

RAE PTA Legislative and Other Interesting Updates - November 2011

Kim Saccone

(1) TXPTA positions (if you are interested):

Committee Appointments

Texas PTA is seeking interested members to serve as standing committee chairs and as committee members for the 2012-2014 term. The documents below provide detailed information and the forms necessary to be considered for these positions:

- [Committee Chair Invitation](#)
- [Committee Chair Selection Process](#)
- [Committee Chair Job Descriptions](#)
- [Committee Chair Submission Packet](#)
- [Committee Member Invitation](#)
- [Committee Member Online Submission for Consideration](#)

All of this information can be found on the Texas PTA website at <http://www.txpta.org/intranet/members/election2012/>

(2) Katy ISD was one of the Five Star award winners for FAST. The Comptroller's Financial Allocation Study for Texas (FAST) examines both academic progress and spending at Texas' school districts and individual school campuses. Each district and campus is assigned a FAST rating of one to five stars, indicating its success in combining cost-effective spending with the achievement of measurable student academic progress. Five stars reflects the strongest relative progress combined with the lowest relative spending.

(3) The STAAR test replaces the TAKS test beginning this year for elementary students. Here are some highlights for you to know:

- ★ It tests PREDICTED performance for the following year/level, so it is more rigorous.
- ★ Tests are developed with the ULTIMATE GOAL in mind (example, Algebra II in high school) and then breaks the learning blocks down/backwards starting at grade 3 (so each year what should they know/learn in order to be ready for Algebra II in high school).
- ★ 4 Hour max testing window limit (I think per day of testing).
- ★ Tests represent 60% readiness standards (things they need to know this year and the next year), 40% supporting standards (things that they should have known and/or been tested on before or need reinforcement) with processing skills embedded throughout. See the website I have listed below to find out more about this.
- ★ There will still be multiple choice answers but there will also now be GRIDDABLE answers. For example, a math question asking the answer to $24 + 33$... instead of having the answer 57 in one of the multiple choice answers, the kids will actually have to color in "5" and "7" on a grid (so less ability for them to guess an answer - they actually have to KNOW it).
- ★ The Benchmark tests that the kids are getting this fall are developed based on what they think the STAAR test will be (i.e. There are no previous tests to go on).
- ★ Writing essays are limited to 26 lines. Writing curriculum includes multiple choice and essays. In 4th grade the writing STAAR will be a 2 day administration.
- ★ Here is a GREAT website with more information and sample test questions. You can see what the students will be tested on and understand more about how many questions there are, what type of questions, how they will be weighted, etc. When you link on this page, scroll down to where you see the links in the grids under "Assessed Curriculum", "Blueprint", and "Released Test Questions". Locate the grade level/subject and read the documents.... Maybe even give your kids a mini test! <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar/>

(4) Check out this great resource developed by the National PTA to give guidance to parents for what their kids should be learning in each grade. Although Texas has NOT yet adopted these Core Standards, parents would benefit from seeing what the majority of the country has adopted as core standards. This website also helps them to know what to talk with their children's teachers about. <http://www.pta.org/4446.htm>

The ***Parents' Guide to Student Success*** (listed below in English and Spanish) was developed in response to the [Common Core State Standards](#) in English language arts and mathematics that more than 40 states have adopted. (To find out if your state has adopted the standards, visit CoreStandards.org/In-The-States.) Created by teachers, parents, education experts, and others from across the country, the standards provide clear, consistent expectations for what students should be learning at each grade in order to be prepared for college and career.

(5) Check out this new virtual world for kids ages 6-12. Players get to be superheroes and go on missions to thwart bullies using non-violent means. The game is meant to teach children about kindness, good behavior, global responsibility, and even geography. www.herotopia.com

(6) <http://www.netsmartzkids.org> and <http://www.netsmartz.org> are good sites to help kids (and their parents and teachers) learn how to use the internet properly and safely.

(7) FYI....Texas 911 Lifeline Legislation - Became Effective 9/1/11.

On December 2, 2008 a young Texan named Carson Starkey died from alcohol poisoning at Cal Poly University in San Luis Obispo, California. Through the tireless efforts of Carson's family and Texas Senator Kirk Watson, legislation was passed by the Texas legislature and signed into law by Governor Rick Perry. SB 1331, also known as Texas Lifeline Legislation, became effective September 1, 2011. This legislation provides minors who possess or consume alcohol with limited immunity if they call 911 because they believe someone is a possible victim of alcohol poisoning. The minor must be the first person to call for medical assistance, remain on the scene until medical assistance arrives, and cooperate with EMS and law enforcement. The legislation also enhances the penalty for providing alcohol to a minor at a gathering that involves binge drinking or coerced drinking. The enhanced punishment requires the provider to perform community service and attend an alcohol awareness course and suspends the minor's driver's license for six months. To learn more about the dangers of alcohol poisoning go to awareawakealive.org.

(8) NOT FINAL - BUT IT LOOKS LIKE IT PASSED: Amendment - Proposition 6 - for November 8 House Ballot -:

Proposition 6 would amend Art. 7, sec. 5(a) of the Texas Constitution to include discretionary real estate investments and cash in the state treasury derived from Permanent School Fund (PSF) property in determining the PSF's market value used to calculate the annual distribution from the PSF to the Available School Fund (ASF). The change would apply only to a distribution from the PSF to the ASF made on or after September 1, 2011. Proposition 6 also would authorize the General Land Office or an entity other than the SBOE responsible for managing PSF land or other properties (such as the School Land Board), in its sole discretion, to distribute to the ASF up to \$300 million each year in revenue derived that year from PSF land or properties.

** Supporters say At a time when additional state funding for the schools is badly needed, Proposition 6 would allow a larger share of the Permanent School Fund endowment to be distributed to the public schools through the Available School Fund in a prudent manner that would not harm the corpus of the PSF.

**Opponents say By changing how the total assets of the Permanent School Fund (PSF) are calculated for purposes of distributing a portion of the fund to the Available School fund (ASF), Proposition 6 would offer a short-term solution to the budget crisis, but would harm public schools and their endowment in the long run. Adding discretionary real estate investments and cash returns derived from PSF land to the basis used by the SBOE to calculate the proportion of the PSF endowment to be distributed to the public schools annually through the ASF would diminish the corpus of the PSF that could be invested for future returns. This change would allow a short-term gain, but ultimately mean a long-term loss for the schools.

(9) October 24 - the KISD School Board adopted a resolution to participate in school finance litigation with other districts, to challenge the existing finance system for public education in Texas. This resolution includes an approval to retain the law firm of Thompson & Horton LLP to file and prosecute on behalf of Katy ISD.

(10) Schools and Local Libraries Lose Vital Funding and Programs

- School and community libraries fared very poorly in both the regular and special-called legislative sessions. The funding for the K-12 database programs for school libraries was completely eliminated. The state library is working to negotiate good pricing for those districts that can afford (and are willing to pay) for these resources. Many districts will not have the funds, so most schools are going to be left without this resource.
 - The only library funding that was restored was \$2.5 million (over the biennium) in state funds for the TexShare database program. That's \$2.5 million in state money out of what had been \$8 million. Grants to local public libraries were entirely eliminated.
 - The fallout for school librarians (aside from the general cuts all education is facing) is that many school librarians have lost their jobs. Cash-strapped districts unfortunately often look at "non-mandated" services first, and school library positions have been hit hard.

- K-12 Databases-School Library Online Resource Sharing for Students, Teachers, and Parents
 - Status: All state funding was eliminated
 - What is the K-12 Database Program? The K-12 Database Program is a statewide program that offers thousands of online full-text educational resources—such as reference works, multi-media programs, and authoritative journals—to students in K-12 Texas public schools. This program is specifically designed to meet the academic needs of K-12 students and teachers. Many campuses cannot afford the high cost of online reference resources and with the urgent need for current and authoritative instructional support materials, the elimination of this program would affect learning at all levels across the state.

- TexShare Databases-Online Resource Sharing for Colleges, Universities and Public Libraries
 - Status: The only library funding that was restored was \$2.5 million (over the biennium) in state funds for the TexShare database program. This is slightly more than half of what was budgeted in the past.
 - What would happen without TexShare? Institutions of higher education and public libraries will lose access to critical information. They will pay more to get substantially less, and communities and institutions in Texas will once again grapple with inequitable access to quality online library information – a problem for which the state and Texas libraries found a solution through TexShare almost 20 years ago.

- Lone Star Libraries-Direct Aid to Public Libraries
 - Status: All state funding was eliminated
 - What is Lone Star Libraries? Lone Star Libraries is a direct aid program that provides grants for about 541 public libraries statewide. Local public libraries use these funds to extend hours, purchase collections and equipment, and provide educational programming. This program: supports workforce development in communities throughout the state; allows local libraries to maintain hours and services; promotes adult education and job advancement; provides funding for programs to support early literacy and student assistance; helps libraries provide public access to state resources, programs, and applications; and provides essential access to the Internet and needed educational programming.
 - Loss of Lone Star support will translate into a decrease in hours of library operation throughout the state, hundreds of thousands of fewer people having access to programs (such as job-seeking and technology classes, GED support, and homework assistance), and a decline in equipment, resources, and technology needed to help libraries support community and state priorities.

- Strong School Libraries
 - Status: All state funding was reduced by \$4 billion dollars. Non-instructional staff positions (librarians) will be reduced across the state.
 - Why is it inaccurate to categorize school librarians as non-instructional staff? School librarians are frontline teachers who instruct students' everyday on curriculum requirements, such as how to research, locate, evaluate, cite, and use information effectively and ethically. School librarians specialize in information literacy, the universal currency for success in today's competitive world. Librarians are teachers.

•What is the impact of school libraries on student performance? Research shows strong school libraries equal higher student achievement. Dozens of national studies, including one conducted in Texas, demonstrate that students in schools with strong school libraries perform better on standardized tests.

82nd Regular Session Review: Bills

PASSED

- SB 834 (Deuell)/HB 2765 (Gallego, Chisum): Relating to the update of discounted telecommunication services provided to educational institutions, libraries, hospitals, and health centers. This measure adds a health entity for discount eligibility and amends the a portion of statute to extend the discounts until 2020. Merged with SB 773.
- SB 773 (Zaffirini; Gallego) – Extends current state telecommunications discount program for libraries, schools, institutions of higher education, and non-profit hospitals for another four years. Passed and sent to the Governor.
- HB 2139 (Guillen): Relating to authorizing the state library to create an “Adopt-a-Library” program. Passed and sent to the Governor.

FAILED

- HB 209 (Alonzo) : Relating to providing Internet access in certain local public libraries. Was not heard in committee.
- HB 493 (Dutton): Relating to evaluation under the public school accountability system of the delivery of library resources. The measure would give the Commissioner of Education the option of including the delivery of library resources as a criterion for district accreditation. Was not heard in committee.
- HB 1394 (Castro): Relating to reports concerning the number of full-time librarians, counselors, and school nurses who are employed at a public school. The measure would require that campuses and districts report the number of listed full-time employees and include student ratio information. Was not heard in committee.
- HB 1505 (Munoz, Jr.)/ SB 784 (Hinojosa): Relating to librarians employed by school districts. The measure outlines that districts may employ a certified school librarian for campuses of over 500 students. Was not passed out of committee.
- HB 2879 (King, Phil): Relating to the abolishment of the Texas Historical Commission and the transfer of its duties to the Parks and Wildlife Commission, the General Land Office, and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Was not heard in committee.
- HB 3283 (Guillen): Relating to the authority of certain development corporations to undertake projects with respect to community libraries. Was not heard in the Senate.
- HB 3367 (White): Relating to the repeal of the laws authorizing the imposition of ad valorem taxes, the rates and expansion of the applicability of state and local sales and use taxes, the distribution of sales and use tax revenue to entities formerly imposing ad valorem taxes, and the replacement of ad valorem tax revenue in relation to financing public schools. Note some impact to library districts. Was not heard in committee.
- SB 1488 (West): Relating to the purchasing and contracting practices of junior college districts; providing criminal penalties. The bill includes (TLA supported) statutory language permitting exceptions for library purchases. Did not pass the House.