

## The Texas Classroom Teachers Association Wants to Get to Know More About You

TCTA greatly appreciates you taking the time to participate in our candidate survey. Please fill out each form section as your answers will be available to our 45,000 members across the state and the general public on TexasTeachersVote.org. Remember to click the SUBMIT button in the Completed section when you are finished.

**Name** Brad Buckley

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**Occupation** Veterinarian

**Candidate Information** State Representative- District 54

**Question 1: Most active teachers and other school employees don't have access to high quality, affordable health insurance. The state contributes \$75/month toward insurance premiums, and districts are required to pay \$150 (though many pay more). Even combined, these amounts are far less than what the state pays for state employee coverage (\$625/month for individual coverage, over \$1200/month for family coverage). How would you address school employee health insurance needs? Would you vote to increase the state's contribution toward premiums?**

The cost of healthcare coverage continues to consume more and more of teacher and staff salaries. I would support increasing the state's contribution toward healthcare premiums and would look at ways to lower the cost of healthcare coverage in the future.

**Question 2: Do you support TRS as the defined benefit retirement system it is today, or would you consider converting it to a defined contribution system similar to a 401(k)?**

I support TRS's current defined benefit plan. The current plan has always been an incentive to attract new educators to the profession and must continue to do so.

**Question 3: What changes, if any, do you believe need to be made to the current public school funding system?**

I'm proud of the gains made in HB 3 during the 86th Legislative Session. We must continue to build on those successes and fund our public schools at levels to provide high quality educational outcomes for all Texas children.

**Question 4: Although there are many issues on which virtually all school employees are united, there are times when the interests of administrators/school boards and teachers/other school employees diverge. Do you plan to create a mechanism to regularly communicate with teachers about issues that affect public education? If so, how will you do so?**

It has been my practice, as a legislator, to engage individual campuses within my district and to visit schools and classrooms regularly. Whether to talk about state government, participate in career fairs as a veterinarian, or to read to a group of students on Dr. Seuss Day, these experiences allow me to have frank discussions with classroom teachers and experience the work they do in real time.

**Question 5: Under current law, school employees can choose to have professional association dues deducted from their paychecks, entirely at the employees' discretion. Do you support**

**continuing to allow this convenience or would you consider eliminating the ability to deduct dues via payroll, and why?**

I would support continuing to allow dues to be deducted from payroll.

**Question 6: Do you believe that teachers should be required to be certified or do you think there are some circumstances in which certification should be waived?**

Ideally, teachers should be certified to ensure that we have qualified and knowledgeable professionals teaching our students. However, there are instances in which professionals in career and technical fields could provide valuable instruction to Texas students and this must be considered.

**Question 7: Do you believe that some part of teacher pay should be based on a student's performance on a standardized test?**

No, I do not believe teacher pay should be linked in any way to standardized test results.

**Question 8: Blended learning and the use of technology have been helpful, temporary tools utilized by public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, but research has consistently shown that virtual schools lag far behind brick and mortar schools in performance, and they avoid much of the accountability required of traditional public schools. What do you think about the attempts to expand full-time virtual schools?**

There is no doubt that students learn best in a classroom with an outstanding Texas teacher. Virtual schooling has played a role during the COVID-19 pandemic but Texas students will be best served by returning to the traditional school setting as soon as safety possible.

**Question 9: Rigorous research on statewide programs across the country shows significant, sustained negative impacts on academic achievement of students using private school vouchers compared to their peers who remained in public schools. Will you oppose attempts to use limited public school funding for private vouchers or tax credit scholarships? If not, why do you support private school vouchers?**

I will oppose any attempt to impose vouchers or tax credit scholarships in Texas.

**Question 10: As part of an effort to address disproportionality in the discipline system, some advocates promote limiting or eliminating disciplinary actions that remove students from the regular classroom (like sending students to the campus behavior coordinator, in-school suspensions, or alternative disciplinary placements). Others believe teachers need to be able to remove disruptive students from the classroom so that their behavior can be addressed without disrupting the education of other students. What is your position on this issue?**

It is important to maintain an inclusive and disciplined classroom environment so all students can be successful. Texas classroom teachers must be provided training in how to recognize social and cultural differences while maintaining an atmosphere where all kids can learn. However, a classroom teacher must have the ability to remove a disruptive student for the well-being of the other students.

**Question 11: Texas law has established approaches for supportive school climates, including encouraging districts to implement positive behavioral intervention systems and restorative justice programs, and establishing student mental health as a priority. The responsibility for implementation of these programs typically falls upon teachers with already full loads. Will you promote the hiring of sufficient personnel in schools such as campus behavior coordinators, mental health professionals, behavior interventionists, and others to better ensure a supportive school climate?**

It must be a priority to provide our schools with adequate mental health and behavioral professionals and not expect our classroom teachers to take on yet another task.

**Question 12: Districts of Innovation were approved by the legislature to allow school districts**

**additional flexibility. To date, among the top waivers obtained through this process are exemptions for revised school start dates, permission for larger class sizes without parental notification, and relaxed certification standards. Is that what was intended, or do you think the DOI provision needs to be revisited by the legislature?**

I believe it is always important to re-visit policy changes to make certain the intent and spirit of the change is being fulfilled. The DOI's can be useful in allowing more local flexibility to meet the needs of communities but we must make certain that the program is being used as intended.

**Question 13: Will you oppose any legislation similar to the Districts of Innovation language that could take away important educator rights and benefits such as contracts, planning and preparation periods, and duty-free lunch, or removing parental notification for when a teacher is not certified for the class they are teaching?**

I will oppose any legislation to that effect.

**Question 14: Given the varying levels of COVID-19 infection through the state and the potential for additional waves of infection, health experts anticipate that schools will need to close and re-open multiple times during the school year. Who do you believe should make these decisions, and on what basis? Should the re-opening of local schools to on-site instruction be governed by public health expert developed metrics (i.e., infection rates, trajectories, hospital capacity and other commonly accepted data)?**

Local school districts should be empowered to make decisions concerning their opening and closing plans in collaboration with local health authorities.