



Board Briefs

Report on the April 2008 meeting of the TASB Board of Directors, TASB Offices, Austin

Call for Resolutions

With the conclusion of highly successful grassroots meetings, TASB moves into its next phase of developing the Advocacy Agenda. Districts should act now to help shape TASB's position on issues during the legislative session and with other governmental entities. Boards can submit resolution proposals for the 2008-10 Advocacy Agenda using the form on the GR Web site (www.gr.tasb.org). All suggested resolutions will be considered by the TASB Board, and ultimately, by the Delegate Assembly for adoption. Individual school boards may submit resolutions until July 1, after which submitted resolutions will be considered on an emergency basis only.

Attendance at the grassroots meetings was up 33 percent over the previous year and most attendees remarked favorably about the small group discussions to formulate position statements and large group discussion to achieve consensus on key issues for the region. The interchange helped identify hot topics and solicit legislative issues most important to each school district in attendance. At these meetings representatives also were elected to the Legislative Advisory Council (LAC), which will use the regional priorities to construct a draft statewide legislative program. LAC meetings are set April 19 and May 3 in Austin.

At its summer meeting, the Board will review issues identified by region and finalize the priorities that will be recommended to the TASB Board and Delegate Assembly. Member involvement in this entire process will ensure that TASB is clearly communicating critical issues to state lawmakers and other decision makers.

Board members also are being asked to consider implementing an Adopt a Legislator program in their districts. A letter recently went to board presidents outlining potential activities which could help build

stronger relationships with legislators. The hope is that by creating closer connections with district leaders, lawmakers will better understand and represent district needs when considering important education-related legislation.

Membership Survey on Line

Every two years the Association conducts a survey to assess members' attitudes about TASB, identify needs, and track demographics. E-mails have been sent to all board members, superintendents, and education service center directors with a link to the online survey. The information gleaned from this poll is valuable in assessing issues deemed critical to the membership.

TASB does not have e-mail addresses for all members, so a postcard was mailed to everyone to share the survey's Web address and deadline of April 30. The data will be used specifically in planning and improving service performance, program reviews, and as input for TASB strategic planning updates. All trustees and superintendents are urged to share their comments to help shape the Association's future and keep TASB in touch with members' viewpoints and concerns. A link to the survey can be found on the TASB Web site under MyTASB or the audience pages for board members and superintendents.

Rodríguez Joins Board

Manuel Rodríguez Jr. of Houston ISD was elected as the newest addition to the TASB Board. He is filling the interim large district seat in Region 4, position D. He has served on his local board since 2003 and held the positions of assistant secretary, second vice-president, first vice-president, and president. In addition, he is vice-president of the Mexican American School Board

Association, member and former director of the Gulf Coast Association of School Boards, and member of the Pecan Park Civic Club.

Among his awards, he has received the HISD Commendation for Meritorious Service as well as a Community Service award from the Texas House of Representatives for his long-time dedication in working with Houston youth. A graduate of Stephen F. Austin High School, Rodríguez earned an associate of arts degree in social sciences from Solano Community College and studied organizational behavior management and marketing at the University of Houston. He is founder and president of the MARVAA Corporation, which provides assistance in education, housing, and community involvement.

Pampa Earns Recognition

Pampa ISD joins a select cadre of districts that has met specific criteria to be recognized in the Association's Good Governance Program. Previous honorees include Big Spring, Castleberry, Northside (Bexar County), Richardson, and Weatherford ISDs.

To be considered for recognition, a district must undertake the TASB governance audit, notify TASB when the audit is complete, be rated acceptable or higher in the accountability system two of the four most recent years, have rising assessment participation, achieve acceptable or higher in the FIRST rating system, and demonstrate that all board members have met training requirements. Districts also are interviewed to obtain information on the effects of the audit, ability of the leadership team to respond to academic challenges in the district, and effect on the public's confidence in the district's leadership.

Summer Leadership North and South

Registration and housing are open for the Summer Leadership Institute (SLI), hosted in two cities this year. SLI South will be held June 12-14 in San Antonio and SLI North June 19-21 in Fort Worth. Over the years the popularity of SLI has continued to grow, and the conference now is being offered twice to allow districts to choose the date and location that best suits their needs. The summer event provides new board members with immediate training following the May elections, offers newly elected board presidents the training they need to lead effectively, and provides experienced trustees with current practices and information about key concerns facing Texas school districts.

General session speakers and 90 percent of the breakout sessions will be the same at both locations. Thursday's main speaker, Jane Brock, will share her experiences as a teacher of the blind who then became blind. She has been the subject of the television movie *More Than Meets the Eye: The Jane Brock Story*. Salome Thomas-El, Friday's speaker, will discuss his award-winning work with inner city children in Philadelphia. Staff is projecting at least 2,100 participants in San Antonio and up to 600 at the inaugural event in Fort Worth.

Community Survey Service

TASB currently is testing the idea of providing community survey services to districts. Such instruments are commonly used to evaluate stakeholder wants and needs as part of a district's strategic planning or as precursors to facilities' studies and redistricting processes. While many districts have used market research firms to conduct community surveys, the price is often prohibitive. TASB hopes to leverage its experience with survey research to provide comprehensive surveys at a lower cost. Only one pilot is being conducted this year, but others will be scheduled in 2009. Results of the pilot program and recommendations will be reported back to the Board this summer.

Convention Update

Planning is well underway for the annual convention in Dallas September 26-28. Friday's general speaker is Sir Ken Robinson, a specialist in the importance of creativity to learning. He was featured at the January MidWinter Conference for administrators and was well received. Back by popular demand, the convention schedule again includes a full day of breakout sessions Friday and ending the convention Sunday at noon. A few changes also are being made in response to member feedback. These include:

- Adding an early morning breakout session time slot on Friday morning to provide more training time that day
- Opening the exhibit hall at 10 a.m. on Friday and closing it at 4 p.m. on Saturday
- Moving up the Sunday general session to 9 a.m. in hopes of increasing attendance.

As of early April, more than 85 percent of the exhibit hall space has been sold, and convention sponsorships are at record highs.

Webinars a Success

In a move to make information more available to people running for a local board this year, TASB provided candidate workshops via the Internet. Candidates could watch and interact in a live-video stream webinar workshop or view a recorded video on the TASB Web site at their convenience. Viewers watching the recorded workshops could send questions or comments to TASB for response the same or next business day.

As of April 15, more interested parties had watched the online presentation than had attended the live workshops in recent years. The candidate webinar will be accessible via the TASB Web site throughout the election season.

More Online Activity

TASB began a series of live webinars on board governance last December. The idea of a webinar series was to offer information and training on topics currently facing the board, through an easily accessible, inexpensive media. Board members can watch the webinars as individuals or as a team.

Initial topics included the new board governance requirements from HB 2563 and superintendent evaluations. Coming topics include quick tips for new board members. The TASB Leadership Team Services division plans to present one live webinar per month through July and then assess member response to the initiative.

Broad Finalists Announced

Aldine and Brownsville ISDs are among a group of five finalists for the 2008 Board Prize for Urban Education from the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. This annual \$1 million award honors urban school districts across the country that demonstrate the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement. In addition, the award spotlights districts that also are reducing achievement gaps among ethnic groups and between high- and low-income students. In October the winner will be announced and receive \$500,000 in scholarships for graduating seniors. Each of the four finalist districts will receive \$125,000 in scholarships.

LAF Overview

Directors heard a report on the Legal Assistance Fund (LAF), which supports school districts that are defending legal challenges with a potential to affect public schools statewide. In most of its cases, the Fund provides assistance in the form of an *amicus curiae*, or "friend of the court," brief. It explains to the court why a school district should win its case and how the court's decision will affect other Texas school districts.

In the 20 years since its inception, the LAF has filed over 100 "friend of the court" briefs and undoubtedly played an important role in the outcome of several significant court cases. Administering the fund is a seven-member board that includes three TASB officers, two TASA officers, and two members from the Texas Council of School Attorneys. Currently, about 700 school districts are members.

Special Committees Report

The Future Vision Team meets again in May to complete discussion of how emerging trends will impact public education and TASB services. As a next step, the team will identify TASB's long-range vision over the next six to eight years, providing a framework for the strategic plan update in the fall. Directors will receive the final report at the summer meeting, along with any recommendations to the Board for adoption or consideration in the future. In addition, the TASB Board and Executive Director Evaluation Special Committee continues to meet to review evaluation tools and process. Work of this group will be finalized in coming months.

Coop Keeps Growing

The Local Government Purchasing Cooperative membership is at an all-time high of 2,400 and the annual purchasing volume reached \$288 million for the period of September 2007 through March 2008. This is an increase of more than 20 percent over the same period a year ago.

The Coop board recently awarded bids for gymnasium equipment, public safety and fire house supplies, radio communications and surveillance equipment, pipe-bursting equipment, residential and commercial garbage/recycling containers, water treatment chemicals and equipment, energy saving lighting products, and a supplemental bid for technology products, software, and supplies.

Mark Those Calendars

TASB's annual spring workshops continue across the state. Topics are selected by area school board members and conducted by a mix of TASB staff, legal professionals, state representatives, ESC staff, board members, and university staff. Remaining workshops include:

- April 22 **Lubbock**, Region 17 ESC; **Wichita Falls**, Region 9 ESC
April 23 **Houston**, Region 4 ESC; **Stephenville**, Tarleton State University
May 7 **Alpine**, Sul Ross State University
May 8 **Uvalde**, Sul Ross State University, Southwest Texas Junior College branch
May 13 **Commerce**, Texas A&M University–Commerce
May 14 **Canyon**, West Texas A&M University; Temple, Temple High School
May 15 **Abilene**, Region 14 ESC; **Nacogdoches**, Stephen F. Austin State University
May 16-17 **South Padre**, South Padre Island Convention Center
May 21 **Victoria**, University of Houston–Victoria
May 22 **El Paso**, Cattleman's Steakhouse in Fabens

In Other Action, the Board Approved:

- Minutes for the January 12, 2008, Board of Directors meeting
- Engagement of auditors for 2007-08
- Agreements related to the creation of the TASB Energy Cooperative
- Amendments to the 2007-08 budget
- Amendments to TASB Board policy on expense reimbursement

The next meeting of the TASB Board of Directors is July 26 in Galveston.

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