



Board Briefs

*Report on the December 2011 meeting of the TASB Board of Directors
TASB Headquarters, Austin*

Grassroots Meetings Launch

In January, board members begin the important process of identifying issues critical to our public schools. Every trustee is urged to participate in the upcoming grassroots meetings to ensure TASB is clearly communicating key issues to state legislators and other decision makers.

The TASB regional grassroots meetings are held in even-numbered years to develop advocacy priorities with statewide impact. An online survey was distributed electronically to all school board members in early November to identify “hot topic” issues, and the results of that survey will serve as a starting point for regional discussions.

Meetings are [scheduled](#) in each education service center region between January 17 and March 8. Some will feature local legislators discussing education concerns with trustees. Additionally, school board members in attendance will elect representatives to the 2012–14 TASB Legislative Advisory Council (LAC). This body will meet in April and June to review the top issues identified by each region and prepare recommendations to the TASB Board and Delegate Assembly. Ultimately, the most significant ideas will be crafted into TASB’s Advocacy Agenda Priorities to guide the Association during the 2013 legislative session.

School board members can attend grassroots meetings closer to home if their designated regional meetings are farther than another regional meeting. However, school board members can only be elected to LAC if they are attending the grassroots meeting in their designated region. Attendees will earn training credit for the event.

Members Head to Washington

Texas will be represented at the upcoming Federal Relations Network (FRN) Conference in Washington, D.C., February 5–7. Critical decisions are expected in Congress in early 2012 that will impact school districts for at least the next six years. Issues include the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, federal funding for education programs for Title I and special education, bullying/school safety, and new school nutrition standards. The conference is an avenue for local leaders to advocate on behalf of their school districts at the national level.

A stipend program created by the TASB Board has helped boost participation in the annual conference, hosted by the National School Boards Association. For the fourth year, the Board awarded stipends to defray registration costs for selected applicants. TASB created the FRN stipend with a goal of selecting a trustee from each of the 32 Texas congressional districts to attend. Approximately 60 Texas board members and district staff are expected to participate in 2012.

Superintendent Salary Survey

A survey of district trends in superintendents’ salaries and benefits was released by TASB HR Services in November. The TASB/TASA survey is the first in a series of four reports that is the most definitive study of public education compensation and benefits practices in Texas. Of particular note in the 2011–12 survey:

- The average superintendent salary in Texas increased 2 percent to \$123,083. This smaller increase occurred in large part because more than 60 percent of districts with a continuing superintendent froze their superintendent's salary.
- In the largest districts, those with more than 50,000 students, the average base salary is \$268,812. Districts with fewer than 500 students saw average superintendent salaries rise slightly to \$85,326, from \$83,729 last year. Half of reported Texas superintendent salaries are less than \$107,000.
- Across Texas, the 61 percent of superintendents whose pay was frozen doubled from last year, when 30 percent of superintendents did not receive a raise. Overall, pay increases were 1.6 percent on average. That's a notable drop from last year's 3.3 percent average increase, which had been the lowest increase seen in more than 10 years.
- On average, superintendents have been in their current jobs for five years and have seven total years of experience as a superintendent in any district. That's the same as reported in 2010–11. Twelve percent of districts hired a new superintendent this year, up from 10 percent of districts last year. A total of 788 Texas school districts participated in this year's survey, representing 77 percent of districts statewide. Thirty-five districts reported having an interim superintendent and are not included in the analysis.

The full superintendent salary survey results for 2011–12 can be accessed by DataCentral subscribers to run customized comparison reports. Other HR Services members can access the PDF report through HR Resources in myTASB. The report is also available for purchase in the [TASB Store](#).

Winter Governance and Legal Seminar

The 15th Annual Winter Governance and Legal Seminar is set for February 16–18 in Corpus Christi. Keynote speakers include Jamie Vollmer, who will present *Welcome to the Great Conversation: Securing the Prerequisites of Progress*, and Barnett Berry, whose talk is entitled *Teaching 2030: New Leadership and Technology for 21st Century Schools*.

Student entertainment and the popular student panel are slated again this year. Online [applications](#) are being accepted through January 11 for students interested in participating. The chosen student panelists will each earn scholarship funds.

In addition, the 2012 Leadership TASB (LTASB) class is inviting Winter Governance attendees to participate in a night at the movies. Seminar participants will join the LTASB class to view *The Finland Phenomenon: Inside the World's Most Surprising School System*. A facilitated group discussion will follow. TASB ISD sessions are planned for newly elected board members, and a strand of sessions will focus on the specific needs and interests of small and rural schools.

January 25 is the cutoff date to make hotel reservations. Online [registration](#) is open through February 10.

End-of-Course Assessments

District concerns have been raised about how to meet a state requirement to include the end-of-course (EOC) assessment score as 15 percent of a student's final course grade. Questions about the complications of mixing EOC assessment scores into grade point average and class rank also have emerged. Since this summer, TASB Policy Service has published several documents to assist districts and shared information as it becomes available from the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

TASB Policy Service subscribers have received a STAAR Policy Alert that includes recent developments and the latest TEA guidance on how districts can award partial credit and the relationship that should exist between the EOC assessment score and class rank. This information will help school districts develop local policy and make decisions to satisfy the statutory 15 percent requirement.

Advocacy Resources

[Resources](#) to help school boards communicate their district's circumstances and challenges to their local communities, legislators, and other stakeholders are available on line. TASB Governmental Relations is finalizing *A Guide to Texas Public Education* to give legislators, media, and other interested stakeholders a condensed resource on issues facing public education. It will cover statistics on Texas public schools and definitions of terms used in education policy discussions. An elections toolkit also is available for trustees to help their communities learn more about candidates' stances on education.

Convention Poll Results

Each year TASB conducts an intercept poll of members at convention to gather opinions about the Association. Highlights from the 397 respondents' answers include the following:

- More than 71 percent said the waiver of fees for training events in 2011–12 impacted their decision to attend the convention.
 - More than 41 percent said current financial limitations would not force their school district to limit participation in TASB services, but 35 percent answered that they would be forced to limit participation, and 23 percent didn't know yet.
 - More than 90 percent said the TASB brand name and reputation was important or very important when selecting a school district service or product.
 - More than 88 percent believe TASB's endorsement of a vendor's product is important or very important when selecting a school district service or product.
 - More than 90 percent rated TASB with an "A" or "B" letter grade in overall performance regarding program quality, program cost, customer service, and overall value.
- More than 95 percent said TASB services and products were affordable or very affordable compared to similar vendors.
 - Almost 90 percent rated TASB as innovative or very innovative in meeting districts' needs compared to similar vendors.

Large District Leadership Forum

The third Large District Leadership Forum was held December 1–2 in Austin. TASB hosts this event every other year for the state's largest districts (20,000+ ADA) to stimulate conversation on issues of special interest to large districts and on the board's role in effectively addressing those issues. The event included in-depth discussions with experts and practitioners on creating productive schools and keeping the public accurately informed in an age of viral media.

Jerel Booker, executive director of Stand for Children Texas and former associate commissioner of Educator and Student Policy Initiatives for the Texas Education Agency, was this year's dinner speaker. Two in-depth discussions focused on *Sustaining Reform and Improving Efficiency* and *Trust and Transparency in a Fractured World*.

School Board Recognition Month

Each January TASB promotes [School Board Recognition Month](#) activities at the district level to highlight the dedicated work of locally elected school boards. This month is an opportunity to share information about the role of the board and spotlight its many contributions to the community. A resource kit, centering on a theme of *Helping Our Kids Shine*, is available on line to assist districts in honoring their local trustees. Certificates and tips for activities were mailed to districts in November.

Lone Star Report

Averaging \$7 billion in annual assets, the [Lone Star Investment Pool](#) strives to make fund management safer and easier. Three unique fund choices help local governments reach their financial goals with the right blend of principal protection, liquidity, diversification, and returns. Each fund is marked-to-market daily to ensure up-to-date investment information always is available, and investments are spread among individual issues of securities. In addition, each fund has earned Standard & Poor's highest rating.

Lone Star, celebrating 20 years of service, has enough scale to buy securities in large quantities, lifting yields, and lowering transaction costs for everyone. This large pool also allows Lone Star to choose securities that mature at different times, which reduces risk and can enhance yields. It also is the only local government investment pool in Texas offering two professional portfolio managers.

Mark Your Calendars

Superintendent Secretary Training Conference February 23–24, TASB offices, Austin

Attendees receive practical information about policy, board meetings, board member training credit, and other topics. Registration fees have been waived for this year's event.

OnSite Services Training (*Free for OnSite members*) TASB offices, Austin

January 24 Asbestos Designated Person
January 25 Integrated Pest Management
Coordinator
January 26 Environmental/Facilities Regulatory
Compliance

Splendora ISD, ESC Region 6

February 7 Asbestos Designated Person
February 8 Integrated Pest Management
Coordinator
February 9 Indoor Air Quality Coordinator

Abilene, ESC Region 14

April 10 Asbestos Designated Person
April 11 Integrated Pest Management
Coordinator
April 12 Indoor Air Quality Coordinator

In Other Action, the Board Approved:

- Minutes for the September 2011 Board Meeting and Delegate Assembly
- 2011–12 budget amendment
- 2011–12 executive director incentive compensation plan notes
- Amendments to Board policy on executive committee accountabilities and approvals
- Amendment to Board policy on operational guidelines
- 2010–11 financial statement and audit
- Amendment to Board policy on appointments
- Changes in Board policy to replace references of fall or winter meetings with December meeting, as appropriate

The next meeting of the TASB Board of Directors is March 31 in Austin.

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When you need help...



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