

Report and Recommendations of the 2025-2026 TSTA Legislative Committee

“This committee shall research issues of importance to education employees and students in Texas and shall propose for adoption by the TSTA House of Delegates a Legislative Program recommending state legislative actions related to those issues.” - TSTA Bylaws, Article IX, Section 1, Subsection D (2)

Legislative Committee Charges 2025-2026

1. Review and make recommendations to the TSTA Legislative Program.

ACTION: The Legislative Committee met twice during the 2025-26 year on October 4 and December 9, 2025, at which time, the TSTA Legislative Program was reviewed and recommended changes were discussed.

2. Submit a written report, including the proposed Legislative Program, to the 2026 House of Delegates.

ACTION: The proposed Legislative Program is found below this Legislative Committee report. All additions and changes in language are found in **underlined bold red** font. Five new additions to the TSTA Legislative Program now include the following:

- 1. Providing Quality ~~Teachers~~ **Educators** (Line 11)
- 1.11 Legislation that would create incentive or merit pay programs based on a competitive model using standardized test scores: **including but not limited to the Teacher Incentive Allotment Program.** (Lines 55-57)
- 2.12 **Legislation that guarantees the appropriate research, implementation, and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for classroom purposes including but not limited to; instruction, grading, student and educator identification or monitoring, and student discipline.** (Lines 118-121)
- 4.02 Legislation that establishes and fully funds full-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs **with universal eligibility.** Research indicates that the initiation of high-quality early care and education programs leads to a reduction in special education placement. TSTA supports legislation that requires students to attend school who are at least 4 years old. (Lines 175-179)
- 4.21 **Legislation that would create a universal free school meal program, ensuring that every student has a free, healthy breakfast and lunch, while reducing the stigmatization and administrative burden of implementing the current meal-for-purchase program.** (Lines 263-266)

3. Be a resource in your local and region on the continuing implementation of legislation.

ACTION: Legislative advocacy for public schools was discussed, and ongoing information and materials are available to members, leaders and staff regarding public education legislation.

4. Serve as a resource for other TSTA Standing Committees, Special Committees and Task Forces to implement their recommendations for the TSTA Legislative Program as needed.

ACTION: The Legislative Committee did not receive recommendations from other committees.

Legislative Committee Members 2025-2026

- Ana Karen Cantu – Deer Park Education Association
- Melissa Cortez – Donna TSTA/NEA
- Heather Cynor – Ysleta Teachers Association
- Angela Davis – NEA-Dallas
- Santos Antonio “Tony” Garcia – Laredo United TSTA/NEA
- Roger Hall – Education Abilene
- David Ring (Chair) – Lubbock County Unit
- Adonis Schurmann – North East Education Association
- Melanie Sheehan (Board Liaison) – Ector County TSTA/NEA
- Megan Tapia – Edgewood C T A
- Andre Williams – Tyler Education Association
- Rhonda “Rhoni” Whiting – Alief-TSTA/NEA

TSTA Legislative Program

2025-2026

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~~ Educators

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

- 1.01.** Legislation to give teachers and ESPs significant across the board pay raises that will be passed through directly to teachers and ESPs.
- 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 teachers 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 show 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. Legislation that provides funding to school districts to create cohorts of

33 Early Career Educators in their first to third year teaching. The funding will be used
34 for training, compensation, and release time to Early Career Educators to ensure
35 they have peer support and help reduce Early Career Educators attrition rates.

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

40 **1.07.** Legislation that provides incentives and financial support for paraprofessionals
41 who pursue teacher certification, as well as continuing education and staff
42 development for teachers.

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

50 **1.09.** Legislation that establishes a paid student teaching model in the state of Texas so
51 that candidates are paid a living wage or higher while student teaching or in
52 residency.

53 **TSTA will oppose:**

54 **1.10.** Legislation that reduces salaries and/or benefits for public school employees.

55 **1.11.** Legislation that would create incentive or merit pay programs based on a
56 competitive model using standardized test scores; **including but not limited to**
57 **the Teacher Incentive Allotment Program.**

58 **1.12.** Legislation that would mandate employment decisions and compensation based
59 on value-added modeling.

60 **1.13.** Legislation that would move the Teacher Retirement System toward a defined
61 contribution system.

62 **1.14.** Legislation to decrease the state’s contribution to the Teacher Retirement System.

63 **1.15.** Legislation that abolishes the State Board for Educator Certification.

64 **1.16.** Legislation that would eliminate experience-based compensation.

65 **1.17.** Legislation that takes away protections granted under the Deferred Action for
66 Childhood Arrivals program.

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

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

70 **2.01.** Legislation that increases the minimum requirements for holding any supervisor or
71 administrative position for which full certification is required, including a
72 mandatory eight years relevant teaching experience before being eligible to apply
73 for administrative certification.

74 **2.02.** Legislation that provides educational employees with a meaningful voice in the
75 important decisions that relate to the learning environment and working
76 conditions. To that end, TSTA supports strengthening site-based decision making
77 at the campus and district level, mandating consultation at the district level,
78 permitting collective bargaining in individual school districts after a local option
79 vote, and repealing the prohibition against collective bargaining in order to give
80 educational employees a necessary and critical role in the decision-making process.

81 **2.03.** Legislation reducing mandated paperwork (electronic or otherwise), providing
82 standardized requirements on required paperwork/forms to be used across the
83 state limiting the number of meetings, and providing time for collaboration and
84 professional learning. Giving teachers adequate preparation time is essential to
85 successful teaching and learning. Numerous studies have shown that working
86 conditions are a primary factor in teacher attrition.

87 **2.04.** Legislation prohibiting classroom teachers and classrooms ESPs from engaging in
88 direct billing (for example, Medicaid billing).

89 **2.05.** Legislation to maintain safe and orderly schools. Educational employees must have
90 the authority to remove disruptive students and maintain discipline. Discipline
91 must be dealt with in a uniform and effective manner. Student violence directed at
92 staff or students must be dealt with swiftly and those students should be
93 immediately removed to an appropriate alternative learning environment. Districts
94 should be mandated to establish policy and include in the district's Student Code of
95 Conduct rules and guidelines prohibiting harassment of educators, personnel, and
96 students, including the use of social media platforms.

97 **2.06.** Legislation that provides health insurance benefits for all educational employees,
98 comparable to those provided to state and higher education employees. The state
99 and district insurance plans should provide appropriate disclosures and notices of
100 what benefits are covered and what fees and deductibles employees may be

101 obligated to pay. TSTA will aggressively lobby and work with Teacher Retirement
 102 System and the legislature to reign in the cost of TRS Active Care / TRS Retired
 103 Care.

104 **2.07.** Legislation that increases personnel, school social workers and support structures
 105 for counseling that best serves the mental health needs of students, faculty, and
 106 staff members.

107 **2.08.** Legislation that provides all public-school employees with a living wage, including
 108 annual cost of living adjustments.

109 **2.09.** Legislation to provide all employees with employment contracts and strong due
 110 process provisions regarding contractual, statutory, and constitutional rights.

111 **2.10.** Legislation that prohibits districts from requiring annual contracts exceeding 187
 112 days without additional compensation.

113 **2.11.** Legislation that outlines strict, specific stipulations, definitions, and limits to the
 114 authority of school districts, in employee contracts, to transfer or reassign a district
 115 employee to any other district position that they consider without a specific
 116 definition to be "similar" at any time with no necessary reason provided or the need
 117 for the employee's consent.

118 **2.12.** Legislation that guarantees the appropriate research, implementation, and use
 119 of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for classroom purposes including but not limited to;
 120 instruction, grading, student and educator identification or monitoring, and
 121 student discipline.

122 **TSTA will oppose:**

123 **2.13.** Legislation that expands or provides broad rulemaking authority to the
 124 Commissioner of Education.

125 **2.14.** Legislation designed to restrict the ability of TSTA to organize and provide services
 126 to educational employees.

127 **2.15.** Legislation that would make current state standards subject to "home rule" or
 128 otherwise allow school districts to be exempt from or to roll back the current
 129 standards that protect the quality learning environment for students. Attempts to
 130 erode state standards for educational quality, in the name of "cost saving," "local
 131 control" or "eliminating unfunded mandates," could mean the end of 22-1 class size
 132 limits, the salary schedule, and other benefits necessary to provide teachers and
 133 students a productive educational environment.

134 3. Increasing Support for Public Education

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

- 136 **3.01.** Legislation that creates long term, equitable school finance solution that generates
137 substantial new revenue for public education, including sufficient revenue to pay
138 for a substantial across-the-board teacher pay raise. A revised tax system must
139 have the capacity to generate sufficient additional revenue in the future as our
140 student population increases and additional funding needs arise.
- 141 **3.02.** Legislation that requires open enrollment charters to follow all regulations and
142 accountability standards that public schools follow.
- 143 **3.03.** Legislation that provides monetary and/or institutional support to end and repair
144 harms committed by historically racist and oppressive public policies, such as red
145 lining, public housing programs, one-way busing of minority students, restriction of
146 languages other than English in schools, etc.
- 147 **3.04.** Legislation that expands local control regarding instructional delivery decisions
148 that is in the best interest of students and staff during a declared state of disaster.

149 TSTA will oppose:

- 150 **3.05.** Legislation that would shift public tax dollars to private entities. Vouchers,
151 educational savings accounts, and other privatization schemes would take the
152 funding we have for public schools and give it to students to attend private schools
153 that are exempt from our accountability system. TSTA believes we should use our
154 state resources to offer every student a quality public education.
- 155 **3.06.** Legislation that allows the takeover of the public's neighborhood schools by
156 private, for-profit, or unelected entities that are not accountable to taxpayers.
157 Privatization has been shown to be a failed approach that provides an inferior
158 education to our students.
- 159 **3.07.** Legislation that would establish initiative and referendum. In states where
160 initiative and referendum are legal, the procedures have been used to bypass the
161 legislative process, undermine the decisions of elected representatives and to limit
162 funding for public education. TSTA supports that system of representative
163 government that allows us to effect change through the electoral process.
- 164 **3.08.** Legislation that expands virtual learning options for students. Research and the
165 experience of the pandemic show that students are not well served in virtual
166 learning environments.

- 203 attendance (ADA) to calculate funding for its public schools. However, schools are
204 still required to provide an education to 100% of its enrolled students using funds
205 that are based on a lower student count, as ADA in Texas is around 95% of the total
206 enrollment across the state. Basing funding on attendance disproportionately
207 penalizes schools that serve a large number of children from low-income families
208 and children who are more likely to suffer chronic health issues.
- 209 **4.06.** Legislation requiring full-time counselors, librarians and school social workers on
210 every campus. In addition, legislation requiring limitations on counselor-to-student
211 ratios is not to exceed 1:250. This should be a priority for all schools without
212 exception. Support legislation that adds school social work services to the Texas
213 Education Code.
- 214 **4.07.** Legislation requiring at least one full-time registered nurse on every campus.
- 215 **4.08.** Legislation expanding the Children’s Health Insurance Program and Medicaid. The
216 quality of health care is directly related to the standard of living. Children from low
217 socio-economic homes are less likely to have access to adequate and preventive
218 health care.
- 219 **4.09.** Legislation minimizing the use of standardized assessments in our schools. The
220 excessive use of high stakes standardized tests to measure or label student,
221 teacher, campus, and district performance creates a situation where “teaching to
222 the test” becomes more important than learning. Student assessment should be
223 based on multiple measures that are related to the educational needs of students.
224 Students with Individualized Education Plans that would formerly qualify to take
225 STAAR ALT 2 assessments shall not be required to take any mandated state
226 assessments and a student portfolio documenting a student’s progress shall
227 replace it.
- 228 **4.10.** Legislation supporting and funding effective, subject-specific technology training
229 for educators in the use of proven programs. With increases in the use of
230 technology systems in the workplace, our students deserve instruction in subject-
231 specific technology by teachers who are proficient in its use.
- 232 **4.11.** Legislation to fund and support programs to assist emergent bilinguals.
233 Globalization has brought students from around the world into Texas public school
234 classrooms. These students need effective programs and appropriately certified
235 teachers to help them become successful emergent bilinguals. In addition,
236 legislation requiring limitations of ESL, transitional bilingual education, and dual
237 language classroom teacher-to-student ratios is not to exceed 1:15.
- 238 **4.12.** Legislation that establishes an 11-to-1 class ratio for pre-kindergarten classes.

- 239 4.13. Legislation that protects and promotes the contributions of and excellence of
240 Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, women, and LGBTQ+ peoples, individually
241 and within movements, including the role intersectionality plays in these
242 movements.
- 243 4.14. Legislation that ensures the history of racism and oppression of marginalized
244 populations is taught.
- 245 4.15. Legislation that strongly supports “opt-out” rather than “opt-in” in regard to
246 “abstinence-plus” sex education that would provide more access for students to
247 the curriculum.
- 248 4.16. Legislation that addresses period poverty, adopts a state mandate and provides
249 funding that directs all public school entities to provide feminine hygiene products
250 in all campuses for menstruating students.
- 251 4.17. Legislation that creates and funds Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs
252 that train and certify high school students in vocations that transition our economy
253 away from dependence on fossil fuels.
- 254 4.18. Legislation that prohibits third party organizations that offer opportunities or
255 services to public school students from collecting student data that could reveal
256 documentation status.
- 257 4.19. Legislation that closes loopholes in the CROWN Act, including disciplinary action
258 against students based on hair color and hair length.
- 259 4.20. Legislation that will mandate and fund training for educators and all district staff in
260 public schools that teaches the dangers of fentanyl use by individuals and certifies
261 educators in Naloxone (NARCAN) administration while also providing emergency
262 use Naloxone (NARCAN) for each staff member.
- 263 4.21. Legislation that would create a universal free school meal program, ensuring
264 that every student has a free, healthy breakfast and lunch, while reducing the
265 stigmatization and administrative burden of implementing the current meal-
266 for-purchase program.
- 267 TSTA will oppose:
- 268 4.22. Legislation that requires outcomes-based funding.
- 269 4.23. Legislation that penalizes educators for special education services missed during a
270 declared state of disaster or academic regression due to student disengagement.

