



# Board Briefs

*A report on the January 2009 TASB Board of Directors Meeting  
TASB Headquarters, Austin*

## Strategic Plan Approved

Direction for the Association in the next four years has been set by Board adoption of the TASB Strategic Plan for 2009–2012. TASB directors began development of the plan last fall by participating in an online survey on critical issues and in a full-day work session to identify priority areas and goals. Next, members of the TASB Planning and Development Committee, TASB Future Vision Team, and senior staff met January 9–10 to draft measurable goals and strategies for presentation to the full Board.

Priority areas and goals approved by the Board include:

### Advocacy

- Ensure policymakers address TASB's Advocacy Agenda
- Increase public support of public schools
- Develop and propose a school finance model that meets legal adequacy and equity requirements

### Services and Products

- Provide services and products that address existing and emerging member needs
- Provide affordable services and products

### Visionary Leadership

- Establish strategic alliances and partnerships to expand TASB's capacity to fulfill its mission
- Maintain a culture that encourages and supports innovation
- Evaluate and measure TASB's organizational performance

TASB's strategic plan addresses the critical issues facing TASB, the service organization, in implementing programs and services that meet the needs of our members. It is complemented by TASB's Advocacy Agenda, which addresses the critical issues facing school districts in implementing programs and services that meet the needs of their schoolchildren and communities. Cornerstone to the plan is TASB's mission to "pro-

mote educational excellence for Texas schoolchildren through advocacy, visionary leadership, and high-quality services to school districts."

Staff will regularly make progress reports on the plan to the TASB Board. After two years, the plan will be revisited to determine if any substantive revisions are needed. The plan is in effect until December 2012.

## Legislative Session Begins

With the Texas Legislature back in Austin, TASB directors received an overview of potential issues this session, including school finance, accountability, and P-16 initiatives. Weekly video updates of the latest legislative information will be featured on [tasb.org](http://tasb.org) to keep members updated on recent activities and, when necessary, to urge board members to contact their legislators directly about specific issues. Online resources also are available at [gr.tasb.org](http://gr.tasb.org) to aid Association members throughout the legislative session. The *Legislative Briefing Book* was noted by TASB Board directors as one tool of particular use in capturing district-specific information that can be shared with elected leaders.

The Capitol Conference and Legislative Reception are set for February 10 in Austin at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center on The University of Texas campus. Presenters at this free conference will include Capitol insiders and TASB Governmental Relations staff discussing topics affecting public schools. After the conference, board members will be transported to the Capitol to meet with legislators and staff. Later board members can interact with their elected representatives during a legislative reception that evening.

As with all legislative sessions, TASB will monitor the flurry of legislation addressing all means of perceived inequities and faults in our system of public education. Online resources for members are available at [tasb.org](http://tasb.org) to aid them throughout the

legislative session. Members also receive the *Legislative Report*, which captures the latest information and issues surfacing that week.

### **Members Head to Washington**

The Lone Star State will be represented at the upcoming Federal Relations Network (FRN) Conference in Washington, D.C., February 1–3. A stipend program created by the TASB Board has helped boost participation in the annual conference, hosted by the National School Boards Association (NSBA).

During the conference, NSBA staff provides advocacy and issue training for school board members, who then visit with legislators and staff. About 60 Texas school board members are expected to attend this year. Increased attendance from years past is due in part to the TASB FRN stipend program, adopted by the Board to help defray registration costs.

### **New Director Joins Board**

Benny May of Barbers Hill ISD was elected by the TASB Board to fill the interim vacancy in Region 4, Position C, until the next Delegate Assembly. He fills the position vacant due to Sarah Winkler’s election as TASB president-elect. May, a supervisor with Exxon Mobil, has served on his local board for more than 12 years and has held the positions of secretary, president, and vice-president. A graduate of McNeese State University, May earned a bachelor’s degree in agricultural business.

### **Winter Governance and Legal Seminar**

Practical continuing education for new and experienced trustees is the focus of the TASB Winter Governance and Legal Seminar February 19–21 in Corpus Christi. Participants will explore key issues facing local districts and legislative updates on school funding proposals, property tax and appraisal practices, and changes in the accountability system. More than 500 local board members from across the state are expected.

Featured speakers include Deborah Estes, who will explore how brain research can be employed successfully in the classroom. Also slated is David Zach, a futurist who specializes in what future developments will mean for education.

A series of sessions also will focus specifically on needs of small school districts, examining financial reporting standards, campus consolidation and realignment, and successful districtwide achievement initiatives.

### **Customized Salary Reports On Line**

A new Web-based application, HR Services DataCentral, allows districts to create customized comparison reports on superintendent salaries and benefits. Members of TASB HR Services can add DataCentral for an annual fee and have 24/7 access to data reports on pay, benefits, and human resource policies and practices in participating districts.

The new survey tool enables subscribers to create customized salary comparison reports with a few clicks of a mouse. Survey data can be downloaded directly to Excel or printed in PDF. In addition to salary surveys, new surveys on HR policies and practices in Texas school districts will be added to DataCentral over the next year. Examples of the expanding array of survey topics include employee benefits, teacher incentives, administrator contracts, fingerprinting practices, nonduty days, leave practices, and more. Salary and stipend data on teachers and other district personnel is now on line, and extra-duty stipend data will be live in early February.

HR Services provides almost 940 member school districts with consulting, training, and information to enhance the management of human resources. Key products and services include salary and benefit surveys, design and maintenance of employee pay systems, personnel management training, online resources, model job descriptions, employee surveys, and HR operations reviews.

### **Readiness Report Released**

Legal and policy barriers to postsecondary success and work-force readiness are examined in a TASB report recently released as part of a two-year project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The report, *Barriers to Implementing College and Workforce Readiness Initiatives in Texas*, focuses on legal, regulatory, and practical obstacles that keep students from making a successful transition from high school to college or the work force.

In coming months, TASB will share the report’s findings in presentations to statewide organizations, Texas legislative staff, school board members, district administrators, and other interested groups.

### **New Electronic Publication Debuts**

A new online publication, *The Star*, was launched in January to provide reminders and quick updates to members. It is

designed to join the *Texas Lone Star* magazine and Association Web Site as ready sources of information on TASB events and services. The first issue of *The Star* was e-mailed to more than 9,800 recipients, including all board members, administrators, program contacts, education service centers, and other district personnel. Look for it in your in-box every month.

## Celebrating Opportunities

TASB will host the Celebrating Educational Opportunities for Students of All Cultures Conference March 27–29 at the Hyatt Regency Downtown in Austin. In recent years, the conference has expanded its scope to consider education issues facing students from all minority cultures. The school boards associations of Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona jointly sponsor this event and rotate the hosting duties each year.

Registration brochures will be mailed to Texas board members with the February edition of *Leadership Team Times*, a monthly TASB newsletter. Featured speakers will include Manny Medrano, Mawi Asgedom, and Sonia Manzano. Entertainment will include performances by students from a variety of school district cultural performance programs. All four sponsoring states will present topic sessions.

## Legal Assistance Fund Report

Currently, 772 school districts are members of the Legal Assistance Fund. Directors were briefed on a number of cases that the Fund has recently supported. Since its inception 20 years ago, the Fund provides support to school districts that are defending legal challenges with the potential to affect public schools statewide.

In most cases, the Fund provides assistance in the form of *amicus curiae*, or “friend of the court,” brief. These briefs explain to the court why a school district should win its case and how the court’s decision will affect other Texas school districts. Over the years, these briefs have played an important role in the outcome of several significant court cases affecting public schools.

Recent topics have included the Texas Economic Development Act, school distribution of non-school literature, home schooling, sovereign immunity, qualified immunity, and the Open Meetings Act.

## Risk Management Update

Celebrating a 35th anniversary this year, the TASB Risk Management Fund is in strong financial condition with assets

nearing \$300 million and more than \$145 million in members’ equity. It continues to be one of the largest and most successful TASB-affiliated programs with 1,113 members participating in one or more of the Fund’s coverage programs. The Fund provides workers’ compensation, property, liability, equipment breakdown, and unemployment compensation coverage to Association members. It is the largest risk-sharing pool for school districts and the fifth largest public-entity risk pool in the nation.

## Lone Star Investment Pool

Over the last two years, the Lone Star Investment Pool has grown from an average annual asset level of \$4.6 billion in 2006–07 to a projected level of \$7.8 billion this fiscal year. As a result of this significant growth, Lone Star will be lowering its fee for the third time in five years. The new fee, which goes into effect March 1, will not only return more investment dollars to members but will make Lone Star even more competitive in years to come.

## School Dedication

A TASB field service representative, Rafael A. Cantu, was recognized for his contributions to Mission CISD with the dedication of a junior high school named in his honor. Cantu held several positions at Mission CISD before being promoted to superintendent; he was named Superintendent of the Year at the TASB/TASA Convention in 1994. He has been with TASB Field Services since 1995.

## Upcoming Training

### TASB Legal Seminars

February 12	El Paso area (Fabens), Cattleman’s Steakhouse at Indian Cliff’s Ranch
February 17	Tyler, Holiday Inn Select

Session topics include open meetings, employee leaves and absences, student privacy issues, school district liability, and legal updates.

### OnSite Environmental Training

February 3–5	Splendora ISD, Region 6
April 14–16	Frisco ISD, Region 10, and San Angelo ISD, Region 15
May 12–14 and July 21–23	Austin (TASB)

### Spring Workshops

This year, the legislative update at many locations will be

provided by live videoconference so attendees can get up-to-the-minute information on legislative developments at the crucial close of the session.

Kingsville, April 1  
Stephenville, April 16  
El Paso, Lubbock, and Wichita Falls, April 21  
Houston, April 22  
Alpine, May 6  
Uvalde, May 7  
Commerce, May 12  
Canyon and Temple, May 13  
Nacogdoches and Abilene, May 14  
South Padre, May 15–16  
Victoria, May 20

### **In Other Action, the Board Approved:**

- Financial Statement and Audit for 2007–08
- Proposed amendments to the NSBA Constitution and Bylaws
- Board Self-Evaluation Form
- Amendments to board policy on executive committee accountabilities and approvals

The next meeting of the TASB Board of Directors is April 25 in Austin.

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**When you need help...**

