a double and \$165 for a triple or a quad, plus taxes.

**QUESTIONS**

Contact Neocha Campbell in the Organizing Center for Executive and Governance at 877-ASK-TSTA, extension 1514, or [neochac@tsta.org](mailto:neochac@tsta.org) if you have questions regarding the elections.

CLUSTER ELECTION REQUEST FORM

TSTA House of Delegates—April 10-11, 2015

The deadline for receipt of this nomination form at TSTA Headquarters is Feb. 11, 2015. (This form is also available online at [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org). Confirmation issued upon receipt.)

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name \_\_\_\_\_

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Last 4 Digits Soc. Sec. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Check the appropriate box:  
☐ There is no TSTA local in my area.  
☐ My local has fewer than 50 people and is not eligible to elect a delegate.

Signature of Nominee \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: Neocha Campbell, TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance, by mail: 316 W. 12th St., Austin, TX 78701; email: [neochac@tsta.org](mailto:neochac@tsta.org); or fax: 512-486-7053.

TSTA HOD RETIRED DELEGATE NOMINATION FORM

Retired At-Large Delegate Positions — TSTA House of Delegates — April 10-11, 2015

The deadline for receipt of this nomination form at TSTA Headquarters is Jan. 16, 2015, 5:00 p.m.

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Last 4 Digits Soc. Sec. No. \_\_\_\_\_

ETHNIC GROUP: (Check all that apply)  
☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Asian ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Multi-ethnic  
☐ Black ☐ Hispanic ☐ Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin) ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Check here if you do not want your ethnicity printed  
☐ Enclosed is my biographical sketch of 25 words or less, which I understand will be sent with the ballot. (Note: Statements exceeding 25 words will be cut after the 25th word.)  
☐ Check here if you will be a first-time delegate

Signature of Nominee \_\_\_\_\_

Send by FAX to 512-486-7043 or EMAIL to [TSTA-R@tsta.org](mailto:TSTA-R@tsta.org) or MAIL to: TSTA-Retired, 316 W. 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701



# National delegate elections

We're headed to Orlando for the 2015 National Education Association Representative Assembly and Annual Meeting on July 1-6, 2015.

The number of Texas delegates is determined by our TSTA/NEA membership on Jan. 15, 2015. TSTA is allocated one (1) state delegate for every 1,000 Active members, as defined in NEA Bylaws, and locals are allocated one (1) local delegate for every 150 Active members, or major fraction thereof.

## MINORITY REPRESENTATION

NEA policy encourages ethnic-minority representation reflective of the ethnic make-up of the state's population. TSTA's goal is to elect at least 55 percent of our total delegation from among our ethnic-minority members. We rely on all of our leaders and caucuses to help recruit ethnic-minority candidates to run for delegate positions at both the state and local levels.

## FUNDING & COSTS

TSTA does not fund state delegates to the NEA-RA, though they may receive a small stipend, budget permitting. A few

regions and locals provide partial funding for state or local delegates, but most do not fund delegate expenses. Candidates for NEA delegate should verify whether or not there is funding available with their region or their specific local when seeking nomination.

## STATE DELEGATES

NEA requires open nominations and secret ballots for all elections for state and local delegates. If you would like to run for a state delegate position, please complete the nomination form at the end of this article or visit <https://tsta.wufoo.com/forms/state-nomination-form-2015-orlando/>.

Each candidate on the ballot for state delegate is entitled to have his or her name and ethnic status published in the Advocate, along with a short statement (25 words or less). In order for your name to appear on the printed ballot, **TSTA must receive the nomination form in the Center for Executive and governance no later than Jan. 16, 2015.**

TSTA will issue confirmation upon receipt.

Members should receive the Advocate containing ballots for

election of state delegates by late March 2015. The deadline for return receipt of ballots to TSTA is April 15, 2015, by 5:00 p.m.

Although we cannot know the exact number of delegates to be elected until after Jan. 15, typically we elect one state delegate on a statewide ballot and the remaining state delegates are assigned to individual regions, clusters of regions or, possibly, statewide in a manner consistent with NEA rules on one-person, one-vote, and in accordance with TSTA policy.

## CATEGORY 2 DELEGATES/ SUPERVISORY MEMBERS

NEA also requires proportional representation for supervisory and non-supervisory members. In order to ensure this is not violated, supervisory members are not eligible to run for state delegate as outlined above. Instead, all supervisory members are eligible to run in a separate election for Category 2 state at-large delegate (which also includes NEA Active Life Retired members).

Supervisory members who also are members of a local additionally may run in the statewide supervisory cluster election, unless their local is not a part of that cluster. TSTA removes locals from this cluster only if inclusion would cost the local a non-supervisory delegate. Locals will be notified in February if they have been removed from the cluster.

Supervisory members seeking election as a delegate should complete and return the nomination form at the end of this article (marking the box designated for Category 2 delegates), along with their 25-word maximum state-

ment. Supervisory members who return the form and who are eligible to run in the Supervisory Cluster will automatically be included on the ballot for that election as well.

## LOCAL DELEGATES

NEA will notify locals by early February of the number of delegates allocated for each local. NEA will send official forms to each local in order for the local to report who their elected delegates and alternates ("successor delegates") will be. In order to ensure delegates have proper credentials at the NEA RA, **the forms are due to TSTA by April 10, 2015.**

Locals must conduct an election that provides for open nominations and secret ballots. This can be accomplished either by (1) delivering a nomination form to each member (using a local newsletter is permissible), then ensuring each member receives a ballot with the names of those who returned the nomination form, or (2) by holding an all-member meeting, with proper notice of the meeting sent to each member, and accepting nominations at the meeting, then voting by secret ballot.

## LOCAL CLUSTER DELEGATES

A local must have at least 76 members (Active and Life) to qualify as a delegate. Locals with fewer than 76 members may cluster together for the purpose of electing local delegates. TSTA coordinates these cluster elec-

tions, so any member interested in seeking election as a cluster delegate must notify the TSTA Center for Executive and Governance. To request a cluster election, return the request form at the end of this article to Neocha Campbell in the TSTA office or submit online by visiting the following link: <https://tsta.wufoo.com/forms/tsta-local-cluster-election-formneara/>.

## RETIRED DELEGATES

NEA allocates one delegate for the first 50 TSTA-R/NEA-R members, and one (1) additional delegate for each 1,000 TSTA-R/NEA-R members thereafter. To seek election as a retired delegate, return the NEA RA Retired Delegate Nomination Form to TSTA by Jan. 16, 2015. The form is available at the end of this article and online at [www.tsta.org](http://www.tsta.org).

A member who was an NEA Active Life member while teaching, but is now retired, has the option of seeking nomination as a Category 2 state at large delegate rather than a retired delegate. However, anyone eligible to run in both elections must choose; he or she may only file in one election. To run as a retired delegate, complete the NEA RA Retired Delegate Nomination Form. To run as a Category 2 delegate, complete the NEA State Delegate Nomination Form and check the Category 2 box. **Nominations are due by close of business Jan. 16.**

**Questions: Anyone with questions about the elections, or needing other information about the process, should contact Neocha Campbell at TSTA, 877-ASK-TSTA, ext. 1514 or email [neochac@tsta.org](mailto:neochac@tsta.org).**



NEA CLUSTER DELEGATE NOMINATION FORM

2015 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY LOCAL CLUSTER ELECTION REQUEST FORM

For use by TSTA/NEA members in a local with fewer than 76 members. Please return this form to TSTA Headquarters by Jan. 16, 2015.

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name \_\_\_\_\_

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Last 4 Digits Soc. Sec. No \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Nominee \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: Neocha Campbell, TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance, by mail: 316 W. 12th St., Austin TX 78701; email: neochac@tsta.org; or fax: 512-486-7053. This form is also available online at www.tsta.org. Confirmation issued upon receipt.

NEA RA RETIRED DELEGATE NOMINATION FORM

2015 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY TSTA/NEA-RETIRED DELEGATE POSITIONS

The deadline for receipt of this nomination form at TSTA Headquarters is Jan. 16, 2015, 5:00 p.m.

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Day phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Last 4 Digits Soc. Sec. No \_\_\_\_\_

ETHNIC GROUP: (Check all that apply)

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Asian ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Multi-ethnic

☐ Black ☐ Hispanic ☐ Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin) ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Check here if you do not want your ethnicity printed

☐ Enclosed is my biographical sketch of 25 words or less, which I understand will be sent with the ballot. (Note: Statements exceeding 25 words will be cut after the 25th word.)

☐ Check here if you will be a first-time delegate

Signature of Nominee \_\_\_\_\_

Send by FAX to 512-486-7043 or EMAIL to TSTA-R@tsta.org or MAIL to: TSTA-Retired, 316 W. 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701

NEA STATE DELEGATE NOMINATION FORM

2015 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY STATE DELEGATES — ORLANDO

The deadline for receipt of this nomination form at TSTA's Headquarters is Jan. 16, 2015. (This form is also available online at www.tsta.org. Confirmation issued upon receipt.)

NOMINEE FOR: (Check one)

☐ State At-Large Delegate: Category 1—Teacher, ESP or other Non-Supervisor

☐ State At-Large Delegate: Category 2—Supervisor or NEA Active Life Retired\*

☐ Statewide Supervisory Cluster—Supervisors who are members of a local association\*\*

(Circle One: Mr. Ms.) Name \_\_\_\_\_

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Last 4 Digits Soc. Sec. No \_\_\_\_\_

ETHNIC GROUP: (Check all that apply)

☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Asian ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Multi-ethnic

☐ Black ☐ Hispanic ☐ Caucasian (not of Spanish Origin) ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Check here if you do not want your ethnicity printed

☐ Enclosed is my biographical sketch of 25 words or less, which I understand will be sent with the ballot. (Note: Statements exceeding 25 words will be cut after the 25th word.)

☐ Check here if you will be a first-time delegate

Signature of Nominee \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: Neocha Campbell, TSTA Organizing Center for Executive and Governance, by mail: 316 W. 12th St., Austin TX 78701; email: neochac@tsta.org; or fax: 512-486-7053.



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# Texas State Teachers Association

316 West 12th Street  
Austin, Texas 78701



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