

2011
*Texas Association
of School Boards
Annual Report*

**dedication
determination
devotion**

Texas Public Schools
Shine Through a
Year of Challenges



Volume 30 • Number 1 • January/February 2012

persistence





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Correction: On page 36 of the December 2011 *Texas Lone Star*, we inadvertently ran photos of the 2012 Leadership TASB Class instead of the 2011 Leadership TASB Class, which was the class being honored. Please see the 2011 Leadership TASB Class photos on page 13 of this edition.



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We're All in This Together

Despite Circumstances, We Must Strive for World-class Texas Public Schools

by Gary W. Inmon

I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season. The holidays are always a great time to spend with family and friends, and hopefully, after all the gifts have been opened and all of the guests have gone back home, you are also able to find some quiet time to reflect upon the year gone by. No matter the circumstances, we all have so much to be thankful for and should count our blessings.

The new year is also such a great time to consider our goals and aspirations for the coming year. In addition to our annual (but often elusive) goals of getting in better physical shape, spending less than we earn, and cleaning out the garage and attic, we should also consider goals pertaining to our role as school board trustees.

As we all recognize, 2012 should prove to be a very challenging and demanding year for school board members all across the state. We will almost certainly be faced with decreasing funds and tighter budgets while having to satisfy ever-increasing demands and expectations from our students, parents, taxpayers, and legislators. In these challenging times, it's more important than ever that we all work together and utilize the resources available to us.



Gary W. Inmon

Lend a Hand to Fellow Trustees

As we face these challenges head on, I want to encourage all of you to turn to each other and TASB for assistance. There are more than 7,000 school board members in Texas, and each one has a unique background and story to tell. I've met a lot of board members during my tenure as a school trustee and TASB Board member, and I can assure you that as a group, school board trustees are some of the most thoughtful, giving, and decent folks you'll ever meet.

With very rare exception, I fully trust that each of you truly has the best interests of your students and district at heart as you carry out your duties. I continue to hear about so

As we face these challenges head on, I want to encourage all of you to turn to each other and TASB for assistance. There are more than 7,000 school board members in Texas, and each one has a unique background and story to tell.

many inspirational stories of the commitment and sacrifice of school board members.

Unfortunately, in every group there are a few who get off track and exercise poor judgment. As we know far too well, the media often loves to report on negative stories of conflict and questionable behavior by public officials, and these stories only help to fuel the public's misguided perception that school board members might not be best suited to lead our education system. One negative story can diminish the impact of hundreds of positive stories that occur every day in every school district in our state.

As you hear of districts or board members who may have gotten a little off track, I would strongly encourage you to seek out those districts and board members who are having issues and reach out in an effort to help them get back on track. For example, almost 10 years ago, the presidents of the Bexar County (San Antonio) school districts formed the Bexar County School Board Presidents Coalition. The initial purpose was to get all the board presidents together to discuss how we could help and support each other in addressing the many challenges facing our respective districts. At the time, a small handful

of Bexar County districts were suffering from lack of teamwork and negative articles in the local newspaper and on television. Coalition members would travel around the county to various board meetings and assist in helping them get on track. The group also held numerous meetings with the local newspaper and were very influential in helping to put a positive spin on local school district news.

Students, parents, taxpayers, and legislators are all looking to us to provide a first-rate, well-balanced, and cost-effective educational opportunity to all Texas schoolchildren. We are all in this quest together.

TASB Can Help

While similar challenges will always be with us, school board members can have a huge impact on their fellow boards and board members by reaching out and lending support and a helping hand, and I would encourage you to do this through the next year.

TASB is also a great source for training in teamwork and leadership. Bill Nemir and his Leadership Team Services staff are readily available to provide cost-effective counseling and training for local boards and board members. So whether you get training at the numerous conferences held throughout the year, such as the Winter Governance Conference in Corpus Christi in February or the Summer Leadership

Institutes in San Antonio and Fort Worth in June, or at localized training provided in your home district, TASB training is an invaluable resource and one that all board members should avail themselves of.

And remember, TASB's waiver of registration fees for key training conferences and events extends through the 2011–12 year. Hopefully, this will ease some of the financial burden districts across Texas are still facing.

Continue the Push

As school trustees, we all face very challenging and uncertain times. As a new year begins, I encourage you to set a goal of not only striving to be the best board member you can be for your local district, but also join forces with other board members and TASB to assist your fellow public school trustees.

In the end, board members need to stick together, not only on the local level, but all across our state. Students, parents, taxpayers, and legislators are all looking to us to provide a first-rate, well-balanced, and cost-effective educational opportunity to all Texas schoolchildren. We are all in this quest together.

So, after all the turkey is gone, the decorations have been put away, and the excitement of the new year has faded, I hope we can all stick to our goals, work together, and continue our push to creating a world-class educational system for all of our kids.

I hope everyone has a positive and productive 2012.

Gary W. Inmon, a Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD Board member, is 2011-12 president of TASB.



The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt



passion



Challenge Accepted

Though 2011 Proved Tough, Local Public Education Leaders of Texas Stepped Up

by Roger White

When the 82nd Texas Legislature decided in its 2011 session on a state budget that underfunded public schools by approximately \$4 billion and reduced state grant funding by approximately \$1.3 billion, an already challenging year for Texas public education became even more difficult.

Combined with tough economic times and a modern milieu in which support for public schools has been brought into question, the public education community did something quite remarkable this year. You rolled up your sleeves, got to work, and faced down these formidable foes to true progress—and you, the public schools of Texas, showed just how determined and dedicated you are to holding to your promise of delivering the best education possible to the most precious resource we have: the children and youth of this great state.

You will read in this, the *Texas Association of School Boards 2011 Annual Report*, stories of such determination—such as the unique partnership created in Navasota between the independent school district and the city administration designed to strengthen both entities to the betterment of the community; the powerful alliance of Richardson ISD and its support

group, which forged a tighter bond between the district and area real estate agents; and the inspiring teacher support initiatives of several Texas school districts, which give not only vital morale-boosting energy to the educators of those communities but also supply real, tangible goods, services, and financial incentives to keep desperately needed teachers on the job.

You will also read about our Association's efforts to ease the burden of these difficult days on our member districts, through such initiatives as fee waivers to many key TASB training and development programs throughout the year, the Risk Management Fund's rate freeze and monetary incentives, the BuyBoard's rebate program, and much more.

Your feedback as the year progressed showed that these money-saving moves made a big difference—and in many cases, paved the way for needed trustee or administrator training credit hours that otherwise wouldn't have been earned by local education leaders due to financial hardship.

In this edition, we've included excerpts from some of the "thank you" notes we received this year.

Through it all, a fundamental truth was reaffirmed:

We are all in this together. And just as you, the local education leadership teams of Texas, remain steadfast in your dedication to show the way to the future for our students,

we at TASB will stay just as determined to ensure that you have every available tool at your disposal to bestow the highest-quality education possible upon the children and youth of Texas.

"Thank you so much! What an awesome and generous contribution by TASB to public education during these times of financial crisis. Please convey my thanks to the TASB Board of Directors also. I continue to be grateful for the strong support that we receive from the TASB team. You are truly amazing."

—Darlene Pennington,
Secretary to Superintendent, Springtown ISD

"On behalf of the Judson ISD Board of Trustees, I would like to thank you and the TASB Board, who are making this possible for the member districts. We just voted on staying with TASB for this next year at our last meeting. With the budget constraints all districts are under, it is important that we look at all of the expenditures. It was decided by the board that the services provided by TASB were too important to get away from. TASB has really stepped up to the plate in helping the member districts in this time of budget constraints. I know how valuable the services are that you provide. Again, thank you."

—Gilbert Flores, President,
Judson ISD Board of Trustees

The 2011 Year in Review: What a Ride

From Capitol Rallies to Convention in Austin, 2011 Was Filled with Challenges, Successes

Make Education a Priority

It began in 2010 in the 4,600-student district of Aledo ISD, in the small community just 24 miles west of Fort Worth. Like other school boards across the state, the Aledo ISD Board was facing difficult budgetary issues and had to begin making decisions about reducing teacher salaries, eliminating teaching positions, and cutting local enrichment programs.

“It became apparent our issues were also the issues found on school board agendas across Texas. The numbers were different, timelines longer or shorter, dollars greater or less, but the common denominator with the issues was the same—with all its complexity, the current system of public school finance was broken and needed addressing,” said Bobby J. Rigues, Aledo ISD Board vice-president.

A local public community awareness campaign called Make Education a Priority, begun by Rigues, originally created with the goal of gathering 4,555 signed letters addressed to members of the Public Education and School Finance committees, eventually fueled ideas for a broader approach. Rigues and fellow board members considered ways that the momentum realized in Aledo could spread statewide.

The district crafted a sample resolution that other districts could adopt and encouraged other districts to do so—and a grassroots initiative soon grew into a statewide awareness campaign.

The campaign made its way to the halls of the Legislature, with support from TASB and other public education associations and entities, and lawmakers became well aware of the many voices behind Make Education a Priority.

Rigues eventually won the Texas School Public Relations Association’s 2011 Key Communicator Award for his inspiring effort.

A STAAR Is Born

The new testing system launched by the state in the 2011–12 school year, called the STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) program, was on everyone’s radar this year. STAAR encompasses all state tests in every grade and subject, and assessments are designed to be more rigorous with content and skills tested at greater depth and higher levels of complexity. Tests will be aligned with expected academic progress, graduation requirements, and college readiness standards.

The Texas Legislature expressed a goal that by 2020, Texas students will place



Local public education leaders make their feelings known at a Make Education a Priority (MEAP) Rally at the State Capitol March 30. The MEAP campaign, begun in Aledo ISD, became a statewide initiative to support public education.

among the top 10 states in terms of college readiness, without significant achievement gaps among racial and economic subgroups—and the STAAR program is considered a key assessment component in that goal.

TASB Superintendent Secretary Conference

Despite the winter weather, superintendent secretaries and administrative support personnel from across the state attended the TASB Superintendent Secretary Training Conference at TASB Headquarters in Austin February 10–11. Staff from TASB, local

school districts, and TSPRA conducted sessions on board meeting management, record-keeping, school district public relations and customer service, and more. TASB initiated the specially designed training in 2006.

TASB Winter Governance & Legal Seminar

The 14th Annual Winter Governance & Legal Seminar February 24–26 in Corpus Christi offered focused, affordable training for both new and experienced board members and administrators. With more than 500 attendees from across the state, the seminar once



Frances Allen from Lancaster ISD participates in the TASB Superintendent Secretary Conference February 10. The two-day conference designed specifically for administrative support personnel was initiated in 2006.

again delivered timely training in an intimate, informal setting.

Specific sessions that addressed common issues faced by small and rural school districts were featured, along with practical training for new and experienced trustees on key issues facing local districts, including open meetings, reducing personnel costs, facilities planning, board member ethics, school finance, social networking, fine arts education, and more. The program also included “Master Mind” sessions and TASB ISD course offerings.

truthaboutschoools.org

A wealth of accurate information on public schools and the education community were at your fingertips this year at **truthaboutschoools.org**. The Web site, designed by TASB to collect reliable information about school districts in Texas, was introduced at the TASA/ TASB Legislative Conference and immediately attracted a

broad audience.

Main topics addressed on the site initially were related to school funding because the topic was a major focus of the legislative session, but through the course of the year, myriad subjects have been addressed on the site, including superintendents’ salaries, Texas students’ NAEP scores, the importance and role of public schools, 22-to-1 class size discussions, the STAAR assessment program, and much more.

TASB Community Involvement

Throughout 2011, TASB used Association events as springboards for several community-enhancing initiatives, such as peanut butter and jelly food drives for local food banks, a book drive to stock local homeless shelters, participation in a hotel-sponsored charitable program, and more.

“We thought we needed to do something that brought

a sense of community to the places where we hold our events. And we felt that our attendees, being as committed to their communities as they are, would really get into the idea of giving on a broader level, especially if we focused on children,” explained Kathy Dundee, assistant director of Meetings and Event Planning for TASB’s Leadership Team Services.

Food bank drives, advertised as “Food Fights,” started in 2009 at the Winter Governance & Legal Seminar and continued through Summer Leadership Institutes and beyond. Attendees were asked to bring jars of peanut butter and jelly to help supply local area food banks, and several large barrels quickly filled in the initial drives. Kate Allen, TASB director of Corporate Sponsor-

ships, was thrilled to see board members spring into action. “Kemp ISD was so into the peanut butter and jelly drive the first year, their entire office staff got into it,” Allen said. “Board member Keith Foisey showed up with a big suitcase full of PB and J!”

This year, a new effort was launched to provide reading materials for children living in homeless shelters. The Leaders in Literacy campaign, kicked off at Winter Governance, was developed in response to the overwhelming support board members provided to the “Food Fights.”

As with the food drive, TASB members have been eager to pitch in with book donations. Dundee recalled board member Ramon Meza of San Felipe Del Rio CISD bringing several bags piled with books



Corpus Christi ISD Trustee Lucy Rubio shows off her Dr. Seuss book donation at the TASB Summer Leadership Institute June 6 in San Antonio. TASB members responded enthusiastically to this year’s donation drives.

to Winter Governance.

Another way TASB members can aid charitable projects is to simply make a hotel reservation at the annual Winter Governance & Legal Seminar in Corpus Christi. TASB was originally approached by Hotels for Hope (H4H), a social enterprise that assists clients with hotel site selection, contract negotiation, and integrated technology to reduce time and costs. Each of the hotels contracted through H4H is asked to include a \$1 charitable contribution, which H4H then matches. Each room night thus generates \$2 for the H4H fund. "So in an indirect way, our members are giving by just staying in the hotel," said Dundee.

The charity selected for the 2011 WGLS was the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (T*A*P*S), which has provided support for the Families of America's Fallen Military Heroes since 1994. The funds helped support Good Grief Camps for children of men and women who died while serving in the Armed Forces.

Risk Management Fund Loss-Prevention Grants

Grants totaling \$550,000 were awarded in 2011 to 211 public school districts and education entities by the TASB Risk Management Fund. Grant monies help implement loss-prevention and safety initiatives to raise awareness of safety issues and reduce the potential for property losses and on-the-job injuries.

"This year more than ever, the need to prevent losses and protect employees is critical because the Fund's members face such tough financial decisions," said Clem Zabalza, director of TASB Loss Prevention Services.

"This partnership has been successful in protecting valuable resources through education and providing funding for identified exposures. The Fund's continuing commitment to the membership is evident by not standing down and by giving back when the need is even greater."

The 2011 grants were awarded to 197 school districts, three regional education service centers, four county appraisal districts, four community colleges, and three shared service arrangements. Workers' Compensation grants focused on fall prevention, personal lifting devices, and personal protective equipment. Facilities security initiatives, driver improvement, and vehicle safety were the primary areas receiving grants under the Property/Liability Program.

The Fund Members' Conference

More than 400 people traveled to Austin April 17–19 for the 2011 TASB Risk Management Fund Members' Conference, which featured 21 roundtable discussions, 20 breakout sessions on pressing issues in risk management, and myriad networking opportunities.

Keynote speaker Nancy Friedman, president and founder of Telephone Doctor, a company that specializes in helping organizations improve communications, delivered a powerful message on how to stay afloat in a floundering economy.

Innovation Awards were presented to Aquilla, Bandera, Covington, Deer Park, Hallettsville, Longview, Lubbock, Mesquite, Pleasant Grove, and Willis ISDs. Representatives of each district received a plaque



San Marcos CISD representatives (starting second from left) Flo Velasquez, Robert Gutierrez, and Alicia Guenther display their loss-prevention grant received from TASB Risk Management Fund Board member Ted Beard of Longview ISD (at far left) and TASB Risk Management Fund Chair Kevin Carbo of Mesquite ISD (at far right) during the Risk Management Fund Members' Conference in Austin April 17–19.

and a \$1,000 check to apply to their risk management programs.

A Stressful Session Comes to a Close

All in all, the 82nd Texas Legislative Session was extremely difficult for public education, with lawmakers deciding on a state budget that underfunded public schools by approximately \$4 billion and reduced state grant funding by approximately \$1.3 billion.

However, it became evident that the work of school leaders and proponents of public education was successful in preventing the initially proposed \$10 billion reduction to education spending and other harmful legislation, including legislation that would have established a statewide voucher program.

When the smoke cleared from the 82nd session, budget figures revealed that approximately 42.4 percent of state general revenue spending will be dedicated to public educa-

tion over the next biennium. While that is an increase of about 10 percent, it is still not enough to maintain current service levels given the growing student population—a student population that has an increasing share of students who need more resources to educate—which prompted action by several public education groups to file suit against the state, claiming that the system of funding public schools in Texas is unconstitutional.

Summer in the Cities: SLIs North and South

Despite Texas districts riding a financial roller coaster this year, more than 2,800 school district leaders from across the state gathered for TASB's Summer Leadership Institutes, held June 9–11 in San Antonio and June 16–18 in Fort Worth. New and veteran local education leaders heard legislative updates on school funding, received



Participants in TASB's Summer Leadership Institute in San Antonio ride the escalator to training sessions geared for the local public education leadership teams of Texas. Sessions included legislative updates, in-depth discussions, community involvement panels, and more.

in-depth training on critical issues facing local districts, and shared ideas for effective board governance and cost-efficient programs.

General Session speaker Jim Brazell, a technology forecaster and strategist on innovation and transformation, addressed how technology, combined with demographic and globalization trends, dictates the need for new directions and methods for schools.

Wes Moore, an army combat veteran, business leader, author, and special assistant at the White House, shared his personal story on the consequences of responsibility at his General Session.

Among other highlights were a book study discussion of *Leading the Way: American Education in the Age of Globalization* that included a skype® question-and-answer session with the author Yong Zhao, as well as the "Master Mind" series featuring interactive group dialogue with a panel of experts. These sessions

focused on career and technology education, school facilities, communicating with the community, and the future of fine arts.

A popular feature was a facilitated session that followed the viewing of the documentary film *2 Million Minutes*. The film explores the time it takes a student to get through a four-year high school and transform from a teenager to an adult. In addition, attendees participated in another successful "Leaders in Literacy" book drive for children living in homeless shelters in the Fort Worth area.

Mesquite ISD Wins CUBE Award

Mesquite ISD was named as the 2011 winner of the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) announced recently. "Mesquite Independent School District is truly a model for

"I want to sincerely thank TASB for being aware of the financial strain the necessary professional development for school boards and administrators is to a limited public school budget. Your willingness to waive the registration fee will allow us to attend and continue the ongoing learning necessary to make decisions for our district. Please convey my appreciation to the TASB Board."

—Diane Stegall,
Superintendent,
Chisum ISD

"Please pass our thanks on to the TASB Board. I know some school board members have refrained from going to the high-quality events TASB offers simply because they want to save the district money. This should help greatly."

—Bill Tarleton,
Hico ISD

"The announcement of your plan to use RM Fund Members' equity to reduce costs for districts in your WC, Property and Liability programs was like a breath of cool, fresh air on a hot Texas day."

—Dovie Brown,
Director of Finance,
Needville ISD

"I just wanted to send a great big 'thank you' to TASB for the [Superintendent Secretary Training Conference]. As always, they provided great presentations, and I always enjoy it. Although the registration fee was waived, the TASB staff did not cut any corners in providing good information, as well as lunch and snack items. Thank you to all the TASB staff!"

—Sandra J. Parker,
Executive Assistant to
Superintendent/Board,
Rains ISD

success,” said Anne L. Bryant, NSBA’s executive director. “The district, through the board’s leadership, has made major gains in student achievement and significantly closed achievement gaps while effectively increasing community support around the schools.”

Mesquite ISD Superintendent Linda Henrie accepted the award on behalf of all of those across the country who are dedicated to public education. “This honor affirms that public education works and works well,” she said.

The award is Mesquite ISD’s second major honor this year; the district received the 2011 Texas Award for Performance Excellence from the Quality Texas Foundation. This is also the third time a Texas school district has received the CUBE award, which has first awarded in 2004.

“We are proud that for a third time since 2004, a Texas school district has received this prestigious honor,” said TASB

Executive Director James B. Crow. “Mesquite, Brownsville, and Houston independent school districts are all great examples of urban education excellence for Texas and the nation.”

TASA/TASB 2011 Convention

More than 7,000 public school trustees, superintendents, and other education leaders gathered September 30–October 2 at the TASA/TASB Convention in the Austin Convention Center to focus on ways to meet the growing challenges facing local school districts.

Participants had access to extensive training opportunities and distinguished speakers and received the latest information on public education issues, trends, and innovative programs. The annual Convention is the largest training event of its kind for Texas public school trustees and chief administrators.



Staff members of Walsh, Anderson, Brown, Gallegos, and Green, P.C., take time out for a group photo at the 2011 TASA/TASB Convention in Austin. TASB announced in 2011 that the legal firm will partner with the Association as the first member of the TASB Partners program.

New TASB President Gary W. Inmon of Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD succeeded Immediate Past President Sylvester Vasquez Jr. of Southwest ISD, a new slate of TASB officers was sworn in, and the Association’s 2010–12 Advocacy Agenda was updated during the TASB Delegate Assembly.

Major award winners at Convention this year were Northside ISD Superintendent John Folks, named Superintendent of the Year; the Lubbock ISD Board, named the 2011 Outstanding School Board Award winner; and Aledo ISD Board Vice-President Bobby Rigues, named the 2011 Key Communicator Award winner by the Texas School Public Relations Association for his significant contributions to the public understanding of public schools in Texas through effective communications.

The Leadership TASB Class of 2011 met at Convention this year, finishing up the year of training with group

presentations on nontraditional approaches to today’s education challenges. The 2011 Class held five sessions in locations across the state throughout the 2010–11 year, culminating in the group presentations at Convention. Twenty-six members graduated this year, with all graduates earning Master Trustee status (see class member photos on page 13).

TASB Partners Program

TASB announced late in 2011 that Walsh, Anderson, Brown, Gallegos and Green, P.C., has joined the Association as its initial partner in the newly created TASB Partners program. The program was established earlier this year to create partnerships that result in collaborative projects to support public education in Texas. See related story on page 26.

“The TASB Partners initiative provides a way for members of the business community to engage with us in projects to benefit public



Students from Austin ISD’s Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders don hard hats for their participation in the CANstruction food drive at the 2011 TASA/TASB Convention in Austin.

2011 Leadership TASB Class

1. **Brenda Bennett**
Goodrich ISD
2. **Chuck Campbell Jr.**
Princeton ISD
3. **Jim Collinsworth**
Kemp ISD
4. **Bob Covey**
Cypress-Fairbanks ISD
5. **Karen Davidson**
Sundown ISD



6. **Holley Dean**
Bowie ISD
7. **Homero Garcia**
South Texas ISD
8. **Sonya Grass**
Cedar Hill ISD
9. **Byron Gregg**
Kaufman ISD
10. **Vernell Gregg**
Lewisville ISD



11. **Wayne Harper**
Judson ISD
12. **Jason Hudson**
Cumby ISD
13. **Craig Hulcy**
La Porte ISD
14. **Donald Wayne Lemon**
Navasota ISD
15. **Kelli Levey**
Bryan ISD



16. **Joan Manning**
Copperas Cove ISD
17. **Dan Mossakowski**
Frisco ISD
18. **Kim Parmer**
Waller ISD
19. **Caroline Pekarek**
Dripping Springs ISD
20. **Oswaldo Romero**
Robstown ISD



21. **Wayne Skubiata**
McDade ISD
22. **Donna Smith**
Ector County ISD
23. **Dick Stevens**
McKinney ISD
24. **Rebekah Tackett**
Bluff Dale ISD
25. **Margie Villalpando**
San Marcos CISD



26. **Kate Whitfield**
Sherman ISD



schools, students, and the leadership of Texas school districts,” said Jim Crow, TASB executive director.

“Walsh Anderson is a highly respected member of the legal community and has been a strong advocate for public education for many years. We are delighted that they have responded to our call for active partners at a time when Texas schools are working hard to preserve and extend recent gains in the midst of financial difficulty,” Crow said.

Policy On Line® Redesign

Policy Service initiated a redesign of Policy On Line®, the subscription-based Web tool for delivering district policy to board members,

school administrators, teachers, and parents. The new site is expected to launch in early 2012.

The design is being updated to include more robust search options and a layout that allows users to open multiple policies at once. The newly designed interface will facilitate more efficient navigation and ease of viewing. More than 90 percent of Texas school districts and education service centers use Policy On Line.

Lone Star Investment Pool's 20th Anniversary

In September, the Lone Star Investment Pool celebrated 20 years of service to Texas school districts. The Lone Star Investment Pool

was created to provide Texas public school districts with a safe, simple, and cost-effective way to invest the public funds they are entrusted with. The four school districts that came together back in 1991 to create the Pool were Houston ISD, Humble ISD, Lewisville ISD, and San Antonio ISD.

Now serving more than 600 Texas local governments, the Pool offers three diverse fund choices and averages more than \$7 billion in annual assets.

The Lone Star Investment Pool is administered by First Public®, a TASB subsidiary, and is governed by an 11-member board of trustees composed of elected officials or employees of Pool participants. This member gover-

nance was designed to ensure that the policies and procedures governing Lone Star were set by representatives of the entities actually investing in Lone Star.

“From day one, it was important that the Pool be governed solely by the participants. Self-governance played an instrumental role in creating Lone Star’s conservative investment style and helps ensure it is maintained,” said Chris Szaniszlo, First Public’s managing director. “We appreciate the support received over the past 20 years and look forward to continuing to serve the investment needs of public school districts in the years to come.”

Celebrating 2012 with our 25th anniversary and a new name



SCHWARTZ & EICHELBAUM
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A New Beginning

TASB Risk Management Fund Works With Lockney ISD to Rebuild School

by Allison Kaminsky

For the first time in two and a half years, 160 Lockney ISD students were allowed to pass through the doors of their high school to attend classes in 2011. But it was not the 80-year-old building the community had always cherished; instead, it was a brand new facility paid for by the TASB Risk Management Fund.

It all started January 11, 2009. Two students set a fire that ravaged the high school, ultimately destroying the main building and damaging the middle school. Receiving notification of the fire, a TASB Risk Management Property and Liability claims adjuster was on site the next day to assess the damages. The building was determined to be a total loss.

Despite the total destruction of their high school, displaced students began their spring semester on time two days later in two local area churches: First United Methodist and First Baptist. Classes remained there for six weeks while temporary trailers were brought in and the 18,000 square-foot central building was demolished.

"TASB came to our rescue. They were a great team to work with. It was a great experience, and we were able to get back to the business we're here for," said Lockney ISD Superintendent Phil Cotham.

Classes resumed on campus in the portables in early March. On the one-year anniversary of the fire, science lab classes were moved into permanent classrooms. Though there was still a lot of ground to cover, not a single day of class was lost to the disaster.

"Schools are the heart and soul of a community. When kids are not able to go to school, parents are not able to go to work," said Todd Holt, division director for Property and Liability Claims Administration for TASB Risk Management Services. "This means police, teachers, bakers, electricians, farmers, computer programmers, etc., are not able to complete their jobs. This can literally shut down a community. Working hand in hand with the Lockney ISD administration and school board, TASB was able to minimize the impact upon this community."

Not Adversaries, but Partners

A settlement of just over \$5 million was agreed upon for repairs, reconstruction, and supplies. Tables, desks, and cabinets were saved, but the ceiling, interior walls, flooring, and electrical components had to be replaced, along with chemicals and microscopes from the science labs. All but 500 books were also saved, but

the remaining 11,000 needed to be "scrubbed" to be restored from smoke damage. The funds also went toward making improvements in the facility, such as including fire alarms, security cameras, and new student lockers. A new computer lab and a staged lecture hall that seats 50 were also added to the building.

"[The TASB Risk Management Fund] was not adversarial. They did not come in as an enemy," said Lockney ISD Board President John Quebe. "They came in as a partner. Everything that we lost in the fire had a value, and those values had to be established. And those values were negotiated. That's a very big job, and they worked with us every step of the way. We came to an agreement, and it was an agreement that we all benefited from—and that's what partnership is. And I appreciate TASB very much for that."

Here's to Another 80 Years

On the evening of August 9, 2011, the residents of Lockney gathered in the Longhorn High School Gymnasium to mark the end of this trying time for the community. Cotham and Quebe, along with the rest of the Lockney ISD Board, led a dedication ceremony for the new high school. The ceremony ended with an

open house, during which the community was invited to tour the Lockney Longhorns' new home for the first time.

"The people of Lockney are very grateful to have their school back," said Elizabeth York, marketing consultant for TASB Risk Management Services. "We are very proud to be in partnership with Lockney, and we're very happy that we could help rebuild this building."

The new building blends with the existing structures that were saved from the fire, the original entrance serving as a memorial in the new facility's courtyard. Also preserved were the photos of all graduating Lockney seniors since 1926. These photos now hang near the entrance of the new building, encased in glass for all to see.

"The old school building served the district for 80 years. We hope the new structure serves this community for the next 80-plus years," said Holt.

Allison Kaminsky is communications coordinator for TASB Risk Management Services.

commitment



One Plus One Equals Infinity

School District-City Partnership Produces Powerful Synergy in Navasota

by Roger White

Two years ago, Navasota ISD began holding quarterly meetings with the Navasota City Council in an effort to keep both entities informed about subjects of mutual interest and to promote working toward similar goals. The move has since grown into a powerful partnership.

“Neither of us can successfully exist without the other,” said Marilyn Bettes, a Navasota ISD trustee. “Although our district encompasses areas outside Navasota proper, four of our five campuses are located within the city, and many of our students live in town. We hold joint receptions for local businesses and Realtors from the area to educate them about how we must work together and what we have to offer. The receptions provide excellent opportunities for the school district to spread the word about the positives in our schools and also to highlight our students’ accomplishments.”

Both entities post the meetings as required by the Open Meetings Act. Meeting locations are rotated between the city and the school district. The groups are comfortable with each other, and discussions are open and frank. “Most of the meetings last past the designated time,” Bettes said. “The topics for discussion are to have better communication between



Photo courtesy of Navasota ISD

Denise Morgan, Navasota ISD’s executive director of Human Resources and Student Services (center), chats with area real estate agents at a reception hosted by Navasota ISD and the City of Navasota. More than 80 people attended two such receptions held recently to help the business community become better acquainted with the school district.

the two entities and to promote the community.”

Navasota ISD Superintendent Rory Gesch noted that the school district-city bond is something he’s rarely seen in all his years working in education.

“This type of partnership between a city and school district is something that is unique in my experience in various school districts,” Gesch said. “Whether it is working together to promote economic development, collaborate on public events, or solving

problems related to our city’s infrastructure, there are so many areas of concern that are not mutually exclusive so that working together promotes efficiency for both entities.”

Mutual Interests

Navasota Mayor Bert Miller noted that advance knowledge of school district events, programs, or ideas in the works gives the city opportunities to provide input and encourages cooperation to the advantage of both groups.

“The city has great interest in the school district’s success with regard to economic development and quality of life,” Miller said. “Also, there were times that incorrect information was being discussed around town, and council and trustee members saw the need to have as many folks as possible be knowledgeable about current events of both entities so that accurate information would be dispersed. We also wanted city council and school trustees to get to know each other and

learn more about their organizations to improve community support of our efforts.”

Initially the meetings were broad-based, including various area councils, ISDs, and other city and county officials, Bettes explained. “However, after several meetings, it became apparent to Navasota ISD and the Navasota City officials that we had one major goal in common—to promote the City of Navasota and Navasota ISD. I believe that both the city and the ISD see major advantages for this alliance to continue.”

Products of the Partnership

The meetings have produced jointly hosted breakfasts for real estate agents who advertise and market properties in the area and a reception for real estate agents and others who are involved with the community in some capacity.

“The main purpose is to share the positive things that are happening within the district and the community,” Bettes said. “As the city manager says, ‘The city needs the schools to market the town, and the schools need the city to market the schools.’”

Other fruits the partnership has produced for Navasota ISD include the school district using a consultant suggested by the city to identify community needs, a new nutritional program, and improved communication between the entities.

On the flip side, ownership of school district tennis court property was transferred to the city so that the city could construct a skateboard park, and in the agreement the city provides time for the school to hold physical education classes at the city park.

“The school district applied and received grant funding for a summer outdoor program for youth, and the city contracted with the district to operate the program,” said Navasota City Manager Brad Stafford. “The city previously had grant funding for the program, but this year it ran out. Without the school stepping up, we would have likely been unable to have the program, which had large participation in years past.”

Other initiatives in which both entities have benefited from the power of this synergy include technology projects and even street repair.

“The city was in need of assistance with technology issues, and the district had a department that handles these issues,” Stafford said. “This year, the city contracted with the district’s tech department for assistance with the city’s computer and information systems. This provides some revenue for NISD while providing tech assistance to the city of Navasota at a considerably reduced cost.”

Additionally, a city paving project was initiated that included repaving a student dropoff driveway at the intermediate campus, something the campus desperately needed.

“This solved a major problem and saved NISD money because we built it in to a larger street project that the city does each year,” said Stafford.

More than Expected

“As issues develop for the city and the district, we tackle them together,” Bettes added. “We also make sure the city knows when good things are happening within the ISD. We have developed a partnership with the city to host such events as realtor mixers to dis-

“Just a brief note to tell you that the districts of our state appreciate the work of TASB and its many associates. This suspension of registration fees for upcoming events in the next school year is certainly appreciated, as well. By waiving the fees, we can reduce some costs that will enable us to place those dollars in other areas.”

—Steve Johnson,
Superintendent, Huntsville ISD

cuss ongoing activities of both the city and the district.”

Mayor Miller noted that on the agenda for each meeting, all of which are open to the public, is an update from each organization about ongoing projects, discussion about needs, and future projects that each is working on. “The overall theme is ‘What can we do together to make our community better?’”

Miller said the partnership has moved beyond what both groups first hoped for when they began the quarterly meetings.

“As both entities depend on each other and need each other, we wanted to bring one united voice to the community, support from each other on projects that benefit the community, gain more confidence from citizens, and help each other with common facilities, grant writing, and program development. In fact, the partnership has surpassed what we imagined. Staff from both entities have a great relationship. Overall promotion of the growth of Navasota has become the theme. Partnering is something that the city has always done, and many things could not have been done without this particular partnership. We hope that continuing working with NISD will bring

more residents to Navasota, therefore adding to each organization’s tax base.”

Miller noted that as a mayor he is invited to sit in on many events and participate in myriad functions—but few have produced the tangible results as the city-school district effort.

“In my position, there are many, many meetings I attend or am invited to. Unfortunately, a very few bear real fruit. This one that we hold regularly with the school is one that brings real results you can see. As you can tell, this partnership has been very successful and a good thing for our community as a whole.”

Gesch agreed. “Having a close relationship with the City of Navasota is more than just our two entities meeting formally each quarter,” the superintendent said. “It’s about a group of people who care about Navasota and its people getting to know one another on a level that allows us to develop a stronger sense of community in our efforts to serve the public. We have different specific missions, but those missions converge in one common interest to see Navasota thrive and its citizens succeed.”

Roger White is managing editor of Texas Lone Star.

TASB Statement of Activities for the Year Ending August 31, 2011

Revenue	Percent of Total	Expenses	Percent of Total
TASB Membership Dues	\$3,562,941..... 7%	Employee Compensation	
Risk Management Services	19,894,439..... 41	and Benefits	\$33,995,983..... 71%
First Public.....	2,011,853..... 4	Purchased and	
Business Services	8,809,754..... 18	Contract Services.....	5,380,469..... 11
Governance Services.....	8,917,622..... 18	Supplies and Materials.....	1,218,798..... 3
District Services.....	673,462..... 1	Other Operating Expenses.....	4,474,234..... 9
Communications.....	306,059..... 1	Depreciation and Amortization.....	2,681,266..... 6
Planning and Human Resources.....	572,763..... 1	Total Expenses	47,750,750..... 100%
Royalty and Program		Change in Unrestricted	
Investment Revenue.....	3,590,659..... 8	Net Assets from Operations	1,104,427
Other Revenue	515,625..... 1	Non-Operating Activities:	
Total Revenue.....	48,855,177..... 100%	Net Investment Income	2,259,548
		Change in Unrestricted Net Assets.....	\$3,363,975

In keeping with the Board-established net assets policy, TASB has expendable net assets of 47.9 percent of annual operational expenditures as of August 31, 2011.

These figures are subject to Board approval.

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From Cynics to Supporters

Richardson's RSRS Group Turns District Detractors into Defenders

by Roger White

Like many school districts undergoing demographic changes and population shifts, Richardson ISD experienced an influx of immigrant families in the 1990s, to the point where the district had more than 100 native languages spoken by mid-decade. A growing number of students were limited English proficient, and many lived below the poverty line, presenting challenges to a district that had been consistently ranked among the top 25 districts nationally in previous decades.

"The homeowner neighborhoods of the district were sending fewer kids to the schools, as families whose kids had already gone through school chose to remain in their homes," recalled Anne Foster, a Realtor and former president of the Richardson ISD Board. "Parts of the district with older, declining apartment complexes were literally running over with kids. These factors were causing an unbalanced use of space. Some schools, those in areas with no apartment complexes, were half empty. Schools in other parts of the district were overcrowded. Classes were taking place on auditorium stages, and cafeterias had to start lunch at 10:30 a.m. in order to get everyone through the lunch cycle. The district



Photos courtesy of Richardson ISD

Sandra Breedlove, president of Realtors Supporting Richardson Schools (RSRS), and Henry Hall, principal of Richardson ISD's West Junior High School, try their hand at manning the cameras during an RSRS tour of the school's Visual Arts & Technology Magnet.

recognized that something had to change, and a series of community meetings was held to allow public comment on possible solutions."

One suggested solution was to change some attendance patterns, so that kids in crowded parts of the district would be attending school outside of their immediate neighborhood where there

was room for them. While this change would take them out of their neighborhood schools, the distances were not far and travel time not considered significant.

"This set the stage for lively discussions about neighborhood schools and about meeting the challenges of educating a more diverse and changing population of students," said

Foster, who at the time was not on the Richardson ISD Board. "It also brought out fears of change and fears of students who spoke different languages and who came from different cultures. Like many other families, mine had chosen to reside in Richardson ISD because of the excellent schools. At this time, my own children were in junior high

and high school, and one of my kids attended the most diverse junior high school in the district at that time, West Junior High School.”

Real Estate Community's Negative Comments

Foster’s older child had also attended West Junior High, and in both cases, Foster noted, her children were getting an excellent education, as well as the opportunity to be in a diverse school and learn about various cultures.

“I had just been elected PTA president at the school. My husband and I were pleased with our decision to send our kids there, but as a Realtor, I had become increasingly aware that negative things were being said about the school and about other schools and, indeed, about the whole district,” Foster said. “I began to experience more and more negative comments from Realtors and from community members, and I was very frustrated because they seemed to always come from people who had never even been in the school they were criticizing.”

Foster began calling fellow real estate professionals and asking that they listen to the other side of the story about the district’s changes and challenges. A watershed moment for Foster, however, came when she attended one of the community meetings.

“Much to my dismay, a woman went to the microphone with TV cameras present and said, ‘Everyone here knows that if you send your kids to West Junior High, they may get shot in the hallways.’ I was totally stunned. The fact that she would say this about this school based on inaccur-



Richardson PTA member Christie Weaver (at left) prepares to present the weather forecast while RSRS member Dennis Baum and West Junior High School counselor Joelle Goad do their part as news anchors during the RSRS tour of West Junior High.

rate perceptions was unconscionable. I determined at that moment to find my voice and use it. . . . I enjoyed going to the school many mornings to meet with the principal in my role as PTA president, and I would often walk around the groups of kids waiting for the first bell to ring. They were mostly bright-eyed and looking forward to a day of school. Many of their families had come to the U.S. legally in order for them to have a better chance. The remarks made at that meeting offended me on behalf of every child there.”

Eventually, the district’s space issues were worked out, and several attendance lines were redrawn. As the district continued to cope with the changing demographics, Foster continued the next

year as president of the PTA at Richardson High School. Then in 1997, she decided to run for the Richardson ISD Board. Foster won and was elected president of the board a year later.

“I hadn’t forgotten my fellow Realtors, some of whom were out there making remarks that were untrue and that were a disservice to their buyers, their sellers, and the schools,” Foster said. “I had continued to try and work with them individually concerning public schools, but once on the board, I knew that the district needed to reach out to them in a concrete and sustainable way. I initiated plans to form a Realtor group that would be connected to the school district as well as to public education generally.”

Richardson ISD Trustee Karen Ellis said the misinformation and rumors that Foster witnessed among the real estate professionals community was a phenomenon that district leaders were acutely aware of—but the school district needed someone in the community ranks, someone just like Foster, to bridge the information gap.

“Anne was a Realtor herself and knew firsthand how critically important it is for Realtors to have correct information about the schools in the neighborhoods where they were selling homes,” said Ellis, a TASB Board of Directors member. “Realtors are often the first line of communication about our schools for new families, and it is to their advantage as well as ours to

be familiar and informed with what's going on in our school district."

Emergence of RSRS

What started with a small group of invited real estate professionals, who discussed ways to reach out to the larger community of professionals in the area, became a proactive district support group called Realtors Supporting Richardson Schools (RSRS) in 1998.

"We began by having the district host a lunch or brunch in a school, and this pattern continued. Since Realtors love to be invited to eat, it was a good draw," Foster said. "We did this twice a year, and we rotated over time into various school levels and to the four attendance regions of the district."

The superintendent and school board members attended each event. In addition, administrators, teachers, and students from each host school were present and talked to real estate agents about the school and school events. "The conversation also began to include issues that the district was dealing with, financial and otherwise, as there was always—as there is now—a conversation to be had about school finance," said Foster. "School board members began to challenge Realtors to understand the larger issues facing public education, not only in RISD but across the state."

Each RSRS meeting also included an opportunity for real estate agents to ask questions—any questions—about rumors, academics, or anything concerning the school district. They were given information about the schools in printed form, were told how

to use the district's Web site, were informed that they could call the district any time with questions, and told that they could bring their clients by to visit schools.

A District Mainstay

As time went by, not only did the RSRS meetings turn naysayers into district supporters, real estate agents began gobbling up banners they could add to their "For Sale" signs—banners that read "I Support RISD."

"Since Richardson ISD neighborhoods considered their public school as the heart of the neighborhood and since public education had long been part of the DNA of the community, the whole thing began to work on a large scale," Foster recalled. "Sellers saw those banners and wanted one on their own houses' 'For Sale' signs. And they wanted information for prospective buyers on the district's public schools and their neighborhood school."

Over time, RSRS has grown, matured, and continued to function as a vital support group to the district and its schools. Foster noted that RSRS members actively attend school functions, as well as the Chamber of Commerce's annual new teachers' luncheon, where they participate in providing welcome gifts for the district's new teachers.

"When we have buyer clients looking at neighborhoods, most place the neighborhood schools as one of the most important features to consider," said Sandra Breedlove, an area Realtor and current president of RSRS. "By getting Realtors into the schools for tours and to meet the principal and

"I would often hear Realtors tell people they had to get into a particular school. I used the opportunity to say that apparently since people had bought or rented property in every part of the district, that they considered that the best school and place for them and their children. It's about what is right and best based on what they were looking for."

some PTA leaders, the Realtors can then do a better job in showing homes to their clients and having the knowledge and resources to answer questions about the local schools."

Ellis noted that the on-campus RSRS meetings provide an important opportunity to forge stronger ties.

"Each semester, RSRS holds a meeting at one of our schools. This gets the Realtors in the door, where they can see for themselves what's going on in the classroom, the technology available and how the kids use it, and really to see just how great our kids are," Ellis said. "The principal speaks, the superintendent welcomes everyone, board members attend, and relationships are built."

Foster said she considers the crowning glory of the RSRS effort the knowledge that real estate professionals talk to clients about what is offered in the public schools of Richardson ISD. "While we know that parents have the right and the

choice of where to educate their children, they deserve to do so with correct information about all of the choices available to them," Foster said. "Realtors became able to effectively and truthfully convey information about the choice of public schools. Not all parents choose public schools in Richardson, but a majority do. Today, the district has come a long way from the challenges of the mid-'90s."

Foster added that the experience gave her the opportunity to help real estate professionals see that there was not one "right" and "best" school in the district.

"I would often hear Realtors tell people they had to get into a particular school. I used the opportunity to say that apparently since people had bought or rented property in every part of the district, that they considered that the best school and place for them and their children. It's about what is right and best based on what they were looking for."

Ellis said the support group has emerged as a crucial pillar for the school district. "RSRS has become one of RISD's mainstays, to say the least," Ellis said.

As a testament to the support and faith the community has had in the district, Richardson ISD has been the highest-ranked large district academically in the state over the past several years, Foster said. "People wonder how RISD gets this level of student achievement, given its diversity. Its scores are what you mostly find in homogeneous districts where that level of achievement is much easier to attain. I believe that the successful public school districts



Gary W. Inmon
President

Gary W. Inmon has served on the Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City (SCUC-ISD) Board since 2000. A graduate of SCUC-ISD, he has served that board as president, vice-president, secretary, and assistant secretary. He joined the TASB Board in 2002. A Leadership TASB graduate and Master Trustee (Class of 2002), Inmon has been active in the TASB School Board Advocacy Network, Federal Relations Network, Delegate Assembly, candidate forums, and the Grassroots Advocacy process. Inmon is an attorney and operates his own law office in Schertz. He previously has served as a founding director of the SCUC-ISD Education Foundation and the local YMCA and currently serves as a board member of the Schertz Chamber of Commerce. Inmon holds a BBS with Honors from The University of Texas and a JD from Baylor University.



Viola M. Garcia
President-Elect

Viola M. Garcia joined the Aldine ISD Board in 1992 and has served as president, vice-president, secretary, and assistant secretary. She was elected to the TASB Board in 2004. Garcia served on the Lone Star Investment Pool Board from 2003 to 2009, has chaired the Bylaws and Resolutions committees, and was vice-chair of the Legislative Committee. A professor at the University of Houston-Downtown, Garcia is a graduate of Leadership TASB and a Master Trustee and is a fellow of the American Leadership Forum-Houston Education Class 2. She has participated in the Reform Governance in Action (RGA) program with the Aldine ISD Board and administrative team and is actively involved in the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Leadership Initiatives. She earned her undergraduate degree from Texas Woman's University and master's and doctorate degrees from the University of Houston.



Faye Beaulieu
Vice-President

Faye Beaulieu has been on the Hurst-Euleless-Bedford (HEB) ISD Board for the past 16 years and has served as president of that board twice. A Master Trustee and graduate of the Leadership TASB Class of 1997, she has participated in the TASB Delegate Assembly for many years and currently chairs the Legislative Committee. Beaulieu is a regional director for United Way of Tarrant County, past president of the North Texas Area Association of School Boards, finance chair for First United Methodist Church of Bedford, and member of the American Association of University Women. She also is president of the Northeast Leadership Forum and represents the school district on the HEB Economic Development Foundation Board. A school board liaison for the HEB ISD Council of PTAs for several years, she also has served as HEB ISD liaison to the North Central Texas Council of Governments. She attended Mississippi University for Women and the University of Mississippi and holds BA, MA, and PhD degrees in English.



Andra Self
Vice-President

Andra Self, a member of the Lufkin ISD Board since 1996, has served as president, vice-president, and secretary and is now the board's vice-president. Self is administrative director of Rehabilitation Services (Inpatient and Outpatient Center) for Memorial Health Systems of East Texas. She received a BS from the University of Houston, is a registered medical technologist through St. Joseph's School of Medical Technology, and holds master's degrees in education and business administration from Stephen F. Austin University. Self has served on the boards for Angelina County Health District, Hospice in the Pines, and Boys and Girls Club of East Texas and has been involved in Leadership Lufkin, United Way, Junior Achievement, Junior League of East Texas, the Mayor's Task Force on Rehabilitation, the Lufkin ISD Better School Task Force, Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., and Top Teen Leadership Development Programs. A 2005 graduate of Leadership TASB, she is a Master Trustee.



Bret Begert
Secretary-Treasurer

Bret Begert was elected to the Allison ISD Board in 1998 and has served as secretary and president of that board. In 2003, the district consolidated with Fort Elliott, and he has served as secretary since that merger. Begert is a partner in Begert Limousin Ranch, Inc., a family operation raising black, polled Limousin cattle, and also is a partner in B&H Disposal Systems, LLC. He is the longtime director of Junior Activities for the North American Limousin Foundation, overseeing all the junior shows and activities with the Limousin breed. Begert is a past president of the Texas Limousin Association. He also is a past president of the Panhandle Area Association of School Boards and remains an active member of that organization. He is lay leader of the United Methodist Church in Allison and is involved in many other church and civic organizations. Begert received a BS in kinesiology from West Texas A&M University.



Sylvester E. Vasquez Jr.
Immediate Past President

Sylvester E. Vasquez Jr. has served as a member of the Southwest ISD Board since 2000 and is currently the board's vice-president. Elected to the TASB Board in 2003, he has participated in Delegate Assembly and the School Board Advocacy Network and has served as chair of various TASB Board committees, including Membership Services, Bylaws, and Budget and Finance. In addition, he served as vice-chair of the TASB Planning and Development Committee. A construction estimator/supervisor for SANTEX Painting and Drywall, Vasquez has been a member of various volunteer organizations, including the Southwest High School band and athletic boosters, and has coached with the Youth Pony League and Catholic Youth Organization. He is a founding member of the Bexar County School Boards Coalition, past regional director for the Southern Region of the NSBA's National Hispanic Caucus, board member of Friends of Texas Public Schools, and parish member of St. Rose of Lima. He holds a BA from Texas Lutheran College.

A Meaningful Alliance

Walsh Anderson Announced as Initial Partner in Unique TASB Program

In late 2011, TASB announced that Walsh, Anderson, Brown, Gallegos and Green, P.C., had joined the Association as its initial partner in the newly created TASB Partners program, a corporate sponsorship program that offers businesses a way to join forces with TASB to benefit public education.



Designed to create long-term relationships (at least three years), the TASB Partners program establishes an alliance between the Association and the business partner that benefits everyone involved: the business gets visibility with community leaders throughout the state; TASB gets to offer added benefits for members; and Texas public education gets the benefit of a variety of projects undertaken by partners participating in the program.

“The TASB Partners program creates a framework for a whole range of possible working relationships with the business community,” said Karen Strong, TASB’s associate executive director of Communications and Public Relations.

“Since the program is centered on projects that benefit public education in Texas, we have the opportunity to partner with business leaders who support public schools and want to add their efforts and resources

to ensuring that the future of Texas schools is bright.”

Business Development Cornerstone

For businesses, participation in the program can act as a cornerstone of strategic business development by connecting them with key audiences, including local school board members, school district administrators and staff, parents, and community members. This access can be very beneficial to a business operating in Texas.

The program also provides visibility throughout the state, tying the business name to a worthwhile project that benefits our children and those who provide their education. In this age of corporate good citizenship, it is a valuable opportunity for businesses to be associated with innovative work on behalf of public education.

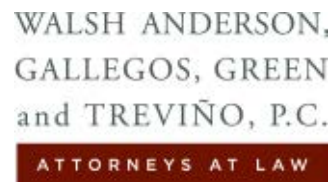
The project that is undertaken by the partner with the Association is the core element of the program and will be collaboratively planned so that it makes the best use of the partner’s resources.

“The TASB Partners initiative provides a way for members of the business community to engage with us in projects to benefit public schools, students, and the leadership of Texas school districts,” said James B. Crow, TASB executive director.

Giving Something Back

“Walsh Anderson is a highly respected member of the

legal community and has been a strong advocate for public education for many years. We are delighted that they have responded to our call for active partners at a time when Texas schools are working hard to preserve and extend recent academic gains in the midst of financial difficulty,” Crow said.



Oscar G. Treviño, managing shareholder of Walsh Anderson, agreed that these are challenging times for public schools and noted that the firm’s attorneys are enthusiastic about the prospects opened by the partnership.

“We are honored to be the first TASB partner. The firm sees this as an opportunity to give something back by getting directly involved in efforts to benefit public schools. The fact that every school district in the state is a member of the Association means our efforts will have real impact,” Treviño said.

Plethora of Projects

Understanding the important role of Texas public education, participants in the TASB Partners program can develop a strong relationship with the school community through their relationship with the Association. Projects that participants engage in may be as

varied as the partners, but there is a common theme: mapping the way for excellence in the local classrooms and communities of Texas.

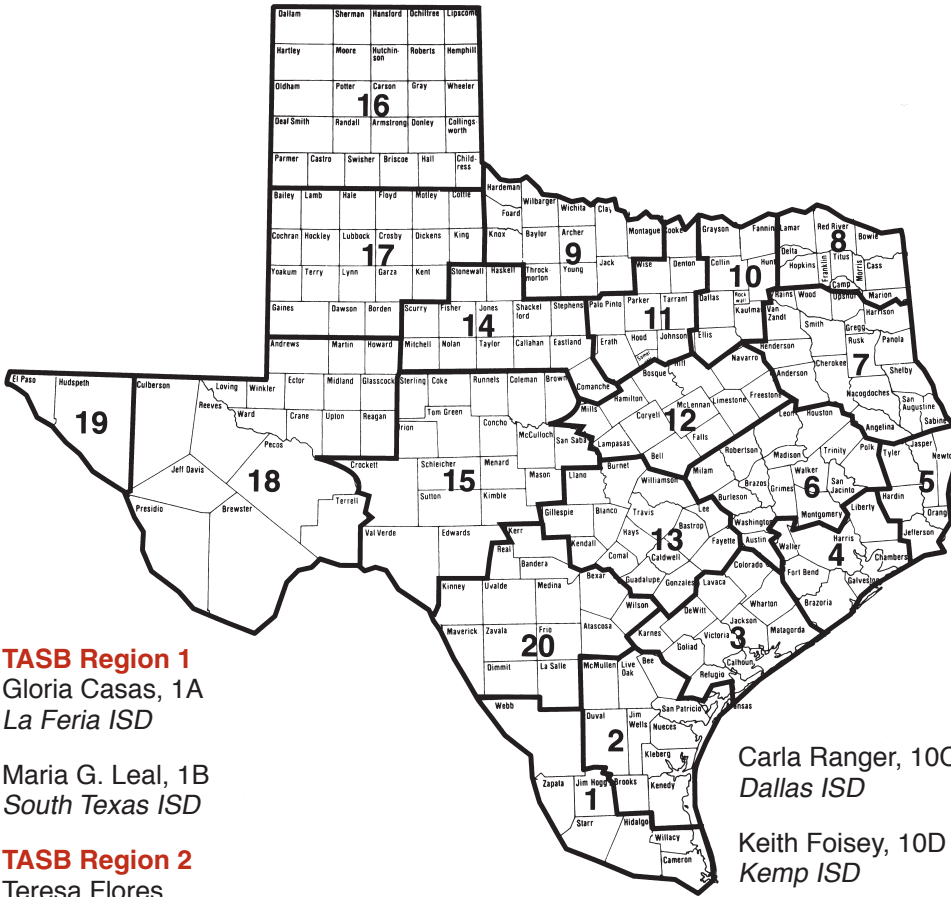
A partner project is typically a yearlong initiative custom-designed to meet the partner’s strategic objectives, support TASB’s mission to serve schools, and provide meaningful support to public education in the state. TASB works with partners to develop creative projects that connect them with the education community.

Projects may range from small, targeted efforts in communities to broad-based statewide initiatives. The Walsh Anderson project is currently being structured and should be announced in the next few months.

“The projects might be any number of things, from creating a database of some sort that all schools could use to establishing a program that offers new opportunities to students, from a new kind of training for school board members to special research or testing of educational principles,” TASB Partners Program Manager Kate Miller said. “Now we have a program that will allow us to explore what might be developed with partners to benefit our members.”

For More Info...

For more information, contact Miller at 800.580.8272 or 512.467.0222, extension 2242, or visit tasbpartners.org.



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TASB Region 2
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A Matter of Morale

Showing Appreciation to Teachers Is Top Priority for Texas Districts

by Diana Freeman

Imagine a college student preparing to graduate with a teaching degree; we'll call her Kim. The year is 2005, and Kim is ready to enter the work force, well-prepared with her university education, excited about the prospect of positively affecting the lives of her students and confident of her chosen career path.

That university education came with school loans, however, and Kim was warned by a number of people that she would "never get rich in education." A love for children and a passion for learning outweighed the warnings; at least she would have job security, she reasoned.

Fast forward to 2011. Now a teacher, Kim finds paperwork taking more of the time she would like to spend developing engaging activities for her students. She worries about how to prepare students for the new end-of-course exams. Beleguared by the myriad problems her students bring to school, Kim doubts that she is having any impact on her students at all. She sometimes wonders why she chose education as a profession, burdened by her school loans, a car needing repairs, and still living in an apartment because she hasn't been able to save for a house. She spends her free time working a second job.

And thanks to the most recent legislative session, Kim lost her stipend for her extracurricular duties and is now teaching eight



Photo courtesy of Lytle ISD

Lytle ISD Board members take the stage to show their support of the school district's teachers during Lytle ISD's "The Future's So Bright We Gotta Wear Shades" celebration, held in conjunction with the district's back-to-school events.

periods a day instead of seven. At least she wasn't one of the recent layoffs, she reasons.

The 2010-11 year was a tumultuous one for teachers. A new testing system, budget cuts, and increased class sizes would be enough to take on without hearing political rhetoric questioning the profession of teaching and reading that a new study declares teachers to be overpaid.

Linda Bridges, president of the Texas American Federation of Teachers, recently likened the new education accountability mandates to "giving the schools a higher bar to hurdle than dig-

ging a deep ditch in front of it." Many teachers are at a breaking point, and school board members are keenly aware of the plight of their teaching force.

A School Board Mantra

"We feel their pain," Lytle ISD Board President Nan Boyd affirmed in explaining her desire for the board to be kept apprised constantly of any program cuts. "We can't leave it up to the administration to make cuts while we ignore the impacts. We note every one. It's important to our board that the administration and teachers know that we have a clear understanding of how

the budget cuts are affecting their day-to-day environment and our students, and that we are actively working with the administration to review our finances to identify opportunities to bring back some of the programs we cut."

This is the mantra of many school boards. Most are staying informed at a level never seen before in order to be aware of the budgetary constraints brought about by the school funding shortfall. The recruitment and retention of high-quality, effective teachers has long been a concern of school boards, but this year has brought it to the forefront.

Making Morale a Priority

A number of boards are taking steps to combat flagging morale, sending a clear signal to teachers that the board stands behind them and appreciates the challenges they are facing.

In recent goal-setting sessions, both the Spur ISD and Karnes City ISD boards recognized the current environment and noted the significance of this by incorporating the issue of teacher morale into the districtwide comprehensive goals, pledging to do their part to make it better.

"In a time of increasing standards for student achievement and decreasing budgets, the Spur ISD Board is sending a message to teachers that they are important and appreciated by making it their goal to create an environment that promotes positive morale," said Spur ISD Superintendent Earl Jarrett.

Board members continuously search for ways to show their appreciation for the work teachers do. Spur ISD Board members resolved to support their staff, even going so far as creating a plan to look into possible teacher housing to help ease some of the time and financial burdens of teachers who commute.

In Karnes City ISD, board members are working to provide monetary rewards such as gift cards and Christmas bonuses. Claude ISD this year was able to provide Christmas bonuses in a way that had never been done in the district. Because mid-year pay increases raise legal issues, the superintendent conferred with legal counsel before proceeding.

"Our faculty worked together to cut costs, allowing us to put money in the bank—so we needed to share it," said Claude

ISD Superintendent Toby Tucker. Board President Shay Christian said that she's only too aware that the teachers could go to nearby districts that pay higher salaries. "It's not a big thing, but it's a way to say 'thanks for sticking it out with us,'" Christian said.

More than Money

While financial rewards are one aspect of the morale issue, board members are going beyond the simple act of rewarding teachers, taking the step of becoming actively involved with their staff. In Claude ISD, for example, board members show up early to cook and serve breakfast for their teachers at the beginning of the year.

"We actually have a lot of fun doing it!" said Tucker.

The Lytle ISD Board also decided to find a way to have fun with its employees. The Lytle ISD Board, this year's Region 20 Education Service Center Board of the Year honoree, went to the teachers during back-to-school convocation to share the board's vision of Lytle ISD and invite the teachers to join with them in making this come to fruition.

Choosing the theme "The Future's So Bright We Gotta Wear Shades," board members attended the event donning light-up sunglasses and going person to person through the faculty, handing each a pair of shades and inviting them to join in the celebration.

Claude ISD takes a similar approach trying to incorporate fun into the work with the district's Teacher Challenge Teams. Elementary Principal Reagan Oles creates randomly selected teams of her entire faculty, devises a series of challenges that range from professional tasks—every member having

grades turned in on time—to fun challenges that take place with the students cheering them on. At the end of the year, the team with the highest point total receives a bus ride to Amarillo for a day of pampering that includes spa time and lunch.

Recognizing the Profession

Both Lytle and Karnes City ISDs have recently worked with the community to launch local foundations. These organizations provide funding to help encourage creativity and innovation.

"Teachers are energized to go above and beyond in the classroom," noted Lytle ISD's Nan Boyd.

"The overwhelming support of the community keeps teachers at Lytle ISD motivated," added Lytle ISD Superintendent Michelle Smith. "When teachers feel supported by the community, great things happen in the classroom."

The Karnes City ISD Education Foundation encourages the community to support the foundation, pointing out that the quality of life and economic growth in Karnes City are directly related to the quality of education. This board also has expressed a desire to invest in things such as business cards and personalized stationery to validate the professionalism of the teachers.

In a time when teachers are feeling besieged professionally, boards can demonstrate their respect by acknowledging the teacher's professional capabilities. When board members adhere to appropriate communications, always utilizing the chain of command when dealing with community interaction, district employees are empowered to fulfill their role.

"Our board always uses the chain-of-command process, and it does wonders for morale," noted Oles. "When Mr. Tucker started the Two Notes initiative asking teachers to send at least two notes to parents, our board members joined in, sending notes to all faculty and staff."

All in This Together

"Creating a total climate of Utopia is impossible. However, as a team of eight we consider it essential to show our appreciation to our entire school family for the efforts that they make daily," said Tucker.

Karnes City ISD Superintendent Jeanette Winn noted, "Our teachers and staff are amazingly committed to the success and well-being of all students, never accepting 'good enough' as the standard. The board-superintendent team believes it is important to let them know how much we value them as members of the KCISD family and appreciate their dedication to our mission."

Karnes City ISD Board President Dennis Mika summed it up like this: "We want our students to feel loved and appreciated. There's no way that can happen without the teachers first feeling appreciated."

So what about Kim, our weary teacher? She now works in a district where the board has made teacher morale a priority. She is energized by the board's presentation to the faculty and feels their support. She is thrilled with her Christmas bonus. Like so many others, Kim already has plans for part of it: a new set of books for her classroom.

Diana Freeman is a TASB Leadership Team Services Board Development consultant.

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“Thanks to you and the TASB Board for this significant message and financial commitment you are making on behalf of Texas school districts and school board members. You have definitely ‘put your money where your mouth is’ with this action! I hope this will be seen by our State Legislature as an example of the extreme importance placed on educating our children by those involved in our schools.”

—Stanley New,
Board Member, Lufkin ISD

“Please express our heartfelt thanks. This makes it only clearer that TASB is here for our districts.”

—Linda Barnhart,
Anahuac ISD

“What a genuinely thoughtful and generous gesture. Thank you so much for being concerned about expense budgets that are already stretched. I know that other school board members will be equally thankful and amazed at your decision. Thank you for showing such strong leadership.”

—Becky Rentz,
Wylie (Abilene) ISD
Board Trustee

“On behalf of Region 15 Education Service Center, I want to thank you for waiving fees to your member districts for many of the conferences/trainings they attend and for services you provide. TASB has always taken a leadership role, and this is another example of its outstanding leadership. Your actions will help many districts across the state during this funding crisis. Thanks again.”

—Scot Goen,
Executive Director,
Education Service Center Region 15

Pay It Forward

Many 'Someones' Paid for Our Education— Let's Pay for Others, As Well

by Karen Strong

Q: What do you mean when you say, "Pay it forward"?

A: The answer to that is simple—and it's not.

I attended public schools in West Texas in the 1950s and '60s, and I am deeply grateful for those experiences. Someone else—many someone elses—paid the dollars to create that opportunity for me.

As a child, I was totally unaware that adults paid taxes. I never gave a thought to how the buildings came to exist or how the books were made available. I didn't know that others sacrificed so I could have the privilege of attending those public schools and receive the benefits of the education they provided.

I was focused on learning to read and, later, memorizing multiplication tables.

I was fortunate to grow up in a time in our nation's history when the adults were concerned about the "common good." I benefited tremendously because the adults in our small town agreed that providing school for *all* the children in the community was the right thing to do.

I am educated because they wanted it for me.

A Way of Repaying Kindness

Years later, as an adult, I realized the magnitude of the



Karen Strong

gift I had been given. My life is forever changed because a host of strangers determined to provide for me when I was too young to recognize the value of their provision.

I have opportunities today because of what they did long ago. I am still benefiting from their foresight and generosity. I am truly indebted to them, and as I wonder how I could ever express my appreciation, I realize this is one of those instances when you can't pay someone back.

This is one of those times when you can only pay it forward.

The idea of "paying it forward" is an old one. Some trace it to a play by Menander, performed in Athens in 317 B.C. Others who have writ-

ten about the concept include Benjamin Franklin and Ralph Waldo Emerson. A few years ago there was a novel and a movie named *Pay It Forward*.

But we all know what it means. It means that someone has done a good deed for me, and my correct response is to repay that kindness by doing a good deed for someone else.

In the case of public education, I received the favor as a child, and now as an adult, I have the chance to extend the favor to children today. It seems like a straightforward concept to me, and a responsibility I am glad to shoulder.

Time to Pass It On

Apparently, my reaction is not universal—and maybe not even frequent. I've heard

otherwise good people say they should not have to pay to educate other people's children. (*People other than your parents helped pay to educate you!*) And I hear retired people say their own children are out of school so they shouldn't have to support schools. (*What happened to caring about the "common good" of all our community's children?!*)

I am frankly embarrassed that the ability to think in terms of the benefit to society as a whole seems to have passed through generations but stopped with some in my generation. How is it that some can gladly benefit from the generosity of strangers and then fail to pass it on to today's children?

I can't explain it. But I can point out the shortsightedness of this thinking, and I can vow to do all that I can to honor the people who helped me by paying it forward to the children in public schools today.

I am hopeful—despite what I hear people say—that we will take the necessary steps to spend the money needed to provide a good education to the children in our schools today. And I hope that someday those children will decide to pay it forward, too.

Karen Strong is TASB associate executive director of Communications and Public Relations.

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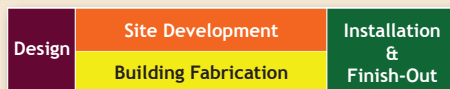
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“This is great news. We appreciate this very much! We need all the training we can get!”

—Missy Bender,
Plano ISD Board

“Thanks to TASB for the gift to all school boards of ‘free tuition.’ This year of all years, we need to work together for our kids, teachers, and communities.”

—Glenna Harris,
Denton ISD Trustee

“What an awesome idea! Thanks for stepping up in hard times!”

—Carolyn Baird,
Rice Consolidated ISD

“What an outstanding idea!”

—Karen Nicholson,
Midland ISD Trustee

“We very much appreciate the efforts of TASB to ease some of the financial burden each district faces. It’s a strong indicator of the value you have for each school district. Please express our appreciation to all members of the TASB Board.”

—Verna Young, President,
Harlingen CISD Board of Trustees

“What an awesome opportunity for us as Texas school board members. Thank you for helping us educate the children of Texas.”

—Pam Burse,
Quanah ISD

“This is fantastic, and it shows your support for school districts. Flour Bluff ISD thanks you.”

—Julie Carbajal,
Superintendent, Flour Bluff ISD

Not So Fond Farewell to 2011

With a Tough Year Behind Us, We Look Forward to Next Year's Challenges

by James B. Crow

Some years a person looks back on and hates to see go. Others you wouldn't mind if they got hit on the backside as they slid out the door. The year 2011 was definitely the latter.

In short, 2011 was the year Texas public schools took it on the chin. With a tough national economy taking its toll on state coffers, the Texas Legislature was faced with a monumental deficit. The result was a legislative session that was one of the most difficult in history.

TASB fought hard to convince lawmakers that funding public schools at their appropriate levels wasn't a luxury but a "must have" investment in our future. Not only did we propose a new school finance plan, we fought cuts with the Make Education a Priority campaign.

We also worked hard to spread the truth about public education and the stellar job districts are doing by launching the Web site truthaboutschoools.org.

This Web site is an excellent resource for information about how districts are making ends meet in these tough financial times as well as the latest news on the current school funding lawsuits.

Pushing the Envelope of Creativity

Texas school districts are employing an estimated



James B. Crow

32,000 fewer staff members today than they would have without the funding cuts, according to a recent report from Moak, Casey & Associates. Next year, when cuts will be even deeper for many districts, student-to-staff ratios will rise, according to 61 percent of those surveyed by the firm.

None of this is good news—but in reality, it could have been worse. Why wasn't it? Because school board members, superintendents, and administrators dug deep, got creative, and did everything within their power to keep the funding losses out of the classroom as much as possible.

Across Texas, school districts scrubbed their budgets to the bone. Many districts found

money by severely trimming administration, cutting campus support, and freezing salaries. Others reduced programs, discovered dollars by pushing the envelope of creativity, and searched for alternative ways to fund programs important to parents and communities.

No Good Deed . . .

But as the old saying goes, no good deed goes unpunished.

Supporters of public education point proudly to the extraordinary measures educators took to blunt the blow of budget cuts on kids. As we all remember, when the legislative session started, no one knew just how big or bad the cuts would be or what the ultimate impact would be on Texas

school districts. Massive layoffs seemed imminent, and school closings were possible.

While some of the worst-case scenarios did play out across the state, overall, the hit to education in the classroom was cushioned because of the hard work and tenacity of school boards and administrators. I commend all of you for the many difficult and sleepless nights you spent working to put children first.

But what makes the outcome of this year's events so frustrating is that the outstanding job you did is already being held against you.

While advocates for public education applaud the way Texas districts braved the budget crisis, detractors of Texas public schools point fingers and accuse districts of having "too much fat" in the first place. They say if budgets were truly tight, districts would have suffered more. What they fail to recognize, of course, is that the actions Texas districts took this year only put a finger in the dike of an overflowing dam.

With the state's continued population growth, our need to compete on a global scale, and ever-increasing accountability standards, state funding for public education must grow, too. While many districts adopted budgets to survive the

current fiscal year, the second year of the biennium will prove even tougher. As underfunding continues, the effects will compound.

TASB's goal is to work to prevent that from happening. To do so, we need your help. In 2012, we begin our Grassroots Advocacy meetings to prepare for the next legislative

session. Please attend and help us be a voice to make education a priority in Texas.

Working together in the coming year, maybe we can make the 2013 legislative year one we aren't so eager to usher out the door.

James B. Crow is executive director of TASB.



"Thank you very much!!! This shows that you guys really understand what we are going through, and it is much appreciated. Our travel budget will be cut by 65 percent this year, so this helps tremendously."

*—Keith Moore,
Superintendent, Crosby ISD*

"Awesome! Thank you so much for helping the school districts out in our time of need!"

*—Linda Sweeny,
Superintendent's Secretary,
Needville ISD*

"Thank you very much. Every little bit helps. Wichita Falls ISD will not forget this kindness."

*—Reginald Blow,
President, Wichita Falls ISD Board*

"What an awesome thing you are doing!"

*—Deborah Moreno,
Secretary to the Superintendent,
Pettus ISD*

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*—Leslie Melson, President,
Highland Park ISD Board*

"What an excellent initiative from TASB to assist Texas school districts to continue their training for staff and board members while also meeting the more pressing demands during this difficult fiscal challenge. Kudos to TASB!"

*—Josie Z. Rodriguez,
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