

[PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE]

On the Brink of Transformation

I couldn't be more excited to serve as your 2012–13 TASA president. These are transformational times in public education, and I truly believe we are on the brink of something great.

There's no doubt that the last few years—and the 2011 Legislative Session in particular—have been difficult ones for public education in Texas. We're dealing with massive budget cuts at the same time we're faced with a new testing system that carries increasingly high stakes for both students and educators.

This doesn't mean we should sit back and throw up our hands. Now is the time for superintendents to stand up and get involved. There is so much going on that telegraphs- change is on the way. The state's school finance system faces six legal challenges in the wake of the 2011 cuts. The lawsuits represent more than 500 school districts and at least 3 million students.

Funding isn't the only thing being challenged. There is a groundswell of support for a movement to de-emphasize high-stakes, standardized testing in our schools as the single measure of accountability. As of early July, 550 school boards had passed a resolution raising concerns about the over-reliance of standardized testing-. This underscores the fact - that the current accountability system is undermining efforts to transform a traditional system of schooling into a broad range of learning experiences that better prepare our students to live successfully and be competitive on a global stage.

That support comes not just from superintendents and school board members but also from parents, local business leaders, and students. It was even voiced by former Commissioner of Education Robert Scott at TASA's 2012 Midwinter Conference.

The time is ripe for superintendents to take the lead in this revolution and continue to spread the word about the amount of instructional time -taken from our teachers and students in the name of testing.

The passage of Senate Bill 1557, which led to the creation of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium, is evidence that the momentum is ours. This unique opportunity will allow a select number of Texas districts to showcase what transformed classrooms can look like, help lawmakers explore how to measure true success in our schools, and develop an accountability system parents, students, and voters can trust.

The pendulum had swung too far in favor of over-testing, and it is finally coming back to an approach that allows for critical thinking, innovation in the classroom, and creativity among teachers.

It might not happen this year or even next, but it will happen soon. When it does, we need to stand ready to showcase what 21st century classrooms should look like and the great things we're achieving with our students.

Good luck this upcoming school year and I look forward to seeing you in September at the TASA/TASB Convention in Austin!