



*This bulletin, produced by TASB Leadership Team Services, examines research and shares philosophies to inform and promote exceptional governance within school boards across Texas.*

## Learning from TASB's Recent XG Summit

*by Phil Gore, PhD, Division Director of TASB Leadership Team Services*

### Convening Researchers and Practitioners

January 12–13, TASB convened national governance researchers with Texas trustees and superintendents for the first-ever XG Summit. The theme of the Summit was How School Boards Affect Student Outcomes, with a focus on improving Texas school governance through deep learning and meaningful discussions. Thank you to Weatherford, Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City, El Campo, Victoria, Hurst-Eules-Bedford, Cypress-Fairbanks, and Knippa for sharing their promising practices related to the research on what school boards do that makes a difference in student outcomes.

### Summarizing the Research

One big takeaway was that leadership matters. Tim Waters shared that the most effective and efficient way of improving student outcomes on a school campus is to invest in professional development for leaders. This includes the board, superintendent, and other administrators. If you were to take the same amount of money spent on teacher and staff development, and put that toward training district leaders,

more improvements would be seen throughout the school system.

Another important takeaway was “Have a Plan!” Districts need a plan to improve their practices and student outcomes. Whether that is a formal strategic plan published in an official document, or it’s scribbled with a crayon on a paper napkin, the most important thing is that districts have a plan. Similarly, boards need to have a plan for how they will govern. Again, it may not be important whether a board is pursuing NSBA’s Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards, Balanced Governance’s Eleven Standards, the Lighthouse Five Roles of the Board, or another structure. Districts having a clear plan and boards having a clear governance plan that aligns with the district’s work is likely to result in improving outcomes for students.

We also learned that specificity matters. Ivan Lorentzen and Bill McCaw shared with us items from a board self-assessment instrument related to improving student learning. While there were multiple great ideas mentioned, participants grappled with which ones were most associated with improving student outcomes, and consistently it was

the more specific items that related to improvement. For example, a generic goal like improving community engagement is a good starting point. However, a board “communicating the performance expectations of the superintendent to the community” is associated more often with improved student outcomes.

### Sharing Best Practices

Ashely Conlon, Weatherford ISD board president, said it best when asked how to get new team members on board with the process and culture of an effective board and district. She said she does not merely show them what to do; she leads by example. Board President Tommy Turner from El Campo ISD shared with Superintendent Kelly Waters their board monitoring reports and how they use those to organize and focus their governance. They adapted these from a process used by Houston ISD. Across Texas, boards are shifting their focus to governance.

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