

Texas Lone Star

A Publication of the Texas Association of School Boards | Volume 41, Number 2 | March 2023



PUTTING PARTNERS TOGETHER

Community helps Hearne ISD chart successful path



Planning for Success

Lubbock-Cooper ISD board focuses on students

TASB Salary Survey

Many districts increase pay for school personnel

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MARCH

1-2 • TASB HR Services: Understanding Compensation in Schools — Virtual Event

1-4 • TASB Governance Camp, Powered by Student Voice — Galveston

7 • TASB Facility Services: Asbestos Designated Person Training — Beaumont

8 • TASB Facility Services: Integrated Pest Management — Beaumont

9-11 • Texas Caucus of Black School Board Members Education Summit — Round Rock

20 • TASB Spring Workshop — Lubbock

21 • TASB Facility Services: Asbestos Designated Person Training — White Settlement

22 • TASB Facility Services: Integrated Pest Management — White Settlement

28 • TASB Spring Workshop — Wichita Falls

29 • TASB Spring Workshop — Kingsville

APRIL

6 • TASB Spring Workshop — San Angelo

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12 • TASB Facility Services: Integrated Pest Management — Amarillo

12 • TASB Spring Workshop — Houston

13 • TASB Student Solutions Webinar Series: Documentation Review — What have we learned and what can we do? — Virtual Event

19 • TASB SHARS Matters Webinar Series: Third Party Liability — Virtual Event

19-20 • TASB HR Services: Managing Personnel Records — Virtual Event

19-21 • TASB Legal Services School Law Boot Camp — Austin

25 • TASB Spring Workshop — Uvalde

25 • TASB Facility Services: Asbestos Designated Person Training — Waco

26 • TASB Facility Services: Integrated Pest Management — Waco



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Texas Lone Star • Volume 41, Number 2

Texas Association of School Boards
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512.467.0222 • 800.580.8272

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Address changes should be sent to Michael Pennant, TASB, P.O. Box 400, Austin, Texas 78767-0400.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to TASB, P.O. Box 400, Austin, Texas 78767-0400.

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Setting Goals

Outlining objectives important to our work

by Debbie Gillespie



Debbie Gillespie

Back in December, my daughter asked everyone at the dinner table to share their New Year's resolutions/goals for 2023. I listened with pride as my grown children discussed with great clarity and enthusiasm what they wanted to do in the coming year.

Meanwhile, my husband and I just looked at each other. Not that we don't have goals, it's just that our approach to setting them and achieving them has changed over time.

I've not been a big fan of resolutions. While they are generally positive and meaningful, they also can be vague and there often is no real accountability for them. After doing some research, I found that only 9-12% of those who make resolutions actually keep them.

Studies show people are sometimes hesitant to set goals or put deep meaning into them because they are afraid of failure.

Winning the Super Bowl, an Olympic gold medal, or first place in a marathon only happens to a few, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't work hard on setting our own goals and taking a chance. Imagine all the great joy you would be missing if you had chosen not to run for school board for fear of losing.

The path to achieving your goals and what you learn along the way is just as important as actually getting there.

Setting realistic goals

Goal setting is significant to our personal lives, but it is also vitally important in the work we do in public education. There is a lot of research that shows a direct correlation between Team of Eight goal setting and student achievement. But

it is also important to remember to set realistic goals and know your limits.

In Frisco ISD, we have started strategic abandonment, a process in which we closely look at all of our plans, projects, and initiatives to determine if each has a concrete and lasting impact on student success. We're not abandoning any goals or programs just yet, but we are realistically reviewing student interest and how resources are being used to provide the best educational opportunities for our growing, and changing, student population. It continues to be a work in progress, but I believe it will lead to even stronger educational pathways.

We continue to work on setting team goals in our district, but we all have different passions and interests, just as our students do. We also need to be flexible as we work on our goals. We need to remember that rethinking or changing the path is not a failure of any kind; it's actually accepting that there are always options.

We also need to remember that group goals can only be successful if there is some agreement and accountability.

A major decision

After some reflection, I have set a few goals. One personal one is to finish books that I started and didn't finish for a multitude of reasons. I've kept a list and will keep you posted.

The goal setting on the professional front is more complicated for me this year. One major decision came only after a lot of prayers and tears. Many of you may already know this, but I announced in January that I will not seek another term on my local board. I was first elected to the Frisco ISD board in 2011.

I will continue to give 100%+ to Frisco ISD until the end of my term in June, and I will find ways to serve the district in the future. Thankfully, I will be able to remain TASB President until the end of the fall TASA | TASB Convention, at which time I will assume the role of Immediate Past President for one year.

We also need to remember that group goals can only be successful if there is some agreement and accountability.

I love being a trustee more than I can possibly express in words, and it is an incredible honor and privilege to serve my district and the mission of public education in Texas. But I believe it's time to take a step back and reflect on where I am needed next. I will always be a dedicated supporter of Frisco ISD and public education and will remain active in advocating for our 5.4 million public school students in Texas.

I'll tell you this: whatever your goals or resolutions may be, remember to take one step at a time, change the path when needed, and most of all, I wish you all great success!★

Debbie Gillespie, a Frisco ISD trustee, is the 2022-23 president of TASB.



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Trust in Public Schools

New poll shows broad support for Texas teachers

by Laura Tolley



Laura Tolley

A new survey indicates Texans share some strong common ground when it comes to supporting and strengthening the future of Texas public education.

Parents report high levels of satisfaction with their public schools, many adults believe teachers had a positive impact on their lives, and there is significant support for increased funding for public schools, according to the 2023 Texas Education Poll conducted by the Charles Butt Foundation. You can find the full report on the poll at charlesbuttfdn.org.

The poll, now in its fourth year, focuses on finding out from Texans “what is on their minds and hearts, and what they believe is essential to strengthening the future of Texas public education,” Shari B. Albright, foundation president, wrote in an opening letter included in the report. The poll of 1,211 adults in Texas was conducted last September and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points.

Of particular interest to me, the proud daughter of an elementary school teacher in Albuquerque (N.M.) Public Schools, is the fact that respondents appreciate teachers and seem to understand the numerous pressures they face. Many also believe they aren’t paid enough.

A total of 89% of public school parents said they are satisfied with the quality of education their child is receiving.

But 75% of Texans believe public school teachers are undervalued or disrespected by society; 66% think they are overworked; and 75% or more say longer-tenured teachers’ average salaries are too low.

Troubling, but worth noting, is that non-parents have become more critical of public school teachers, according to the poll. A total of 60% of non-parents gave teachers in their community an A or B grade, down from 68 percent in the 2021 poll. But 76% of public school parents gave their teachers an A or B grade, the same as in 2021.

Teacher retention issues

Texas school districts continue to face challenges to attract, retain, and reward teachers. In fact, about nine in 10 of the poll respondents said teacher shortages are a problem in their community’s public schools — 43% think the problem is serious and 16% believe it’s a crisis.

Addressing the teacher pay challenge received broad support in the poll — 89% support increasing state funding for K-12 public schools to raise teacher salaries. Respondents tend to favor a comprehensive compensation system, and important factors for higher pay to those polled are years of experience, inflation, and level of education.

“Our report reveals strong support for increasing state funding to pay Texas teachers more, especially our tenured teachers. In addition, Texans and public school parents overwhelmingly support Career and Technical Education (CTE), universal pre-kindergarten access, and mental and physical health support for students,” Albright wrote.

School districts continue to face challenges attracting and retaining teachers. TASB is here to help. This month’s issue includes an article about TASB’s statewide 2022-23 District Personnel Survey. Conducted by TASB HR Services, the survey offers in-depth compensation informa-

tion to its members about teachers and other personnel.

School district officials can use this important information as they work now on their next budgets. The data allows school district to compare themselves to peers for teacher salaries, stipends, and substitute rates in addition to about 140 other jobs common to school districts.

There is interest in teachers’ compensation in the Legislature as well, with at least one bill being filed that proposes a \$15,000 pay raise for teachers and a 25% pay hike for other school employees — with the funds coming from the projected record budget surplus.

“We hope this information serves as a catalyst to support and strengthen public education in Texas,” Albright wrote. “May we all take positive action and leverage our expertise, passion, and influence to make this happen for our children, our state, and our future.”

I think that is a message that resonates with our members as they work hard to provide the best education possible to their students, knowing that keeping and rewarding their teachers is a major part of that mission.

I hope you enjoy the March issue.★

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Tolley".

Laura Tolley is managing editor of Texas Lone Star.



PUTTING PARTNERS TOGETHER

Community helps Hearne ISD chart successful path

by Leslie Trahan



When Adrain Johnson became superintendent of Hearne ISD in July 2016, he knew he had a long road ahead of him. At the time of Johnson's arrival, the district was under investigation by the Texas Education Agency and had cycled through five superintendents in as many years. Johnson would be the sixth.

"The district was facing charges of closure and being taken over by the state," recalled Johnson, "and none of the community members or board members I was working with wanted to see that happen."

Johnson knew the district would need to enact major change to prevent closure, and in June 2017, the Texas Legislature gave Hearne ISD the lifeline it needed. Senate Bill 1882 allows districts to partner with an outside institution, such as a university or nonprofit, to receive certain benefits, including additional state funding and a two-year exemption from the state's accountability interventions.

For Johnson, the path was clear. "When the state allowed the partnership to be created with a nonprofit, it seemed like a really good idea to pursue," he said. "We created our own nonprofit that would be customized to work with us here in Hearne ISD."

The result was the Hearne Education Foundation (HEF), a nonprofit organization that serves as the governing body for all three of the district's schools. HEF works alongside the district administration and the Hearne ISD school board to help improve education outcomes for all of the district's 700-plus students.

For the past five years, the HEF has strived to improve the district's efforts on student achievement. And the effort has paid off. After years of scrutiny by the state, in July 2022, the TEA awarded the district a B rating, an improvement of two letter grades from the last time the district received a rating in 2018-19.

A network of support

Jannifer Taylor is a lifelong Hearne resident who has been a Hearne ISD trustee since 2018. She said the district's partnership with HEF has transformed its approach to student achievement.

"Our partnerships have been the backbone of learning opportunities in the district. They support the innovations that [start in the district], and they bring opportunities to enhance the district," said Taylor. "It's a blessing because a lot of districts don't have that extra layer of support."

According to Delic Loyde, executive director of HEF, building a network of support like this is critical to instituting long-term, systemic change in a school district. The goal, said Loyde, is to develop a strategic network of committed professionals who can support the district in different ways.

"You need that wealth of knowledge across different perspectives to be able to make the best decisions for the district," said Loyde. "We want to make sure we're building capacity for knowing all the possible ways that we could move forward."

For a rural community like Hearne, building this kind of network can be tricky. Hearne, which has a population of approximately 4,500, is located 26 miles north of College Station. As Johnson began to develop the HEF board, he worked to build connections with education leaders at nearby universities, such as Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M universities. He also reached out to administrators in Longview ISD in East Texas and Cypress-Fairbanks ISD in northwest Harris County for support.

"It seemed like a good way to build a partnership was to look at these educational entities," said Johnson. "They're right here around us. They can be part of the school system in helping us to improve student learning."

Bringing in board members from larger districts and universities means that Hearne ISD is able to draw from a larger well of support, said Loyde.

"Because of their own networks, we are able to branch out past the core board members," she explained. "We're looking at data with the district, helping the district find the best practices to move forward. We find opportunities that fit our vision and mission, including any type of grant opportunity that might be available to help enhance the district."

Focusing on outcomes

Hearne ISD Board President Mary Jane Ramirez said the wide range of knowledge that the HEF board brings has helped the district be more innovative in its approach to student achievement.



Hearne ISD Superintendent Adrain Johnson addresses parents, community members, and staff at a Hearne ISD Strategic Planning Update Meeting.

Photo courtesy of Hearne ISD and the Hearne Education Foundation

"If I see scholarships or grants that teachers may want to take part in, I pass that information along to Hearne administration."

– Marcia Montague, a Hearne Education Foundation board member

"The board opened the door for us, as far as networking, new ideas, new programs. It was a complete turnaround," said Ramirez. "They gave us ideas for different programs, funding, grants — all those things that really have helped us."

With the HEF's guidance, the district has been rapidly expanding opportunities for students and staff in the district. Over the past five years, the district has added dual credit programs, college and career training courses, blended learning, and staff training opportunities, among other programs.

"The partnership with the HEF helps us be more confident when we're doing those cutting-edge practices," said Loyde. "We began the implementation of algebra I in junior high a couple of years ago at the request of a HEF board member, and that practice is helping those students and our district as a whole."

Marcia Montague is a HEF board member who serves as a clinical assistant professor in special education at Texas A&M. She said the value HEF brings to the district comes from both the connections the board members can offer as well as access to new opportunities.

"If I see scholarships or grants that teachers may want to take part in, I pass that information along to Hearne administration," said Montague. "The HEF board members have their areas of specialization and are knowledgeable about different resources, so when we come to the meetings, we have that knowledge."

As the HEF board works to develop new strategies and initiatives for the district, Montague said the conversations focus on student outcomes and how to support high achievement.

"We ask the questions to help move thinking beyond 'these are our struggles,'" said Montague. "What about our kids who are doing really well? How can we continue to push them to do even better? What kind of opportunities can we extend to all the students and keep in mind those high achievers, too?"

Continued connections

Though district administration officials and the Hearne ISD board worked hard to get the HEF partnership off the ground, Johnson acknowledged that community involvement was an essential part of the process as well.

"There were numerous relationships already present in the community. There were people already on the staff who had graduated from or people in the community who have a connection to Texas A&M," recalled Johnson. "There has been a natural relationship with these universities that was already there but brought out stronger through the work of the foundation. We also have local and extended area support that we continue to nurture in the best interests of our students."



Photos courtesy of Hearne ISD and the Hearne Education Foundation

HEF board member and Texas A&M professor Marcia Montague provides professional development to Hearne ISD teachers.



Hearne ISD and Hearne Education Foundation board members attend a joint summer meeting.



Superintendent Johnson and the Hearne ISD Board of Trustees recognize Hearne High School welding students selected to present at TASB's Governance Camp.

Trips to college campuses, interactions with HEF board members, and tutoring by college students have given Hearne ISD students a greater glimpse into the higher education world and boosted morale for students and staff, according to Johnson.

"Our students live in this media market of Texas A&M at College Station, Prairie View A&M, and Baylor University. To see them get exposure, highlighted, and able to work with people at these institutions, gives our students a sense of pride in who they are and the community they belong to, as well as the school district they're a part of," said Johnson. "We have continued this network improvement community of support and have garnered interest in the concept at the national level as presenters at a national conference in early 2023."

For her part, Ramirez said that the relationships with the HEF board have helped build the community's confidence in the district. She believes the connections made through the HEF partnership have gone beyond academics.

"It really has made us into a family, a community. Everyone helps each other — tracking the kids from year to year, seeing what gaps they've had and where they need help. We work together," she said. "We're so thankful for the HEF board." ★

Leslie Trahan is a staff writer for Texas Lone Star.

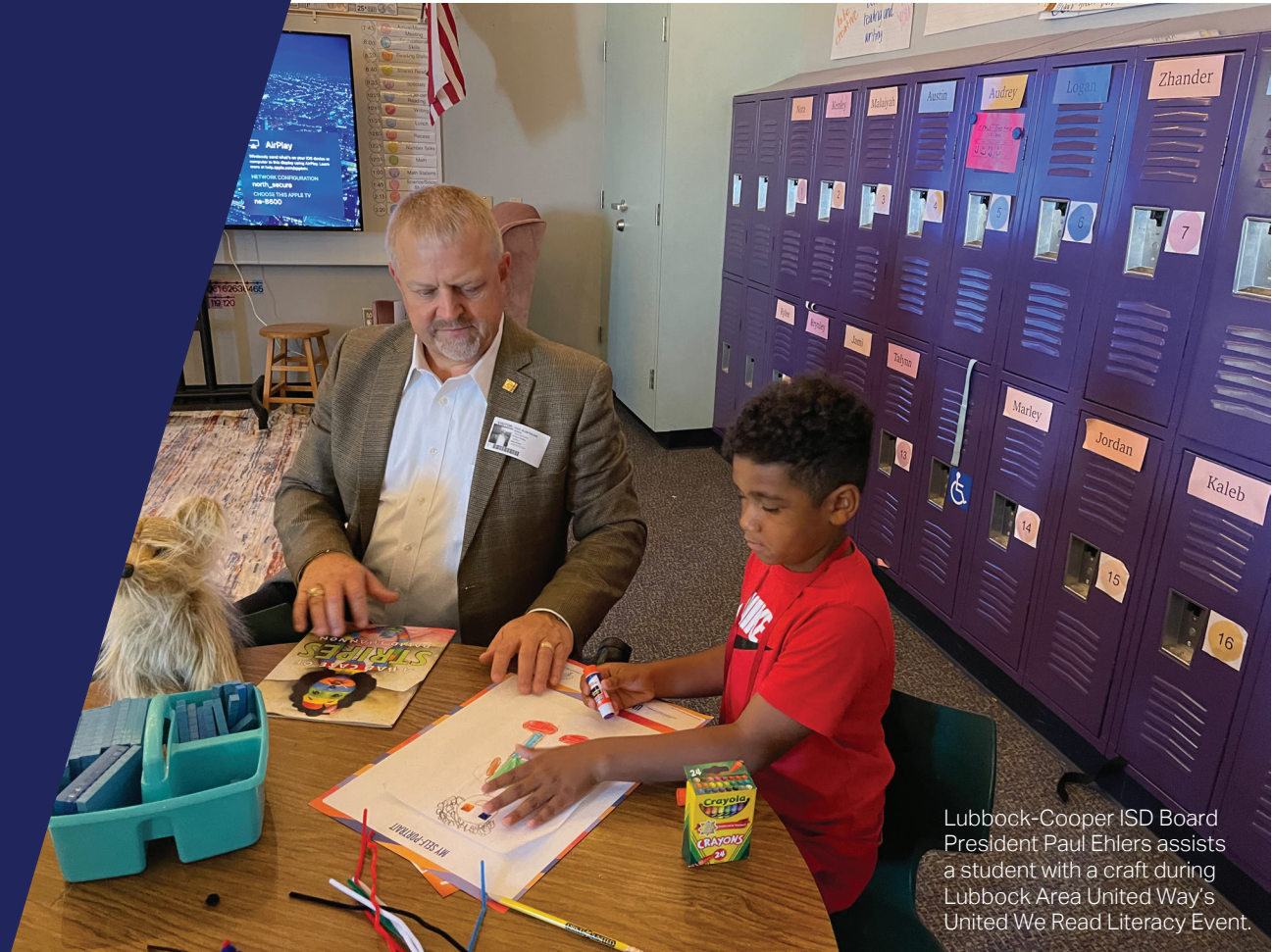
HOW SENATE BILL 1882 WORKS

- SB 1882 authorizes districts to partner with approved entities, including charter schools, nonprofits, universities, and government entities.
- Districts must pursue the in-district charter application process to set up a partnership.
- The partner serves as the governing body for the school. This includes overseeing academic programs, budgets, and personnel.
- Some partnered schools will receive additional per-pupil state funding, depending on the school's current funding allotment.
- Schools that received an "Improvement Required" rating in the year prior to entering the partnership will receive a two-year exemption from state accountability assessments to give the partnership time to improve student outcomes.

For more information, see txpartnerships.org.



From left: HEF Executive Director Delic Loyde, HEF board member Valerie Hill-Jackson, HISD board member Nelda Calhoun, Hearne High School Brazos Valley Teach teacher Amanda Puryear, and HISD graduate and Brazos Valley Teach fellow Adriana Gasca.



PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Lubbock-Cooper ISD board focuses on students

by Leslie Trahan

As one of the fastest growing districts in the state, Lubbock-Cooper ISD is no stranger to change. With a growth rate of more than 10% from 2018 to 2020, the district has nearly tripled in size over the past 15 years.

The Lubbock-Cooper ISD board has had to work decisively to develop plans for expansion, and in May 2021, they passed a \$420 million bond to build three new campuses, including a new high school, as well as new athletic facilities and a new stadium.

Superintendent Keith Bryant attributes the success of this bond — the largest in Lubbock County’s history — to a well-functioning team that stays focused on student success, no matter the obstacles.

“They voted to call for a bond to build a second high school, and when you’re in a community that’s only had one high school for 85 years, the thought of a second high school can be daunting,” said Bryant. “They did it without dividing the community, and it’s because they took the time to learn, and they took the time to listen before they made final decisions.”

Bryant isn’t the only one who has noticed the hard work of the Lubbock-Cooper ISD board. The board was named the 2022 Region 17 Board of the Year, and in August 2022, it was selected as a Texas Honor Board, a distinction that recognized it as one of the top five school boards in the state.

Focusing on the facts

Success like this doesn’t happen overnight. Lubbock-Cooper ISD Board President Paul Ehlers said the team spent “the better part of two years” collecting data and developing a plan before presenting their ideas to the public.

“We went in small groups of two or three board members with administrators to other parts of the state that had opened second high schools,” said Ehlers. “As we started going around visiting these other districts, some people said, ‘No, we’re all Lubbock-Cooper Pirates; that’s what we want to be.’ But after talking through all the different scenarios with other fast-growing schools, everyone got on board.”

Ehlers stressed that although hearing about the experiences of similar districts was critical to the board’s decision-making, connecting with Lubbock-Cooper ISD administrators and other staff was just as key. “We listened to administrators and learned that having a smaller campus, they get to know students on a more personal level. With a large campus, you can’t have that one-on-one, so kids get lost in that,” said Ehlers.



Lubbock



Photos courtesy of Lubbock-Cooper ISD

Lubbock-Cooper ISD school board and superintendent. Top: Secretary Kevin Bryan, President Paul Ehlers, Brent Preston, B.J. Lewis. Bottom: Vice President Daniel Castro, Ursula Caswell, Colby Miller, Superintendent Keith Bryant.

According to Bryant, the board’s careful deliberation and commitment to facts was essential to their ability to support student success while also building goodwill in the district’s community, located south of the City of Lubbock. “They don’t let emotions get in the way,” said Bryant. “They look at the facts. They look at the information, and that’s how they make their decisions.”

“Managing the growth when your community is changing and you’re growing threefold over 15 years — it is a tremendous responsibility to maintain the culture, family feel, and values of the community,” said Bryant. “It’s hard to measure, but we measure it through parent feedback and community feedback.”

Listening to the community

Community involvement was fundamental to the district’s growth management process. The board relied on the Lubbock-Cooper Ambassadors, a parent group that provides input to the district, to help get the word out about the proposal for a new high school and to share concerns and potential issues.

“The administration and the board ask them for input and, vice versa, info is shared with them,” said Ehlers. “They’re a little more in the know about what’s going on, but we can also get their input and feedback on where we’re headed.”

Ehlers stated that being clear about district goals and providing information when it’s available was a critical part of Lubbock-Cooper’s strategy in communicating with the public. When working with community groups like the ambassadors, Ehlers said it is important for boards to “be transparent about what you’re doing or trying to do and always give the why behind it.”



Photos courtesy of Lubbock-Cooper ISD

Lubbock-Cooper ISD trustees break ground on the district's second high school.



Lubbock-Cooper ISD trustees help cut the ceremonial ribbon during the grand opening of the new Lubbock-Cooper Middle School campus.

"If [ambassadors] are in the public and other parents or community members are asking about what's going on, they can set the record straight if people are confused," he said. "They spread the word of what is happening and why."

Ehlers noted that responding to community concerns sometimes means acknowledging the softer side of things as well. To ease the transition to the second high school and encourage a sense of unity, the Lubbock-Cooper ISD board voted to make the new high school mascot the Lubbock-Cooper Patriots. This allowed the community to continue using the logo from the original high school, where students are known as the Lubbock-Cooper Pirates.

"Our brand is LCP. Parents have window stickers and T-shirts with LCP on them," said Ehlers. "That was part of the fun in the board's decision. We got to keep the LCP."

Finding unity

A large part of the Lubbock-Cooper ISD board's success, according to Bryant, comes from the team's ability to put their personal agendas aside for the sake of student achievement.

"They truly put the needs of students first and staff

second," said Bryant. "They respect one another's ideas. They don't always agree during discussions, but they always come to consensus and do what's best for kids."

Ehlers agreed that finding consensus has been fundamental to the board's strategy for success. "We all have our own opinions and come from various backgrounds, but ultimately after discussion, we're unified in the decision that's made," he said. "That helps mitigate the divisiveness in the community."

Construction on the new high school is currently under way, and the goal is to have the campus completed in time for the 2023-24 school year. Ehlers knows that there is change still to come for a growing district like Lubbock-Cooper ISD, but he is hopeful that the district will be able to retain its culture and emphasis on success despite whatever the future may bring.

"We're all about family culture, and we have a small school feel, even though we're a large and growing school," said Ehlers. "I'm proud of our students and our staff in that even though we're fast growth, we've had a lot of success."★

Leslie Trahan is a staff writer for Texas Lone Star.

"Managing the growth when your community is changing and you're growing threefold over 15 years — it is a tremendous responsibility to maintain the culture, family feel, and values of the community. It's hard to measure, but we measure it through parent feedback and community feedback."

—Keith Bryant, Lubbock-Cooper ISD Superintendent



Lubbock-Cooper ISD trustees write inspirational and encouraging messages on a beam during the construction of Liberty High School.



TASB SALARY SURVEY

As salaries continue to be a key component of Texas school districts' efforts to attract and retain teachers, a TASB survey shows that the median pay increase granted to teachers and other personnel was 3%.

The overall median starting salary for a new teacher in Texas is \$46,550, a 1.6% increase from last year, according to TASB's statewide 2022-23 District Personnel Survey.

In addition, the median pay increase for other school personnel groups — administrative/professional, clerical/paraprofessional, and auxiliary personnel — was 3%, the survey shows.

Conducted by TASB HR Services, the survey offers in-depth compensation information to its members about teachers and other personnel that school districts can use real-time as they work on their next budgets. The survey data allows school districts to compare themselves to peers for teacher salaries, stipends, and substitute rates in addition to pay for about 140 other jobs common to school districts. Salaries are a vital part of districts' efforts to hire and retain teachers and other personnel.

"The survey provides information that helps districts recruit, retain, and reward staff through the development of competitive compensation plans," said Amy Campbell, director of TASB HR Services. "The information we compile gives districts important information about their current market, which helps them develop a plan for pay increases and other compensation adjustments."

Increase in respondents

TASB sent the questionnaire to 1,019 Texas public school districts and 556 districts, or 55%, responded —

an increase from 51% participation last year. For districts with 3,000 or more students, participation in the survey was 86%.

The survey respondents represent 80% of the estimated total population of teachers, about 370,000, in Texas public schools. A total of 74% of those teachers, or 220,907, work in large school districts with 10,000 or more students. Participation by districts with fewer than 1,000 students rose from 147 last year to 180 this year.

Teacher highlights

Information about teacher salaries, hiring schedules, degree stipends, shortage stipends, substitute teacher pay rates, and teacher pay increases was collected for the survey in fall.

Following are other highlights from the 2022-23 survey (data effective October 2022):

- In districts with 10,000 or more students, the median starting salary is \$57,000 — a 3.5% increase from last year.
- Of 556 responding districts, 50% have an entry-level salary of \$46,550 (median) or greater. These districts employ 91% of teachers among the respondents. The highest reported entry salary is \$64,000.
- This year's median starting salary is 38.3% higher than the state minimum starting salary of \$33,660. Only 28 responding districts, employing 1,031 total teachers, reported paying teachers the state minimum.
- Teacher pay in small and rural districts is generally lower than in large and urban districts.

by TASB Staff



The survey respondents represent 80% of the estimated total population of teachers, about 370,000, in Texas public schools.

Social Media Matters

Guidelines for online communications

by TASB Legal Services

School district trustees must operate within appropriate guidelines when communicating about school district business in any medium. TASB Legal Services publishes suggested guidelines online in TASB School Law eSource under the Governance tab. The following is a short list of guidelines for using social media as a trustee.

1. Clarify that you are communicating as only one trustee.

Like all citizens, trustees may voice their opinions about matters of public concern, whether that occurs in a formal letter to the editor or an informal social media post. However, Texas law requires the board to act only as “a body cor-

porate.” Many school board operating procedures appoint the board president as a spokesperson. Other trustees are free to speak publicly about school matters but should clarify that their statements reflect their own views.

2. Avoid deliberating school district business with other trustees.

Under the Texas Open Meetings Act, a trustee may not engage in a series of communications about official business outside of a meeting with the knowledge that a deliberation involving a quorum of the board will occur. Tex. Gov’t Code § 551.001; .143. Trustees should not use social media to communicate with each other about official business. In addition

to the risk of violating the law, such communications undermine good working relationships on the board.

3. Direct complaints to appropriate administrators.

When a community member with a concern approaches a trustee, the trustee should direct them to an appropriate administrator. Again, no trustee may act alone. Tex. Educ. Code § 11.051(a-1). Directing concerns to the administration preserves the district’s chain of command. See TASB Policy BBE(LOCAL).

4. Avoid posting content indicating that you have formed an opinion before a hearing.

In some instances, the board acts as a judge or tribunal by hearing contested cases, including grievances and employee contract appeals. The concept of *due process* calls for the board to serve as an impartial decision maker, which means trustees should come to the hearing with an open mind. Posts by a trustee expressing an opinion on pending matters may be used as evidence of bias to exclude the trustee or call into question the validity of board action.

5. Post only content that the district has already released to the public.

It is an offense to distribute information considered confidential by law. Tex.



Gov't Code § 552.352. Someone harmed by a disclosure could sue a trustee for invasion of privacy.

In addition, a trustee who reveals closed meeting deliberations undermines the purpose of the closed session and may violate the code of ethics. See TASB Policy BBF(LOCAL). A trustee owes a fiduciary duty to act in the interest of the district, including protecting its confidential information.

6. When describing what happened at a meeting, clarify that the posting is not an official record.

Nothing in law or policy prohibits a trustee from publicly describing a discussion or action that took place during the

open portions of a board meeting. But only final board-adopted minutes are the official record of a school board meeting. See Tex. Gov't Code § 551.021(a)-(b) (requiring meeting minutes and minutes content). As a practical matter, posting personal meeting notes or summaries of board discussions creates additional documentation that can lead to confusion and unintended consequences. A better practice is to point readers to the district's official website.

7. Do not repeat rumors.

Even a well-meaning trustee who repeats false information about another person can be subject to a defamation claim. Depending on the circumstances, conducting school board matters on

social media may breach confidentiality, violate individuals' privacy rights, or expose the trustee to personal liability for defamation. Trustees do not have immunity or free speech protection for words that breach a duty of confidentiality or defame another person.

8. Immediately report suspected illegal activities and harassment.

If a person posts something potentially offensive, harassing, or defamatory on a trustee's official district account, the trustee will not be held responsible for the inappropriate post unless the trustee personally shares or repeats the content. Federal laws such as the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and Communications Decency Act

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Trustees should work with an attorney to create appropriate boundaries between their personal, campaign, and official school district social media accounts and then conduct online activities accordingly.

provide districts and district officials some protection from liability for such behavior by third party users. These protections are in addition to state law immunities that shield officials acting in good faith. Tex. Civ. Prac. & Rem. Code § 101.051.

Other nefarious online conduct, such as spoofing, pharming, and catfishing, should be reported to the district and, as necessary, to law enforcement. A trustee should print a screenshot to document the matter, then work with the district's attorneys to remove the content in compliance with applicable law.

9. Be cautious about blocking users from an account used to discuss school business.

In courts across the country, active

litigation is unraveling complex legal issues involving the First Amendment's application to interactions between individual officials and members of the public. If a court determines that a public official is using a personal account to conduct official business, the page may be subject to First Amendment protections. For instance, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit recently affirmed that two school board members in California violated the First Amendment rights of parents in the district whom the members blocked from commenting on the trustees' personal Facebook pages. *Garnier v. O'Connor-Ratcliff*, 41 F.4th 1158 (9th Cir. 2022).

Trustees should work with an attorney to create appropriate boundaries between their personal, campaign, and official

school district social media accounts and then conduct online activities accordingly.

These guidelines are continually updated and can be found on tasb.org. Click on the site's Legal tab, find TASB School Law eSource, go to the Governance section, find Board Member Responsibilities subsection, click on Technology Use, and look for Social Media Guidelines for School Board Members. You can also visit schoolawesource.tasb.org for more information on school law topics.★

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. Updated October 2022

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Getting Organized

Legislative work increases at Texas Capitol

by Dax González

As the legislative session heads into its third month, Texas lawmakers continue to file bills and complete other organizational work in both chambers.

State budgets

Legislative leaders have posted their initial proposals for the state budget, which will be passed as House Bill 1 this session. The proposals are largely similar in terms of overall funds dedicated to various priorities. Most notably, the budgets call for about \$15 billion for property tax relief — \$5.3 billion in tax rate compression and \$9.7 billion through a constitutionally dedicated fund for tax relief, such as an increase in the homestead exemption or further tax rate compression.

The proposed budgets also call for an increase in school funding, but the amount and mechanism(s) have not been identified. This could include increases to the basic allotment, teacher pay, or the school safety allotment. The leadership also built in an additional \$1 billion for the Instructional Materials and Technology Allotment and \$600 million for school safety in the current biennium, which would occur in a supplemental budget bill and not HB 1.

HB 1 also calls for an increase in the guaranteed yield on school district golden pennies from \$98.56 to \$126.21 in FY 2024 and to \$129.52 in FY 2025. This represents the state's estimate of what was needed to comply with statutory requirements to keep pace with the 96th percentile of property wealth per weighted average daily attendance.

You can view summaries of the proposed House and Senate budgets on the

Legislative Budget Board website, which can be found at lbb.texas.gov. Click on the 88th Legislature Documents icon on the homepage.

Virtual education

In one of the last acts of legislators from the previous session, the Texas Commission on Virtual Education has posted its recommendations for the 88th legislative session. The commission was created to provide suggestions on how the state should move forward with a more robust virtual education system.

You can read the report by visiting tea.texas.gov and searching for Texas Commission on Virtual Education.

House committee assignments

Texas House Speaker Dade Phelan (R-Beaumont) announced committee assignments in early February. The House Public Education Committee members are:

- Brad Buckley, chair (R-Salado)
- Alma Allen, vice-chair (D-Houston)
- Steve Allison (R-San Antonio)
- Charles Cunningham (R-Humble)
- Harold Dutton (D-Houston)
- Cody Harris (R-Palestine)
- Brian Harrison (R-Frisco)
- Cole Hefner (R-Mount Pleasant)
- Gina Hinojosa (D-Austin)
- Ken King (R-Canadian)
- Oscar Longoria (D-Mission)
- Matt Schaefer (R-Tyler)
- James Talarico (D-Round Rock)

For a full list of House committee assignments, go to house.texas.gov and click on Standing Committee Appointments by Committee.

Senate committees

In late January, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick announced the makeup of Senate committees. It's worth noting that the Senate Committee on Education now includes the Subcommittee on Higher Education.

Members of the Senate Committee on Education are:



Legislative leaders have posted their initial proposals for the state budget, which will be passed as House Bill 1 this session. The proposals are largely similar in terms of overall funds dedicated to various priorities.

- Brandon Creighton, chair (R-Conroe)
- Donna Campbell, vice chair (R-New Braunfels)
- Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston)
- Brian Birdwell (R-Granbury)
- Pete Flores (R-Pleasanton)
- Phil King (R-Weatherford)
- Morgan LaMantia (D-South Padre Island)
- José Menéndez (D-San Antonio)
- Mayes Middleton (R-Galveston)
- Tan Parker (R-Flower Mound)
- Angela Paxton (R-McKinney)
- Drew Springer (R-Muenster)
- Royce West (D-Dallas)

Members of the Subcommittee on Higher Education are:

- Brandon Creighton, chair
- Mayes Middleton, vice chair
- Phil King
- Drew Springer
- Royce West

You can read the full list of Texas Senate committee assignments by going to ltgov.texas.gov and searching the news section for committee assignments.★

Dax González is division director of TASB Governmental Relations.



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May 19-20.....	South Padre
May 23.....	Waco
May 25.....	El Paso

Visit tasb.org/spring-workshops for more information.



Streamlining Processes

TASB launches next phase of Policy Online™

by Beth Griesmer

TASB will soon be launching the newest phase of the enhanced Policy Online™ website, the Governance and Management Library (GML), which connects board-focused policy work to resources that facilitate corresponding changes in district regulations and procedures.

“Historically, we have published districts’ policy manuals in Policy Online and then any other kind of document that we needed to share with districts went into another area on TASB’s website,” said Marvin Long, TASB Policy Service business analyst.

The GML application creates a structure that can accommodate different types of resources and organizes those into collections. There are categories within the collections and then items, such as files and links, are found within the applicable categories in the GML.

“If you are the superintendent, Policy Online will deliver policies for the board agenda in Local Manual Updates while also providing resources for regulations and procedures in the GML,” said Long.

Enhanced features

TASB’s Policy Service launched the new Policy Online website last fall, making the complex role and responsibility of adopting local policies more efficient for districts and their school boards.

“It’s a powerful tool that allows districts to streamline the process of adopting and updating policy,” said Clark. “It is a more modern interface. The enhancements improve how districts maintain and interact with their individual policy manuals.”

The new website has many other features that make board policy easier to



- Streamline the adoption notification process to make it easier for districts and TASB Policy Service staff to manage
- View pending policies from numbered updates at the level of individual policies instead of only update numbers
- View district-specific adoption dates and access digital copies of new policies
- Navigate easily to the policy, with tabs for legal, local, and exhibit documents for districts and the public
- Provide resource links that give communities access to district resources, reinforcing connections between policy and district practices

“I think it is a useful way for me to direct the public to an all-in-one page.”

— Rachel Glenn, superintendent secretary of Elkhart ISD

One-stop shop

Reference documents such as the Model Student Handbook, Regulations Resource Manual, and Policy Alerts will migrate over time from the Policy Service Resource Library to the GML. “The goal is to make Policy Online a one-stop shop for all policy documents and resources,” said Kristi Clark, TASB division director of Policy Service.

navigate, whether the board is adopting changes to a single policy or considering complex issues affecting multiple policies. It also makes it easier for administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the public to find the procedures and other resources that implement those policies.

The new Policy Online website allows districts to:

Policy in practice

The feedback from districts about the new application has been positive, according to Long. The resource links within the board policy manuals were an appreciated feature from the initial launch of Policy Online in September.

“I think it is a useful way for me to direct the public to an all-in-one page,” said Rachel Glenn, superintendent secretary of Elkhart ISD, a small district in East Texas. Glenn appreciates the guidance from her TASB Policy Consultant Carolyn Austin,



who encouraged her to use the resource links to make direct connections with the policy behind district documents like the student handbook.

“The handbook and policy should go hand in hand and so it’s a quick reference for my public, district, board members, and even the superintendent to use it,” said Glenn.

Long said the feedback from districts has helped them make improvements to the application, including better guidance on how to use the filter and search features. Other updates to the website include restoring the Word documents to the public view and allowing users to link directly to the local policy tab within a topic. These changes make it easier for district staff to work on policies, including legal counsel, who helps districts in revising their policies.

“We are always considering the user experience and making improvements based on that,” said Clark.★

Beth Griesmer is a staff writer for Texas Lone Star.

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The Art of Teaching

Adapting and learning is vital for educators

by Chris McLeod



Chris McLeod

Editor's note: The District Voices column features articles written by local school board members and other district leaders from around Texas. This month's column features teacher Chris McLeod, who was named the 2023 Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year by the Texas Association of School Administrators. His column is adapted from the speech he gave when he was honored for earning the award, the highest honor bestowed upon Texas teachers. We are looking for District Voices submissions from local school board members. For submissions or questions, contact managing editor Laura Tolley at laura.tolley@tasb.org.

I am not one to remember details. I am not the first to learn students' names. Even after Christmas break, I sometimes have to think just a little bit longer about that kid in the third row. But something a retiring teacher said in my first months of teaching has stuck with me.

"Teaching is an art, not a science, and never let anyone tell you otherwise," Mr. Henry said at his retirement send off.

That stuck with me. Many years later, in this moment, it stands out even more.

You see, science is a repeatable process. It is distilling a technique to a series of steps with a guaranteed outcome. Follow the procedure, run your experiment, and you get a result. The more carefully you pay attention to detail, the better your outcome. How nice would that be in the classroom? How nice would it be to guarantee results, predict test scores, and create a series of steps that any adult could walk through and be successful in the classroom?

But we know better. In reality, we have pep rallies, fire drills, boyfriend

drama, and Snapchat. There are hours of in-service, emails, lesson planning, and parent conferences. Although I teach engineering and science, my teaching is not a direct science.

Lessons in teaching

Mr. Henry was right. Teaching is an art. Art takes an idea, shapes it, expresses it in a way that is unique to the artist. It takes time and dedication. Sometimes it takes blood, sweat, and tears. And coffee. Lots of coffee.

Yes, there are best practices for educators. There are proven strategies for the classroom. There are solid resources that can set a foundation. There are lesson plan templates galore. All these things can be helpful. Then students walk in the door.

Moment by moment, teaching is about adapting and learning. It is the ebb and flow of pacing a lesson. It is words of encouragement just to get that one student on task for a few minutes. What I do sometimes feels closer to theater than teaching a science and engineering lab. And if you aren't flexible, it's easy to get bent out of shape.

Often we will wind up far from the "plan." We find ourselves far from the normal, or the comfortable, or the way we have always done it. Often that is where the best teaching moments happen. One of the best answers I have ever received was during a physics test. We had been learning about sound and how sound waves travel, and a test question asked: Why can't we hear anything in space? The student's answer: "Because it's so far away!" What do you even do with that? That wasn't the plan! That wasn't the TEK! I gave him full credit.

Teaching with hope

It is easy to lose focus on what truly matters, which is allowing a teacher to be authentic, to build healthy relationships, and to be human. I am thankful to be able to step into my classroom everyday with the trust of those around me. To be able to be myself, to teach by asking questions, rather than giving answers. To fall down that rabbit hole here and there.

In a talk, renowned NCAA basketball coach and educator John Wooden recited this poem:

"No written word, no spoken plea, can teach our youth what they should be. Nor all the books on all the shelves, it's what the teachers are themselves."

Teaching with hope is the biggest attribute of a great teacher. The greatness is in knowing there is a future for each student in front of you, being a part of their story, and their struggle upward. What is the point of coming to work every day if you don't actually believe in tomorrow? What is the point of that extra time in the evening perfecting your lesson and delivery if you don't believe in those students?

Students are watching. And while they may remember in part the lessons we teach, they will always fully remember how we made them feel. Students shape tomorrow. Let them remember us by our character, our enthusiasm, and our hope for a tomorrow even better than today.★

Chris McLeod teaches 10th-12th grade rocket engineering at Brazoswood High School in Brazosport ISD, which serves more than 10,000 students in Clute.

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Leadership TASB

Successful program will celebrate 30th anniversary

by Kay Douglas

LEADERSHIP TASB

Editor's note: Leadership TASB is a unique board development program designed to take experienced board members to a new level of service and leadership by exposing them to a variety of issues, people, activities, and locations during a yearlong program. Leadership TASB columns track the progress and share the experience of each year's class throughout the year.

It started with a mission to help school board members across Texas become better leaders. Now, with nearly 900 graduates and countless stories of success, growth, and fellowship, the Leadership TASB program is planning its 30th anniversary celebration for later this year.

An advisory committee was formed back in July 1991 by then-TASB Board President Patti Clapp to develop a leadership training program that would help school board trustees reach beyond their basic training.

"There exists a need to develop board members as true trustees, ones who accept the responsibility to look at the big picture, to be aware of how their decisions affect other districts in the state," Clapp said then. "TASB can assist by developing a vehicle to provide a cadre of leaders who have a shared vision for education improvement for all children."

That first LTASB class of 36 members met in September 1993 and graduated the next summer. The current 2023 LTASB class of 26 members has already had meetings in San Antonio and Huntsville and will graduate in June.

LTASB classes, which are limited to a maximum of 36 members who come from

all over Texas, meet at different locations where they go on field trips to local schools, meet with educational leaders, and attend other activities that enhance their leadership skills. This one-of-a-kind program elevates the leadership skills of experienced board members through a yearlong journey. Class members, through formal and informal gatherings, also form strong relationships that they can tap into throughout their years as board members — and beyond.

Each Leadership TASB cohort also focuses on finding solutions to the challenges public education faces today.

"By Session III, the group is able to talk about diverse issues from a place of respect. That's the magic of LTASB, building connections," said Nicole Green, LTASB meeting planner for the past four years.

In 2010, the LTASB Alumni Association was formed to meet the needs of graduates who wanted to remain active in statewide school board issues and continue growing their leadership skills and knowledge.

Since its creation, the LTASB Alumni Association has recruited program applicants, sponsored the Alumni Reunion and Celebration of Leadership Award at TASA | TASB conventions, provided LTASB graduate activities at conferences, and awarded more than \$100,000 in scholarships to class members.

When the Alumni Association's current board of directors met recently to plan a 30th anniversary celebration, they discussed how the traditional gift is pearls, which symbolize honesty, durability, purity, and wisdom. They also shared what they've gained from LTASB — little pearls of wisdom you might say.

"The most memorable part of the experience has been the networking with not only my class, but with the alumni association as a whole. No matter the size of your district, we all have the same issues. If someone has gone through an experience, they can help you," said Helen Warwick, a graduate of the LTASB Class of 2014 and a former Marshall ISD school board member.

Angie Trejo, a LTASB Class of 2017 graduate and current Mathis ISD trustee, said she applied for the course because she "wanted to be a better board member."



A Leadership TASB meeting in 1993.

Photos courtesy of TASB Media Services

“TASB can assist by developing a vehicle to provide a cadre of leaders who have a shared vision for education improvement for all children.”

— Patti Clapp, former TASB Board President

You see the board members from other districts and think if they did it, so can we.”

The LTASB Alumni Association is planning a series of events leading up to the official 30th anniversary celebration at this year’s TASA | TASB Convention in Dallas this fall. In addition to reaching out to board members at all TASB conferences, they also will be contacting past LTASB members to get their input on current issues facing Texas school board members.

In the coming months, the LTASB Alumni Association also will be sharing “pearls of wisdom” gleaned from those meetings.

Thirty years later, LTASB continues to be a one-of-a-kind program with a mission unlike any other.★

Kay Douglas is program manager of Leadership TASB and was a member of the LTASB class of 1998.



Program from a 1991 planning meeting for Leadership TASB.



Members of the Leadership TASB class of 2014, including current TASB President Debbie Gillespie and Jim Rice, the 2020-21 TASB president, work on a course project to present at a Summer Leadership Institute.



Members of the Leadership TASB class of 1999.



Members of the Leadership TASB class of 2007 visit a school.



Members of the Leadership TASB class of 2007 participate in a team building exercise.

TASB Staff Celebrates Service to Texas School Boards

TASB staff members gathered at Pflugerville ISD's Connally High School to recognize work highlights from the past year and discuss plans for members in the coming months. The theme for the annual State of the Association, held in late January, was "One Team. One Mission," which honored TASB's commitment to serve its members on many levels.

The Connally High School Drumline, under the direction of Lauren Gonzalez, welcomed TASB staff members to the school's performing arts center. The staff also enjoyed a performance by the Cele Middle School Choir, conducted by Julie Newcomb.

Attendees also welcomed several TASB officers and directors who attended the event: TASB President Debbie Gillespie (Frisco ISD), First Vice President Rolinda Schmidt (Kerrville ISD), Immediate Past President Ted Beard (Longview ISD), Lynn Boswell (Austin ISD), and TASB Director Kathy Major (Liberty

Hill ISD). Longtime Pflugerville ISD board member and former TASB Director Vernagene Mott also attended the association's gathering.

"TASB was more in demand than ever with leaders from across the organization being asked to share their expertise on everything from pressing teacher recruitment and retention issues, to school safety and legislative knowledge," TASB Executive Director Dan Troxell said as he talked about the association's many accomplishments last year.

"TASB is truly the sum of all the parts and that's a message that I want to reiterate," Troxell said. "We all need to not only work on behalf of our service areas but also the entire organization. One team, one mission is about keeping the focus on members and TASB as a whole."★



Executive Director Dan Troxell gives the keynote address at the State of the Association.



Members of Pflugerville ISD's Cele Middle School Choir, conducted by Julie Newcomb, perform at TASB's State of the Association.



From left: TASB President Debbie Gillespie (Frisco ISD), Immediate Past President Ted Beard (Longview ISD), First Vice-President Rolinda Schmidt (Kerrville ISD), and TASB Director Kathy Major (Liberty Hill ISD), enjoy a student performance at the State of the Association.



TASB staff members were greeted by Pflugerville ISD's Connally High School Drumline.



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BE PART OF TASB'S GOOD NEWS ISSUE!

TASB's *Texas Lone Star* magazine is looking for great stories from school districts about their students' achievements to feature in our July "Good News About Texas Public Schools" issue!

Last year, the Good News issue included stories about a high school welding program, a violinist, standout scholars, and an NJROTC program.

Districts interested in participating should submit a short story, 350-400 words, and at least one 300-dpi jpeg photo suitable for publication.

The deadline for submissions is April 30 — but earlier is even better!

Email stories and photos to *Texas Lone Star* managing editor Laura Tolley at laura.tolley@tasb.org.

This special issue is a great opportunity for districts to share their good news across Texas!



Remember to Submit Nominations for Outstanding Superintendents

TASB encourages Texas public school boards to submit nominations for the 2023 Superintendent of the Year award, which spotlights outstanding district leaders.

To be eligible, superintendents must have served in their district for three years at the time the award is presented this fall. The deadline for 2023 applications to be submitted to the regional education service center is April 21, but boards are encouraged to start early. In addition to highlighting the superintendent's successes, the board must pass a resolution in support of the nomination.

The SOTY winner is chosen for exemplifying 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.

The selection process begins with regional interviews, conducted by each ESC in late spring. A regional 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 go through another round of interviews at the TASA | TASB Convention, when the winner is selected and announced.



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

See past winners and find more details on eligibility and the nomination process at tasb.org/soty.★

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H-E-B Announces Finalists, Recognizes School Boards in Excellence in Education Awards

H-E-B has announced eight school districts and five early childhood facilities throughout Texas as finalists in the retailer's 21st annual Excellence in Education Awards program. H-E-B is also recognizing five public school boards in the program to highlight the importance of strong leadership at the board level.

Since the program's inception, H-E-B has awarded nearly \$13 million in funding to benefit outstanding Texas public schools and early childhood facilities. This year, H-E-B will award a total of \$90,000 to the finalists, who will go on to compete for even greater cash prizes at the statewide level. Each finalist in the district, early childhood, and school board category will each receive \$5,000.

"I want to congratulate the finalists and all who were nominated for the H-E-B Excellence in Education awards. It is a great honor for each finalist," said TASB Board President Debbie Gillespie, a trustee at Frisco ISD, which was selected as a finalist last year.

To determine statewide winners, a panel of judges will visit each finalist to tour campuses and engage with administration, staff, parents, and community members.

Winners will be announced at the H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards ceremony Sunday, April 30, at the La Cantera Resort and Spa in San Antonio. The winning large district will receive \$100,000; the winning small district receives \$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.

Forty teacher and principal finalists also will be announced before April during a series of surprise visits to schools and classrooms across Texas.

The 2023 school district and early childhood finalists, as well as recognized school boards, are as follows:

Large school districts:

- Arlington ISD — Arlington
- Corpus Christi ISD — Corpus Christi
- Garland ISD — Garland
- Spring Branch ISD — Houston
- Tomball ISD — Tomball

Small school districts:

- Corsicana ISD — Corsicana
- Fabens ISD — Fabens
- Montgomery ISD — Montgomery

Early childhood education facilities:

- Brighton Center — San Antonio
- Del Valle ISD Child Development Center — Del Valle

- Irene C. Cardwell Head Start and Pre-K — Del Rio
- Pre-K Academy at West Avenue/ North East ISD — San Antonio
- The Child Development Center — Austin

School board finalists:

- Edgewood ISD — San Antonio
- Northside ISD — San Antonio
- Texas City ISD — Texas City
- Tomball ISD — Tomball
- Tornillo ISD — Tornillo★

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TASB

Texas school leaders attend federal advocacy conference

by Stephanie Butler

More than 70 Texas school board members recently traveled to Washington, D.C., for the first-ever Texas Federal Advocacy Conference. Organized by TASB, the two-day event connected trustees with congressional and policy leaders on education issues ranging from teacher recruitment to funding to special education.

TASB Executive Director Dan Troxell said he was pleased to see board members take advantage of the opportunity to have their voices heard at the nation's capital.

"D.C. staffers and lawmakers aren't necessarily used to seeing people from their home districts show up here in Washington. It makes a huge difference because our members are able to have those face-to-face connections," he said.

The three priorities that Texas board members were focused on for Congress were fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), teacher recruitment and retention, and an update on the Texas Permanent School Fund (PSF) Guarantee Bond Program.

Attendees spent the first day getting briefed on key federal education issues, including National Assessment of Educational Progress scores, learning loss, and the digital divide. U.S. Rep. Nathaniel Moran, R-Texas, spoke to the delegation, thanking them for their service and encouraging them to keep up the good work.

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.

Hearing from policymakers and national experts reiterated the importance of advocating on a national level, said TASB President Debbie Gillespie. "It's important to understand how laws being made in D.C. trickle down to the state," she said.

On the conference's second day, board members went to Capitol Hill to visit with elected officials and their staff



Texas Federal Advocacy Conference attendees pose after a group dinner.

Photo by Whitney Broughton, TASB staff

members, including the offices of Republican Texas Sens. John Cornyn and Ted Cruz. Recruiting and retaining great teachers was one of the main topics of conversation with the senators' staff members. School board members discussed their difficulties in filling open positions and what resources might help.

Cindy Zuniga, a newly elected board member in Canutillo ISD, said attending the conference emphasized the fact that struggling to hire and keep teachers is not unique to her district.

"The problems I see in my district are the same across the state and the same across the country," Zuniga said.

In addition, school board members talked with officials about the costs to districts of ensuring IDEA compliance and how they have resulted in funds being pulled from other critical programs, which has impacted student learning.

Joining the group was Jacob Flint, a high school senior at San Angelo Central High School. He traveled with his mother, Ami Mizell-Flint, who serves on the



Martina Lemond Dixon, a Humble ISD board member, asks a question during one of the conference sessions.

Photo by Stephanie Butler, TASB staff

San Angelo ISD school board. Flint, who plans to study music education and become a teacher, said he enjoyed learning about education issues and visiting the U.S. Capitol for the first time.

"Jacob has been interested in government and history since he was little," Mizell-Flint said. "I saw this as a great opportunity to expose him to D.C. and the history here. He loves to come to school board meetings, and I thought it would be neat for him to be able to see the federal view."★

Stephanie Butler is a staff writer for Texas Lone Star.



Attendees during a session at the Federal Advocacy Conference.



Photos by Stephanie Butler, TASB staff

On right, Dax González, division director of TASB Governmental Relations, welcomes attendees to the event.



U.S. Rep. Nathaniel Moran, R-Texas, speaks to Texas school board members.

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Bulletin Board

Singing Her Praises: Texas Choir Director Wins Educator Grammy

Pamela Dawson, DeSoto High School's director of choirs, has won the 2023 Grammy Music Educator Award, given to those who have made a significant contribution to the music education field.

Presented by the Recording Academy and GRAMMY Museum, the award also recognizes educators who demonstrate a commitment to the broader cause of maintaining music education in schools. A winner is selected each year from 10 finalists. Dawson also was a finalist in 2021.

Dawson was recognized as the winner at the Grammy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles Feb. 5. Each winner receives a \$10,000 honorarium and matching grant for their school's music program.

During her 16-year tenure at DeSoto ISD, Dawson has built the DeSoto High School choir program into a national powerhouse. The program has won numerous state and national competitions, and several of her former students are in high level music programs and performing in venues such as Broadway.

A skilled harpist and vocalist, she and her choirs are in demand for performances at many local events, including during the holidays, and a choir also performed at Carnegie Hall.

"What I think my students really realize now is that what I've been doing has always been for them and not about me," Dawson said in a news release.

The school district is located in the town of DeSoto in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area. It has been voted the best community for music education more than six years in a row by the Music Educators Association.

"DeSoto ISD is proud to acknowledge the work of Ms. Pam Dawson in her attainment of this recent achievement," said DeSoto ISD Superintendent Usamah Rodgers.



Pamela Dawson, DeSoto High School's director of choirs, poses with her 2023 Grammy Music Educator Award.

Photo courtesy of DeSoto ISD

School Report Cards Available on TEA Website

The 2021-22 School Report Cards are now available on the Texas Education Agency's website.

The SRC's purpose is to provide parents and guardians with information about a campus's individual characteristics and its academic performance. Districts and campuses receive an overall performance rating, as well as a rating for each domain. The ratings are A, B, or C.

Each campus must send a copy of its SRC to a parent or guardian of each of its students, but the information also is available at tea.texas.gov/perfreport/src/index.html.

Campuses may also include additional information with the SRC that highlights other performance aspects of the campus or district. All campuses that reported student enrollment on the TSDS PEIMS October 2021 snapshot will have an SRC. Campuses that opened in the 2022-23 school year will not have a 2021-22 SRC.

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

► **Robstown ISD.** Superintendent.
Deadline: March 15, 2023

For information about vacancies or services provided by TASB's Executive Search Services, call **800-580-8272**, email executive.search@tasb.org, or visit ess.tasb.org.



Celebrate School Library Month in April!

The American Association of School Librarians will celebrate School Library Month in April. School librarians are encouraged to host activities to help their school and local community celebrate the essential role school libraries play in learning. For more information, visit the American Library Association at ala.org and search for American Association of School Librarians under the ALA websites tab.



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Spring Training

TASB offers range of opportunities for members

by Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield



Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield

Spring is my favorite time of year and not only because I can get back into my garden — a source of joy and inspiration for me — but because it also kicks off an abundant season here at TASB.

As I write this, I'm also working on my presentations for Governance Camp in Galveston, where I'm looking forward to seeing many of you. Next up on the TASB calendar will be our Spring Workshops, happening across the state through May, followed by the Summer Leadership Institute in San Antonio and Fort Worth in June.

From my gardener's perspective, each of these trainings and events is an opportunity to plant a seed and cultivate the possibility of growth and development so that all our public schools across the state have the chance to flourish.

of Education. We also closely monitor the K-12 education landscape to identify emerging topics, and we value the ideas and input from our members who submit session proposals for our annual events or vote on the sessions for inclusion in the program.

Working for our members

Can we do a better job, though, in responding to our members' evolving training needs and interests? Absolutely. That must be our goal.

Just like in spring gardening, where periodic work is needed to ensure perennials can make a strong comeback and there is room to add new annuals for interest and appeal, this same process applies to the work underway to refresh and grow our TASB board development offerings.

Long and his team from Board

TASB is committed to being the leader in providing high-quality, engaging, and timely training to meet your needs.

programming related to school safety, school staffing and recruitment, advocacy, and vouchers — all topics that are top of mind right now for school board trustees.

We know school board members have an increasing number of choices when it comes to fulfilling their continuing education requirements. TASB is committed to being the leader in providing high-quality, engaging, and timely training to meet your needs.

This spring, we're especially focused on cultivating enhanced training and event experiences for our members. Just as I know that the hard work I put into the ground now will produce a beautiful garden for my family and friends to enjoy, the skilled training we provide here at TASB will yield new and lasting benefits and successes for school leaders and the students they serve.

See you in the field!★

Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield is deputy executive director of TASB.

TASB, of course, continuously updates and adjusts our training programs to comply with continuing education requirements adopted by the State Board of Education.

In fact, Robert Long III, our new division director of Board Development Services, is talking a lot these days about how TASB can better meet the training and professional development needs of Texas trustees. This work is central to our mission.

TASB, of course, continuously updates and adjusts our training programs to comply with continuing education requirements adopted by the State Board

Development Services will be conducting listening tours in many education service center regions and actively responding to ideas, requests, and questions. So, if you have a specific training need or idea, they want to hear from you and can be reached at board.dev@tasb.org.

Over the next several months, you'll have the opportunity to hear important updates on the 88th legislative session at many of our events. You'll also see new

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- *Top 10 things to know* — Minicourses providing a quick overview of important topics such as school safety and human resources
- *Understanding school finance*
- *Finding your voice: developing effective legislative strategies*

These courses fulfill some of your continuing education credit requirements. Log in to the OLC using your TASB credentials to have your credits automatically recorded.

Register at onlinelearning.tasb.org.

Additional opportunities for convenient training



We can deliver customized team building to meet your board's unique needs.

Popular topics include:

- *Board self-assessment*
- *Evaluating and improving student learning outcomes (EISO/SB 1566)*
- *Understanding governance roles to improve decision-making*

Ask us about our customized team-building services!



Board Development Services

For information on any of these offerings:
800-580-8272, ext. 2453 • board.dev@tasb.org
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