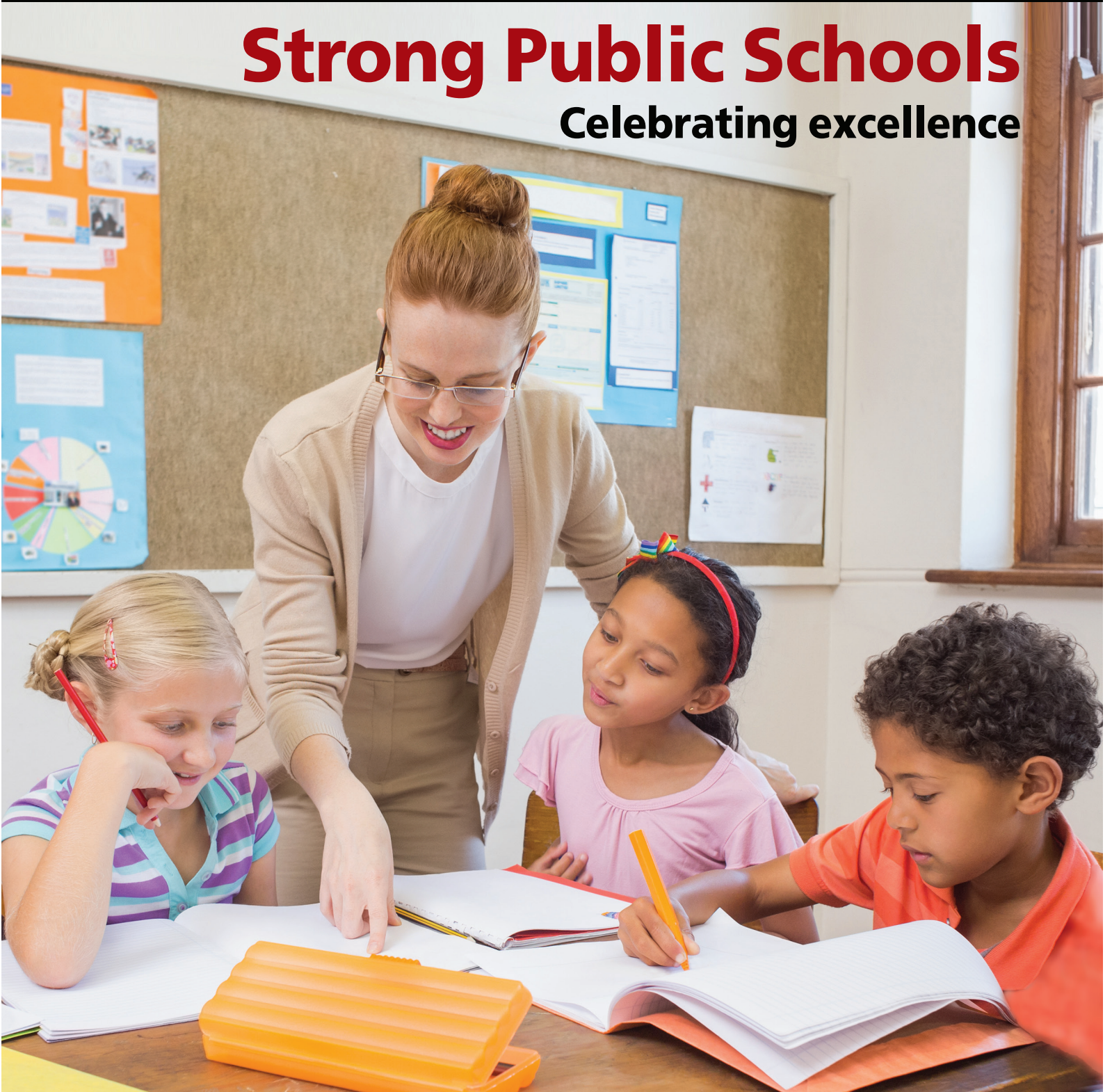


Advocate

Texas State Teachers Association/National Education Association

Spring 2024

Strong Public Schools Celebrating excellence



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TSTA President Ovidia Molina and Vice President Linda Estrada joined the Region 4 House of Delegates.

Contents

4 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am always proud that our members work each and every day to ensure we don't just have student growth and learning but also nurturing safe spaces...for everyone.

6 UPFRONT

After tough primary, anti-voucher fight intensifies; state leadership leaves federal money on the table rather than support Texas families.

10 TEACHER CERTIFICATION

By the 2022-2023 school year, the number of new teachers lacking certification or preparation became by far the largest category of new teachers in the state.

12 IN THE CLASSROOM

More than ever, the social-emotional learning model is critical to supporting the academic recovery, mental well-being and safety of all young people.

14 NEA CONVENTION

See the latest information for delegates, including the tentative agenda and a hotel form for the NEA Representative Assembly, held in Philadelphia this summer. You'll also find your ballot for voting for state delegates.

20 TSTA CONVENTION

Delegates to the state convention in April will attend professional development workshops and conduct association business.

22 LEADING ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

In advance of this year's election and next year's legislative session, here's a roundup of some of the issues affecting our membership.

26 ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Education Round Rock member is Foreign Language Teacher of the Year for Texas, Jump Start your National Board Certification with a rigorous summer program.

Advocate

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Spring 2024

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Our students do incredible things because of you



Each time I sit down to write to you I am overwhelmed with gratitude. Gratitude for you and all the work you have done, are doing and will do for the students, educators and communities in Texas. What are you grateful for?

It is hard for many educators to see their own uniquely amazing talents. It is easier to shine light on others, especially our students. But I want you to remember that our students do incredible things because of you. Your dedication and support in the classroom, hallways, buses, libraries and at every level of their education make an impact that ripples out beyond them.

Thank you, #TeamTSTA.

I am always proud to share with everyone that our members include dedicated teachers, paraeducators, administrative staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, nurses, counselors, custodial staff, coaches, librarians, aspiring educators, retired educators, higher ed faculty and staff...and more. All these

members work each and every day to ensure we don't just have student growth and learning but also nurturing safe spaces...for everyone.

In our TSTA familia we have many — campus, region and statewide — Teachers of the Year, NEA Foundation Global Learning Fellows, All-Star Association Representatives (All-Star ARs), Ronnie Ray ESP Advocates of the Year, racial and social equity and justice advocates and political activists who refuse to give up on each other, our students and the future of Texas.

What and/or who do you want to celebrate?

I know that many of you use your voice at the local level on your campuses and work sites. You attend and speak up at school board meetings. Through your activism you help create policies that work towards ensuring every student can succeed, regardless of their skin color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or ability. You are vocal and active against Abbott's obsession with vouchers and the constant attacks on our professions, students and communities.

Together we will grow our work; after all, springtime is a time of new beginnings and growth.

We know better than most that growth doesn't happen without some effort, so we must continue to be politically active. This is a presidential election year. It also is critical that we support and work to elect pro-public education candidates at every level — school board, state and federal.

Everything that happens in our schools is a direct result of someone getting elected to bring about new policies and laws. These policies and laws affect everything, including school funding and salaries and benefits for educators; programs and resources for our students; our ability to teach the truth; our ability to have school boards that are accountable to local voters and not to an Austin bureaucrat; and so much more.

What will you do to get everyone around you to #VoteEducationFirst in every election? The party primaries are over, but important school board elections and the November general election are still ahead of us.

We need your help to grow the number of pro-public education officials at all levels, including Austin and Washington, D.C. Sign up for our newsletters to stay informed on issues that impact all of us.

Contact your state and federal representatives, attend and speak at your local board meetings. Become a continuing PAC contributor at tsta.org/pac to help us keep the pro-public education officials we have and elect more.

I can't wait to celebrate all our future wins...and a Texas where educators are respected, listened to and at the table when education policies are being discussed and voted on. If you are already a continuing contributor, thank you! Your support is deeply appreciated and has helped all our students, educators and communities.

TSTA President Ovidia Molina

NUESTROS ESTUDIANTES HACEN COSAS INCREÍBLES GRACIAS A TI

Cada vez que me siento a escribirles siento una gratitud infinita. Gratitud por todo el trabajo que han hecho, y siguen haciendo por los estudiantes, educadores y comunidades de Texas. ¿Qué te hace a ti sentir gratitud?

Es difícil para muchos educadores reconocer sus propios talentos únicos y maravillosos. Es más fácil apuntar la luz hacia otros, especialmente nuestros estudiantes. Pero quiero que recuerdes que nuestros estudiantes hacen cosas increíbles gracias a ti. Tu dedicación y apoyo en las clases, pasillos, autobuses, bibliotecas y a cada nivel de su educación tiene un impacto que afecta su futuro.

Gracias, #TeamTSTA.

Siempre tengo orgullo de compartir que nuestros miembros incluyen maestros, instructores, personal administrativo, trabajadores de cafetería, conductores de autobús, enfermeras, consejeros, conserjes, entrenadores, bibliotecarios, educadores en entrenamiento, educadores retirados, profesorado y personal de educación superior... y más. Todos estos miembros trabajan cada día para asegurar que no sólo nuestros estudiantes crezcan, sino que hayan espacios seguros de aprendizaje para todos.

En nuestra familia TSTA tenemos muchos Maestros del Año, Miembros de NEA Foundation Global Learning, Representantes de All-Star Association (All-Star ARs), Defensores del Año Ronnie Ray ESP, defensores de igualdad social y racial, y activistas políticos que se niegan a rendirse, luchando el uno por el otro, por nuestros estudiantes, y por el futuro de Texas.

¿A quiénes y a qué quieres celebrar tú?

Se que muchos de ustedes usan su voz al nivel local en sus escuelas y sitios de trabajo. Atienden y hablan en reuniones de juntas escolares. A través de tu activismo, ayudas a crear políticas que nos ayudan a asegurar que cada estudiante puede tener éxito, sin importar el color de su piel, religión, orientación sexual, identidad de género, o habilidad. Estás activo y alzas tu voz en contra de la obsesión de Abbott con los vouchers, y los constantes ataques a nuestra profesión, estudiantes, y comunidades.

Juntos seguiremos nuestro trabajo; después de todo, la primavera es un tiempo de nuevos comienzos y crecimiento.

Sabemos mejor que muchos que el crecimiento no ocurre sin esfuerzo, así que tenemos que continuar siendo políticamente activos. Es un año electoral presidencial. Es también crítico que apoyemos y trabajemos para elegir a candidatos pro-educación pública en todos los niveles—junta escolar, estado, y federal.

Todo lo que pasa en nuestras escuelas es resultado directo de alguien que ha sido electo para traer nuevas políticas y leyes. Lo afectan todo, incluyendo fondos, salarios, y beneficios para educadores; programas y recursos para estudiantes; nuestra habilidad de enseñar la verdad; nuestra habilidad de tener juntas escolares que son responsables ante votantes locales y no ante burócratas en Austin; y muchas cosas más.

¿Qué vas a hacer tú para que todos a tu alrededor #Vote-EducationFirst en cada elección? Las primarias ya terminaron, pero las elecciones de junta escolar y las elecciones generales de noviembre llegarán pronto.

Necesitamos tu ayuda para crecer el número de oficiales pro-educación pública en todos los niveles, incluyendo Austin y Washington D.C. Anótate en nuestro newsletter para mantenerte informado en asuntos que nos afectan. Contacta a tus representantes estatales y federales, atiende y habla en tus juntas escolares locales. Conviértete en un contribuidor mensual de nuestro PAC en tsta.org/pac para ayudarnos a mantener a nuestros oficiales pro-educación y para elegir a más.

Estoy emocionada de seguir celebrando más victorias... y de vivir en un Texas donde los educadores sean respetados, escuchados, y participen cuando las políticas de educación sean discutidas. Si ya eres contribuidor mensual ¡gracias! Tu apoyo significa mucho, y ayuda a todos nuestros estudiantes, educadores y comunidades.

Presidente de TSTA Ovidia Molina



After tough primary, anti-voucher fight intensifies

The anti-voucher margin in the Texas House of Representatives narrowed when six anti-voucher Republicans lost re-election races in their party primary, and four others were forced into May 28 runoffs. All were victims of Gov. Greg Abbott and a school privatization blitz fueled by money from right-wing billionaires who want to destroy public education. Six other incumbent anti-voucher GOP House members won their primary races, but the four runoffs are now the next crucial round in the fight for the future of public schools in Texas. Regardless of how

those races turn out, though, our fight against vouchers and for more funding for public schools during next year's legislative session will be more difficult.

As you may recall, 21 Republican House members joined with their Democratic colleagues in voting against and killing vouchers last November during the final special session of 2023. They stood up for their local public schools, and Abbott vowed revenge.

Five of the 21 did not run for re-election. That left 16, and, as noted

above, six of those were unseated this week with the futures of four others to be decided in runoffs. Additionally, Speaker Dade Phelan, a Republican who abstained from the voucher vote but appeared to support the anti-voucher effort, is in a runoff after being targeted by his party's right wing in his home district.

With a potential margin now of only six to ten friendly Republicans in the Texas House, depending on the outcome of the runoffs, the stakes for the general election just got higher. Some

of the new pro-voucher Republican nominees will have Democratic anti-voucher opponents in November, but it remains to be seen how the Democrats will fare in traditionally Republican districts. Voters in those districts who really value their public schools need to wake up and vote for public education, not political party.

On the Democratic side, all the TSTA-endorsed friendly incumbents in the Legislature won their primary races, and State Board of Education member Aicha Davis of Dallas won the nomination for the open House District 109 seat.

In the Texas Senate, TSTA-friendly Democratic incumbent Nathan Johnson won his primary race against Victoria Neave Criado, who gave up her Texas House seat to challenge him. And in open Senate District 15, vacated by John Whitmire after he was elected mayor of Houston, state Rep. Jarvis Johnson and Molly Cook will be in a runoff.

Thank you to everyone who voted for education first in the first round of what will be a long, and extremely important, election year. Up next are the May school board elections for many districts. The deadline to register to vote is April 4 and early voting will run from April 22 through April 30. Election Day is May 4. If your local endorses a candidate or candidates, look out for ways you can contribute to the campaigns, either by volunteering or helping to turn out the vote. Our students and communities need us to raise our educator voices and #VoteEducationFirst!



NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR 2024 STUDENT HEROES AWARD

Approved by the SBOE in 2015, the Student Heroes Award highlights Texas public school students participating in impactful volunteer service in their communities. Since the award's inception, nearly 120 Texas public school students with a heart for service have been named Student Heroes. Fifteen students — one per State Board district — receive the award each year, with contributions ranging from initiating inclusive programs for seniors and students with disabilities to facilitating fundraisers for kids receiving medical treatment.

The SBOE encourages students, teachers, administrators and community members to nominate any Texas public school students who exemplify the core value of selfless service. To be eligible for nomination, service projects performed by nominees must be voluntary and not associated with any curriculum requirement, school service project or pre-existing community program. Winners will receive a plaque and a medal from their district's SBOE member during an awards presentation held at their school.

Nominations will close on May 4th. More information is available in the nomination guidelines on the TEA website at tea.texas.gov.



Texas leadership continues to leave money on the table

This year 35 states will participate in a \$2.5 billion federal nutrition program that will help low-income parents buy groceries for their children when free school meals are unavailable during the summer months.

But Texas, which has 3.8 million children eligible for the program, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has opted not to join this national effort. If it had, qualifying families would have received \$120 per child through a pre-loaded card for the three summer months. The USDA calculated that

Texas is passing on a total of \$450 million in federal tax dollars that would have gone to eligible families here.

This “thanks, but no thanks” from Texas to the Feds is just the most recent example of state leadership leaving federal money on the table that could’ve gone to support struggling Texas families. Texas’ refusal to expand Medicaid is another.

The eligibility requirements for Texans under Medicaid are some of the strictest in the United States: For parents and caretakers of kids who are covered

by Medicaid, a family of four with two parents has to make at or below \$285 a month to be eligible. In comparison, the same family in Tennessee can make at or below \$1,867 a month and the caregivers can still qualify for Medicaid coverage.

Because Texas has not expanded Medicaid, close to 800,000 Texans live in the “coverage gap,” where they make too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to take advantage of the sliding scale premiums of Affordable Care Act coverage.

Adam Searing, a research professor at Georgetown University, has been working on Medicaid issues at the university since 2014. He said it's one of the "most studied health policy issues in history" because of the stark differences between states that have expanded coverage and states that have not.

"Texas is a state that has the largest number of people who would benefit from expansion," Searing told the Texas Standard last year. "When you get down to ordinary people who are trying to live their lives, they are generally very supportive of expansion, regardless of what side of the political spectrum they're on. So, we really need to focus on the leadership in the states that haven't expanded. And political leadership is where the road-blocks are."

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission claims they didn't have enough time — six months — to implement the summer nutrition program, though 35 other states clearly found the time sufficient. Additionally, the USDA would only cover 50% of the administrative expenses for Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer program. It would be up to the state to cover the residual cost. Had the program been a priority for state leadership, it would stand to reason that the \$33 billion surplus the state enjoys could have been tapped to make up the difference.

USED UPDATES EQUITY ACTION PLAN

The U.S. Department of Education has updated its Equity Action Plan ini-

tiative, part of its efforts to implement the President's Executive Order on "Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government."

The department has identified five areas of focus through visits to communities, listening sessions and roundtables. The department wants to improve college access, affordability and degree completion for underserved students to increase economic mobility, implement maintenance of equity requirements to ensure historically underserved students have equitable resources for learning recovery, advance equity in and through career and technical education and increase mental health resources, with an emphasis on underserved communities.

The department believes that their new action plan will prioritize equity across government by working intentionally to ensure that their policies, grants and programs address longstanding disparities in education still faced by underserved students, families and communities. You can follow along with the department's efforts at www.ed.gov/equity.

TEA PLACES CHARTER NETWORK UNDER CONSERVATORSHIP

The Texas Tribune reported that the conservatorship is part of a settlement agreement between IDEA Public Schools, the state's largest charter school network, and TEA, following a long investigation into improper spending within the school system.

Over the years, media reports have

noted numerous questionable expenditures by IDEA officials, including luxury driver services and the lease of a private jet. A former superintendent and co-founder of the chain who claimed wrongful termination received a \$475,000 settlement, and another co-founder and former CEO was given a \$900,000 severance package.

IDEA has about 80,000 students in K-12 in 143 schools and has received about \$821 million in state funding for the current 2023-24 school year alone.

NEW DENTAL AND VISION COVERAGE FOR TRS RETIREES WILL BEGIN IN JANUARY 2025

Under the new coverage, which was ordered by the Legislature, TRS-Care eligible retirees, their surviving spouses and surviving dependent children will be able to enroll for optional dental and vision benefit plans beginning next Jan. 1. Eligible retirees can enroll in the new plans even if they are not enrolled or applying for enrollment in any other TRS-Care plan. Plan years will run from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31.

TRS is now procuring competitive bids from insurance vendors and will present recommended options to the TRS trustees during the May board meeting.

The TRS Trust Fund balance stands at \$195.3 billion (as of Jan. 31), up from \$187.2 billion, the last report in 2023. The pension membership has grown to 2 million, including retired, active and inactive school employees.

Most new teachers entering Texas classrooms now are uncertified



A new analysis of Texas Education Agency data shows that the number of uncertified teachers in Texas has been quickly rising in recent years. In 2021-2022, more teachers entered Texas schools completely uncertified or with emergency certification than from all Texas colleges and universities combined. In 2022-2023, the number of new teachers lacking certification or preparation nearly doubled yet again and became by far the largest category of new teachers in the state.

This analysis was presented to the State Board for Educator Certification by Dr. Michael Marder, executive director of UTeach, who testified to the irony of increasing regulatory rules related to certification at a time when being a certified educator seems to matter less and less to Texas policymakers.

“The possibility of shaping the state’s

teacher workforce through certification rules is unraveling before your eyes,” Marder told the board.

Because Districts of Innovation and charter schools can exempt themselves from the law governing teacher certification, a wave of underprepared teachers is hitting our school systems, and veteran teachers must bear the burden of mentoring these uncertified hires. Texas is shortchanging students who may receive inadequate instruction, yielding poorer student learning outcomes. Underprepared and uncertified teachers are also more likely to leave the profession, contributing to the revolving door of teacher attrition.

Neither the school districts nor these new uncertified teachers would have any incentive to seek the appropriate training and earn their certification. In other words, all the changes to edu-

cator preparation programs the SBEC is implementing will mean nothing on a practical level for a significant and growing percentage of the teacher pool.

Moreover, the number of uncertified teachers is exploding in urban, suburban and rural schools alike and in all grades and across all subject areas. Marder also noted that the influx of uncertified teachers is having a direct effect on the quality and availability of secondary upper-level math and science courses.

Texas students need well-prepared and certified teachers. Empirical evidence shows that teachers from university training programs stay in teaching longer, compared to educators from alternative or uncertified training programs. We also know from research that students with teachers from traditional or university-based programs learn more in a school year, and this is especially true for low-income students, students with special education needs and students of color.

“Prospective teachers, if not adequately prepared and certified, will not have the skills to affect student growth, manage a classroom and create a positive learning environment,” said TSTA member, Jump Start mentor and National Board-certified teacher Kara Campbell. “Poorly prepared, uncertified teachers increase the statistics of teacher turnover and thereby a

teacher shortage. Ironically, the placement of uncertified teachers exacerbates the problem that their approval was supposed to remediate. Increased preparation and practice, autonomy and life-long learning improve student outcomes and increase teacher satisfaction and retention.”

TSTA is committed to advocating for quality teacher preparation and professional development. One of the programs we’re proudest to offer our members is Jump Start, a comprehensive seminar led by National Board-certified teachers which is designed specifically to support teachers who have just begun their journey towards National Board Certification, the most respected professional certification available in education. We believe quality teacher preparation is essential to a solid educational system that benefits all students and the teaching profession.

“Ensuring teachers have a strong foundation in educational pedagogy, are highly qualified and learn reflective strategies to continuously improve their skills ensures all students benefit from having access to the best learning and teaching practices,” said TSTA member Patty Candelaria, an NBCT-certified educator and Jump Start mentor. “As a 23-year educator, [National Board Certification] allowed me to provide my students with a well-rounded education that helped meet their individual and collective needs as learners, enriched my school community and impacted the broader educational landscape.”

During the SBEC meeting, TSTA expressed our opposition to a proposal to exclude candidates in teacher residency programs from having to take a

pedagogy exam to become certified. We believe that all teacher candidates, regardless of their training route, should be required to take both content and pedagogy exams. UTeach’s Marder also cautioned the certification board against giving favored treatment to teachers trained in teacher residency programs.

“Residency programs are examples of high-quality Texas programs, but they are expensive for EPPs (educational preparation programs), districts and candidates alike, and if you privilege them over other high-quality pathways, you risk driving the number of uncertified teachers up,” Marder testified.

Troublingly, the problem is not limited to just Texas.

In 2015, 25 states required teacher candidates to pass a basic skills test for admission into a teacher preparation program. By 2021, that number had declined to 15. At present, it’s down to 11, according to the most recent count by the National Council on Teacher Quality, with most of the holdouts being red states in the Southeast. Of those 11 states, some allow candidates to fulfill the requirement by meeting a minimum score on the ACT, SAT or GRE. Many education leaders have applauded the shift, saying that it allows more students of color, first-generation students, and students from low-income families a shot at becoming teachers. Others worry that by eliminating these test requirements, states are lowering the bar for becoming a teacher, to the detriment of the profession and students.

“For states to drop standards without

replacing them with another meaningful measure of academic aptitude doesn’t do anyone a favor in the long-term,” said Heather Peske, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality. “States are making it easier to become a teacher, though the job of being a teacher hasn’t gotten any easier.”

The UTeach program created at the University of Texas is being replicated at 55 universities across the United States and at 12 Texas universities. UTeach programs prepare nearly half the secondary STEM teachers coming from Texas universities. There is strong evidence that UTeach graduates remain in teaching and obtain positive student learning gains. UTeach for Texas is an active member of the Texas Coalition for Educator Preparation, which TSTA helped to organize.

SBEC FOCUSES ON CERTIFICATION STRUCTURE

In adopting new rules for educator preparation programs, the State Board for Educator Certification increased the number of pre-service hours for a teacher candidate from 30 to 50 and increased the frequency of candidate observation. These changes were recommended by the Coalition for Educator Preparation, a group of education experts co-founded by TSTA.

But the board’s staff also continues to support making the Educative Teacher Performance Assessment a permanent teacher certification exam. This support continues despite opposition from the State Board of Education, TSTA and its coalition partners, who continue to oppose efforts to elevate the edTPA.



Creating more supportive classrooms with social-emotional learning

Social-emotional learning has emerged as a crucial aspect of education, supporting students in developing emotional intelligence, resilience and empathy. When viewed through the lens of equity, transformative SEL becomes a powerful tool for promoting inclusivity and empowering all students to thrive. Educators play a critical role in cultivating equity through quality implementation of SEL, which is why TSTA/NEA remains committed to advancing SEL practices in Texas public schools.

NEA has had a strong partnership with the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning, or CASEL, since the group's inception in 1994. CASEL originated to ensure social-emotional learning is a critical part of high-quality and equitable education for all students, and their advocacy work spans from classrooms to statehouses.

According to CASEL, SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships and make responsible and caring decisions.

What all this means is that SEL is programming to help all individuals in school buildings acquire the skills and attitudes to be kind to themselves and others.

SEL plays a vital role in fostering students' emotional well-being and academic success in public schools. It encompasses key components such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. By integrating these core areas into the

curriculum and culture of the school, Texas educators can create a supportive environment that nurtures students' emotional growth and empowers them to reach their full potential.

CASEL argues that "in order for SEL to be truly transformative, it must be a process whereby young people and adults build strong, respectful and lasting relationships that critically examine the root causes of inequity and develop collaborative solutions that lead to personal, community and societal well-being."

In order to accomplish this, schools must implement what CASEL calls "systemic SEL." Systemic SEL goes beyond weekly lessons or morning exercises contained within individual classrooms. When fully implemented, truly transformational SEL is woven throughout all the classrooms, across

the school building and in the broader school community.

Educators who are committed to SEL work to make equity a fundamental principle in Texas public schools, ensuring that all students have equal access to resources, opportunities and support. Transformative SEL takes equity into account by acknowledging and addressing the social inequities that students may face, such as racial disparities, socioeconomic disparities or varying abilities. By incorporating a focus on equity into SEL practices, educators can create an inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued, respected and empowered.

Texas educators play a crucial role in creating inclusive classrooms that embrace students' diverse identities and experiences. SEL programs in public schools should provide a structured framework for developing empathy and perspective-taking skills. By integrating activities that encourage understanding and compassion, educators help students recognize and challenge biases, stereotypes and prejudices. Through SEL, students learn to appreciate diversity, embrace multiple perspectives and develop a sense of collective responsibility towards creating a more equitable society.

By implementing Transformative SEL in Texas public schools, students are empowered to become agents of change by fostering their sense of agency and providing opportunities for civic engagement. Educators can involve students in decision-making processes within the school and community, allowing them to contribute to creating an equitable and just society.



EXPLAINING SEL

If your community does not yet prioritize SEL, you can make a strong case by sharing the evidence and the perspectives of important stakeholders: parents, educators, students and more. Visit our partner CASEL at casel.org for resources and strategies for promoting SEL in your school.

More than ever, SEL is critical to supporting the academic recovery, mental well-being and safety of all young people. In addition to sharing the definition and framework for SEL, here are three core messages to highlight when explaining SEL.

- SEL is for everyone. SEL develops skills that help us be successful in all parts of our lives — like communicating effectively, setting goals, staying motivated and making decisions that benefit ourselves and others. With these skills, we can build healthy relationships, succeed in schools and workplaces and contribute to our communities.
- SEL is based in science. Hundreds of independent studies show that SEL leads to better academic performance, improved well-being and safer schools. It creates positive school environments where children learn the skills they need to succeed in school and in their futures.
- SEL brings families, schools and communities together. The way SEL is implemented in schools and which skills are emphasized are driven by partnerships between families and schools and tailored to the local community's priorities, cultures and needs.

Information for NEA delegates

Here's everything you need to know about the 2024 NEA Convention and Representative Assembly July 3-7 in Philadelphia, PA



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. Please monitor the NEA (ra.nea.org) and TSTA websites for updates, as dates, times and events are subject to change.

Also, all delegates will be emailed information 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 **Wyndham Philadelphia Historic District**.

The room rate per night is \$209 single/double occupancy, plus taxes and fees (currently 16.37%). **Submit your reservation to TSTA by May 15, 2024: <http://bit.ly/3KWvDJ4>.**

Completed reservation forms MUST include the first night's deposit.

Please provide your credit card (not debit card) information on the reser-

vation form. If an incomplete credit card number and/or no credit card 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.
Please refer to the hotel website, <https://bit.ly/3SjOQ9r>, for more details.

At the time of publication amenities include a rooftop pool, mini-refrigerators, Snack Shop, room service and a fitness room. Please let us know if you have any questions.

If you intend to pay cash for your lodging expenses, be prepared to pay all room, tax and parking fees at check in. This is a smoke-free hotel. We will send delegates any updates to lodging information.

Lodging requests and inquiries should be directed to Crystal Carpenter at crystalc@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 the **Wyndham Philadelphia Historic District**, cab fare to the convention center is about \$6. Contact the hotel for more information. 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. The first Texas Caucus Meeting will take place on July 3. Additional information regarding meeting times and schedule will be sent to delegates.

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 monitor ra.nea.org for more NEA RA information including the schedule.

PRECONFERENCES

In addition to the Representative Assembly, NEA hosts several pre-conferences. The NEA Aspiring Educators Conference is scheduled to take place June 28-July 2. The purpose of the Aspiring Educators Conference is to offer future educators the opportunity to connect with their colleagues, learn about their profession, and take action on important education issues affecting public schools and communities.

The NEA Retired Annual Meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 30-July 1. Please check nea.org for schedule updates. Each year, more than 300 delegates from NEA-Retired gather for a two-day meeting to connect with their colleagues and lead the way on key retirement issues.

The Conference on Racial and Social Justice is set to take place June 30-July 1. The Conference on Racial and Social Justice is presented by NEA's Center for Racial and Social Justice. The purpose of the conference is to provide a unique space for educators, students, parents and families, organizers, community members and leaders to unite for the advancement of Justice in Education.

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, 2024.**

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 30 State Delegates from three 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.

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 3, 4, 9, 10, 16, 17)
- Delegate District 2 (Regions 6, 11, 14, 18, 19, TFA)
- Delegate District 3 (Regions 1, 2, 5, 8, 12, 13, 15)

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 Crystal Carpenter. The deadline to request a replacement ballot is April 9.

In the return address portion of the envelope most members will find printed

“District” followed by some number up to three (3); 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 District number and you are an NEA member, 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 Crystal Carpenter.**

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. If you do not have a Delegate District number of 1, 2, or 3 on your envelope, please vote in the Category II and Statewide Elections only.

On all three sections, you may vote for the printed name(s), or you may write in a name and their local 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 mem-

BALLOTS MUST BE RECEIVED AT TSTA HEADQUARTERS IN AUSTIN BY 5 P.M. ON W

ber 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 the 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 by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 24, 2024. 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 ballots are counted at TSTA Headquarters on April 27. Please contact Crystal Carpenter at 877-ASK-TSTA if you are a candidate and want an observer.

| WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2024.

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 test 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 33 state delegates for the 2024 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 30 state delegates. We were able to meet all necessary requirements by dividing the 30 delegates among the three 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 have received from NEA by early February the number of delegates to be elected to the 2024 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.

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 \$600 stipend. Although this amount is only a 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.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS (*statements limited to 25 words)

In the event a candidate has chosen to self-identify their ethnicity, we display that information to accordance with policy EP-14 to show the diversity of the candidates.

STATEWIDE

- Linda Estrada, Hispanic. I am a Campus Secretary, strong Public Ed advocate and TSTA Vice President. I'd be honored to represent you at the 2024 NEA RA #VoteLinda.

CATEGORY II

- Bobbie Duncan, Caucasian. It would be an honor and privilege to be a member of the TSTA delegation to the RA. Your support will be appreciated.
- Eliza Garcia, Hispanic.
- Mariana Hansen, Multi-Ethnic. Thank you for your consideration in my 16th year of service. Through the voice of equity and justice, I seek to be of service.
- Glenn Russell, Hispanic. This will be my first time at NEA-RA. I have been active locally with TSTA, and I want to continue to advocate for Texas education.

DELEGATE DISTRICT 1 (REGIONS 3, 4, 9, 10, 16, 17)

- Maria Allen, Hispanic. I love meeting other educators who share the same goals which are to connect members and prepare students to be successful and independent.
- Octavia Brown-Reed, Black. A vote for me is a vote for service to the organization. I hear you, and I'll vote for you. Vote for Octavia Brown-Reed.
- Michelle Cardenas, Caucasian. I enjoy representing and advocating for our members at the NEA-RA every year. I would like to attend and represent Texas in 2024.
- Tammy Conrad, Caucasian. As our local's president, I am excited to represent Texas, sharing what we've done and learning from others how we can improve to support members.

- Melissa Davis, Other. As a teacher in my district, I know there are issues that need attention and I'd like to be a part of the solution.
- Luis De la Garza, Hispanic. I am the current Laredo United President and have served on state Board of Directors for the past 3 years.
- Shiree Dennis, Caucasian. Advocacy is my passion, and I thoroughly enjoyed last year's event. I hope I can represent my state, district, and local again this year.
- Monica Edwards, Black. I would love to attend the RA to represent my region of the state and to meet new delegates and get new info
- Kary Freemyer, Hispanic. Representing Texas once again at this year's NEA-RA would be a great honor.
- Danielle Medina, Hispanic. I'm a good candidate because I am a new leader in my local and I am interested in advocating for ESP's at the national level.
- Franchesca Mejia, Hispanic. It is my honor to share the voices and ideas of members across the state. Let me help us move the work of the union!
- Brenda Panella, Hispanic. Dedicated local and regional officer, with 20 years as a bilingual teacher turned middle school librarian. Committed to fostering diversity and excellence in education.
- Keke Powell, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. A 2nd grade teacher that enjoys spreading my aloha to all!
- Stephanie Powell, Caucasian. It has always been an honor and privilege to attend RA as a delegate. I am deeply vested in doing the work of our union.

- Angelan Ringland, Caucasian. I would love to represent you at the NEA RA. TX teacher for 15 years! Let's keep fighting for Texas public schools!
- Melanie Sheehan, Caucasian. I've been active in my association for seven years serving in many capacities and want to advocate at the national level for all educators.
- Angelena Watkins, Hispanic. This will be my 10th RA. I'm excited to represent you this year! Thank you for your consideration.
- Tanzanyika Williams, Multi-Ethnic. It would be my honor to represent the state of Texas at the RA, this year! Representing Texas, would be a monumental accomplishment.

DELEGATE DISTRICT 2 (REGIONS 6, 11, 14, 18, 19, TFA)

- Veronica Arispe, Hispanic. Hello, I've served as a State Delegate for the last few years and would appreciate your vote to continue this year. Thank you!
- April Blair, Black. As a delegate, I would like to continue being the voice for all my students, co-workers and families.
- Patricia Candelaria, Hispanic. I am a second year PhD student and a field supervisor inspiring future teachers. We must advocate for great public schools for all students.
- Angela Davis, Black.
- Ginny Evans, American Indian/Alaska Native. Teacher voice is important at all levels and been elected to all levels and as your NEA Director for two terms. Experience is key.
- Doris Hill, American Indian/Alaska Native. I would be honored to represent you

and Texas. Thank you for your vote of confidence and letting me be your voice.
Doris Hill

- Shannon Isaac, Black. Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world! I know that I'm equipped to be a vehicle for the change!
- Winifred Jackson, Black. I believe education empowers children to reach their full potential, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, unlocks opportunity, fuels innovation, and strengthens their values.
- Dale Kaiser, Caucasian. I would be honored to be YOUR voice at this year's NEA Representative Assembly in Philadelphia! Let freedom and YOUR voice ring!
- Tylesia Lewis, Black. If given an opportunity to be part of the NEA Representative Assembly as a State Representative I would make a lasting difference for all educators.
- Roscoe McCormick, Black. As a delegate, the knowledge gained will enable me to provide my local and state organization with up to date information on NEA initiatives.
- Sheila Nickerson, Black. My goal as a delegate is to be able to execute knowledge learned for the people I am representing here in our district.
- Sandra Patterson, Caucasian. I would like to be a delegate at the Convention, because I would like to see even the small Districts represented
- Sheila Walker, Black. It is my pleasure to represent TSTA as a delegate at the RA in Philadelphia, PA to continue the work of the union.
- Rhonda Whiting, Black. I strongly believe in advocating for teachers and students. I am hoping to be elected as a delegate so that I can continue this work.
- Andre Williams, Black. Public Education

is under attack. I will continue to fight for our students, teachers, and staff to have an opportunity for a great public education.

- Dr. Cary Wintz, Caucasian. Working in higher education to support shared governance and academic freedom, I advocate as a tenure specialist and serve on the Board.

DELEGATE DISTRICT 3 (REGIONS 1, 2, 5, 8, 12, 13, 15)

- Hanna Andrews, Caucasian. Hanna Andrews, is a dedicated ESP championing equity for neurodiverse learners and advancing culturally responsive practices.
- Kenyon Andrews, Black. Kenyon Andrews, M.S., a transformative Reading and Literacy Specialist, advocates for neurodiverse, gifted, and exceptional needs learners, fostering diverse school cultures.
- Stets Bryant BA, Caucasian. It has been a joy to advocate for teachers in my Lubbock, and I don't plan on stopping now.
- Ana Karen Cantu, Hispanic. I'm a passionate early career educator excited for the opportunity to learn and grow with fellow NEA members.
- Arisa Carr, Hispanic. I am excited and ready to grow and develop as an educator advocate and enhance my NEA experience by becoming a first time state delegate.
- Heather Cynor, Other. I am looking to broaden my NEA experience and become a first time state delegate. Thank you in advance, for this opportunity.
- Jeffrey Cynor, Multi-Ethnic. As Vice President of my local (Ysleta Teachers Association) I feel compelled to represent our members at the NEA RA and to fight for educators.
- Andrea DeLeon, Hispanic. My vision for public education is for every student to be seen, heard, and shown care.

- David Garza Jr., Hispanic. As a union member I am eager to join my fellow members in the vital democratic work to come.
- Carmen Hernandez, Hispanic. If chosen, this will be my 3rd time attending. It is an honor to represent our state and the amazing Texas educators.
- Maria Hernandez, Hispanic. With over 25 years serving the YTA community, I have cared for and represented educators. My goal is to continue and make a greater impact.
- Agustin Loreda III, Hispanic. I would like to be considered to represent my local. I am currently the minority director and last year chaired our election endorsement committee.
- Reynalda Medina, Hispanic. I'm a passionate early career educator excited for the opportunity to learn and grow with fellow NEA members.
- Ryan Mitchell. Fight the fight for what is right. If elected, I will use this platform to advance the issues prevalent in our educational organizations.
- Irma Quaney, Hispanic. I have been an English teacher for 32 years in a border community. Education equals freedom and opportunity. I love teaching in a multilingual environment.
- Paula Randolph, Caucasian. Dedicated member, Aspiring Educator participant, first-year teacher seeking your vote as a delegate, representing Texas and early career educators at the RA. Appreciate your support!
- Sarah Ring.
- Destiny Talley, Multi-Ethnic. I am committed to improving public education and bringing power to our local union.
- Bianca Zachary, Black. I believe in fighting for Texas Public Schools and for the students and educators in them. I want better for Houston ISD.



TSTA HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Delegate voting and registration

Delegates attending the 145th TSTA annual convention in Frisco, Texas 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. If necessary, elections for TSTA Board at-large members will be held as well. All delegates must have their credentials and a picture ID with them in order to vote. Registration will be held on Friday, April 19, from 7:45 a.m. through the close of the First Business Session, and re-opens Saturday, April 20, at 8:00 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 the art contest 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.

We have a room block at the Embassy Suites Frisco. The rate for the Embassy Suites is \$169 for a single/double (plus tax). The form to request lodging was posted on tsta.org and shared with Local, Region, and Affiliate Presidents.

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.

PROPOSED TSTA BYLAWS AMENDMENTS

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

1 INTENT: To eliminate TSTA-R life and Pre-Retired membership.

Article III Section G. TSTA-R Members

2. Dues

- a. Annual dues shall be set by TSTA-R, but shall not be less than twenty-nine dollars (\$29). TSTA shall rebate any amount over fifteen dollars (\$15) to TSTA-R. Unless a life member of NEA-R, annual dues-paying members of TSTA-R must also pay annual dues to NEA-R.
- b. [~~In lieu of annual dues, a member may pay Life TSTA-R dues of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250). Members who join by paying Life TSTA-R dues shall not be required to pay any additional annual amount.~~] A member who pays Life TSTA-R dues, but does not pay Life NEA-R dues, shall be declared inactive and not entitled to any benefits of TSTA-R membership after November 1 for that year or any subsequent year until NEA-R annual dues are paid.

5. TSTA-R Pre-Retired Life Dues

- [a. Pre-Retired Life dues shall be available to anyone who is eligible to receive a pension from an education retirement system including social security and who was employed at least five (5) years in a position that qualified him or her for active membership but who is not yet eligible for TSTA-R membership because of remaining eligible for active TSTA membership. Pre-Retired Life dues shall be the amount of Life TSTA-R Pre-Retired dues at the time of application for payment of Pre-Retired Life dues.]

[b. TSTA-R Life dues payers have no governance

rights through TSTA-R until they are no longer eligible for active membership and notify TSTA to activate their TSTA-R Life Membership.]

[c. TSTA-R Life Membership, when activated, does not constitute membership in NEA-R. TSTA-R members must maintain membership in NEA-R as provided in paragraph G. 2. Above. NEA Bylaws may provide for pre-retired dues payment for NEA-R life membership.]

[d. Application and full payment of Pre-Retired Life dues may be made at any time after the eligibility requirements are met but must be made no later than August 31 of the year retirement benefits commence.]

[e. TSTA will provide Pre-Retired Life members payment options that allow for up to three years to pay dues in full. Once individuals begin a multi-year payment plan they are not eligible for a refund if they fail to pay the full amount.]

Transition Proviso: Any member who has made at least one payment into the Pre-Retired program prior to August 31, 2024, shall be allowed no more than two years to complete payment. This provision will expire on August 31, 2026.

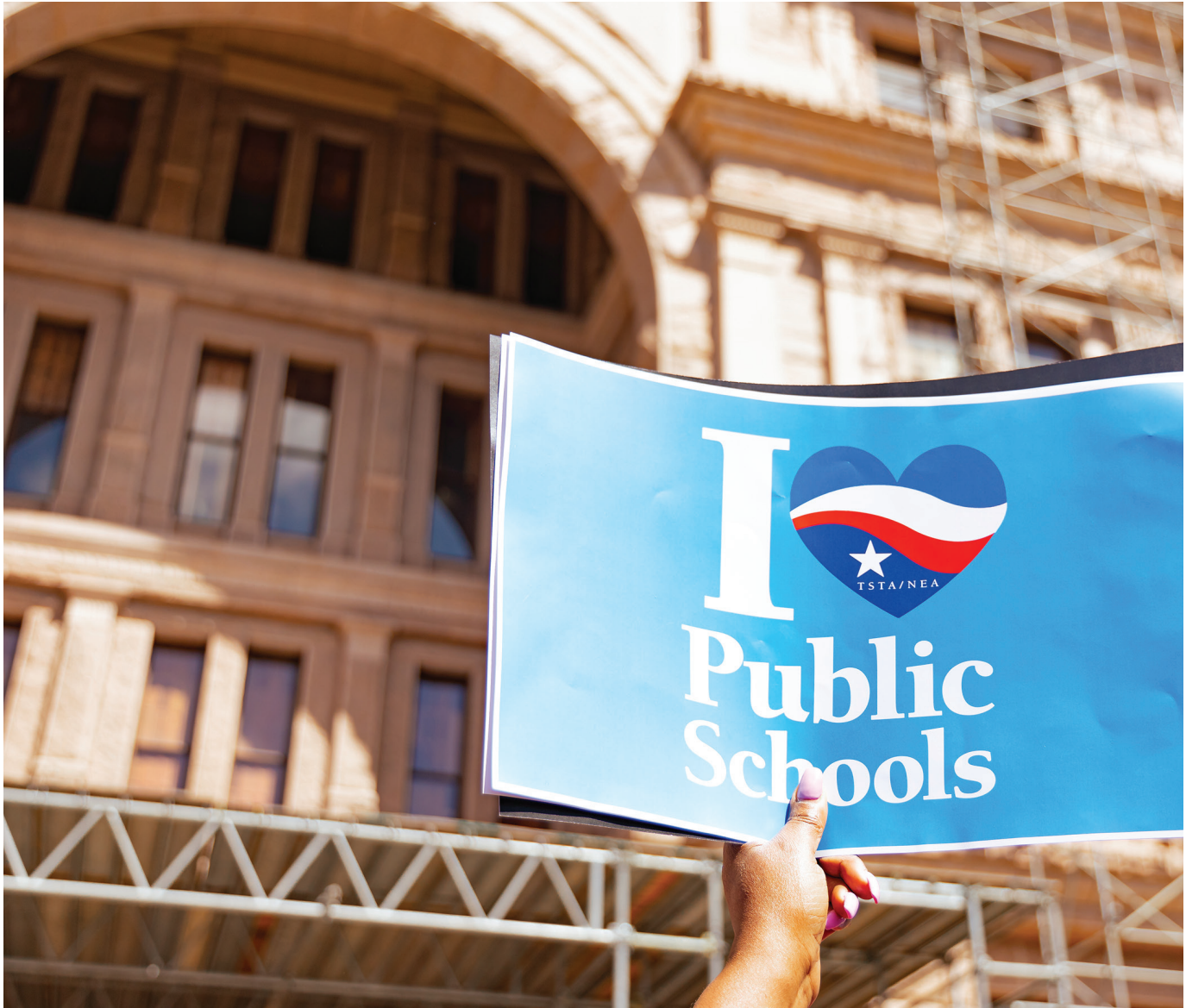
Maker: TSTA-R Board of Directors

Rationale: To ensure that TSTA-R has the necessary financial resources to operate in the future.

Financial Impact: None

Vote Required: Two-thirds

CB&E Recommends: Support



Looking forward to the 89th Legislature

In advance of this year's election and next year's legislative session, here's a roundup of some of the issues affecting our membership. Look for ways to stay engaged with these concerns on our social media channels and web site.

YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE

Free and fair elections empower us to contribute to the shaping of our community's and nation's destiny. It is the cornerstone of democracy, ensuring that every citizen has the right to express their opinions and values through the ballot box.

Recent challenges to the election process underscore just how valuable a part of our civic life truly is. A recent study by the Public Religion Research Institute, in partnership with the Brookings Institute, found that an overwhelming majority of Americans believe that democracy is at risk in the upcoming election. Astonishingly, and troublingly, nearly a quarter of those surveyed said they think "American patriots may have to resort to violence to save the country."

Simultaneously, and further undermining the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 that only the federal government — not a private individual — can bring a Section 2 challenge to court. Section 2 of the VRA safeguards against voting schemes that demonstrably dilute the votes of minorities. The decision is binding in seven states, and if affirmed by the Supreme Court, could potentially lead to voters of color being denied the ability to challenge voting systems that overtly deny fair representation.

So, what to do? First, check your voter registration, early and often. With the proliferation of well-funded, organized partisan voter challenges, eligible voters are getting swept up in overzealous purges of the voter rolls. If your regis-

tration is challenged, you'll need to prove your eligibility well in advance of any election.

Second, be a voting advocate! Stay up to date with upcoming elections and talk with your friends and family about what's on the ballot. Organize a car-pool if you know of anyone in your circle who needs help getting to the polls. Your students likely cannot vote, but elections absolutely affect them. You can normalize and demystify the process by modelling good civic responsibility.

Third, volunteer as an election worker! Election workers are essential to ensuring that elections are a success. If you're interested in becoming an election worker, learn more about what is required and how to volunteer by visiting the Texas Secretary of State's Election Training Portal: <https://pollworker-training.sos.texas.gov/>.

Most important, Vote! There's no such thing as a minor election, and our right to vote is too precious to ignore.

THE DANGERS OF ANTI-TRANS LEGISLATION

The rise of discriminatory legislation targeting the transgender community poses a threat to the fundamental principles of equality, dignity and human rights. It is crucial for us to recognize the dangers at the core of these measures and actively advocate for our neighbors and students.

Anti-trans legislation often seeks to restrict or deny transgender individuals their basic human rights. By denying them access to gender-affirming healthcare, restricting their right to use

bathrooms that align with their gender identity or limiting their ability to participate in school sports, these laws directly infringe upon the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Every individual, regardless of gender identity, deserves to live a life free from discrimination and prejudice.

We all want to foster an environment that supports and affirms the identities of our students, including transgender individuals, because we understand that inclusion and compassion promotes mental well-being rather than exacerbating existing challenges. Anti-trans laws contribute to increased rates of depression, anxiety and suicide attempts within the transgender community by perpetuating harmful stereotypes and reinforcing negative attitudes towards the transgender community.

By codifying discrimination into law, these measures contribute to a culture that fosters bias and prejudice. Advocating against such legislation is not just a matter of protecting the rights of transgender individuals but also an essential step towards building a society that embraces diversity and promotes understanding.

DECOLONIZING CURRICULA

As educators, we are committed to creating an environment for our students that fosters inclusivity, stimulates critical thinking and imparts a more accurate representation of the breadth of knowledge.

One way to be more mindful about how we create this environment is by making a conscious effort to decolonize our students' curricula; by which

LEGISLATURE

we mean, ensuring that our classroom curriculum promotes diverse perspectives, challenges Eurocentrism and acknowledges the historical and cultural contributions marginalized in traditional teaching.

If you are an educator who's committed to being mindfully antiracist, here are a few suggestions for how you can begin to evaluate and decolonize your students' classes.

Incorporate literature, history and scientific contributions from a variety of cultures and regions.

Encourage students to critically examine historical events and narratives, considering multiple perspectives.

Use language that respects diverse identities, avoiding biased or Eurocentric terms.

Connect local topics to global issues, emphasizing the interconnectedness of cultures and societies.

Promote collaborative learning environments that value different experiences and knowledge systems.

Decolonization is an ongoing process, one that is best approached with mindfulness and humility. Our willingness to learn from and alongside the communities that are traditionally marginalized by colonial histories gives our students the opportunity to see themselves in their schools and widens what seems possible for their futures.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Texas holds the dubious record as the state with the most children living with-

out health insurance. Our state leaders have repeatedly rebuffed opportunities to protect more children by expanding Medicaid coverage, even when the cost of that expansion would be largely borne by federal funding. The undeniable message to Texans is that we are on our own when it comes to maintaining the health of our communities.

This is why TSTA, along with many of our allies, is championing the community schools model for public education. Community schools are public schools that provide services and support that fit each neighborhood's needs, created and run by the people who know our children best — all working together. The community school model puts schools at the center of the community. It focuses on community support services and family and community partnerships to improve student learning, strengthen families and build healthier communities. Community school services are unique to each school and community, changing over time as the needs of students and families change.

Making healthcare available on campus creates a variety of benefits for the entire community. On-site care keeps both students and teachers in the classroom and prevents illnesses and injuries from disrupting important educational moments.

By offering healthcare services, schools also have the power to identify both physical and mental health conditions in students at an early age.

For example, many families first learn that their child needs glasses or hearing

aids as a result of in-school screenings. Catching these issues early gives families the opportunity to address them right away, and it also ensures that these health issues won't interfere with their child's learning and development.

Family and community involvement in schools is important to the learning, development and health of students. When schools engage families in meaningful ways to improve student health and learning, families can support and reinforce healthy behaviors in multiple settings—at home, in school, in out-of-school programs, and in the community. With help from school leaders, community agencies and groups can collaborate with schools to provide valuable resources for student health and learning. In turn, schools, students, and their families can contribute to the community through service-learning opportunities and by sharing school facilities with community members (e.g., school-based community health centers and fitness facilities).

FREEDOM TO LEARN

No matter our color, background or ZIP code, we want our kids to have an education that imparts honesty about who we are, integrity in how we treat others and courage to do what's right. We also want educators to feel supported when teaching these important lessons.

While parents, educators and students demand that our schools have the resources to meet every child's needs with well-trained and supported teachers, and a curriculum that helps them reckon with and shape our future, a handful of politicians are stoking social

and racial division, putting some students into boxes, banning books from shelves, and censoring our history. They care more about their political careers and agendas than our students. They are driving great educators out of the profession and trying to take funding away from public schools for vouchers.

Because of states such as Texas, many classrooms have become political battlegrounds, and a new report by RAND, "Policies Restricting Teaching About Race and Gender Spill Over into other States and Localities," shows some of the effects on teachers and students. The report, partly funded by NEA, finds that 65 percent of teachers nationwide report limiting discussions of political and social issues in class. Even more troubling, 55 percent of teachers who were not subject to any state or local restrictions on classroom content said they decided on their own to limit this content. About half of this group said they were concerned that school or district leaders would not support them if parents expressed concerns.

Our communities deserve better. As educators, we are the true curriculum experts, and know best what age-appropriate context our students can understand. An established body of research affirms what educators have long known: a culturally responsive and racially inclusive education benefits all students — and is the most effective pedagogical approach.

Studies show that students who participate in ethnic studies and a curriculum that is culturally responsive and racially inclusive are more academically engaged, perform better academically

and graduate at higher rates. This pedagogical approach also facilitates many of the core goals of public education: promoting democracy by preparing children for citizenship and voting, teaching cultural literacy, developing citizens' capacities for critical thinking and self-directed learning and cultivating a workforce that can compete in the global marketplace.

While the State Board of Education slow-rolls the adoption of the American Indian/Native Studies Ethnic Studies elective course and ISDs are imposing what PEN America calls educational gag orders: legislative re-

strictions on discussions of race gender, American history and LGBTQ+ identities in K-12 classrooms and on college campuses, we have a daunting challenge ahead of us. We also have powerful allies, most notably our students, their parents and members of our community who value our expertise and judgment.

TSTA/NEA offers guidance and resources for educators who want to know more about their rights and protections regarding censorship and teaching about racism, sexism and historical prejudice: <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/know-your-rights-texas>

SUPPORT YOUR PROFESSION



SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS

Support TSTA-PAC

Your monthly PAC contribution helps us win victories that impact your classroom and your campus:

- Winning school board races impacts wages, benefits and educators' rights
- Winning a pro-public education majority in the Legislature will stop vouchers, secure more funds and reduce testing

To Join TSTA-PAC, contact your local TSTA officers or go to <http://tsta.org/PAC>



In Austin, if you are not at the table, you are on the menu





Round Rock educator honored

Westwood High School French teacher and Education Round Rock member Anne Pham-Macharia is the Texas Foreign Languages Association's 2023 Texas Foreign Language Teacher of the Year.

Pham-Macharia began her career in Round Rock ISD in 2007 at Cedar Valley Middle School and has been teaching at Westwood High School since 2016. She teaches French III (Ad-

vanced), French AP Language and Culture, French IB standard and higher levels and French VI, leading the department curriculum development.

She has served as a department chair, French curriculum writer, in-service presenter and trainer, new teacher mentor, student teacher cooperative teacher and a member of the school and district equity and diversity committee.

Pham-Macharia is highly regarded for fostering authentic communication in her students, encouraging them to apply their language skills in real-world scenarios. Conducting 99% of her instruction in French, she organizes annual student trips abroad to France and Canada and motivates her students to participate in foreign language creative writing contests. She has built partnerships with schools in Belgium, Benin, France and Senegal,

where her students communicate with their pen pals via letters, videos and Zoom meetings.

In February, Pham-Macharia represented Texas at the annual Southwest Conference on Language Teaching in Honolulu, Hawaii.

“I am deeply humbled to be named Texas Foreign Language Association Teacher of the Year,” said Pham-Macharia. “I am committed to advocating for strong language programs in Texas and nationwide, including supporting world language teacher education, professional development and providing teachers with the tools they need to inspire the next generation of multilingual learners.”

NEISD HONORS ITS 2024 TRINITY PRIZE CAMPUS NOMINEES

The Trinity Prize for Excellence in Teaching began in 1982 as a platform to honor some of the best public school teachers in the San Antonio area. These teachers go above and beyond to support their students inside and outside of the classroom. Their impact on the community they serve is undeniable. North East Education Association is proud to number eight members among the recipients of this year’s campus nominees.

“Congratulations to all... including our members who were nominated for this award,” North East Education Association wrote in a statement. “Winning this award is a testament to your genuine care for student success and the fun and positive influence you have on their lives. Keep up the incredible work!”



JUMP START YOUR NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

Recognized as the gold standard in teacher certification, the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards believes that higher standards for teachers mean better learning for students. National certification is a voluntary, advanced teaching credential that goes beyond state licensure and is based on professional standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. Teachers successfully complete the rigorous process over the course of a couple years, and they regularly cite the experience as being about much more than a certificate; National Board certification is an impactful and lasting professional development.

“Teaching can be a job or a career, but I believe the teachers who treat it as a career — always looking to grow and learn — become the most effective educators,” said Richard Gabriel, TSTA member, Jump Start mentor and National Board-certified teacher. “NBCT extends that growth and learning, giving teachers a model to keep getting better.”

The National Board Jump Start program is a valuable opportunity that helps candidates develop the skills, knowledge and strategies necessary to be successful in the National Board certification journey. TSTA has long supported opportunities to grow professional practice for our members, and we are excited to be expanding our capacity for robust and relevant professional supports through the Jump Start program.

Dates for the upcoming cohort are still to be determined, but if you are planning to pursue National Board certification and are interested in learning more, please feel free to contact the TSTA Teaching and Learning Specialist, Carrie Griffith at carrieg@tsta.org.



A TFA member's story

I've been on the faculty of a major state university in Texas since 2004. I joined TFA on advice of senior colleagues in my department as of 2010. I paid my TFA membership dues every year mainly for professional insurance — as TFA provides legal assistance to its members — without much engagement otherwise, until May of 2023. On May third, I participated in the rally at our state Capitol for public higher ed and in opposition to Senate bills 16, 17 and 18. At the urging of leaders at TFA and AAUP-Texas, I submitted written testimony and called the office of a key state representative to voice my

opposition to SB 18; I did so as a private citizen and a registered voter in Texas. My elevated involvement with the TFA has continued since then. So, what got me more involved? The truth is that, in addition to the persuasive power of the TFA president and other leaders, a truly disturbing event happened to me in the Fall of 2022.

On November 3, 2022, some university administrator(s), likely my Department Head/Chair, called in two fully armed police officers in flak jackets to eject me from my office and the campus following a suspension order issued by two

administrators against me just hours prior — and of which I was not aware and thus went into my office, unsuspecting of the ambush. When I asked for five minutes to pack up my stuff so that I can work from home, one of the two police officers threatened to “cuff [me] up” (while dangling a pair of handcuffs right in front of my face), “haul [me] to jail”; he further added that they would rather not to have to “rough [me] up.” But, thanks to the other and nicer cop, the threatened police brutality did not come to pass, and I was allowed to pack up and then be escorted by the cops out of the building.

Now, you may wonder what I did to warrant or justify this “swatting” incident from my DH. The truth is that the incident has, as a pretext or trigger, my insistence to teach a class online rather than teaching it in person in a small classroom as ordered by the administrators. About a month prior, an abusive, adult student from the class aggressively charged at me — an act, as I found out later from attorneys, constituted assault under Texas Penal Code. Yet, the university admin blamed me for the incident, refused to remove the student aggressor, and ordered me back into a small classroom to teach the entire class. It’s noteworthy that, on November 9, 2022, the Chief Compliance Officer of the university at the time characterized the police raid against me as not appropriate and that “[I] shouldn’t have been set up”.

You may think that my experience is a singular event, particular to my mix of circumstances. But I have found out, since becoming more involved with TFA, that there are numerous other stories of miscarriages of justice happening to faculty in higher ed around the state. Indeed, I’m aware of multiple other faculty members in my own department who, though initially “liked” by the admin, were later forced out due to reasons not necessarily legitimate or just. For example, in the spring of 2022, a colleague told me that he was getting forced-out because, in trying to not over-inflate grades, he was deemed by the admin to have assigned too many D-F-Qs. The colleague had to uproot his family and took up an academic position in the bowels of Eurasia.

The lesson I would like to share is to be proactive early. Join TFA for legal services and for fellowship with like-minded colleagues. Find out more about what academic freedom actually means, as opposed to a vague slogan. Advocacy groups such as TFA and

AAUP-Texas have made significant gains recently on core concerns such as preserving tenure in public higher ed and keeping Texas academia a welcoming place for all. TFA can be stronger with you in it; we can all try to make a difference.

HIGHER ED ADVOCACY GROUPS MEET ON FACULTY ISSUES

Texas Faculty Association Board Members Pat Heintzelman and Cong X Kang meet with Belle Wheelan, president of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, to discuss critical issues facing faculty around the state.

SACSCOC is the body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. It is also a signatory on a joint statement on legislative efforts to restrict education about racism and American History, in concert with PEN America, the American Historical Association, the American Association of University Professors, the Association of American Colleges & Universities and dozens of organizations that share our commitment to a free and open exchange about history and the forces that shape our society both in the classroom and our broader community.





Aspiring Educators from across the state participated in their 68th annual convention and House of Delegates, held March 1-3 in San Marcos.

TSTA-AE welcomes first HBCU chapter

The spring has been a busy time for the TSTA Aspiring Educators program! District 3, which encompasses the Houston area, held their convention on Saturday, February 10th at Lone Star College-Kingwood. Participants heard from new and experienced teachers on preparing to be successful in the classroom. TSTA-AE staff liaison, Clinton Gill, spoke to those in attendance about the importance of continuing their leadership journey with TSTA once they graduate and start their own classroom.

Recruitment has been outstanding this year! In February, we surpassed 1,000 members and continue to increase in members each week. We are excited

30 TSTA Advocate | 877-ASK-TSTA

to start our first HBCU chapter of TSTA-AE at Texas Southern University this spring — the planning began in the fall and the first meeting was held in February. We look forward to the great things ahead at TSU!

The 68th annual TSTA Aspiring Educators convention and House of Delegates was held March 1-3 in San Marcos. Aspiring Educators from across the state received professional development on topics including legal rights, National Board Certification, using AI to teach to improve productivity, engagement and knowledge and strategies to create a nurturing environment. Local chapters were recognized at the awards banquet for their

outstanding work completed throughout the school year. It was an honor to have Representative James Talarico be our keynote speaker during the awards banquet. Representative Talarico, himself a former teacher, encouraged attendees to be activists for their profession and stay involved in the political issues that are so crucial to public education.

The convention wrapped up with a training for local, district and state leaders to plan for the 2024-2025 school year. Participants left energized and excited for what is to come with TSTA-AE!

—Caitlynn Almance, TSTA-AE president

NEA-Retired nominations due soon

As former NEA-R president, Sarah Borgman said, “NEA Retired isn’t waiting for a spring thaw or words of love to warm things up. We continue to move forward on membership outreach and always on reaching out to legislators to hold them accountable. Holding legislators accountable is the only way to be heard and protect democracy. It is YOUR job; it is MINE! Write those letters, make those calls and give to PAC! All of us together can make a difference!”

33rd TSTA-Retired Annual Meeting:

Plans are underway for our Annual Meeting, to be held at the Embassy Suites Frisco Hotel and Convention Center in Frisco, Texas, on Wednesday and Thursday, April 17-18, 2024, immediately preceding the 2024 TSTA House of Delegates. The TSTA-R Executive Committee and Board will meet on Tuesday, April 16. Please note: You DO NOT have to be a delegate to the TSTA HoD to attend the TSTA-Retired Annual Meeting! All TSTA-Retired members may attend and participate in the business session and a variety of workshops. Registration fees are as follows: Members: Early Registration \$40.00/ Late and onsite \$50.00; Non-Members: Early registration \$45.00/Late and onsite \$55.00. An insert with the link to register online for the Annual Meeting was included for all TSTA-R members in the elections mailing. If you’d prefer to download and print a registration form, visit <https://bit.ly/TSTAR2024>. Again, this year, TSTA-R will not be doing the silent auction. Along with our quilt

giveaway, we will be doing an onsite Double Good Popcorn pop-up store at the TSTA House of Delegates on April 19-20, 2024.

The 2024 NEA-Retired Conference was held March 3-5, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency Chicago hotel in Illinois. The theme for this year’s conference was “Education. Democracy. Freedom. Our Right! Our Responsibility! Retired and Powerful. Promoting, Protecting and Strengthening Education.” The Conference was attended by TSTA-R President, Barbara Davis-Staley, VP and Membership Chair, Evelina Loya and TSTA-R Interim Staff Liaison, Paty Torres Saucedo.

The NEA-Retired Annual meeting will be June 30-July 1, 2024, in Philadelphia, PA. The meeting is open to all Retired members, but only elected delegates are allowed to vote. We will be electing the following at this year’s annual meeting:

- Secretary (3-year term)
- Executive Council (2 seats/3-year term)
- NEA Board of Directors (2 Retired positions/3-year term)
- Retired Alternate for NEA Board of Directors (2 positions/3-year term)

- Retired Member on NEA Resolutions Committee (6 seats/1-year term)

The deadline for receipt of NEA-Retired governance nominations is April 15, 2024, and the deadline for NEA-Retired seats on the NEA Resolutions Committee nominations is May 1, 2024; both submissions are due at 5 pm EDT. Visit <https://bit.ly/NEAR2024> for more information.

Please give to PAC. As a continuous contributor you help ensure candidates who support public education are elected. If you are unable to be a continuous contributor, then consider giving any donation. TSTA-Retired members have always been generous. Can we count on you?

Finally, check out TSTA-R by friending us on Facebook under TSTA Retired. Feel free to like and leave comments on our page. You can also find us on the web at www.tsta.org, click on “TSTA RETIRED” on the left side of the page. There, you can find information about TSTA-Retired as well as membership forms for yourself or to share!

*Barbara Davis-Staley, TSTA-R President,
Bstaley105@aol.com*

TSTA-RETIRED MEMBERSHIP DATA UPDATE FORM	
Name _____	
Address _____	
Phone _____	Email _____
Please mail to: Rosie Castillo, TSTA-R, 8716 North Mopac Expy., Austin, TX 78759	

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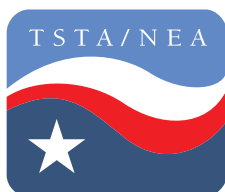
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2024 TSTA ESP Conference



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Deadline for early bird discount is April 12, 2024.

Conference swag is guaranteed available for the first 100 registrants. Conference t-shirts for all registrations received between March 15 – April 12, in requested sizes, will be mailed after the event.

Register online today with a credit/debit card:

<http://tinyurl.com/4unz6z8r>

Onsite registration will be available, but will not include a Conference t-shirt.

SCHEDULE

6:30 - 7:00 am. Check-in or Late Registration
7:00 - 7:45 am. Breakfast and Welcome
8:00 - 9:00 am. Session 1 (Breakouts)
9:15 - 10:15 am. Session 2 (Breakouts)
10:30 - 11:30 am. Session 3 (Breakouts)
11:45 am - 12:45 pm Lunch / Keynote Address / Closing Remarks

FEES

Early bird MEMBER: \$30
Late or onsite MEMBER: \$40 (after April 12)
Early bird NON-MEMBER: \$35
Late or onsite NON-MEMBER: \$50 (after April 12)

For payment by check, please request a printable form: ESP-CONFERENCE@tsta.org