

## Concerns growing about online assessment

# TN (NOT) READY?

**National test finds students did better with paper and pencil than on a computer. With careers and schools on the line, what happens if it goes poorly?**

The transition to new TNReady tests begins in full force this week. The test is in a different format, with constructed-response questions replacing bubble-in answer sheets. TNReady is designed to be administered on computers, instead of with pencil and paper. Districts have been scrambling to get ready for this new test and a new delivery mechanism.

But, is Tennessee ready? The state Department of Education is now telling

districts that using iPads and other non-wired devices will create problems. Districts are being told they may need to shift to paper and pencil delivery if technology problems persist.

Additionally, technology problems are still apparent. Nashville Public Radio reported: "Problems have been uncovered on the school side and with the state's system."

"Wi-fi networks and bandwidth have been the primary culprit," according to WPLN. "On the state's end, a test run from October went so badly that the system of more than 100 servers was completely reconfigured in December. But as recently as last week, the system crashed during another test."

As Tennessee prepares for the most significant testing transition in its history, there

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## TEA holds National Board training

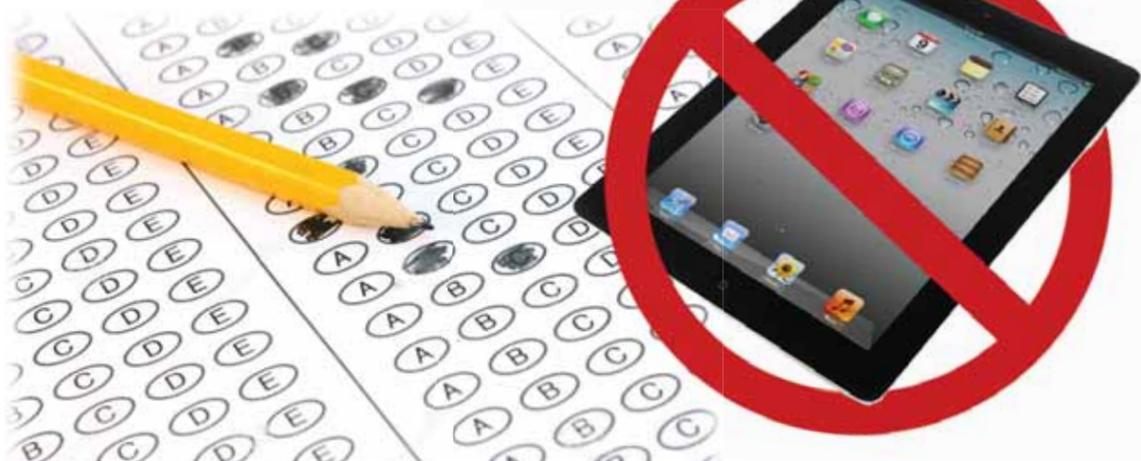
Continuing its longstanding commitment of helping teachers improve their practice, TEA hosted a training for teachers seeking to boost their professional skill set through the National Board certification process.

"Responding to members' requests, TEA held a Jump Start training for National Board certification candidates in November, followed by another training in late January," said TEA Assistant Executive Director Terrance Gibson. "The statewide training involved candidates from many content certificate areas."

Approximately 15 local districts offer financial incentives for National Board certification, while 672 NBCTs currently teach in Tennessee.

The training sessions were led by TEA member Cathy "Clee" Lee, a National Board certified teacher and member of the NEA Jump Start redesign team. If you are interested in learning more about the process, please visit [www.boardcertifiedteachers.org](http://www.boardcertifiedteachers.org).

**State officials recently discouraged districts from using iPads for online standardized testing because of glitches. Five systems have requested paper and pencil tests.**



There is concern about "subtle, hidden, small issues that can occur on certain versions of operating systems."



Gov. Bill Haslam

## Haslam initial budget proposes 4% increase in teacher compensation, 9% increase for health insurance funding

After TEA called for a 6 percent increase in teacher pay, Gov. Bill Haslam announced the largest investment in K-12 education without a tax increase in Tennessee's history during his sixth State of the State speech last week.

Haslam's \$34.8 billion budget proposal for fiscal year 2016-17 includes \$261 million in new dollars for public education. It also features

\$104.6 million dedicated to giving teachers a raise, a roughly 4 percent increase over last year's pay.

"The governor's proposal to put nearly \$105 million into teacher salaries demonstrates his commitment to fulfilling his promise to make Tennessee the fastest improving state in teacher salaries."

**PAY RAISE**  
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## MASSIVE SHIFT TO LIMITED PLAN CREATES BREWING PROBLEMS FOR STATE HEALTH INSURANCE

Since 2014, TEA has been documenting the disturbing trend of school systems encouraging, and in some cases coercing, employees into cheaper health insurance with higher out-of-pocket costs. In most cases, the push to move was encouraged by offering to pair the lowest cost health plan, the Limited PPO, with a wraparound, or gap, insurance policy to help absorb the large increase in deductibles and coinsurance costs.

A recent state survey of participating school systems found that half of all responding offer gap policies, and of

those over 90 percent fund all or part of the cost of the gap policies. In some more unfortunate cases, the increase in Limited PPO support was also accompanied by dramatic cuts to the employer share of premiums for the other two plans offered by the state, the Partnership and Standard PPO, which have higher premiums, but much lower out-of-pocket costs. When pressed about the cause of the changes, many school systems stated they had been

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## TEA members stand strong, united statewide

The strength of TEA comes from our tens of thousands of members spread out all across the state standing united to fight for our students, our schools and our profession.



The only reason anyone goes in to our profession is for a love of children. Tennessee's students need us to be united now more than ever. Our state is under constant threat of ASD takeovers, voucher proposals, lack of adequate funding and toxic testing. These threats come from initiatives that are pushed down by the state. For resistance to be effective, it has to happen at the state level. In order to defeat these things and protect our children, we have to be united. This is not a fight any of us can win on our own.

It is important to me that our members and potential members understand the value of belonging to an organization with a local, state and national presence. Here are the facts of what TEA and NEA benefits all members enjoy:

- **Liability insurance** – The policy offered by TEA is not identical to the policy now offered by the state or any other professional organization. TEA's policy is a reliable and time-tested safeguard in the event a civil suit is filed, or criminal charges are initiated against a member. A member's insurance coverage covers not only any judgments against a member, but also pays the costs of hiring attorneys to defend against claims. A member's TEA/NEA policy also provides for reimbursement of attorney fees for defense of criminal proceedings, provides bail bond coverage, and provides coverage for assault-related personal property damage for members. And with the TEA/NEA policy, you need not ever be concerned about whether your coverage is at risk because your interests might be contrary to the State's or the school district's interests.
- **Professional representation** – TEA's legal team has more than 75 years of combined experience representing public school teachers and local affiliates. No one else can offer the expertise of TEA's legal team in school law and issues that affect teachers. TEA's legal team provides representation to individual members, as well as groups of members.
- **Powerful statewide advocate** – The attacks faced by districts statewide are coming from the state level. Under our state constitution, it is the state legislature, not the local school board, that has ultimate control over public education. To protect our students and our profession, it is critical to be united with educators statewide to defeat things like the ASD, vouchers, over-testing and more.
- **NEA and TEA member benefits** – Many members participate in NEA/TEA Member Benefits. This includes things like affordable mortgage and loan rates, life insurance policies, travel and entertainment discounts, and more. All of these benefits would end immediately if you cancel your TEA/NEA membership.

Thank you for your commitment to Tennessee students and your membership in TEA – the largest and strongest advocate for public education.

## We fight bullying in classrooms, statehouse

As a classroom teacher, I soon learned that teaching the curriculum was not my only job. I spent time being a nurse, den mother, counselor, coach, judge, detective, referee, etc. My detective and referee skills were especially important when identifying classroom bullies who needed to be stopped. Right now there are some bullies in our state legislature who must be stopped.



Over the past few years, out-of-state special interest groups funded by the likes of the Koch brothers have poured millions of dollars into efforts to strip our public schools of much-needed funding. To achieve this, groups like Americans for Prosperity, Students First and others have turned some of our legislators into bullies.

You know who they are because the moment we try to reason with them using facts, figures and research, they start reciting false and offensive clichés about “failing schools,” “bad teachers” and so on.

When it doesn't work, they get louder and try to stab us in the back with caption bills. One recent example is the sleight of hand by Sen. Todd Gardenhire (R-Chattanooga), who turned a bill regulating bicycle helmets into one that targets the ability of teachers to pay their TEA membership dues through payroll deduction.

Gardenhire, who is also one of the sponsors of extremely dangerous voucher legislation, claims the dues deduction system that has worked for decades is “unfair” to other organizations - one of which claims to represent teachers but lobbied to repeal teachers' collective bargaining rights.

In typical bully fashion, Gardenhire has been doing the bidding for deep-pocketed privatizers under the guise of fairness and justice. Dubbed “Fair Access to Collection of Teacher Support Act,” Gardenhire's legislation would bar employee dues check-offs by local school systems “for a professional employee organization, if any of that organization's funds are contributed in any way to another organization that engages in political activity.”

There's only one organization in Tennessee that fits this description - TEA. As it is currently written, Gardenhire's bill would eliminate payroll deduction for TEA members, which has been in place for decades.

Several Tennessee senators noticed the obvious attack on teachers, asked questions about the bill and attempted to postpone the vote in the Senate. Sen. Paul Bailey (R-Sparta), Sen. Ken Yager (R-Harriman), Sen. Frank Niceley (R-Knoxville) and Senate Minority Leader Lee Harris (D-Memphis) took issue with Gardenhire's bill, but he refused to give them time to study it or postpone the vote.

TEA continues to fight the bill, pointing out its many dangers and fallacies. Chief among them would be teachers' inability to impact the political process, something that the out-of-state special interest groups are hoping to accomplish. We cannot afford to let them win.

There are many more caption bills pending in this legislative session, and the TEA government relations team is watching closely, no matter how many bullies come out of the woodwork to undermine the voices of teachers.

As the true experts in identifying and fighting bullying, we must remain vigilant. Remember, the biggest bullies aren't in schools, but at the state Capitol.

The strength of TEA comes from our tens of thousands of members standing united to fight for our students, our schools and our profession.

Right now there are some bullies in our state legislature who must be stopped.

## TEA members run for NEA RA state delegate positions

Biographical information and photographs submitted by candidates for state delegate positions to the National Education Association's Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C., July 3-8, 2016, are published in this two-page section. All candidates will be listed on ballots which local association presidents will receive by March 1.

Members are encouraged to vote in the locally conducted election to determine who will represent them at the NEA RA.

For Category 1, NEA members will vote for two district delegates based on the district in which they teach. Category 1 includes candidates who are classroom teachers, education support professionals or persons who

serve in other non-supervisory positions.

In Category 2, NEA members may vote for any three of the candidates. This category includes members who are supervisors, administrators or retired NEA life members.

Any NEA-retired life, education support or active member not affiliated with a local association who wishes to vote in the election may receive a ballot by writing or calling TEA, 801 Second Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37201-1099, (615) 242-8392 or (800) 342-8367.

The NEA RA is NEA's highest decision-making body. With over 9,000 delegates, it is also the world's largest democratic, deliberative body.

The RA convenes every July during the Annual

Meeting. While the first two days are devoted to discussions, conferences, and exhibits, the highlight is the Representative Assembly itself. During this important event, delegates debate issues that impact American public education, elect NEA officers, and set policy for the 3.2 million-member association.

In conjunction with the Annual Meeting, NEA also hosts several pre-RA events, including the Joint Conference on the Concerns of Minorities and Women. Participants explore societal trends, the latest education research, current reform, best practices, and other critical issues affecting students and employees. We invite you to come and lend your voice to the conversation.

### CATEGORY I District 1



**Joe Crabtree** — Sixth-grade science and social studies teacher at Indian Trail Intermediate School in Johnson City. Currently serving at the state level on the TEA Board of Directors (District 1), chair of the TEA Internal Organizational Needs (ION) Committee, and member of the TEA Executive Committee.

For the past seven years has served as a local and state delegate of the TEA and NEA Representative Assemblies. “I feel extremely honored to serve as a voice for the teachers of Johnson City and Tennessee at the state and national levels!”



**Vicky Jones** - Third-grade classroom teacher, 36 years at Fall Branch Elementary/Middle School. Active in association work since 1978: in NEA/TEA/WCEA, WCEA president for 2 terms, WCEA vice president, WCEA AR, WCEA Bargaining Team (25+ years), TEA RA

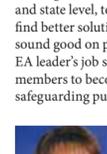
(numerous), TEA Advocacy Conferences, TEA Summer Leadership Academies, NEA RA (since 1992). Presently WCEA Association representative and member of WCEA Collaborative Conferencing team.



**LaDawn Hudgins** — Currently serving as President of Washington County Education Association, served as President-Elect (2 yrs), member of Wash. Co. School's School Calendar Committee (7 yrs), TEA Minority Affairs Committee member (3 yrs), Delegate for TEA/RA (11+ yrs), TEA State Delegate for NEA/RA (4 yrs), State Delegate for NEA MLT/WLT (Oct. 2014), Attendee for Organizing Summit (2 yrs), Attendee for Leadership Conference (4 yrs), President Council Attendee (Spring 2015 and Fall 2015), Attendee for “Road Rally Days” (Spring 2014), Civitation Attendee (Spring 2014-2015), Appointed to TEA SPED Committee, Appointed to the IPD Committee (2014-2015). Married for 34 yrs.



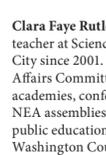
**Jene' Hewlett-Peters** — Math teacher for Washington Co. school system with 24 years of experience. Active member of WCEA since the very beginning. Attended many TEA conferences and served as a RA delegate many times. Has been a building AR for most of my teaching career. PECCA team member. Legislative Contact Team member. I have worked closely with legislators and policymakers, both at the local and state level, to build a team of all stakeholders to find better solutions for our students that just don't sound good on paper but REALLY work. I believe an EA leader's job should be to advocate and empower members to become actively involved in securing and safeguarding public education in Tennessee.



**Karen Anderson** — Elementary teacher at Lake Ridge School in Johnson City. Currently serving on NEA Women's Issues Comm. and TEA NEA Concerns Committee. Previously served on TEA BOD and several committees. Former Membership Chair and current PACE Comm. member for JCEA. Attended

various state and national academies, conferences and RAs. Taught early childhood education courses at East Tennessee State University and Middle Tennessee State University; directed three early childhood programs in middle Tennessee and

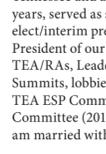
### CATEGORY I District 2



**Clara Faye Rutledge** — High school English teacher at Science Hill High School in Johnson City since 2001. Currently serving on the Minority Affairs Committee. Attended various state academies, conferences and RAs, as well as two NEA assemblies. I have been in some form of public education since 1981 (working as an ESP in Washington County for five years) and serving on various local committees which focused on public education. I am privileged to be a member of JCEA, TEA, and NEA and would consider it an honor to represent Tennessee at NEA RA.



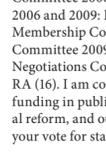
**Rebecca Thornburg** — As a young struggling student I admired educators who got it right. As a special educator of 28 years, my number one goal is advocacy through empowerment. Change happens when people work together. I currently teach in Greene County. I have been in Tennessee and an association representative for 11 years, served as secretary two years. I was president elect/interim president one year and am currently President of our Association. I have attended TEA/RAs, Leadership Conferences, Organizing Summits, lobbied during “Civitation”, served on the TEA ESP Committee (2 yrs), TEA Communication Committee (2015), and attended NEA/RA 2015. I am married with two college-age daughters.



**Melinda Douthat Pruitt** — Special Education Supervisor-Greene County Schools, 33 years: 17/teacher, 16/administrator; B.S./M.S. UT-K, doctorate ETSU; GCEA: Treasurer 2004-2006; president 2011, 2001, 1995; president-elect 2000, 1994; vice president 2013, 1999, 1993. TEA: Status of Women Committee 2006-2007; Administrator Task Force 2006 and 2009; ION Committee 2004, 2013, 2015; Membership Committee 2002, Members Benefits Committee 2009-2012; Insurance Committee 2000, Negotiations Committee 1998; TEA/RA (23); NEA/RA (16). I am committed to advocating for adequate funding in public education, meaningful educational reform, and our profession. I would appreciate your vote for state NEA RA delegate.



**Michelle Bowman** — I am the Librarian at Northview Primary School in Kodak. I am currently serving the Sevier County Education Association as secretary and legislative chair. I am a member of TEA's Legislative Contact Team and the current District 2 board member. I also serve as the corresponding secretary and newsletter editor for the NEA-Republican Educators' Caucus.



**Bryan Massengale** — Band director at Rhea Central Elementary School, band director in Rhea County since 1984. Rhea-Dayton EA. B.S. degree in music education, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1980; M.S. degree in Administration, RDEA president, past president, newsletter editor, chief negotiator; NEA: past NEA Today local editor advisory board; attended 15 previous NEA Representative Assemblies.



**Pam Thompson** — I am the Librarian at Northview Primary School in Kodak. I am currently serving the Sevier County Education Association as secretary and legislative chair. I am a member of TEA's Legislative Contact Team and the current District 2 board member. I also serve as the corresponding secretary and newsletter editor for the NEA-Republican Educators' Caucus.



**Beth Brown** — English teacher, 14 years, Grundy Co. High School. GCEA: association representative, president-elect, president, chief negotiator, grievance chairperson, membership chairperson, collaborative conferencing chairperson.



**Jennifer Eilender** — Special education teacher, Comprehensive Development Classroom (CDC), Bearden Middle School, Knox Co. EA: KCEA Executive Board, parliamentarian, Legislative Contact TEAM (LCT), Membership committee, Minority Affairs Leadership committee, association representative. TEA: Board of Directors, district 4, co-chair of 2015 and 2014 Minority Affairs committee, TEA Resolutions, Southeast Regional Minority Leadership Training Committee, Minority Affairs Leadership committee, New Teachers Training committee, state delegate – RA; NEA Resolutions committee.



**Josephine McQuail** — Treasurer. Previous positions: WCEA president, president-elect, TEA Minority Affairs Committee, ION Committee, Career and Technology Committee, TEA RA and NEA RA since 2002.

### CATEGORY I District 3

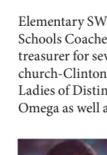


**Anthony Hancock** — Special education teacher, Comprehensive Development Classroom (CDC), Bearden Middle School, Knox Co. EA: KCEA Executive Board, parliamentarian, Legislative Contact TEAM (LCT), Membership committee,

Minority Affairs Leadership committee, association representative. TEA: Board of Directors, district 4, co-chair of 2015 and 2014 Minority Affairs committee, TEA Resolutions, Southeast Regional Minority Leadership Training Committee, Minority Affairs Leadership committee, New Teachers Training committee, state delegate – RA; NEA Resolutions committee.



**Tanya Coats** — President (KCEA), IPD Commission chair, Bearden Elementary instructional coach; KCEA Executive Board member, 2011-2013 TEA Board of Directors District 4; committee member of KCEA's Minority Affairs, Public Relations, Elections, Human Relations, Bearden



**Paula Hancock** — Sixth-grade mathematics teacher, Karns Middle School; TEA Board of Directors, East Tennessee Black Classroom Teacher; TEA Legislative Editing Committee; TEA Communications Committee; TEA Resolutions Committee; TEA Representative



**Joan Washington** — Behavior coach at Beaumont Magnet Honors Academy, Knox County—26 years of service at the end of 2013. Member: KCEA Executive Board, Minority Affairs, TEA, NEA. Committees: Teacher Evaluation Advisory and TUEAC. Served on Mentoring Team, Project Grad Cooperative Management Consistency Discipline coach, treasurer of Oak Ridge Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Member: Children of God Ministries. “I would like to serve as your 2014 NEA RA State Delegate.”



**Jeannette Omarkhail** — NEA Executive Committee, Teacher on special assignment, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools; past TEA president, vice president, executive committee member, TPACE Committee member and board member; holds undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate degrees; has attended numerous NEA RAs and served on the NEA Resolutions Committee; chaired state committees, involved in numerous local association activities, Metropolitan Nashville EA Executive Committee.



**Jeannine Renfro** — Jeannine Renfro has been a teacher in Metro Nashville Public Schools for 16 years. She is currently serving as District 4 director, Metro Nashville Education Association Executive Board. She serves at MNEA as association representative, chair of the Scholarship/Communications Committees. NCUEA has attended TEA Bargaining Conference, NCUEA Fall Conference, Quality Schools Summit, TEA RA and NEA RA. “I would consider it an honor to serve and represent TEA District 9 at the 2014 NEA Representative Assembly.”



**Theresa L. Wagner** — Gra-Mar Middle School, Nashville. Professional: teacher in Louisiana (1986-98); Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools physical education teacher (1998-present). MNEA: Executive



**Jennifer Eilender** — TEA: TEA Board (2009-2012, 2014-president), TEA vice president, board liaison to IPD Commission, Executive Committee, Budget Committee, Educator Advocacy Committee, Dues Task Force, Credentials Committee, Editing Committee. NEA: RA delegate, 2009-2014.



**Jennifer Eilender** — TEA: TEA Board (2009-2012, 2014-president), TEA vice president, board liaison to IPD Commission, Executive Committee, Budget Committee, Educator Advocacy Committee, Dues Task Force, Credentials Committee, Editing Committee. NEA: RA delegate, 2009-2014.

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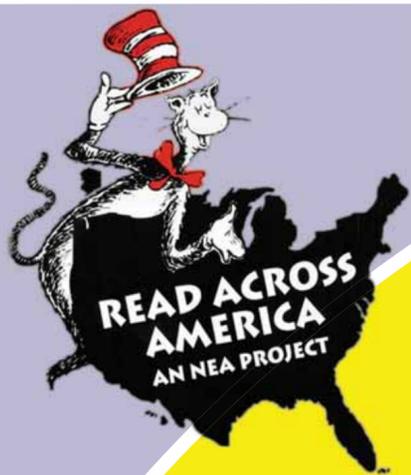
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UniServ Staff contact information can be found on page 6.



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about

**READING!**

**Read Across Tennessee**

**March 2, 2016**



FOR MORE CLASSROOM MATERIALS GO TO [TEATEACHERS.ORG](http://TEATEACHERS.ORG)

Read Across Tennessee, a celebration of TEA in conjunction with NEA's Read Across America. "Ruffy the Reading Dog." Copyright, Tennessee Education Association.

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**District 11** — Antoinette Lee, P.O. Box 1412, Antioch, TN 37013; (615)308-5293, fax: (888)519-7331; Assns: FSSD, Williamson, TN Dept. of Ed.  
**District 12** — Sue Ogg, P.O. Box 210486, Nashville, TN 37211-0486; (615)856-0503, fax: (855)427-6660 — Assns: Giles, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Fayetteville, Maury, Marshall, Motlow State Comm. College, Perry, Wayne,

**District 13** — Mary Campbell, Susan Dalton, Metro Nashville, 531 Fairground Court, Nashville, TN 37211; (615)347-6578 (Campbell), (615)476-3161 (Dalton), fax: (855)299-4968 (Campbell), (855)299-5837 (Dalton); Assns: Cumberland Uni., Dept. of Higher Ed., Metro Nashville, TN School For The Blind, Lebanon, Wilson  
**District 14** — Maria Uffelman, P.O. Box 99, Cumberland City, TN 37050; phone: (931)827-3333, fax: (855)299-4925; Assns: Austin Peay State Uni., Clarksville-Montgomery, Robertson  
**District 15** — Cheryl Richardson, P.O. Box 354, Goodlettsville, TN 37070; phone: (615)630-2601, fax: (888)519-4879; Assns: Benton, West Carroll, Central, Clarksville, Huntingdon, McKenzie, Henry, Paris, Houston, Humphreys, Stewart, Cheatham, Dickson, Hickman  
**District 16** — Lorrie Butler, P.O. Box 387, Henderson, TN 38340; (731)989-4860, fax: (855)299-4591; Assns: Chester, Hardeman, West TSD, Henderson, Lexington, Jackson-Madison, Jackson State Comm. College,

McNairy, Decatur, Hardin  
**District 17** — Terri Jones, P.O. Box 2140, Cordova, TN 38088; (901)258-3902, fax: (646)270-8083; Assns: Crockett, Dyer, Dyersburg, Dyersburg State Comm. College, Gibson, Humboldt, Milan, Trenton, Haywood, Lake, Lauderdale, Obion, Union City, UT-Marlin, Tipton, Weakley  
**District 18** — Zandra Foster, 3897 Homewood Cove, Memphis, TN 38128; (901)377-9472, fax: (855)320-8737 — Assns: Bartlett, Collierville, Fayette, Germantown-Arlington-Lakeland, Millington, Southwest State Comm. College, Uni. of Memphis  
**District 19** — Assns: TEA West — Karla Carpenter, UniServ Field Manager; UniServ Directors: Glenda Jones, Tom Marchand, Terri Jones, 6520 Stage Road, Bartlett, TN 38134; phone/fax (901)379-6939; [www.uniledshelby.org](http://www.uniledshelby.org)

[www.teateachers.org](http://www.teateachers.org)  
[www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

## NEA RA DELEGATE NOMINEES from page 3



Board director (2007-present); delegate to TEA Representative Assembly (2006-14); committee chair (Human Relations, Membership, Nominations/Elections, PACE), TEA Committees: Legislative Editing; Status of Women; Membership (Chair); Communications (chair);

TUEAC president (2010-14); TEA state delegate to NEA Annual Meeting (2008-14); TEA District 9 board director (2012-present), Executive Committee (current), NEA: Human and Civil Rights Division/GLBT Cadre trainer (2007-present); GLBT Caucus SE Regional Female Director (2010-present).



rick huth — MNEA vice president, Metro Retirement Plan, Metro Insurance Trust, Sick Leave Bank; TEA: Advocacy, Retirement and Insurance. Formerly: National Council of Urban Education Associations; parliamentarian, regional director, Screening,

Elections; MNEA: president, chief bargaining spokesperson, parliamentarian; Tennessee Urban Education Associations Council; president, vice president; Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System; trustee, executive committee member; TEA: Board member, TEA Political Action Committee for Education Council, chair (Internal Organizational Needs, Advocacy, Retirement and Insurance), member (Vocational, Communication, Professional Negotiations).

## District 10



Carrie Allison — Carrie is in her fourth year of teaching special education at Cumberland Heights Elementary in Clarksville. Carrie represents new teachers on the TEA Board of Directors. She serves as her local association's secretary and is her school's building representative. Carrie is also an advisory board member of TEA's new teacher group: iTEAM and co-chairs her local chapter of iTEAM. Carrie's association involvement began in college where she served as a campus and state officer

in the NEA student program. In 2014, NEA selected Carrie to serve as a facilitator on the GPS Network. Carrie represented her local association as a TEA and NEA RA delegate in 2013 and 2014.

Becky Jackman \*

## District 11 Brandi Adams \*



Raelene Burke — Classroom kindergarten teacher at Huntingdon Primary School.

## District 13 Trish Stephenson \*



LoMay Richmond — Serving our professional education association for 15 years through state and local committees. Currently, I am serving as the vice president of the Germantown Arlington Lakeland Education Association. I have served as the chair for the TEA Legislative Editing Committee, Shelby County Education Association - Minority Affairs Committee, Instructional Professional Development Committee, and Germantown Arlington Lakeland Education Association - Constitution and Bylaws. I served on the Steering Committee for the Arlington District.

## District 14/15



Stephanie Bea — Special education assistant in Memphis-Shelby County Schools. Currently serving on TEA Board of Directors-ESP at-large; member of UEA, EA; building representative; National Council for Educational Support Professionals; TEA ESP Committee chair; Council of Exceptional Children; NEA Peace and Justice Caucus;

NEA Women's Caucus; Caucus for Educators of Exceptional Children; attended TEA Representative Assembly, NEA Representative Assembly; NEA ESP Leaders for Tomorrow 2013; won Heart Person Award 2011-2012.

Kenyon Cook \*



Sarah-Kennedy Harper — Proud teacher of Memphis City Schools in West Tennessee. Currently serving on the TEA board of directors. Having taught for 15 years, she has been a delegate to the TEA RA a number of years. "I know now that teaching is what I was born to do and a teacher is who I am. It's in my blood."

Tiffany Reed \*



Diccie Smith — M-SCEA, functional skills teacher, 32 years experience. I have been active in the association since I was a student and have represented you on the local, state, and national levels, protecting and promoting the teaching profession. I would like to continue to bring the rural, suburban, and urban issues to the forefront. I ask for your vote to continue to stand up for our children, our employees, and public education.

Tikeila Rucker — A third-grade teacher, Germantown Elementary. Currently serves as president of United Education Association of Shelby County, (UEA) TEA: New Teacher Committee, Minority Affairs and iTEAM Advisory Board. An NEA 2015 Affirmative Action Intern Graduate. Former roles: Board-Elementary director, New Teacher Committee, as well as PACE Council. I would consider it an honor to serve and represent TEA District 15 at the 2016 NEA RA. I'm motivated and determined to make a difference in the lives of students and teachers.

Comeshia Williams \*



Lily H. Reed \*

Clemmie West \*

## CATEGORY 2



Barbara Gray — presently serving as TEA president, member of ESSA Implementation Team, NEA Minority Planning Committee, TEA budget committee, member of Germantown Arlington Lakeland EA, assistant principal on leave from Arlington Middle School; past president, vice-president, administrator — Shelby County EA; served on state and local Board of Directors; chaired various state and local committees; involved in numerous state and local association activities. Proud to have served as your delegate in the past and would love to represent you at 2016 NEA RA.



Jessica Holman — Longtime TEA activist representing East Tennessee teachers. Currently on the TEA Executive Board representing East Tennessee administrators. Former involvement includes East Tennessee Black Classroom Teacher on TEA board, Knox Co. EA board member and negotiations and Sparks Committee member, chair of TEA Human Relations Committee, NCUEA Discover Grant recipient.

Dennis Kimbrough \*



Margaret Thompson — I have represented administrators from Middle Tennessee on the TEA Board for the past three years. I have taught school for more than 30 years. I have been an administrator for seven years in Robertson Co., all the while being a member of Robertson Co. EA. Throughout my years of Association membership, I have worked on numerous committees, as well as recruited membership. During my tenure on the Board, I have attended four NEA RAs.

Sherry Hensley \*

\* — no photo or bio at press time.

## PAY RAISE from page 1

said TEA President Barbara Gray. "The key, however, is that safeguards need to be put into place to ensure that this 4 percent ends up in teachers' paychecks, unlike in previous years."

For four years now, the average teacher in Tennessee has seen only a fraction of the governor's proposed increase as a result of policy changes at the state level no longer requiring that the money be applied to teachers' base salaries.

"We have educators in some districts who qualify for food stamps," Gray said. "So many educators face increasing insurance expenses, while having to dig deeper and deeper into their own pockets for classroom supplies."

A second year of proposing a significant increase in teacher salaries shows that the governor recognizes the investment teachers are making in our students every day. To attract and retain the

best teachers, it is crucial that Tennessee remains competitive with neighboring states in teacher pay.

"In recent years, we haven't been competitive with other states in terms of teacher pay," Gray said. "The governor's proposal sets us on the right path to making sure there is a qualified, committed educator in every classroom across the state."

It is encouraging to see the governor propose funding for the final month of insurance coverage for educators. The state had previously only funded 10 months of insurance for educators, placing the burden to fund the final two months on the shoulders of our local districts. After TEA's successful lobbying efforts in 2015, the General Assembly added funds for the eleventh month of insurance. The governor completing the year with his proposal is one more demonstration of his intent to support our educators.

**TEA REIMBURSES FOR MILES!  
GREAT BREAKFAST AT TEA HQ!  
CAPITOL MEETINGS ARRANGED!  
PRE-PAID HOTEL FOR LONG TRAVEL!  
OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS!**

# Civication

noun, [siv-i-kā-shen]

1. A combination of *civics* and *vacation* that promote good laws and policies for Tennessee public schools.
2. Where TEA members come to Nashville during Spring Break to lobby their legislators for schools back home.
3. A heck of a lot of fun.

[www.teateachers.org/civication](http://www.teateachers.org/civication)

## REGISTER NOW FOR SPRING CONFERENCES

### Quality Schools Summit

March 4, TEA headquarters

### Minority Affairs Conference

March 11-12, Sheraton Downtown Hotel in Memphis

The Johnella Martin Minority Affairs Conference is always a wonderful opportunity to connect with colleagues, celebrate diversity and address issues facing minority educators today.

### Student TEA Conference

March 18-19, Embassy Suites Hotel in Franklin

### 20th Annual TEA Spring Symposium

April 8 - 9, Park Vista Doubletree Hotel in Gatlinburg

TEA's Spring Symposium is an annual two-day instruction and professional development event and is designed to provide a challenging and invigorating experience for educators who want to strengthen their teaching performance. **This year's Spring Symposium will be open to non-members.**

### TEA Representative Assembly

May 13-14 at the Cool Springs Marriott Hotel in Franklin

Register online:

[www.teateachers.org](http://www.teateachers.org)

## INSURANCE PROBLEMS BREWING from page 1

advised by benefits consultants that these changes were mandated under federal law, and were, in part, necessary because of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

The explanations citing federal law were the product of a flawed understanding of legal requirements, and TEA quickly set about debunking the mistaken assertions. TEA worked closely with officials at the state and federal level, which culminated in a memo in fall 2015 from the Commissioner of Commerce and Insurance affirming TEA's position regarding a school system's obligation under federal law.

This, however, did not discourage the trend. No longer able to cite legal requirements, the move was presented to employees as a win-win, a cost savings to the district and something that wouldn't affect employees due to the gap insurance. As a result, enrollment in the Limited PPO skyrocketed, and continues to increase. Between 2014 and 2016, enrollment in the plan increased by an astounding 532 percent.

The problem with this change is that the win-win for everyone was really an illusion. Low cost, high deductible health plans were developed and introduced as an alternative option for healthier employees with low fixed medical expenses. Traditionally, these types of plans have been an attractive option for younger employees, who seldom go to the doctor and are often times attracted to the premium savings. The practice of wholesale shift into this plan for all employees

meant that thousands of employees were enrolling in a plan that do not fit this risk profile. And while the cost to the employee may be masked by gap insurance, which could pay the extra increase in cost up to their out-of-pocket maximum, there is no such protection for the state, who must pay all remaining costs.

The resulting destabilization has impacted the entire Local Education section of the State Group Insurance Program (SGIP), which covers more than one hundred thousand active and retired teachers and their families. The local education insurance committee, which includes teacher representation from each region of the state, met in the first week of February to discuss the impact of the trend and what it meant to future premiums. Officials with the state notified the committee that due to the enrollment trends, revenue (premiums) were down 6 percent, while costs to the plan by paying claims were up 6 percent. Specifically, there was a 57 percent increase in claims in the Limited PPO. This has had the effect of spending down plan reserves much more quickly than anticipated.

Members of the committee voiced concerns that the trend will only accelerate, intensifying the fiscal problems created by the mismatch of plan versus employee need.

Treasurer David Lillard, a member of the committee, wondered how effective the gap policies were in the first place. He reported his office receiving numerous calls from teachers that claimed the gap policies purchased by their school systems did not function as promised, and that they were confused and frustrated in their experience trying to use it. Lillard went on to say that he was concerned about teachers being mistreated, and worried about the damage being caused to the profession by this phenomenon.

Current forecasts estimate an increase to all plans should the trend continue, which stands in sharp relief from previous estimates before the full extent of the problem was understood.

Committee members were also presented with a variety of proposals to stem the tide of enrollment, and to encourage employees to move back into plans more suited to their utilization.

TEA's primary interest is ensuring the long-term health and stability of the SGIP, while mitigating the risk of large premium increases that would hurt the family budgets of educators across the state.

TEA appreciates the good work of the committee, Treasurer Lillard, Director Lee of the SGIP, and their staff, and look forward to resolving this challenge.

**Treasurer Lillard went on to say that he was concerned about teachers being mistreated, and worried about the damage being caused to the profession.**



## Are we TNReady?

from page 1

are strong signs pointing to a lack of readiness.

TNDOE is reacting to the growing concerns.

"This is a huge transition for us, but keep it in perspective," says Nakia Towns, assistant education commissioner for data. "We think that educators and students are going to be flexible. They know that this is a first-year experience and there is a transition. There will be hiccups, I'm sure. But we expect to be able to recover."

While educators and students are flexible, there is no way to recover lost instructional time as teachers have been prepping students on the technology.

"We've spent hours getting our youngest students ready to use computers for taking these tests," said TEA President Barbara Gray. "Still, our students are nervous and anxious and unsure of what will happen. Educators across Tennessee worry about extreme frustration if the computers don't work when we're in the middle of the actual test."

Educators have concerns about spending time teaching kids computer-based test-taking skills, instead of learning and doing

hands-on projects.

"The constant test-prep pressure for TNReady has reduced instructional time and taken the fun out of learning," Gray said.

Teachers also expressed concern about the results of the tests when some districts are using paper and pencil tests while others use the computer-based model.

"How can we compare results when some kids are writing answers on paper and others are dependent on technology that so far has been unreliable?" asked Gray.

As it turns out, in similar testing situations, there is a difference in scores between paper and pencil and computer-based versions of the same tests.

Education Week featured an article on the PARCC tests that have been administered in some states. The article noted that students taking PARCC on pencil and paper scored higher than those who took it on the computer.

Specifically, the article noted:

"Students who took the 2014-15 PARCC exams via computer tended to score lower than those who took the exams with paper and pencil—a revelation that prompts questions about the validity of the test results and poses potentially big problems for state and district leaders."

If some Tennessee districts decide to go with pencil and paper while others use computers, based on

the evidence from PARCC, it seems likely we'll see different results. In other words, it will be impossible to achieve a fair comparison. Students will be given scores that will not be an accurate reflection of their knowledge and ability.

This is to say nothing of the confusion caused by practicing for months for a computer test only to switch to pencil and paper at the last minute.

"Tennessee spent \$108 million on TNReady," said TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder. "It seems we should have also spent the time and energy necessary to get it right. Our students and teachers deserve a testing system that works and that is fair."

"It's not worth lost instructional time and frustrated kids if we don't end up with results that are valid and reliable," Crowder added. "We should be pursuing a system that is less focused on test prep and more focused on the type of hands-on learning that engages our students."

Are we TNReady? That question remains to be answered. Yet with school reputations or even closures on the line, and teaching careers hanging in the balance based on test scores, the question should have hopefully been answered a long time ago.

# Save hundreds with educator tax deductions

TEA knows every dollar counts in your family budget. That is why when tax time rolls around, it is important that you know the many tax deductions you qualify for as a professional educator.

First, TEA members can deduct 93.8 percent of your association dues for the 2015 tax year. The nondeductible portion of TEA dues is 6.2 percent related to certain lobbying and political activities, so you can deduct \$251.81 for active full-time teachers and \$125.91 for full-time education support professionals as miscellaneous itemized deductions.

Teachers may also deduct up to \$250 for classroom supplies purchased in 2014. This is a particularly advantageous deduction because it is an above-the-line deduction on Schedule A, which means you don't have to itemize to take it and it reduces your overall adjusted gross income.

Other situations faced by educators preparing their taxes include:

### Income from outside work like a summer job or tutoring

If there is no additional withholding on outside work, you want to be sure to avoid a penalty for under-withholding—i.e., when your overall tax liability exceeds the amount of tax you had withheld by certain margins.

The outside income should be reported on your federal tax return.

### Other unreimbursed employment expenses

You can deduct expenses for classroom supplies beyond the \$250 amount as unreimbursed employment expenses, which are defined as expenses that help you conduct your job even if they are not required.

However, these deductions are subject to a 2 percent limit on itemized deductions—this means you can only deduct the amount that exceeds 2 percent of your adjusted gross income on Schedule A.

### Continuing education

If you take courses that you pay for yourself, whether or not they are required for certification, the tax extender bill renewed the deduction for tuition and fees for college education for 2015 (see form 8917). This tax benefit allows you to deduct up to \$4,000 a year (the amount is lower for higher income brackets), and this again is an above-the-line deduction on form 1040.

Another option is the Lifetime Learning Credit for 20 percent of education expenses up to \$2,000. This is a credit, so it is taken off your tax liability dollar for dollar. However, it is nonrefundable, which means you have to have some tax liability for it to count against.

Be sure to work with a tax advisor or reliable tax software that clearly addresses your situation, especially if you are in the higher income brackets. And keeping receipts or a careful log is critical for the classroom supplies deduction and other tax benefits.

## TEA MEMBER TAX DEDUCTIONS

**TEA DUES:** **\$251.81**  
Active full-time teacher

**\$125.91**  
Active full-time support professional

**CLASSROOM SUPPLIES** **\$250.00**

**CONTINUING COLLEGE EDUCATION** Up to **\$4,000**