

TEACH

The teaching and learning journal of the Tennessee Education Association

TEA's 20/20 Vision: increased public education funding and no more high-stakes decisions tied to TNReady

Testing and funding can easily be identified as the two biggest issues impacting public education in Tennessee.

TEA has embarked on a two-year campaign to address these two issues and accomplish our 20/20 Vision: Eliminate high stakes decisions based on standardized tests that affect Tennessee's

educators, students and schools by the year 2020; and increase Tennessee's investment per student to the Southeastern average by the year 2020, with the ultimate goal of reaching the national average.

"We are in the home stretch of working toward these goals set by the TEA Board of Directors in 2015," said TEA President Beth

Brown. "I am challenging all supporters of public education - not just TEA members - to work with us over the next two years to achieve this 20/20 Vision."

Educators, parents and community members are encouraged to visit the TEA website to say "I'm in!" and indicate the actions in which they are willing to participate.

Join the campaign now: TEAteachers.org/2020Vision

20/20 Vision poster pages 4 and 5



TEA Legal racking up wins protecting teachers' rights

TEA Legal has two new wins under their belt after recent rulings in favor of Tennessee teachers.

Educators statewide stand to benefit from a summary judgment issued by the Chancery Court of Maury County reinforcing teachers' rights under the Professional Educators Collaborative Conferencing Act.

TEA filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Maury County Education Association after a series of unlawful acts by district leadership, including interfering with professional employees in the exercise of their right to choose representatives for collaborative conferencing, failing to engage in good faith collaborative conferencing, refusing to vote on an MOU that had been agreed to by the collaborative conferencing teams, and unilaterally implementing changes to the terms and conditions of professional employees' employment.

"The actions detailed in this lawsuit demonstrate a clear violation of the Professional Educators Collaborative Conferencing Act," said Steve McCloud,

Legal victories
cont. page 8

Vote for Public Schools

VOTE, because the 2018 elections are a watershed for Tennessee public schools and educators.

A new governor, many newcomers in the General Assembly, and new federal officeholders including a U.S. Senator, all will have significant impact on funding, laws and policies affecting every classroom in the state.

That is why every educator needs to vote and mark their ballot for the pro-public education candidates standing for election.

TEA Fund for Children and Public Education, the political action

committee of the association, has candidate endorsements in most elections. TEA-FCPE is non-partisan, reviewing Republican and Democratic candidates for positions, records and electability to gain association support.

"It's not about 'R', it's not about 'D', it's about 'E'. A friend of education is a friend of ours, regardless of party. That has been our strategy that has allowed us to defeat vouchers, increase state funding, and pass

Ed Election
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THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TENNESSEE

I am, not "I'm just"

By TEA President Beth Brown



This past April, I was privileged to attend a celebration honoring the Memphis sanitation workers who went on strike in 1968, bravely taking to the streets and demanding the respect due to them. Iconic images of the workers carrying "I AM a man" signs will forever be commemorated as we continue to be inspired by our forebears.

I am an English teacher, so the power of the verb am is not lost on me; that two-letter word defines us. As I travel our state, though, I hear educators time and again belittle themselves with a single word: just. I've heard it over and over: "I'm just a

___."

Friends, don't say "I'm just a teacher." Boast "I am a teacher."

I inspire creativity and facilitate learning.
I fill my students' heads with knowledge and their hearts with joy.
I encourage their abilities, talents, and gifts.
I mentor, I correct, I guide.

Friends, don't say "I'm just an ESP." Boast "I am an education support professional."

I am the first and the last to see our students.
I provide nutritious meals and a clean, safe space for students to learn.
I transport parents' most precious cargo.
I provide one-on-one assistance that many teachers often cannot provide.
Without me, the school is incomplete.

Friends, don't say "I'm just a college student." Boast "I am an aspiring educator."

I am working hard today to inspire students I haven't even met yet.
I am accumulating debt to go into a profession that I know won't pay much, but I believe in this work.
I am the future of the education profession.

Friends, don't say "I'm just a retiree." Boast "I am a retired educator."

I dedicated my life to the noblest profession of all.
I inspired both my students and my colleagues.
I continue to work on behalf of public education in Tennessee.

Let's not overlook the power that we have as members of the education profession. We are life changers.

And friends, don't say "I'm just one voter; I can't make a difference." Boast "I am a voter." Margaret Mead reminded us to "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Every vote counts. Every. Single. One.

Let's not overlook the power that we have as members of the education profession. We are life changers. And we have an opportunity right now to change public education in Tennessee for the better. As educators, we know more than anyone about what public schools need.

Join TEA in our campaign to achieve 20/20 Vision. Help us to eliminate high-stakes decisions based on standardized tests. Let's get back to what we know works: assessments used to diagnose and teach rather than label and punish. Help us to increase per-pupil investment so that students have the resources—including smaller classes—that they need to be successful.

Embrace the power of am. Embrace your power as an educator and a TEA member. Together, focused on our students, we can achieve 20/20 Vision.

Changing lives together - Are you in?

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder

We are unique in education - in many ways.

In most professions goal-setting is often based on earning a company more money, increasing sales of a product and/or attracting new clients. In public education though, we set goals to change lives.

I've been reflecting on this in recent months as we've looked back at the association's big hairy audacious goals set by the TEA Board of Directors in 2015. These aren't self-serving goals focused on increasing membership. These are goals centered on improving public education for all Tennessee children and protecting the profession to which we have dedicated our lives.

TEA's two-year 20/20 Vision campaign has two main goals. The first one is to put an end to the unfair and harmful use of TNReady scores to judge the performance of students, teachers and public schools. The second goal is to increase our state's per-student investment to the southeastern average - both by the year 2020.

Just think about the truly life-changing effects of accomplishing these two goals for students and educators.

Ending high-stakes decisions based on standardized tests would free our children to become well-rounded, educated students instead of expert test-takers.

Without hours of test prep, teachers could devote more classroom time to one-on-one instruction, teaching critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and encouraging creativity.

It will take all of us working together to accomplish these goals and change the lives of Tennessee students.

Students and teachers benefit most when tests are used as diagnostic tools to identify where students may be struggling and need extra instruction. It is time for some meaningful change in how we measure student achievement and teacher performance.

To provide the well-rounded education Tennessee students deserve, the state must also increase its per-student investment. Our current funding model places too heavy a burden on local school districts to fund public education. Students in districts without a large tax base are being left behind and inequities are increasing rapidly compared to more affluent districts. A child's future should not be left to chance or depend on living in the right neighborhood.

School districts need more support from the state for important programs like RTI and to provide the well-resourced classrooms students need for academic success. We need the state to do its part to keep working toward fully fund public education in our state, including paying teachers a fair, competitive wage.

Accomplishing these two big hairy audacious goals sounds pretty incredible, right? We have already made great strides with both goals, but there is still hard work to be done. It will take all of us - educators, parents and supporters of public education - working together to accomplish these goals and change the lives of Tennessee students.

Do you have 20/20 Vision? We have two years to make it happen. Let us know you are in!

www.TEAtachers.org/2020Vision



Teach (USPS 742-450, ISSN 15382907) is published four times (July, October, Jan/Feb, March), by the Tennessee Education Association, 801 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201-1099. Periodicals Postage Paid at Nashville, TN, and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to **TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION Teach**, 801 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201-1099. The subscription price of \$3.06 is allocated from annual membership dues of \$258.00 for active members; \$129.00 for associate, education support and staff members; \$16.00 for retired members; and \$10.00 for student members. Member of State Education Association of Communicators (SEAC).

MANAGING EDITOR: Amanda Chaney
achaney@teea.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

PRESIDENT: Beth Brown* (800) 342-8367
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.

I'm ALL IN on TEA's 20/20 Vision

By Tanya Coats, TEA vice president



When I was growing up, I rarely liked playing games like dodgeball, flag football or 3-on-3 basketball. Playing those games meant one of my friends would deem themselves one

of the best players in the whole universe and then say someone else, besides me, was their equal. Those two would, in turn, consider themselves captains of Team A and Team B.

You know what happened next. Those two would look out to a gathered number of us children who wanted to play to determine who was strong enough to be on their team. We would have to wait patiently as they chose us one by one. I was never picked first. I seemed to always be one of the last two who had to hear humiliating things such as, "neither one looks strong enough to be on my team," or "I don't want a girl on my team."

When I was not chosen to be a part of any activity that I wanted to do, I felt rejected. Rejection is insulting, at least to me. I knew that being rejected should be a pivotal point to reflect; I reflected and it still felt bad. I did not like it! Not one bit.

I did enjoy being a part of school clubs and trying out for a sport. I was ALL IN. I got to show my ability, strength and knowledge on a particular sport or club without being chosen. My participation was something I chose.

While active participation is the obvious goal, it is also important to have buy-in and understanding. Being a part of TEA's 20/20 Vision is something I choose. I am actively participating and supporting the 20/20 Vision of TEA to eliminate

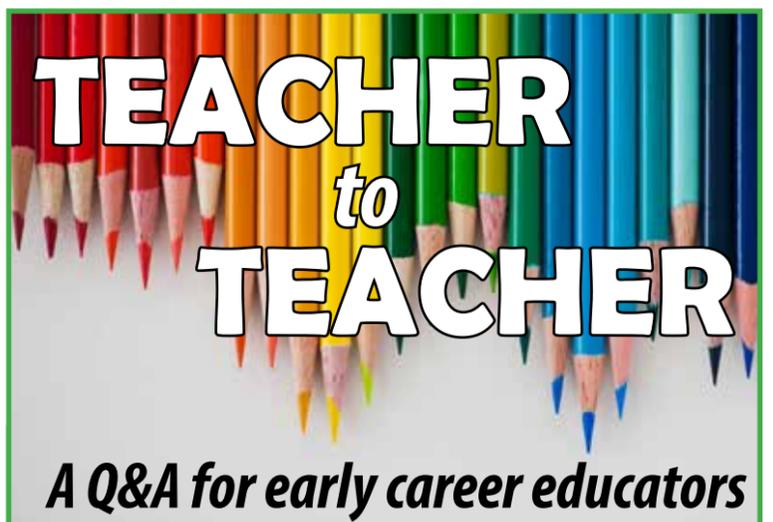
high-stakes decisions tied to TNReady and increase funding for public schools. President Brown and TEA Board of Directors have devoted the time and thought to shape the Association's focus on what is important for educators. It is now our responsibility as Tennessee educators to join the campaign and be ALL IN.

Through our active participation, my hopes are that we, the TEA, can gain interest from members and non-members alike, engage more members, receive valuable feedback that would galvanize the masses and encourage dialogue with all stakeholders. Our profession needs a boost that will ignite excitement and prove that we are still as important as doctors and lawyers. We need to get back to the basics by focusing on students and helping parents. TEA's 20/20 Vision is so clear that anyone would have to be crazy to not be... ALL IN!

Over the past 20 plus years, I have come to develop my own belief that some of what is best for students is also what is best for educators: being welcoming, caring, and supportive of developing the whole person. When I came to the realization that I wanted to do what was best for students, at the same time I understood that the requirements of my profession did not always align with doing what is best, due to the tedious work of comprehensive school reform, etc.

Over the years you have, no doubt, also begun to realize that it is far too easy as educators to toss around statements like "doing what is best for kids" without taking the time to have clarifying conversations about what we truly believe is best. The 20/20 Vision campaign is just that: a much-needed conversation. We will eliminate high-stakes decisions and increase funding for public education, because I am.....ALL IN!

Will you join me?



Q: My principal regularly asks us to take on extra duties. While I don't mind helping out sometimes, my plate is getting full. How do I say no to my principal tactfully?

A: As long as these extra duties are outside of your contractual responsibilities you have every right to decline. Still it can be difficult to say no to a supervisor as a new educator, when you're trying to cultivate that relationship. We don't want to appear as though we're not willing to work hard.

Unfortunately, there can be negative consequences for taking on more than we can handle. Our emotional and physical health may also suffer as we struggle to get enough sleep, squeeze in exercise, and eat well amidst an unhealthy schedule. And in the end, our students may suffer, when we don't have the positive energy and cognitive strength to be the teachers they need us to be.

The best strategy to saying no is to be honest and direct. If we know we need to decline but beat around the bush ("I'd love to, but I'm not sure if I can...maybe I can fit it in...I have to check my schedule..."), we may leave people hanging or give the impression that we might accept. Instead, be clear and truthful: "I'm already completely booked, and I can't take on anything else right now."

Although taking on extra roles and responsibilities is an important part of being a professional educator, it is important to make sure that as we do so, we still have the time and energy needed to take care of ourselves, our families, and our students!

Q: What can I do if I don't agree with my evaluation?

A: While you cannot challenge (or grieve) the scores you were given for your evaluation, you may have grounds to file a grievance if the proper evaluation procedures were not followed (not given a pre-conference when required, evaluator leaves in the middle of the lesson, etc.).

All local education agencies are required to have a local level evaluation grievance procedure to provide a means for evaluated teachers and principals to challenge the accuracy of the data used in the evaluation and the adherence to the evaluation policies adopted by the State Board of Education.

While you will have to review the specific grievance policy for your school district, grievances must typically be filed within 15 days of receiving evaluation feedback with your evaluator. If the issue is not resolved at this level, you would have another 15 days to file your grievance with the Director of Schools (or Superintendent). Hopefully the issue would be resolved here. If not, the final step would be to file with your local board of education.

More detailed information can be found here: <http://www.teateachers.org/member-center/evaluation-grievance-procedure>

Keep in mind, that filing a grievance doesn't mean you get the scores you believed you earned. In most cases, if your grievance is approved, you may receive a new evaluation or have your scores vacated.



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.

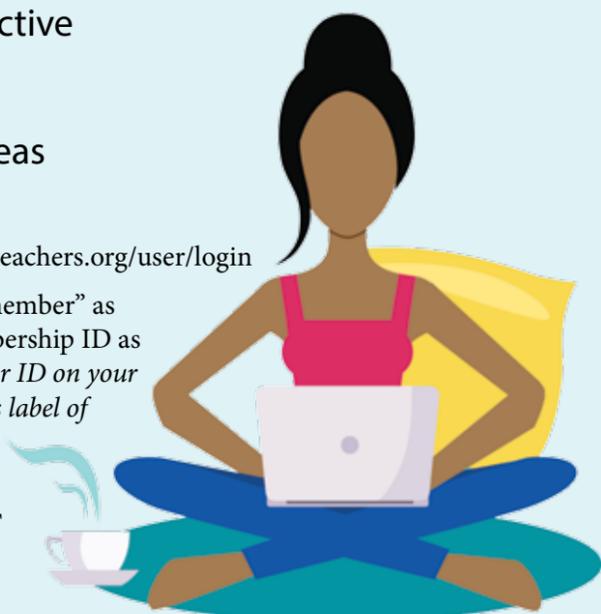
New trainings added to TEA online PDP opportunities

- "First Class" by Dr. Nicole Arrighi
- Successful parent-teacher conference
- 12 ways to promote active learning
- Creative classroom ideas
- Test security in Tennessee
- Tennessee's Teacher Code of Ethics.

TEA Education Portal: www.teateachers.org/user/login

TEA member login: Enter "tea-member" as login name and your 10-digit membership ID as password (You can find your member ID on your TEA membership card or the address label of Teach and The Advocate.)

Go to: RESOURCES > PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS, and click on the EDUCATION PORTAL link.



Do you have 20/20

Big Hairy Audacious Goal #1:

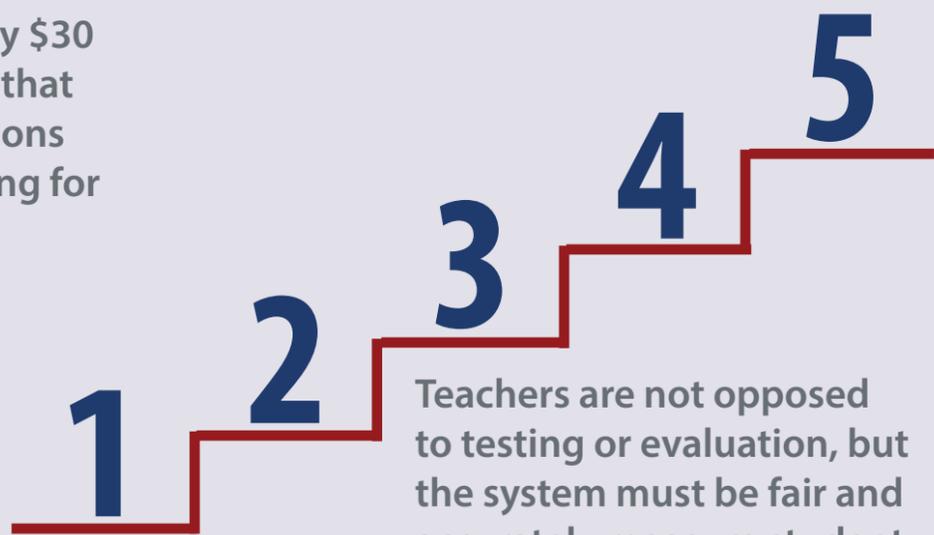
Eliminate high-stakes decisions based on standardized tests that affect Tennessee's educators, students and schools by the year 2020



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

\$30
million per year

In 2016, the state signed a two-year contract with current vendor Questar for approximately \$30 million a year - a number that does not include the millions spent by districts preparing for the state tests.



Teachers are not opposed to testing or evaluation, but the system must be fair and accurately measure student achievement and teacher performance. TEA wants to see educators involved in the design and implementation of accountability alternatives, including a proper pre-test/post-test system, creative use of benchmark testing, and other accurate assessments to ensure student progress.



The state's use of standardized test scores in high-stakes decisions takes the joy out of learning and unfairly penalizes students. 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, as well as creativity through a well-rounded education will set our children up for academic success.

**Say "I'm in!" by visiting:
www.TEATEACHERS.ORG/2020VISION**



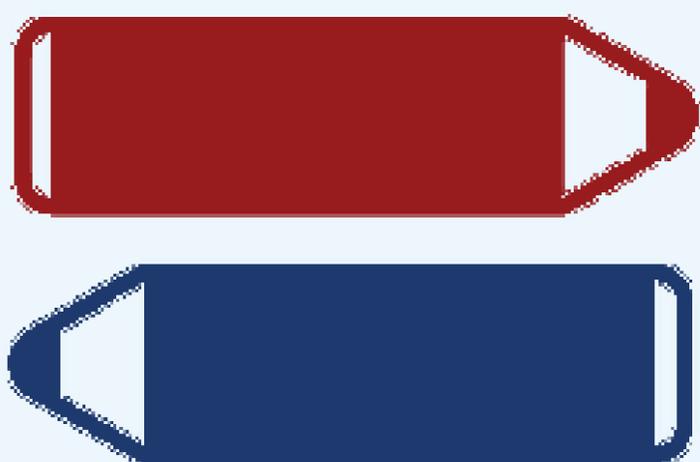
2020 VISION?



Big Hairy Audacious Goal #2:

Increase Tennessee's investment per student to the Southeastern average by the year 2020, with the ultimate goal of reaching the national average

The state increased education funding by \$1.5 billion during the Haslam administration, but there is still much work to be done to fully fund our great public schools. Tennessee is ranked 39th nationally in state per-student investment based on average daily attendance. Tennessee will need to increase per-student investment by \$583 to reach the Southeastern average of \$10,463.



Local school districts need more support from the state for important programs like RTI, and to provide the properly-resourced classrooms students need for academic success. All children, regardless of where they live, deserve the support, resources and time to learn. If we are serious about student achievement, let's get serious about what works. We must fully fund our schools so that students have the educators they need, one-on-one attention, inviting classrooms and a well-rounded curriculum.

36th



To ensure every child is learning from a qualified, committed educator, the state must work to increase teacher pay statewide. While the General Assembly has done its part to increase teacher pay, most Tennessee teachers have not seen those increases show up in their paychecks, leaving the state ranked 36th nationally in average teacher salary.



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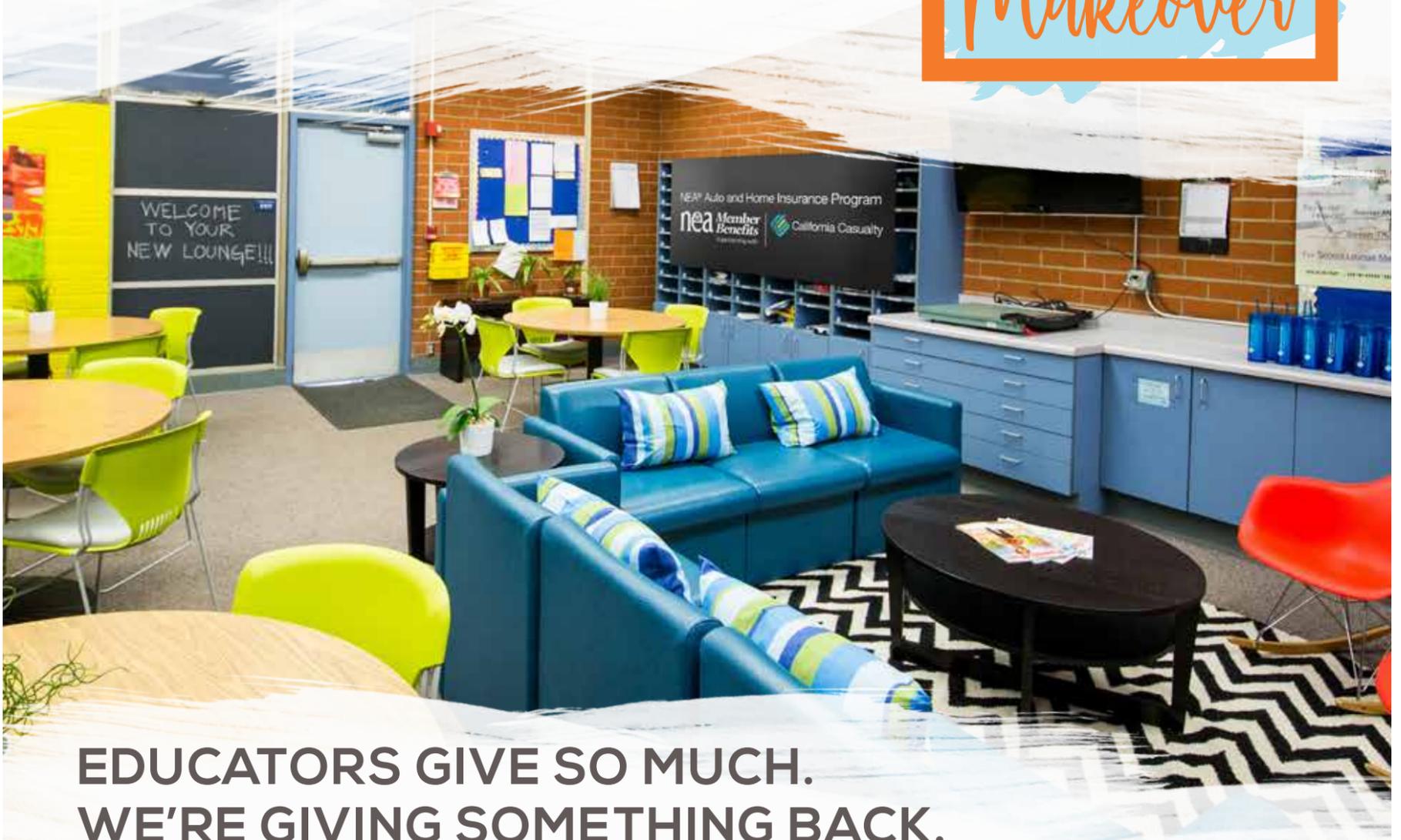


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Contact TEA

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: 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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PHIL BREDESEN

- Former Tennessee Governor
- Former Metro-Nashville Mayor
- Saved K-12 funding from recession
- Increased state K-12 budget

KARL DEAN

- Former Metro-Nashville Mayor
- Increased Metro-Nashville K-12 budget
- Opposes school vouchers
- Led 2010 flood recovery

ONE KEY REASON FOR BREDESEN:

Tennessee will receive more than \$1.4 billion in federal K-12 funding this year, 12% of all Tennessee school funding. Thousands of Tennessee teacher and support professional positions rely on federal dollars, especially rural and urban systems. Phil Bredeesen will protect federal K-12 funding.

ONE KEY REASON FOR DEAN:

Tennessee has made strides in improving K-12 funding. However, vouchers have devastated school budgets in states where they have passed. Karl Dean is the only gubernatorial candidate who opposes school vouchers in all forms.

Ed Election cont. from page 1

things like hold-harmless legislation when state tests crash or portfolios go off the rails,” said TEA president Beth Brown. “For us to move forward on big goals in the future, we all need to vote and vote for pro-public education candidates.”

At the top of the ballot, TEA-FCPE has endorsed Phil Bredeesen for U.S. Senate. Bredeesen has a record of protecting and enhancing education funding as a two-term governor. Tennessee was one of only a handful of states that didn’t cut K-12 funding during the Great Recession in 2008, a testimony to how important education is to Bredeesen.

Federal funding accounts for one of every eight dollars spent in Tennessee’s public schools, funding that is critical for so much in our schools, from special education and teaching positions, to student nutrition and internet connectivity.

“Phil Bredeesen has a record of support for our public schools, even in the darkest times we’ve faced,” said TEA President Beth Brown. “We now see increasing

threats to federal education funding that is critical to all Tennessee schools. We need someone with a proven record of defending and supporting our schools.”

“Every candidate for public office pledges their support for education. The real test is after the election, when there are choices to be made, where does education actually end up on their priority list,” Bredeesen said. “Even in the most difficult budget times in our state history, I made sure never to cut education, and make investments whenever possible. Every student has the one opportunity for a better future; taking resources from that student is always wrong.”

For Governor, TEA-FCPE encourages educators to vote for Karl Dean. Dean is the only candidate who opposes vouchers and has pledged to make increased K-12 funding the priority in his administration.

“Would you want a governor who would send public school funds to private schools or arm teachers and let guns in classrooms? Bill Lee believes all of that; I don’t,” Dean said. “That’s the choice in this election.

I’m not the flashiest guy running, but we don’t need an extreme governor who would take us backward. Let’s keep Tennessee moving forward.”

TEA-FCPE has made endorsement in many, but not all legislative races across the state. Some House and Senate districts have no general election whatsoever. Incumbents, regardless of party affiliation, with strong pro-public education records receive the endorsement, an important fact to encourage lawmakers to vote with local teachers and against special interests.

An example is Rep. Jim Coley (R-Bartlett) and Rep. Dwayne Thompson (D-Cordova), two incumbent legislators in adjoining Memphis area districts with strong education voting records. Coley is a retired TEA member who has spoken effectively in the House on behalf of fellow teachers, and Thompson a freshman who has a solid voting record. Both candidates have strong challengers, but with the backing of TEA and members voting they should return to the General Assembly.

“We will need good people like Coley and Thompson in the next legislature as we work toward accomplishing our goals on testing, funding, and professional salaries,” said Brown. “If you receive communication from TEA on legislative endorsements, please consider voting for those candidates. We will need every friend of education we can elect.”

Rep. Jim Coley (R-Bartlett) and Rep. Dwayne Thompson (D-Cordova), are two incumbent legislators in adjoining Memphis area districts that have received a TEA-FCPE endorsement. These cards (right) are sent to members in most legislative districts with a general election.



TEA advocacy protects committed educators at TN School for the Deaf

Most educators have heard of unfair discipline actions or accusations against their colleagues, but few believe it can happen to them. The truth is — it can.

A year ago, five teachers at the West Tennessee School for the Deaf were called in by their new superintendent. They were told they were no longer qualified to do their jobs.

“It was nearly half of the school faculty,” said TEA UniServ Coordinator Lorrie Butler. “All of them had deaf education degrees and had been teaching for 10 to 27 years. They were told they would have to go back to school, get additional degrees and take multiple Praxis tests on their own dime to continue in their jobs.”

Teachers were also instructed to sign a waiver to keep their job. Instead, they contacted Butler, a full-time TEA staff representative who covers their district.

After collecting the teachers’ stories and data, Butler met with TEA Instruction and Professional Development experts.

“We work with the State Department of Education every day, so we reached out to them for help,” said Gibson, TEA Assistant Executive Director and head of TEA IPD. “When the state issued new course code correlations, it was clear that all of the teachers had the credentials needed to teach their students at WTSD. It’s a very challenging job that requires true and dedicated professionals who are often in short supply, and these endorsements are difficult and expensive to obtain.”

Still, at the end of the school year, the teachers were contacted again and told they would have to sign another waiver and begin coursework and testing.

Their only advocates were TEA staff — nobody at their school offered to help. Following months of communications with the State Department of Education and the WTSD superintendent, the teachers were notified by the state two weeks ago that they will not have to do any additional coursework or Praxis testing.

“TEA was instrumental in assisting me after I was informed I was being placed on a waiver at the start of my 27th year of teaching,” Ann Shearon, one of the WTSD teachers, wrote to TEA. “I was told changes were being made to licensure and I would need to take three Praxis tests. TEA was able to get the issue resolved and no additional Praxis were needed. I’m no longer on a waiver! Thank you so much!”

Tennessee schools for the deaf and blind are unique institutions due to their specialized nature, and teachers with deaf and blind education endorsements typically dedicate their entire careers to one school.

“This victory proves once again that you can teach for years, even decades, dotting all the i’s and crossing all the t’s, until all of a sudden your whole career is on the line,” said TEA President Beth Brown. “That’s when you definitely need true experts in your corner — and that’s TEA!”

“Someone above your pay grade can make a decision that puts you out of a job in minutes,” Gibson said. “As we’ve learned with WTSD teachers, it can happen anytime, to anyone, even if it’s completely off base. The only way you can prevail is if you have a great advocate who will protect you.”

Test transparency, already in state law, identified as one of teachers’ many TNReady complaints

TNReady
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“What the governor learned is that we have been flying blind when it comes to TNReady,” said TEA President Beth Brown. “We’ve been concerned with differences in benchmark testing data and TNReady scores, or how ACT scores do not align with TNReady outcomes. That is why TEA worked to pass testing transparency legislation. We pushed the state to publish actual questions to compare what we are told to teach with what is being tested. It seems like common sense, but the state has yet to follow through.”

The report recommended the state explore options to put as many test items as possible in teachers’ hands. An option was to engage more Tennessee teachers to create aligned test items.

“A requirement of credibility is to make the tests as transparent as possible. We should have more teachers to create test items so we can publish more questions each year,” said Brown.

The state will be soliciting proposals for a new testing contract this spring. TEA will be working with the General Assembly and the new administration to ensure increased transparency for teachers, students and parents.

“When teachers can see actual test questions and answers it will improve how well students are prepared for the tests,” said Brown. “It shouldn’t have taken a listening tour to learn that teachers want testing transparency. Gov. Haslam could just have read our publications.”

TEA Legal wins back-pay for Shelby Co. teacher

Legal victories
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TEA assistant executive director of legal advocacy. “The judge’s ruling reinforces the strength of the PECCA law and acknowledges that there is a requirement of good faith implicit in the law.”

TEA’s legal team also won a teacher two years of back-pay after Shelby County Schools violated the state tenure law in “excessing” her from her position at East High School.

Curlean Jones-Tate was a tenured teacher in Shelby County when she received a letter in June 2015 from Superintendent Dorsey Hopson telling her that due to budget cuts and/or programmatic cuts at her school, her current position would no longer exist following the conclusion of the 2014-15 school year. This was a notification to Ms. Jones-Tate that she was being “excessed,” a process that is unknown in Tennessee law but has been used for many years in the Memphis City Schools and now in the Shelby County Schools. If a teacher has not secured another position by July 1, then she is considered to be laid off.

Jones-Tate tried for two years, without success, to secure another position in the Shelby County Schools. On May 3, 2017, TEA filed suit on her behalf in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee. The District Court held that the excessing of Jones-Tate did not give rise to a due process claim, but it did violate her rights under the Tenure Law.

As a result of TEA Legal’s work, the District Court ordered that Jones-Tate be paid full back pay, without offset, for the period from the date of her unlawful excessing in 2015 until she retired two years later, and that her service credit for those two years be restored. The restoration of her service credit was necessary in order for her to qualify for the school system’s retiree health insurance program. The school system promptly satisfied that judgment. Ms. Jones-Tate has received her full back pay, and her retiree health insurance is in place.

These are just two examples of the effectiveness of TEA’s expert legal team and the importance of having them watching your back.

Dedicated Wilson Co. administrator featured on Ellen, Good Morning America



Ranesa Shipman (center right) and the Wilson Central High School dance team were featured on Ellen.

There is always room for joy, even for a busy school administrator.

Assistant Principal and TEA member Ranesa Shipman received national attention when she danced with the Wilson Central High School dance team at a pep rally during R&B singer Ciara’s “Level Up” challenge.

Shipman and the dance team’s energetic performance gathered hundreds of thousands of views on YouTube (it’s a must-see on the TEA Facebook page).

“It started as a joke,” Shipman said. “I dressed for the previous pep rally. The kids loved it, they were going crazy about it. I

loved seeing how it brought joy to their day, just the happiness on their faces.”

The dance was covered on Good Morning America, News Channel 5 in Nashville and was featured on the Ellen DeGeneres Show.

A proud TEA member, Shipman said finding love and joy is crucial to her work as an administrator.

“I love my kids, I love my job, and I have a great school family,” she said. “If you really don’t love what you do, you need to find something else. I have found my purpose — it is to teach children, and to be there for everyone, especially for our unsung heroes, our janitors and educational assistants.”