

TSTA Legislative Program

2024-2025

These legislative priorities are designed to make significant progress toward meeting our goals of well-funded and well-staffed classrooms and truthful, accurate curricula for every public school student in Texas; professional pay and respect for Texas teachers and support staff; effective and affordable teacher training and professional development; promote student and educator health, wellness and safety; and secure comfortable retirements for former educators, including a cost of living adjustment. These are goals that our students need and members of our profession have earned and deserve.

The TSTA Legislative Agenda

1. Providing Quality Teachers

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

- 1.01.** Legislation to give teachers significant across the board pay raises that will be passed through directly to teachers.
- 1.02.** Legislation that requires proportional per diem rate of pay for any work done beyond the number of days required by the school employee's employment contract.
- 1.03.** Legislation that requires high standards for teacher certification and supports teacher preparation programs that balance content knowledge and pedagogy. These programs will provide teachers with an understanding of how to teach, including requiring practical experience before entering the classroom.
- 1.04.** Legislation that provides for greater representation of teachers on the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).
- 1.05.** Legislation that provides training, compensation, and release time to teachers who serve as mentors to new and or struggling teachers. According to SBEC data, approximately one-third of new teacher quit after the first year and one-half leave by the fifth year. Data from the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBess) and similar projects shows that an effective Mentoring program can reduce first year attrition rates to less than 10 percent. Every district should provide a mentoring program for first to third year teachers and mentoring support for new teachers.

33 **1.06.** Legislation to financially reward those individuals who obtain National Board
34 Certification and others who voluntarily hold themselves to higher standards such
35 as: Master’s Degree(s), Specialist Degree(s), Doctorate(s) and Multiple
36 Certifications.

37 **1.07.** Legislation that provides incentives and financial support for paraprofessionals
38 who pursue teacher certification, as well as continuing education and staff
39 development for teachers.

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

47 **TSTA will oppose:**

48 **1.09.** Legislation that reduces salaries and/or benefits for public school employees.

49 **1.10.** Legislation that would create incentive or merit pay programs based on a
50 competitive model using standardized test scores.

51 **1.11.** Legislation that would mandate employment decisions and compensation based
52 on value-added modeling.

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

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

56 **1.14.** Legislation that abolishes the State Board for Educator Certification.

57 **1.15.** Legislation that would eliminate experience-based compensation.

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

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

61 **2.01.** Legislation that increases the minimum requirements for holding any supervisor or
62 administrative position for which full certification is required, including a
63 mandatory eight years relevant teaching experience before being eligible to apply
64 for administrative certification.

- 65 **2.02.** Legislation that provides educational employees with a meaningful voice in the
66 important decisions that relate to the learning environment and working
67 conditions. To that end, TSTA supports strengthening site-based decision making
68 at the campus and district level, mandating consultation at the district level,
69 permitting collective bargaining in individual school districts after a local option
70 vote, and repealing the prohibition against collective bargaining in order to give
71 educational employees a necessary and critical role in the decision-making process.
- 72 **2.03.** Legislation reducing mandated paperwork (electronic or otherwise), providing
73 standardized requirements on required paperwork/forms to be used across the
74 state limiting the number of meetings, and providing time for collaboration and
75 professional learning. Giving teachers adequate preparation time is essential to
76 successful teaching and learning. Numerous studies have shown that working
77 conditions are a primary factor in teacher attrition.
- 78 **2.04.** Legislation prohibiting classroom teachers and classrooms ESPs from engaging in
79 direct billing (for example, Medicaid billing).
- 80 **2.05.** Legislation to maintain safe and orderly schools. Educational employees must have
81 the authority to remove disruptive students and maintain discipline. Discipline
82 must be dealt with in a uniform and effective manner. Student violence directed at
83 staff or students must be dealt with swiftly and those students should be
84 immediately removed to an appropriate alternative learning environment. Districts
85 should be mandated to establish policy and include in the district's Student Code of
86 Conduct rules and guidelines prohibiting harassment of educators, personnel, and
87 students, including the use of social media platforms.
- 88 **2.06.** Legislation that provides health insurance benefits for all educational employees,
89 comparable to those provided to state and higher education employees. The state
90 and district insurance plans should provide appropriate disclosures and notices of
91 what benefits are covered and what fees and deductibles employees may be
92 obligated to pay. TSTA will aggressively lobby and work with Teacher Retirement
93 System and the legislature to reign in the cost of TRS Active Care / TRS Retired
94 Care.
- 95 **2.07.** Legislation that increases personnel and support structures for counseling that best
96 serves the mental health needs of students, faculty and staff members.
- 97 **2.08.** Legislation that provides all public-school employees with a living wage, including
98 annual cost of living adjustments.
- 99 **2.09.** Legislation to provide all employees with employment contracts and strong due
100 process provisions regarding contractual, statutory, and constitutional rights.

- 101 **2.10.** Legislation that prohibits districts from requiring annual contracts exceeding 187
102 days without additional compensation.

103 **TSTA will oppose:**

- 104 **2.11.** Legislation that expands or provides broad rulemaking authority to the
105 Commissioner of Education.

- 106 **2.12.** Legislation designed to restrict the ability of TSTA to organize and provide services
107 to educational employees.

- 108 **2.13.** Legislation that would make current state standards subject to “home rule” or
109 otherwise allow school districts to be exempt from or to roll back the current
110 standards that protect the quality learning environment for students. Attempts to
111 erode state standards for educational quality, in the name of “cost saving,” “local
112 control” or “eliminating unfunded mandates,” could mean the end of 22-1 class size
113 limits, the salary schedule, and other benefits necessary to provide teachers and
114 students a productive educational environment.

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

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

- 117 **3.01.** Legislation that creates long term, equitable school finance solution that generates
118 substantial new revenue for public education, including sufficient revenue to pay
119 for a substantial across-the-board teacher pay raise. A revised tax system must
120 have the capacity to generate sufficient additional revenue in the future as our
121 student population increases and additional funding needs arise.

- 122 **3.02.** Legislation that requires open enrollment charters to follow all regulations and
123 accountability standards that public schools follow.

- 124 **3.03.** Legislation that provides monetary and/or institutional support to end and repair
125 harms committed by historically racist and oppressive public policies, such as red
126 lining, public housing programs, one-way busing of minority students, restriction of
127 languages other than English in schools, etc.

- 128 **3.04.** Legislation that expands local control regarding instructional delivery decisions
129 that is in the best interest of students and staff during a declared state of
130 disaster.

131 **TSTA will oppose:**

- 132 **3.05.** Legislation that would shift public tax dollars to private entities. Vouchers,
133 educational savings accounts, and other privatization schemes would take the
134 funding we have for public schools and give it to students to attend private schools

135 that are exempt from our accountability system. TSTA believes we should use our
136 state resources to offer every student a quality public education.

137 **3.06.** Legislation that allows the takeover of the public’s neighborhood schools by
138 private, for-profit, or unelected entities that are not accountable to taxpayers.
139 Privatization has been shown to be a failed approach that provides an inferior
140 education to our students.

141 **3.07.** Legislation that would establish initiative and referendum. In states where
142 initiative and referendum are legal, the procedures have been used to bypass the
143 legislative process, undermine the decisions of elected representatives and to limit
144 funding for public education. TSTA supports that system of representative
145 government that allows us to effect change through the electoral process.

146 **3.08.** Legislation that expands virtual learning options for students. Research and the
147 experience of the pandemic show that students are not well served in virtual
148 learning environments.

149 **3.09.** Legislation that gives corporations unnecessary tax breaks rather than using
150 that revenue for public schools.

151 **3.10.** Legislation that would withhold funding for schools based on decisions made
152 by local school officials and health experts during a declared state of disaster.

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

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

155 **4.01.** Legislation to fully fund and support Early Childhood Intervention and Special
156 Education Programs.

157 **4.02.** Legislation that establishes and fully funds full-day kindergarten and pre-
158 kindergarten programs. Research indicates that the initiation of high-quality early
159 care and education programs leads to a reduction in special education placement.

160 **4.03.** Legislation limiting class size across all grade levels. Both the Carnegie Foundation
161 for the Advancement of Teaching and the National Association of Elementary
162 School Principals recommend a student-teacher ratio of 15:1 – a real and effective
163 student-teacher ratio rather than one that includes all campus instructional
164 personnel. In addition, the impact of a growing number of inclusion special
165 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.

167 **4.04.** Legislation limiting class sizes for self-contained classrooms for special education
168 students to 10 students. In cases where this ratio is inadequate, districts should be
169 required to provide a process for teachers to request additional personnel based on

170 the severity of each exceptional student's needs. Special needs children in self-
 171 contained classrooms must have more one-on-one instruction time with
 172 appropriately certified teachers in order to succeed, including requirements that
 173 address: Class size limitations on self-contained and resource classrooms for
 174 children with disabilities. Educator: Student ratios for general education classes in
 175 grades K-12 to limit the practice of overcrowding students with disabilities into the
 176 general education setting with minimal adult support with a ratio of no more than
 177 one-fourth of SPED students in class; and the establishment of a 1:1 ratio of
 178 students to adults in classrooms with students confined to wheelchairs or who
 179 require assistance walking or moving about to include students with autism and
 180 other disabilities that require extensive assistance and/or modification.

181 **4.05.** Legislation that funds schools based on student enrollment rather than
 182 attendance. Texas is only one of seven states in the country that uses average daily
 183 attendance (ADA) to calculate funding for its public schools. However, schools are
 184 still required to provide an education to 100% of its enrolled students using funds
 185 that are based on a lower student count, as ADA in Texas is around 95% of the total
 186 enrollment across the state. Basing funding on attendance disproportionately
 187 penalizes schools that serve a large number of children from low-income families
 188 and children who are more likely to suffer chronic health issues.

189 **4.06.** Legislation requiring full-time counselors and librarians on every campus. In
 190 addition, legislation requiring limitations on counselor-to-student ratios is not to
 191 exceed 1:250. This should be a priority for all schools without exception.

192 **4.07.** Legislation requiring at least one full-time registered nurse on every campus.

193 **4.08.** Legislation expanding the Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid. The
 194 quality of health care is directly related to the standard of living. Children from low
 195 socio-economic homes are less likely to have access to adequate and preventive
 196 health care.

197 **4.09.** Legislation minimizing the use of standardized assessments in our schools. The
 198 excessive use of high stakes standardized tests to measure or label student,
 199 teacher, campus, and district performance creates a situation where "teaching to
 200 the test" becomes more important than learning. Student assessment should be
 201 based on multiple measures that are related to the educational needs of students.
 202 Students with Individualized Education Plans that would formerly qualify to take
 203 STAAR ALT 2 assessments shall not be required to take any mandated state
 204 assessments and a student portfolio documenting a student's progress shall
 205 replace it.

206 **4.10.** Legislation supporting and funding effective, subject-specific technology training
 207 for educators in the use of proven programs. With increases in the use of

208 technology systems in the workplace, our students deserve instruction in subject-
209 specific technology by teachers who are proficient in its use.

210 **4.11.** Legislation to fund and support programs to assist ~~Emergent Bilinguals, Language~~
211 ~~Learners, and Dual Language Learners~~ **emergent bilinguals**. Globalization has
212 brought students from around the world into Texas public school classrooms.
213 These students need effective programs and appropriately certified teachers to
214 help them become successful ~~Emergent Bilinguals, Language Learners, and Dual~~
215 ~~Language Learners~~ **emergent bilinguals**. In addition, legislation requiring
216 limitations of multilingual **ESL, transitional bilingual education, and dual**
217 **language classroom** teacher-to-student ratios is not to exceed 1:15.

218 **4.12.** Legislation that establishes an 11-to-1 class ratio for pre-kindergarten classes.

219 **4.13.** Legislation that protects and promotes the contributions of and excellence of
220 Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, women, and LGBTQ+ peoples, individually
221 and within movements, including the role intersectionality plays in these
222 movements, ~~and ensures the history of racism and oppression of marginalized~~
223 ~~populations is taught.~~

224 **4.14.** **Legislation that ensures the history of racism and oppression of marginalized**
225 **populations is taught.**

226 TSTA will oppose:

227 **4.15.** Legislation that requires outcomes-based funding.

228 **4.16.** **Legislation that penalizes educators for special education services missed**
229 **during a declared state of disaster or academic regression due to student**
230 **disengagement.**

~~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. 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.~~

260 ~~2.04.~~—Legislation that pauses all charter growth, a significant and elective cost to the
261 state at the direct expense of public schools.

262 **TSTA will oppose:**

263 ~~2.05.~~—Legislation that gives corporations unnecessary tax breaks rather than using that
264 revenue for public schools.

265 ~~2.06.~~—Legislation that expands full time virtual programs.

266 ~~2.07.~~—Legislation that would withhold funding for schools based on decisions made by
267 local school officials and health experts during a declared state of disaster.

268 **~~3.~~ Providing Quality Instruction**

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

271 ~~3.01.~~—Legislation that provides for additional funding and salary supplements that would
272 support supplemental instruction.

273 ~~3.02.~~—Legislation limiting class size across all grade levels according to research-based
274 student to teacher ratio recommendations regardless of District of Innovation
275 status.

276 ~~3.03.~~—Legislation limiting class size based on the number of inclusion students in a
277 classroom.

278 ~~3.04.~~—Legislation eliminating standardized testing beyond the federal requirement.

279 **TSTA will oppose:**

280 ~~3.05.~~—Legislation that would increase class sizes and/or student teacher ratios.

281 **~~4.~~ Ensuring Support for Special Populations**

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

284 ~~4.01.~~—Legislation that allows for temporary measures to efficiently account for services
285 and/or evaluations that were interrupted, reduced, delayed or suspended for
286 students who receive special education services.

287 ~~4.02.~~ Legislation that provides for additional funding and salary supplements that would
 288 support the efficient and immediate delivery of compensatory services and
 289 supplemental instruction.

290 **TSTA will oppose:**

291 ~~4.03.~~ Legislation that penalizes educators for special education services missed during a
 292 declared state of disaster or academic regression due to student disengagement.