

TEACH

The teaching and learning journal of the Tennessee Education Association

What's next in the fight for fair, accurate measures of student and teacher performance?

Even if there are no issues administering the test, standardized test scores of a summative year-end test like TNReady are not valid measures of student achievement, teacher effectiveness or school performance.

Numerous studies have shown it is inappropriate to use value-added scores generated from standardized tests to evaluate teachers and schools. The state's use of these scores in high-stakes decisions unfairly penalizes students, educators and schools.

"Years of state testing failures have destroyed the trust of educators, parents and students in the state assessment system,"

said TEA President Beth Brown. "Under pressure from TEA members and other public education advocates, legislators did the right thing and passed hold-harmless legislation for the 2017-18 school year. Now we must capitalize on this momentum and make meaningful changes to student and teacher accountability."

While the legislature is not in session, there is much work to be done at the local level. Support from local boards of education and parent allies can go a long way toward helping TEA achieve its goal of eliminating high-stakes decisions based on standardized tests.

"Teachers are not opposed to testing or evaluation," Brown said. "We just want a fair system that accurately measures student achievement and teacher performance. Tests can be powerful diagnostic tools for teachers, but only when they are designed and implemented in a fair and meaningful way. That is not what we have right now with TNReady."

As school starts back, TEA is implementing an organizing effort called "2020 Vision," that will work to accomplish the association's "Big Hairy Audacious Goal" of eliminating high-stakes decisions based on test

TNReady next steps
cont. page 8

The TEA Board of Directors set a "Big Hairy Audacious Goal" in 2016:

TEA will work to ELIMINATE high-stakes decisions based on standardized tests that affect Tennessee's educators, students and schools by the year 2020.



TEA expands professional development offerings making it easier than ever to earn PDPs

Since launching a new online learning portal on TEAteachers.org earlier this year, TEA continues to expand its online and in-person professional development offerings.

"Don't let your license expire on August 31," said TEA President Beth Brown. "There is still time to gather all necessary materials and professional development points (PDPs) to keep it current."

Members across the state have recognized TEA for its high quality professional development and are embracing the "PDPs in pajamas" concept available online.

Professional development
cont. page 7



Student TEA member receives national recognition, chapter ranked in Top 3 nationwide

TEA's student affiliate STEA has once again been recognized among the top three student programs in the nation with the highest membership.

"We are extremely proud of our student members who go above and beyond their demanding school work load to grow professionally and mentor others as aspiring educators," said Rhonda Thompson, STEA coordinator and member of TEA's Instructional Advocacy staff.

STEA success is built on a strong network of chapters at



Ruth Tan, STEA member at Tennessee Tech, awarded NEA organizing grant

Student TEA
cont. page 7

Membership poster on pgs. 4-5 to hang in the break room!



THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TENNESSEE

It's the most wonderful time of the year

By TEA President Beth Brown



It's July in Tennessee. Back-to-school commercials saturate the media, and stores prepare for major sales during the tax-free weekend. We've all seen at least one advertisement that shows parents skipping merrily through the school supplies aisle at the store while students lag behind, glumly dragging their feet.

I despise that commercial, for it reinforces a false narrative about Tennessee's public schools. That commercial depicts school as a means for parents to escape from their children, and it portrays school as a place to be dreaded by

students.

Nowhere in those commercials do we see the joy that students feel when they grasp a difficult concept or have an "aha!" moment. We don't see students engaged in inquiry and discovery and creation of art and music. Also missing is the sharing of ideas—and challenging others' ideas—that is routine in our public school classrooms.

The reality is that teachers spend their summer break writing curriculum, engaging in professional development, and organizing their classrooms.

Another glaring flaw with back-to-school advertisements is that they rarely—if ever—accurately represent how educators spend their summers. If educators appear in back-to-school commercials, they are generally portrayed as gloomy and reluctant to return to their

classrooms. The reality is that teachers spend their summer break writing curriculum, engaging in professional development, and organizing their classrooms (with much of their resources purchased out-of-pocket). Administrators and counselors spend countless hours customizing schedules for educators and students alike; custodians clean, wax, and clean some more; and food service personnel take inventory, order supplies, and plan meals. All of these educators work together to plan a well-rounded educational experience that will set our children up for a successful school year.

In 2016 Australian physician and author Helen Caldicott expressed her regard for educators when she asserted that educators "are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth." Some critics have accused her of being grandiose, but Caldicott recognizes that education is the foundation of all other professions.

Knowing the important role that educators play in students' success, TEA offers professional development for teachers, education support professionals, and administrators in a variety of topics, including knowing, grouping, and motivating students; classroom management; teacher evaluation; diversity and cultural awareness; conflict resolution; collaborating with families; cyber safety; and English language learners.

These topics—and many more—are available in person through regional or statewide conferences and also via TEA's professional learning portal, where members can receive online training from the comfort of their own homes.

So, fellow educators, as we prepare to welcome our students during the upcoming weeks and begin the journey of a new school year, know that TEA is ready to assist our efforts to teach and inspire our students. And let us all be humming "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year."

TEA is not a building in Nashville

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder

Throughout TEA's more than 150 years, the association has accomplished many important things for students and educators.

Thanks to the efforts of TEA, educators today have planning periods, sick time, retirement, health insurance, gender pay equity, duty-free lunch, the right to continue teaching through pregnancy and more!

It is important to remember that when I say "TEA," I'm not talking about a building in Nashville.

The most beautiful and powerful thing about this association is that the strength of TEA does not come from within the walls of our headquarters in Nashville. It comes from our tens of thousands of members all across the state and from all of the members who have come before us.

Everything TEA does - every training, every legislative battle, every event, every media statement, every legal fight - all of it is member-directed. You set the priorities and direction of the association. You elect association leaders at all levels - from your school building rep to state and national leaders.

I say all of this to empower and encourage you to get involved. Be an active and engaged member of the association, if you are not already.

We have a very talented and committed team of staff members (many of whom are former educators themselves), but staff alone cannot accomplish the mission and goals of the association. We need you!

Your voice, your opinions and your talents are needed to keep TEA strong, vibrant and growing.

Your voice, your opinions and your talents are needed to keep TEA strong, vibrant and growing - and we are growing!

In 2011, some legislators thought that if they took collective bargaining away from teachers, TEA would crumble and stop being a thorn in their sides. What they didn't understand is that being a member of the largest and strongest professional association for educators is about so much more than a contract.

Since the loss of bargaining, this organized and united advocate for great public schools has dramatically increased school funding, kept class sizes small, reduced the weight of test scores in teacher evaluations, prohibited the use of TVAAS in licensure decisions, increased classroom supply money, defeated deep-pocketed private school voucher proponents FIVE times, and on and on I could go.

TEA members have proven we don't need bargaining to be a powerful force for students and educators. Our passion for our students, our profession and our public schools will always drive us to keep pushing forward.

TEA will always be here advocating for public school educators and students. We will always fight to ensure all students, regardless of ZIP code, have access to a quality public education. Our commitment to educating our children and watching the backs of our colleagues will never end.

Thank you for somehow finding the time and energy to be a committed advocate for this worthy cause. Thank you for being a member of the Tennessee Education Association.



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MANAGING EDITOR: Amanda Chaney
achaney@teaa.org
ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Jim Wrye
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & PUBLISHER:
Carolyn Crowder

Tennessee Education Association

801 Second Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37201-1099
Telephone: (615) 242-8392
Toll Free: (800) 342-8367, (800) 342-8262
Fax: (615) 259-4581
Website: www.teateachers.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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VICE PRESIDENT: Tanya Coats* (865) 308-2787
SECRETARY-TREASURER: Carolyn Crowder (615) 242-8392
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UniServ Staff contact information can be found on page 6.

That's a Great Question!

By Tyson Hoppe, Rutherford County EA president



As a new president of the Rutherford Education Association (REA), someone approached me and asked, "So, what's your story?"

How did you get here?"

It turns out my entire career path stems from well-placed questions, perhaps the most important one occurring at age nine when my teacher asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up, and I responded, "I am going to be a teacher!"

I had never discussed it with anyone before, but that question made me realize I had the ability to translate information into multiple formats, and that just seemed like a strong teaching trait.

People asking questions have opened many doors for me, ultimately leading me to unexpected positions of service and leadership.

In an undergraduate exchange program in Liverpool, England, I was asked to be president for the international student organization. When I returned to SUNY Potsdam to finish my bachelor's, I was asked to be the president for our international student organization in the States.

Each opportunity came back to someone asking me to participate, serve, or step up to lead. As association members and leaders, it is our responsibility to ask these same questions of our colleagues.

Questions, I realized, were actually two forms of respect. First, it meant someone saw something in me. Second, they had the conviction to ask.

In 2000, my wife and I arrived in Tennessee after completing my master's degree at UT, Austin. Bethany started teaching at Vol State Community College, and I started teaching music at Walter J Baird Middle School in Wilson County.

One day a fellow music teacher pulled me aside and asked, "Are you a member of the association? You need to be a member of TEA!" I immediately signed up not really knowing what the association was.

I have appreciated the outcome to this day; it led to being asked to become president of that local association for LEA. I quickly realized I did not know the size and scope of the association.

I needed to start asking questions if I wanted to be an informed leader who could see the larger picture outside the 12-member local I was now part of.

Everything changed for me at the NEA convention in Washington, D.C., that year.

At the NEA-RA, I learned first-hand what the true democratic process felt like. An arena of 10,000 people ran like Swiss clockwork. The rush of energy experiencing and witnessing this process was mind-blowing. Educators were integrally connected, and the heartbeat was strong!

From that day on I knew that everyone had the equal opportunity of becoming a member and having a voice in this profession.

Asking someone to become a member was not just a matter of association survival but also a demonstration of respect towards my colleagues. So I began to respect as many educators I could with the question, "Would you like to join the Association?" With that one question our tiny local association started growing again.

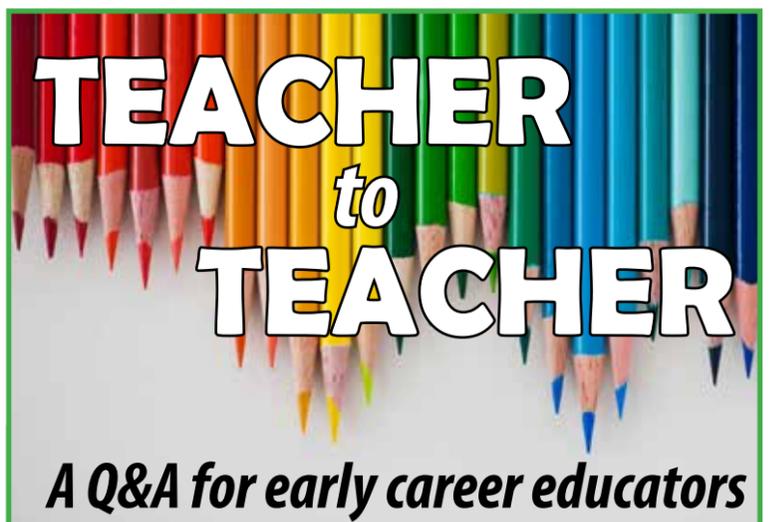
A few years later, we relocated to Murfreesboro in Rutherford County. In this new county I immediately started asking the question, "How can I help?" and became a co-AR of my building and attended meetings. This larger local was intimidating to me at first because there were things I'd never experienced at locals before: Robert's Rules of Order, an Executive Board, monthly meetings, and an official office! It was like a miniature NEA convention and I was completely impressed.

And then in 2017, some colleagues asked the question, and once again I found myself in a service position.

Now as President of the REA local, I am reminded that the action of asking a question is a sign of respect and recognition that prompts all of us towards action, participation, and equality in our profession.

My fourth-grade teacher started my journey in education, and many others have urged me forward to grow and reach my potential. I hope that my questions, "Would you like to join the association?" and "How can I help?" will spark the same path for many others, especially as we pass the torch and welcome new teachers into the largest organized profession in the world.

Got questions? See potential and talent? Just ask! "Are you a member of the association? You should be!"



Q: Do you have some tips for gathering student data and using it effectively?

A: There are an endless number of ways to gather student data. The way you choose to collect student data will ultimately depend on the type of data you want to gather.

For example, if you want to measure student growth in letter recognition over the course of a semester, you could create a bar graph tracking sheet for each student. Along the side (y-axis) set an interval for the number of letters the student recognizes (perhaps 5's or 10's). Along the bottom (x-axis) create spaces to record the dates you assess. Each time you assess a student, shade in the bar for that date, noting how many letters the student recognized. Within 2-3 assessments, you should be able to visually see if the student is making progress.

If you're more of a visual learner, one of my favorite blogs, We Are Teachers, has inventive ideas for collecting student data, along with pictures. You can find the post here: <https://www.weareteachers.com/16-teacher-hacks-for-making-data-collection-a-piece-of-cake/>

But wait! You cannot stop with just collecting data on your students. The point of collecting data is for it to be used to inform your instruction. One way to make sure you're using the data you collect effectively is by creating SMART goals. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Action Oriented, Realistic and Time Bound.

Q: What are some good strategies for educators and students to deal with stress?

A: Stress management is so important in this profession. Your students depend on you to be at your best every day. Unchecked stress can lead to low energy, headaches, and even weaken your immune system making you more susceptible to colds and infections. Stress affects our students in the same ways and can impact their academic performance. Below are some ideas you can use in managing stress for yourself and your students.

Prepare for the Next Day

Nothing is more stressful than being unprepared. Get organized so you're ready for the next day, taking a few minutes to make a to-do list and clean up before you leave. Knowing you've got everything covered means you'll be less likely to fret about work in the evenings. When you come in the next morning, you'll have the sense that you're in control of the situation and can handle it.

Focus on your senses

Try taking a short walk and pay attention to your senses—what you see, feel, hear, smell. This can make a huge difference in your emotional and physical well-being. This is something that can be done with your students as well. Even if you don't have the ability or time to take your students outside, you can dim the lights, have them close their eyes, and meditate for just a few moments before starting the lesson.

Identify at least one good thing that happened today.

Most of us are guilty of this. We come home from school and start venting to our family or friends about the day. Instead of creating a negative atmosphere the minute you walk in the door, try starting off the evening by exchanging good news. Something good happens every day, you just have to take time to recognize it. This strategy can also be used as a closure to the day with your students. Before dismissal have each student share out one good thing that happened during the day or something they're looking forward to the following day to help end each day on a positive note.



Teacher-to-Teacher questions may be submitted to TEACH@tnea.org. Answers are provided by TEA New Teacher Board Member Hope Shields. Ms. Shields teaches Kindergarten in Bartlett City Schools.

Top 5 reasons



Professional Development

TEA is one of the largest providers of high-quality professional development trainings in the state. Members have access to a variety of trainings to earn professional development points throughout the school year - including online and in-person options.



Effective Advocacy

Elected officials from the legislature to your local school board are setting policy that affects your students and your classrooms. TEA members statewide form a powerful and strongest united voice for great public schools.



Legal Expertise

We hope you never need it, but should the unthinkable happen - TEA members have access to the best team of education law experts in the state. TEA also provides liability coverage to members. Don't get caught with only the state-funded liability plan. You need a partner protecting YOUR best interest.

www.TEAteachers.org/Join

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On-the-ground Support

Being an educator is tough. A strong support system can make all the difference in your career. As a TEA member, you have a TEA UniServ coordinator in your district and a network of tens of thousands of educators to learn from and to lean on whenever you need someone.



Exclusive Discounts

From discounts on family vacations to your favorite restaurants, exclusive member discounts can easily offset the cost of association membership. Don't miss out on discounts on auto and life insurance, and movie tickets, too!



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Contact TEA

Tennessee Education Association
801 Second Avenue N., Nashville, TN 37201-1099
(615) 242-8392, (800) 342-8367
FAX (615) 259-4581

UniServ Coordinators

District 1 — Harry Farthing, P.O. Box 298, Elizabethton, TN 37644; phone: (423)262-8035, fax: (866)379-0949; Assns: Bristol, Carter Co., Elizabethton, Johnson Co., Hancock Co., Hawkins Co., Kingsport, Northeast State Community College, Rogersville, Sullivan Co. **District 2 — Jennifer Gaby**, P.O. Box 70, Afton, TN 37616; (423)234-0700, fax: (855)299-0723; Assns: Cocke Co., Greene Co., East Tennessee State University, Greeneville, Hamblen Co., Johnson City, Newport, Unicoi Co., Washington Co. **District 3 — Tina Parlier**, P.O. Box 70288, Knoxville, TN 37938-0288, (865)688-1175, fax: (866)518-3104; Assns: Campbell Co., Claiborne Co., Grainger Co., Jefferson Co., Sevier Co., Union Co., Walters

State Community College. **District 4 — Jason White**, KCEA, 2411 Magnolia Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37917; (865)522-9793, fax: (865)522-9866; Assns: Knox, Pellissippi State Comm. College, UT-Knoxville, TSD. **District 5 — Tom Hopkins**, P.O. Box 5502, Oak Ridge, TN 37831; (423)416-7330, fax: (855)301-8366; Assns: Alcoa, Anderson Co., Blount Co., Clinton, Etowah, Maryville, McMinn Co. (except Athens City - see District 7), Monroe Co., Oak Ridge, Polk Co., Sweetwater. **District 6 — Shannon Bain**, P.O. Box 3452, Lebanon, TN 37088, phone: (615)547-7769, fax: (844)274-0765; Assns: Cannon Co., Cumberland Co., Cumberland University, DeKalb Co., Lebanon, Putnam Co., Van Buren Co., Warren Co., Wilson Co., White Co., TTU. **District 7 — Theresa Turner**, HCEA 4655 Shallowford Road, Chattanooga, TN 37411; (423)485-9535, fax: (423)485-9512; Assns: Athens City, Bradley Co., Chattanooga State Community College, Cleveland, Hamilton Co., UT-Chattanooga. **District 8 — Josh Trent**, P.O. Box 451, Livingston, TN 38570, (931)279-9530, fax: (855)299-5674; Assns: Fentress Co., Lenior

City, Loudon Co., Meigs Co., Morgan Co., Oneida, Overton Co., Rhea-Dayton Co., Roane Co., Scott Co., York Institute. **District 9 — Jackie Pope**, 2326 Valley Grove Dr., Murfreesboro, TN 37128; phone: (615)898-1060, fax: (855) 301-8214, Assns: Bedford Co., Bledsoe Co., Coffee Co., Franklin Co., Grundy Co., Manchester, Marion Co., Moore Co., Motlow State Community College, Sequatchie Co., Tullahoma. **District 10 — Jeff Garrett**, P.O. Box 1326, Lebanon, TN 37088-1326; (615)630-2605, fax (855)320-8755; Assns: Clay Co., Jackson Co., Macon Co., Pickett Co., Robertson Co., Smith Co., Sumner Co., Trousdale Co. **District 11/13 — Antoinette Lee**, P.O. Box 1412, Antioch, TN 37013; (615)308-5293, fax: (888)519-7331; Assns: FSSD, Williamson, TN Dept. of Ed. **District 12 — Sue Ogg**, P.O. Box 210486, Nashville, TN 37211-0486; (615)856-0503, fax: (855)427-6660 — Assns: Fayetteville City, Giles Co., Lawrence Co., Lincoln Co., Marshall Co., Maury Co., Wayne Co. **District 11/13 — Mary Campbell, Rhonda Jett**, Metro Nashville, 531 Fairground Court, Nashville, TN 37211; (615)347-6578 (Campbell), (615)476-

3161 (Jett), fax: (855)299-4968 (Campbell), (855)299-5837 (Jett); Assns: Dept. of Higher Ed., Metropolitan Nashville, TN School For The Blind, MTSU, Murfreesboro City, NSCC, Rutherford, TSU. **District 14 — Maria Uffelman**, P.O. Box 99, Cumberland City, TN 37050; phone: (931)827-3333, fax: (855)299-4925; Assns: Austin Peay State University, Clarksville-Montgomery Co., Henry Co., Houston Co., Paris, Stewart Co., Weakley Co., UT-Martin. **District 15 — LaMonica Jones Harris**, 20 Stonewater Creek Drive, Jackson, TN 38305; phone: (615)864-1984; Assns: Benton Co., Central, Cheatham Co., Clarksburg, Decatur Co., Dickson Co., Hickman Co., Humphreys Co., Huntingdon, Lewis Co., McKenzie, Perry Co., West Carroll. **District 16 — Lorrie Butler**, P.O. Box 387, Henderson, TN 38340; (731)989-4860, fax: (855)299-4591; Assns: Chester Co., Jackson-Madison Co., Jackson State Community College, Hardin Co., Henderson Co., Lexington, McNairy Co., West Tennessee School for the Deaf. **District 17 — Terri Jones**, P.O. Box 2140, Cordova, TN 38088; (901)258-3902, fax: (844)270-8083; Assns:

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www.teateachers.org
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Stretch your paycheck with TEA member benefits

Money is tight, and we know every dollar counts in the family budget.

In addition to persistent efforts to improve teacher pay, TEA is also committed to providing members with exclusive and valuable discounts that more than offset the cost of membership dues.

“TEA membership can pay for itself if you take advantage of the many discounts offered,” said TEA President Beth Brown. “When you are intentional about using the MyDeals app and checking our discount websites

before making purchases online or booking travel, you can save yourself hundreds of dollars.”

Through partnerships with NEA and companies like ACCESS, TEA is able to offer members discounts on everything from clothing and shoes, to movie tickets, flights, car rentals and more.

“As an educator in rural Tennessee, I understand the desire to maximize every dollar in your budget,” Brown said. “It is important for the association to support members in and out of the classroom in any way we

can. Offering these discounts is one way we can do that.”

Member benefits also include savings on a number of personal insurance policies, including complimentary life insurance from NEA and a free Member Assistance Program that connects members with confidential counseling professionals.

The best place to find all of the discounts and benefits offered to TEA members is to visit the TEA website, www.teateachers.org, and click on the “Benefits” tab.

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TEA MyDeals Mobile App in your app store - When asked for a password, enter: 8995-Full TEA Membership Number



Keep your license up to date with TEA professional development



TEA Instructional Advocacy coordinator and former educator Rhonda Thompson travels all across the state to conduct professional development trainings. TEA UniServ, legal and communications staff support the work of TEA's Instructional Advocacy team with trainings on a variety of topics.

Professional development from page 1

“It’s a unique benefit of membership and we urge everyone to check it out,” Brown said. “The learning portal is free and available exclusively to TEA members, allowing educators to learn at their own pace in the privacy of their own home.”

The portal offers engaging courses to boost best teaching practices and an education tracker tool that records and monitors learning progress.

Courses on classroom management, collaborating with families, Tennessee teacher code of ethics, the evaluation process and others are available now, with more courses being added continuously.

“If you haven’t visited the portal, please register today and send us your course suggestions,” said TEA Assistant Executive

Director Terrance Gibson. “The online learning portal was built by educators for educators, so we will continue to rely on educator input as we expand our course offerings.”

In addition to online and in-person trainings delivered at TEA conferences and in locals, TEA is also proud to offer more than 100 NEA micro-credentials on bullying and sexual harassment prevention, working with English language learners, classroom management, ESSA, early career educator training and others.

“Micro-credentials are a great way to demonstrate your competency as an educator and be recognized for improving your knowledge and classroom practices that support student success,” Brown said.

Please visit www.TEAteachers.org for all your professional development needs.

STEA continues streak as Top 3 program

Student TEA from page 1

education colleges throughout the state, a robust professional development program centered around two annual student conferences and a rich history of service projects across the state and beyond.

After attending a STEA training, student member Ruth Tan wrote and received a grant that resulted in engaging an entire school and its community of more than 170 families last year.

“Ruth’s work gained national attention which led to her being selected to share her leadership story in front of 2,000 NEA members during the 2018 NEA Leadership Summit,” Thompson said. “That’s just one example of how driven young educators can be – if we open the door and give them the tools to succeed.”

Before the 2018 TEA Representative Assembly, STEA members helped build Azafran Community Park in Nashville. Student members often participate in school service projects statewide, help fundraising efforts for schools and students in need, and expand their perspectives on public education throughout the country during national meetings and projects surrounding the NEA Representative Assembly.

“STEA is one of the most important things you can do for your future career because it brings you into the world of education before you enter the classroom,” said Savannah Huff, STEA President and student at Tennessee Technological University. “Thanks for STEA, I have so many connections that opened me up to opportunities which I never thought were possible. I now have a wonderful support system all across the country.”

Former STEA members credit their professional success to the program and remain active in promoting public education as members of TEA.

“I have learned so much over the years and I haven’t even reached the classroom yet. STEA taught me how to build a portfolio, build relationships with staff and leaders in the building, and represent myself professionally,” said CarVaughn Page, English Education major at Tennessee State University and president of the TSU STEA chapter. “We are taking charge of our profession so we can be in control of our future as educators. If we don’t do it, public education as a career and calling may become extinct, but we won’t let that happen.”

STEA member Azaria Mays participates in a community project with fellow members prior to the TEA Representative Assembly in May.



2020 VISION

TNReady next steps
from page 1

scores by 2020.

“We must get back to focusing on what is best for students: more time for one-on-one attention and instruction, learning critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and creativity through a well-rounded education to set our children up for academic success. Of all the things we teach our kids, the most important is love of learning, which no standardized test can measure.”

Look for more to come on TEA’s 2020 Vision. In the meantime, contact your local president or UniServ coordinator to get involved in the push for fair and accurate measures of student, teacher and school performance.

Next steps toward fair, accurate measures of student, teacher, school performance

1

Elect pro-public education candidates at the local, state and national levels. This starts right now and continues through November - Thursday, Aug. 2 is the Primary Election for state and federal races, and the General Election for many local races.

2

Connect with parent organizations and other supporters of public education. After years of state testing issues, there is increased awareness of the flaws with standardized test scores. Now is the time to build relationships with like-minded groups.

3

Ask your local board of education to pass a resolution against the use of standardized test scores in high-stakes decisions. Many local elected officials already support these efforts. It is time to ask for their formal support for fair, accurate measures of performance.

Vote for education on Election Day, Thursday, Aug. 2

The Primary Election is our best opportunity to keep a pro-public

education majority in the legislature



There is a misconception that the election that really matters is in November, but in Tennessee, that could not be further from the truth.

“The winners of most state races are actually decided in the open August primary election,” said Jim Wrye, TEA assistant executive director of government relations. “It is crucial that educators pay attention to the primary and get out to vote for candidates who support public education.”

The Tennessee General Assembly is one of the few legislatures in the south with a pro-public education majority. To keep it that way, all educators and supporters of our great public schools need to show up on Thursday and vote for education.

“When educators and other public education supporters vote in the best interest of students and public schools, we are an unstoppable force,” Wrye said. “It is hard to see past party lines sometimes, but I can’t emphasize enough the importance of voting for the candidate who will stand with educators on the issues impacting our profession and our classrooms.”

Tennessee students and teachers have benefited from the pro-public education majority in the state legislature through increased investment, a reduction in test scores in teacher evaluations and repeated victories against privatization advocates.



Save the Dates 2018-19 TEA Events

**November
2-4**

New Teacher Retreat
Clinton

**November
9-10**

Organizing Summit
Franklin

**March
22-23**

Minority Affairs Conference
Nashville

**April
5-6**

Spring Symposium
To Be Determined

**April
5-6**

Administrators Conference
To Be Determined

**April
13**

ESP Conference
Nashville

**May
17-18**

Representative Assembly
Murfreesboro

**June
13-15**

Summer Leadership
Murfreesboro

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