



Summer 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!

I can't believe we are getting ready to head back to school! Does anyone else feel like summer was on 2x speed? It feels like we were just starting summer break, and now we're already preparing for a brand-new school year. It's definitely bittersweet, but I'm so excited for everything this year has in store for TAFE.

At the end of April, we hosted our annual Officer Training Workshop. We had a record-breaking number of attendees, and it was incredible getting to meet so many local and area officers from across Texas. The excitement and passion everyone brought made us even more excited for the year ahead, and I know your Area Officers have been working hard to make this year's conferences the best yet.

Soon after, the state officer team attended the June TAFE Board of Directors Meeting, where we learned more about how our organization operates and began planning for an exciting year. We then had the opportunity to represent TAFE at the TASSP Summer Workshop. It was such a great experience talking with administrators from across Texas and sharing how TAFE helps students discover their passion for education while developing leadership skills.

Next, we traveled to Portland, Oregon, for the Educators Rising National Conference. It was amazing to meet future educators from across the country, but what made me especially proud was seeing Texas show up in such a big way. With 1,059 registered attendees, Texas made up about one-third of the entire conference! Congratulations to everyone who competed, represented our state, and made us proud.

To wrap up the summer, we hosted our Teacher Leader Workshop in Austin. It was wonderful getting to connect with teacher leaders, answer questions, and help prepare

them for another successful year. A huge thank you goes to all of our presenters and volunteers who gave up part of their summer to invest in TAFE. We are so grateful for your willingness to share your experience and encourage others.

As we start this school year, I want to encourage you to get involved and help your chapter grow. Invite a friend to a meeting, host a fun recruitment event, or connect with a nearby middle school about starting a chapter. Every new member is another future educator who could make a difference in the lives of students one day.

At Officer Training Workshop, we introduced this year's Trailblazer Challenge, inspired by our theme, Exploring the Wilderness of Teaching. The State Officer Team has already had so much fun recognizing members with Trailblazer Bears, and we hope your area and chapter will join in too! Whether you participate in the Trailblazer Challenge or create your own way to recognize members, we would love to see it. Be sure to tag @tafestate on Instagram so we can celebrate the amazing things happening in your chapter!

I'm also excited to announce our very first Virtual Fall Workshop! Whether your area isn't hosting an in-person workshop or you simply want another opportunity to learn, this two-hour Zoom event will give members and officers valuable information to help prepare for a successful year. We hope you'll join us!

As summer comes to a close, I'm thankful for the memories we've made and even more excited for what's ahead. A new school year means new opportunities, new friendships, and new ways to grow as future educators. I truly believe this is going to be an incredible year for TAFE, and I can't wait to see all that your chapters accomplish.

If you ever have questions, ideas, or just want to say hello, feel free to email me at jaxontomlinson56@gmail.com or message me on Instagram @tafe.jaxon. Let's make this an amazing year, and I'll see you on the trail!

www.tafeonline.org

Connections

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



Hi TAFE Family, I hope everyone had an incredible summer filled with fun, relaxation, and time spent with family and friends. I hope you're returning refreshed and ready for another amazing year with TAFE! As we begin a new school year, we also begin a new chapter filled with opportunities to grow as leaders, learners, and future educators. This year is sure to be full of memorable experiences and I couldn't be more excited! Welcome back, and here's to a fantastic year of learning, leading, and inspiring. I can't wait to see all that you'll accomplish through TAFE!

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS:

If you're a member of TAFE, chances are you've already discovered a passion for making a difference in the lives of others. Whether you dream of teaching kindergarten, coaching high school students, becoming a special education teacher, or working in educational leadership, college is an exciting next step toward turning that passion into a profession and reality. As I am going into my senior year I thought I would share a few things I'm doing this school year to prepare for my future.

As I began exploring my options, I made sure to look for colleges that offer strong education programs, opportunities for classroom observations, student teaching experiences, and organizations that support future educators. I have started to visit campuses, talk with current education majors and ask professors about their programs in hope that I can find the right fit.

Here are 4 great ways to help you prepare your future of education:

- Stay involved in TAFE. Leadership, competitions, and service projects help you develop the communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills every great educator needs.
- Gain experience with students. Volunteer at local churches, tutor younger students, help with summer camps, or participate in school mentoring programs.
- Build relationships with teachers and mentors. The educators who inspire you today may become the mentors who help shape your future.
- Research scholarships. Many colleges and organizations offer scholarships specifically for aspiring educators.



Colleges with Collegiate Chapters participating in TAFE Events:

If you're hoping to continue your TAFE journey after high school, consider exploring one of these schools:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Austin Community College | • Texas A&M International University |
| • Dallas Baptist University | • Texas A&M University–Commerce |
| • LeTourneau University | • Texas A&M University–Kingsville |
| • Midland College | • Texas A&M University–San Antonio |
| • Our Lady of the Lake University | • Texas A&M University–Texarkana |
| • Prairie View A&M University | • Texas State University |
| • Sam Houston State University | • The University of Texas at Arlington |
| • Stephen F. Austin State University | • The University of Texas at Dallas |
| • St. Mary's University | • The University of Texas at San Antonio |
| • Tarleton State University | • The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley |
| • Texas A&M Higher Education Center at McAllen | • West Texas A&M University |

As you begin planning for what comes next, I hope that these tips give you a great starting point like they did for me! I know first hand that choosing where you are going to go to college and planning your future can feel really overwhelming at times but no matter where your journey leads, remember that every teacher was once a student with a dream just like me and you. I hope that this information helps you feel more confident and excited about your journey ahead. I can't wait to see all the amazing things you all accomplish. I know each of you have the potential to make a lasting impact on the future of education. Wishing you all the best as you prepare for your senior year, your future!





KUDOS

LIEV KUTEV, DENTON HIGH SCHOOL, AREA 10

TAFE SECRETARY

Hey TAFE! I hope you've all had an amazing summer! This summer felt like this went with a blink of an eye, but starting the school year back up always starts a fun, new chapter. This summer, I traveled with my family to Lake Tahoe and Las Vegas. With the state officer team, we attended the TAFE board meeting, nationals, and Teacher Leader Workshop/FCSTAT. Pretty soon, I'll be starting band camp!

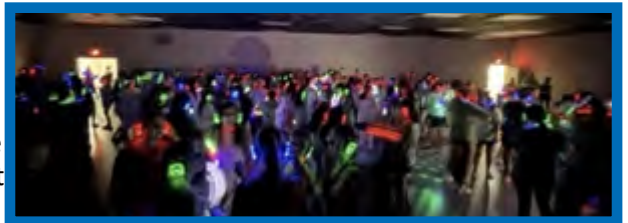
With the school year starting back up, your chapters will be more active! Please share photos of your chapter's activities to me either on Instagram (@kuttevv and @tafestate) or email me (lievkutev@gmail.com) photos with a description and your school name! I look forward to seeing all of your hard work this year, and I can't wait to see how great this year will be!

KUDOS:

Thank you to Highland Lakes Camp for hosting another amazing Officer Training Workshop. In total, we had 207 participants, including 53 state and area officers. The state officer team had such a great time meeting local officers, area officers, and teacher leaders. We hope that you all had as great of a time as we did! Shout out to our trailblazer winners, who were exceptional all throughout camp! Hopefully, you were all able to get great work done, and bond with your team. Thank you for attending this year, and let's make next year even better!

Texas also excelled at the Educators Rising National Conference! There were 3,800 attendees, and Texas showed up with 1,059 of them! This year, the conference's grand champion was La Promesa High School! Congratulations! We also had 44 first place/blue ribbon winners, 48 second place/red ribbon winners, and 53 third/white ribbon winners! WOW! Great job TAFE, great way to represent Texas! Congratulations once again!

Lastly, we want to thank all the veteran and new teacher leaders who attended the Teacher Leader Workshop. Thank you to our wonderful presenters such as Clark High School's chapter, Mike Richardson, Journey Harris and Jacque Roe, Connie Thornell, Monica Hunter and Kim Gorman, and last but not least Monica Shaw. All of the presentations were amazing! Let's also congratulate Maria Besa for winning our trailblazer challenge!



RECREATION - TAFE Officer Training Camp

The dance party at training camp was a blast! With three different channels with different kinds of music, everyone could find their own tune to jam out to.



LEADERSHIP - J. Frank Dobie HS

The Dobie HS TAFE officers had a planning meeting before school started to be prepared for the entire year! What a great way to stay on top of things!

FUNDRAISING - Rusk HS

Rusk HS held a TAFE bake sale. There were different assortments of cookies and pastries. Looks tasty!





PICTURE THIS: Virtual TAFE Scrapbook

COOPER SYKES, DUMAS HIGH SCHOOL, AREA 8
TAFE HISTORIAN

Hey TAFE!

It's been a great few months getting to serve as your State Historian. I can't believe how fast this summer went! I feel like just yesterday we were at Teach Tomorrow Summit getting to know each other. Since then, I've loved getting to connect with so many more of you at Officer Training Camp, Nationals, and even some teacher leaders at our workshop!

One of my favorite parts of this role has been seeing all the memories you've shared. I've loved looking through every post you've tagged the state account in, so keep them coming!

Together, we've explored Officer Training Camp, the TAFE Board of Directors Meeting, the TASSP Workshop, the Educators Rising National Conference, the Teacher Leader Workshop, and the FCSTAT Conference. Each event has brought new experiences, new friendships, and unforgettable moments. And don't forget; if you want your photos included next time, email them to cooper.captures27@gmail.com! With all that being said, I'd love to share a few of my favorite moments from the past few months.



Area 7 officers work hard planning their area conference at Officer Training Camp!



TAFE State President Jaxon Tomlinson exhibiting TAFE at the TASSP conference.



Students from Area 10 after participating in some area bonding activities!



TAFE members from Area 2 come up with ideas for their area conference!



The 2026-2027 Board of Directors.



Texas really showed up for this year's Educators Rising National Conference!



Your favorite TAFE team takes on their first day in Portland, Oregon!



Texas earned an impressive 53 voting delegate positions at this year's national conference!



Mrs. Shaw and the TAFE State Officers connect with others from around the nation at the Oregon convention center!



We found National Ambassador Sean Daley, and just had to get a photo!



Georgetown TAFE shows out in Oregon!



Collegiate TAFE members from Tarleton State University represent us well at nationals!



Competitors from the Rusk High School TAFE Chapter pose with their nationals awards. Way to go everyone!



Our Area Coordinators helped us with registration as we headed into the Teacher Leader Workshop. Thank you for helping, we couldn't have done it without you!



TAFE State Officers pose with Maria Besa, their choice for a real teacher leader TAFE Trailblazer!



Our State Officers exhibited at the FCSTAT Conference, helping spread the word about how great TAFE really is!



From the Director

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

Summer flew by! It's hard to believe that area conferences are just around the corner. We are gearing up for another exciting season of learning, leadership, and collaboration.

The State Officer Team is continuing our chapter leadership challenge with this year's theme, Exploring the Wilderness of Teaching with the #Trailblazer Challenge, a program designed to recognize chapter members who go above and beyond expectations by taking initiative, demonstrating strong character, and embracing the journey of becoming future educators.

There are many ways to get started:

- Recognize a Student of the Month who demonstrates leadership, growth, or a positive impact within your chapter.
- Spotlight a Teacher of the Month with a note of appreciation, a treat, or a small gift to recognize their support and dedication.

- Create a Trailblazer Board to showcase and celebrate your honorees throughout the year.

Choose the activities that best fit your chapter and members. After all, trailblazers don't wait for a path to appear... they create one!

Texas Shines at Educators Rising National Conference

TAFE showed up in a big way at the Educators Rising National Conference! Congratulations to every student, teacher leader, and chapter who represented Texas with excellence. We are incredibly proud of each of you and all that you accomplished. Thank you for representing Texas with professionalism, dedication, and pride. We can't wait to see all that you'll achieve next!

Texas TAFE Takes the National Stage

National Champions 1st Place

Middle School	2
Junior Varsity	16
Varsity	13
Collegiate	3

2nd Place Winners

Middle School	3
Junior Varsity	12
Varsity	14

3rd Place Winners

Middle School	3
Junior Varsity	9
Varsity	12
Collegiate	3

National Ribbon Recognition

Blue Ribbons

JV: 1 | Varsity: 8 | Collegiate: 1

Red Ribbons

JV: 4 | Varsity: 13 | Collegiate: 2

White Ribbons

JV: 3 | Varsity: 22 | Collegiate: 1

Clean Sweeps	10
Registered Attendees	1059
Voting Delegate	53



Grand Champions: La Promesa High School



Texas Dominates the Top 10

Middle School: 10 | Junior Varsity: 88 | Varsity: 105 | Collegiate: 11

As a reminder, Safie Gaye is now serving as our Program Assistant. Thank you for your continued patience and support as she settles into her new role.

For assistance with the following, please contact Safie Gaye at sgaye@tassp.org:

- Registration
- Membership dues
- Invoices
- Website forms
- Teacher leader updates
- Login information

For questions regarding the following, please contact Monica Shaw at monica@tassp.org:

- TAFE events
- Starting a chapter
- Membership
- Program development
- Competitive events
- Sponsorship opportunities

Thank you for helping us ensure your inquiries are directed to the appropriate team member for the fastest assistance.

2026-2027 Membership Renewal is Now Open!

Renew your chapter's TAFE and Educators Rising memberships today. Please note that state and national affiliation must be completed before students are eligible to compete at Area Conferences this fall. This requirement is mandatory.

As a reminder, Educators Rising membership dues must be paid by December 1. All Educators Rising dues will be invoiced directly to Teacher Leaders by the TAFE office. For additional details about membership requirements, dues, and the invoicing process, please visit the [Educators Rising Membership Information](#) page.

Don't wait until conference registration opens. Complete your membership renewal early to ensure your students are eligible to participate in all TAFE and Educators Rising opportunities.

Support for New Teacher Leaders and Mentors

If you're a new chapter leader and would like guidance as you get started, feel free to reach out to me at monica@tassp.org. I'll connect you with an experienced mentor in your area who can offer support and help you navigate your new role.

What's New and What's Next:

Fall Workshops are gearing up to begin! These workshops are designed to introduce students to TAFE and help them prepare for Area Conferences. There is no registration fee to attend; however, some areas may charge a fee to cover lunch expenses.

If you are unable to attend your designated Area Fall Workshop, don't worry. You are welcome to attend a workshop hosted by another area if the date works better for your schedule.

For those who cannot attend in person, the State Officer Team will host a Virtual Fall Workshop on **September 16 from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**, providing the same valuable information and preparation opportunities online.

Area 1 - N/A

Area 2 - Sept. 26 @ CAST Teach @JP Steven's High School

Area 3 - Sept. 12 @ San Marcos High School

Area 4 - Sept. 18 @ Lone Star College- University Park

Area 5 - Sept. 25 @ Lone Star College- Montgomery

Area 6 - Sept. 23 @ Region 8 Service Center

Area 7 - Sept. 12 @ ESC 14

Area 8 - N/A

Area 9 - N/A

Area 10 - Sept. 19 @ Tarleton State University @ Ft. Worth

Area 11 - Aug. 29 @ Wylie High School

Virtual Fall Workshop: September 16 1:30-3:30p

Area Conference Registration will be open October 1 through October 16, with Area Conferences taking place shortly afterward in November and December. Conference dates and locations are available under each area tab on the www.tafeonline.org website.

Please note: The Area Conference registration fee has increased to \$40 per attendee.

Area Coordinators:

- Carrie Swisher oversees Areas 3 and 8
- Connie Thornell oversees Areas 4, 5 and 9
- Ann Grimes oversees Areas 6 and 11
- Jerri Cox oversees Area 7 and 10



Online Meetings

Virtual Chapter Meetings - the State Officer Team is excited to introduce virtual, statewide chapter meetings designed to give members from across Texas the opportunity to connect, learn, and grow together. These meetings will provide valuable leadership development, networking opportunities, and chapter engagement ideas. All meetings below will be held virtually and will begin at 6:00p. [CLICK HERE](#)

- Tuesday, August 25
- Thursday, October 22
- Thursday, February 18

Prospective Candidate Meetings are designed to help students better understand the state officer application and election process. During these virtual sessions, we will review candidate expectations, answer questions, and provide insight into the responsibilities and commitments of serving as a state officer. [All meetings](#) will be held virtually and will begin at 7:00p.

- Tuesday, September 29
- Tuesday, October 27
- Tuesday, November 10
- Tuesday, January 5



43rd Annual Teach Tomorrow Summit

43rd Annual Teach Tomorrow Summit planning is underway, and we are excited to be at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio, March 4-6, 2027. As details are finalized, they will be posted on the [Teach Tomorrow Summit](#) events page, so check back periodically for information.

- **Teach Tomorrow Summit Registration cost increase:**
 - o Early Bird - \$105 per attendee
 - o Late Registration - \$135 per attendee
 - o **Reminder: No unpaid people can attend any portion of the conference. This includes parents, judges and spectators.**



Competition Updates:

- **New Rubrics and Prompts will be released at the end of August.**
- **Two New Competitions and One New Contest will be introduced this year!**
Final event names are still being determined; however, the focus areas are:
 - o Competition: Design and defend a future-focused school concept.
 - o Competition: Develop an app that addresses a need or solves a problem within the community.
 - o Contest: Interactive Learning Space.
- **Rubric Updates:** Several event rubrics have been reviewed and revised to better differentiate expectations by division level. Once the new materials are released, please review all rubrics and guidelines carefully to ensure you and your students are familiar with the updated requirements.
- **Educators Rising National Conference Update:** Substitutions are only permitted for team events. For dual events, if a qualifying pair advances to the National Conference and one partner is unable to attend, the remaining student may still compete as an individual using the qualifying entry.
- *Please continue to tag us on Instagram (@tafestate) or [submit your photos here](#) to be included in future newsletters or on the website.*



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Mark Your Calendar!

2026-2027 TAFE Chapter Affiliation

TAFE State Chapter dues \$95.00 • Educators Rising Student Dues \$15.00

AUGUST 31 DEADLINE FOR TAFE STATE AFFILIATION - Chapters must pay a \$95.00 state chapter affiliation fee

AREA FALL WORKSHOPS - September

Area 1 – N/A	Area 7 – Sept. 12 @ ESC 14
Area 2 - Sept. 26 @ CAST Teach @JP Steven's High School	Area 8 - N/A
Area 3 - Sept. 12 @ San Marcos High School	Area 9 – N/A
Area 4 - Sept. 18 @ Lone Star College- University Park	Area 10 – Sept. 19 @ Tarleton State University @ Ft. Worth
Area 5 - Sept. 25 @ Lone Star College- Montgomery	Area 11 - Aug. 29 @ Wylie High School
Area 6 - Sept. 23 @ Region 8 Service Center	Virtual Fall Workshop: September 16 1:30-3:30p

OCTOBER 1 REGISTRATION FOR AREA CONFERENCES AND COMPETITIVE EVENTS OPENS

OCTOBER 16 REGISTRATION FOR AREA CONFERENCES AND COMPETITIVE EVENTS CLOSES 5:00 PM CST

OCTOBER 27-29 ELF TESTING FOR AREA 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, AND 11

NOVEMBER 2 DEADLINE FOR EDUCATORS RISING AFFILIATION

All TAFE members must be registered with EdRising prior to competing at Area Conferences

NOVEMBER 17-19 ELF TESTING FOR AREA 3, 6 AND 7

AREA CONFERENCES - November / December

Area 1 - Nov. 7 @ Veterans Memorial HS - Mission	Area 7 - Dec. 4 @ McMurray University
Area 2 - Nov. 14 @ Texas A&M Victoria	Area 8 - Nov. 7 @ West Texas A&M University
Area 3 - Dec. 5 @ ACC Highland Campus	Area 9 - Nov. 7 @ Fabens High School
Area 4 - Nov. 13 @ Lone Star College-University Park	Area 10 - Nov. 14 @ Tarleton State University @Ft. Worth
Area 5 - Nov. 2 @ Sam Houston	Area 11 - Nov. 14 @ Dallas Baptist University
Area 6 - Dec. 4 @ Texas A&M Texarkana	

DECEMBER 1 DEADLINE TO PAY FOR EDUCATORS RISING AFFILIATION FEES THROUGH TAFE OFFICE

\$15.00 individual dues for all TAFE members prior to competing at Area Conferences.

DECEMBER 14 TEACH TOMORROW SUMMIT REGISTRATION OPENS

JANUARY 15 APPLICATION TO RUN FOR STATE OFFICER POSTED BY 5:00 PM CST

JANUARY 15 APPLICATIONS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS BY 5:00 PM CST

JANUARY 26 REGISTERING FOR COMPETITIVE EVENT TIMES, STUDENT VOLUNTEER AND JUDGING SLOTS OPENS

JANUARY 28 REGISTERING FOR COMPETITIVE EVENT TIMES CLOSES @ 5:00 PM CST

JANUARY 29 TEACH TOMORROW SUMMIT EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION ENDS

FEBRUARY 1 PRESCORING WINDOW OPENS

NOTE: All Form ID Numbers have changed, double check numbers before uploading.

FEBRUARY 5 DEADLINE UPLOADING LESSON PLANS, POSITION PAPERS, AND VIDEO LINKS FOR COMPETITIVE EVENTS BY 5:00 PM CST

FEBRUARY 1 EDUCATORS RISING CONFERENCE REGISTRATION OPENS

MARCH 4-6 TAFE TEACH TOMORROW SUMMIT - San Antonio Convention Center, San Antonio

APRIL 1 EDUCATORS RISING COMPEITION APPLICATION AND EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION CLOSES

APRIL 7-14 EDUCATORS RISING COMPETITION VERFICATION PERIOD

APRIL 22-24 LOCAL, AREA & STATE OFFICER TRAINING WORKSHOP - Highland Lakes Camp and Conference Center

JUNE 17-20 EDUCATORS RISING NATIONAL CONFERENCE - Columbus, Ohio

JULY 1 2027-2028 CHAPTER AFFILIATION OPENS

EDUCATORS RISING NATIONAL CONFERENCE LOCATIONS

June 19 - 22, 2028 - Kissimmee, Florida
June 21 - 24, 2029 - Portland, Oregon