



Board Briefs

*A report on the April 2011 TASB Board of Directors Meeting
TASB Headquarters, Austin, Texas*

Districts Brace for Funding Cuts

The state budget crisis has forced education leaders to make far-reaching decisions based on information that seems to change daily. Members are urged to read and respond to legislative updates and action alerts so the impact of proposed legislation is quickly and accurately communicated to our state representatives.

In recent weeks, board members and superintendents have rallied at the Capitol and met with editorial boards of the state's major newspapers. Letters to the editors and opinion editorials are being written to explain to communities what is happening in their local school systems. In addition, a new Web site, www.truthaboutschoools.org, was launched to combat misrepresentations and to set the record straight.

Registration Fees Waived

As a signal of support for its members, the TASB Board of Directors unanimously approved use of the Association's fund balance to waive registration fees to key TASB training events in the 2011-12 school year. Board members can continue to fulfill their education training requirements. More importantly, trustees and administrators can continue to learn ways to navigate through these challenging times while keeping the focus on our students.

The TASA/TASB Convention in Austin, September 30–October 2, will be the first event with no registration fees for active members. Others are the Superintendent Secretary Training Conference in October 2011 and

February 2012, Large District Leadership Forum in December 2011, Fall and Winter Legal Seminars (hosted in select cities on various dates), the Winter Governance and Legal Seminar in February 2012, and the two Summer Leadership Institutes in June 2012. Additionally, paid subscribers of TASB HR Services, OnSite Services, and SMART program will be eligible for some training events at no cost, and tuition fees have been waived for the Leadership TASB class beginning September 2011.

All public school districts and education service centers are classified as active members. Associate and affiliate members, such as community colleges, appraisal districts, charter schools, and co-ops, are not eligible for this benefit. More details on the waiver process will be shared in the days ahead.

Legal Tips on Legislative Advocacy

School board members can and should engage in advocacy on issues important to them. Recently, district staff, parents, and students have voluntarily joined the fight to adequately fund public schools. TASB Legal Services prepared a comprehensive guide to frequently asked questions about legislative advocacy by a school district, trustees, employees, and students.

Political advertising, lobbying, and free speech rights of various groups are addressed. Also explored are proper use of district resources in terms of staff time, equipment, supplies, and facilities. Check the TASB Web Site under [Legal eSource](#) for this important and timely information.

Cost Cutting Help Available

Across the Association, staff is looking for ways to respond to the needs of our members, especially in these critical times. TASB Legal Services, Policy Service, and HR Services have developed valuable resources on reducing costs:

- **Web resources**—A collection of tools and resources are linked on a new Web page, [*Cost Cutting*](#). Postings include sample agreements for incentives, reduction in force procedures and flow charts, unemployment benefit information, model policies, and information on Texas Workforce Commission services.
- **Out placement support for employees**—A new training package for out-placed employees can help develop their skills at job-searching, writing resumes, and handling interviews. Districts can provide support and lessen unemployment costs by helping people get back to work. Participants of the one-day workshop will receive links to the best job search sites, coaching and counseling on techniques for landing a new job, and personalized resume assistance.
- **RIF toolkit**—For use next year, a Web-based toolkit will include a suggested time line and description of all RIF-related activities and decision points. A description of each action to be taken with links to sample documents, procedures, and models will be embedded.

Convention Plans Underway

Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia, will keynote the first general session of the TASA/TASB Convention in Austin September 30–October 2. Saturday's general session features Sean and Leigh Anne Tuohy, the couple portrayed in the movie *The Blind Side*. Peter Ricchiuti, a popular speaker on finance and the economy, is signed for a distinguished lecture. His session will count toward part of the investment officer training requirement.

In the exhibit hall, the redesigned Digital Learning Pavilion will allow visitors to walk through without a guide and have the option to interact with their smart phones. Again this year, exhibit hall sales are on track for a sellout.

Planners are exploring ways to allow districts to showcase innovative ways they have saved money in response to the fiscal situation. As noted, there will be no Convention registration fee for TASB member districts.

Resolutions Reminder

The second year of the TASB Advocacy Agenda biennium gives members an opportunity to update and/or add to priorities and resolutions on the agenda. Any proposed changes must be adopted by the Delegate Assembly in October. July 1 is the deadline for districts to submit resolutions for consideration.

SLI Registration Is Open

Housing and registration are open for the Summer Leadership Institute in San Antonio June 9–11 and Fort Worth June 16–18. Keynote speakers include Jim Brazell, an early champion of the importance of STEM instruction (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) to meet 21st century challenges. Also featured is Wes Moore, author of *The Other Wes Moore*, about the factors in an individual's life that can most influence personal development. As a new effort, book drives will be held at both locations to provide children's books for homeless shelters in San Antonio and Fort Worth.

TASB is working with the venues to keep costs down for members. The two headquarter hotels are reducing parking and Internet fees for attendees and providing discounts on food and nonalcoholic beverages purchased by badge-wearing attendees in hotel outlets. A ride-share program also is being organized to facilitate people from nearby districts who would like to carpool and save expenses.

SOTY Deadline Nears

May 16 is the deadline for districts to nominate their chief executives for the annual Superintendent of the Year (SOTY) award. Since 1984, the SOTY program has honored outstanding Texas administrators for achievement and excellence in public school administration.

Candidates are chosen for their strong leadership skills, dedication to improving the quality of education in their school districts, commitment to public support and involvement in education, and ability to build good employee relations among teachers and staff members. [Entry forms and instructions](#) are posted on the TASB Web Site.

Energy Efficiency Services Created

A new program to help districts reduce energy consumption and costs was approved by the TASB Board as an ongoing service offering. Energy Efficiency Services will combine components of both design/build and performance contracting as well as incorporate behavioral management to more effectively and efficiently assist districts of all sizes.

Under the program, a district's goals to reduce energy usage and costs would be developed and implemented through a detailed Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plan. This plan would offer ways to save through changes in behavior and upgrading aging and/or inefficient infrastructure. These upgrades could include items such as HVAC, lighting, controls, boilers, chillers, and solar screens. TASB will issue an RFP to select an energy efficiency services company to partner on this project.

Sponsorship Program Enhanced

Over coming months, the Association will be reaching out to current and prospective sponsors to establish year-round partnerships. TASB Partners, a new TASB initiative, will target businesses and organizations that share TASB's mission and service goals. The program aims to ultimately help promote better practices, promote public education, and create more long-term value for TASB and its corporate partners.

Internal Audit Service Launched

With the goal of improving district controls and saving money, TASB is launching a new internal audit service. In operational areas, audits would focus on procurement, payroll, human resources, and campus and student activity funds. Internal audit outsourcing would provide continuous, year-round management of the internal audit function, including risk assessment, annual audit planning, internal audit project completion, and reporting to the district's board of trustees.

Through tightened controls, districts can increase savings and benefit from the early detection and prevention of fraud or theft. TASB will partner with an outside firm to begin the service this summer or early fall.

Fund Awards Grants

Grants totaling \$550,000 were awarded to 211 public school districts and education entities to help implement loss prevention and safety initiatives by the TASB Risk Management Fund. Since 1998, the program has distributed 1,992 total grants of more than \$5 million to Fund members in the workers' compensation and property/liability programs. TASB Directors also were updated on the Fund's strong financial condition. As of February 2011, it had more than \$355 million in assets and \$187 million in members' equity.

The Fund continues to look for ways to reduce and stabilize costs for its 1,100 members. Over the past 10 years, the Fund has returned approximately \$18 million to its members through various programs including the loss prevention grants, coverage credits, and member Experience and Renewal Rewards. Recently, the Fund Board announced a rate freeze that will lock in a two-year rate guaranty on workers' compensation and property/liability programs. This move is one way of offering some financial relief to current Fund members in these difficult times.

Spring Workshops in Full Swing

TASB and its regional partners are hosting 16 workshops across the state in April and May. Updates on legislation and school finance will be key topics at most sites. Check the [calendar](#) for the most convenient location and make plans to attend.

In Other Action, the Board Approved:

- Amendments to the 2010–11 budget
- TASB Risk Management Fund amended service agreement fee addendum
- TASB Energy Cooperative Sponsorship and License Agreement
- Audit services for 2010–11
- Refinements to the TASB Organizational Scorecard
- Executive Director incentive compensation plan
- Amendments to Board Policy TASB-401, program participation
- Amendments to Board Policy TASB-502, Nominations Committee operational guidelines

The next meeting of the TASB Board of Directors is July 30, 2011, in Austin.

Editor: Barbara Williams
Public Information Office

When you need help...



tasb.org