

Spring 2026

TAFE Newsletter

Texas Association of Future Educators

Monica Shaw, TAFE State Program Director

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From Our President:

JAXON TOMLINSON, CLEBURNE HIGH SCHOOL, AREA 10

Hello TAFE members!

My name is Jaxon Tomlinson, and I am so excited to serve as your 2026-2027 TAFE State President! I am an upcoming junior at Cleburne High School in Area 10. When I started my freshman year, I honestly was not sure what I wanted to do, but joining TAFE ended up being one of the best decisions I have made. This organization has had such a big impact on my life, and now I am excited for the opportunity to give back and make that same kind of impact on others.

Last year, I had the privilege of serving as the Area 10 Vice President. During that time, I learned so much from different chapters and met so many amazing people who all share the same goal of becoming educators. Being able to connect with others across the area was one of my favorite parts, and it is something I am really looking forward to continuing at the state level.

I am truly honored to serve as your State President. Thank you to the entire TAFE community for trusting me to represent you. I also want to recognize the previous state officer teams. Everything they have done has helped shape TAFE into what it is today, and because of their hard work, we have the chance to keep growing and improving this organization even more.

With Nationals coming up in June, who is excited for Portland? I wanted to share a few quick tips. First, start preparing early and do not wait until the last minute. I know it is easy to procrastinate, but putting in time now will make a huge difference. Also, don't just practice once and call it good. Keep practicing so you don't lose momentum. Ask for feedback from as many people as you can because that is how you improve. Most importantly, be confident in your work. You have put in the effort, so be proud of it. Take time to meet new people, not just from Texas but from other states too. And don't forget to enjoy the full experience. Competition is just one part of Nationals. Get involved, have fun, and represent yourself, your chapter, and Texas well.

This year, I have a few goals I am really passionate about. I want to increase participation at the chapter, area, and state levels so more members can get involved. I also want to strengthen connections between chapters, because when we are more connected, we are stronger as an organization. Another big goal of mine is to encourage leadership at every level, whether you are just starting out or already in a leadership role. I also want to make sure TAFE continues to be a place where everyone feels welcomed and included. Overall, I will do my best to represent each and every one of you to the best of my ability.

This year's theme, "Exploring the Wilderness of Teaching," shows how teaching is not always predictable. Just like exploring something new, every classroom is different. Every group of students brings new challenges and opportunities, and as future educators, we must be ready to adapt, think creatively, and keep pushing forward. It is all about growth, learning, and stepping outside of your comfort zone.

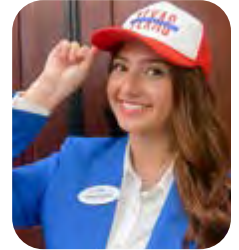
I am so excited for everything this year has in store. If you ever have questions, ideas, or just want to reach out, feel free to email me at jaxontomlinson56@gmail.com or message me on Instagram @tafe.jaxon. Let's make this an amazing year. Have a great rest of your spring semester, and I cannot wait to see what we accomplish together!



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Connections

**KATELYN COOKSY, OPPORTUNITY CENTRAL, FORNEY, AREA 11
TAFE VICE-PRESIDENT**



Hi everyone,

My name is Katelyn Cooksy, and I am incredibly honored to serve as your Vice President of TAFE. As a proud member of the Class of 2027, I am so excited to be part of a community that is dedicated to inspiring the next generation through education. Outside of TAFE, I am also involved in cheer, which has taught me so much about teamwork, leadership, and lifting others up values that I carry with me into everything I do.

My passion for education didn't just appear overnight, it was shaped by experiences and people who truly changed my life. I still remember being in middle school, unsure of myself and my abilities, when a few teachers saw potential in me that I couldn't yet see on my own. They took the time to encourage me, to challenge me, and most importantly, to believe in me. Their classrooms were places where I felt safe, inspired, and capable of more than I ever imagined. Because of them, I began to understand the true power of education not just as a pathway to knowledge, but as a force that can build confidence, shape identity, and open doors.

That experience is what drives me today. It's why I joined TAFE, and it's why I am so passionate about what we stand for. Education is more than lessons, it's about connection, impact, and the opportunity to change lives, just like those teachers changed mine. I want to be that person for someone else one day, and I know many of you feel the same way.

Last year, I had the privilege of serving as Area 11 Secretary, where I grew not only as a leader but also as an advocate for education. That role helped me see just how powerful our organization can be when we come together with a shared purpose. Now, as State Vice President, I am committed to continuing that work supporting each of you and making a meaningful difference in our schools and community.

TAFE is more than an organization, it's a family of future educators, leaders, and changemakers. I am so grateful to be part of it, and I cannot wait to see all that we will accomplish together this year.

With passion and purpose,

Katelyn Cooksy





KUDOS

**LIEV KUTEV, DENTON HIGH SCHOOL, AREA 10
TAFE SECRETARY**

Hi TAFE! My name is Liev Kutev, and I go to Denton High School! I am so excited to be your state secretary! I have been in TAFE for four years, and I love it! I'm thrilled to be able to help TAFE as much as it has helped me. Besides TAFE, I am also in my school's band, taking dual credit and IB classes, and always spending time with my loving friends and family – I truly wouldn't be anywhere without them.

In these newsletters, I will have two sections: KUDOS, which is meant to give gratitude to all the amazing people, organizations, and places who choose to help TAFE, as well as TRAFLES CONNECTIONS, where chapters will have the opportunities to share their experiences using our leadership framework.

KUDOS:

We want to take the time to thank the Hilton Anatole for allowing us to use their facilities for an amazing conference. The entire conference center was gorgeous; the statue garden was outstanding and was overall a fantastic experience!

Let's also thank all the people who made this year's Teach Tomorrow Summit possible. Thank you to all the judges, timekeepers, student helpers, and door monitors who graciously volunteered in order to keep all of our competitions running smoothly! We also want to send a gigantic thank you to Monica Shaw, Austin Ince, and all our amazing area coordinators for their great role in allowing this state conference to happen. We are also so grateful for this year's keynote speaker, Aric Bostick for getting TAFE fired up! Thank you to our amazing audio-visual team, all our amazing TAFE members who contributed to a great state conference. Lastly, we send our gratitude to our previous state officer team!



← Georgetown HS TAFE: Recreation

Georgetown TAFE hosted their first "TAFE Takes The Night" event. It consisted of fun illustrations, toys, food, and shows that the children all enjoyed. Looks great!



← J. Frank Dobie HS TAFE: Service

Dobie TAFE sent over members of their chapter to volunteer at the Laura Bush Elementary Fun Run. We love seeing our TAFE members be so helpful!



Clark HS TAFE: Fundraising →

Clark TAFE gets their chapter going by fundraising every Wednesday with some awesome concessions.

If you're in the mood for an ice cold snow cone or some hot ramen, Clark TAFE has you covered!



TRAFLES CONNECTIONS



CLARK TAFE thank you for Volunteering at your elementary school Bike Rodeo this spring! You went above and beyond to demonstrate TRAFLES by leading engaging bike stations and creating a fun, active learning environment for students. Your leadership and dedication to promoting education and community involvement truly made a lasting impact. Your commitment to our organization does not go unnoticed!



ROCKHILL TAFE We were so excited to see your presence at the Plant and Market Sale this spring! You clearly demonstrated fundraising one of the key TRAFLES by attending a well-organized event that connected your community while benefiting your chapter. Your initiative, collaboration, and strong effort made this event both memorable and worthwhile. Your dedication to expanding opportunities for your chapter is truly appreciated!



SFA TAFE thank you for your dedication in volunteering at Open Door this spring! You demonstrated TRAFLES in such a meaningful way by giving your time and energy to serve others, highlighting service, leadership, and appreciation. Your willingness to step in, support your community, and make a difference reflects the true heart of TAFE. Through your compassion and commitment, you made a lasting impact that truly represents what our organization stands for!



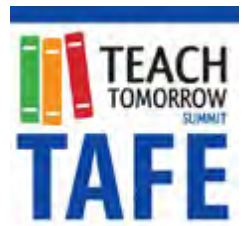
GEORGETOWN TAFE we loved seeing your first-ever TAFE Takes the Night event this March! You brought TRAFLES to life by creating a fun and engaging evening filled with activities for kids, highlighting recreation, and teaching. Your effort in planning such an exciting and welcoming event showed strong leadership and a true commitment to serving your community. The energy and enthusiasm you shared made this event both special and impactful, what an amazing way to represent TAFE!





PICTURE THIS: Virtual TAFE Scrapbook

COOPER SYKES, DUMAS HIGH SCHOOL, AREA 8
TAFE HISTORIAN



Hey there everyone! My name is Cooper Sykes, and I am a junior at Dumas High School. I am so honored to be serving as your 2026-2027 TAFE State Historian! This has been my first year in TAFE, and I am so glad I joined! I have competed in Public Service Announcement and Researching Learning Challenges, advancing to both at the national level. Outside of TAFE, I am involved in many clubs and organizations, such as 4-H, Leo Club, Student Council, NHS, yearbook, and the varsity tennis team. I look forward to growing with everyone and can't wait to see what we accomplish together!

In this year's newsletter, I will have a section titled, "Picture This," where I plan to highlight TAFE chapters and areas from around the state. If you have any photos, you would like me to include, email them to cooper.captures27@gmail.com.





From the Director

Monica Shaw | monica@tassp.org
512-443-2100 ext 8512

GOOD NEWS!!!

THANK YOU for the time, dedication, and patience you give your students each and every day. The opportunities you provide equip them with skills that will serve them well throughout their lives.

This year, more than **3,900 students and teachers attended the 42nd Annual Teach Tomorrow Summit**, reflecting our continued growth and momentum year after year. As we close out the school year, we are proud to end with **374 chapters**—a milestone that would not be possible without you.

Our success depends on the unwavering support you provide to your students and school communities as **Teacher Leaders**. We truly could not do this work without you. **Thank you!**

We are excited to announce our **2026–2027 theme, “Exploring the Wilderness of Teaching.”** Teaching is a journey that requires adaptability and flexibility as educators navigate daily interactions, evolving challenges, and the unexpected moments that arise in every classroom. We hope this theme will empower both students and teachers to continue purposefully building and strengthening their skill sets.

If you have questions, need assistance, or have suggestions for the future, please don’t hesitate to reach out to our office.

END OF THE YEAR AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

It is that time of year to recognize and celebrate your students for their hard work and accomplishments. Don’t forget to place your orders for **patches, pins, and honor cords** to ensure they arrive in time for your awards ceremonies.

To guarantee delivery for **May graduations**, all orders must be submitted by **April 30**. Please note that **TAFE policy** requires payment by **check or credit card** for all store orders, and items will not be shipped until payment is received.

For additional details and to place your order, please visit the [TAFE Store](#).



NATIONAL CONFERENCE

I am looking forward to attending the Educators Rising National Conference, June 20-23 in Portland, Oregon. This year we have 39 national delegates who will represent our voice at the national level. We can’t wait to see how their voice impacts on the national level.

Jasmon Sampy	Alief Taylor HS	Patricia Galvan	Cleburne HS	Paige Reeccer	Rock Hill HS
JayAnn Jamison	Andrews HS	Torri Whitehead	Cleburne HS	Callie Robertson	Rusk HS
Samantha Rodriguez	Andrews HS	Virginia McCoy	Cleburne HS	Reese Bryant	Sachse HS
Adyson Woody	Andrews HS	Janean Moya	Coleman HS	Audri Moore	Sachse HS
Emily Buck	Central HS	Liev Kutev	Denton HS	Georgia Recio	San Marcos HS
Grace Barrick	Clark HS	Elayna Kutev	Denton HS	Maeby Kraatz	San Marcos HS
Jaxon Tomlinson	Cleburne HS	Cooper Sykes	Dumas HS	Jaelynn Palacios	Veterans Memorial HS
Iris Martinez	Cleburne HS	Lily McClinton	Georgetown HS	Jessica Rodriguez	Veterans Memorial HS
Lainey Hannon	Cleburne HS	Annabelle Agnew	Kingwood HS	Aylin Gonzalez	West Mesquite HS
Kylie Lewis	Cleburne HS	Michael P Holland	Medina Valley HS	Gabrielle Roberts	Wylie HS
Arrisa Turner	Cleburne HS	Katie Tovar	Mount Vernon HS	Henley Pierce	Wylie HS
Aubrey Fisher	Cleburne HS	Katelyn Cooksy	Opportunity Central	Peyton Pilling	Wylie HS
Aileen Aguilar	Cleburne HS	Sophia Lim	Rock Hill HS	Jolie Daniel	Wylie HS

State competition was challenging, but at the national level, your students are competing against the very best from across the United States. I wish all competitors the very best of luck as they rise to this next level of excellence.

As a reminder, we will once again wear the **conference attire shown above** during the **Opening General Session on June 20**.

Use this [ORDER FORM](#) all orders must be placed by April 24. We will begin shipping orders the week of May 18



The TAFE Teacher Leader's Workshop will be **July 13-14, 2026**. It will be in conjunction with the FCSTAT Conference. We will be utilizing their two pre-conference days. For more information, please visit [Teacher Leader's Workshop](#).

News From EDUCATORS RISING

Competition Schedules Announced Next Month

Thank you to everybody who is competing this year for applying by the deadline! We have a record number of competitors joining us in Portland, Oregon, this year! PDK staff is working diligently to assign each competitor a presentation time! **Competition schedules will be posted on or around May 18, 2026**, on the competition page in the Student Resources section of the Educators Rising membership portal. **It is the competitor's responsibility to check these schedules for their times.** We will NOT be emailing each competitor or teacher leader individually. Unfortunately, due to the number of competitors, **we cannot take requests for dates or times to compete.**

We look forward to rooting for all of our competitors in June!



Join the Educators Rising Honor Society

The Educators Rising Honor Society recognizes students for their academic achievements and commitment to becoming quality teachers. Active-level members who complete the application process will **receive a certificate** and be able to **list that they are a member of the Educators Rising Honor Society on their college applications and resume.** Honor Society members are also able to purchase honor cords for a small fee if your school allows cords to be worn during graduation ceremonies.

Juniors or seniors with a 3.5 or above, can learn more about how they can join by [visiting our National Honor Society page](#) in their Member Portal. Applications are due by May 31, 2026. **To be included in the program book at the Educators Rising National Conference, students must apply by April 30, 2026.**



Celebrate Educators Rising National Signing Day on May 5

Upcoming graduates who have committed to pursuing a postsecondary degree in education are encouraged to participate in the **2026 Educators Rising National Signing Day on May 5, 2026!** Learn more on the Student Resources page in your Member Portal and follow [@educatorsrising](#) on Facebook, X, and Instagram as we share the celebration.

Mark Your Calendar!

2026-2027 TAFE Chapter Affiliation

Opens May 1, 2026 TAFE State Chapter dues \$95.00 • Educators Rising Student Dues \$15.00

• **EDUCATOR'S RISING NATIONAL CONFERENCE** - June 20-23, 2026 - [Portland, Oregon](#)

• **TEACHER LEADER WORKSHOP** - July 13-14, 2026 - Hilton Austin Downtown, Austin, Texas

Registration \$200.00 - Registration information online, [Teacher Leader's Workshop](#) (tafeonline.org)

• **FCSTAT ANNUAL CONFERENCE** - July 13-17, 2026 (Monday – Friday) Hilton Austin Downtown, Austin, Texas

Registration on the FCSTAT website [Click here](#)

• **AREA CONFERENCE REGISTRATION** - October 1-15, 2026

Area 1 – TBD

Area 3 – TBD

Area 5 – Nov. 2 @ Sam Houston

Area 7 – TBD

Area 9 – Nov. 7 @ Fabens High School

Area 11 – Nov. 14 @ Dallas Baptist University

Area 2 – TBD

Area 4 – Nov. 13 @ Lone Star College-University Park

Area 6 – Dec. 4 @ Texas A&M Texarkana

Area 8 – TBD

Area 10 – Nov. 15 @ Tarleton State University Ft. Worth

• **DEADLINE FOR STATE AND NATIONAL AFFILIATION TO COMPETE AT AREA CONFERENCES** - November 1, 2026

Chapters *MUST* pay their \$95.00 state affiliation and \$15.00 individual dues for all TAFE Members prior to competing at Area Conferences.

• **DEADLINE TO PAY NATIONAL AFFILIATION DUES** - December 1, 2026 - \$15.00 per student.

• **APPLICATION FOR STATE OFFICER BOARD OF DIRECTORS DUE** - Uploaded by January 15, 2027

• **DEADLINE FOR EARLY REGISTERING FOR TAFE TEACH TOMORROW SUMMIT** - January 29, 2027

• **DEADLINE TO UPLOAD PRESCORED MATERIALS LINKS FOR COMPETITIVE EVENTS** - February 5, 2027, 5:00 PM {CST}

• **CAPITOL LEADERSHIP IN AUSTIN, TX** - Late January/Early February 2027

• **TAFE TEACH TOMORROW SUMMIT** - March 4-6, 2027, San Antonio Convention Center, San Antonio, TX



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