

# LEGISLATIVE Priorities

## TCTA TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2009

- Support increasing teacher salaries to levels necessary to recruit and retain appropriately certified teachers
- Support proposals for teacher salary increases that recognize the value of experience and provide additional career potential
- Support development and implementation of a salary schedule for support personnel
- Seek statutory improvements in benefits and working conditions for support personnel
- Restore retirement benefits that were reduced in recent legislative sessions
- Seek increases in retirement and health insurance benefits
- Support modification of legislatively enacted incentive pay programs to eliminate linkages to student performance
- Support changes in the state accountability system to reduce the emphasis on and the high-stakes nature of testing
- Support retention of 22:1 class-size requirements for grades K-4 and expansion of class size caps to grade 5, and reinstate child care child-to-adult ratios for early childhood education
- Preserve and expand teacher disciplinary authority, and oppose measures that would directly or indirectly serve to limit teacher referrals to an alternative education program

During the 2009 Annual Convention in Austin in February, the TCTA Representative Assembly (our highest governing body) adopted a legislative program for the 81st legislative session. We hope these legislative priorities will inform and encourage an exchange of ideas between lawmakers and practitioners.

*NOTE: As has been our practice, the TCTA leadership and staff may exercise the flexibility to revise legislative positions as needed to cooperate and negotiate in the best interest of the membership.*

### School Finance

- Support enhanced funding and changes to the finance structure necessary to meet increased needs and rising expectations
- Support measures to direct public education funding to instructional purposes to the greatest extent possible
- Support adequate facilities funding
- Support the reinstatement of a formula-based equitable system
- Oppose constitutional amendments that would weaken current equity standards
- Support measures to ensure that increased revenue from property value growth benefits public schools
- Support any reasonable means of raising revenue to benefit public education
- Support an increased funding weight for mainstreamed students

### Salaries

- Support retention of the state minimum salary schedule and its extension beyond step 20

- Support a structured approach to increasing teacher salaries on an ongoing basis
- Support direction of significant portions of new and surplus revenues to teacher salaries
- Support measures encouraging districts to pay and retain local supplements
- Support pay at an individual daily rate for any work beyond the statutorily required minimum days
- Support returning speech therapists and diagnosticians to the salary schedule

### Health Insurance

- Support increased funding for the school employee health insurance program to a level at least equal to that provided to state employees, and/or combining the two systems
- Support restructuring TRS-Care to ensure ongoing and adequate funding for retiree health insurance

**Teacher Retirement System**

- Support an increase in the TRS multiplier for more experienced teachers
- Support a mechanism allowing the TRS Board of Directors to approve ad hoc increases for retirees when market performance exceeds expectations
- Support TRS full funding for credit earned by accumulated sick leave
- Support measures to enhance existing TRS benefit programs

**Other Benefits and Working Conditions**

- Support measures to limit the amount of time required for meetings or other noninstructional activities outside of the regular school day
- Oppose the elimination or weakening of statutorily provided employee benefits, e.g., duty-free lunch and conference periods
- Oppose any weakening of contractual protections for teachers and support the establishment of due process rights for paraprofessionals
- Support incentives for school districts to offer child care to district employees and student parents

**The Teaching Profession**

- Oppose the involuntary transfer of teachers to subjects for which they are not certified, the placement of unqualified individuals in teaching positions, and any weakening of certification standards
- Oppose the use of student test scores for teacher appraisals or employment decisions
- Support a requirement that districts grant compensatory time for training activities un-

dertaken off-campus or outside of the normal contract year

- Support a requirement that staff development (other than compensatory time) take place during regular hours of required service
- Support a requirement that some staff development be self-directed
- Support measures to enhance procedural protections for school employees accused of misconduct

**Students/Class Sizes**

- Support measures to enable teachers to receive support to meet the needs of special needs students included in the classroom
- Support appropriate state funding for alternative education programs
- Support a repeal of the provision that AEP employees are not entitled to benefits and protections of state law

**Curriculum**

- Support reasonable limitations on mandatory student testing to assess progress without disrupting learning
- Support academic freedom with regard to teaching methodologies
- Support measures that ensure a well-rounded education for all students

**Governance/Site-Based Decision Making**

- Support increased authority for SBDM committees at the district and campus levels, with appropriate sanctions
- Support restoration of teacher workdays unless waived by the SBDM committee

**District Issues**

- Oppose vouchers, tax credits and other proposals that would allow the use of public funding for private schools
- Support a broad range of choices within the public school system with appropriate oversight
- Support legislative proposals that would prohibit exclusive consultation arrangements
- Support the ability of citizens to recall school board members under specified circumstances
- Oppose any legislation that would outlaw “unfunded mandates” in the absence of due consideration and a clear articulation of the components of what is currently being funded (e.g., class-size limits, employee salaries)

**Charter Schools**

- Oppose the expansion of charter schools until appropriate monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are in place

**Parental Rights**

- Support efforts to improve appropriate parental involvement in the schools

**Miscellaneous**

- Support a provision that state agencies implementing federal programs be granted rule-making authority under the Texas Administrative Procedures Act
- Support automatic penalties for failure to comply with valid open records requests
- Support extension of appraisal confidentiality statute to other school professionals