

## Legislative Priorities Discussion for the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session

Focused Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ School Choice</li> <li>▶ Assessment and Accountability</li> <li>▶ School Finance</li> <li>▶ Mental Health and School Safety</li> <li>▶ Funding for High-Quality Pre-K Programs</li> <li>▶ Facilities Funding</li> <li>▶ Local Control/Governance and Taxation</li> <li>▶ Teacher Retirement System of Texas</li> </ul>
Guiding Statements of Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1.1 Our Faculty and Staff feels recognized and appreciated</b></li> <li><b>1.2 Percentage of our students reading on grade level by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade</b></li> <li><b>1.3 Percentage of our 9<sup>th</sup> grade students mastering Algebra I</b></li> <li><b>1.4 Percentage of our students engaged in extra and co-curricular activities</b></li> <li><b>1.5 Percentage of our graduates meeting the College and Career Readiness Standards</b></li> </ul>

Priority	Legislative Priorities for the 86 <sup>th</sup> Legislative Session	TASB Resolutions (July 2020)	Legislative Advisory Committee Proposed Advocacy Priorities for TASB*
Charter Schools, School Choice, and Vouchers	<p><b>Adamantly opposes the diversion of public funds for vouchers, tax credits, education savings grants, or any other funding mechanisms diverting funds to private schools.</b> The DISD currently offers many choices for students and parents to consider within the current school choice framework. Students and parents often have the ability to choose among public schools. In addition, Texas should consider public accountability and transparency provisions to charter schools allowing for a more efficient and equitable public charter school system in compliance with the Texas Constitution.</p>	<p><b><i>Advocates for legislation which opposes vouchers and privatization vouchers:</i></b>  <i>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to prevent any transfer of public funds through the use of vouchers to private entities that do not follow the same transparency and accountability requirements governing independent school districts, including prohibitions on tax credits, education savings accounts, and other privatization measures.</i></p> <p><b><i>Advocates for charter transparency and limiting expansion of charters:</i></b>  <i>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to evaluate the impact that new and expanding charter schools have on the state budget and on local public schools and to increase the transparency of charter schools and their operators, especially with regard to enrollment and expulsion practices, business operations, and expenditures. The Texas Legislature must prohibit the wasteful use of tax dollars caused by funding two school systems through charter school expansion, particularly in areas in which traditional public schools are already successful.</i></p>	<p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to prohibit the expansion of charter schools; to reduce the impact charter schools have on the state budget and on local public schools; and to increase the transparency of charter schools and their operators, especially with regard to enrollment and expulsion practices, business operations, and expenditures. The state should require charters to have publicly elected board members who are accountable to the communities they serve.</p> <p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to prevent any transfer of public education funds through the use of vouchers, savings accounts, or tax credits to private entities, including unfettered expansion of virtual instruction by corporations.</p>

Assessment and Accountability	<p><b>Supports an assessment and accountability system that values student growth and achievement over standardized, high-stakes one day testing.</b> A system designed to rank and sort schools is not accountability, nor does it demonstrate growth in student learning. The DISD advocates for the establishment of a comprehensive accountability system that looks beyond high-stakes, multiple-choice exams to meaningful assessments that have value for students, parents, and teachers, as well as measures what each community deems important in promoting college and career readiness. Oppose A–F campus and district ratings.</p>	<p><b>Advocates for reduced testing:</b>  <i>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to continue to reduce state assessments by eliminating those not required by federal law and to prohibit standardized tests from serving as the primary indicator of school and student performance. TASB advocates for additional support for non-high-stakes assessment alternatives, such as writing portfolios and adaptive exams.</i></p>	<p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to continue to reduce state assessments by eliminating those not required by federal law, removing the high-stakes aspect of the system, reducing testing time, and prohibiting standardized tests from serving as the primary indicator of school and student performance. TASB advocates for additional support for non-high-stakes, diagnostic assessment alternatives, such as writing portfolios and adaptive exams.</p>
School Finance	<p><b>Supports legislation making public education funding a priority.</b> For more than 30 years, the Texas school finance formula has remained substantially unchanged. It is the recommendation of the Denton Independent School District that the state make appropriate budget adjustments to the school finance system by developing a simplified and sustainable plan, which provides resources promoting educational excellence for all Texas students. DISD further advocates for truth in taxation as it relates to the implications of rising property values and the corresponding decline in state funding for public education. In addition, DISD expects that the State shall not engage in any tax cuts until it has fully funded the infrastructures of the state; specifically, funding public education.</p>	<p><b>Advocates for improved and sustainable funding of the school finance system/maintenance or increase of state share.</b></p> <p><i>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to maintain the promises and dedication of funding made in the new school finance system implemented under House Bill 3 (86<sup>th</sup> Session) and to equitably share the cost of education with local school districts.</i></p>	<p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to maintain the promises and dedication of funding made in the new school finance system implemented under House Bill 3 (86th Session) and to equitably share the cost of education with local school districts. Further, the state should implement a funding structure that recognizes the flexibility needed by and the additional costs incurred by school districts amid the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>

Mental Health and School Safety	<p><b>Support a state-funded organizational framework designed to create a network of effective support in our public schools and community-based services to address the mental health needs and school safety of our children.</b> According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), those at greatest risk of serious emotional disturbances and/or mental illness are children and adolescents who have been involved in a traumatic event at their young age. Students must feel safe and be mentally healthy in order to learn and meet their full potential. Students are experiencing greater anxiety, fear, depression and a lack of coping skills. Additionally, school counselors, social workers and school psychologists across the nation are seeing an increase in suicide ideation. The academic needs of students cannot be separated from the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students and vice-versa.</p>	<p><b>Advocates for improved mental health resources for students:</b></p> <p><i>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to fund increased access to mental health services and support in public schools to improve the physical safety and psychological well-being of our students and schools. Primarily, a universal level of support in which all students have access to mental health services in a school setting, followed by targeted interventions identified for students who need additional services to eliminate barriers that affect them academically, followed by a comprehensive and sustainable process in which the student’s parents, teachers, counselors, campus administrators, and local mental health agencies collaborate and strategize about the needs of students.</i></p> <p><b>Advocates for providing additional resources for school security and student safety:</b></p> <p><i>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to work with public school districts and their locally elected trustees to enhance school safety measures, including funding for school safety audits, the school safety allotment, and other measures that ensure the safety of students and staff.</i></p>	<p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to increase state funding for access to proactive mental health services and support in public schools to improve the physical safety and psychological well-being of our students and schools, especially as students cope with additional anxiety related to COVID-19. This includes access to services for all students in a school setting; the ability for districts to provide students with targeted interventions; and the establishment of a collaborative network of school and mental health professionals to better identify and meet the needs of students and their caregivers.</p> <p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to work with public school districts and their locally elected trustees to enhance school safety measures, including increased funding for school safety audits, the school safety allotment, and other measures that ensure the safety of students and staff.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">High Quality Pre-K Programs</p>	<p><b>Supports full funding for the expansion of high-quality Pre-K programs state-wide.</b>          Research indicates the greatest opportunity to impact achievement gaps and improve outcomes for all students over their lifetime is to provide students access to a high-quality Pre-K program.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Facilities Funding</p>	<p><b>Recognizes the needs of rapidly growing districts and districts in areas of the state with low property values and supports the legislature in designing a school finance system to provide adequate and equitable resources.</b> Specifically, the population of students enrolled in public education has increased by more than two million over the last 20 years. The Denton Independent School District is categorized as a destination, Fast Growth School District. Eighty percent of students new to Texas enroll in approximately 80 school districts across Texas. The construction cost index, and state and local building codes have increased significantly during this time; however, the funding formula weights in the Existing Debt Allotment and Instructional Facilities Allotment formulas have remained frozen. Districts have large amounts of deferred maintenance due to the cumulative impact of the inadequate school finance and debt funding formulas.</p>		

<p style="text-align: center;">Local Control/Governance and Taxation</p>	<p><b>Supports governance allowing for local control of the school district.</b> Local control allows decision making to occur in collaboration with local communities and constituents. Given the transition to the Every Student Succeeds Act, DISD advocates for increased opportunities for school districts to implement local initiatives, such as Districts of Innovation, and prevention of measures that reduce or remove governance of districts from locally elected school boards. DISD advocates for innovations in school district taxing authority allowing local school trustees more flexibility to raise and lower taxes within a voter-approved limit.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Teacher Retirement System (TRS)/Staff Recruitment and Retention</p>	<p>Advocates for the continuation of the current defined benefit pension program for TRS members. <b>The Denton Independent School District advocates for increased state funding to assist with increased health care costs associated with TRS-ActiveCare and TRS-Care.</b></p>	<p><b><i>Advocates for support and solutions for staff recruitment and retention:</i></b></p> <p><i>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to support adaptive and creative local solutions for recruiting and retaining high quality educators in our independent school districts and to help elevate the teaching profession by incentivizing education degrees and providing additional funding for TRS Care and ActiveCare, along with insuring defined retirement benefits for teachers through TRS.</i></p>	<p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to support adaptive and creative local solutions for recruiting and retaining high quality, diverse educators in our independent school districts and to help elevate the teaching profession by incentivizing students to enter the teaching profession, shoring up teacher health benefits and retirement, and supporting local measures to develop and assess educators.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">School District Lobbying</p>		<p><b><i>Advocates for the continued ability for school districts to lobby on behalf of constituents, parents, and students:</i></b></p> <p><i>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to recognize and preserve the right of public-school boards to associate and collaborate with each other and to communicate the needs of their students and schools, either directly or through representative organizations, with lawmakers. Specifically, TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to preserve the right of local elected officials to advocate on behalf of the constituents, students and parents they represent, thereby ensuring state elected officials are provided information directly from constituents and not solely from special interest groups.</i></p>	<p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to recognize and preserve the right of public school boards to associate and collaborate with each other and to communicate the needs of their students and schools, both directly and through representative organizations, with lawmakers.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Disaster Response</p>		<p><b>Advocates for disaster response:</b></p> <p><i>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to continue working with local school districts to identify and address student needs during and after disasters, such as access to technology and broadband service, mental health resources, meals, social services, and remediation upon returning to school.</i></p>	<p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to continue working with local school districts to identify and address student needs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters, such as access to technology and broadband/utility services, mental health resources, meals, social services, personal protective equipment, additional support for economically disadvantaged children, and remediation for students, while maintaining local control. The state should also suspend accountability ratings during disasters that severely impact school operations, such as the current pandemic; enact a temporary moratorium on the expansion or creation of new charter schools; not supplant state education funding with federal funds provided for disaster recovery; and fund schools based on student enrollment to ensure adequate instructional continuity.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Diversity and Cultural Awareness</p>			<p>TASB calls upon the Texas Legislature to combat systemic racism by supporting diversity and cultural awareness initiatives throughout districts through staff and student education and restorative teaching and disciplinary practices that treat all students equally and focus on building relationships. We also call on the legislature and State Board of Education to evaluate the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for accurate and complete education as it pertains to all cultures that have contributed to the rich history of Texas and the United States.</p>
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