



TCTA's COVID-19-related activities | Since March 2020

1. Surveyed membership on COVID-19-related matters to help inform policy positions and priorities of TCTA.
2. Participating in Texas Education Agency and U.S. Education Department webinars and calls related to COVID-19 weekly, in addition to monitoring federal and state agency news and actions related to COVID-19.
3. Monitoring White House and U.S. Department of Education proposals and actions and congressional bills, hearings and floor procedures related to COVID-19 federal policy and budget matters. Pursuing clear federal guidelines that focus on the health and safety of teachers and students; funding for protective equipment, technology, and additional personnel; more virus testing in schools; suspension of annual assessments; and to prioritize educators for COVID-19 vaccines. Working with congressional members, including providing compelling data, to extend additional paid sick and family paid leave to educators.
4. Monitoring state agency meetings and discussions related to COVID-19 policy and budget matters.
5. Monitoring Gov. Abbott's press conferences and announcements in addition to Attorney General Paxton's opinions and court rulings on COVID-19.
6. Monitoring COVID-19 related bills and budget measures in the 87th legislative session and working with state legislators to better ensure:
 - flexible requirements, such as not administering and/or using the STAAR exam for accountability and teacher evaluation (SB 260-Menendez), suspending new certification exam, promoting remote learning (SB 258-Menendez) and supporting teacher accommodations, temporary resignations/retirements (SB 256-Menendez);
 - health and safety of teachers and students are prioritized, including coverage for related health care costs (HB 47-Canales, SB 436-Blanco), providing personal protective equipment, ample staffing for at least 6 feet of spacing and reducing class sizes, proper ventilation, on site COVID testing and contact tracing and notification (SB 79-Miles), availability and administration of vaccines to teachers and school personnel who want it (SB 239-Powell);
 - additional paid leave (SB 257-Menendez); and
 - funding stability of the Foundation School Program (HB 1017-Bernal, HB 1246-Hinojosa, additional resources for Covid-19 related expenditures.

These bills have been filed to address COVID-19's impact on education.

7. Ongoing collaboration with other educator and public education groups on issues related to COVID-19 and strategy to impact policy.
8. Produced extensive [recommendations](#) on reopening schools during COVID-19. Disseminated the recommendations to Gov. Abbott, Commissioner Morath, Lt. Governor Patrick, Speaker Bonnen,



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House Public Education Chairman Huberty, Senate Education Chairman Larry Taylor, and other key legislators.

9. Collaborated with Sen. West and other education groups to develop joint recommendations on school re-openings.
10. Ongoing communication/meetings with Commissioner Morath, Office of Gov. Abbott, Office of Lt. Governor Patrick, Speaker Bonnen, House Public Education Chairman Huberty, Office of Senate Education Chairman Larry Taylor, and other key legislators, including the following:
 - [2/24/21 Letter to Morath on Flexibility for TELPAS](#)
 - [12/20/20 Letter to Abbott on Prioritizing Teachers for Vaccine](#)
 - [10/23/20 Letter to Abbott and Morath on State Enforcement of Safety Protocols](#)
 - [6/22/20 Letter to Morath on Public Health Parameters for Safe Reopening](#)
 - [6/22/20 Letter to Abbott on Public Health Parameters for Safe Reopening](#)
 - [5/29/20 Letter to Abbott on Public Health and Safety for 2020-2021 School Year](#)

Continue to urge Gov. Abbott, Commissioner Morath and other officials to mandate and enforce that all schools follow guidelines developed by state and federal health experts that are based on data about the number of cases in a community so that schools only reopen when it is safe to do so. Requested the Governor and state officials to designate teachers as frontline workers for voluntary, priority eligibility to the vaccine. According to TEA, the current COVID-19 vaccines were authorized under the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization; therefore vaccination cannot be required by employers.

11. Executive Director and Commissioner Morath regularly scheduled one on one meetings.
12. Conducted three interactive virtual regional workshops with Q&A. Topics included: 1) membership (environment due to COVID-19 with new online registration form, videos and other support for recruitment), 2) legislative (legislative and political environment due to COVID, hot topics), legal (resignations, accommodations, leave). Priority public policy topics include:
 - Safety of educators – TCTA has led the way in calling for schools to be closed for on-site instruction until safe for students and employees as determined by local health authorities. Reopening should be based on factors established at the federal and state level, including the number of COVID-19 infected individuals in the county, the trajectory of infection rates, and the time period during which infection rates should be at or below a particular level. Districts must provide PPE as needed. Decisions about the number of students allowed to return safely to on-site instruction should be made by local health authorities in accordance with state and federal recommendations, based on local health conditions, and implemented by local school districts, and should prioritize certain students who most likely suffered COVID slide.
 - Teacher Incentive Allotment –pushing for suspension or elimination
 - STAAR –pushing for suspension + federal waiver
 - Enhanced efforts to provide technology to enable better remote learning



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13. Legal team [webinar](#) on COVID-19, answering questions: 8/4/2020
14. Maintaining webpages with latest COVID-19 information impacting educators that includes frequently asked questions and short videos in addition to information related to TRS, resignations, accommodations, strikes, and other educator rights.
 - [Video series](#) on contracts, resignations- Dohn Larson
 - [Video](#) on returning to work amid the pandemic- Julie Leahy
 - [Video](#) on COVID-19 and Reopening Schools- Holly Eaton
15. Generating weekly E-updates and summer magazine to members with latest COVID information impacting educators, in addition to including questions and answers on the current hot topics.
16. Produced media statements and press releases as critical information on COVID-19 has been released by the state.
 - 3/3/21 [Premature removal of state mask mandate puts Texas educators, students at risk](#)
 - 7/28/20 [TCTA appalled by Paxton's guidance on reopening schools despite local health authority orders](#)
 - 7/27/20 [TCTA appreciates suspension of STAAR promotion requirements, but urges all testing to be waived](#)
 - 7/17/20 [While flexibility is appreciated, TCTA says state guidance on reopening still lacks reliance on data and public health experts](#)
 - 7/13/20 [TCTA says current state policy dangerous for students, teachers](#)
 - 7/7/20 [TCTA alarmed by TEA's guidance on reopening schools](#)
 - 6/23/20 [TCTA says fall school openings must be in accordance with parameters determined by health care professionals](#)
17. Interviewed with print and television media outlets across the state.
18. Posting Facebook and Twitter messages on an ongoing basis with COVID-19 information, news, statements, videos. Views, reach and new followers are up 100-300%.
19. The legal team is providing information and identifying options for hundreds of members per week who have individual questions, concerns and cases related to educator rights and privacy, health and safety protocols, reporting, and enforcement, schools reopening, remote instruction, and more. The legal team is also assisting members seeking accommodations and remote teaching positions.
20. Addressed certain school board(s) on behalf members who are concerned about their district's reopening plans, in addition to promoting adoption of local leave policies to cover employees with Covid-19 exposures or positive test results. Will continue similar efforts at the district level.
21. Participating in webinars related to instructional continuity, remote learning during COVID-19. Reviewing data, reports, best practices, news and other information related to COVID-19.



Texas Classroom Teachers Association

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22. Participating in discussions/meetings with various legislative groups including the Senate Democratic Caucus and the Legislative Black Caucus.
23. Participated in a *Know Your Rights Teachers Virtual Town Hall* for teachers to voice their concerns, ask the candidate questions, and learn about their rights in the workplace during these unusual times.
24. Provided request for information submissions to House Committees on Public Education, Pensions, Investments and Financial Services, and Public Health that include recommendations related to the new challenges facing public education because of the pandemic. Provided written testimony to the Legislative Budget Board regarding TEA and TRS legislative appropriations requests and to the Sunset Committee regarding the committee's report on TRS. Also, provided expert invited testimony to the Senate Committee on Education.