

TEPSA

Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association

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Testimony Against SB1000

Texas Elementary Principals & Supervisors Association

Lillie Beth Wilson, Principal, Outley Elementary School – Alief ISD

Senate Education Committee

March 27, 2007

Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) strongly urges you to vote against SB1000.

- Currently 80% of students with autism are being served in mainstream classrooms. This clearly demonstrates that outstanding programs already exist in Texas public schools. These best practices should be shared and replicated.
- SB1000 is an unnecessary bill. Currently a school's ARD (Admission, Review and Dismissal) Committee may determine that a student with autism will best have his or her needs met through an outside school or company if the school district is unable to serve the child using available district resources and services.
- SB1000 is a voucher bill that would drain millions of dollars from special education budgets at neighborhood public schools. We encourage legislators to support the Special Education Initiatives package that was recommended by the Governor-appointed Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders in 2006. We believe those recommendations will provide a real solution for improving the education of all students with disabilities in Texas public schools, rather than draining funds from the currently underfunded special education programs.

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Leading with Heart

From TEPSA's President

Spring holidays — a welcomed few days to be off schedule and on vacation. Observations of adults and children outside of school brought a time of reflection about my profession, family and friends, and the time I commit to all three.

At times, I remark on the few hours that parents are home during their child's waking hours. When I think about my own schedule and those of many elementary educators in Texas, we are no different.

Certainly, these are not the times for balanced schedules. But for most, the lack of balance in hours is managed because of our desire to see all children succeed. I returned home from a short trip and found a message to call Yousra, one of my teachers. My thoughts centered on the last time I was in her class — the 45-minute PDAS observation the week before spring break.

Securely held by a seat belt, Jinfrey began tapping the laptop tray and kicking the side of the portable chair. He was always the most active and happiest of our 30 autistic children. Jinfrey was waiting his turn, not so patiently. His teacher was completing her lesson with another autistic child. Zip-lock sandwich bags filled with bits of raisins and pretzels were nearby, as was an unusual toy — a blue plastic dinosaur-like head with a mouth that opened and closed as if to speak. She readied to teach Jinfrey as I entered. I sat down with my yellow pad and pencil in hand.

Those who choose to work with autistic students are very special. Their rewards usually come not with high test scores or student performances, but from single word utterances. These are victories celebrated amid spinning, kicking, twirling and yelling that speak the inner-thoughts of the children.

For days, Yousra told me, she had been working with him to say



Lillie Beth Wilson
TEPSA President

the word "toy." They were sitting so closely that their noses almost touched. Exaggerated smiles, expressions and gestures were crucial to attentiveness and responses. Tissues for sneezes and saliva, patience and repetitiveness were components of each lesson.

Jinfrey's excitement heightened as Yousra pulled up her chair. I scripted quickly as she began the compliance exercises. "Jinfrey, show me your eye. Good, Jinfrey," responded the teacher as she rewarded him with a raisin. Soon the dinosaur moved across the lap tray. She said "toy" — and he said "toy" too. His feet kicked faster, smile brightened and he said "toy" again. The teacher jumped up and down and they laughed together. The days of work to say one simple three-letter word had made for success. No award will replace the special moment in time I shared with Jinfrey and Yousra. It was a moment in time filled with love, work and play. I wrote down the ending time, closed my note pad and left smiling and sharing Jinfrey's new word with others.

A week later, Jinfrey drowned. That was the message the teacher had for me. My staff gathered for the memorial service. I was called upon to talk about Jinfrey. A quote by Henry Van Dyke used frequently at TEPSA meetings came to mind as I walked to the front of the church. "Be glad of life because it gives you the chance to love, work, play and look up at the stars." How appropriate a summary for the dedication of educators' time, choices made and lives lived each day with children.

Jinfrey helped us to know to "Value every moment that you have. Time is a coin you can spend only once. Use it, invest it, make it count and treasure it more because you shared it with someone special — special enough to have your time. Remember, time waits for no one" (Author unknown).

During these closing weeks of school, a balance may not be found in our schedules. Yet our choices affirm our dedication to children and have the understanding and support from our families for they know "Our Children's Future Begins Now!"

Five Texas Schools Nominated for National Title I Award

Five Texas elementary schools have been nominated for the national Title I Distinguished Schools Recognition Program Award by the Texas Education Agency. Nominated were: Bowie Elementary, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD; Garcia Elementary, Houston ISD; Hamlet Elementary, Amarillo ISD; Kelly Elementary, Hidalgo ISD; and Las Yescas Elementary, Los Fresnos ISD.

To be eligible, a school must have at least 70 percent of its Title I students passing the reading and mathematics sections of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills from 1993-96 and have low-income student populations of 50 percent or higher. The schools may not have received national Title I recognition within the previous three years.



Our Children's Future Begins Now!

TEPSA 1998 District Meetings

Dist.	Date	Time	Place	Speaker	Dist.	Date	Time	Place	Speaker
1	5/11	11 a.m.	To be announced	Sandi Borden	20	5/28	11:30 a.m.	Steak & Ale on Loop 410, San Antonio	