



Board Briefs

*A report on the April 2010 TASB Board of Directors Meeting
TASB Headquarters, Austin*

Member Survey Results

TASB members recently shared insights on their perspectives about Texas public education and the Association. Every two years, the survey is conducted to better define who our members are and gather their thoughts about the products and services provided by TASB. The survey helps track member characteristics, identify needs, monitor successes, and provide valuable information about changes over time.

Profile of board members: The majority lives in rural communities, are married, have a college degree, and are white males between the ages of 40 and 59.

District concerns: Critical issues for members are funding/budget, legislative mandates, facilities, standardized testing, accountability, and compensation and benefits.

TASB Report Card: Responders graded TASB on its activities, services, and products. Customer service earned the highest rating with 96 percent of responders giving it an A or B. The top five programs graded were Policy Service, BoardBook®, Summer Leadership Institute, Legal Services, and Convention.

Overall results were positive and quite similar to the 2008 survey. The May issue of *Texas Lone Star* will carry more complete details.

School Finance Plan

As outlined in the March *Texas Lone Star*, TASB is in the process of developing a school finance plan that meets legal requirements for adequacy and equity. Moak Casey & Associates was engaged to help develop a computer model of the current system, including estimates to project the model out for five years. The next steps are estimation of state cost and district impact when some of the foundation program formula elements change and simulations and full-scale modeling of various proposals.

TASB and its partners will then identify the best components for a new school finance system that meets adequacy and equity requirements. TASB will translate those components into draft legislation for the 82nd Legislative Session. Beginning with the March issue, *Texas Lone Star* is carrying a series of articles about the school finance initiative. The legislative section of the TASB Web Site also will carry updates and Webcasts on the plan.

Advocacy Agenda Advances

With the conclusion of highly successful grassroots meetings, TASB moves into the next phase of developing its Advocacy Agenda. At these meetings, representatives were elected to the Legislative Advisory Council (LAC), which will use regional priorities to construct a draft statewide legislative program. LAC members met in April and will reconvene June 9.

Boards have until July 1 to submit resolutions to help shape TASB's position on issues during the legislative session and with other governmental entities. These will be considered by the TASB Board this summer, and ultimately, for adoption by the Delegate Assembly. Member involvement in this entire process ensures that TASB is clearly communicating critical concerns to our legislators and the public.

Capitol Conference

A new TASA/TASB Legislative Conference is planned March 30, 2011, to create a stronger showing of school district advocates during a pivotal time in the session. Traditionally, the TASA/TASB Pre-Legislative Conference was held in December of even-numbered years, and the TASB Capitol Conference was held in early February.

There will be no charge for attending; participants will receive breakfast and lunch and transportation to and from the Capitol free of charge.

Cornerstone Principles Reaffirmed

Advocacy efforts and organizational conduct are guided by TASB's cornerstone principles. In even-numbered years, the Board evaluates them and forwards them to the Delegate Assembly for action during Convention: These principles, reviewed and approved by the Board, reflect tenets with uniform support of all school board members. They are as follows:

- Excellence in student achievement for all Texas students
- Locally governed and locally controlled public schools
- Rigorous accountability for academic progress
- Adequate funding levels to provide exceptional education programs
- Efficient and effective school management
- Working with parents to create optimal opportunities for each child

National Purchasing Program

Over the past year, the Association has been working with the National School Boards Association (NSBA) to create a national purchasing cooperative based on a model similar to the BuyBoard® program in Texas. NSBA approved its involvement in the program in March and is working with several school districts in other states to form the interlocal organization that would govern the purchasing program.

TASB's role will be to provide administrative services to the national cooperative, including bid administration, vendor relations, and billing/accounting.

Community Surveys

A new survey service was approved by the Board to assist TASB members obtain feedback from their communities at a reasonable cost. The focus primarily will be on community and parent surveys on general perceptions of the district or specific district issues. Custom and special surveys also are available. Offered by the TASB Planning and Research Division, the service will help districts do the following:

- Measure support for facilities programs and potential bond issues
- Understand attitudes and perceptions about the district and the leadership team
- Develop stakeholder feedback for district goal setting and planning

Community surveys can be distributed by mail or the Internet, and districts will be able to customize or add questions. Parent surveys also can be sent home with students and multiple languages are offered for an additional fee.

NSBA Program and Financial Review

In March, TASB took part in a voluntary program review coordinated by NSBA. An eight-person review team included executive directors from other state school boards associations and NSBA executive staff. From this visit, the executive directors of the state associations in California, Georgia, Missouri, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, along with two NSBA senior staff members, will compile a report on the programs they saw and provide recommendations for TASB's consideration. A formal report from a member of the review team will be delivered to the TASB Board of Directors at its July meeting.

Convention Preview

Governor Rick Perry and Bill White, gubernatorial candidate, have been invited to address convention attendees in Houston. The 2010 Convention, September 24–26, marks the 50th anniversary of this joint event with the Texas Association of School Administrators. Daniel Pink, a well-known speaker on innovation and technology, is the first general session speaker. Emmitt Smith, formerly of the Dallas Cowboys, will address the second general session.

Staff has been working closely with the Digital Learning Pavilion supporters: Apple, Smart, and SHW. Several new districts have been identified to participate this year, and a panel session on implementing new technology will be led by districts inspired by last year's display.

First Public® is sponsoring the Distinguished Lecture on Friday, featuring Todd Buchholz, an American economist. This lecture will be the culmination of a special strand of investment officer training that is being offered for the first time. Both the distinguished lecture and breakout sessions will be open to board members and offer continuing education credit.

Online Learning Center

Activity continues to increase in the Online Learning Center. Currently there are 12 courses available for board member training credit and several other free courses and podcasts for board members and board candidates. An additional eight courses are in development, most of which will be up and going by the end of summer.

An entire series of short courses for board presidents will be available as boards reorganize, and a free course on selecting a board president (available for continuing education credit) will be posted by election time. Staff is concentrating on developing short courses that can be completed in 30 minutes.

OnSite® Services Update

In recent years, the volatility of gasoline and diesel prices has created challenges for school districts trying to estimate their annual transportation fuel budgets. A new program through the TASB Energy Cooperative now is providing a fixed-rate gasoline and diesel program. Approximately 45 districts and other entities have expressed interest in participating in TASB's fixed-rate fuel pool, Transportation Fuel Solutions. The initial pool is expected to form in May or June.

OnSite Services also is piloting two new programs on energy efficiency and facilities services. The energy efficiency service would combine components of both design/build and performance contracting, as well as incorporate behavioral management to more effectively and efficiently assist districts of all shapes and sizes. The other service being considered would be an extension of the facility assessment services OnSite currently offers and would assist school districts in developing a strategy to fund the capital improvement plan developed as a result of the facilities assessment.

Social Networking

TASB is exploring a social networking filter and protection service for school districts. The impetus for the idea is the rapid adoption of social networking sites and districts' inability to take advantage of these sites' collaboration and communication capabilities without risk and liability. Staff is currently conducting a market survey to gauge districts' interest.

Summer Leadership Institute

This year the Fort Worth Institute moves to the new Omni Hotel, across from the Fort Worth Convention Center. A larger venue for hosting the conference was needed because the event has grown so quickly. The San Antonio site again is the Marriott Rivercenter.

General session speakers this year will be Manny Medrano and Jonathan Kozol. A former trial attorney and current Los Angeles news reporter, Medrano will give a presentation called "Film at 11: News, Views, and Reflections of a Barrister Turned TV Broadcaster." Kozol, a nonfiction writer, educator, and activist, will focus on "The Mania of Testing: How School

Boards, Administrators, and Teachers Can Fight against the Risk of Turning Classrooms into Test-Prep Factories." More than 100 sessions will be offered in San Antonio and more than 80 in Fort Worth. In addition, sessions for newly elected trustees and board presidents have been reworked to offer a combination of both breakout and in-depth formats.

Risk Management Report

With more than 1,100 members, the TASB Risk Management Fund reports more than \$300 million in assets and over \$150 million in members' equity that provides stability, protection, and flexibility. Knowledgeable and responsive TASB staff continues to offer the expertise that helps make the TASB Risk Management Fund one of the oldest, largest, and most successful risk pools in the nation.

In recent months, the Fund Board and TASB Risk Management staff have worked on updating the Fund's strategic plan. This exercise has reconfirmed a commitment to excellence and service over the past 35 years and focused efforts to ensure continued success well into the future.

Mark Your Calendar

Training at TASB offices

OnSite Services (free to OnSite members)

May 11–13, grounds management, hazardous materials coordinator, indoor air quality coordinator

July 20–22, asbestos designated person, integrated pest management coordinator, and environmental/facilities regulatory compliance

HR Services

June 2, Family and Medical Leave Act

June 3, managing absences

Other Meetings

NSBA Southern Region Conference

July 11–13, Williamsburg, Virginia

In Other Action, the Board Approved:

- Minutes for the January 23, 2010, Board meeting
- Engagement of auditors for 2009–10
- Amendments to the 2009–10 budget
- Amendments to Board Policy, Executive Committee Accountabilities and Approvals
- TASB Risk Management Fund amended service agreement fee addendum for 2009–10
- Proposed bylaws amendment for consideration by the Delegate Assembly vesting the Board with the authority to officially interpret the Association’s bylaws
- A motion to table a proposal from the Center for Reform of School Systems

The next meeting of the TASB Board of Directors is July 31 in San Antonio.

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