

Texas Lone Star

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The **88TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE**

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Featured Event

TASA/TASB Legislative Conference Austin • Feb. 21



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JANUARY

26-27 • Texas Association of Community College Attorneys Conference — Austin

FEBRUARY

- 1 • TASB BoardBook Premier Basic Skills Training — Austin
- 1 • TASB Executive Search Services: Winter 2023 Superintendent Mock Interview Workshop — Austin
- 2-3 • TASB Conference for Administrative Professionals — Austin
- 6-7 • Texas Federal Advocacy Conference — Washington, D.C.
- 7 • TASB Facility Services: Asbestos Designated Person Training — Abilene
- 8 • TASB Facility Services: Integrated Pest Management — Abilene
- 8 • Preparing to Serve: A Webinar for School Board Candidates — Virtual Event
- 9 • TASB Student Solutions Webinar Series: Understanding the FIE from Referral to IEP — Virtual Event
- 15 • TASB SHARS Matters Webinar Series: Strong IEP Documentation is Strong SHARS Documentation — Virtual Event
- 21 • 2023 TASA/TASB Legislative Conference — Austin
- 22-23 • TASB HR Services: Recruiting and Retaining School Employees — Virtual Event

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
- 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
- 11 • TASB Facility Services: Asbestos Designated Person Training — Amarillo
- 12 • TASB Facility Services: Integrated Pest Management — Amarillo
- 12 • TASB Spring Workshop — Houston



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

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The Advocacy Front

There are many ways to stand up for public education

by Debbie Gillespie



Debbie Gillespie

I'm sure you've been asked why you ran for the school board. You've probably also been asked what surprised you the most once you took office. Having been a local volunteer since 1995, I wanted to continue my passion for giving back to our community by serving on the school board.

I had already served on two school bond committees and had seen how my own children had benefited from great teachers and a wonderful support system on every single campus they attended. I wanted to help ensure that all children in our community had access to opportunities I never thought were even possible when I was a student. I wanted to be a part of a fabulous district and make sure that the focus continues to be on what is best for the kids.

I was somewhat surprised about the time commitment — all the reports, budgets, training requirements, laws, and just learning what my role as a trustee really is takes a lot of time.

But the biggest surprise? Definitely the politics!

I am a dedicated voter, and I spend a great deal of time researching issues and candidates. I was closely following the 82nd legislative session while I was first campaigning, but I was still listening with the ears of a parent, not a trustee.

Then I attended my very first TASB Summer Leadership Institute in June 2011 and listened to the legislative recap by Jackie Lain.

That was the year a whopping \$5.4 billion dollars was cut from public education funding. The first budget I had to approve as a trustee slashed approximately \$22 million from an already tight budget. We did our best to make cuts that had the

least effect on the classroom, such as landscaping. But those were hard times for school districts across Texas.

What does it mean to advocate? Advocacy can look very different depending on your district and the needs of your students, staff, and community members.

Advocacy in action

I understand that not every person has the ability to go to Austin to testify, watch long hearings online, or follow legislation. But there are some things we can all do:

- Take time to consider the perspectives and needs of teachers, parents, students, and community members when making decisions about school policies and resources.
- Make an effort to seek out diverse perspectives and listen to the concerns and ideas of all stakeholders.
- Team of eight members can sign up for School Board Advocacy Network news at gr.tasb.org. You can get updates on education policies and initiatives at the state and national level.
- Be accessible and responsive to the needs and concerns of your community and keep them informed about the work of the school board and the decisions being made that impact schools and students.
- Visit campuses! Go to games, concerts, or events. Share great news about your district with your community. Those are all good opportunities for important advocacy efforts — and they can be a lot of fun!

As for our legislators, I know it can be intimidating, but don't be afraid to reach

out to them to share your concerns. In Frisco, we have spent many years building strong relationships with our legislators so that we can share information with them and be a trusted resource. At times, we have provided examples of how proposed legislation may possibly have unintended consequences and be harmful to districts. Also, we have even helped make some bills better.

Remember to thank legislators for their time and for their service. As trustees, our focus is on public education, but our legislators are tasked with learning about and making decisions on so many other things. Acknowledge their hard work and dedication to the people of Texas.

As for our legislators, I know it can be intimidating, but don't be afraid to reach out to them to share your concerns.

Overall, we can effectively advocate for the needs of all schools and students by staying informed, listening to all stakeholders, collaborating with our colleagues, and communicating with our communities.

Most of all, know that you are not alone in this important mission. Remember that TASB has very helpful tools we all can use while navigating through our trustee responsibilities and as we advocate on behalf of Texas public education.

We will always have work to do, but together we can all make a world of difference for all of our teachers, staff, parents, community, and most of all, our students!★

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

GOVERNANCE CAMP

POWERED BY
STUDENT VOICE

MARCH 1–4, 2023

GALVESTON ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER

FIVE BIG SESSIONS HAPPENING AT CAMP:

1. Exploring the Many Aspects of School Safety (PRECONFERENCE)
2. General Session with Holly Hoffman (THURSDAY)
3. Student Panel and Scholarship Awards (FRIDAY)
4. Closing Session Workshop with Adolph Brown (FRIDAY)
5. Evaluating and Improving Student Outcomes (EISO):
The Board's Role in Continuous Improvement
(SBI566 TRAINING — SATURDAY)



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BROWN**

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HOFFMAN**



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Registration and housing now open



Visit tasb.org/gov-camp for details.

A New Year Like No Other

The legislative session will dominate much of 2023

by Laura Tolley



Laura Tolley

The Texas Legislature is underway, students are back in school, and the commitment to my New Year's resolutions is waning. It has been a busy start to 2023.

The 88th legislative session is top of mind for many of us here at TASB, and it is the focus of the first issue of *Texas Lone Star* this year.

What lawmakers will do with a huge budget surplus or with education issues ranging from school safety to vouchers to teacher retention has yet to be determined. But Texas school leaders are bracing for a tough session.

TASB is here to help, and we will be walking the legislative path with you.

The current magazine issue is part of that effort. Our legislative package features a main story by Dax González,

staffs. We also have a fun primer on how bills become laws. (Actually, not many do.)

I know that the legislative process can be complicated and overwhelming at times. As a new Capitol bureau chief back in the late '90s, my assignment was covering the Texas Senate, ruled by the legendary Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock, as well as chronicling then-Gov. George W. Bush as he welcomed experts and leaders from around the country to the governor's mansion in what was widely believed to be the run-up effort to his bid for president. We all know that proved to be true!

What I remember most is all the long hours of hard work that go into the legislative process. From the elected officials to staff members to the advocacy groups to the reporters to the cafeteria employees, the legislative world becomes your life

the way by visitors who somewhat apologetically asked if I would mind taking their photo — and to please make sure the Capitol was in the background. (We didn't do selfies then.) That was the iconic image they wanted to take home with them — the massive, beautiful Pink Dome.

Our cover features the Capitol and the leafy path that so many trek daily, even multiple times, during the session. That walk usually gave me time to think about where I was headed and what I needed to do — ask the governor an unrelated question at his press conference, pay attention to certain bills during a long committee meeting, or stay awake for a nighttime session on a tax bill. I know I'm not the only one who feels that deep sense of responsibility and honor as they make their way along that same path.

We face challenges as the 88th Texas Legislature moves past its opening ceremonies and gets down to business. TASB is ready and prepared to work hard with you to protect Texas public schools and to do everything we can to ensure student success.

Here's to a strong 2023 for Texas public education! ★

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

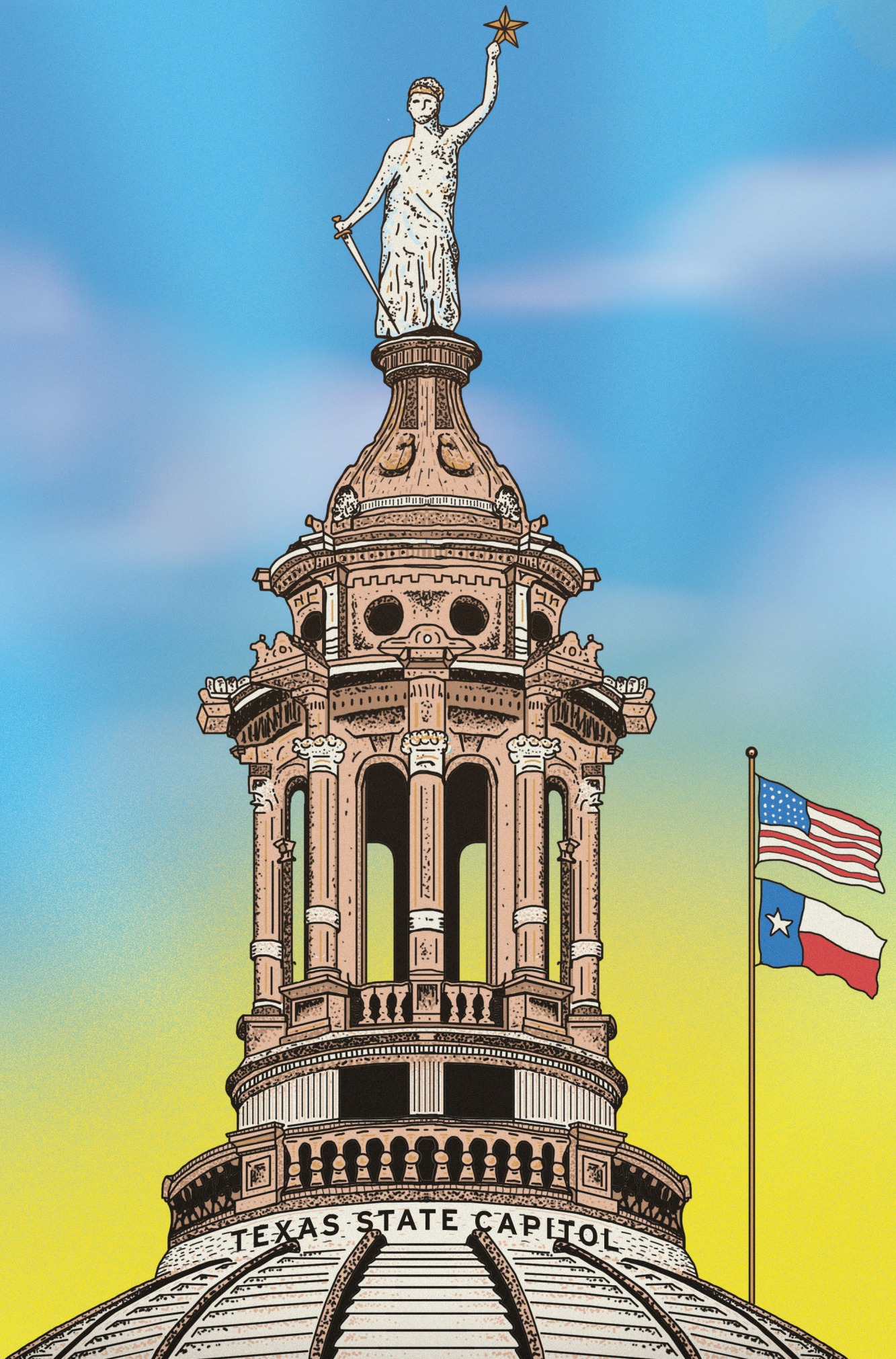
Laura Tolley is managing editor of Texas Lone Star.

From the elected officials to staff members to the advocacy groups to the reporters to the cafeteria employees, the legislative world becomes your life for many long, intense months.

division director of TASB's Governmental Relations, who writes with insight on page 8 about some of the key education issues expected to be debated during the 140-day session. Flip to page 12 to read about how TASB can help you stay up to date on legislative news, and an article on page 14 provides tips about building relationships with lawmakers and their

for many long, intense months. A lot of adrenaline is pumping, a lot of coffee is consumed, sleep is elusive.

One thing I remember with great fondness is walking along the tree-lined path and feeling a sense of awe as I approached the south entrance of the Texas Capitol, no matter how rushed I was. I can't count the times I was stopped along



THE 88TH TEXAS LEGISLATURE

What's in store for Texas public schools?

by Dax González

The 88th session of the Texas Legislature is already shaping up to be an interesting one.

That's because legislators are looking at billions of dollars in additional revenue after record-high tax collections over the past year have the state's coffers overflowing. As the session opened on Jan. 10, Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar announced that the state would generate close to \$32.7 billion in revenue not previously anticipated. Hegar said state legislators will have \$188.2 billion in general funds this session, compared to \$112.5 in the 2021 session.

One might think that all of this revenue – in addition to \$27.1 billion sitting in the state's rainy day fund – makes legislators' jobs easier, but it can actually make things a lot more difficult. First, more money means that more groups representing every issue from education to health to transportation to various other interests are approaching state budget writers with requests to use the windfall to support their members, industry, or projects.

Second, lawmakers don't actually have that full amount available to them without completing some parliamentary gymnastics. Before the start of every session, the Legislative Budget Board – a panel of legislators led by the lieutenant governor and speaker of the Texas House – determines a spending limit as required by the Texas Constitution. Using factors such as population growth and inflation to determine economic growth, the

LBB sets a percentage that constrains the growth of the state budget.

Last November, the LBB agreed on a 12.3% estimated growth rate, which means lawmakers actually have about \$12.5 billion more to spend over last session's budget, not \$32.7 billion. Legislators can vote to surpass the constitutional spending limit, but that can be a bridge too far for some fiscal conservatives.

Finally, many elected officials ran their campaigns on promises of significant property tax relief for voters, which is an expensive proposition that could eat up some to all of the additional state revenue. With so much pressure from local homeowners and business-owners to provide help on increasing taxes – largely driven by skyrocketing tax appraisals – legislators are under pressure to address this issue before doling out funds to the many groups and industries seeking a slice of the pie.

One of those politicians, Gov. Greg Abbott, announced late last year that he wants to use half of the estimated surplus for property tax cuts. As discussed before, the LBB has set a spending limit that will fall short of the \$16.35 billion that would be needed to cover the cost of such a property tax cut. One thing to watch this session will be the back and forth between Abbott and others on what the final number for property tax relief will be and what form those cuts will take, such as forced tax compression of local rates or increased exemptions.

School board members are tasked with overseeing the governance of their districts and focusing on setting policies that will lead to better student outcomes, but some individuals are seeking to inject politics into what has traditionally been a nonpartisan position and creating distractions for some trustees.



Push for school vouchers

Meanwhile, some groups and individuals are seizing on the disarray many families and schools experienced as they have emerged from the pandemic to sow discord and generate mistrust between the public and neighborhood schools. This is largely an effort to build support for privatization efforts like school vouchers. At least one bill related to school choice has already been filed.

Vouchers are any mechanism that diverts public tax dollars to private entities that are not accountable to taxpayers. There are different forms of vouchers, such as education savings accounts, direct payments to individuals or schools, and tax credits provided to businesses that provide scholarships to students. All forms of vouchers would remove or divert funds from public schools to send to private entities. Public schools are held accountable to state lawmakers and taxpayers through many transparency and reporting requirements, while private schools are neither accountable to taxpayers nor transparent.

Some national groups, like the Washington, D.C.-

based Heritage Foundation, continue to point to vouchers as a way to save students from “failing public schools,” or to provide school choice for families, despite mounting research that voucher programs actually lead to worse outcomes for students and provide choice for schools – not parents – as private schools are generally not required to accept students with a voucher.

The Texas House has usually opposed voucher measures but look for organizations and individuals both in and out of Texas to invest significant funds and resources, and to cloak vouchers in various mechanisms under different names in an attempt to move some legislators off of their no votes.



Other distractions

School board members are tasked with overseeing the governance of their districts and focusing on setting policies that will lead to better student outcomes, but some individuals are seeking to inject politics into what has traditionally been a nonpartisan position and creating distractions for some trustees.

Before the session began, legislation had been filed to make school board races partisan affairs. While this is not the first time this type of bill has been proposed, the current climate of distrust of trustees and schools is stronger than usual among some.

This has led to some boards having to turn their attention toward controversial issues such as critical race theory or reviews of library books and away from student academic progress, staff recruitment and retention, school safety, and oversight of public tax dollars.

Some groups likely will lose interest in these issues now that elections are over. But others will carry on with efforts to politicize school boards. It will be vital for trustees to connect with their state legislators to reiterate that education is not a partisan issue.



School safety

Legislators will be expected to address the school safety issue in some capacity following the tragic school shooting in Uvalde. Lawmakers spent the

interim hearing from law enforcement, school leaders, safety experts, and families about preparedness and prevention.

Discussions around this issue indicate that additional resources will be made available to schools. In fact, state leaders announced in October that the state was providing \$400 million to assist school districts in replacing or upgrading doors, windows, fencing, communications, and other safety measures. There is hope that the school safety allotment of \$9.72 per student will be increased this session, as this is one of the best ways to allocate funds for security efforts while recognizing the different needs of Texas local school districts.

There will, of course, be several other issues addressed during the legislative session – staff recruitment and retention, special education funding, accountability, school finance, etc. One of the best ways to stay on top of the issues most relevant to Texas public schools is to subscribe to the TASB Legislative Report at **gr.tasb.org**. This free newsletter will keep you up to date on legislative happenings and education-related bills as they move through the process. Read more about how to keep up with legislative news on page 12.

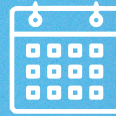
Lastly, don't forget to begin developing those relationships with your legislators. It will only get harder as they get busier during the session, but you are the best source for information about your school district and they need to hear from you. You can find tips about establishing these relationships on page 14.



A great opportunity to come to Austin and meet with your legislators at the Texas Capitol will be during the TASA/TASB Legislative Conference scheduled for Feb. 21. Learn about the issues being discussed by lawmakers and then visit with them later that day. The conference is free for trustees and administrators and will include continuing education credit for school board members.

See you at the Capitol! ★

Dax González is division director of TASB Governmental Relations.



Legislative Conference Set for Feb. 21

TASB and the Texas Association of School Administrators are hosting a conference on Feb. 21 that will give school board members and superintendents the opportunity to learn about education legislation and communicate their district needs and priorities to state lawmakers.

During the TASA/TASB Legislative Conference in Austin, governmental relations staff members from TASA and TASB will update attendees on legislative activities and proposed bills. In addition, key legislators and political observers will share their insights on the 88th Texas Legislature.

Mark Your Calendar

What:
2023 TASA/TASB Legislative Conference

When:
Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2023
8 a.m.-1 p.m.

Where:
Sheraton Austin Hotel at the Capitol
701 East 11th St.
Austin, Texas 78701

For additional information about the conference, visit **events.tasb.org** or contact TASB Governmental Relations at **800-580-4885**.

A stylized line drawing of a hand holding a flagpole. The hand is simple, with fingers wrapped around the pole. The flagpole is a thick black line. The flag is a large orange banner with a black border, curved at the top and bottom. The word "Legislative" is written in large, white, sans-serif font across the orange banner.

Legislative

Be ready to act on behalf of Texas public schools

by Stephanie Butler

Funding for teacher recruitment and retention. School safety. Vouchers. It's going to be a busy session for public education. Dax González, division director of TASB Governmental Relations, is encouraging school leaders to stay in touch with their lawmakers.

To stay on top of what's going on and to advocate for what's best for your schools, board members and administrators will have to stay informed and communicate regularly. TASB has the tools to help you do just that.

Stay informed

TASB's Legislative Report is an email newsletter compiled by TASB Governmental Relations staff that will give you the highlights of the legislative happenings of the day. Now that the Legislature is in session, daily updates are provided that are short and to the point, giving you a quick and easy way to be in the know.

If your inbox feels a little crowded these days, you can subscribe to TASB's podcast, TASB Talks. These short, weekly TASB Talks episodes provide a recap of the Legislature's previous week and a preview of the coming week. Subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.

If you already use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Instagram on a regular basis, be sure to follow TASB on social media for the latest news, action alerts, and highlights from Texas public schools. Ready

to get more hands on? Attend a TASB conference. There are two upcoming advocacy-focused events, one state and one national.

With more than 1,500 miles between Austin and Washington, D.C., it can be a challenge to make sure the voices of Texas trustees are truly heard. Join your fellow school leaders in D.C. for the first-ever Texas Federal Advocacy Conference, Feb. 6-7. Hear from influential speakers, learn about federal education policy, and meet with legislators at the U.S. Capitol.

The TASA/TASB Legislative Conference will take place in Austin Feb. 21 and will feature a morning program of updates from political insiders, with lawmaker visits scheduled for the afternoon.

Both of these conferences offer continuing education credit. More information about them can be found at events.tasb.org.

Be ready to act

Important decisions that affect your school district will be made this session by lawmakers in Austin. Make sure your elected officials have heard from you and like-minded public education supporters before they make those decisions.

Texans for Strong Public Schools is TASB's public advocacy campaign. Any Texan who supports public schools can sign up for free. As a subscriber, we'll let you know when actions by the Legislature need



Advocacy

your attention. You'll receive advocacy action alerts in your email inbox, with instructions on how to act quickly and easily. Since Texans for Strong Public Schools is a public, statewide campaign, you should encourage your friends, family, and school staff to sign up at StrongTexasSchools.org.

TASB's School Board Advocacy Network is just for teams of eight. Board members and superintendents who are members will receive specialized alerts related to public education. Join hundreds of trustees from across the state in influencing policymakers by signing up for SBAN at gr.tasb.org.

Sharing with your community

As a leader in your schools and community, it's important that you're not only informed and ready to act, but that you share critical information and action steps with your community. By taking the simple steps listed above, you can be the go-to expert on public school advocacy among your network.★

Stephanie Butler is a staff writer for Texas Lone Star.

Legislative Dates to Remember

Jan. 10
88th Legislature convenes

Feb. 6-7
Texas Federal Advocacy Conference
in Washington, D.C.

Feb. 21
TASA/TASB Legislative Conference
in Austin

March 10
88th Legislature bill filing deadline

May 29
88th Legislature concludes



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of School Boards



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Capitol Contacts

Advocacy efforts vital during the session

by TASB Staff

Know your local state leaders

If you are unsure of who represents you or your school district, you can look up that information at wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home.

Once you know who represents you and your district, you can find information about them and the overall 88th session at Texas Legislature Online at capitol.texas.gov. On this site, each elected official has his or her own web page that generally includes their bio, contact information, bills they have authored, and more. Before contacting an individual state lawmaker, first take some time to read about him or her so you can understand the issues important to that official.

Establishing connections

An in-person meeting with a legislator is the best way to make a connection and communicate information. Call or email the official's office and ask if the legislator is available for an in-person meeting in the district or a virtual meeting (or an in-person one in Austin if you are able to travel to the Texas Capitol).

If the legislator is unable to meet with you, you can also request to meet virtually or in-person with the lawmaker's staff, which can also be effective. It's also valuable to establish relationships with a lawmaker's staff, especially staff members who are involved in education issues.

Making a good impression

When communicating with a legislator, either in-person or virtually, good manners matter. Remember the following:

Introduce yourself. Tell the legislator who you are, which group(s) you represent, and the issue(s) you want to discuss. Be sure to tell the legislator if you are a constituent. If you can, you may mention any community ties you share with the legislator.

Be prepared to discuss your issue(s). Provide a brief explanation of what bill you are interested in discussing and use the

bill number and caption. Be precise in how the bill affects your school district and what you want done. If you are requesting an amendment, try to have one prepared with the correct language that you can show the legislator.

Be firm but courteous with the legislator. Don't try to force them to change a position on the spot or make a commitment if they don't agree with you. Never lose your temper with a legislator or staff member.

Be honest. If you support a bill, be enthusiastic and show why you care about it. If you oppose a bill, be genuine about your reasons. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell them so — and that you will do your best to find an answer and get back to them.

Timing matters. If possible, try to schedule a meeting with a legislator before he or she takes a public stance on issues important to your district.

Thank the legislator. If the legislator supports your issue and agrees to vote accordingly, thank them for the support. If they don't, thank them for their time in discussing the issue with you. Provide contact information to their staff if they don't already have it. Write a brief note of appreciation to the legislator's office.

Emailing a legislator

You can find a legislator's official email by going to capitol.texas.gov. On that site, find the section you need (Texas House or Texas Senate), click on Members, and search for the legislator by name. On each member's individual page, there generally is a tab for how to email that official.

Your email should properly address the legislator.

Keep the email short. State who you are and why you are writing. Provide the specific bill number and caption, state why you support or oppose it, and provide any local impact it may have on your school district. Express your support or opposition strongly. Tell the legislator you would appreciate his

The Texas legislative session is a busy time for lawmakers, but it's important for them to hear from school board members about issues affecting public education.

State lawmakers need to understand how potential legislation will impact their constituents, and school board members are important voices in the discussion about public education.

Here are some guidelines to help you communicate with state leaders.

HOW TO CONTACT STATE OFFICIALS



or her support of your stand. Never threaten or be offensive. Do not mention the legislator's election or reelection. Do not make negative personal statements.

Calling a legislator

Use the same guidelines as email in finding the contact information for a specific legislator. Include the same information you would write in an email and be as brief. If the lawmaker is unavailable to take your call, ask to speak with the staff member responsible for education issues.

Texas Governor

When writing:

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas

P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Abbott,

When speaking:

Governor Abbott

Online:

Visit gov.texas.gov/contact.

Texas Lieutenant Governor

When writing:

The Honorable Dan Patrick
Lieutenant Governor of Texas

P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Patrick,

When speaking:

Governor Patrick

Online:

Visit ltgov.texas.gov/contact.

State Senator

When writing:

The Honorable (Full name)
State Senate

P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator (Last Name),

When speaking:

Senator (Last Name)

Speaker of the House

When writing:

The Honorable Dade Phelan
Speaker of the House

Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

Dear Speaker Phelan,

When speaking:

Mr. Speaker

State Representative

When writing:

The Honorable (Full name)
Texas House of Representatives

P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768

Dear Representative (last name),

When speaking:

**Representative
(Last name)**

The Texas Legislature: How it Works



Before the legislative session ends on May 29, thousands of bills will be filed, hundreds will be debated, and some will be passed into law. The legislative process can be complicated. Following are the basic steps in the constitutional path.*

Who Can File a Bill:

Bills are proposals to change state law by adding a new law or amending a current one. Only a Texas state representative or senator may introduce a bill into the legislative process. However, the idea for a bill may originate from various sources. Before a bill can be passed into law, it must have three official readings, among other things.

Note: Any bill increasing taxes or raising money must start in the Texas House.

Committee Work:

After a bill is filed, a short description of it, the caption, is read aloud in the chamber where it's filed. This is the first reading. Next, the presiding officer assigns the bill to a committee.

- The committee chair decides when the committee considers specific bills. Public testimony is usually sought on bills.
- After considering a bill, a committee may take no action or may issue a report on it. A report includes the committee's recommendations regarding action on the bill.
- In the House, the report goes to the House Committee on Calendars for place-

ment on a calendar for consideration by the full House.

- In the Senate, bills are placed on the agenda in the order in which they were reported from a committee.

Floor Action:

A bill receives a second reading when it comes up for consideration by the full House or Senate. Members then vote on the bill. If approved, the full body then must consider the bill again on third reading and final passage. When a bill receives a majority vote on the third reading, it is considered passed and the bill is engrossed.

Next Steps:

A copy of an engrossed bill is sent to the other chamber, where it follows the same process. It can be amended in the other chamber.

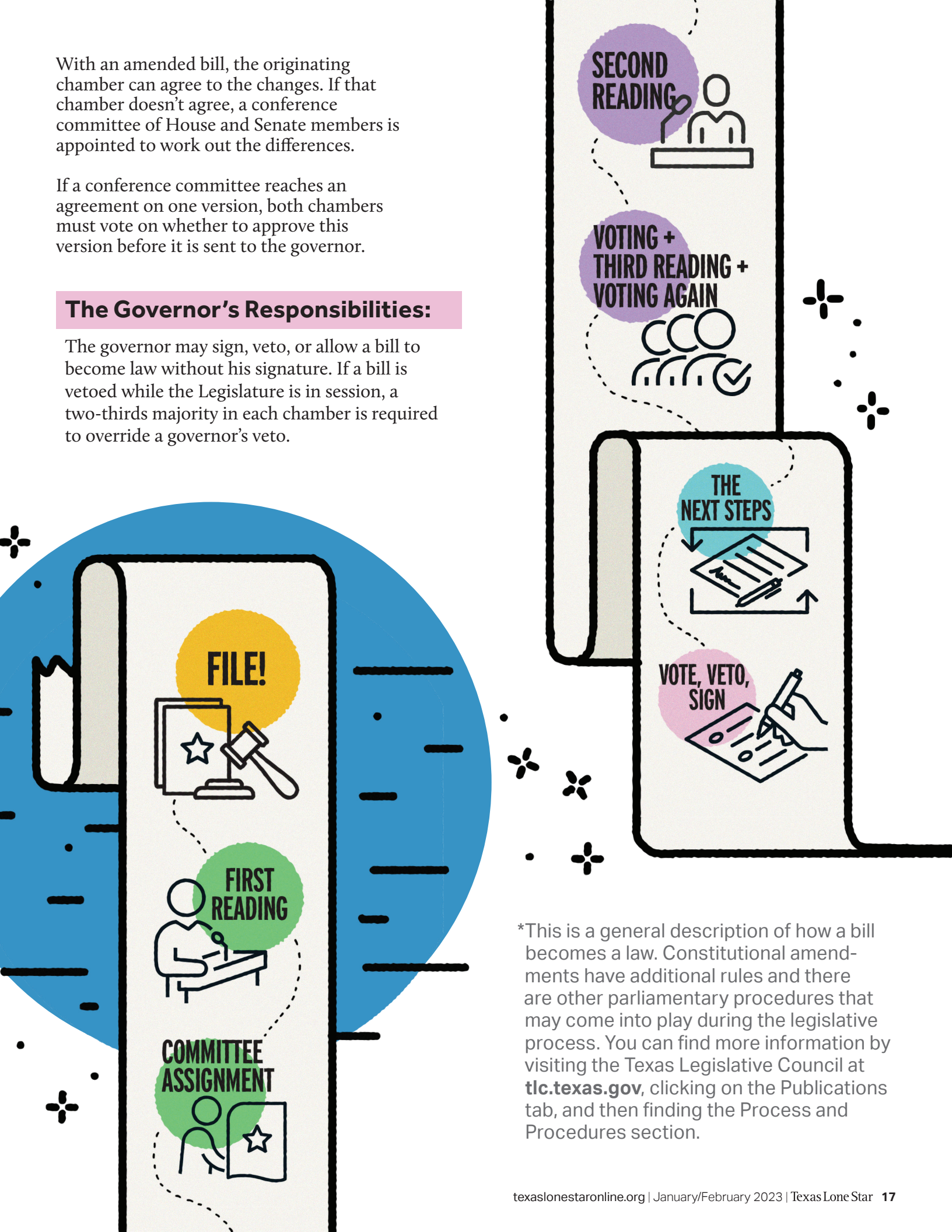
If a bill is returned to the originating chamber without amendments, it is signed by the speaker and lieutenant governor and sent to the governor.

With an amended bill, the originating chamber can agree to the changes. If that chamber doesn't agree, a conference committee of House and Senate members is appointed to work out the differences.

If a conference committee reaches an agreement on one version, both chambers must vote on whether to approve this version before it is sent to the governor.

The Governor's Responsibilities:

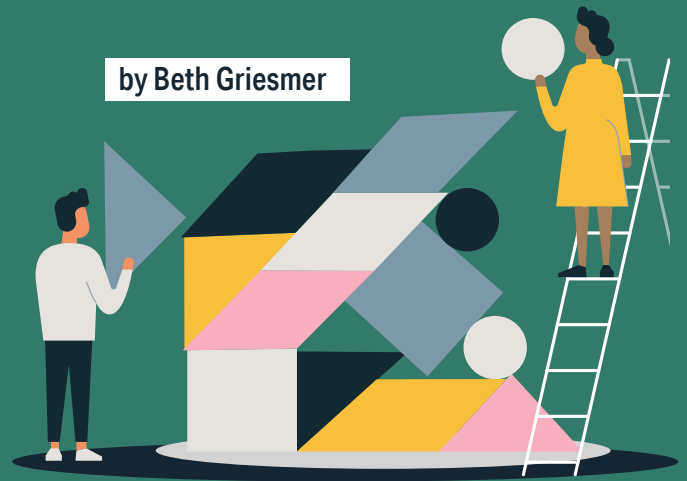
The governor may sign, veto, or allow a bill to become law without his signature. If a bill is vetoed while the Legislature is in session, a two-thirds majority in each chamber is required to override a governor's veto.



*This is a general description of how a bill becomes a law. Constitutional amendments have additional rules and there are other parliamentary procedures that may come into play during the legislative process. You can find more information by visiting the Texas Legislative Council at tlc.texas.gov, clicking on the Publications tab, and then finding the Process and Procedures section.

Building Bond Support

by Beth Griesmer



Proposals require work long before the election



Fort Stockton ISD Superintendent Gabriel Zamora was disappointed after two bond proposals on the ballot last May did not pass. The week after the election, Zamora sent an email to parents, staff, and students expressing his post-election frustrations. He admits the email was not well received. *The Fort Stockton Pioneer* printed it as a letter to the editor, prompting a few angry responses. “But it at least made some people pay attention,” said Zamora.

Zamora set aside his frustrations and got back to work on the bond proposals, launching a communications strategy that focused on consistent, educational conversations with community members throughout the spring and summer. The board met in August with a facility advisory committee made up of more than 40 parents, staff, and community members who unanimously supported the committee’s recommendation for a November bond election.

Educating voters

Long before the first shovel strikes the ground on a bond project, school districts are realizing they need to put more effort into educating voters about why a bond is needed, what it will do for students, and how much it will cost. In some cases, districts must work extra hard to win over voters. Clear, consistent, and constant communication is important to winning support for these proposals.

Fort Stockton ISD’s stepped-up efforts paid off. With more than twice the number of voters making it to the polls in November than in the spring election, both district propositions on the ballot passed.

“You have to reach out to all the members of the community,” said Dax González, division director of TASB’s Governmental Relations. “Generally, I see bonds fail due to a lack of communication, and when they pass it’s because districts did a good job of communicating exactly what they are going to do and how that will impact the educational success of the students.”

Fort Stockton ISD, a small district in the Pecos County seat in far West Texas, consulted attorneys before setting out to educate the community

about the bond proposal. The district also developed a webpage with videos and a flowchart that clearly outlined that the bond would not increase the property tax rate.

“You need something that in three seconds people can understand because we only have three seconds,” Zamora said, referring to explaining bond information to the community.

Zamora said a small group of residents “fought tooth and nail that nothing that we can do is right.” He countered their efforts on multiple



The Fort Stockton ISD Panther serves as an information booth on Election Day.



Volunteers pose with Fort Stockton ISD Superintendent Gabriel Zamora [dressed in suit and blue tie] as they mobilize on Election Day. A local restaurant, Joe's Place, served as Election Day headquarters.

Photo courtesy of Fort Stockton ISD

fronts, holding educational assemblies and giving numerous interviews to local media about what the bond proposals would do for the district and how a “no” vote would not lower the tax rate. When the \$100 million bonds overwhelmingly passed, Zamora said, “Our community has become one.”

Ballot language

School districts large and small depend on bond packages to fund capital projects such as building new schools, renovating existing buildings, improving technology, and creating performing arts and athletic facilities. This voter-dependent way of funding major educational improvements can be complicated and sometimes fraught with conflict for local communities. National School Public Relations Association President Cathy Kedjidian commented in the Texas School Public Relations Association’s newsletter about how hard Texas school districts had to fight negative communication. “You faced opposition unlike any previous ‘Vote No’ campaigns your community has seen,” she wrote about the November bond elections.

Not too far from Fort Stock-

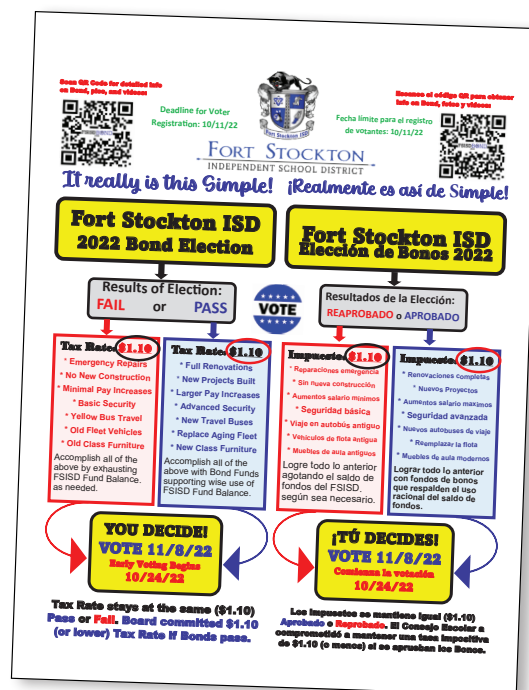
ton in the same corner of West Texas, Canutillo ISD did not pass its proposed bonds in the last two November elections. “The results of the bond election are disappointing because they point to a lack of willingness from our community to invest in the future of our students,” longtime Canutillo ISD Trustee and TASB President-Elect Armando Rodriguez said in an interview with KBDC El Paso.

Canutillo ISD, which serves more than 5,000 students in a region bordering New Mexico, had a \$264 million bond on the recent ballot that addressed district needs in the areas of district growth and equity, and supporting special programs like STEAM classes.

“The bond proposal sought to address the dire needs in the district,” said Rodriguez.

Canutillo ISD’s bond would have raised the property tax rate as much as three cents over the life of the bond but would not have impacted senior citizens.

While not all bond proposals will raise taxes, a recent state law requires school districts to add a sentence to every bond proposition stating, “THIS IS A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.”



The informational flowchart, developed by district leadership, shows that the bond would not increase the property tax rate in Fort Stockton. It was published in the newspaper and was used as doorhangers.

“Unfortunately, new state regulations to ballot language forcing districts to label any referendum as a tax increase even if mathematically it isn’t one, will make the option of bond funding very difficult for school districts to use,” Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez said the board is in the process of regrouping. “We recognize the need to address some of the concerns that are prevalent in our community,” he said.

Other obstacles

But opposition to a tax rate increase isn’t the only thing discouraging voter support. Other districts, such as Gregory-Portland ISD on the coast near Corpus Christi, didn’t have a tax rate increase connected with its \$242 million bond proposals, but it didn’t get approved in November. New state regulations concerning bonds, inflation, and an increase in mistrust of public education since the onset of the pandemic can make it difficult for bonds to win voter approval.

Prior to 2020, about 70% of school bonds passed, González said. According to a review of Texas Bond Review Board Data, 57% of the school bond ballot propositions passed in November. Another recent legislative requirement is that bond requests related to ath-

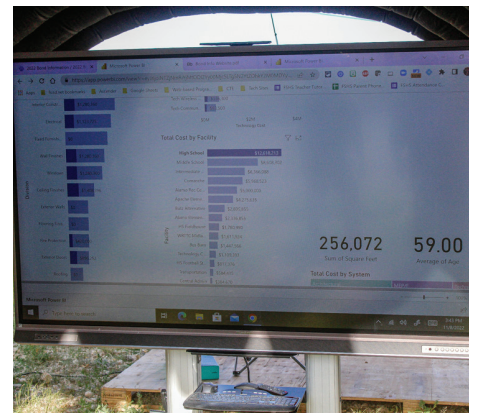
letic and performing arts facilities improve the academic performance of students. There are so many positives for being part of those activities and those facilities create spaces to bring the community together.”

Clear messaging

González stresses that both the district and its school board need to have a clear and concerted message that is consistently communicated to stakeholders.

Lockhart ISD took a long-term, phased-in approach to the bond initiatives it proposed to address district immense growth in the Lockhart area south of Austin.

“The school board and district leaders wanted to present a bond that would address the most urgent needs,” said Lockhart ISD Superintendent Mark Estrada. “In the interest of transparency, the district chose to educate the community about the reality of the need for additional bonds in the future so they understood that the growth



Early voting results on Election Day show the bond getting strong support. The 85-inch touchscreen television was purchased with money from a previous \$3 million technology bond.

“In this digital age, it was important to use tools beyond the bond brochure,”
—Mark Estrada, Lockhart ISD superintendent

letic and performing arts facilities or requests for technology updates must be in separate ballot propositions from the larger bond packages for school improvements.

“I see that bonds for extracurricular facilities fail at a greater rate,” said González. “Those are a tougher sell to the community.”

Communication around bonds for athletic and performing arts facilities needs to show a link between academics and the benefits of a theater program or a natatorium for the swim team, he explained. “If you’re going to go after a bond for an extracurricular facility, you really want to push how

plan would occur over time.”

Lockhart ISD used the approach González recommends for all districts that are trying to educate the community about a bond proposal. “They need to make sure they are reaching out to the members of the community who aren’t (just) parents.” He stresses that a wide variety of communication channels should be used. “You aren’t going to reach those people through the district newsletter or website,” González said.

Bond information signs at each campus and a mailout to all voters in the district were just a couple of the information channels Lockhart ISD used

to build community support.

“In this digital age, it was important to use tools beyond the bond brochure,” said Estrada. The district developed a toolkit of digital infographics and informational videos for social media that addressed concerns that came up during a series of meetings between community members, district leadership, and the board.

“These meetings were smaller with diverse groups to try to harness the community’s collective voice, and their feedback directly shaped the information tools the district developed for the bond once the board called for the bond election,” he said.

Estrada also credits Lockhart ISD’s successful \$71 million bond election in November to voter-turnout efforts. “The district had one message stream devoted to voter participation with its #ShowUpLockhart campaign,” he said, noting that 60% of eligible voters participated in the November election versus 30% in the unsuccessful 2019 bond election.

“Do not underestimate the importance of communicating about voter registration and participation. Make this a district priority even when you are not having elections to create a culture of voting,” Estrada said.★

Beth Griesmer is a staff writer for Texas Lone Star.

Bond Strategies from Corpus Christi ISD

Corpus Christi ISD Superintendent Roland Hernandez knows a few things about passing bonds. Over the last 10 years, his district has passed five bonds. "It comes down to communication and over communicating," he said. Here are a few strategies Corpus Christi ISD has used:

- Flyers and pamphlets with bond information were distributed throughout the city.
- Bond FAQs posted on the district website and a video presentation detailed what the district had accomplished with previous bond elections and what was still owed.
- District administrative team and campus principals presented bond information to each PTA.
- Student ambassadors educated peers and community members about the bond.
- Bond presentations were given to over 60 different groups throughout the city.
- Established a team effort with board members giving full support to the proposed bond.
- When determining specifics of a bond proposal, focus on the district's needs. "I see a lot of bond packages that come across as more of a 'want,' and I think communities and voters pick up on that really fast," Hernandez said.



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Serving All Students

Lyford CISD uses holistic approach to help students

by Orin Moore



Lyford CISD's efforts to deepen staff and student learning demonstrate the important ways a district can build connections for continuous improvement and successfully create and sustain initiatives to advance student success.

At the heart of Lyford CISD's ability to excel has been the overall commitment to serve all students by taking a comprehensive approach to education and focusing on access to technology. The district also employs a holistic approach that starts with fully embracing students — and their families.

"Serving all students means every student, every day, regardless of what concerns or challenges exist at home with their families," said Kristin N. Brown, Lyford CISD superintendent. "We're here to meet basic needs and to provide the best possible education."

Holistic approach

Lyford CISD is a small, rural school district in the Rio Grande Valley that serves more than 1,400 students. Part of the district's holistic approach focuses on seeking options to increase access to information for the overall student population, which is 80% economically disadvantaged. One proven effort has been to ensure that every student has access to a computer at home.

"We see kindergarten students completing and submitting assignments online," Brown said. "We see the impact of online learning and increased access to learning materials like online library resources."

Access to technology also helps parents.

"Parents have asked the district if they can use the computer to apply for jobs online. The primary purpose of the computer is student instruction, but there are other benefits to having technology at home. This is the aim of a holistic approach to serving students," Brown said.

Expecting more

When Lyford CISD became a 1:1 technology district 12 years ago, the administration decided then that success would be defined as demonstrated improvements in the quality of instruction, not in terms of standardized test scores. This approach allows the district to expect a broader range of outcomes.

One outcome has been the development of Tech Squad, a group of highly trained students ranging from elementary through high school that teaches peers, teachers, and other districts about technology applications. Lyford CISD's Tech Squad makes presentations at local, state, and national conferences.

The Tech Squad's accomplishments illustrate how a holistic approach helps enrich the learning experience around technology.

"We have empowered students. They're excited to show adults what excites them, and adults are then inspired to incorporate more technology into instruction," Brown said.

Collaboration

Like most of Lyford CISD's achievements, the success of the district's technology program is supported by the district's ability to collaborate across different departments and to sustain initiatives.

With technology, school board members and administrators have participated in a collaborative process to establish a vision for the district.

Technology discussions are not limited to a few specialized personnel or a specific course. All of Lyford CISD's

teachers are Apple certified. Collectively, these efforts help ensure the role technology plays in educating students is understood from the boardroom to students' homes.

For Lyford CISD Board President Victoria Perez, these connections are reassuring. "It's refreshing to see we're all thinking outside the box," Perez said. "We're not in the classroom every day, so it's nice knowing our leaders are focusing on building these connections."

Mutual trust

Perez attributes productive collaborations across the district to high levels of mutual trust between the board and district staff.

"Being able to collaborate with the administration is important. We ask tough questions, and they make sure we're comfortable with what we're approving. It's nice to have that trust. It's a genuine collaboration," Perez said.

The Lyford CISD governance team uses a "Team of Eight+" concept, meaning the board and superintendent work closely with chief administrators and include them in their annual training. This approach has built a deeper level of coherence between oversight and management, which helps sustain initiatives.

Overall, the board aims to model and encourage commitment to learning throughout the system so that students benefit.

"We view meetings as opportunities to develop professionally, and not just to conduct school business," said Perez.



Student members of the Lyford CISD Tech Squad.

Photo courtesy of Lyford CISD

Strong connections

District personnel also have built connections across the district to promote a commitment to deep learning and personal development.

Brown recalls the district's approach to maintaining an all-inclusive playground and converting another Wi-Fi-equipped playground to an all-inclusive environment.

"Professional development was not just for the staff. Students also learned how to engage with people who depend on all-inclusive equipment and environments," Brown said.

In Perez's view, this approach aligns perfectly with the district's commitment to holistic education. "Watching general education students play with special education students is magical. Now every kid, parent, and the elderly can play together or do homework together. It's a holistic approach to meeting needs," Perez said.

Recognizing the role community plays in sustaining school initiatives, the district launched a Community Involvement Alliance program to educate residents about school operations and events. Now, community members can hear presentations from each department and participate in learning tours of the facilities.

Whether educating the community, maximizing technology, or creating inclusive spaces, Lyford CISD demonstrates the importance of building connections across the system for continuous improvement and leveraging that work to sustain initiatives. The result is improved service to all students and better academic achievement in this award-winning district.★

Orin Moore is a board consultant for TASB Board Development Services.



The Lyford CISD board of trustees won the 2022 Texas Association of School Administrators' School Board Honor award. From left: Joey Mendoza, Arnold Cortez, Marina Quilantan-Rivera, board president Vicki Perez, Viola Z. Vela, Alison Busse Savage, Superintendent Kristin N. Brown, and Eulalio Mendez IV.

Photo by TASB Media Services

Top Evaluations

Questions about superintendent reviews

by Joe Ball

The superintendent's evaluation is one of a school district's most important governance functions. Here are answers to common legal questions about evaluating a superintendent.

Q: Who evaluates the superintendent?

A: The board of trustees hires, manages, and evaluates the superintendent. The superintendent's evaluation may not be delegated. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 11.151(b), .1513(a)(1).

As elected officials who are not employees of the district, board members face certain challenges in evaluating the superintendent. For example, they do not have the advantage of day-to-day workplace observations. In addition, since the board governs as a "body corporate," all members must reach consensus on the evaluation. Tex. Educ. Code § 11.051(a). With these unique challenges, it is important that the board and superintendent discuss and agree on the process and performance criteria that will be used before each evaluation cycle.

Q: What are the legal requirements?

A. State law provides two options. First, a district may use the commissioner's recommended appraisal process and performance criteria. Tex. Educ. Code § 21.354(c)(1). This option does not require any additional procedural steps. Alternatively, a district may develop its own appraisal process and performance criteria. Tex. Educ. Code § 21.354(c)(2). A board must consult with its district- and campus-level committees before adopting a locally developed evaluation.

The commissioner's recommended

appraisal process must include (1) an annual evaluation, (2) a student performance domain, and (3) other additional procedures and criteria determined by the school district board of trustees. 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 150.1031.

Information in the board's annual report describing the educational performance of the district must also be a primary consideration in the evaluation of the performance of the superintendent. Tex. Educ. Code § 39.307(3)(C). This requirement is in addition to the appraisal performance criteria under Texas Education Code section 21.354.

Q: What is the time frame to complete the evaluation?

A: Texas Education Code section 21.354 requires that administrators, including a superintendent, be appraised

annually. The law does not define *annually* but provides that district funds may not be used to pay an administrator who has not been appraised in the preceding 15 months. Therefore, the board should complete the annual evaluation within a one-year time frame. If the board does not complete the annual evaluation within a one-year time frame, there is flexibility to complete the annual evaluation within 15 months.

Q: Does the annual evaluation have to occur in January?

A: There is not a set date for the evaluation, though it customarily occurs in January or February, shortly after the public hearing on the district's Texas Academic Performance Report. Tex. Educ. Code § 39.306(c); 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 61.1022(c).

Q: Can the board conduct evaluation check-ins of the superintendent throughout the appraisal year?

A: Absolutely. While the law only requires an annual appraisal, many boards have formative evaluation conferences and evaluation check-ins throughout the year to strengthen the appraisal process. The superintendent's appraisal should not be limited to a once-a-year, "check the box" summative evaluation.

Q: How can the board include the superintendent in the evaluation?

A: A board should ask the superintendent to provide a summative report that



includes data and self-assessment as to the performance criteria in the evaluation instrument. The superintendent may present the report at a meeting so that board members can ask questions and the superintendent can address any issues or concerns.

The board may also decide whether to include the superintendent when they discuss the evaluation in closed session. The attorney general has opined that a school board may include in a closed meeting individuals whose participation is necessary to the matter under consideration. Tex. Att’y Gen. Op. No. JC-0375 (2001).

Q: How specific does the meeting notice have to be for the superintendent’s evaluation?

A: Whether notice of a meeting is sufficient under the Texas Open Meetings Act (OMA) depends on whether it reasonably informs the public of the subjects to be discussed. Matters involving the superintendent are not in the same category as ordinary personnel matters and need to be specifically identified. An acceptable meeting notice for the final evaluation would identify the subject as the “Superintendent Annual Evaluation.”

Q: Does the superintendent’s summative conference occur in open or closed session?

A: The OMA allows deliberation of the evaluation of personnel in a closed meeting, which includes the board’s

evaluation of the superintendent. Tex. Gov’t Code § 551.074. However, if a superintendent requests an open meeting, which would be unusual, the OMA requires the board to comply with superintendent’s request and proceed in an open meeting. Tex. Gov’t Code § 551.074(b).

After the board deliberates in closed session, the vote to approve the superintendent’s annual evaluation must occur in an open meeting. Tex. Gov’t Code § 551.102.

Q: Is the superintendent’s evaluation confidential?

A: A document evaluating the superintendent is confidential, which would include the evaluation instrument that is discussed during the summative conference. Tex. Educ. Code § 21.355.

The board may discuss the superintendent’s performance in public to the extent the discussion does not disclose the content of an evaluative document.

Q: Does the board have to give the superintendent a raise or a new contract after the evaluation?

A: No. It is common, however, for school boards to consider a contract extension and an increase in compensation following the superintendent’s final evaluation for the year. TASB Legal Services generally recommends that the board address the superintendent’s evaluation and contract issues at separate board meetings.

Q: What resources can board members review to prepare for an evaluation?

A: On tasb.org, board members can access resources created by TASB’s Board Development Services, including a new online training course in the Online Learning Center at onlinelearning.tasb.org. More information about laws pertaining to superintendent evaluation can also be found at TASB School Law eSource at schoolawesource.tasb.org.★

This article is provided for educational purposes only 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.

Joe Ball is a senior attorney for TASB Legal Services.




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Making News

Catching up on Texas governmental events

by Dax González

The 88th Texas legislative session is upon us! Many of us are already compiling lists of bills to track and we're reading any and everything about the Legislature. But there's also other news to catch up on, including some important things that occurred before the holiday break. The following are some of the most noteworthy news items:

New SBOE members to take office

When the Texas State Board of Education meets for the first time this year, six new members will be in attendance. Outgoing members Lawrence Allen (D-Houston), Ruben Cortez (D-Brownsville), Jay Johnson (R-Pampa), Sue Melton-Malone (R-Robinson), Georgina Perez (D-El Paso), and Matt Robinson (R-Friend-

swood) have been replaced by incoming members Evelyn Brooks (R-Frisco), LJ Francis (R-Corpus Christi), Aaron Kinsey (R-Midland), Melissa Ortega (D-El Paso), Julie Pickren (R-Houston), and Staci Childs (D-Houston).

Texas House picks speaker

Shortly after the Texas Legislature convened Jan. 10, the Texas House reelected Speaker Dade Phelan (R-Beaumont) on a 145-3 vote. In December, Texas House Republicans had overwhelmingly endorsed Phelan to continue to serve as speaker for the 88th session on a 78-6 vote.

Nelson to serve as secretary of state

Gov. Greg Abbott announced in December that he will appoint former

Sen. Jane Nelson (R-Flower Mound) as secretary of state. Nelson, who did not seek reelection this past November, will replace John Scott, who announced he would be stepping down from the position at the end of 2022.

Patrick unveils legislative priorities

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick unveiled his legislative priorities late last year. His top priorities include property tax relief, paying down debt, strengthening the state's power grid, continuing border security funding, supporting rural law enforcement, and building mental health hospitals across the state. Other issues include increasing teacher pay, additional support for retired teachers, parental empowerment, school safety funding, assistance for universities not funded through the permanent university fund, scholarships for teachers, law enforcement personnel and nurses, reforming the higher education tenure process, addressing voter fraud, and reviewing voting machines.

Teacher prep program in jeopardy

Texas Teachers for Tomorrow, the state's largest teacher preparation program, is in trouble of having its accreditation revoked by TEA after it failed to show improvements while on probation. The Education Lab of the Dallas Morning News found that the program may have misled potential teachers, did not provide required mentors, and provided training



not based in research. The Education Lab notes that 70,000 would-be educators enrolled last year, but fewer than 6,000 people completed the program and fewer than 5,500 gained their full teaching certification.

Bond program nears capacity

The state's Bond Guarantee Program supported by the Permanent School Fund is nearing a limit imposed by the IRS. The program helps guarantee debt for school district bond projects and saves taxpayers millions of dollars by helping districts secure lower interest rates on their bonds. U.S. Reps. Lloyd Doggett (D-Austin) and Jodey C. Arrington (R-Lubbock) have filed legislation to stop the IRS from setting the limit. State lawmakers are aware of the situation and are working to generate support to address the issue as well.

Spending limit set

The Legislative Budget Board has set the 2024-25 biennial state spending limit, which is a constitutionally required limit on the growth of the Texas budget. Members of the LBB, which include the lieutenant governor, speaker of the house, and other legislators, evaluated several different caps that take several factors into account, such as economic and population growth. They determined that the budget shall not increase by more than 12.33%. That means that while Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar has said the state will have a revenue surplus of about \$32.7 billion, the Legislature will only be able to increase the state budget by \$12.5 billion without voting to go beyond this spending cap.

Survey on school safety costs

TEA has designed a School Safety Standards Cost Estimates Collection Survey to capture data on the financial impact of the implementation of recently proposed school safety standards. The agency is recommending that all school systems that need to upgrade facilities to meet the proposed standards complete the survey. Survey responses are due Feb. 10. The survey link can be found by going to tea.texas.gov and searching for School Safety Standards Cost Estimates Collection Survey in the search box.★

Dax González is division director of TASB Governmental Relations.

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Strategic Staffing

Options to address workforce shortages

by Jennifer Barton

Many Texas school districts started the new year with staffing shortages in key areas despite efforts to attract and keep talented educators and other personnel. There are staffing models to consider that may help districts eliminate vacancies, provide innovative and sustainable instructional models, and save money.

To help bring districts back from the breaking point, school leaders can use strategic staffing models to alleviate the burdens on staff and ensure quality instruction in all classrooms, as well as free up resources to provide rewards for staff through improved salaries and total rewards.

Creating effective staffing models in schools is an arduous challenge. School leaders must think strategically to address concerns, maximize staff utilization, and identify efficiencies in each department and on every campus.

By adopting new staffing models, temporarily or long-term, school districts may be able to slow the staffing crisis and create a more effective model that benefits students and staff.

Eliminating vacant positions

Sometimes school entities hold vacant positions for indeterminant periods of time with the hope that a qualified candidate will eventually fill the role.

Districts may want to consider eliminating long-standing vacancies to recoup budgeted funds for the position and to allow school leaders to implement an alternative staffing option. Any elimination of positions should be strategic and may need to be a temporary measure used only during a staffing shortage.

Typically, districts redirect duties and

responsibilities associated with vacant positions to current employees. This can be problematic if the workload is burdensome. However, some districts may find that the department or campus can manage duties without the vacant position, and it may be prudent to eliminate the position to provide cost savings and a more efficient staffing model.

School districts should evaluate current vacant positions to determine budget and organizational impact. The elimination of unused or unfilled positions could easily improve staffing conditions because elimination of these positions would be through attrition, a best practice for implementing staffing changes.

Alternative instructional models

When there is a shortage of qualified teachers to fill class assignments, schools may need to create new instructional models that maximize the use of additional staff to provide quality services to all students.

Sample models include:

- Designating a master teacher to deliver instruction to a larger group of students and assigning instructional aides to facilitate student management and instructional support
- Assigning instructional aides to teach specials classes at the elementary level (art, makerspaces, computer lab, etc.) instead of certified teachers
- Shifting pull-out and itinerant instruction to create a differentiated instructional model where the trained teacher provides instruction and services to students in the general education classroom



- Using a cluster of library aides to provide management of school libraries with oversight and instructional guidance provided by a certified librarian
- Assigning one teacher and one teacher aide to pre-K classrooms to ensure the appropriate ratio for high-quality pre-K programs is obtained

Reevaluation of instructional models requires planning and buy-in from multiple departments and individuals. While this staffing change can provide opportunities, it may be harder to implement in a short amount of time.

Class size limits

Staffing ratios directly impact a teacher's ability to effectively influence student learning. Guidelines are necessary to allocate students and teachers appropriately to classes at each grade level. While there are rules that dictate maximum class sizes in grades pre-K through four [Texas Education Code (TEC) § 25.112], no legislation mandates a staffing ratio for grades five through 12.

Across the state, many school districts set local class size limits for grade levels based on students' needs and preferences from the community. In the time of staffing shortages, schools may need to strategically increase the student-to-staff ratio for certain classes.

Some questions school leaders should ask when considering increasing class sizes are:

- Will increasing class sizes allow the presence of a skilled and highly committed teacher to provide instruction to students?
- Is this a temporary or permanent solution?
- If we increase class sizes to an average above 22 students in pre-K through grade four, are we prepared to submit a maximum class size exception to the state for the affected grade levels?
- What student-to-staff ratio in each grade level is the school able to accommodate that will still ensure students receive quality instruction on a consistent basis?
- Who needs to be involved in the process of revising class size limits for the organization (stakeholders, board of trustees, teachers)?
- How do we implement and communicate the increase in student-to-staff ratios to our staff, parents, and the community?

The decision to increase class size can be a difficult one. However, this may be a viable option that could have minimal overall impact in schools. An advantage of strategically increasing class sizes is the reduced need for staff and possible cost savings gained from employing fewer staff.

Master scheduling

Campus master schedules and the allocation of instructional personnel reflect the values, priorities, and strategic goals of a school. Unfortunately, there is limited evidence to show which type of master schedule has the greatest impact on student achievement. Therefore, schools must prioritize placing highly skilled and committed teachers in classrooms while providing adequate support for the teacher to ensure students are receiving the best instruction possible.

Master schedules have an impact on many factors, including class size averages and the student load for teachers. When analyzing and revising schedules to address staffing, master schedule changes can have a significant impact on the number of staff needed and personnel costs. Schools could consider revising master schedules when cost savings are needed or when there are not enough staff available to cover needed assignments.

Possible changes to the master schedule could include:

- Reducing the number of periods offered for students during the school day (For example, implementing an eight-period day versus a seven-period day.)
- Providing teachers their one required conference period (TEC § 21.404) and eliminating any additional planning periods designated for professional learning communities (PLCs), department meetings, or additional assignment duties
- Assigning more academic classes to extracurricular sponsors and athletic coaches to ensure more academic offerings are available throughout the day
- Maximizing teacher certifications by assigning teachers more than one content area or grade level assignment

There are many scheduling options that districts could consider to increase staffing efficiencies. Districts should

ensure that any options considered meet campus needs, and decisions should put a heavy focus on the model that provides students with the best instruction and services available.

Next steps

When school districts evaluate and analyze staffing options, it is best practice to identify strategic opportunities first and then determine what is best for the organization. When there is a crisis such as the current staffing shortage, districts may need to pivot quickly to make real-time staffing decisions.

These staffing options could be temporary measures to help cope with ongoing vacancies and the shortages of qualified candidates and substitute workers, or they could be a step toward changing staffing models for the future. Strategic staffing is key to organizational improvement and budget management.★

Jennifer Barton is a TASB HR Services HR and compensation consultant.

HR Resources for Staffing Options

TASB HR Services has a variety of resources available for school districts that want to use strategic staffing options to address shortages and save money:

- **HR Library** – Strategic Staffing (HR Services member login required) can be accessed by going to tasb.org, using the TASB login feature, then navigating to HR Resources/HR Library.
- **The Administrator's Guide to Strategic Staffing** can be purchased by going to store.tasb.org and clicking on the District Operations category.
- **Search for "staffing" on the HRX blog**, which can be found by going to tasb.org and clicking on HR Services under the Services tab.



Fields of Fortitude

Donna ISD expands migrant student initiative

by Fernando Castillo



Fernando Castillo

Editor's note: The District Voices column features articles written by local school board members from around Texas. We invite you to send us your submissions. For submissions or questions, contact managing editor Laura Tolley at laura.tolley@tasb.org.

Growing up in a migrant family was very challenging. We were 11 in all, so as you can imagine, my mom and dad struggled to make sure we all had what we needed to get by. When I turned 12, I recall leaving our home in Donna for the first time with my parents and three older sisters. My younger siblings stayed behind until they were old enough to join us on these

In spite of these hardships, I was grateful to my parents for instilling in me a sound work ethic and ensuring that my siblings and I did not miss out on any educational opportunities. My father, in particular, always made sure we were in class for the first day of school to the last each year.

Donna ISD helps migrant students

My personal experiences as a migrant student in the mid-70s and 80s make me appreciate the great things that we're doing now at Donna ISD with our Migrant Education Program (MEP), which this school year expanded to include our youngest students. Previously,

student when he or she moves to the next grade level until they graduate.

Donna ISD Superintendent Angela Dominguez, MEP staff members, and board members all worked together to develop and expand this important program. The board supported the expanded program and other efforts to help our migrant students by adopting a budget that provided funding for support staff and program monitoring efforts.

As a board member since 2020, I am particularly proud to be part of these types of efforts that help ensure that every student at Donna ISD has access to the programs and services they need to succeed in school – and in life. In Donna

In spite of these hardships, I was grateful to my parents for instilling in me a sound work ethic and ensuring that my siblings and I did not miss out on any educational opportunities.

yearly trips.

In time, I came to understand that my family was part of the labor movement of South Texas workers who migrated north to work the fields. First, we headed to Michigan where we worked the strawberry, tomato, and cucumber fields. From there, we journeyed west to Montana, where we faced the tedious and difficult task of thinning rows and rows of sugar beets. As I got older, this work prevented me from participating in the high school football practices I longed to do or from enjoying summer family vacations like the ones my classmates talked about when we were back at school.

only migrant students in Donna ISD's secondary schools were provided these extra services.

The program designs supplemental action plans that help migrant students overcome educational disruptions, mobility challenges, cultural and language barriers, social isolation, health issues, and other factors associated with a migratory lifestyle. Teachers and strategists assigned to the migrant program conduct one-on-one pull-out sessions with each student on a daily basis to make certain they're caught up with their studies. Teachers also monitor and document their academic performance and progress. These services follow the

ISD, we focus on every child, every classroom, every day!

While migrating across the country for seasonal employment will continue for many South Texans, I am pleased to see Donna ISD put a program in place that provides our students with the tools they need to remain on par with their non-migrating peers. As our district motto states, our number one goal is for students to graduate on time and ready for college, a career, or the military.★

Fernando Castillo is a member of the Donna ISD Board of Trustees and serves as the board's vice president. Donna ISD serves more than 13,000 students.

Tax Season Is Here!

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May 11.....	Huntsville
May 16.....	Alpine
May 16.....	Commerce
May 17.....	Canyon
May 19-20.....	South Padre
May 23.....	Waco
May 25.....	El Paso
TBD.....	Stephenville

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



The Learning Journey

LTASB's Huntsville trip yields new perspectives

by Christopher Stanley

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 introducing them to a variety of issues, people, activities, and locations. These columns are written by class members and track the group's progress.

Twenty-six school district leaders literally came from all over Texas late last year to gather in Huntsville for several days to work on our purpose and process as the new Leadership TASB class of 2022-23.

We gathered at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, where we were led by TASB's Kay Douglas, the program man-

ager, and other key TASB staff members who are helping us on this learning journey.

Our first full day, Nov. 10, included a visit to the Windham School District in the Jim Ferguson Unit of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, where we toured the vocational and academic wings of the school.

We saw an impressive welding training facility, and it was exciting to see the students so willing to discuss their products with us. We also visited the electrical, carpentry, and culinary arts programs in the vocational section. We were all impressed with not only the artistry, but also the applied real-world skills these students are learning.

Warden Adrian Amonett told several of us that finding jobs for his students has been hard because of their past. But coming out of the COVID pandemic, he said that his students were now in high demand. Amonett said that getting a job that paid well outside of prison is one of the best ways to keep them from returning.

We also talked to students about their studies. There were two very poignant moments — one where a student recognized one of our class members as being from his hometown and another where a student said he was from one of our school districts.

We also were treated to a wonderful Thanksgiving feast made by the students from the culinary arts program! Throughout the visit, I had a hard time thinking of these people as inmates, and I wondered about where we failed them. Somewhere at some time, these students were third graders, headed for a bookfair or kicking a ball during recess.

Our ride back to Huntsville was solemn.



Members of the LTASB class board a bus for a visit to Montgomery ISD.

Photo by Nicole Green, TASB staff

Many topics to discuss

After a brief break, we had an afternoon session with Matt Fuller, professor of educational leadership at Sam Houston State University, and four of his colleagues. We discussed such issues as school safety, special education, and training future public school teachers.

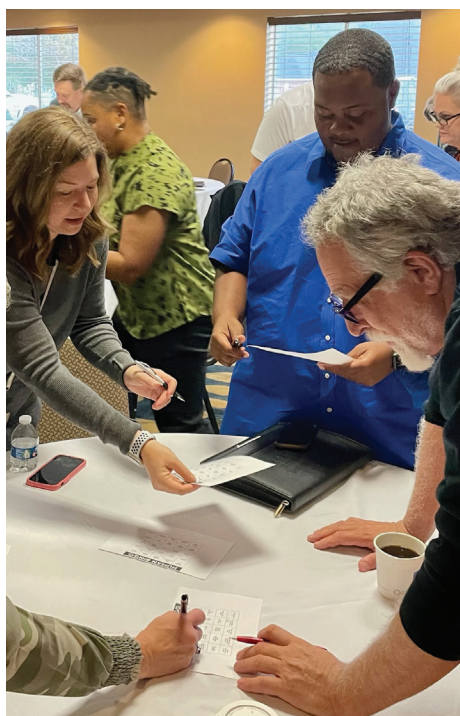
Later, our friends James Spradley of Eanes ISD, Amy English of Hutto ISD, Cassandra Hatfield of Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, and Polly Montgomery of Allen ISD presented their "Hometown News." It's fascinating to learn about the strengths and concerns of our colleagues and their districts.

After an incredible dinner, we settled into an evening of long conversations about our own districts. We are starting to learn a lot about leadership during the day, but we are learning more about our collective struggles and missions outside of class. We are not of one mind, but we are of one mission.

The next day, we visited Montgomery ISD's Oak Hills Junior High and saw a memorable Veterans Day celebration. In addition, Montgomery ISD Superintendent Heath Morrison and several board members talked to us about the issues facing their district.

Back at the hotel, our afternoon speaker was Marcus Funk, associate professor of communications at Sam Houston State University. He gave us an exceptional overview of the current media climate.

Part of our leadership journey is conducting research on topics considered critical to the future of public education in Texas. Our class's research groups are centered around student voice, school safety, community engagement, recruitment and retention, and school finance. I think we



LTASB members play Human Bingo during a morning energizer session.

Photo by Nicole Green, TASB staff



Photo by Kristina J. Hartman, superintendent of Windham School District

The LTASB class poses outside the Texas Department of Criminal Justice system's Jim Ferguson Unit.

are all excited by the prospect of working across the state to gain a more complex understanding of these issues.

After dinner, we convened again for lively conversations about public education. We were no longer strangers feeling our way through politeness. Our conversations were getting real.

Since our Huntsville trip, I don't think there has been a day go by when we have not seen a group text come in. We are invested in our schools, and we are now invested in each other.

Large districts, small districts, rich ones, and poor ones — we are all part of the same team. Our collective empathy is growing about the mission of TASB. We can feel it.★

Christopher Stanley is an Ector County ISD trustee and a member of the LTASB Class of 2022-23.



Photo by Nicole Green, TASB staff

LTASB members discuss the Governance Core during the group's book study session.



Photo by Nicole Green, TASB staff

LTASB members attended a special Veterans Day ceremony at Oak Hills Junior High School in Montgomery ISD.

TASB Seeks Nominations for Outstanding Superintendents

Texas school boards can now submit nominations for the 2023 Superintendent of the Year Award.

Presented annually since 1984, the SOTY Award spotlights outstanding district leaders. The SOTY winner, announced on stage each fall at the TASA | TASB Convention, 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.

"I am looking forward to hearing the inspiring stories of this year's SOTY candidates," said Rolinda Schmidt, Kerrville ISD board president and chair of the TASB Member Services Committee, which also serves as the State Selection Committee that oversees the SOTY award process. "Hearing what these leaders are doing in districts across the state always makes me proud to be a part of public education and excited about what's ahead for public schoolchildren in Texas."

To be eligible, superintendents must have served in their district for at least three years at the time the award is presented. 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 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. Application materials were updated last year with new student outcomes measures at subject and grade level to reflect the lack of district-level letter grades for 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic.

"This award is a great opportunity to spotlight the hard work, dedication, and innovation of Texas public education leaders," said Dan Troxell, TASB executive director and the 2008 SOTY winner. "I



The 2022 SOTY finalists and winner at the TASA | TASB Convention in San Antonio. From left: Jenny McGown, Klein ISD, Thurston Lamb, Henderson ISD, Bobby Ott, (winner) Temple ISD, Doug Killian, Pflugerville ISD, and Scott Muri, Ector County ISD.

Photo by TASB Media Services


look forward each year to honoring these talented education leaders and the positive impact they, along with their boards, are having on their students and communities."

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.


The 2022 SOTY winner was Bobby Ott, superintendent of Temple ISD. See other past winners and find more details on eligibility and the nomination process at tasb.org/soty.★



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Sign up for TASB's Governance Camp March 1-4 in Galveston

TASB's Governance Camp: Powered by Student Voice — a unique learning experience where Texas school board members receive top-notch training focused on governance, leadership, and student voice — will be held March 1-4 in Galveston.

The Camp's keynote speakers and sessions will provide trustees with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead and serve their communities. Attendees will have the opportunity to mix and mingle with other trustees from across the state, session presenters, and TASB staff, and they will hear directly from students about their educational experiences.

This year, TASB's special Wednesday night preconference will explore the many aspects of school safety. Attendees will hear from experts, share experiences, discuss policies and procedures, and learn useful tips and tools for communicating with the community. The preconference event will include dinner.

Special speakers

The opening keynote speaker will be Holly Hoffman, the last remaining

member of the Espada Tribe and the last woman standing on Season 21 of Survivor Nicaragua on CBS. Through that experience and others throughout her life, she was inspired to share her message of positivity, determination, and confidence.

Adolph Brown will close Governance Camp on Friday, March 4, with a two-hour workshop that is not to be missed. It will be the first time someone has facilitated a workshop where school board members, administrators, faculty, and students sit and work together.

As one of the highest rated keynote speakers for the annual Summer Leadership Institute in the past decade, Brown offers an inspiring and challenging presentation. He is a businessman, investor, author, urban and rural school educator, research scientist, and keynote speaker. For more than 30 years, Brown has researched, field tested, and implemented a set of concrete strategies used to support and enhance schools and businesses around the world.

To register and find more information about the Camp, visit tasb.org/gov-camp. ★



Holly Hoffman



Adolph Brown



Attendees at the 2022 Governance Camp in Galveston.

Photo by TASB Media Services

TASB Risk Management Fund Redesigns Website to Better Serve Members

The TASB Risk Management Fund has launched a redesigned website that offers an enhanced online experience as part of its ongoing commitment to better serve members with innovative and continuous improvements.

“We are very excited to unveil the new website because it not only looks better and is mobile friendly but it’s also easier to navigate and has more resources,” said Mary Barrett, associate executive director for Risk Management Services. “Most importantly, the new single sign-on experience makes it easier for members to access all the resources they need to support risk management in their organization.”

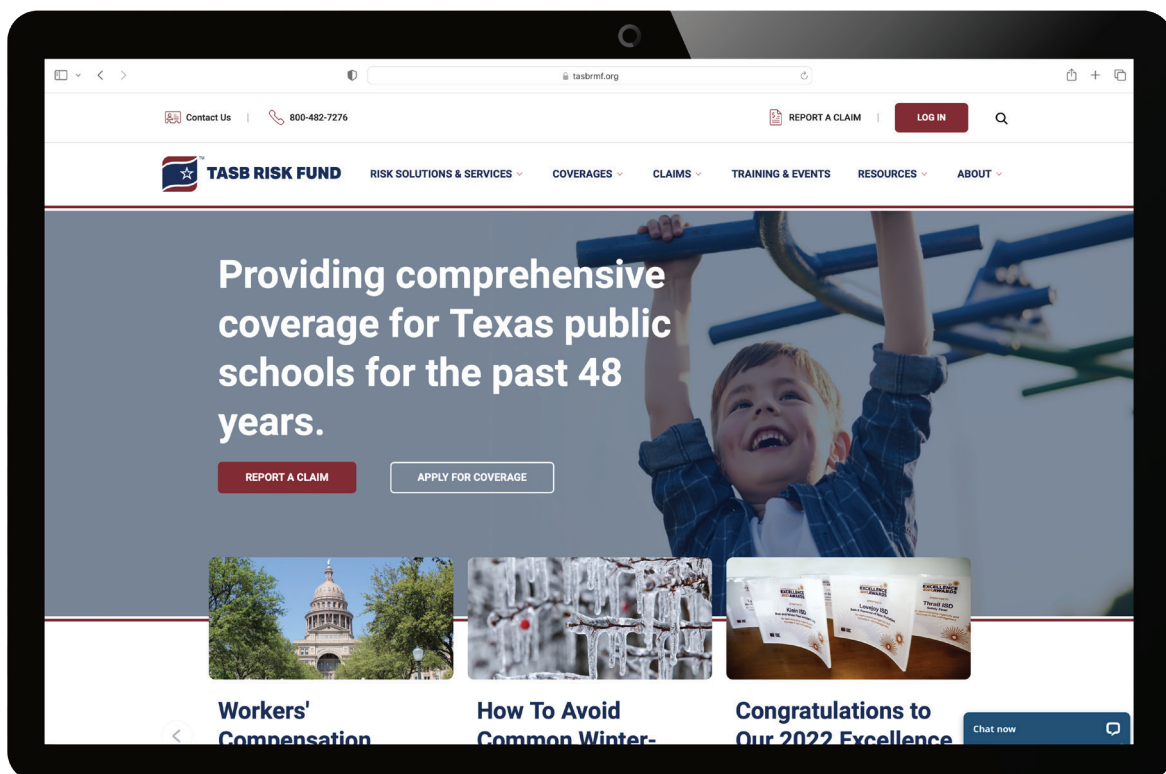
While the location of the new **tasbrmf.org** is the same, logging in to the

website offers the best experience as it opens the door for key applications and member resources. Fund members use their same preferred email address that they use to log in to **tasb.org**. Logging in should be the first step for members when they visit **tasbrmf.org** to ensure a personalized experience with access to the specific Fund coverage programs and resources used by their organization.

TASB Executive Director Dan Troxell applauded the new website’s launch in November and the Fund’s longstanding commitment — as one of the largest and oldest risk pools in the U.S. — to providing outstanding service and resources for its members. TASB administers the Fund, which is aligned to the mission of supporting public education through

comprehensive and responsive risk solutions.

“Our commitment is to always prioritize the needs of those we serve — namely school districts and public education entities — by providing programs, products, and services that enhance member experience,” Troxell said. “Creating a modern and useful website is essential to our mission of supporting public school districts and their communities.” ★



Bulletin Board

TASB Honors School Board Members

Each January, TASB honors the more than 7,000 school board members during School Board Recognition Month. As Texas public schools continue to face many challenges, school boards lead the way in working to ensure that students receive the best education possible. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott also officially declared the first month of the year School Board Recognition Month. Abbott issued a proclamation acknowledging the importance of locally elected boards. “These boards set a vision for their district based on students’ needs and community values,” he said in the proclamation.



Temple ISD Superintendent Receives SOTY Award

TASB Executive Director Dan Troxell officially presented the Superintendent of the Year award to Bobby Ott of Temple ISD. Ott, whose district is in Region 12, was selected from a group of five state finalists. The winner was announced last September at the TASA | TASB Convention in San Antonio, but Troxell presented Ott with his official award in December in Temple. During his tenure as superintendent of Temple ISD, the district has seen progress in closing student achievement gaps, particularly at the elementary level and among students receiving special education services, as well as English language learners.



TASB Executive Director Dan Troxell and Temple ISD Superintendent Bobby Ott.

Photo by TASB Media Services

TASB's Executive Search Services Listings

► White Oak ISD:

Deadline: Feb. 1

► Bluff Dale ISD:

Deadline: TBD

► Giddings ISD:

Deadline: Feb. 23

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



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.

In Praise of Leadership

We honor school board members' dedication

by Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield



Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield

January is significant for public education in Texas. It marks School Board Recognition Month.

In my previous roles as head of communications and family engagement for two districts in the Houston area, I always enjoyed finding ways to celebrate our school board members for their hard work and commitment to our students. I also saw it as an opportunity to educate the public on the essential role of school board trustees — the largest group of elected officials in Texas.

School board service certainly hasn't gotten any easier in recent years, so I was

— both current and past — have made in service to their communities.

Recognizing service all year

That's precisely why it's important that TASB works hard to ensure school board service in Texas is recognized, appreciated, and supported — in January and throughout the year. The responsibilities of school board trustees, which are formally defined in the Framework for School Board Development adopted by the State Board of Education, are not for the faint of heart.

The framework clearly outlines 44 unique responsibilities for Texas trustees

So, while School Board Recognition Month comes around once per year, let's work together to raise awareness and appreciation for school board service and the importance of local control throughout 2023.

This year, especially, there's a lot at stake. The 88th legislative session is underway with issues of vital importance for the 5.4 million public school children in our state. As lawmakers debate bills affecting public school students, staff, and community members this session, let's make sure they hear from the experts — Texas school board trustees. There's no more powerful voice for public education

Despite all this work, every time I've asked a school board member why they do what they do, they never talk about those sacrifices. It's always about the students and working to achieve stronger schools for stronger communities.

especially gratified to scroll through social media with #SchoolBoardMonth and see so much appreciation and recognition being shared and expressed, from celebratory dinners and presentations of student artwork to videos and stories.

I would argue that even when January is a distant memory, we must continue finding ways to recognize school board service and its impact on the educational experience of our state's students.

School boards and local governance have a long history in Texas, so I hope we can all agree that our state would not be the ninth largest economy in the world without the hard work, commitment, and sacrifices that many Texas trustees

organized around five areas of work. Of course, since most trustees also have day jobs and/or family responsibilities, these duties are placed on top of already full schedules and typically require late nights, long meetings, and time connecting with parents and community members to answer questions, explain policies, attend events, and more.

Working for the students

Despite all this work, every time I've asked a school board member why they do what they do, they never talk about those sacrifices. It's always about the students and working to achieve stronger schools for stronger communities.

than school board members working together for stronger schools and stronger communities.★

Tiffany Dunne-Oldfield is deputy executive director of TASB.

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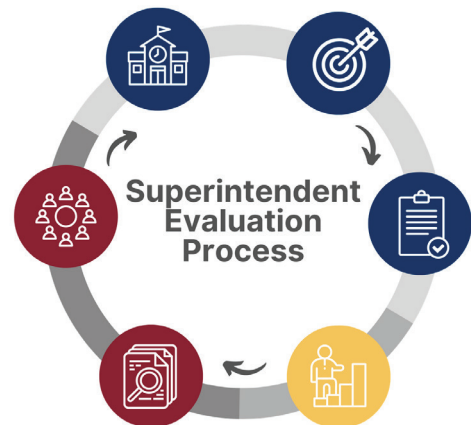
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Superintendent Evaluations: A Comprehensive Guide

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Board Development Services

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CALL FOR SESSIONS OPENS FEB. 1

Do you have a pertinent message, program, or initiative from your home district you would like to share with other trustees and district leaders across Texas? If so, we want to hear about it! Submit your session ideas at tasb.org/sli.