

# TEXAS EDUCATION TODAY

NOVEMBER 2010



The 2010 National History Day winners were honored by the board.



News from the Texas Education Agency

## INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

### Board reverses course, modifies call for supplemental science materials

New supplemental science materials and English language arts instructional materials will be in classrooms next fall, if an appropriation is approved by the Texas Legislature.

Despite the state’s budgetary uncertainty, the State Board of Education has taken action to move the textbook adoption process forward and, through its investment of the Permanent School Fund, has generated enough money to pay for the new instructional materials, which are estimated to cost about \$550 million.

During its November meeting, the board approved lists of conforming and nonconforming materials covered by textbook Proclamation 2011. This includes new materials for Prekindergarten systems; English language arts, grade 2-8; Spanish language arts, grades 2-5; English as a Second Language, grades K-8; handwriting, grades 1-3; spelling, grades 1-6; and English I-IV.

This material, which is collectively known as an English language arts adoption, is estimated to cost \$490 million. The board has asked publishers to reconsider the prices they bid to determine if a lower price could be charged in an effort to reduce the total bill.



cover new science Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and are expected to require an appropriation of \$30 million.

The board reconsidered an earlier vote and agreed to seek bids for supplemental science materials for grades 5-8. The recently adopted science TEKS substantially reorganized and added material to the science courses for these grades. If the legislature appropriates funds for this purpose, the new materials are expected to be available for order by August.

Because the materials will be all electronic, it will still be possible to have this content in the classrooms for the 2011-2012 school year. The middle school materials are also expected to cost about \$30 million.

While the board has continued to fulfill its duty to provide free textbooks to children, a major question mark remains about whether funding will be available to purchase the materials

Along with the \$550 million needed to buy the English language arts and science materials, an additional \$393 million is required to cover continuing contracts. These contracts pay for the purchase of additional copies of books already in adoption and for consumable materials.

This brings the total price tag for instructional materials for the 2012-2013 biennium to \$943 million. That would be one of the largest price tags for books in Texas history.

The books are paid for indirectly from the Available School Fund from a distribution made by the Permanent School Fund. The PSF, one of the world’s largest educational endowments, is now valued at about \$24.1 billion.

Because of the strong performance of the fund, the board has voted to send \$1.9 billion, which includes a \$500 million transfer from the General Land Office, to the Texas Legislature

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The board also moved forward with plans to purchase supplemental science materials for high school biology, chemistry, physics and Integrated Physics and Chemistry, which are all tied to the end-of-course exams that will be used beginning next year. The supplemental materials, which will only be available in an electronic format, will

◆ See TEXTBOOKS, page 2

## SKILL SCREENER

## State launches MSTAR to target algebra readiness

For many students, algebra is the stumbling block to graduation. Soon Algebra I and II will weigh even more heavily into students' high school success when rigorous end-of-course exam requirements are implemented beginning in 2011-2012.

Last spring, only 58 percent of the 101,887 students who took an Algebra I End-of-Course exam passed it.

Convinced that many students need more support to fully understand pre-Algebra, the Texas Education Agency has launched a program aimed at students in grades 5-8 called Middle-school Students in Texas: Algebra Ready (MSTAR).

Part of the Algebra Readiness Initiative, the goal of MSTAR is to beef up algebra readiness skills.

This summer, thousands of teachers were trained in MSTAR math academies designed to improve overall mathematics instruction and student achievement.

Last month, the agency rolled out the next wave of assistance. It is called the MSTAR Universal Screener. This new instrument will help teachers identify which students need extra support in developing skills for algebra readiness.

The screener, which is a formative assessment, will help teachers make two important determinations:

1. Are students on track or at-risk for meeting algebra and algebra readiness expectations?
2. What level of support is needed by students who are at-risk?

"The MSTAR Universal Screener gives teachers a first blush look at students' performance. It gives them a sense of where students are struggling. This will help teachers improve students' algebra readiness," said Norma Torres-Martinez, deputy associate commissioner for standards and alignment and a former math teacher.

Agency staff believe this is a unique tool unlike anything used elsewhere in the country.

Texas math educators from both public schools and univer-

sities created the screener under the guidance of TEA and Dr. Leanne Ketterlin Geller, an associate professor of education policy and leadership at Southern Methodist University (SMU).

Ketterlin-Geller said, "The screener was developed to target students' knowledge and skills that form the foundation of algebra readiness."

Available at grades 5-8, the screening instrument contains 25-30 multiple choice questions and can be accessed from the Texas Mathematics and Science Diagnostic System Assessment Center platform at <https://www.tmsds.org/>. The test is untimed but typically a student takes 20-40 minutes to complete it. It can be administered on a computer using a secure login.

"We hope that teachers will see that this tool complements other district efforts to increase all students' achievement," said Dr. David Chard, dean of the Simmons School of Education and Human Development at SMU.

Use of the screener is voluntary and is not designed to supplant other assessments. The screener is designed to be given three times a year. The beginning of the year screener should have been administered no later than Nov. 5 this year. In future years, it is recommended to be given during the first six weeks of school. A second screener is given mid-year and the final screener is given in the early spring. The second and third administration will help clarify where additional support may be needed.

Torres-Martinez said the results are to be used to inform teachers' instruction and are not intended to be a graded assignment for students. Practicing, previewing or disseminating the MSTAR Universal Screener is not appropriate.

Background information about the screener is available on Project Share site, TEA's e-learning platform, as well as a tutorial that shows teachers how to administer the screener.

To date, 231,793 Texas teachers have registered and received Project Share logins.

### ◆ TEXTBOOKS *continued*

for the next biennium. The board is required to send revenue to the Legislature each biennium. The funding can only be spent on instructional materials and education funding. However, the money must be formally appropriated by lawmakers back to the Texas Education Agency for the purchase of textbooks.

Because there is a concern that lawmakers will use all or most of the Available School Fund to plug anticipated budget holes to cover basic education costs, all 15 state board members signed a letter that was delivered to every lawmaker, urging them to appropriate funds for instructional materials.

The letter said in part: "These textbooks will provide a critical foundation for student achievement. Reducing funds for instructional materials will undermine instruction in the core curriculum and curtail the resources teachers need to ensure student success.

We, the members of the State Board of Education, strongly urge the Legislature to appropriate the \$550 million necessary for the upcoming textbook purchases. This action will ensure that our students have the educational tools they need to excel in school and become the leaders Texas needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

## CODE OF ETHICS

# Updated educators' rules address social media

Teachers must refrain from inappropriately communicating with students through the use of social media under specific standards adopted in an updated Educators' Code of Ethics. The revised code was endorsed by the State Board of Education at its November meeting.

The Code of Ethics was updated by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC), which oversees educator certification issues. Rules proposed by SBEC must come to the State Board of Education for review before they become effective.

The newly amended code is effective Dec. 26.

Texas Education Agency staff requested the change to the ethics code to give specific notice to educators that communication through electronic means or social media can be inappropriate and can violate the code of ethics. Numerous disciplinary case referrals have been made in which teachers were found to have sent students thousands of text messages or messages with inappropriate content. Sometimes the content of these messages did not appear to be inappropriate but the volume of messages and time of day the messages were sent indicated that the educator was "grooming" the student for a future sexual relationship.

The new provision in the Code of Ethics says:

(I) Standard 3.9. The educator shall refrain from inappropriate communication with a student or minor, including, but not limited to, electronic communication such as cell phone, text

messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, or other social network communication. Factors that may be considered in assessing whether the communication is inappropriate include, but are not limited to:

- (i) the nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication;
- (ii) the subject matter of the communication;
- (iii) whether the communication was made openly or the educator attempted to conceal the communication;
- (iv) whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship;
- (v) whether the communication was sexually explicit; and
- (vi) whether the communication involved discussion(s) of the physical or sexual attractiveness or the sexual history, activities, preferences, or fantasies of either the educator or the student.

Also, provisions that an educator "shall be of good moral character and be worthy to instruct or to supervise the youth of this state" were added to incorporate legal standards of conduct.

In addition, certified individuals are prohibited from "intentionally or knowingly misrepresenting his or her employment history, criminal history, and/or disciplinary record when applying for subsequent employment."

The revised Code of Ethics can be viewed at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=3460>.

## OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP

# Two Texas educators named Milken Award winners

Ben Milam Elementary Principal Tracy Spies scrambled for several weeks in October, readying her school for a visit from Gov. Rick Perry and Texas Commissioner of Education Robert Scott. It turns out that she was planning her own party.

During the ceremony with the state officials, Spies learned that she is the latest recipient of the 2010 Milken National Educator Award, which carries with it a prize of \$25,000. The money can be spent on anything she likes.

Spies, a principal in the Bryan Independent School District, and Rogelio Garcia, a teacher at James B. Bonham Elementary School in the Dallas Independent School District, are the two Texas recipients of this prestigious award this year.

Only 55 educators in the country received the award in 2010. Established by the Milken Family Foundation, this is now the largest teacher recognition program in the country, having awarded \$62 million in prizes since its inception in 1987.

Educators don't apply for the award. They come to the attention of state leaders in a variety of ways and then a blue-ribbon panel in each state recommends possible recipients to the foundation, which ultimately decides who will be recognized.

Spies was selected because her colleagues say she is the "ultimate instructional leader. She not only understands effective teaching practices, but completely understands how to support/coach/mentor her master and mentor teachers to make them more

effective instructional leaders."

Ben Milam Elementary participates in a program called the Teacher Advancement Program, which is a research-based school improvement model created by the Milken Family Foundation that is designed to attract, retain and motivate the best talent to the teaching profession. It provides teachers with career advancement opportunities, such as becoming a mentor or master teacher, without leaving the classroom. Under Spies' leadership, the TAP program has produced measurable academic gains.

Garcia, the Dallas recipient, is described by his colleagues as a "model educator. He has a charismatic way about him. Parents love him and his teaching style. Many parents, year after year, request this educator to be part of their child's life. He forms strong bonds with students so that students do well because they want to make him proud."

Garcia is an active leader on the campus, serving on the Campus Improvement Leadership Team and serving as the campus' New Teacher Support Team Mentor. He has also played a key role in ensuring the success of the campus' dual language program. Garcia was instrumental in reviewing the new learning standards for English Language Learners, making sure the standards were rigorous and aligned with the state accountability system.

Both recipients will receive an all-expense paid trip to Los Angeles this spring to participate in the Milken Educator Forum.

## CALL OF DUTY

## Love of students and learning motivate the 2011 Texas Teachers of the Year

Just as soldiers answer the call of duty, Daniel Leija and Beth Huckabee answered the call to serve their country through teaching. In October they received the state's top teaching award for their outstanding performance.

Huckabee, a veteran science teacher from the Flour Bluff Independent School District near Corpus Christi, was named the 2011 Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year. Leija, a fifth-grade teacher from San Antonio's Northside Independent School District, was named the 2011 Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year. Leija will also represent the state in the national Teacher of the Year competition.

Huckabee and Leija learned of their awards during a luncheon held on Oct. 15 in Austin at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center. Each received a \$5,000 cash award, a technology package valued at more than \$16,500, a computer, a trophy, a travel allowance and other prizes.

Also honored at the event were four additional state finalists who each received a \$750 award and a commemorative trophy and 34 Regional Teachers of the Year, who each received a \$500 award and a commemorative trophy.

**BETH HUCKABEE**

Huckabee has taught nearly four decades, 31 years of which have been in her current position as a science teacher at Flour Bluff High School. "My first classroom 40 years ago had a green chalkboard, some textbooks, an autopsy slab with running water, and a class full of teenagers. Today, I have a brand new lab, a SMART board, and access to a class set of computers, digital microscopes and digital cameras for students to use," she says.

"My college training did not prepare me for the tools that I now can access. My students will face a similar leap except their leap will need to occur much faster and will be a greater leap than mine. These students must be ready to be life-long learners. We must rethink how we teach to ensure that our students are ready for the next leap in technology and careers," Huckabee said.

During her years in the classroom, Huckabee has learned that students are more eager to learn when they know their teachers care about them. She works to connect with her students by sponsoring student clubs such as the National Honor Society and the Student Council and coaching teen kickball teams.

After teaching all these years, Huckabee says, "I still get up every morning looking forward to going to school, and I am a little sad in May when the school year ends."

**DANIEL LEIJA**

Leija is known as "Dan, Dan the science man" around the Esparza campus where he teaches fifth grade. Every Monday, he

conducts televised science experiments that are broadcast to the entire campus, reinforcing the connection between a concept and real-world applications.

"Teaching is not just my job; it is my calling, my passion, my legacy. Because my students come to me burdened with academic, social, emotional and familial gaps, it is imperative to provide the guidance and leadership to help chart their course through life's rough waters and cheer them on to success. To accomplish this feat, I feel it necessary to be available to them not only in the classroom, but at any time throughout the year and long

after they have moved on," Leija said.

The recipient of a number of teaching awards, Leija, an Air Force veteran, serves as a mentor to teachers who have come to the profession through the Troops to Teacher program. He learned early on himself how critical it is to have a veteran teacher work closely with a new teacher.

"Preparing for combat situations and war zones was nothing compared to facing 21 kindergartners my first morning as a teacher. Fortunately I had been paired with Margie Dominguez, a 20-plus year veteran teacher who would skillfully guide me through my first year of teaching. The methodologies and strategies she unselfishly shared transformed me from mediocrity to a highly effective teacher," he said.

Now with 10 years of teaching under his belt, Leija has crafted his own essay about what it means to be a teacher (see page 5).

**SPONSORS**

The Texas Teacher of the Year program is sponsored by the Texas Education Agency with support from the following generous donors: H-E-B • ING • Smart Technologies • Blue Bell Creameries, Inc. • Mike A. Myers Foundation • ClassWorks, LLC • Ergotron • Association of Texas Professional Educators • State Board of Education • Texas Classroom Teachers Association • Texas State Teachers Association • Texas Federation of Teachers • Texas Association of School Business Officials • Texas School Public Relations Association • Texas Association of School Administrators • Texas Business and Education Coalition • Texas Association of School Boards • Texas Computer Education Association • Texas Congress of Teachers and Parents • Texas Association of Secondary School Principals • Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association • Texas Association of Partners in Education • Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development • Texas Association for School Nutrition.



*Teachers of the Year  
Daniel Leija & Beth Huckabee*

# *I Am a Teacher*

By Daniel Leija  
2011 Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year  
2011 State Teacher of the Year

*I am a teacher.* I have answered my nation's call to redefine the future. I have been entrusted to nurture and develop our country's most precious resource...our children.

*I am a coach, mentor, counselor and friend,* fully prepared to take the necessary steps to make each student's dream become a reality. I will never waver from my course.

*I am a professional,* the descendant of a proud and honorable heritage. I hold myself to a higher standard because I am accountable to our nation, my community, the students, and myself. I will always conduct myself in a manner that will bring credit to my field. I actively seek ways to sharpen my skills through continuing education and collaboration with my colleagues.

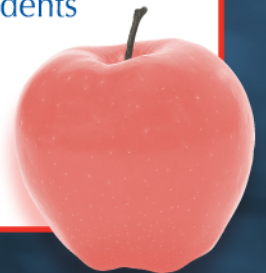
*I am a partner.* I work together with the community, business organizations, support agencies, administration, and parents to ensure each student receives the quality education that many seek and relatively few realize. My classroom door is always open for my students and all who wish to catch a glimpse of how tomorrow's leaders are being prepared.

*I am a shepherd.* I openly reach out to and guide each student who passes through my door; rich, poor, privileged, or disadvantaged. I nurture and encourage each student to achieve their full potential. My students will overcome life's obstacles to become successful.

*I am an advocate.* I encourage my students to take risks, think outside the box, and always dream big. I help my students learn to be humble winners, gracious losers, and work together as a team to achieve their goals.

*I am a confidant.* I offer counsel to students who have nowhere else to turn in times of personal crisis. I offer the support, guidance, and encouragement my students need to pilot them through their hour of darkness. I will never jeopardize that bond of trust. I gladly take on each of these roles to ensure my students have the tools they need to be successful in an ever-changing world.

*I am a teacher.* I have answered the call. I cannot and will not fail.



## State Board Actions

The State Board of Education met November 19 and took the following actions.

### FIRST READING

At first reading and filing authorization, the board:

- Approved a new mathematics course called Advanced Quantitative Reasoning, which can be used to satisfy the fourth mathematics credit requirement in high school.

### SECOND READING

At second reading and final adoption, the board:

- Unanimously approved minor modifications to the Principles of Technology course to align it with end-of-course assessment requirements. This course may be used to satisfy the physics graduation requirement. These amendments become effective 20 days after filing as adopted with the Texas Register.
- Approved amendments that align student expectations for elective courses in Bible Literacy with revised student expectations in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Special Topics in Social Studies and Independent Study in English. This item was approved for first reading at the May 2010 meeting where various sections within the subchapter were updated as a result of the statutorily required four-year review of rules. Statute (TEC §28.011) required the courses to be submitted to the attorney general for review to ensure that they complied with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution before the board could give final approval.
- Approved rules for the continuing education for school board members, and the nomination of trustees for military reservation school districts and the Boys Ranch Independent School District.

### IN OTHER ACTION

In other action, the board:

- Approved a schedule of costs for administering the 2010-2011 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)

to private school students, which allows the state to recover costs associated with the administration. The rates vary depending on the number of students who take the tests.

- Voted to approve the purchases and sales of the investment portfolio of the Permanent School Fund (PSF) for the months of August and September 2010 in the amount of \$681,566,747 and \$457,269,970 respectively.
- Adopted amendments to Section I of the Investment Procedures Manual of the PSF.
- Approved the reappointment of Lance E. Purcell and the appointment of Sharon Miner to the board of trustees of the Boys Ranch ISD for three-year terms from Nov. 19, 2010, to Nov. 18, 2013, and approved the appointment of Glenda Solomon to the board of trustees of the Randolph Field ISD for a two-year term from Nov. 19, 2010 to Nov. 18, 2012.
- Approved a payout on the percentage distribution of the PSF that will generate \$1.9 billion for the 2012-2013 biennium. This includes an anticipated \$500 million from the General Land Office to the Available School Fund, which is \$300 million more than had been previously anticipated.
- Received an update on the TEKS review. Applications for mathematics and fine arts TEKS review committee members are due Jan. 3 and board nominations are due Jan. 31.
- Voted to impose a penalty for publishers' back orders based on 1 percent of the average value of back-ordered materials for each day the instructional materials remained on back order after the first day of school year 2009-2010. The board also voted to require each publisher to issue credit to the agency in the appropriate amount as recommended.
- Accepted the proposal from Region 4 Education Service Center (ESC) to produce digital Braille files for use with portable Braille-reading devices, accessible student-ready digital files in other formats, and tactile graphics from Packages A and B and authorize the commissioner of education to conclude the necessary contract. The board also accepted the proposal from Region 20 ESC to produce digital Braille files for use with portable Braille-reading devices, accessible student-ready digital files in other formats, and tactile graphics from Package C and authorize the commissioner of education to conclude the necessary contract. The board also voted to accept the proposal from

Visual Aid Volunteers, Inc. to produce digital Braille files for use with portable Braille-reading devices, accessible student-ready digital files in other formats, and tactile graphics from Package D and authorize the commissioner of education to conclude the necessary contract. The board also accepted the proposal from Region 4 ESC to produce Braille copies from Copy Packages A and B. The board accepted the proposal from Region 20 ESC to produce Braille copies from Copy Packages C and D and to authorize the commissioner of education to conclude the necessary contract.

- Accepted the proposal submitted by Braille Jymico for production of large type materials and authorize the commissioner of education to conclude the necessary contract.
- Approved a contract with GAM USA Inc. to provide abso-

lute return discretionary separately managed account fund-of-hedge funds manager for the PSF with future consideration of rebalancing and authorization to negotiate terms and for contract execution by the commissioner of education.

- Took no action on rules from the State Board for Educator Certification that amend requirements for educator preparation programs. The amendments clarify requirements for educator preparation program coursework, training, internships, student teaching, clinical teaching, practicums, field-based experiences, and field supervision and provide that the program requirements that were in effect on the date an educator candidate was admitted to a program would be the requirements applicable to that candidate. By law, the SBOE may take no action on an SBEC item, which effectively endorses it, or the board may reject the item.

## PUBLIC SERVICE

# Outgoing State Board of Education members honored, five new members to begin terms of service in January



*Geraldine "Tincy" Miller*



*Rene Nuñez*



*Don McLeroy*



*Rick Agosto*



*Cynthia Dunbar*

The board passed resolutions thanking departing board members Geraldine Miller of Dallas, Rene Nuñez of El Paso, Don McLeroy of College Station, Rick Agosto of San Antonio and Cynthia Dunbar of Richmond for their service on the board. During their tenure, these five board members directed the revisions of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, diversified the investments of the Permanent School Fund and saw the fund rebound to \$24.1 billion.

Five new members will begin their terms of office on the 15-member State Board of Education beginning in January.

Carlos "Charlie" Garza, R-El Paso, an assistant principal in the Clint Independent School District, will fill the District 1 seat held by Rene Nuñez who served on the board for 22 years.

Michael Soto, D-San Antonio, a faculty member at Trinity

University takes the District 3 position, which represents parts of San Antonio and South Texas. He replaces financial consultant Rick Agosto of San Antonio who served for four years.

Thomas Ratliff, R-Mount Pleasant, a legislative consultant, was elected to the District 9 seat. Ratliff replaces Don McLeroy who served on the board for 12 years.

Marsha Farney, a Republican from Georgetown, claimed the District 10 seat. She is replacing Richmond lawyer Cynthia Dunbar who served four years on the board.

Teacher George Clayton, R-Richardson, won the District 12 seat, replacing Geraldine "Tincy" Miller who served on the board for 26 years.

Republican Ken Mercer of San Antonio and Republican Bob Craig of Lubbock were both re-elected to the board.

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is available electronically on the web at:  
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For information about this  
publication, contact:  
Division of Communications  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 North Congress Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78701-1494  
(512) 463-9000  
[www.tea.state.tx.us](http://www.tea.state.tx.us)

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**TOP PRIORITIES**

# State Board of Education issues recommendations for 82nd Texas Legislature

As the state gears up for the bi-annual gathering of Texas legislators in January, State Board of Education members discussed and approved their five legislative recommendations for the House and Senate’s consideration. The 82<sup>nd</sup> session begins Jan. 11 in Austin.

After considering some 18 recommendations submitted by the body, the members approved the following as their top recommendations:

1. Assure full funding of Proclamation 2011 instructional materials to honor the commitment made to publishers during the 81<sup>st</sup> session and assure that the Permanent School Fund monies paid to the Available School Fund each biennium are appropriated to fully fund instructional materials content first before they are utilized for other education-related expenses.

2. Prevent subsequent subject matter content

changes to electronic textbooks after initial approval from introducing factual errors and/or diluting TEKS coverage. Require the elected SBOE, not the appointed commissioner of education, to approve electronic textbooks.

3. Require a general appropriation by the legislature for textbook proclamations prior to the SBOE adopting materials in that proclamation.

4. Assure funding for supplemental science materials in preparation for the onset of End-of Course exams.

5. Amend Texas Education Code, Section 7.103(c) to clarify eligibility of a registered lobbyist doing business with a profession, business, or association related to the operation of the board.