



**To: TARS Membership**  
**From: Michael Lee and Leigh Ann Glaze**  
**Re: Report from the Capitol**

July 11, 2018

The Texas Commission on Public School Finance met Tuesday, July 10 for a regularly scheduled meeting. This meeting was quite interesting in the fact that the Commission members received a presentation of recommendations arranged by priority. The recommendations were formed from information that was provided by educational practitioners testifying over the course of the Commission meetings. Different than in past meetings, there seemed to be more lively discussion than witnessed in the past by the audience.

Todd Williams, who is the “Commit Partnership” founding Chairman/Executive Director and commission member appointed by Governor Abbott, gave the presentation the Outcomes Working Group developed with a great deal of facts and figures. I would encourage you to watch the archive of his presentation. He showed several graphs where the State is spending less than local districts for funding, but he also showed where the State is outpacing inflation. He had a couple of bar graphs that showed what the State was spending in 2006 dollars. However, one very important piece he left out of this graph was the cost of student population growth. The State increased the amount of money they are spending, but my impression is that the increase was due to population growth and not to an increase in the current population. There were also the years of the stimulus

money we received that showed a slight increase in State spending.

The concern I have while watching these meetings is the direction we are heading. The trend is to have schools apply for new money and to target the money specifically. Compensatory funds are an example Mr. Williams emphasized in this meeting and in the "Outcomes" subcommittee meeting held July 3. He specifically talked about the Free and Reduced lunch numbers not being a reliable factor in determining poverty, but to use other means and to target any increase in Compensatory Funds that will encourage school districts to perhaps fund full day pre-kindergarten. Find the link to his presentation here and select the "open with" radio button when the window appears:

[Final Outcomes Working Group White Paper](#) (As Amended and Adopted) (PDF)

[Outcomes Committee Recommendations Presentation](#) (PDF)

The only time that rural schools was part of the discussion was when Dr. Kevin Ellis, State Board member from Lufkin, stated that some of his rural schools might not benefit from this type of a scenario in regard to incentives for districts. Mr. Williams agreed with that they needed more input. (Please know Mr. Williams has my card and we will be in contact with Mr. Williams to provide him the opportunity to receive input from two people who understand rural schools. I feel Mr. Williams genuinely wants to make a positive impact for public schools.)

What I have come to realize is that every Legislative Session is the most important one to date. This next session is very important. We have much for which to fight, and the number one fight is our small school formula. I can assure you, when you look at the membership of the Texas Commission on Public School Finance, <https://tea.texas.gov/schoolfinancecommission/>, you do not see much representation of Rural Schools. You do see several people who look at consolidation for Rural Schools while trying to expand Charter Schools.

Of course, there is always the "meeting after the meeting." I noticed the Expenditures Working Group circled around each other after the meeting without anyone able to listen to them. This group will formally meet on August 9, replacing the regular scheduled meeting of the full Commission. I look forward to attending that meeting on August 9.

The TARS officers and directors will be meeting August 3-4 in San Saba to help develop the new direction for TARS, and to set the Legislative Agenda. Please give your input to your director, or feel free to call either Leigh Ann or me. Leigh Ann and I are committed to represent you well and to work hard for the benefit of our Rural Schools and Rural Communities. We both live in Rural Texas! TARS is an organization owned by the membership, and we expect you as members to help develop a plan to best serve your needs.

Mike and Leigh Ann

#### Upcoming TARS Events

- **July 16, 2018** - TARS has been invited to participate in Governor Abbott's School Safety Panel - The Governor's Budget and Policy Division and Public Safety Office are convening stakeholders and experts to participate in policy discussions related to these priorities - **8:30- 11:30 pm at Legislative Conference Center inside the Texas Capitol**
- **July 18, 2018** - Senate Select Committee on Violence in Schools & School Security - 9:00 am E1.036 Capitol.
- **July 24, 2018** - Senate Select Committee on Violence in Schools & School Security - 9:00 am E1.036 Capitol.
- **August 3 & 4, 2018** - TARS Officer and Regional Director Planning Retreat - San Saba, Texas.
- **August, 9, 2018** - Texas Commission on Public School Finance - 9:00 am Texas Education Agency - work group only meeting, not the full Commission



**THE MAJOR THRUST OF TARS IS THREEFOLD:**

- To protect the “small school formulas/adjustment,”
  - To protect the valuation of agricultural land according to its productivity only, and
    - To fight efforts toward consolidation of small school districts.
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