



## Legislative Progress Made Towards Fulfilling the 2008-10 TASB Advocacy Agenda Priorities

### Adequacy

The current education system is not adequately funded. TASB supports an inflation-indexed educational funding structure that provides increased state funding commensurate with the escalating cost of education, including the rising costs of utilities and transportation and the ever-increasing standards for student performance.

*HB 3646 put \$1.9 billion new money into Texas public schools, but that amount does not constitute adequate funding according to this priority. That amount of funding is not enough to cover the escalating costs of education, the rising costs of utilities or transportation, or the ever-increasing standards for student performance.*

### Alignment of the State and Federal Accountability Systems

TASB supports a single, less complex accountability system that recognizes individual student progress, reduces state testing, and implements constructive measures before sanctions.

*HB 3, the accountability bill, accomplishes 2/5 of the elements in this priority: it recognizes individual student progress and implements additional constructive measures before sanctions. Additionally, although HB 3 does not completely align the state and federal accountability systems, the legislation moves a bit further in that direction by providing that if the commissioner determines that a campus has implemented substantially similar interventions required by federal law, the commissioner may accept those interventions as meeting the state law requirements.*

### Career and Technology Education Programs

TASB shall support expanding the “4x4” curriculum to include career and technology courses with credit and funding beginning in middle school; promoting multi-district cooperatives reflective of the local workforce; and seeking funding to implement career and technology programs and funding for certification exams.

*Several bills accomplish the elements in this priority. HB 3, the accountability bill, expands the 4x4 curriculum to include more CTE courses; it also creates two new grant programs that promote multi-district cooperatives to help meet local workforce needs and provide funding for the development of CTE courses. HB 3646 creates a \$50 per student allotment for students enrolled in two or more advanced career and technology courses or an advanced course as part of a tech-prep program and funding for certification exam fees. HB 1935 establishes the Jobs and Education Grant Program and Trust Fund through which the comptroller may award grants to public junior colleges, technical institutes and non-profit organizations that prepare low-income students for careers in high-demand occupations. The grants may be used to help defray start-up costs of new CTE programs. The comptroller may also use the funds to provide need-based scholarships to students in junior colleges or technical institutes who are enrolled in a training program for a high-demand occupation.*

## Dropout Rates

TASB supports increased funding for the implementation of programs in public schools that identify and provide interventions and curricular opportunities for at-risk students beginning at the elementary school level to decrease dropout rates.

*Two bills accomplish this priority. **HB 2263** provides grant funding for middle, junior, and high school programs to aid in dropout prevention. **HB 3646**, the school finance bill, prioritizes existing funding for extended-year programs to go to districts with the highest proportion of at-risk students.*

## Equity

TASB supports an equitable formula-funded school finance system that allows community access to equal amounts of total revenue per local tax effort, allows the public school system to capture fully the benefit of increasing property values, and recognizes communities' unique challenges arising from differences in student populations.

***HB 3646**, the school finance bill, somewhat addresses this priority:*

- *It improves inequities in the current system, but it does not achieve full equity;*
- *It puts districts with low target revenue back into the formula system;*
- *It provides a driver for the formulas based on the statewide average property value;*
- *It authorizes a special committee to study whether the current weights and allotments drive state, and federal funding to public schools in recognition of differences in student populations and to recommend systemic improvements to the Legislature.*

## Facilities Funding

TASB shall support legislation that would increase equalized facilities funding for both the Instructional Facilities Allotment (IFA) and Existing Debt Allotment (EDA), as well as legislation that would automatically roll forward the EDA each biennium for all bonded debt not covered by IFA.

***HB 3646**, the school finance bill, accomplishes this priority by providing more IFA and EDA funding and a permanent "roll forward" for EDA. Additionally, it creates a new bond guarantee program for districts unable to receive a guarantee through the Permanent School Fund.*

## Prekindergarten School Finance

TASB supports educational opportunities for Texas students through an expanded prekindergarten program at local district option, including funding for expanded eligibility or a full class day.

***HB 130**, the prekindergarten bill, which was vetoed by the governor, would have accomplished half of this priority. It authorized a new grant program to help districts expand their pre-K program to a full-day program if the program complied with certain quality enhancements; however, this bill would not have provided additional funding for districts to offer free pre-K services to categories of students other than those currently specified in the law.*

## Salary & Benefits

TASB supports state funding for competitive salary and benefit packages for all school districts with an annual cost of living adjustment to attract and retain qualified employees.

*HB 3646, the school finance bill, somewhat accomplishes this priority. It provides state funding for an across-the-board educator salary increase; it also collapses the TEEG incentive pay program into the DATE incentive pay program, thus providing more funding to districts for incentive pay programs through the DATE grant program.*

## Technology

TASB supports increased technology funding to provide districts with necessary resources for online testing and virtual courses.

*Several bills accomplish this priority. HB 3, the accountability bill, eliminates the requirement that districts administer tests online. It also authorizes increased funding for the state virtual school network and makes it easier for districts to access courses through that network. SB 1, the state budget, provides \$18 million for the virtual school network. HB 3646, the school finance bill, authorizes school districts to receive \$400-per-virtual school course taken.*

## Unfunded Mandates

TASB supports funding the actual cost of any required programs and services implemented by laws, rules, and regulations, and opposes the imposition of any new unfunded or underfunded mandates.

*SB 300 somewhat accomplishes this priority. It eliminates the bus evacuation mandate, and lessens the impact of two existing unfunded mandates: the 22:1 student-teacher ratio in grades 1 through 4 and the annual goal of reducing energy consumption by five percent annually. These mandates were highlighted in the revised Unfunded Mandates document that TASB and TASA published prior to the legislative session.*

## Vouchers

TASB opposes private school vouchers, tuition tax credits, scholarships, and other such programs funded with public tax dollars.

*This priority was accomplished. No voucher bills passed this session, and for the first time, the state budget includes language prohibiting state funds from being used for voucher programs.*