

Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

Spring 2015



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Harlandale Education Association fights back and wins

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MONICA WASHINGTON HONORED AT NEA GALA: The NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence recognize excellence in teaching and advocacy for the association. Recipients are honored each year at a Washington, D.C., gala that attracts more than 800 national education leaders and supporters. Representing TSTA this year was Texas Teacher of the Year Monica Washington of Texarkana (seated, second from the left). Learn more about the awards at www.neafoundation.org.

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Advocate

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PRESIDENT
Noel Candelaria

VICE PRESIDENT
Ovidia Molina

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Richard Kouri

DIRECTOR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Ed Martin

EDITOR
Debbie Mohondro

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST
Clay Robison

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Susan Martin

ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER
Leann Kloesel

ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY
Claire Moore

SECRETARY/ADVERTISING
Vacant



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Local action gets results

In the spring of every odd-numbered year, the Texas Legislature is in full swing, and that means it’s time for educators to act to advance and protect the best interests of our students and our profession. You all have your hands full in your classrooms and support positions preparing Texas’s next generation for success, but remember, decisions made in Austin can have a lasting impact on our students and their future.

You need to be part of the decision-making process, and you don’t have to come to Austin to participate. You can meet with your legislators back home, call them, send them an email, or

contact them through their official social media sites. When a legislator hears from the people who vote and work in his or her community, it makes a difference.

Decisions made by the local school board also have a direct effect on you. This May, many local school districts will hold elections, and the stakes for educators and students will be equally high. Traditionally, May school board elections have a low turnout; your involvement in those races can help elect candidates who will work with us on policy that affects you every day.

In the next few weeks, the Legislature

will be making important decisions, and your action is essential. Most of you probably know who your state representatives and state senators are, but, if you’re not certain, go to this link and fill in your address to learn your legislators’ names and how to contact them: <http://bit.ly/myTxRep>.

TSTA will provide regular updates on important legislation, and you can track bills and more at: <http://bit.ly/84thTxLegAction>.

Please watch for briefings, alerts, and calls to action. Before key votes on important issues, we will be asking you to help by calling, emailing, or visiting with your legislators in Austin or back home in your community. When we ask for help, please respond quickly because the legislative process can be very volatile.

Hundreds of proposed laws could have an impact on you, for better or worse. Here are just a few of the issues that can make spending time on legislative action a sound investment in your future:

- Health insurance — Increases in school employees’ health care premiums have resulted in cuts in take-home pay for some teachers and support staff. The state hasn’t increased its \$75 monthly contribution to your premiums in 13 years, placing a burden on educators and local school districts. The state must do more.
- Vouchers — Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick is pushing private school vouchers with the false claim that they will offer low-income parents a “choice” on where their kids go to school. In truth, they offer them no choice, because the voucher would not cover the cost of tuition at most private

schools. Vouchers are a privatization scheme that would benefit only a few students while costing local school districts millions of dollars in state aid a year.

- Community schools — TSTA supports legislation that would expand the community schools model in Texas. Explained in more detail in a separate article in this issue of the Advocate, this approach has proven successful in several other states and recently helped turn around two struggling public schools in a low-income neighborhood in Austin.
- TRS — TSTA will work to protect your retirement and health care for retirees.
- Also on the agenda — School finance, testing, teacher evaluation, and more.

The time to act is now. Let your legislators know — in no uncertain terms — what you think about these and other key issues. And remind them that you vote.

If your district also has a school board election in May, volunteer to help the candidates your local endorses, and take your family, colleagues, friends, and neighbors with you to vote for them. The Legislature leaves important employee and instructional decisions to local school boards, so school board elections have a direct impact on you and your students.

Your #TeamTSTA staff in Austin is here to assist, represent your interests at the Capitol, and keep you informed. But the action that matters most must come from you.

— TSTA President Noel Candelaria

Las acciones locales producen resultados

En la primavera de cada año impar, la legislatura de Texas se encuentra en plena acción, y eso significa que es la hora para que los educadores se pongan de pie y protejan los intereses de nuestros estudiantes y de nuestra profesión. Todos ustedes tienen sus manos llenas en sus clases, y apoyan las posiciones que preparan a la nueva generación de Texas, pero recuerden, las decisiones tomadas en Austin pueden tener un impacto duradero en nuestros estudiantes y su futuro.

Tu tienes que ser parte del proceso, y no tienes que venir a Austin para participar. Puedes reunirte con tus legisladores en tu hogar, puedes llamarlos, enviarles email, o contactarlos a través de sus redes sociales oficiales. Cuando un legislador escucha de las personas que votan y trabajan en su comunidad, esto hace una gran diferencia.

Las decisiones tomadas por le junta escolar local también causan un efecto directo para ti. Este mayo, muchas juntas escolares de distrito tendrán elecciones, y hay muchas cosas en juego para educadores y estudiantes. Usualmente, estas elecciones en mayo tienen baja participación, tu voto puede ayudar a elegir candidatos que trabajarán junto a nosotros en políticas que te afectan día a día.

En las próximas semanas la legislatura va a tomar decisiones importantes, y tu acción es esencial. Muchos de ustedes probablemente saben quienes son sus representantes estatales y senadores estatales, pero, si no estás seguro, ve a este enlace y pon tu dirección para saber los nombres de tus legisladores y como contactarlos: <http://bit.ly/myTxRep>.

TSTA proveerá recordatorios sobre legislaciones importantes, y puedes seguir leyes y más aquí: <http://bit.ly/84thTxLegAction>.

Por favor presta atención a reuniones, alertas y llamadas a actuar. Antes de votos claves en asuntos importantes te estaremos pidiendo tu ayuda llamado, enviando emails o visitando a tus legisladores en Austin o en tu comunidad. Cuando te pidamos ayuda, por favor responde lo más pronto posible, porque el proceso legislativo puede ser muy rápido.

Cientos de las leyes propuestas podrían tener un efecto en ti, para bien o para mal. Aquí hay algunos de los asuntos que puede hacer que el tiempo que gastes en acción legislativa sea una inversión inteligente en tu futuro:

- Seguro de Salud — Los aumentos en “premiums” de los seguros de salud de empleados escolares han resultado en cortes al pago para algunos maestros y empleados de soporte. El estado no ha aumentado su contribución mensual a “premiums” de \$75 al mes por 13 años, aportando a la carga de educadores y distritos escolares locales. El estado debe hacer más.
- Vales — El vicegobernador Dan Patrick quiere implementar vales de escuelas privadas con la declaración falsa que le ofrecerá a padres de bajos recursos la “opción” de a donde van sus hijos a la escuela. De hecho, no les ofrece ninguna opción, porque los vales no cubren el costo de la matricula de la mayoría de las escuelas privadas. Los vales son un plan de privatización que sólo beneficiaría a unos cuantos estudiantes, mientras le cuesta millones de dólares a distritos escolares locales cada año.
- Escuelas Comunitarias — TSTA apoya la legislación que expande los modelos de escuelas comunitarias en Texas. Explicada en más detalle en un artículo en esta edición del “Advocate,” estas escuelas han sido exitosas en otros estados y recientemente ayudaron a mejorar dos escuelas públicas con problemas en un vecindario de bajos recursos en Austin.
- TRS — TSTA trabajará para proteger tu retiro y el seguro de salud para jubilados.
- También en la agenda — Finanzas escolares, exámenes, evaluaciones a maestros, y más.

El momento para actuar es ahora. Dile a tus legisladores — de manera clara y concisa — lo que piensas sobre estos y otros asuntos. Y recuérdales que votas.

Si tu distrito también tiene elecciones de junta escolar este mayo, ofréctete como voluntario para ayudar a los candidatos que tu local apoya, y trae a tu familia, colegas, amigos y vecinos contigo para votar por ellos. La legislatura deja que las juntas escolares tome decisiones importantes que afectan a empleados escolares, así que estas elecciones tienen un impacto directo en ti y tus estudiantes.

Tus colegas de #TeamTSTA en Austin estamos aquí para ayudarte, representar tus intereses en el Capitolio, y mantenerte informado. Pero la acción que más importa debe venir de tu parte.



Where's the funding for the Governor's 'top priority'?

In his State of the State speech, Governor Abbott said his top education priority is the expansion of pre-K and early childhood education, but press reports noted that his budget provides only enough funds for a very limited expansion.

Abbott also called for an end to school finance lawsuits, but he failed to suggest a remedy for repeated court findings that the current system is inadequate and inequitable.

"We look forward to working with the Governor and legislators to provide full-day pre-K and additional early childhood education opportunities that

are critical to success in the classroom, in college, and in the working world," TSTA President Noel Candelaria said in a press statement.

"However, expanding educational opportunity requires a genuine commitment of resources, from pre-K through college, and we are concerned that Governor Abbott called for an end to school finance litigation without addressing today's inadequate and inequitable school finance system.

"The Governor gave a specific dollar figure for roads and for tax cuts, but, unfortunately, our children's educational needs did not warrant that level

of commitment," Candelaria said.

Another TSTA concern: In his speech, Abbott stressed "local control" and suggested local school districts should be free of many of the standards in the state education code. This session, "reformers" are seeking to make it easier to establish "local control school districts" (currently known as home rule districts) that could ignore important employee protections, class size limits, and other state standards.

TSTA: CHILDREN CAN'T WAIT

In testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Article 3

(Education) in February, TSTA Public Affairs Director Ed Martin said TSTA appreciates that, as filed, HB 1, the House appropriations bill, includes \$2.2 billion above what is needed to cover enrollment growth, but "we are hopeful the committee will consider adding additional funds to meet the needs of a diverse student population that is growing by roughly 80,000 students a year."

Martin noted that, when adjusted for inflation, Texas still spends \$600 less per pupil than it spent in 2008-09 before the recession, roughly \$2,600 less per student than the national average.

"At a time when resources are available, our children should not be asked to wait another school year or two while court appeals drag on. We recognize that this legislature may not be able or willing to make up that funding gap this year, but we encourage you to start that effort now," he said. "After all, the only way to 'end school finance litigation,' as the Governor suggested, is by addressing the recurring problem that has led to decades of litigation: inadequate and inequitable funding."

TSTA also encouraged the subcommittee to:

- significantly increase public education funding, including funding for full-day pre-kindergarten;
- increase the state contribution for health insurance for educational employees; and
- provide the funding necessary to maintain TRS Care without increasing premiums for retired educators.

HEALTH INSURANCE

TSTA is working for increased state funding for health insurance, whether employees are insured by TRS-ActiveCare or an insurance carrier under contract with their local school district. A bill has been filed.

The state hasn't increased its \$75 monthly contribution since ActiveCare was created in 2002. Meanwhile, employee health care premiums have soared, effectively imposing take-home pay cuts on many teachers and support professionals.

There is a significant difference in funding levels between TRS and the Employees Retirement System of Texas, and TSTA believes school employees deserve to be treated as well as state employees.

Both House and Senate budget proposals include \$562 million to provide a required state contribution to TRS-Care of 1 percent of the public education payroll. TRS has requested an additional \$768 million to make TRS-Care solvent for the next two years and ensure that retirees won't have to shoulder increasing health care costs on tight, fixed incomes. TSTA is aggressively supporting this request.

"Many teachers are delaying necessary surgeries because they cannot cover

the medical costs. Some teachers are delaying having children because of the costs associated with the birth of a child. And we have numerous members who are considering leaving the profession altogether. Indeed, many have left the profession over rising health care costs," TSTA Government Relations Specialist John Grey testified.

"Currently, a teacher seeking to cover his or her entire family under ActiveCare 2 must pay a monthly premium of over \$1,300 per month — more than most of our members pay for their mortgage, if they can even save enough to buy their own home," he said.

"On a monthly basis, many retirees have to choose between paying their electric bill or having insurance that allows them to purchase the prescription drugs that are vital to their well-being. Can you imagine a more excruciating, life-threatening dilemma for an elderly teacher who has given his or her entire life to serve the schoolchildren of the State of Texas?

"Although numbers play a big role in this discussion, it always does us well to remember the people who are ultimately affected by those numbers. These are real people who desperately need your help," Grey said.

Updates on the Legislature

Website: <http://tsta.org/news-center/education-news>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/texasstateteachersassociation>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/txstateteachers>

Tools: <http://bit.ly/84thTxLegAction>



LEADING THE PROFESSION

Keeping the community in schools

By Clay Robison

A child’s education doesn’t begin and end with a test score, an accountability system, or even a classroom teacher. A child’s education, beginning with his or her ability to learn, is affected by a range of factors, including poverty, health, familial support, and the neighborhood or community environment.

It shouldn’t surprise anyone that low-income children and youngsters struggling to learn English have relatively poor academic performance and high dropout rates in today’s Texas public education system. That poses a serious challenge to serious policy makers and advocates, because these children account for more than 60 percent of Texas public school enrollment. And that number is growing.

“This model allows educators, parents, community non-profits, and businesses to develop effective programs for supporting local schools, including a range of services that address the problems that make it hard for a child to learn.”

TSTA President Noel Candelaria

If a boy has a toothache, and his parents can't afford a dentist, he isn't going to be able to concentrate in class, if he even goes to school. If a girl's single mom is working three jobs to pay the rent and buy groceries, she rarely will be at home to help or encourage her daughter to complete her homework or prepare for the STAAR test.

Schools take the blame when these children stumble, even though these are issues beyond a school's control. But a neighborhood public school can partner with parents, non-profit organizations, local businesses, and other community groups to provide children and families with the support critical to educational success.

This is the community schools model, which has improved student performance and reduced dropout rates in a number of other states and helped dramatically turn around two struggling schools in Austin ISD. TSTA and other public school advocates are urging the Legislature this year to enact

laws to encourage the creation of community schools throughout Texas.

“This model allows educators, parents, community non-profits, and businesses to develop effective programs for supporting local schools, including a range of services that address the problems that make it hard for a child to learn,” TSTA President Noel Candelaria said. “This process creates neighborhood schools that offer opportunity and a better future for our children.”

Allen Weeks, an Austin public school activist and former teacher, was part of what he called an “all-hands-on-deck effort” by his Austin ISD neighborhood to rescue two schools – Reagan High School and its feeder, Webb Middle School – that were faced with closure in 2007 under the state's accountability system. Both schools are heavily minority and low-income.

“The real problem was that our kids were moving and missing school constantly due to family issues, including housing, health care, and other issues beyond the schools' control,” Weeks

told the Senate Education Committee last fall.

“We started two family resource centers to help families stabilize and become engaged with school,” he added. “We made sure that we had a strategy for every child, from English language learners to parenting teens to our most academically gifted. We recruited new community partners to expand summer programs and mentoring. (And) the list goes on.”

Not only were Reagan and Webb saved from closure, Weeks said, but now “we have two great schools and a neighborhood that is thriving, not dying.”

Reagan's graduation rate increased from 48 percent in 2006 to 83 percent in 2014, and some Reagan seniors will graduate this year with 60 college credits. Webb is now the highest performing Title I middle school in Austin ISD. A Title I school is a campus in which at least 60 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches because of low family income. Enrollment at both schools has increased.

The schools' turnarounds were made possible by 35 community partners, including Education Austin, the local affiliate of TSTA and Texas AFT. And to build on the Reagan and Webb successes, the National Education Associa-

tion and AFT have provided a \$180,000 grant to establish the community schools model in all the elementary and middle schools that feed into Reagan in northeast Austin.

Education Austin and Austin Voices for Education and Youth, a non-profit organization that Weeks heads, are seeking community help for families at Travis High School in south Austin, where many students are hindered by language, employment, housing, and health issues.

“If we don't address the needs of these children and their families, we are a disservice and an impediment to their success,” Education Austin President Ken Zarifis said. “This means support before, during, and after school as well as on weekends. It's full support. It's really about how do we, as a community, say kids are the number one priority.”

Zarifis emphasized that needs may vary from community to community.

“One size doesn't simply fit all when you're talking about schools and communities,” he said.

Elsewhere in Texas, Communities in Schools of Houston (CIS), a campus-based, nonprofit organization, has been serving at-risk students since 1979. Working with Houston, Aldine, Alief, and Spring Branch ISDs and 300

agency partners, CIS provides services and resources to 30,000 students and their families each year.

The community schools legislation supported by TSTA would allow parents and teachers at low-performing schools – including those facing closure or reconstitution as charter schools – to develop a community school plan. The plan would coordinate resources provided by the school and campus community partners to provide students the support they need for success. Schools that successfully implement a community school plan would be exempt from closure or reconstitution under the state's accountability system.

Other parts of the legislation would set standards, provide for the appointment of campus community school coordinators and partnership teams, and establish state grants to support them.

The community schools model doesn't have to be limited to struggling schools. Teachers, parents, and com-

munity partners may want to use this successful approach to make good campuses even better.

“Parents want their children's neighborhood schools to be the center of their community, and the community schools model lets the community invest in and guide its local school,” said TSTA Public Affairs Director Ed Martin.

“It puts teachers and parents from the community in charge of their children's futures, not outsiders calling themselves reformers who have no personal stake in the students' success,” he added.

Weeks said 4,000 community schools across the country have been successful, including schools in Cincinnati, Ohio; Tulsa, Okla.; Portland, Ore.; and Oakland, Calif. Graduation and attendance rates have increased and test scores have improved in these schools where parents, teachers, and community leaders work together to do what a school is supposed to do: provide opportunity for their children.

“If we don't address the needs of these children and their families, we are a disservice and an impediment to their success. This means support before, during, and after school as well as on weekends. It's full support.”

Education Austin President Ken Zarifis

Information for NEA delegates

Here’s everything you need to know about the 2015 NEA Convention and Representative Assembly July 1-6 in Orlando, Florida



Delegates to the Representative Assembly (RA), the Association’s highest decision making body, debate issues impacting American public education, elect top officers, and set association policy. They are elected both locally and statewide (see state ballot and voting information in this issue).

This article contains information delegates need about the NEA RA lodging, travel, and schedule. Please monitor the NEA (www.nea.org/ra) and TSTA websites for updates.

Also, all delegates will be emailed a packet from the Center for Executive and Governance with the most up-to-date Texas delegation convention information.

LODGING

The official hotel for the Texas Delegation is the **Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld**. The hotel is located across the street from SeaWorld and near both Aquatica Orlando and Universal Studios.

The room rate per night is \$149 single/double occupancy, plus taxes and fees (currently 12.5%). **The deadline to submit your reservation to TSTA is May 15, 2015.**

Completed reservation forms MUST include the first night’s

deposit. Please provide either your credit card (not debit card) information on the reservation form or enclose with your form a check for the total cost of one room night (including taxes and fees) made payable to: Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld. If an incomplete credit card number and/or no credit card or check is submitted, your reservation will not be made.

Hotel check-in time is 4:00 p.m. Check-out time is 11:00 a.m. Current parking rates are approximately \$20 for self-parking. Room service is available from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Guest room amenities include complimentary wireless internet, mini-refrigerators, and a fitness center. If you intend to pay cash for your lodging expenses, be prepared to pay all room, tax, and, if applicable, parking fees at check in. This is a smoke-free hotel. Pets are not allowed. We will send delegates any updates to lodging information. Lodging inquiries should be directed to Jan Parks at janp@tsta.org.

All rooms will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Delegates should submit their reservation forms as soon as possible to ensure space in the TSTA room block at our guaranteed rate.

Delegates who do not have a roommate but would like to share lodging expenses may indicate this on the reservation form. TSTA cannot guarantee a roommate for every request, but we will attempt to pair delegates who ask for such assistance.

TRANSPORTATION

From **Orlando International Airport**, cab fare to the hotel is about \$40. Shuttle service is approximately \$40 roundtrip.

Delegates who need special transportation assistance should pre-register with the NEA as physically challenged delegates.

TEXAS CAUCUS MEETINGS

All Texas Caucus meetings will be at the Texas Delegation hotel. Additional information regarding meeting times and schedule will be sent to delegates. Morning meetings will include coffee service and a light breakfast.

NOTE: Delegates must register at the Texas Caucus meeting **and** register with NEA at the convention center. Registration at the first Texas Caucus meeting will begin 30 minutes before the start of the meeting. Please review the Tentative NEA Meeting Event Schedule for the NEA registration times.

CLUSTERING TO ELECT NEA DELEGATES

Delegate allocations are based on NEA membership as of Jan. 15, 2015. NEA local affiliates are allocated delegates on a ratio of one delegate for each 150 (or major fraction thereof) active, NEA life, and educational support members of NEA. Local associations with 75 or fewer NEA members may cluster to elect an NEA delegate.

If your local has 75 or fewer NEA members and is interested in clustering to elect an NEA delegate, submit a local cluster election request form (printed in the Fall Advocate). If you have not submitted your form and still are interested in being a cluster delegate, please submit your written request to cluster **by email** to: neochac@tsta.org, **by fax** to: 512-486-7053, or **by mail** to: TSTA Center for Executive and Governance, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

TEXAS TRADITION

Texas delegates capture the eyes of the entire nation at each NEA RA by dressing uniformly in Texas flag attire. All Texas delegates should wear a “Texas” vest or shirt — i.e. Texas flag design with a white star on the right front chest — with white or navy blue pants, skirt, or shorts. All Texas delegates are expected to wear the official “uniform” on the days the NEA RA is in session.

REMEMBER

- Make your room reservation through TSTA’s Center for Executive and Governance, not the hotel.
- Completed reservation forms MUST include the first night’s deposit.
- Deadline to submit your room reservation to TSTA is May 15, 2015.

TENTATIVE NEA MEETING EVENT SCHEDULE

www.nea.org/grants/2015-annual-meeting-agenda.html (Dates, times and events are subject to change.)

PRE-CONVENTION SCHEDULE

Friday, June 26	
5:30 pm-10:00 pm	National Council of Urban Education Associations Meeting
Saturday, June 27	
8:00 am-5:00 pm	National Council of Urban Education Associations Meeting
Sunday, June 28	
8:00 am-5:00 pm	Ethnic Leaders Meetings
9:00 am-5:00 pm	NEA-Retired Annual Meeting
9:00 am-5:00 pm	National Council of Urban Education Associations Meeting
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Resolutions Editing Committee Meeting
6:00 pm-9:00 pm	NEA Student Leadership Conference
Monday, June 29	
7:30 am-5:30 pm	NEA Student Leadership Conference
8:30 am-5:00 pm	NEEAF Annual Meeting
9:00 am-2:30 pm	National Council of Urban Education Associations Meeting
9:00 am-4:00 pm	Constitution, Bylaws and Rules Committee Meeting
9:00 am-5:00 pm	NEA-Retired Annual Meeting
9:00 am-6:00 pm	Joint Conference on Concerns of Minorities and Women
9:00 am-6:00 pm	Resolutions Editing Committee Meeting
1:30 pm-5:00 pm	National Council of State Education Associations Meeting
4:00 pm-5:30 pm	Constitution, Bylaws and Rules Committee Meeting with Candidates for NEA Office
4:15 pm-5:15 pm	Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Hearing
5:00 pm-6:00 pm	Women’s Issues Hearing
Tuesday, June 30	
6:00 am-8:30 pm	Student Leadership Conference
8:30 am-3:00 pm	Joint Conference on Concerns of Minorities and Women
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Candidates Interview Day
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Resolutions Committee Meeting
3:00 pm-6:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting
3:00 pm-5:00 pm	Credentials Committee Meeting
4:00 pm-10:00 pm	National Council for Education Support Professionals Executive Meeting

CONVENTION SCHEDULE

Wednesday, July 1	
Annual Meeting (Delegate Registration and Policy Hearings Begin)	
7:00 am-10:00 am	Student Leadership Conference
9:00 am-11:00 am	Open Hearing on Resolutions
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Registration: Delegates, Successor Delegates, and Non-Delegates
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Exhibits
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Credentials Committee Meeting
10:00 am-3:30 pm	State Delegation Meetings (HQ hotel for state delegations)
10:30 am-noon	Read Across Summer Reading Kick-Off Event
3:30 pm-5:30 pm	National Council for Education Support Professionals
4:00 pm-5:30 pm	Special Interest Caucus Meetings
4:00 pm-6:00 pm	National Council for Higher Education Membership Meeting

6:00 pm-10:00 pm	Special Guests’ Dinner
All Day	Campaigning
TBD	Outreach Service Project
Thursday, July 2	
7:00 am-9:00 am	State Delegation Meetings
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Registration: Delegates, Successor Delegates, and Non-Delegates
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Exhibits
9:00 am-6:00 pm	Credentials Committee Meeting
10:00 am-noon	Open Hearing on Strategic Plan and Budget
10:00 am-3:00 pm	Raise Your Hand Day
10:00 am-4:00 pm	Resolutions Committee Meeting
Noon-1:00 pm	Special Interest Caucus Meetings
1:00 pm-3:00 pm	Legislative Open Hearing
1:00 pm-2:00 pm	Sexual Orientation/Gender Identification (SOGI) Committee Hearing
1:00 pm-3:00 pm	Open Hearing on Constitution, Bylaws and Rules
2:00 pm-4:00 pm	Elections Committee Meeting
4:30 pm	Board of Directors Meeting
6:30 pm-10:00 pm	Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner
All Day	Campaigning
TBD	Outreach Service Project
Friday, July 3	
7:00 am-9:00 am	State Delegation Meetings
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Credentials Committee Meeting
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Non-Delegate Registration
9:30 am-10:00 am	Special Interest Caucus Meetings
10:30 am-6:00 pm	Representative Assembly
1:00 pm-5:00 pm	Non-Profit Fundraising Activities
All Day	Campaigning
Saturday, July 4	
7:00 am-9:00 am	State Delegation Meetings
8:30 am-noon	Voting for Officers
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Credentials Committee Meeting
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Non-Delegate Registration
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Non-Profit Fundraising Activities
9:30 am-10:00 am	Special Interest Caucus Meetings
10:00 am-6:00 pm	Representative Assembly
Lunch Break	Special Interest Caucus Meetings
Lunch Break	National Council for Education Support Professionals
Sunday, July 5	
7:00 am-9:00 am	State Delegation Meetings
8:30 am-noon	Voting on Amendments and Runoff Elections (if necessary)
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Credentials Committee Meeting
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Non-Delegate Registration
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Non-Profit Fundraising Activities
9:30 am-10:00 am	Special Interest Caucus Meetings
10:00 am-6:00 pm	Representative Assembly
Lunch Break	Special Interest Caucus Meetings
Monday, July 6	
7:00 am-9:00 am	State Delegation Meetings
9:00 am-noon	Non-Delegate Registration
9:00 am-3:00 pm	Non-Profit Fundraising Activities
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Credentials Committee Meeting
9:30 am-10:00 am	Special Interest Caucus Meetings
10:00 am-completion	Representative Assembly
Lunch Break	Special Interest Caucus Meetings

HOTEL REGISTRATION FORM FOR NEA CONVENTION DELEGATES

July 1-6, 2015 • Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld • Orlando, Florida

Complete all requested information (one form per guest room) and return to TSTA by May 15, 2015. Check-in time 4:00 p.m.—Check-out time 11:00 a.m.

DO NOT CONTACT THE HOTEL DIRECTLY

(PLEASE PRINT)

RENAISSANCE ORLANDO AT SEAWORLD

ROOM RATE

(Texas Delegation Hotel)
6677 Sea Harbor Drive
Orlando, Florida 32821
Phone: 407-351-5555
Fax: 407-351-9991

Cut-off date for ALL rooms at TSTA room rate is May 15, 2015. All rooms are subject to an additional occupancy tax, currently 12.5%.
Rooms not booked through TSTA may be charged at the hotel rack rate.

I will arrive (June/July) _____, 2015 at _____ (a.m./p.m.) and I will depart July _____, 2015.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Day phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

Home email: _____ School email: _____

List ALL individuals per room (one name per line) and accommodations desired:

GUESTS PER ROOM

Guest 1 _____

Guest 2 _____

Guest 3 _____

Guest 4 _____

_____ I do not have a roommate but am interested in sharing accommodations with another delegate.

First night's room and tax is due upon receipt of reservation. Deposits can be made by major credit card or check. No debit cards allowed. Make check payable to Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld. No deposit refund will be issued for any cancellation made within 72 hours of your scheduled arrival date. If the hotel is not advised, you will be responsible to pay for space held.

Approved major credit card (not debit): _____ Exp. date: _____

Credit card #: _____ Name on card: _____

Return to: Jan Parks, TSTA Center for Executive and Governance, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701, fax 512-486-7053

The schedule outlines all activities of the 2015 NEA Convention. Information packets will be mailed to Texas delegates in early May.

Voting for state delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly

Most members will mark three sections of the ballot this year for State Delegates to the NEA RA — one for Category II delegates, one for a Statewide delegate, and one for Delegate District delegates. Please read this before marking your ballot.

TSTA allocates State Delegates for the NEA RA based on TSTA Regions in a manner that maximizes our opportunity to elect a full delegation while complying with the NEA one-person, one-vote requirement. This year we will be electing two Category II delegates on a statewide basis, one other delegate on a statewide ballot, and 42 State Delegates from six Delegate Districts.

All members should vote for Category II delegates — i.e. supervisors and retired Life members as defined in the NEA Bylaws. Every eligible member should vote for the Statewide delegate. The TSTA Vice President is an automatic Statewide candidate, and no other person filed.

The remainder of the ballot is divided into Delegate Districts in a manner to meet NEA requirements for equal representation based on the one-person, one-vote principle. The ballot will

list the Regions in each Delegate District and will indicate the number of delegates that can be elected in that Delegate District. Members should vote only in the Delegate District that includes their Region, and should not mark any other Delegate District on the ballot. The Delegate Districts are:

- Delegate District 1 (Regions 1A, 1C, 1D, 1E, 2D, 3B);
- Delegate District 2 (Regions 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 4A, 4B);
- Delegate District 3 (Regions 2A, 2B, 3A, 3E, 4C, 4D, TFA);
- Delegate District 4 (Regions 1B, 3C, 3D).

There is a special insert in this magazine between pages 16 and 17 with a return envelope and the ballot. If you did not receive a ballot, call TSTA immediately (877-ASK-TSTA) and ask for Neocha Campbell.

In the return address portion of the envelope most members will find printed “Del Dist” followed by some number up to five (5); this indicates the Delegate District in which you should vote. Also printed is a code designating your membership category. If your envelope does not have a Del Dist designation, then you are eligible to vote only in the Category II section. Everyone else should mark three sections: the Category II ballot, the Statewide ballot, and the appropriate Delegate District ballot. **If you believe your envelope is incorrect, call TSTA immediately (877-ASK-TSTA) and ask for Neocha Campbell.**

Check the return address portion of the envelope to determine which Delegate District you should mark. First, mark Category II (vote for two). Next, mark the Statewide section (vote for one). Then, find the section for your Delegate District. The section for your Delegate District will tell you how many votes you may cast.

On all three sections, you may vote for the printed name(s), or you may write in a name and vote for the write-in. In order for write-in votes to be counted on the Delegate District ballot, the write-in candidate must be a member in a Region included in that Delegate

District. We do encourage write-in votes. Eligible members who receive votes but are not elected as a delegate will be placed on our alternate list.

Once you have marked your ballot, separate it from, and seal it in, the envelope provided. **The printed information on the envelope verifies for the Elections Committee your right to vote, so you MUST return your ballot in this envelope.**

In order to encourage more members to vote, some locals collect the sealed envelopes and mail a group of envelopes together. This is acceptable, but you still must seal your ballot in the special envelope before you turn it in.

Whether you mail it yourself or your local collects and mails envelopes, ballots must be RECEIVED at TSTA headquarters in Austin by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 15, 2015. If the ballot is not in the provided envelope, your vote will not be counted.

This issue of the Advocate includes brief statements from many of the candidates for State Delegate. TSTA policy provides for printing statements from those candidates who file such a statement before the established deadline. TSTA policy also permits any candidate to have an observer present when the Elections Committee canvasses the ballots on April 19 at the TSTA headquarters in Austin. Please contact Neocha Campbell at 877-ASK-TSTA if you are a candidate and want an observer.

THE DELEGATE STORY

NEA Bylaws and policies determine the allocation of delegates to the NEA RA. TSTA is allocated one state delegate for every 1,000 NEA active and educational support members. Allocation and election of these delegates must comply with the NEA requirements about open nominations, secret ballots, and the one-person, one-vote principle.

Once NEA notifies us of the number of state delegates to be elected, TSTA Board policy controls how we will allocate those delegates. Because of the variance in the number of members across TSTA Regions, we cannot allocate delegates only to individual Regions and still pass the one-person, one-vote tests applied by NEA. Instead, we have combined Regions into Delegate Districts in a way to maximize our opportunity to fill all delegate slots while still complying with NEA standards. One delegate must be elected statewide in order to provide a method for the TSTA Vice President to seek election as a delegate.

TSTA is allocated 45 state delegates for the 2015 NEA RA. Based on proportional representation, two delegates must be elected as “Category II” delegates, representing supervisors and retired Life members as defined in the NEA Bylaws. After setting aside one delegate for the statewide ballot, we looked at different ways to combine Regions in order to meet the one-person, one-vote principle in electing the remaining 42 state delegates. We were able to meet all necessary requirements by dividing the 42 delegates among the four Delegate Districts as shown on the ballot.

Local associations are allocated one delegate for each 150 active and educational support NEA members or major fraction thereof. Locals with fewer than 76 NEA members may cluster to form delegate units. Presidents of locals that have 76 or more members should receive from NEA by early February the number of delegates to be elected to the 2015 NEA RA, a local delegate report form, and a copy of guidelines to assure proportional representation by educational position. Local presidents must send the local delegate report forms to TSTA by April 10. If your local has 75 or fewer NEA members and is interested in clustering to elect an NEA delegate, submit a local cluster election request form (printed in the Fall Advocate). If you have not submitted your form and still are interested in being a “cluster” delegate, please contact Neocha Campbell at 877-ASK-TSTA or by email at neochac@tsta.org.

One of the core values for both NEA and TSTA is appropriate representation for ethnic minority members. Locals are encouraged to seek and elect ethnic minorities as delegates to help TSTA meet our goals for ethnic minority representation.

Elected State Delegates are eligible to receive a \$250 stipend. Although this amount is only a small percentage of the total cost for a delegate, TSTA is pleased to be in a position to provide some financial assistance. TSTA Board Policy sets out the caucus and RA attendance expectations delegates must meet in order to receive the stipend.

BALLOTS MUST BE RECEIVED AT TSTA HEADQUARTERS IN AUSTIN BY 5 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2015.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS (*statements limited to 25 words)

STATEWIDE

- Ovidia Molina, Hispanic. It would be an honor to represent you at the 2015 NEA Representative Assembly.

CATEGORY II

- Bobbie Duncan, Caucasian.
- Dale Kaiser, Caucasian.
- Ignacio Salinas Jr., Hispanic.

DELEGATE DISTRICT 1

(REGIONS 1A, 1C, 1D, 1E, 2D, 3B)

- Lucy Artiga, Hispanic. I am married with four wonderful kids. I enjoy my job and try to always do my best. I also like helping and encouraging others.

- Pamela Belcher, Multi-ethnic. I'd be honored to be your representative at the 2015 NEA RA. I'm a long time advocate of public schools and a middle school teacher.

- Bianca Carpenter, Black. Advocating for educators and students is my passion! Can't wait to make a difference!

- Ebony Kennedy, Black. I recently became involved in TSTA as a campus representative. I am interested in broadening my knowledge and involvement by serving as a representative.

- Joyce Roberta "JR" Miller-Alper: analytical thinker, grassroots advocate, ethical professional; **your voice** at twenty-four Representative Assemblies-Leadership NEA/TSTA/Region 3B/SBEA thirty years — **Your vote** — the important one!

- Elizabeth Narvaez, Hispanic. I was born and raised in Houston, TX and graduated from Madison high school along with my sister and two brothers. I am the proud*

- Kimberly Parnell, Black. Kimberly Parnell is a current Alief Independent School District employee and Houston Community College student majoring in teacher education, graduating in May 2015.

- Deborah Pepper, Caucasian. As past president of my local, and current president of Region 3B, I'm passionate about the democratic process, and being a delegate to represent you.

- Dorian Prier, Black. I am the Area Director for Middle and Intermediate Schools for my local. I am proud to serve on the Communications and Community Relations Committee.

- Kevin Sanders, Black. My name is Kevin Sanders I am a native of South Carolina, I moved to Austin TX in 1981 at the age of nine. I*

- Talia Wynne, Black. I am so excited to come together with other Advocates of Education. I look forward to Orlando.

DELEGATE DISTRICT 2

(REGIONS 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, 4A, 4B)

- Winifred Jackson, Black. A life-long member of TSTA, a state board member, local president, building AR, local and national leadership committees and advocate for public education.

- Lois Stephens, Black. Served as a local president, ESP Caucus Secretary, state and regional delegate. Served on TSTA ESP Committee and a long time advocate for public education*

- Doris Hill, American Indian/Alaska Native.

- Norma Waters, Hispanic. Longtime Advocate. I have held Local positions of Board of Directors, Secretary and Vice-

President. It would be a privilege to be your State Delegate.

DELEGATE DISTRICT 3

(REGIONS 2A, 2B, 3A, 3E, 4C, 4D, TFA)

- Gilbert DeLaRosa, Jr., Hispanic.

- Robert Fierro, Hispanic. Previous NEA-RA Delegate. Former NEA Resolutions Committee member. Committed to serving all TSTA members at the NEA-RA. I need your vote to continue serving you.

- Delna Bryan, Hispanic.

- Chris Tullis, American Indian/Alaska Native. Currently Serving on the NEA Resolutions Committee (5th term), Region 4D Board, Nea Dallas Board. Past: Region 4D VP. I would appreciate your vote.

- Sheila Walker, Black. I look forward to being a State Delegate

DELEGATE DISTRICT 4

(REGIONS 1B, 3C, 3D)

- Julie Gimbel, Hispanic. Special education teacher/coach; President Harlandale Education Association; 2014-2015 TSTA Communications Committee; HEA Political Board Elections Chair; Wanting the opportunity to continue to grow w/ association.

- Ann Dolbee, Caucasian. I have served TSTA in various roles for seven years. I would like the experience of the RA to better serve my members.

- Jessica Powell, Caucasian. Local Treasurer, Region 3D President, NEA Women's Leadership Training, Western Region Leader, State Board of Directors, TSTA Board of Directors-Advisory Committee, Permanent Fund Committee



TSTA HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Delegate voting and registration

Delegates attending the 136th TSTA annual convention at the Embassy Suites in Frisco will elect TSTA Board of Directors at-large position(s) and NEA Director for Texas, Place 2. If necessary, elections for TSTA Board at-large members will be held. Finally, delegates will vote on one proposed bylaws amendment, which is included in this issue in its entirety on page 21.

Delegates are elected at the local level, except for certain supervisory delegates elected regionally, cluster delegates, and voting members of the TSTA board who are automatically delegates because of their position. All delegates must have their credentials and a picture ID with them in order to vote. Registration opens Friday, April 10, from 7:00 a.m. through

the close of the First Business Session, and re-opens Saturday, April 11, at 6:30 a.m. Delegates planning to arrive on Saturday should allow plenty of time to register and vote. Voting begins Saturday at 8:30 a.m. Delegates must have completed registration and be in the voting line no later than 9:30 a.m. to be eligible to cast their ballot.

Information about lodging and a preliminary schedule of events appeared in the Winter Advocate and is available on the TSTA website, www.tsta.org. Updates to this information will be posted on the website. The convention hotel is holding a room block for TSTA attendees. Delegates are responsible for making their own hotel reservations with the Embassy Suites. The housing deadline is March 15.

Voting begins Saturday at 8:30 a.m. Delegates must have completed registration and be in the voting line no later than 9:30 a.m. to be eligible to cast their ballot. Delegates must present their credentials (badge and ribbon) and a photo ID to vote.

CANDIDATES FOR NEA DIRECTOR, PLACE 2



JESSICA POWELL

Professional Training

- Texas Lutheran Univ., 08/01-05/05, B.A. History
- Abilene Christian Univ., 10/06-01/07,

coursework completed; no degree obtained

- Sam Houston State Univ., 01/09-06/09, coursework completed; no degree obtained

Professional Experience

- Conroe ISD, 08/05-07/12, Teacher (7/8 ELA); Instr. Tech Specialist
- Huntsville ISD, 08/12-07/14, Instructional Technology Specialist
- Cy-Fair ISD, 08/14-present, Instructional Technology Specialist

Professional Education Associations

- TCEA: Texas Computer Educator Association
- Techs4Tex Foundation (Board of Directors): non-profit professional development team

Offices Held

- TSTA-Conroe PAC/Vice Pres., 09/05-07/12
- Huntsville TSTA Organizing Chair/President, 08/12-07/14
- CyFair TSTA/NEA Sec./Treas., 08/14-present
- Region 3D TSTA President, 07/13-present

Campaign Statement

I believe in bringing representation & advocacy to all members and empowering them to lead our profession into the next evolution of public education. Public education in non-union states needs informed, empowered, and outspoken advocates fighting to improve the situations in our school. I will speak up and speak out on behalf of our students, our members and our community schools.



DORIS HILL

Professional Training

- Angelo State, B.A., Education
- UNT, 2004, Cert—Sp.ed. all levels; Cert—E.C.-4

Professional Experience

- Lewisville ISD, 1997-2006, ESP/Sp. Teacher
- Grand Prairie ISD, 2006-now, dyslexia teacher – inclusion; teacher, basic ELA; Sp. ed. dept. head

Offices Held

- Lewisville EA, Vice-President & President, 2006
- Grand Prairie EA, Organizing Chair & President, 2006-now
- Region 4B (old 4B), Vice President, 2004-2006
- TSTA Ambassador, 2002

Campaign Statement

My philosophy is to serve all members from all Locals.

PROPOSED TSTA BYLAWS AMENDMENT

Wording in **bold and underlined** proposed additions. Wording in ~~[brackets with strikethrough]~~ proposed deletions.

INTENT: To increase the length of term for At-Large members to three (3) years.

Article VII, Section 4. Term of Office

A. The term of office for Board of Directors members shall be three (3) years except for ~~[At-Large Board members;]~~ the president of the Texas State Teachers Association-Student Program and NEA Directors from Texas.

Maker: Karen Barnes

Rationale: For many years At-Large Board of Directors members have served terms of two (2) years. This amendment will update the terms of At-Large members to be more consistent with other Board of Directors member terms.

Financial Impact: No financial impact.

Vote Required: 2/3rds

CB&E Recommends: Support

When you're ready to elevate student achievement.

You are ready for American Public University.

With more than 90 degrees to choose from, there's almost no end to what you can learn. Pursue a respected Education degree online — at a cost that's 33% less for graduate students than the average in-state rates at public universities.*

[StudyatAPU.com/TX-Advocate](#)

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

We want you to make an informed decision about the university that's right for you. For more about our graduation rates, the median debt of students who completed each program, and other important information, visit [www.apu.edu/disclosure](#).

Ready when you are.™



Dealing with compassion fatigue

As do other service professionals, teachers can experience secondary traumatic stress. When children hurt, we hurt too. This can wear us out — physically, emotionally, and mentally.

Many new teachers leave our profession within the first two to five years. Though I didn't stray far afield, I, too, became a professional statistic — a classroom dropout. Believe me, the reasons were varied. Mainly, I wasn't prepared for the helplessness I felt when my idealism and inexperience came face to face with the horrific narratives most of my students lived day in and out. Simply stated, I was in over my head but felt like a failure.

Teaching is a helping profession. Though we don't often speak of it as

such, much of what we do goes beyond our curricula. My first job as a helping professional began in an inner-city dropout prevention program shortly after race riots gutted many cities.

Back then, the term "adverse life experiences" didn't exist, yet every one of my students had circumstances beyond my wildest 22-year-old imagination. In time, I came to appreciate the unmitigated power of traumatic events to obliterate a personal sense of safety, control, and hopefulness. Teaching in hard-knock neighborhoods often takes

a harsh toll on every member of the school community.

My work was funded by a one-year grant. Relieved when the program was over, I chose a job doing something else. In time, I returned to the classroom in a suburban school. There, buses provided safe transport. Parents called with questions and addressed teacher concerns. "How sweet it is," I thought. Then, in the spring, one of my eighth graders took his life. No one saw this coming. There was little awareness of youth suicide. Schools didn't have crisis teams back then, yet the entire staff stepped up to the plate. That's what we teachers do. We help.

Harsh times, adverse experiences, disasters, other traumas, and loss — these are a part of life. When children hurt, they don't check their tragic experiences at the door. Because many of us are emotionally available to our learners, students often bring their stories to us, the people they trust. Competent, caring, and concerned, we bear witness to the suffering of our students. Because we are human, we may also bear the burden.

When children hurt, we the compassionate, competent adults in their lives hurt, too — whether or not we are aware of the toll it takes on us. We may also pack personal histories that become activated when another's trauma hits close to home. Compassion fatigue expert Charles Figley writes: "Any educator who works directly with traumatized children and adolescents is vulnerable to the effects of trauma."

Trauma experts refer to this vulnerability as secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma, or compassion fatigue. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN.org) defines secondary traumatic stress as "the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another." Secondary traumatic stress (STS) wears us out — physically, emotionally, and mentally. It's especially prevalent when we feel overwhelmed and are working in unsupportive and demanding environments.

THE LOOK AND FEEL OF STS

Teachers are not immune to human emotions. No smart board or dry erase marker magically protects us from feeling another's pain. STS reactions may seep or crash into our systems.

We may find ourselves a little less patient, snarky, or perhaps angry and frustrated. We may yell, slam books, or make threats. Work obligations, focusing and planning, decision making, or record keeping become more difficult. Headaches, stomachaches, and back pain frequently appear. We may wall off our caring or tell students we don't have time to listen. Or we may listen — but without compassion. We might even get angry with the traumatized student (the real victim) or blame the student's family. Some of us become jaded and cynical.

We lose the creative spark and spontaneity that made teaching fun. The joy of teaching? We may question whether it ever existed. And when you

Symptoms & conditions associated with STS

- **Hypervigilance**—on guard, expecting the worst to happen
- **Minimizing**—make mountains into molehills (no big deal, so what?)
- **Fearful**—worry excessively, all molehills become mountains
- **Hopelessness**—nothing will make a difference
- **Disconnection**—numb or space out so as not to see or feel
- **Poor boundaries**—try to solve other's problems, take on more than you can handle
- **Social withdrawal**—avoid friends, colleagues, activities you enjoy
- **Desensitized to violence**—act as if it's reasonable for the environment
- **Avoid situations and conflicts**—often at personal price
- **Diminished self-care**—ignore or don't care about personal well-being or appearance
- **Survival coping**—living by fighting, fleeing, or avoiding
- **Guilt, anger, cynicism, chronic exhaustion, sleeplessness, physical ailments**

Source: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN.org)

add in all the new initiatives educators face today — all of it becomes too much. Suddenly we notice we really do not feel physically well. In fact, we may find ourselves susceptible to every seasonal flu or cold virus.

Attempting to ignore or minimize the impact of STS is a harmful way to numb feelings and physical sensations. Not addressing the personal impact brought by another’s suffering leads to helplessness and hopelessness. Burn-out is much harder to reverse.

Perhaps you are thinking, “I signed up as an educator, not a counselor. I’m not going to let this stuff get to me.” If only it were that simple.

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON, BUT, WHEN IT’S OVER, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Recognition is the key to self-care. If you want to know whether you lean toward compassion satisfaction or fatigue, STS, or border on burnout, download the free Professional Quality of Life Scale at PROQOL.org. This site also provides a variety of resources and tips for coping and self-care.

Care for your self does not mean knocking you out with manic or mindless activity, self-medicating, or other avoidance strategies. It’s not the junk food lunch, the liquid dinner, the half-gallon of ice cream consumed as a couch potato. Nor is it doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result.

Perhaps becoming a classroom dropout seems enticing or advisable. A new

career or job may provide relief. Without self-change this quick fix is usually temporary. Self-care requires a conscious, deliberate implementation of well-being strategies. STS recovery and restoration invites us to look at what we have and what we need in order to create a plan to access our resources. We then implement well-being strategies. Seeking professional help may be necessary. If so, don’t hesitate. Mental health is physical health.

WHAT DO PEOPLE DO TO DEAL? LESSONS FROM SANDY

“Life is not a matter of holding good cards, but of playing a poor hand well.” — Robert Louis Stevenson

When Superstorm Sandy slammed into my state, New Jersey, the losses far exceeded the brick, stick, and mortar homes devastated by the flooding waters. For many children and families, Sandy significantly displaced their emotional foundation — the sense of personal safety, belonging, and control that help us meet and greet life’s hard challenges. Despite Sandy’s impact, the resilience I’ve been privileged to see and to foster as a helping professional has been extraordinary.

Presently, I’m involved in three programs that help people locate the good cards they hold and play the entire hand better. Following are resilience-building and coping strategies skimmed from these best practices. If you, your loved ones, your students, and/or your school community are struggling, use these suggestions. None of the ideas will come as a sur-

prise or produce a glorious “AHA.” You’ll probably recognize them. You may have even tried a few — possibly casually?

One caveat: Suggestions without your personal implementation plan are like most things we hope to remember to do: out of sight, out of mind. Literally! Well-made plans bring positive results.

Always begin with a personal inventory of your resources and strengths. What is working? For improvement areas you identify, jot down a few notes: What do I have already? What do I need or want to improve? Who can help me? What’s my plan? How will I know if it’s working?

Start small. Ask yourself: What one small change can I make that will start a course correction? Too often we go for the extreme make-over. Walk, don’t leap. Little steps take us there. For instance, if you are powering up on too much caffeine, could you substitute green tea for one or two cups? Could you commit for a month? Keep a daily score? It may seem insignificant, but following through on a small step is making a commitment and regaining a sense of mastery over your life. Write down your goal and action plan — and add a column to note your progress.

Do not go it alone. Teaching can be very isolating. Research on resilience and positive coping consistently emphasizes the importance and great value of social connection and belonging. We need each other. Self-care

doesn’t mean all by yourself. It means care for your “self.”

Consider creating a small on-site support network or perhaps an off-site group for people who want to implement well-being strategies. Avoid any group that wants to “romance” the problem and remain in the drama. The goal is to recover and restore your balance. We connect with others for mutual support.

Seek healthy social connections and relationships. Make a list of all the people in your social world. Who are your positive friends? Your most important connections? Who can you go to for advice or help? Who brings you down? Who do you want to spend more time with? Less time? Who needs your help or support? Do you have supportive family? If not, who can fill this role? Make a written plan to improve your healthy social connections.

Manage reactions. Nothing manages reaction better than the breath. The simple act of deliberately and slowly breathing in and breathing out calms your sympathetic nervous system and thus quiets your biology. You restore homeostasis. When you commit to a daily practice of breathing, start small. Try to go from two to five minutes and ultimately to 15 minutes two times a day. You will notice that taking a calming breath becomes your default switch.

Consider adding a mindfulness practice to the breath work of managing reactions. What do you get? An ability to feel your emotions, witness your

Because many of us are emotionally available to our learners, students often bring their stories to us, the people they trust. Competent, caring, and concerned, we bear witness to the suffering of our students. Because we are human, we may also bear the burden.

troubling thoughts, your anxieties, your worries, and your agitation — without judging, shaming, or blaming. When distressing thoughts and troubling sensations arise, breathing without judging the experience helps us be okay with what is. When we accept what is, we then can become creative agents of change.

Many contemplative practices lead us to our inner resources. Mindfulness is suggested here because it’s well-researched and evidence-based. No matter what biological quieting practice you use, managing your reactions responsively is the desired result. The book, “Mindfulness for Beginners” comes with a guided CD; it’s great for individual practice or to facilitate a school-based faculty practice.

Positive activities. What gives you juice? What helps you zone in to disengage from troubles and stress? Indoor or outdoor activities? Group activities? Volunteer activities? Expressive arts? Hiking, biking, surfing, skiing? Knitting? Gardening? Is there something you’re itching to try?

Make a weekly calendar. List the activities you can do under the days you can do them. Resist cramming or tell-

ing yourself you don’t have time! Have something to look forward to on your weekend — even if you have only an hour.

Generosity. Serving others is a positive activity that has been shown to give the giver more than she or he gave. The generous idea is to do something not connected to your teaching profession that fulfills you and helps others.

These practices probably won’t bring instant relief or change. They do move you in the direction of higher ground. By embracing them, you are making a positive difference in your life by taking care of your gift — you. That’s the essence of self-care: becoming the change you want to see in your world.

Reprinted from the February NJEA Review. Mary Fowler is an author and educational consultant. Through her practice, Positive Difference PD for Educators, Fowler specializes in social, emotional, and behavioral issues. She also works for the Barnabas Health Institute for Prevention as a facilitator for Turning the Tides, a New Jersey Department of Children and Families funded grant. Learn more and contact Fowler at www.maryfowler.com.



Express-News: U.S. Constitution supersedes politics

“It appears petty politics were at play here and the Constitution got in the way.”

When Julie Gimbel, president of the Harlandale Education Association (HEA), was denied the right to speak at a school board meeting, her members and the community rallied around her.

Most of the people who signed up to speak at the following week’s board meeting were there to protest; TSTA members from the North East, Southwest, Edgewood, and Judson school districts came to support Gimbel; and the media supported her, too.

“(HEA members) refused to be silenced and stood up for their right to speak,” KENS-TV reported. “On Thursday, they confronted the school board president — they stood holding signs that read ‘free speech’ and then applauded after each teacher spoke.”

“The recent ruckus in the Harlandale Independent School District over who would be allowed to speak during the

citizens’ comment period reflects badly on the district’s leadership,” the San Antonio Express-News said. “Jesse ‘Jay’ Alaniz, the board’s newly installed board president, was wrong to trample on the First Amendment by not allowing a group whose message he disagreed with from speaking.

“It appears petty politics were at play here and the Constitution got in the way,” the newspaper concluded.

“We’ve always had a good working relationship with the board members here at Harlandale,” Gimbel told KSAT-TV, the ABC affiliate. “We’ve always voiced our concerns, and it was pretty embarrassing to be ousted in public in front of all our peers, to be denied the right to speak.”

HEA used a video to organize members to attend the second school board meeting, where the school board president apologized.



A WIN IN DEL VALLE

On Jan. 27, Sarah Buchanan of the Del Valle Education Association (DVEA) called on the school board to reject a proposed language change to DGBA grievance policy that was included in TASB Update 101.

“It stated that the grievance timeline clock shall start ticking before any informal attempt has been made to resolve concerns,” TSTA Organizational Development Specialist Jason Wylie, who works with DVEA, said. “The language change was a knee-jerk reaction to a recent ruling by the Texas Commissioner of Education who determined that an informal resolution process should be allowed to run its course before the grievance timeline took effect.”

The school board and administration of Del Valle ISD agreed with DVEA’s analysis, and the proposed change to grievance policy DGBA will not be adopted.

At the same meeting, DVEA’s Sean Hurley spoke on behalf of “at will” hourly employees whose employment could be terminated at any time for any reason. DVEA is circulating a petition to provide them due process.

“Employees deserve progressive discipline and a fair procedural process before their employment is terminated,” Hurley said, adding that the current system creates insecurity and low morale.



American Education Week in Texas

Counterclockwise from top:

- Sixty people attended a banquet sponsored by Beaumont Teachers Association and Port Arthur Teachers Association to honor ESPs and other school employees. See photos at <http://bit.ly/1ABk010>.
- NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia visited Southwest ISD on Educator for a Day Thursday of American Education Week. She joined the TSTA officers for a press conference, meeting with the San Antonio Express-News editorial board, reception at Aggie Park, and breakfast with superintendents and board members.
- Ysleta Teachers Association launched a fair pay campaign on Wednesday, ESP Day, at the Board of Trustees meeting.
- Cy-Fair TSTA members spoke at a school board meeting about the outstanding education employees in the district. Photos at <http://bit.ly/1A2tzVZ>.



NEA holds training in San Antonio

LEADERSHIP EVENT: TSTA local leaders and school board members from the San Antonio area, NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, TSTA President Noel Candelaria, and TSTA Vice President Ovidia Molina discuss Opportunity and Equity in Educating the Whole Child. Photos by Casey Howell.

Held in early fall and late winter, NEA's Minority and Women's Leadership Training Conferences provide women and members of NEA's four designated ethnic minority groups (American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian/Pacific Islander; Black; and Hispanic) the skills they need to be effective leaders in their schools, communities, and the Association.

The session for the western United States was held in San Antonio this

year. While in town for the event, NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia joined TSTA President Noel Candelaria and Vice President Ovidia Molina for a Leadership Roundtable and tour of Travis Early College High School.

They also met with Rick Noriega of Avance, a company that strengthens families in at-risk communities through parent education and support programs.



CBS EVENING NEWS FEATURES EULESS MENTOR

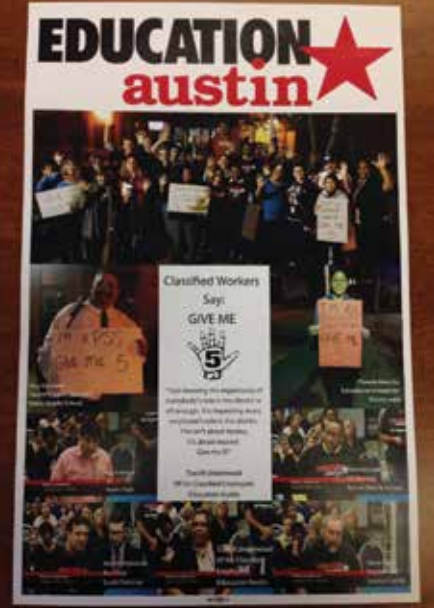
Charles Clark, a custodian who mentors students at Trinity High School in Euless, was featured in the "On the Road with Steve Hartman" segment of the Jan. 16 CBS Evening News. You may remember his story from the Fall 2013 issue of the Advocate. <http://cbsn.ws/16ZytpD>

LUBBOCK SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER HONORED

Helene Thorpe, a sixth grade social studies teacher at Smylie Wilson Middle School in Lubbock ISD, was named the Texas Council for the Social Studies Middle School Teacher of the Year. She has developed original instructional material that demonstrates creativity and incorporates research-based teaching strategies.

SAN ANTONIAN INTERVIEWED BY NEA MAGAZINE

Michael Proscelle, a teacher for 15 years at Woodlawn Hills Elementary School in San Antonio, shared "What I've Learned" with NEA Today. Before becoming a teacher, he was a retail manager for a grocery chain for almost 20 years. <http://bit.ly/1vH9bsx>



Education Austin launches Give Me 5 campaign

Education Austin is asking for a five percent pay increase for classified employees next year. At a school board meeting in January, bus drivers, monitors, custodians, teaching assistants, and others carried signs. Their salaries are not keeping up with the rising cost of living in Austin, they told reporters.

"My rent has gone from \$475, to \$600, to over \$1,000 a month," Felipe Garza, a special education teaching assistant, told KUT Radio. "My pay hasn't kept up with that. I've had to make severe adjustments...to my budget. I've had to reduce the time I'm able to spend with my grandchildren."



Student Program celebrates, prepares members

TSTA Student Program President Katie Bruno said she frequently hears members talk about their love for teaching and willingness to be politically active to ensure a bright future for public education and students.

“It is evident that student program chapters encourage their members to become the change agents of their future field. Student members will be ready for the challenges ahead, and they will fight for what is best for our students,” Bruno, a student at the University of Houston at Clear Lake, said.

As the Advocate went to press, the Student Program was preparing for its state convention Feb. 27-March 1 at the Omni Austin Hotel at Southpark, where members will participate in professional development and vote

on new leadership. One of the program’s goals is to help prepare members for the classroom; participants will leave the convention knowing how to utilize technology to spark engagement in the classroom, prepare for an interview, and create classroom crafts.

Last year’s Texas Teacher of the Year, TSTA member Monica Washington of Texarkana, is the keynote speaker at the banquet, where top student chapters will be recognized for their hard work on membership growth and community outreach and receive awards for local excellence, outstanding CLASS project, and other achievements (see <http://tsta.org/formembers/affiliates/tsta-student-program>).

NEWS FROM TSTA RETIRED

Elections: Elections were held for delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly and TSTA House of Delegates, and for state vice president. (As the only nominee for president, Louise Watkins was automatically re-elected.) Results will be posted at <http://bit.ly/1z1EfyN>.

For the first time, members with a current email address on file were sent electronic ballots; others received ballots in the mail. Please contact TSTA-R@tsta.org to update your email address and other contact information.

Join online: Prospective members can now enroll at www.mytsta.org. If you are considering Retired Lifetime membership, you can now pay by bank

ON PAGE 30: Counterclockwise from right, student convention speaker Monica Washington; SP District 4’s fall meeting; and the Retired quilt.

draft in up to 10 installments, based on the months left in the membership year. Retired Lifetime members no longer pay annual state dues, but do pay regional dues where applicable.

Attention Pre-Retired members: If you have retired, you must contact TSTA to convert your membership to Retired Lifetime; call 877-ASK-TSTA ext. 1418 or email TSTA-R@tsta.org. As a Pre-Retired member, you are pre-purchasing Retired Lifetime membership at today’s rate while you are still working and can use payroll deduction.

NEA Retired Organizing Conference: It’s March 24-26 at the Sheraton Atlanta Hotel in Atlanta. Register for \$90 at www.nea.org/retired.

Annual handmade quilt fundraiser: See this year’s beautiful, one-of-a-kind, award-winning, queen-size quilt at <http://bit.ly/1voZjn0>. The drawing will be held during the TSTA House of Delegates. To purchase \$2 tickets, contact your local TSTA Retired representative or mail a check with your name, address, phone number, and number of tickets desired to TSTA-Retired, attention: Ashley Wiles, 316 W. 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701. Anyone can purchase a ticket, so spread the word!

Stay involved: Your activism doesn’t have to stop when you retire. Ask your regional director how you can get involved. A couple of ideas: Invite active

members to visit the Online Retirement Planning Center at <http://www.neamb.com/retirement-center.htm>, or help retirees save money with the NEA Medicare Supplement Program.

Be sure to follow us at www.Facebook.com/tstar.near, visit <http://tsta.org/formembers/affiliates/tsta-retired>, and take advantage of member benefits at www.neamb.com. You’ve earned them!

Annual meeting: TSTA Retired’s 24th Annual Meeting will be April 8-9 in the Embassy Suites Hotel at 7600 Avenue of the Stars in Frisco. All TSTA Retired members are welcome to attend and participate in the business session and informative workshops. Registration, which includes dinner on April 8, is \$25 through March 30; late or on-site registration is \$35. Frisco is approximately 45 miles north of Dallas. The TSTA House of Delegates will be April

10-11 at the same location. The tentative schedule is as follows:

- Tuesday, April 7**
2:00 p.m. — TSTA Retired Executive Committee meeting
- Wednesday, April 8**
9:00 a.m. — TSTA Retired Board of Directors meeting
12:00 p.m. — Board lunch
1:00 p.m. — Registration/fundraising/Member Benefits
2:00 p.m. — All-member meeting
6:00 p.m. — Dinner for all registered member attendees (nominal cost for non-member attendees)
- Thursday, April 9**
9:00 a.m. — Workshop
10:15 a.m. — Break
10:30 a.m. — Workshop
11:45 a.m. — Wrap-up

TSTA RETIRED ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION FORM

Embassy Suites Hotel, Frisco

April 8 -9, 2015

PLEASE PRINT and use a separate form for each individual. Mail your form so that it reaches TSTA Retired by March 30. Mail to: TSTA Retired, 316 West 12th Street, Austin, TX 78701, Attention: Ashley Wiles.

FIRST NAME

MIDDLE

LAST

ADDRESS

CITY

ZIP

AREA CODE

PHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS

A NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE of \$25 must accompany this form. Late registration or on-site registration is \$35. Please note: The registration fee covers the entire event.

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Texas State Teachers Association

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"Public schools have given so many of us a vision of ourselves and what we might become. They help us to find the most treasured thing any of us have: personal meaning and our contribution to the common good. Public schools must stay open, because teachers' doors must stay open, saying, 'Come in, let's learn, let's hope, let's begin dreaming.'"



Shanna Peebles is one of four finalists for National Teacher of the Year. She is an English teacher at Palo Duro High School in Amarillo ISD and a member of the Amarillo Education Association/TSTA.