



# Legislature targets successful educational aide-to-teacher program for cuts

The Texas Legislature has proposed as part of House Bill 1 to end the program that has provided college funding for educational aides studying to become classroom teachers. Texas AFT initiated the idea for funding more than 15 years ago: If we are looking for teachers in shortage areas like special education and bilingual education, why don't we look in the classrooms where we already have talented teacher assistants with classroom experience, many of whom would love to get teacher certification, but can't afford it with their pay?

The legislature agreed with us, and a successful program was born whereby a current school employee of typical modest means with at least one year of recent classroom experience can attend any public college or university tuition-free while working on a teaching certificate. A win for all!

- **Section 54.214 of the Texas Education Code** has enabled educational aides to become teachers in Texas. In fact, 46,228 educational aides in Texas have availed themselves of this program.
- **Report on Student Financial Aid (for The Higher Education Coordinating Board in 2008)** reported that financial-aid directors at 160 public and private not-for-profit campuses said that *this educational-aide program is the one specific grant program they would least wish to see consolidated into a generic college-readiness grant program.*
- **Successful Transitions: The Texas Educational Aide Exemption Program: (Conducted by West Texas A&M University, 2003)** found that students in this program tended to be highly motivated and had significant experience in the school setting.
- **Focus on an Untapped Classroom Resource: Helping Paraprofessionals Become Teachers (SREB, 2003)** found that more than 80 percent of paraprofessionals who had graduated from the program were still teaching after three years.

Texas AFT understands that when times are difficult hard decisions have to be made. However, Texas AFT strongly believes programs like this one that assists educational aides to realize their dreams of teaching are good for students and good for Texas.

***Call your legislators at 1-888-836-8368 (give your state senator's or representative's name, and ask to be connected).***

***If you don't know the name of your senator or representative, go to [www.capitol.state.tx.us](http://www.capitol.state.tx.us) and click on "Who Represents Me" section.***



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