

# Texas Lone Star

A Publication of the Texas Association of School Boards | Volume 42, Number 2 | March 2024

## 75 Years of TASB Service – and Services

Programs that help districts excel at  
heart of TASB's mission





## Featured Event



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Rolinda Schmidt, President-Elect, Kerrville ISD  
Tony Hopkins, First Vice President, Friendswood ISD, Region 4C  
Mary Jane Hetrick, Second Vice President, Dripping Springs ISD, Region 13B  
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David Sublasky, ESC 19, ESC Representative  
Theresa Wagaman, Conroe ISD, Region 6B  
Mildred Watkins, La Vega ISD, Region 12  
Greg Welch, Clyde CISD, Region 14

## MARCH

- 6 • TASB Grassroots Meeting — ESC Region 12, Waco
- 7 • TASB Grassroots Meeting — ESC Region 6, Huntsville
- 7 • TASB Grassroots Meeting — Virtual
- 19 • TASB Spring Workshop — Lubbock
- 25 • TASB Spring Workshop — Dublin
- 26 • TASB Spring Workshop — Wichita Falls
- 27 • TASB Spring Workshop — Kingsville
- 27-28 • TASB HR Services: Writing Effective Job Descriptions — Virtual Event

## APRIL

- 4 • TASB Spring Workshop — San Angelo
- 10 • TASB Spring Workshop — Houston
- 10-11 • TASB HR Services: Employment Relationships: Independent Contractors, Contract Entitlement, Benefit Eligibility, and More — Virtual Event
- 11 • TASB Student Solutions: Defending Districts in Special Education Dispute Resolution — Virtual Event
- 14-16 • TASB Risk Management Fund Conference — Round Rock
- 16 • TASB Facility Services: Asbestos Designated Person Training — Amarillo
- 17 • TASB Facility Services: Integrated Pest Management — Amarillo
- 17 • TASB SHARS Matters Webinar Series: Telehealth and Telemedicine Services — Virtual Event
- 20 • TASB Governmental Relations: Legislative Advisory Council I Meeting — Austin
- 23 • TASB Facility Services: Asbestos Designated Person Training — Midland
- 24 • TASB Facility Services: Integrated Pest Management — Midland
- 25 • TASB Spring Workshop — Gonzales
- 30 • TASB Spring Workshop — Uvalde



For more information about these events or deadlines, visit the TASB website at [tasb.org](https://tasb.org) or call TASB at **512-467-0222** or **800-580-8272** toll-free.



## Features



### 8 75 Years of TASB Service — and Services

Programs that help districts excel  
at heart of TASB's mission



### 14 The Fund at 50

Texas risk pool marks milestone  
in serving districts

#### Call for submissions to District Voices!

We want to hear more about what is going on in local school districts around Texas and invite you to send us submissions for our new, occasional feature, District Voices. Do you have an interesting program to discuss?

Lessons learned as a school board member? For submissions or questions, contact managing editor Laura Tolley at [laura.tolley@tasb.org](mailto:laura.tolley@tasb.org). We look forward to hearing from you and your district!



## Departments

- 2 **Calendar**
- 18 **Legal News**
- 22 **Capitol Watch**
- 24 **News & Events**
- 34 **A Closer Look**

## Columns

- 5 **From the Top**
- 7 **Editor's Note**

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# TASB Risk Management Fund Conference 2024

*Connect. Engage. Achieve.*

**April 14-16**

**Kalahari Resorts & Conventions  
Round Rock, Texas**

**Join your peers for the Fund's premier training and networking event.**

Grow your professional network, fill your risk management toolbox with expert-led educational sessions, and celebrate the Fund's 50th anniversary with a full slate of fun activities!

Register now at [tasbrmf.org/conference](https://tasbrmf.org/conference).

**50**  
YEARS STRONG





# Elections Matter

Support public education at the voting booth

by Armando Rodriguez



Armando Rodriguez

**A**s Texas holds its primary elections this month, I am reminded of the profound impact each of us holds as advocates for public education. Our voices, our choices, and our votes shape the landscape of our schools, our communities, and the future of Texas children. It is with this sense of responsibility and commitment that I urge each of you to vote in the March 5 primary.

At the heart of our democratic process lies the fundamental right to vote. It is a privilege bestowed upon us, a sacred duty that empowers us to shape the course of our collective future. As advocates of public education, we carry a special obligation to champion the interests of our schools, our educators, and, most importantly, our students. Our participation in the electoral process is not just a choice; it is a solemn responsibility — a commitment to uphold the values of democracy and ensure that the voices of our communities are heard.

The Texas primary elections serve as a critical juncture — a pivotal moment where we, as citizens and stakeholders, have the opportunity to shape the future of public education in our state. The decisions made in these elections will reverberate far beyond the confines of our polling stations, influencing policies, funding, and the overall direction of our education system for years to come.

## Staying informed, engaged

As we navigate through the electoral process, it is essential to remain informed and engaged. TASB members have a wealth of resources at their disposal to guide them through the voting process. Key dates, impartial websites such as

[votetexas.gov](https://www.votetexas.gov), and information on polling hours are readily available to ensure that every eligible voter can exercise their right to vote.

One of the unique aspects of the Texas primary elections is the absence of party registration. In our state, any registered voter has the freedom to participate in either party's primary, regardless of their political affiliation. This inclusivity underscores the essence of our democratic principles, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose as we come together to shape the future of our great state.

**As we navigate through the electoral process, it is essential to remain informed and engaged. TASB members have a wealth of resources at their disposal to guide them through the voting process.**

However, participation in Texas primaries tends to be low. Just 18% of registered Texas voters cast ballots in the March 2022 primary elections, compared with 46% of registered voters who cast ballots in the November 2022 general election. Yet in Texas, many races are decided in the primary, so it's vitally important to vote in these elections.

## Speaking up for public ed

As advocates for public education, it is imperative that we remain steadfast in our commitment to advancing the interests of our schools and our students. Our advocacy extends beyond the confines of our boardrooms and into the realm of

civic engagement, where our voices hold the power to affect meaningful change.

During the Texas primary elections, let us reaffirm our dedication to public education. Let us stand united in our commitment to fostering an educational environment that empowers every child to thrive and succeed. And above all, let us exercise our civic duty with pride and conviction, knowing that our votes carry the potential to shape the future of Texas public education for generations to come.

I urge each of you to heed the call of civic responsibility, to make your voice

heard, and to cast your ballot in the Texas primary elections. Together, let us reaffirm our unwavering commitment to public education and ensure that every child in Texas can fulfill their highest potential.

Thank you for your dedication, your advocacy, and your unwavering commitment to the future of Texas public education. ★

*Armando Rodriguez, president of the Canutillo ISD board of trustees, is the 2023-24 president of TASB.*



# March is National Procurement Month!



Help close the deal on products and services for your district. Browse awarded BuyBoard vendors for these popular K12 contracts at [buyboard.com/vendor-list](https://buyboard.com/vendor-list).

1. **657-21** Building Maintenance, Repair, Operation Supplies and Equipment
2. **670-22** Uniforms and Accessories
3. **653-21** Instructional Materials and Classroom Teaching Supplies and Equipment



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# Providing Value

TASB finds success in serving members

by Laura Tolley



Laura Tolley

“Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value.”

— Albert Einstein

In this month's magazine, we continue our year-long history project that highlights TASB's 75th anniversary with an infographic/article that tracks the evolution and range of services the Association provides to boards and school districts across the state.

While working on the issue, the Albert Einstein quote came to mind as I thought about TASB's dedication to serving its members. For TASB staffers, success means helping school boards and their districts achieve their public education goals and provide the best education possible to students. That is what you value, that is what we value.

It's been that way from the beginning. When TASB was first established in 1949, services were developed to fill a long-time gap in training for boards. Trustees needed to understand their responsibilities, the overall system, legislation that affected public schools, and more. They also needed a unified voice in support of Texas public education.

From there, the Association added more services, training, and programs, including events. Throughout its 75-year history, TASB has listened intently to

members discuss their needs, challenges, dreams, and more. Listening and understanding is critical to providing the right solutions, which we do through our innovative and efficient programs and services. When TASB learned of a need, it responded.

We understand your mission is to provide an exceptional education to Texas schoolchildren, and we know we must be a valuable partner to you in that effort. When we provide value to you, that spells success for all of us.

Learn more about the growth and reach of TASB services in the article and infographic timeline that begin on page 8. It maps the evolution of TASB services as well as TASB's affiliated entities.

## Another important milestone

The March issue also features a story about the Risk Management Fund, which is marking 50 years of helping Texas school districts cope with a range of issues such as workplace injuries and damage caused by severe weather.

The Fund looks different from the effort that began in 1974, but its core mission is the same — serving Fund members' needs.

“At the end of the day, our job is to help school districts help the students and staff that they serve,” Mary Barrett, associate executive director for TASB's Risk Management Services, said in the story that begins on page 14.



**TASB  
RISK  
FUND**



## Honoring the best

At TASB, we also understand that school boards work tirelessly for their students and staff.

We understand your mission is to provide an exceptional education to Texas schoolchildren, and we know we must be a valuable partner to you in that effort. When we provide value to you, that spells success for all of us.

We understand that trustees are dedicated to serving their students — as are all districts across the state. At TASB, we honor your commitment and are proud to help you in your mission.

I hope you enjoy the issue.★

Laura Tolley is managing editor of Texas Lone Star.





# 75 YEARS OF TASB SERVICE — AND SERVICES

PROGRAMS THAT HELP DISTRICTS EXCEL AT HEART OF TASB'S MISSION

by Melissa Locke Roberts



The Texas Association of School Boards promotes educational excellence for Texas schoolchildren through advocacy, visionary leadership, and high-quality services to school districts.

**TASB MISSION STATEMENT**



*Editor's note: In every issue of Texas Lone Star this year, the magazine will honor TASB's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary by writing about the positive impact the Association has had on Texas public schools through its high-quality services, visionary leadership, and skilled advocacy. Additionally, these articles will highlight the significant events, people, legislation, and issues that have shaped public education in Texas. Overall, these articles reflect how TASB and school leaders work hard together to promote educational excellence for all Texas schoolchildren.*



## Services of the past

Sometimes TASB services grow and expand. Other times they are phased out when the challenge is no longer present, schools have placed services under their own purview, or the service is no longer financially feasible.

Here are a few offerings of the past that filled a gap for members at specific times.

- **Accountability Information Management and Evaluation Services:** Created in the 1990s, when accountability expectations increased.
- **Child Care Solutions:** Formed to help school districts plan in-house childcare for employees. TASB was an early adopter of on-site childcare for employees, having established The Corner School in 1987. Spring Branch ISD founded the first such center in a Texas school district, in 1982.
- **Parent Learning Network (originally known as Practical Parent Education):** Designed to enhance parenting skills and increase parent participation in their children's education; originated with a curriculum piloted by TASB and Plano ISD in 1990.
- **Texas Center for Educational Research (TCER):** Established by TASB and TASA in 1987 to provide sound research and unbiased information to assist school finance cases and other areas of education policy and practice.

**W**ith a calling to help public schools be the best they can be, TASB learned long ago how critical it is to listen.

In its 75-year history, the Association has listened closely to school boards and district staff to understand their logistical and budgetary challenges as well as their goals. And it has responded with a host of services designed to lessen the burdens of government and help school boards and the schools they serve run more efficiently.

“Texas public schools must focus on what matters most — providing an exceptional education for all students,” said Armando Rodriguez, Canutillo ISD board president and 2023-24 TASB president. “TASB services are designed to help schools do just that. Since 1949, TASB has found ways to help school boards function better and school districts address logistical and administrative concerns. And participants are comforted in working with an association whose main purpose is to advance public education in this state.”

In the beginning, services were created by TASB to fill a gap that school boards had dealt with for a long time.

Trustees needed to learn more about their responsibilities and the state educational system. They needed to understand legislation that affected schools. And they needed to find ways to share experiences with other trustees from across the state and form a unified voice in support of public education.

TASB stepped in with training and guidance on legislation and board governance, events to help school boards gather and learn, and a variety of resources to keep them informed.

Programs grew to assist boards with policy development, superintendent searches, and board packet compilation. Other services helped school districts with human resource management, facility compliance and planning, and recouping costs associated with special populations. And an array of TASB affiliated entities gave school districts solid options in the areas of risk management, cooperative purchasing, electricity and fuel purchases, investment services, employee benefits, and support with legal challenges.

For decades, a team of field representatives has checked in regularly with school district staff across the state to share details about TASB services — and to listen.

Find out more about the broad reach and growth of TASB services over the years in the pages that follow.★

*Melissa Locke Roberts is a staff writer for Texas Lone Star.*



# TASB services for school boards and school districts

For 75 years, TASB services have helped public schools face challenges caused by legislative mandates, a lack of funding, or other pressing issues.

This timeline shows when current TASB services took shape.

Many service names and functions have morphed over time to better respond to member needs.

- TASB services
- Affiliated entities



1970

## Policy Service\*

Monitors changing laws and regulations that impact school district governance and assists school districts with updates of board policy and administrative regulations.

1974



## TASB Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Fund

After the Workers' Compensation Fund was founded in 1974, many new coverage lines emerged over the years to eventually constitute the TASB Risk Management Fund (see 1997 in this timeline).\*\*



1978

## Governmental Relations\*

Monitors legislative developments and promotes TASB's Advocacy Agenda with state and federal lawmakers, the State Board of Education, and other agencies.

1978



## Legal Services\*

Provides information and advice to school district decision-makers as a supplement to the legal advice districts receive from their own attorneys and offers training and resources.

1978



## Communications and PR\*

Informs members and the public via the magazine, website, social media, and other channels, and promotes public education through campaigns and recognition programs.

# 1980

## TASB Legal Assistance Fund



### TASB Legal Assistance Fund

Supports school districts that are defending legal challenges with the potential to affect public schools statewide.



# 1984

### HR Services\*

Supports school district staffing and talent management needs, providing access to data, publications, training, and consulting.

# 1988

## Looking for a Superintendent?

The recruitment and selectic cessful administrative leader and expertise. TASB can help

### Executive Search Services\*

Assists school boards with customized superintendent searches, including community engagement, recruitment, interviewing, transition, onboarding, and relationship building.

# 1988



### Facility Services

Assists school districts with facilities-related matters, including environmental services, facility planning, and construction consulting.



# 1991

### Field Services\*

Field reps who have served in decision-making roles in school districts regularly visit school districts to discover their needs and provide information about TASB services.

## Thoughts on TASB services

"I've seen the ebb and flow of TASB services, everything from offering strategic planning to superintendent searches — so many things that school districts would be terribly pressed to do on their own. TASB has become the entity to provide those services and do it consistently throughout the state."

— Janis Petronis, TASB president 1987-88

"We gave districts choices on services they really needed.... If a school district invests in a TASB program, what they get back in return is a stronger TASB devoted to helping all schools."

— George McShan, TASB president 1998-99

"TASB has always been a wonderful servant in the sense that surveys are conducted, and communities and board members are asked what they need and how we can improve our services to school districts and school boards. I think TASB has done a fabulous job with all of that and will continue to do so."



— Viola Garcia, TASB president 2012-13

\*TASB provided some of the functions of this service in the early years, before its current name/function was defined.

\*\*Read about the Fund and its 50th anniversary in this issue.



# TASB services for school boards and school districts

 TASB services  
 Affiliated entities

## 1991



### Lone Star Investment Pool™

Assists school districts and other local governments with the investment of public funds by providing safety of principal, liquidity, diversification, and a competitive rate of return.

**Lone★Star™**  
Investment Pool



## 1993



### Special Education Solutions

Helps school districts with federal reimbursement for qualifying special ed services and offers program reviews, revenue analysis, and best practices for billing and documentation.

## 1998



### BuyBoard®

Helps school districts and other local governments increase purchasing power, lower administrative costs, and streamline the procurement process.

**BuyBoard®**

## 1997



### TASB Risk Management Fund\*\*

Offers school districts a self-insured risk pool and coverage lines such as comprehensive, auto, property, liability, cybersecurity, workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, and violent act.



## 2002



### BoardBook®

A software application designed to simplify the compilation and distribution of board meeting information, materials, and documents.

 **BoardBook®**

## 2003



### First Public®

Provides school districts and other local governments with a variety of investment and insurance options including Lone Star Investment Pool and TASB Benefits Cooperative.

 **FIRST PUBLIC®**

Want to know more about the start of these services? See a full, interactive and illustrated TASB history timeline at [tasb.org/about/history](https://tasb.org/about/history).

# 2007

## TASB Benefits Cooperative™

Provides to school districts employee- and employer-paid benefit options, including health, dental, and vision coverage as well as a range of voluntary products.



# 2008

## TASB Energy Cooperative™

Helps school districts procure electricity and fuel at fixed costs.



# 2012

## Community College Services

Provides legal expertise and comprehensive policy development and maintenance responsive to the needs of Texas community colleges.



# 2020



## Student Solutions

Offers a broad range of solutions for special populations to help school districts stay on top of best practices, maintain compliance, and provide needed programs.

## A look back at the Texas School Services Foundation

TASB was created in 1949 as an unincorporated nonprofit association, the common legal structure for nonprofit entities at that time. After the Workers' Compensation Fund was created in 1974 and other risk management programs followed, TASB began to consider alternative organizational structures that could facilitate the delivery of some services and protect tax-exempt status.

In 1983, the TASB Board established the Texas School Services Foundation (later renamed TASB, Inc.) to function as a separate legal entity administering services in the risk management area and performing data processing and printing functions for both itself and TASB.

By 1987, TASB and TSSF had grown with new and expanded programs and began combining some common services (such as communications and data processing) to benefit members.

In 1999, an IRS ruling cleared the way for streamlining TASB's structure into one entity. Thus, after operating for 16 years under a dual-entity structure, TASB and TASB, Inc., which by then included many new services, merged into one entity: TASB.

\*TASB provided some of the functions of this service in the early years, before its current name/function was defined.  
\*\*Read about the Fund and its 50th anniversary in this issue.



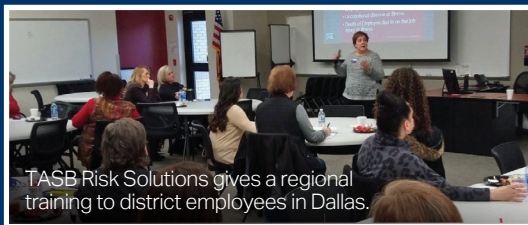
# The Fund at 50

Texas risk pool  
marks milestone in  
serving districts

by Beth Griesmer



The Fund held the School-Based Law Enforcement Summit at TASB Headquarters in Austin last November.

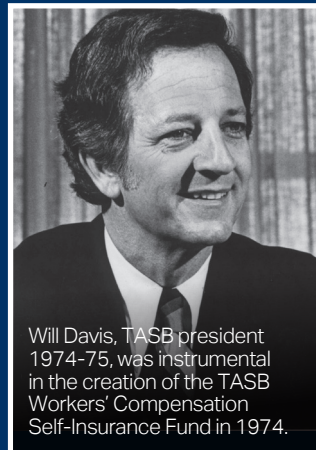


TASB Risk Solutions gives a regional training to district employees in Dallas.



Thrall ISD received a Risk Management Fund Excellence Award in 2022 for the work of the district's safety coordinator.

50  
YEARS STRONG



Will Davis, TASB president 1974-75, was instrumental in the creation of the TASB Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Fund in 1974.

A year ago, when Lake Dallas ISD experienced a serious cybersecurity breach, it turned to the TASB Risk Management Fund for expert guidance in addressing the problem. Through the Fund's cybersecurity coverage, the district had access to a team of experts who walked school leaders through every step of the solution, from detecting the source and magnitude of the cybersecurity incident to rebuilding files.

Wes Eversole, Lake Dallas ISD deputy superintendent and chief financial officer, said that kind of response means so much to a district when something goes wrong.

"What was amazing was that, as a district, we don't handle something like this regularly, if at all," said Eversole, who is also treasurer of the board that oversees the Fund. "Having access to experts in that realm right at our fingertips made a huge difference in how quickly the district was able to respond to the breach and take action. There were cybersecurity lawyers and forensic teams on calls with our administration every day for about three weeks investigating and responding to the incident."

This year the TASB Risk Management Fund — the oldest continuously operating risk pool serving public

schools in Texas — is marking 50 years of helping Texas school districts cope with myriad issues, from workplace injuries to severe weather.

And while it looks very different from the effort that began in 1974, the Fund's core mission has remained the same.

"It's really about serving the Fund members' needs and doing it with compassion and understanding," said Mary Barrett, associate executive director for TASB Risk Management Services. "At the end of the day, our job is to help school districts help the students and staff that they serve."

Today the Fund — an entity formed under the Texas Interlocal Cooperation Act administered by TASB and overseen by a 19-member board — provides a range of comprehensive coverage, including unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, auto, liability, cybersecurity, and property programs. The Fund also offers loss prevention resources, training, and grant programs, among other services.

"Members know they can count on and rely on us for expertise," Barrett said.

## How the Fund began

The Fund's journey as a risk pool

started with a legislative act. Senate Bill 283, which passed in 1973, required school districts to provide workers' compensation coverage for all employees. The bill allowed for two or more political subdivisions to create a joint risk pool that could be used to provide coverage for employees.

Barrett said that traditional insurance markets weren't interested in serving school district needs to meet the bill's requirements. The president of TASB at the time, Will Davis, was an attorney and Austin ISD school board member. "He saw the mechanism in the law that allowed school districts to self-insure the risk and saw the wisdom of doing it together," said Barrett. "That is how the Fund was born."

Barrett describes the Fund as an efficient way for school districts that have similar risks and exposures to work together to protect each other. "The coverage is tailor-made for Texas school districts," Barrett said.

On Jan. 4, 1974, the TASB Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Fund was created with a membership that grew quickly in the pool's early years. In fact, it was not long after the creation of the workers' compensation pool that TASB's membership grew to nearly every district in the state so they

could access the risk pool.

Two years later, the TASB Employee Benefits Joint Account was formed, followed by the TASB Unemployment Compensation Group Account in 1977 and the TASB Property/Casualty Joint Account in 1981.

In 1997, the four self-insurance risk pools merged to officially become the Fund, leveraging the strength of all the programs together and collaborating with available TASB expertise in human resources, business services, and school board operations to offer Fund members a comprehensive portfolio of options.

"We are all together sharing risk, and it's not a shallow pool and that is comforting," said Scott Campbell, superintendent of East Chambers ISD and Fund board member. "I like to think of it as we are not insurance, but we provide reassurance."

## Helping districts

While school districts face the same risks as other industries, the cadence and challenges of the school year are unique. The Fund plays a vital role supporting Texas school districts' operations, from providing classroom portables after a major storm or fire destroys a school building to mitigating water damage caused by ruptured pipes after a freeze.

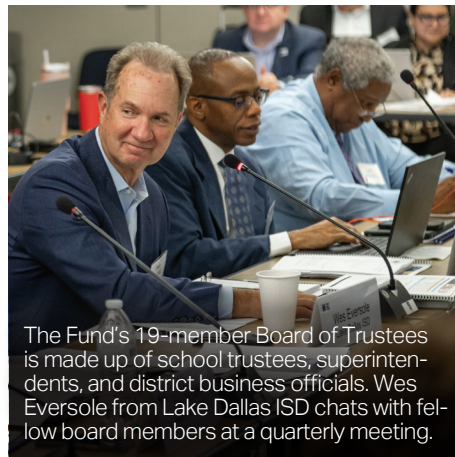
"We replace roofs when they are damaged. We repair buses. We make sure that when employees are injured, they get the care they need and get back to school," said Dubravka Romano, who led TASB Risk Management Services area for 35 years before retiring in 2022.

"If a school district gets sued, we are there to help them through that process. When a school district has layoffs, we diminish that impact by providing unemployment compensation benefits. It's very rewarding work," said Romano, now an outside adviser to the Fund's Board of Trustees.

Unemployment compensation benefits through the Fund have been critical for districts with school funding challenges, said Barrett. These benefits can help districts with financial stability and budget predictability if they face difficult staffing decisions or changes in student enrollment.



Mary Barrett, associate executive director for TASB Risk Management Services, at a Fund anniversary celebration with Dubravka Romano.



The Fund's 19-member Board of Trustees is made up of school trustees, superintendents, and district business officials. Wes Eversole from Lake Dallas ISD chats with fellow board members at a quarterly meeting.



Mary Barrett speaks at a quarterly meeting for the Fund board.

Romano acknowledged the challenges of the work. "If someone is dealing with us, it's because something really bad has happened, and we can help make that situation better."

Property damage from severe weather events such as hurricanes Rita and Harvey, Winter Storm Uri, tornadoes, and record losses from hailstorms have caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to school districts in recent decades.

With more than \$65 billion in

property covered by the Fund, claims related to severe weather events are handled quickly and responsively to get districts back to serving students as soon as possible. Winter Storm Uri in February 2021, for example, resulted in \$100 million in claims being paid to more than 200 member districts.

"When you have a claim, whether it's big or small, the goal is to get that school district back to serving the kids. That's where we come in," Barrett said. "When there is a disruption in district operations, our job is making sure the district can move forward."

## History of responsiveness

Weather is not the only risk to district property. Sweetwater ISD, located 40 miles west of Abilene, had a fire that destroyed a small classroom building the week before STAAR testing a couple of years ago. "Our claims adjuster was able to get remediation and portables set up on the campus so that they did not have to delay or ask for a waiver in taking the STAAR test," Barrett said.

That history of service and responsiveness comes from having a true understanding of the needs of members — who may also be neighbors. TASB Risk Management Services employees who administer the Fund's programs live all over the state and are part of the communities they serve.

Many of the Fund's claims adjusters have relationships with districts that go back decades. "Our adjusters not only understand and know our members' operations and expectations, but we also have long relationships that have been established over time. We cherish these relationships," said Hiawatha Franks, claims officer for TASB Risk Management Services. "The Claims department is here to serve our members to lessen the negative impact of accidents, injuries, or property damage so our member can focus on education."

Since its inception 50 years ago, the Fund has processed 780,392 Workers' Compensation claims or an average of more than 15,000 each year.

Franks finds great purpose in his work. "When a teacher is not able to teach in the classroom or a bus driver is injured and can't drive his route, we



know the work they do is so critical. The purpose of our work is to support continuity of education for our students.”

The Fund’s claims department receives hundreds of calls a day and services more than 40,000 calls a year. “It’s a personal connection. It’s a friendly face. It’s somebody to pick up the phone and somebody that is readily available when we need assistance,” said Eversole.

Sometimes the injury does not allow a district employee to return to the job. “A catastrophic injury, an event that irreparably changed life in that moment can require a lifetime of medical care that the Fund will provide,” Barrett said. With some life-changing injuries, the Fund also covers long-term care costs such as modifying a home to widen doorways or providing adapted vehicles.

“Over the years, we’ve added programs to respond to exactly what our members need,” Barrett said. “We even did employee benefits for a very long time.” But she said that it has been important “to have the courage to recognize when the Fund was not best positioned to meet members’ needs.”

The Employee Benefits program was discontinued after the Legislature

created TRS Active Care in 2003, said Barrett. “One of the things we know is the landscape is always changing,” she said. “We need to be open to what our members will need in the future.”

## Training and resources

A main focus of the Fund’s work is to consider ways to help members mitigate risks and lessen the possibility of expensive claims.

Risk Solutions consultants spend time at districts providing training and guidance on best practices in risk mitigation, but they are also looking at what districts do well. The annual Excellence Awards recognize members for innovative risk solutions, and the Fund highlights these efforts to other members in the risk pool.

“We have a really strong risk solutions team that focuses on evaluating and scanning the horizon to make sure we understand what is coming down the pike for members in addition to responding to risks that have always been there,” Barrett said. In recognition of emerging risks for school districts, the Fund added cybersecurity coverage in 2014 and has added other programs over the years.

“Thirty years ago, when we talked about school safety, we were probably

talking about playground safety. Now we all worry about active shooters and other violent acts,” said Romano.

To help districts respond to increasing campus security needs and requirements, the Fund held the School-Based Law Enforcement Summit at TASB Headquarters in Austin last November. The day-long summit was attended by about 60 representatives from member districts and was the culmination of the Fund’s first-ever residency program focused on providing members with school-based law enforcement resources and training.

The Fund will hold a conference in April at the Kalahari Resorts & Conventions in Round Rock. The event will be an opportunity for Fund members to do a deep dive into a range of risk management topics (See box on page 17 for more information).

The Fund has awarded millions in loss prevention and other types of grants over the years, including \$500,000 in the cybersecurity grant program to more than 170 members in 2023.

Barrett recalled a time when grant funds helped students from Channelview ISD on a band trip to Disney World, when their chartered bus was involved in a serious accident half-way



TASB Risk Management Services claims staff pose for a photo in the lobby of TASB Headquarters in 2018.



between Florida and the school district near Houston. The accident resulted in many serious student injuries, and the Fund's crisis grant was made available to help reunify students with their parents. "While that would not be a covered claim, grants through the Fund helped get parents to their students and get students home safely," Barrett said.

### Governed by members

The Fund has faced its own challenges over the years.

"During the mid-to-late '80s, the workers' compensation system in Texas was collapsing due to out-of-control medical and legal costs," said Romano. "The situation was so bad that the oldest and largest workers' compensation insurance company in the state ended up filing bankruptcy and very few workers' compensation carriers were left in the state."

According to Romano, the crisis necessitated the Legislature to completely rewrite the workers' compensation laws in 1989. During that time, the Fund faced a significant deficit and financial uncertainty. She credited the Fund Board for a successful recovery plan. "The Fund fully recovered and has continued to serve the needs of its members," Romano said.

The 19-member board is critical to the Fund's success and drives the goals and the mission, said Barrett. The board's composition is intentional to be representative of Fund members and is made up of school trustees, superintendents, and district business officials.

"The Fund is governed by its members," Barrett said. "We take our members' trust in us, our board, and our TASB staff very seriously."

Barrett, who joined TASB more than 25 years ago, said the core mission of the Fund is a simple one.

"We are stewards of our members' pool of funds to be there as a safety net when that bad thing happens," Barrett said. "The Fund will be here for the next 50 years and beyond that to make sure we are serving Texas public schools."★

*Beth Griesmer is a staff writer for Texas Lone Star.*



## TASB Risk Management Fund Conference 2024 Details

**When:** April 14-16

**Where:** Kalahari Resorts & Conventions in Round Rock



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This April, TASB Risk Management Fund will hold its first member conference since 2019. Fund members from across the state will learn more about risk pooling and risk management from TASB and other experts and hear about risk management experiences from Fund members.

"The conference is an opportunity for our members to network with their peers and learn how they can reduce risk, claims, and costs at their district," said Janina Flores, division director of TASB Risk Solutions. "I hope attendees of the conference will walk away with an understanding that they are members of a risk pool and that we are here with support and resources to strengthen their organization against risk."

This event will also mark the Fund's 50th anniversary with a special dinner featuring a State of the Fund speech by Mary Barrett, associate executive director for TASB Risk Management Services. The evening will showcase the Fund's history as well as a school performance.

### Event highlights:

- Keynote speaker - Chet Garner, host of the 12-time Emmy award-winning Texas travel show on PBS, *The Daytripper*
- Round Rock Express game
- First time attendee breakfast
- Excellence Awards luncheon
- 50th Anniversary Celebration dinner
- Educational sessions on topics including:
  - Auto claims
  - Behavior threat assessment and management
  - Cybersecurity and fraudulent instruction tips
  - House Bill 3 and the Texas Education Agency
  - Mental health in schools
  - Property coverage and weather cycles
  - School-based law enforcement member panel
  - TASB Legal and Policy Service updates
  - Unemployment compensation
  - Workers' compensation
  - Many other risk management topics

To register, go to [tasbrmf.org/conference](https://tasbrmf.org/conference).

For questions about the Members' Conference 2024, contact [fund.training@tasb.org](mailto:fund.training@tasb.org).



# Employee Misconduct

Guidelines for prevention, investigation, and more

by TASB Legal Services

In collaboration with the Texas Education Agency, Texas Department of Family Protective Services, and other relevant entities, TASB Legal Services has developed guidelines to assist school officials in addressing allegations that an employee abused, was involved in a romantic relationship, or otherwise committed an unlawful act with a student or minor. The following information contains excerpts from the complete guidelines, which can be found on the TASB Legal Services eSource website on [tasb.org](https://tasb.org).

### 1. Have a plan before an incident arises.

When inappropriate contact is suspected or alleged, the district’s actions must be responsive to multiple stakeholders, including the alleged victim, the parents, the employee, law enforcement, and other state and local authorities. Each of these entities may have rights and responsibilities in the investigation process. District officials should consider these interests and create a procedure tailored to the community’s needs.

Every situation is different; the plan should not lock the district into an inflexible approach. Nonetheless, certain issues are likely to arise with any allegation of employee misconduct involving a student. Identifying these issues in advance will help your district respond effectively.

### 2. Establish relevant policies and procedures.

TASB Policy Service has developed model policies on these topics in the following codes.

**Electronic communications policy:**  
The prevalence of electronic media — smart phones, social media, email, and text messaging — has led to an unprecedented risk of inappropriate communications between staff and students. State law requires districts to adopt a written policy designed to discourage improper electronic communications between employees and students. Tex. Educ. Code § 38.027.

TASB Model Policy DH(LOCAL) and the TASB Model Employee Handbook address employee use of electronic com-

munications with students. The TASB Model Student Handbook also includes a section that parallels the restrictions and processes described in the TASB MEH.

### 3. Screen potential employees.

Applicants for certain positions are required to submit a preemployment affidavit disclosing any charges, adjudications, or convictions based on inappropriate relationships with minors. This includes teachers, teacher interns or teacher trainees, librarians, educational aides, administrators, educational diagnosticians, school counselors, audiologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, physicians, nurses, school psychologists, licensed professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, social workers, and speech language pathologists. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 21.003, .009.

TEA-approved forms are available on the TASB Legal Services eSource website at [tasb.org/resources/esource](https://tasb.org/resources/esource).

### 4. Provide training.

By law, all school district employees must receive training on sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and other maltreatment of children. New employees must be trained annually. Tex. Educ. Code § 38.0041; 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 61.1051(c)-(d); TASB Policy DMA(LEGAL). Training should include identifying and reporting potential sexual harassment under Title IX



Employment Policies	Student Policies	Community and Governmental Relations Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CJ: Contracted Services</li><li>• DC: Employment Practices</li><li>• DH: Employee Standards of Conduct</li><li>• DHB: Reports to SBEC</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FFF: Student Safety</li><li>• FFG: Child Abuse and Neglect</li><li>• FFH: Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GRA: State and Local Governmental Authorities</li><li>• GRAA: Law Enforcement Agencies</li></ul>



of the Education Amendments of 1972. School board trustees must also complete training on identifying and reporting sexual abuse, human trafficking, and other maltreatment of children. Tex. Educ. Code § 11.159(c)(2).

In addition, all employees should be trained to report concerns (including rumors, innuendo, observations, or other information) to an appropriate administrator. For more information, visit [tea.tx.gov](http://tea.tx.gov) and search for Child Abuse Prevention Overview.

#### 5. Understand what types of reports are required and when to report.

School employees and volunteers must report child abuse within 48 hours if they have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been or will be subjected to abuse. Tex. Fam. Code § 261.101(b); 40 Tex. Admin. Code § 707.605. If the person believed to have committed the abuse or neglect is an individual responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child (including another school employee), the employee or volunteer must make a report to DFPS and may also report to law enforcement. Tex. Fam. Code § 261.103(a), (c). Even if a student victim of an improper relationship is not a minor, there may be cause to report to DFPS if the employee also had contact with minors.

The person making a report must identify, if known, the child's name and

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## In contrast to child abuse reporting requirements, employees must report suspected abuse or improper relationships to the TEA Division of Educator Investigations when required, regardless of the age of the student.

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address; the name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child; and any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.

In 2023, the Texas Legislature expanded reporting requirements to include the facts that caused the person to believe that the child was abused or neglected

and the source of such information; the person's name and telephone number; and the person's home address, or, if the person is a professional (including educators and school district employees), the person's business address and profession.

Due to this change in law, DFPS is no longer authorized to accept anonymous reports of abuse or neglect. However, the identity of a person making a report is still confidential and may only be disclosed as provided by law. Tex. Fam. Code § 261.104.

In contrast to child abuse reporting requirements, employees must report suspected abuse or improper relationships to the TEA Division of Educator Investigations when required, regardless of the age of the student. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 21.006, 22.093.

**Reports required after an employee is terminated or resigns:** A superintendent must notify the TEA Division of Investigations no later than seven days after learning about an employee's termination or resignation of employment if there is evidence that the employee sexually or physically abused or otherwise committed an unlawful act with a student or minor

or was involved in a romantic relationship with or solicited or engaged in sexual contact with a student or minor. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 21.006; 22.093. The State Board for Educator Certification may impose sanctions against a superintendent who fails to file a report or a principal who fails to provide notice to a superintendent as required by law. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 21.006(b-2), (f).

For more information about SBEC-required reporting, go to **tasb.org**, click on Legal under the Solutions & Services tab and search for Reporting Employee Misconduct.★

*This article is provided for educational purposes and contains information to facilitate a general understanding of the law. References to judicial or other official proceedings are intended to be a fair and impartial account of public records, which may contain allegations that are not true. This publication is not an exhaustive treatment of the law, nor is it intended to substitute for the advice of an attorney. Consult your own attorney to apply these legal principles to specific fact situations.*

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# Grassroots Meetings

Trustees begin to develop legislative priorities

by Dax González

**H**undreds of trustees from across the state took part in TASB's regional Grassroots Meetings this year, collaborating to form regional priorities that will be considered for TASB's Advocacy Agenda.

At the meetings, trustees heard updates on the Texas Legislature and discussed many of the important issues facing Texas public schools and students as they worked to identify the most critical items to include in their regional lists. Many regions chose to include teacher recruitment and retention, an increase to the basic allotment, and additional support for school safety and security in their priorities, among other issues.

"It was great to feel the energy in the room at the [ESC] Region One Grassroots Meeting. The unity in our common goals and passion for public education is strong," said Daniella Lopez-Valdez, a Brownsville ISD trustee who attended the Grassroots Meeting in Edinburg on Jan. 11.

The meetings were held in education service center regions around the state, beginning in ESC Region 13 in Austin at TASB headquarters. Many attendees expressed their appreciation for the ability to discuss their thoughts with other trustees, discovering that they share many of the same concerns even though their district characteristics may differ.

"I love coming to these meetings," said Renae Mitchell, Pflugerville ISD's board president, who has attended several Grassroots Meetings in Austin during her eight years on the board. "This is a great way to stay involved and contribute to shaping our education system."

Now that the local priorities have been established, the Legislative Advisory Council — consisting of trustees

elected during the regional grassroots meetings — will gather in Austin on April 20 to merge them into one statewide list of priorities to be considered by the

TASB Delegate Assembly and potentially become priorities in the Advocacy Agenda for the upcoming legislative session.

## Submit advocacy resolutions

TASB invites all school boards to submit new resolutions to be included in the 2024–26 Advocacy Agenda.

TASB's Advocacy Agenda includes priorities and resolutions. Advocacy priorities are the legislative goals arising from TASB's grassroots process. The resolutions are board-submitted positions guiding TASB's response to other issues that might come before the Texas Legislature, State Board of Education, and regulatory entities.

Resolution proposals will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. on June 17. Each resolution must be adopted by your board and



This year's Grassroots Meetings began in January when trustees in ESC Region 13 gathered at TASB headquarters in Austin to discuss regional priorities that may become part of the next Advocacy Agenda.

Photo by TASB Media Services

must be submitted using the form provided at [tasb.org/resources/submit-an-advocacy-resolution](https://tasb.org/resources/submit-an-advocacy-resolution). Plan now to put any proposed resolutions on your board's agenda before the submissions deadline if you have not already.

Proposed resolutions are first reviewed by the TASB Resolutions Committee and then by the TASB Board of Directors. In September, the 2024 Delegate Assembly will adopt approved resolutions that will form part of the 2024-26 Advocacy Agenda, which will remain in effect until the end of the 2026 TASB Delegate Assembly.

Please note that all current resolutions will expire, along with the 2022-24 Advocacy Agenda, in September after the Delegate Assembly adjourns. Any reso-

lutions your district wants to see on the new agenda must be resubmitted.

Also, we strongly encourage your board to send a trustee to the TASB Delegate Assembly in San Antonio on Sept. 28 to represent your board's interests and support your advocacy positions. Learn more at [tasb.org/about/governance/delegate-assembly](https://tasb.org/about/governance/delegate-assembly).

An electronic version of the resolution submission form, the current Advocacy Agenda, and more information may be found at [gr.tasb.org](https://gr.tasb.org). Please contact Dax González at 800-580-4885 or [dax.gonzalez@tasb.org](mailto:dax.gonzalez@tasb.org) if you have any questions.★

*Dax González is division director of TASB Governmental Relations.*

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**"It was great to feel the energy in the room at the [ESC] Region One Grassroots Meeting. The unity in our common goals and passion for public education is strong,"**

**— Daniella Lopez-Valdez,  
a Brownsville ISD trustee**

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# In the Nation's Capital

## Texas school leaders attend federal advocacy conference

by Beth Griesmer

More than 60 Texas school board members recently traveled to Washington, D.C., for the second annual Texas Federal Advocacy Conference. Organized by TASB, the two-day event connected trustees with congressional and policy leaders on education issues ranging from school finance to artificial intelligence.

"As a new board member, I appreciate this opportunity to learn more about the issues facing Texas school districts," said Donald Henderson, who was elected to the Los Fresnos CISD board in November. Los Fresnos CISD serves 10,000 students in South Texas. "This is an opportunity to advocate for my school district but also an opportunity to grow as a leader for my district."

TASB Executive Director Dan Troxell

said he was pleased to see board members take advantage of the opportunity to have their voices heard in the nation's capital.

"This conference gives Texas trustees an opportunity to hear from education policy experts," said Troxell. "Then they get to go have face-to-face conversations with their legislators after taking a deep dive on the topics that matter to their school districts."

School board members were able to ask education leaders tough questions as they heard about education finance policies, updates on U.S. Supreme Court rulings, and the education issues resonating with voters.

Roberto Rodriguez, assistant secretary for planning, evaluation, and policy development for the U.S. Department of Education, gave the group an update on the department's work.

"This was advocacy 2.0," said Dan Micciche, a Dallas ISD trustee and TASB Board secretary-treasurer, who also attended the first conference. He said the conference this year expanded on what he learned while in Washington, D.C., last year. "This conference was at a whole new level. I appreciated what I heard, even when I disagreed with them."

AI was a topic of interest to conference attendee. Sara Burleson, a Midland ISD board member and retired teacher, wanted a better understanding of the impact of using AI tools on the more than 25,000 students in her West Texas district.

"What are the long-term ramifications of using artificial intelligence in the classroom?" Burleson asked. "We need to discuss as boards how we can develop policies that still promote critical thinking skills and creativity in our students when they use AI tools."

The two priorities that Texas board members were focused on were fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and increasing Social Security benefits for retired teachers.

Drawing from the Grassroots Meetings that have been taking place across the state, "we selected these two local issues because there is overlap between federal policy and state level programs," said Ruben Longoria, assistant director for TASB's Governmental Relations. "Advocating for these issues and encouraging our members of Congress to support



Left: Texas Federal Advocacy Conference attendees pose after a group dinner. Right: TASB Second Vice President Mary Jane Hetrick, Dripping Springs ISD board president, asks a question during a conference session..

them would consequently benefit special education students and retired teachers.”

On the second day of the conference, board members went to Capitol Hill to visit with elected officials and their staffs, including the office of Republican Texas Sen. John Cornyn. Trustees talked with officials throughout the day about the costs of ensuring IDEA compliance and the difficult decisions districts are having to make in the face of funding shortfalls.

“This is a bipartisan issue,” said Alaura Ervin, Cornyn’s legislative aide for education. She explained that the current bill before Congress to increase IDEA funding does not have bipartisan support.

Advocating as a group, the Texas school board members represented a range of geographical regions, student demographics, and district sizes. Trustees described to Ervin the challenges districts of all sizes have in serving special education students without adequate resources.

“It only takes one additional student in a district my size to increase our funding gap by another 10%,” said Bryan Holubec, Thrall ISD board president and the School Board Advocacy Network 2023 advocate of the year. Thrall serves 900 students in Central Texas. “There are hundreds of small districts like mine across the state.”★

*Beth Griesmer is a staff writer for Texas Lone Star.*



Photo courtesy of Beth Griesmer

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# State of the Association

TASB leaders and staff discuss past and present

TASB leaders and staff, past and present, came together at the State of the Association to discuss the ongoing challenges facing public education and the Association's role in supporting boards and districts over the years.

The annual gathering, held Jan. 31 at the DoubleTree by Hilton in north Austin, offered TASB leaders and staff an opportunity to honor the Association's 75th anniversary while also focusing on what lies ahead.

"This past year has been an amazing one for serving children, for serving school boards," TASB Executive Director Dan Troxell told TASB staff members. "The work that you do matters — it makes a difference in the lives of kids."

TASB's many services and programs help boards and districts on many levels, Troxell said. They "believe in what we do and how we do it."

During the program, Troxell joined TASB President Armando Rodriquez and past presidents Ted Beard, (2021-22), Faye Beaulieu (2013-14), Debbie Gillespie (2022-23), and David Sublasky (1997-98) for a panel discussion that was a highlight of the event. Beard is a Longview ISD trustee, Beaulieu was a Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD trustee, Gillespie was a Frisco ISD trustee, and Sublasky was a Fabens ISD trustee and currently is a TASB Director representing the educational service centers.

The panelists discussed the state of public education in Texas and how TASB has continued to provide help in the form of training and critical programs for school board members and the districts they serve.

Beaulieu noted that TASB offers many learning and networking opportunities for board members. "The leadership development training you get at TASB is phenomenal," she said.

The panelists also offered some advice for current school board members.

"Don't judge until you understand," Rodriguez said, noting that once you understand something, you probably won't pass judgment on it.

Beard said it's important for trustees to make "data-based decisions," over those involving emotions. "Leadership is hard at times," Beard acknowledged.

Sublasky said new board members should get engaged and learn as much as possible because "when you first start, you're so far behind."

"Be positive, and encourage being positive," Gillespie said.

Beaulieu also said it's important for

board members to bond. "Get together, talk, get to know each other."

Another panel discussion featured James B. Crow, who served as TASB's executive director from 1995 to 2021, and Karen Strong, who was TASB's associate executive director of communications and public relations from 1988 to 2020. They talked about TASB's history of developing programs and services that continue to help boards and districts today.★







Top left: From left, Troxell, former TASB presidents Faye Beaulieu, David Sublasky [currently a TASB Director representing the education service centers], Debbie Gillespie, and Ted Beard [a Longview ISD trustee], and TASB President Armando Rodriguez, Canutillo ISD's board president, discuss TASB and public education in Texas. Top: TASB Executive Director Dan Troxell, on stage, makes introductions at the annual State of the Association. Bottom left: TASB President Armando Rodriguez talks to TASB President-Elect Rolinda Schmidt, a Kerrville ISD trustee, at the State of the Association. Above: From left, Karen Strong, former associate executive director of communications and public relations at TASB, and James B. Crow, who served as TASB executive director from 1995 to 2021, discussed highlights of TASB's 75 years of service to Texas school boards and districts. Crow wore his shirt from TASB's 50th anniversary. Left: Eric Narcisse, assistant director for Update Research and Development in Policy Service, asks panelists Crow and Strong a question.

*Photos by TASB Media Services*



# Teacher Pay

## TASB HR Services releases 2023-24 survey results

TASB HR Services' 2023-24 District Personnel Survey results show that the median starting salary for a new teacher is \$47,388, up 1.8% from a year ago.

Conducted by HR Services during the fall of the 2023-24 school year, the survey collected data that covers teacher salaries, hiring schedules, degree stipends, shortage stipends, substitute teacher pay rates, and teacher pay increases. The survey information can help districts recruit, retain, and reward teachers through the development of competitive compensation plans.

The survey was sent to 1,019 Texas public school districts and 543 districts responded. The survey data represents about 78%, or 291,671, of the estimated total population of 371,802 teachers in Texas public schools. Of these teachers, 75%, or 219,166, work in large school districts with 10,000 or more students.

The data only represents survey participants and is effective October 2023.

### Starting teacher pay

While the median starting salary for a new teacher is \$47,388, the median starting salary in responding districts with 10,000 or more students is \$59,000, a 3.4% increase from the 2022-23 survey. Teacher pay in small and rural districts is generally lower than in large and urban districts.

Half of the 543 responding districts have an entry-level salary of \$47,400 or greater, and these districts employ 91% of teachers among the respondents. The highest reported entry salary is \$65,000, and the five districts reporting the highest starting salaries are all in Education Service Center Region 4, which includes the Houston metropolitan area.

This year's median starting salary is

40.8% higher than the state minimum starting salary of \$33,660. Only 22 responding districts, employing 714 total teachers, reported paying teachers the state minimum as determined in the State Minimum Salary Schedule for benchmark years collected in the survey.

### Median teacher salaries

The median teacher average salary in responding districts is \$55,600 for 2023-24, up 1.7% from a year ago. Median teacher average salaries varied by enrollment: from \$49,881 in districts with fewer than 500 students to \$65,563 in districts with 50,000 or more students.

### Teacher Stipends

Of 543 responding districts, 90% pay shortage stipends to teachers in at least one identified shortage area.★

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March 19: Lubbock .....Region 17  
March 25: Dublin .....Region 11  
March 26: Wichita Falls .....Region 9  
March 27: Kingsville .....Region 2

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April 10: Houston .....Region 4  
April 25: Gonzales (New Location!).....Regions 3 and 13  
April 30: Uvalde .....Region 20

May 8: Alpine .....Region 18  
May 9: Huntsville .....Region 6  
May 9: Abilene .....Region 14  
May 14: Nacogdoches .....Region 7  
May 14: Commerce .....Region 10  
May 15: Canyon .....Region 16  
May 17-18: South Padre.....Region 1  
May 21: Waco .....Region 12  
May 23: El Paso .....Region 19



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Visit [tasb.org/spring-workshops](https://tasb.org/spring-workshops) for more information.



# Honoring Achievement

H-E-B announces finalists for excellence awards

H-E-B has announced eight public school districts, five early childhood facilities, and five school boards throughout Texas as finalists in the 22nd annual H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards program.

This year, H-E-B will award a total of \$90,000 to these finalists (\$5,000 each), and all finalists will go on to compete for even greater cash prizes at the statewide level in May. Since the program's inception, H-E-B has awarded more than \$13 million in funding to benefit outstanding Texas public schools and early childhood facilities.

To determine statewide winners, a panel of judges tours each finalist's campus to engage with administration, staff, parents, and community members. Winners will be announced at the H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards ceremony

May 5 in Houston. The winning large district will receive \$100,000; the winning small district will receive \$50,000; the winning early childhood facility will receive \$25,000; and if selected one or more school boards will receive up to a total of \$25,000.

In addition, 50 Texas teacher, principal, and counselor finalists will be announced during surprise visits to schools and classrooms across the state.

The 2024 school district, early childhood, and school boards finalists are:

#### Large school districts

- Allen ISD
- Galena Park ISD
- Klein ISD
- Pasadena ISD
- Wylie ISD

#### Small school districts

- Angleton ISD
- Gregory-Portland ISD
- La Porte ISD

#### Early childhood education facilities

- Del Valle ISD Child Development Center Central (Del Valle)
- M. Rivas Primary Discovery Academy (Donna)
- Early Childhood Academy (Harlingen)
- Melinda Webb School (Houston)
- Central Texas 4C, Inc. (Temple)

#### School boards

- Corpus Christi ISD
- Donna ISD
- Garland ISD
- Plainview ISD
- Sharyland ISD★



## Healthcare Plans as Unique as Texas School Districts.

Are you looking for fresh alternatives to your current health plan? Talk to someone who knows the unique needs of school districts. With a wealth of experience and a commitment to providing friendly service, TASB Benefits Cooperative can assist with evaluating your options and help ensure you are making the best choice for your district.

Contact us for a complimentary analysis as we walk you through some best practices to consider in making this important decision.

# SOTY Award

Deadline nearing for superintendent nominations

Texas school boards are encouraged to submit nominations for the 2024 Superintendent of the Year, which honors outstanding district leaders. The deadline for submissions is April 21.

Winners exemplify strong leadership skills, dedication to strengthening public education, and commitment to community engagement. The winner also exhibits a strong and effective relationship with their board.

To be eligible, superintendents must have served in their district for three years at the time the award is presented this fall at txEDCON24. In addition to highlighting the superintendent's successes, the board must pass a resolution in support of the nomination.

The nomination packet includes district demographic and performance data to provide the committee insight into

the district's progress on student performance, efforts to close achievement gaps, and the context for that work.

After nominations are submitted, the selection process begins with regional interviews, conducted by each education service center in late spring. A winner is named in all 20 ESC regions where a superintendent is nominated.

Among the regional winners, five finalists are selected by the State Selection Committee after a round of interviews in August. The five finalists will go through another round of interviews at txEDCON24, where the winner is selected and announced.

The SOTY winner is presented with \$5,000 for use by their district, and finalists each receive \$1,000 for use by their district. The award program is underwritten by Balfour, and the winner receives a



custom Balfour ring.

The 2023 SOTY winner was Martha Salazar-Zamora of Tomball ISD. See other past winners and find more details on eligibility and the nomination process and materials at [tasb.org/soty](https://tasb.org/soty).★

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# Bulletin Board

## Dr. Matt Robinson Honored with Celebration of Leadership Award

The Leadership TASB Alumni Executive Board has selected Dr. Matt Robinson as recipient of the prestigious Celebration of Leadership Award for the 2023-24 school year. The award recognizes LTASB alumni who are outstanding education leaders making significant contributions to their communities and Texas.



From left: Tony Hopkins, TASB first vice president and Friendswood ISD board president, and Dr. Matt Robinson.

The annual Celebration of Leadership Award recognizes individuals who exemplify strong leadership, commitment to service, and a deep love for learning. Robinson's achievements in these areas are well-documented, and he is highly regarded by his peers and the community.

A servant-leader known for his dedication and innovation in education, Robinson was honored for advancing the quality of schooling and championing the causes of students and educators alike. His commitment to excellence in leadership has been a driving force in shaping better educational outcomes.

Through his board service and other leadership roles, Robinson has proven himself to be a staunch supporter of public education, said Tony Hopkins, TASB first vice president, Friendswood ISD board president, and an alumnus of the LTASB Class of 2014. He said that Robinson, a medical doctor, has used his expertise to inform both his decision-making process and his role in board governance on both the Friendswood ISD school board and the State Board of Education, where he helped craft new health TEKS for students.

"Dr. Robinson accomplished these things while balancing his medical practice obligations and would many times have to attend meetings while wearing his scrubs, having come straight from surgery," Hopkins said in his nominating letter.

LTASB is the premier school board leadership training program in the state with nearly 1,000 alumni trustees. It is dedicated to fostering leadership and innovation in education. Through its alumni executive board, LTASB continues to recognize and encourage leaders who make a difference in the lives of students across Texas. The award ceremony was held in Friendswood on Dec. 29, 2023.

We want to recognize school board members' extraordinary work in TLS!

If you have received any awards or honors, please send your news and photos to [tls@tasb.org](mailto:tls@tasb.org).

## Board Officer Institute Registration Now Open

Registration is now open for TASB's Board Officer Institute. The six-week virtual training — designed for board officers and trustees aspiring to become board officers — begins March 18. The class will meet one hour per week and dive into topics that every board officer should know and understand to be successful.

During the course, you'll learn about:

- Board Officer Roles and Responsibilities
- *Robert's Rules of Order*
- Running an Effective Meeting
- Team Inventory
- Goal Setting
- Superintendent Evaluation

Participants also receive three hours of one-on-one individualized remote coaching. Trustees can earn up to 14 hours of continuing education credit for completion of the program. Register now on the TASB Online Learning Center at [onlinelearning.tasb.org](https://onlinelearning.tasb.org). Have questions or want to learn more? Contact Esperanza Orosco, TASB board consultant, at [esperanza.orosco@tasb.org](mailto:esperanza.orosco@tasb.org).

TASB's Executive Search Services is currently accepting applications for the positions listed below:

- ▶ **Rogers ISD:** Superintendent  
Deadline: March 6, 2024
- ▶ **Corsicana ISD:** Superintendent  
Deadline: March 8, 2024

For information about vacancies or services provided by TASB's Executive Search Services, call **800-580-8272**, email [executive.search@tasb.org](mailto:executive.search@tasb.org).



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# Board Members: MAP YOUR JOURNEY TO SUCCESS

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## Master Trustees

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For experienced trustees, meet with innovative districts and leaders, while learning what makes them successful. LTASB's one-of-a-kind experience will expand your view of education leadership.

### Applications open May 2024.

Learn more! [leadershiptasb@tasb.org](mailto:leadershiptasb@tasb.org)

## Whole Board Training

Need support with your superintendent evaluation process? Board Development Services' consultants are here to help! Get training tailored to your district's needs.

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## Experienced Trustees

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For veteran trustees and board officers, BOI imparts knowledge and tools for effective and efficient meetings.

**Key offerings:** Important Tools for Meeting Preparation, Effective Meetings, Focused and Productive Board Discussions.

### Next session begins March 18.

Register now at [onlinelearning.tasb.org](https://onlinelearning.tasb.org)!

## Continuing Education

With the Online Learning Center, you can find courses to support your board service, including Introduction to Parliamentary Procedure, Board Officers Forum, and Advocacy 101 and 201.

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# A Closer Look

## School Board Elections

If you've ever wondered about why some school districts hold their board elections in November while others are in May, the answer is as complicated as the Texas Election Code.

Simply put, the law changed in 2016, effectively ending the authority that school districts had to change from May to November for their school board elections, except under very limited circumstances.

Traditionally, most school districts have chosen May because there's the general belief that local issues will get more attention not having to compete with federal and state matters during the November general election.

There's also the issue of cost and convenience. Since 2006, school districts have been required to have a joint election partner for trustee elections. Districts with May elections can partner with a local municipality, the county, a community college, and in some circumstances, a hospital district. State law requires school districts holding November elections to partner with the county during even-numbered years.

Here's a closer look at when districts hold elections\* and then a November recap\*\*:

	MAY ELECTION	NOVEMBER ELECTION
EVEN YEARS	628 DISTRICTS	311 DISTRICTS
ODD YEARS	680 DISTRICTS	64 DISTRICTS

\*These numbers do not include nine nontraditional districts designated as "school districts" by the Texas Education Agency.  
 \*\*Numbers are approximate.

## November 2023 Election Recap

64 out of 1,025

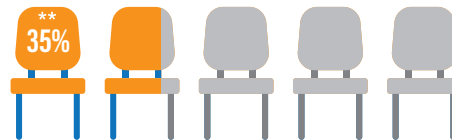
Districts were scheduled to have an election

### OUT OF THE 64 DISTRICTS...

37 Districts held an election

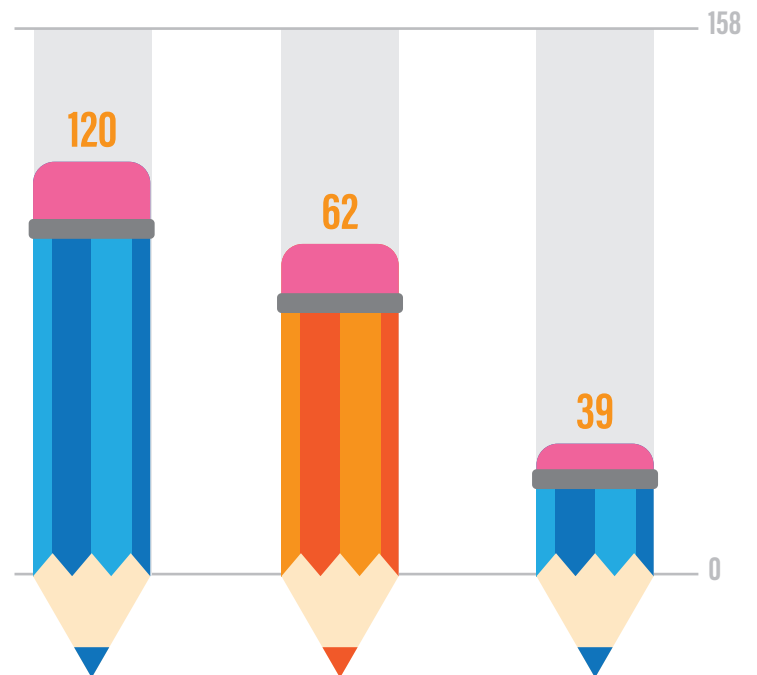


27 Districts cancelled their elections because candidates ran unopposed.



158 out of 448

School board seats were up for election



120 out of 158

School board incumbents ran for reelection

62 out of 158

Incumbents with no opposition

39 out of 158

New board members elected

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