

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 **2.11.** Legislation that outlines strict, specific stipulations, definitions, and limits to the
104 authority of school districts, in employee contracts, to transfer or reassign a district
105 employee to any other district position that they consider without a specific
106 definition to be "similar" at any time with no necessary reason provided or the need
107 for the employee's consent.

108 **TSTA will oppose:**

109 **2.12.** Legislation that expands or provides broad rulemaking authority to the
110 Commissioner of Education.

111 **2.13.** Legislation designed to restrict the ability of TSTA to organize and provide services
112 to educational employees.

113 **2.14.** Legislation that would make current state standards subject to "home rule" or
114 otherwise allow school districts to be exempt from or to roll back the current
115 standards that protect the quality learning environment for students. Attempts to
116 erode state standards for educational quality, in the name of "cost saving," "local
117 control" or "eliminating unfunded mandates," could mean the end of 22-1 class size
118 limits, the salary schedule, and other benefits necessary to provide teachers and
119 students a productive educational environment.

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

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

122 **3.01.** Legislation that creates long term, equitable school finance solution that generates
123 substantial new revenue for public education, including sufficient revenue to pay
124 for a substantial across-the-board teacher pay raise. A revised tax system must
125 have the capacity to generate sufficient additional revenue in the future as our
126 student population increases and additional funding needs arise.

127 **3.02.** Legislation that requires open enrollment charters to follow all regulations and
128 accountability standards that public schools follow.

129 **3.03.** Legislation that provides monetary and/or institutional support to end and repair
130 harms committed by historically racist and oppressive public policies, such as red
131 lining, public housing programs, one-way busing of minority students, restriction of
132 languages other than English in schools, etc.

133 **3.04.** Legislation that expands local control regarding instructional delivery decisions
134 that is in the best interest of students and staff during a declared state of disaster.

135 **TSTA will oppose:**

136 **3.05.** Legislation that would shift public tax dollars to private entities. Vouchers,
137 educational savings accounts, and other privatization schemes would take the
138 funding we have for public schools and give it to students to attend private schools
139 that are exempt from our accountability system. TSTA believes we should use our
140 state resources to offer every student a quality public education.

141 **3.06.** Legislation that allows the takeover of the public’s neighborhood schools by
142 private, for-profit, or unelected entities that are not accountable to taxpayers.
143 Privatization has been shown to be a failed approach that provides an inferior
144 education to our students.

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

150 **3.08.** Legislation that expands virtual learning options for students. Research and the
151 experience of the pandemic show that students are not well served in virtual
152 learning environments.

153 **3.09.** Legislation that gives corporations unnecessary tax breaks rather than using that
154 revenue for public schools.

155 **3.10.** Legislation that would withhold funding for schools based on decisions made by
156 local school officials and health experts during a declared state of disaster.

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

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

159 **4.01.** Legislation to fully fund and support Early Childhood Intervention and Special
160 Education Programs.

161 **4.02.** Legislation that establishes and fully funds full-day kindergarten and pre-
162 kindergarten programs. Research indicates that the initiation of high-quality early
163 care and education programs leads to a reduction in special education placement.
164 TSTA supports legislation that requires students to attend school who are at least 4
165 years old.

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- 4.03.** Legislation limiting class size across all grade levels. Both the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the National Association of Elementary School Principals recommend a student-teacher ratio of 15:1 – a real and effective student-teacher ratio rather than one that includes all campus instructional personnel. In addition, the impact of a growing number of inclusion special education students in the general education classroom requires an additional reduction in class size based on the number of inclusion students in a classroom.
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- 4.04.** Legislation limiting class sizes for self-contained classrooms for special education students to 10 students. In cases where this ratio is inadequate, districts should be required to provide a process for teachers to request additional personnel based on the severity of each exceptional student’s needs. Special needs children in self-contained classrooms must have more one-on-one instruction time with appropriately certified teachers in order to succeed, including requirements that address: Class size limitations on self-contained and resource classrooms for children with disabilities. Educator: Student ratios for general education classes in grades K-12 to limit the practice of overcrowding students with disabilities into the general education setting with minimal adult support with a ratio of no more than one-fourth of SPED students in class; and the establishment of a 1:1 ratio of students to adults in classrooms with students confined to wheelchairs or who require assistance walking or moving about to include students with autism and other disabilities that require extensive assistance and/or modification.
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- 4.05.** Legislation that funds schools based on student enrollment rather than attendance. Texas is only one of seven states in the country that uses average daily attendance (ADA) to calculate funding for its public schools. However, schools are still required to provide an education to 100% of its enrolled students using funds that are based on a lower student count, as ADA in Texas is around 95% of the total enrollment across the state. Basing funding on attendance disproportionately penalizes schools that serve a large number of children from low-income families and children who are more likely to suffer chronic health issues.
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- 4.06.** Legislation requiring full-time counselors and librarians on every campus. In addition, legislation requiring limitations on counselor-to-student ratios is not to exceed 1:250. This should be a priority for all schools without exception.
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- 4.07.** Legislation requiring at least one full-time registered nurse on every campus.
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- 4.08.** Legislation expanding the Children’s Health Insurance Program and Medicaid. The quality of health care is directly related to the standard of living. Children from low socio-economic homes are less likely to have access to adequate and preventive health care.

- 203 **4.09.** Legislation minimizing the use of standardized assessments in our schools. The
 204 excessive use of high stakes standardized tests to measure or label student,
 205 teacher, campus, and district performance creates a situation where “teaching to
 206 the test” becomes more important than learning. Student assessment should be
 207 based on multiple measures that are related to the educational needs of students.
 208 Students with Individualized Education Plans that would formerly qualify to take
 209 STAAR ALT 2 assessments shall not be required to take any mandated state
 210 assessments and a student portfolio documenting a student’s progress shall
 211 replace it.
- 212 **4.10.** Legislation supporting and funding effective, subject-specific technology training
 213 for educators in the use of proven programs. With increases in the use of
 214 technology systems in the workplace, our students deserve instruction in subject-
 215 specific technology by teachers who are proficient in its use.
- 216 **4.11.** Legislation to fund and support programs to assist emergent bilinguals.
 217 Globalization has brought students from around the world into Texas public school
 218 classrooms. These students need effective programs and appropriately certified
 219 teachers to help them become successful emergent bilinguals. In addition,
 220 legislation requiring limitations of ESL, transitional bilingual education, and dual
 221 language classroom teacher-to-student ratios is not to exceed 1:15.
- 222 **4.12.** Legislation that establishes an 11-to-1 class ratio for pre-kindergarten classes.
- 223 **4.13.** Legislation that protects and promotes the contributions of and excellence of
 224 Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, women, and LGBTQ+ peoples, individually
 225 and within movements, including the role intersectionality plays in these
 226 movements.
- 227 **4.14.** Legislation that ensures the history of racism and oppression of marginalized
 228 populations is taught.
- 229 **4.15.** Legislation that strongly supports “opt-out” rather than “opt-in” in regard to
 230 “abstinence-plus” sex education that would provide more access for students
 231 to the curriculum.
- 232 **4.16.** Legislation that addresses period poverty, adopts a state mandate and
 233 provides funding that directs all public school entities to provide feminine
 234 hygiene products in all campuses for menstruating students.
- 235 **TSTA will oppose:**
- 236 **4.17.** Legislation that requires outcomes-based funding.

237 **4.18.** Legislation that penalizes educators for special education services missed during a
238 declared state of disaster or academic regression due to student disengagement.

239 **4.19.** Legislation that removes the right to a student’s privacy in regards to their body
240 autonomy.

241 **5. Protect and Enhance Communities Served by Public Schools**

242 **In order to improve outcomes for public students and their families, TSTA will support:**

243 **5.01.** Legislation that protects reproductive freedom and body autonomy.

244 **5.02.** Legislation that promotes reproductive education.

245 **5.03.** Legislation that establishes automatic voter registration.

246 **5.04.** Legislation that ensures the right to housing, such as a vacancy tax, higher
247 property taxes for landlords, incentivizing home ownership, and restricting
248 corporate control of housing.

249 **5.05.** Legislation that creates incarceration reform to protect family stability.

250 **5.06.** Legislation that mandates improved public health notices for environmental
251 contamination.