

# TSTA Legislative Program

## 2020-2021

1     **The TSTA Legislative Agenda**

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3     **1. Providing Quality Teachers**

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5     **To attract, maintain, and retain appropriately certified teachers in Texas classrooms, TSTA**  
6     **supports:**

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8     **1.01** Legislation to give teachers significant across the board pay raises that will be passed through  
9     directly to teachers.

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11     **1.02** Legislation that requires proportional per diem rate of pay for any work done beyond the number  
12     of days required by the school employee's employment contract.

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14     **1.03** Legislation that requires high standards for teacher certification and supports teacher preparation  
15     programs that balance content knowledge and pedagogy. These programs will provide teachers  
16     with an understanding of how to teach, including requiring practical experience before entering the  
17     classroom.

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19     **1.04** Legislation that provides for greater representation of teachers on the State Board for Educator  
20     Certification (SBEC).

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22     **1.05** Legislation that provides training, compensation, and release time to teachers who serve as  
23     mentors to new and or struggling teachers. According to SBEC data, approximately one-third of  
24     new teachers quit after the first year and one-half leave by the fifth year. Data from the Texas  
25     Beginning Educator Support System (TxBess) and similar projects shows that an effective  
26     Mentoring program can reduce first year attrition rates to less than 10 percent. Every district should  
27     provide a mentoring program for first to third year teachers and mentoring support for new teachers.

28     **1.06** Legislation to financially reward those individuals who obtain National Board Certification and  
29     others who voluntarily hold themselves to higher standards such as: Master's Degree(s),  
30     Specialist Degree(s), Doctorate(s) and Multiple Certifications.

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32 **1.07** Legislation that provides incentives and financial support for paraprofessionals who pursue teacher  
33 certification, as well as continuing education and staff development for teachers.

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35 **1.08** Legislation to protect and enhance Teacher Retirement System's defined benefit program. All  
36 educational employees should be able to make plans for their retirement without worrying about  
37 the Legislature changing or reducing benefits. Retired educational employees deserve a system  
38 that provides annual cost of living adjustments and health insurance they can afford. Retired  
39 School Employees' health insurance and benefits shall be comparable to or better than those for  
40 Retired State and higher education employees.

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42 **TSTA will oppose:**

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44 **1.09** Legislation that reduces salaries and/or benefits for public school employees.

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46 **1.10** Legislation that would create incentive or merit pay programs based on a competitive model using  
47 standardized test scores.

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49 **1.11** Legislation that would mandate employment decisions and compensation based on value-added  
50 modeling.

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52 **1.12** Legislation that would move the Teacher Retirement System toward a defined contribution  
53 system.

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55 **1.13** Legislation to decrease the state's contribution to the Teacher Retirement System.

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57 **1.14** Legislation that abolishes the State Board for Educator Certification.

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59 **1.15** Legislation that would eliminate experience-based compensation.

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## 61 **2. Creating a Positive Work Environment for Educational Employees and Students**

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63 **In order to provide a positive working environment for educational employees and students in**  
64 **Texas, TSTA will support:**

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66 **2.01** Legislation that increases the minimum requirements for holding any supervisor or administrative  
67 position for which full certification is required.

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- 69 **2.02** Legislation that provides educational employees with a meaningful voice in the important  
70 decisions that relate to the learning environment and working conditions. To that end, TSTA  
71 supports strengthening site-based decision making at the campus and district level, mandating  
72 consultation at the district level, permitting collective bargaining in individual school districts after  
73 a local option vote, and repealing the prohibition against collective bargaining in order to give  
74 educational employees a necessary and critical role in the decision-making process.  
75
- 76 **2.03** Legislation reducing mandated paperwork (electronic or otherwise), providing standardized  
77 requirements on required paperwork/forms to be used across the state limiting the number of  
78 meetings, and providing time for collaboration and professional learning. Giving teachers  
79 adequate preparation time is essential to successful teaching and learning. Numerous studies  
80 have shown that working conditions are a primary factor in teacher attrition.  
81
- 82 **2.04** Legislation prohibiting classroom teachers and classrooms ESPs from engaging in direct billing  
83 (for example, Medicaid billing).  
84
- 85 **2.05** Legislation to maintain safe and orderly schools. Educational employees must have the authority  
86 to remove disruptive students and maintain discipline. Discipline must be dealt with in a uniform  
87 and effective manner. Student violence directed at staff or students must be dealt with swiftly and  
88 those students should be immediately removed to an appropriate alternative learning  
89 environment. Districts should be mandated to establish policy and include in the district's Student  
90 Code of Conduct rules and guidelines prohibiting harassment of educators, personnel, and  
91 students, including the use of social media platforms.  
92
- 93 **2.06** Legislation that provides health insurance benefits for all educational employees, comparable to  
94 those provided state and higher education employees. The state and district insurance plans  
95 should provide appropriate disclosures and notices of what benefits are covered and what fees  
96 and deductibles employees may be obligated to pay. TSTA will aggressively lobby and work with  
97 T.R.S. and the legislature to reign in the cost of T.R.S. Active Care / T. R. S. Retired Care.  
98
- 99 **2.07** Legislation that provides all public school employees with a living wage, including annual cost of  
100 living adjustments.  
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- 102 **2.08** Legislation to provide all employees with employment contracts and strong due process  
103 provisions regarding contractual, statutory, and constitutional rights.  
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- 105 **2.09** Legislation that prohibits districts from requiring annual contracts exceeding 187 days without  
106 additional compensation.  
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108 **TSTA will oppose:**

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110 **2.10** Legislation that expands or provides broad rulemaking authority to the Commissioner of  
111 Education.

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113 **2.11** Legislation designed to restrict the ability of TSTA to organize and provide services to educational  
114 employees.

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116 **2.12** Legislation that would make current state standards subject to “home rule” or otherwise allow  
117 school districts to be exempt from or to roll back the current standards that protect the quality  
118 learning environment for students. Attempts to erode state standards for educational quality, in  
119 the name of “cost saving,” “local control” or “eliminating unfunded mandates,” could mean the end  
120 of 22-1 class size limits, the salary schedule, and other benefits necessary to provide teachers  
121 and students a productive educational environment.

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123 **3. Increasing Support for Public Education**

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125 **In order to improve the public schools in Texas, TSTA will support:**

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127 **3.01** Legislation that creates long term, equitable school finance solution that generates substantial  
128 new revenue for public education, including sufficient revenue to pay for a substantial across-the-  
129 board teacher pay raise. A revised tax system must have the capacity to generate sufficient  
130 additional revenue in the future as our student population increases and additional funding needs  
131 arise.

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133 **3.02** Legislation that requires open enrollment charters to follow all regulations and accountability  
134 standards that public schools follow.

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136 **TSTA will oppose:**

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138 **3.03** Legislation that would shift public tax dollars to private entities. Vouchers, educational savings  
139 accounts, and other privatization schemes would take the funding we have for public schools and  
140 give it to students to attend private schools that are exempt from our accountability system. TSTA  
141 believes we should use our state resources to offer every student a quality public education.

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143 **3.04** Legislation that allows the takeover of the public’s neighborhood schools by private, for-profit, or  
144 unelected entities that are not accountable to taxpayers. Privatization has been shown to be a  
145 failed approach that provides an inferior education to our students.

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147 **3.05** Legislation that would establish initiative and referendum. In states where initiative and  
 148 referendum are legal, the procedures have been used to bypass the legislative process,  
 149 undermine the decisions of elected representatives and to limit funding for public education.  
 150 TSTA supports that system of representative government that allows us to effect change through  
 151 the electoral process.

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#### 153 **4. Enhancing Our Public School System**

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#### 155 **In order to improve the public schools in Texas, TSTA will support:**

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157 **4.01** Legislation that establishes and fully funds full-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs.  
 158 Research indicates that the initiation of high-quality early care and education programs leads to a  
 159 reduction in special education placement.

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161 **4.02** Legislation limiting class size across all grade levels. Both the Carnegie Foundation for the  
 162 Advancement of Teaching and the National Association of Elementary School Principals  
 163 recommend a student-teacher ratio of 15:1 – a real and effective student-teacher ratio rather than  
 164 one that includes all campus instructional personnel. In addition, the impact of a growing number  
 165 of inclusion special education students in the general education classroom requires an additional  
 166 reduction in class size based on the number of inclusion students in a classroom.

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168 **4.03** Legislation limiting class sizes for self-contained classrooms for special education students to 10  
 169 students. In cases where this ratio is inadequate, districts should be required to provide a process  
 170 for teachers to request additional personnel based on the severity of each exceptional student's  
 171 needs. Special needs children in self-contained classrooms must have more one-on-one  
 172 instruction time with appropriately certified teachers in order to succeed, including requirements  
 173 that address: Class size limitations on self-contained and resource classrooms for children with  
 174 disabilities. Educator: Student ratios for general education classes in grades K-12 to limit  
 175 the practice of overcrowding students with disabilities into the general education setting with  
 176 minimal adult support with a ratio of no more than one-fourth of SPED students in class; and the  
 177 establishment of a 1:1 ratio of students to adults in classrooms with students confined to  
 178 wheelchairs or who require assistance walking or moving about to include students with autism  
 179 and other disabilities that require extensive assistance and/or modification.

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181 **4.04** Legislation requiring full-time counselors and librarians on every campus. In addition, legislation  
 182 requiring limitations on counselor-to-student ratios not to exceed 1:300~~250~~. This should be a priority  
 183 for all schools without exception.

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185 **4.05** Legislation requiring at least one full-time registered nurse on every campus.

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187 **4.06** Legislation expanding the Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid. The quality of  
 188 health care is directly related to the standard of living. Children from low socio-economic homes  
 189 are less likely to have access to adequate and preventive health care.

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191 **4.07** Legislation minimizing the use of standardized assessments in our schools. The excessive use of  
 192 high stakes standardized tests to measure or label student, teacher, campus, and district  
 193 performance creates a situation where "teaching to the test" becomes more important than

194 learning. Student assessment should be based on multiple measures that are related to the  
195 educational needs of students. Students with Individualized Education Plans that would formerly  
196 qualify to take STAAR ALT 2 assessments shall not be required to take any mandated state  
197 assessments and a student portfolio documenting a student's progress shall replace it.  
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199 **4.08** Legislation supporting and funding effective, subject-specific technology training for educators in  
200 the use of proven programs. With increases in the use of technology systems in the workplace,  
201 our students deserve instruction in subject-specific technology by teachers who are proficient in  
202 its use.  
203

204 **4.09** Legislation to fund and support programs to assist English language learners. Globalization has  
205 brought students from around the world into Texas public school classrooms. These students  
206 need effective programs and appropriately certified teachers to help them become successful  
207 English language learners.  
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209 **4.10** Legislation that establishes a size cap of 12 students for pre-kindergarten classes.  
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211 **TSTA will oppose:**  
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213 **4.11** Legislation that requires outcomes-based funding.

## TSTA Legislative Program: Educational COVID Response

### The TSTA Legislative Agenda: Educational COVID Response

#### 1. Providing Quality Schools

**In order to be responsive to teachers and students as they have had to adjust to new instructional approaches and respond to the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, TSTA will support:**

1.01 Legislation that ensures and prioritizes the health and safety of students and educators

1.02 Legislation that removes high stakes on students related to the State of Texas Assessment

of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exam, including grade promotion and high school graduation requirements

1.03 Legislation that suspends the administration of the STAAR exam

1.04 Legislation that removes high stakes on teachers related to performance evaluations, including the use of student outcomes based on standardized tests

1.05 Legislation that suspends formal evaluations of educators during the 2020-21 school year

1.06 Legislation that removes high stakes on schools related to the STAAR exam, including sanctions for poor performance

1.07 Legislation that suspends the use of the punitive A-F accountability system

#### 2. Increasing Funding for Public Education

**In order to help smooth over the downturns as the economy is recovering and to protect investments made in House Bill 3 (2019), TSTA will support:**

2.01 Legislation that permits for the use of the Economic Stabilization Fund (Rainy Day Fund) as it was intended in order to fund the COVID-related expenditures and avoid cuts to education

2.02 Legislation that ensures federal stimulus dollars are used to increase public education funding

2.03 Legislation that expands local control regarding instructional delivery decisions that is in the best interest of students and staff during a declared state of disaster

2.04 Legislation that pauses all charter growth, a significant and elective cost to the state at the direct expense of public schools.

#### **TSTA will oppose:**

2.05 Legislation that gives corporations unnecessary tax breaks rather than using that revenue for public schools

2.06 Legislation that expands full-time virtual programs

2.07 Legislation that would withhold funding for schools based on decisions made by local school officials and health experts during a declared state of disaster

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### **3. Providing Quality Instruction**

**In order to ensure added supports for students facing learning loss due to COVID-19 school closures, pedagogical limitations, and the digital divide, TSTA will support:**

3.01 Legislation that provides for additional funding and salary supplements that would support supplemental instruction

3.02 Legislation limiting class size across all grade levels according to research-based student-to-teacher ratio recommendations regardless of District of Innovation status

3.03 Legislation limiting class size based on the number of inclusion students in a classroom

3.04 Legislation eliminating standardized testing beyond the federal requirement

**TSTA will oppose:**

3.05 Legislation that would increase class sizes and/or student-teacher ratios

### **4. Ensuring Support for Special Populations**

**In order to effectively remediate the students hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, TSTA will support:**

4.01 Legislation that allows for temporary measures to efficiently account for services and/or evaluations that were interrupted, reduced, delayed or suspended for students who receive special education services

4.02 Legislation that provides for additional funding and salary supplements that would support the efficient and immediate delivery of compensatory services and supplemental instruction

**TSTA will oppose:**

4.03 Legislation that penalizes educators for special education services missed during a declared state of disaster or academic regression due to student disengagement