

EDUCATION Reporter

BACKGROUND ON EDUCATION ISSUES FROM THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

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Navigating the Sea of Tomorrow

TASB 21st Century Committee Charts Education Course

by Lisa Sullivan

A sea of forces is reshaping the public education system in Texas and across the nation. Evolving technology, shifting demographics, the economy, and politics are but a few of the forces driving these changes. To identify and analyze these factors, TASB, with the assistance of INFUSE Corporation (an Austin-based consulting firm), recently organized the TASB 21st Century Education Committee. The committee initiated a research project to help the Association successfully navigate the swift and changing waters that will constitute the future of Texas K-16 public education over the next 20 years.

One of the key goals of this project was to provide policy- and decision makers with insight into the coming changes for public education and the challenges and opportunities for students, teachers, administrators, and school board trustees. By understanding these potential changes, school boards and district administrators are better prepared to assess the future impact and determine their needs and priorities at local, regional, and state levels.

The Texas public education system is influenced by a variety of forces across a broad spectrum of issues and trends. This project looked at a

wide range of trends that cut across social, technological, environmental, economic, and political areas.

Sources for the trend data included research studies, articles, white papers, databases, and interviews with industry experts. Utilizing a futures research methodology called "environmental scanning," committee members analyzed these data sources for relevant trend information.

Trends Ho!

The trend data was organized into "trend clusters," consisting of data that was logically related to a particular concept or issue. More than 200 trends were identified and organized into 19 trend clusters, spanning

social, environmental, economic, and technological categories (see Illustration A, page 8).

This approach provided a means of communicating and assessing the trend research in an organized and systematic manner.

To illustrate this organization, social trends, for example, were divided into two trend clusters: demographics (addressing population migration, aging, and family structure), and domesticity (addressing lifestyles, behaviors, and personal values). (See Illustration B, page 8, for detail.)

The following takes a closer look at the demographic profile in the social trend cluster.

AN ABLE CAPTAIN & CREW

Although the TASB 21st Century Committee completed project work this summer and presented its final report to the TASB Board in July, the committee is scheduled to meet with the TASB Planning and Development Committee in November to merge the project's long-range goals into the Association's two-year strategic plan, which will be reviewed and adopted by the TASB Board when it meets in December.

The TASB 21st Century Committee, chaired by Rudy Montoya of Austin ISD, is composed of school board representatives from demographically diverse districts across Texas. Members include Eddie Albin, Schleicher County ISD; Jim Ash, Arlington ISD; Roberto Garcia, San Elizario ISD; Jerry Johnson, Burkburnett ISD; Bonnie Longnion, Humble ISD; Steve Neece, Chisum ISD; and Ron Price, Dallas ISD. Ex officio members include Carlos Nieto, Presidio ISD; Rick Ogden, Aldine ISD; and Troy Simmons, Longview ISD.

For more information and detailed reports on trends and impact, go to www.tasb.org/21stcentury, where you'll find complete project information.H

A Changing Current

The demographic landscape of Texas has shifted, and it continues to shift. Two of the more significant trends affecting the state are urban/rural population distribution and the continued migration of the U.S. population to the South and West.

- **Urban/rural population distribution.** The distribution of the Texas population shows a higher-than-average density in urban areas when compared to other states. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 75.2 percent of the national population resides in urban areas, while in Texas, over 80 percent does. Texas is second only to California with the number of cities that have crossed the 100,000-population threshold, with 23 such centers throughout the state.

This explosion of growth over the last two decades and continuing into this one has been concentrated in what are termed “edge cities,” smaller urban areas that link to larger urban areas. These smaller urban areas, with their rapid growth, have dramatically affected much of the public infrastructure in these regions.

As they cope with increasing numbers of residents who are requiring greater and more complex public services from an infrastructure, it becomes increasingly more stressful on these institutions and their ability to keep up with the pace of growth.

- **Continued migration of the U.S. population to the South and West.** Coupled with the redistribution of population within the state of Texas is the influx of population from outside the state. This inbound migration typically occurs in the urban/suburban centers rather than in rural areas, creating further pressure on these areas. This inbound migration is the result of a continuing national trend of relocation to the South and West, a trend that, according to Census Bureau data, has been evolving since the 1800s.

One result of these combined trends

is a growing student population disparity between rural and urban areas. This size difference is polarizing the needs of these different regions. In public education, it is difficult for many rural schools to attract and retain teachers. Also, because of the smaller student populations, it is often difficult to provide a wide range of classes due to the small number of students enrolled in these classes, and just as difficult to find appropriately skilled staff to deliver instruction.

Urban areas also have difficulty attracting and retaining teachers and staff due to the sheer number of positions they are often trying to fill. One such area of particular concern, both now and in the future, will be that of attracting and retaining bilingual educators.

Keys to Successful Passage

The population profile of the United States is changing, and Texas is no exception. There are other key demographic trend indicators that are influencing many of the basic operating premises of public education, from the composition of its student population to the demographic characteristics of property owners, who fund public education. These indicators include the aging of the population, increasing racial and ethnic diversity, and changing family structure.

- **Aging of the population.** According to U.S. Census Bureau figures, by 2010 the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population will be over age 55. The total population aged 50 and over will reach approximately 97 million in that time frame. This astounding figure holds several key implications for public education and its planning.

First, this group is past child-rearing years, and its priority focus is not necessarily on public education, given other emerging personal needs such as health care and retirement.

Second, the fastest-growing segment of this population in the next decade

will be “baby boomers,” many of whom have not saved enough to support their lifestyles in retirement. This lack of savings coupled with the current investment environment will create intense pressure on persons in this age group as retirement looms. In addition, while many “boomers” are “empty nesters”—their children grown and living independently—most boomers are not likely to be grandparents yet, when their interest in public education may be revitalized.

Finally, while this demographic group is growing, along with the attendant needs for mid- and later life, by 2010 there will also be approximately 2.5 million more school-age children (or younger) than are in the education system today. This change suggests continuing pressure on the public education infrastructure at a time when a growing percentage of the population may become less concerned with public education at a personal level.

- **Increasing racial and ethnic diversity.** Increasing racial and ethnic diversity is a national trend, and there are several key factors within this trend area that are critically important to Texas over the next decade. One such area is rate of growth in its Hispanic population. In the United States, the Hispanic population continues to grow with a strong presence in the South and West, and Texas is particularly influenced by this phenomenon. Nine of the top 27 metropolitan areas with the largest Hispanic populations are in Texas.

The Hispanic population in the United States is a relatively young cohort. About 30 percent of Hispanics are under the age of 14, compared to 20 percent for the white/non-Hispanic population. Comparatively, there will be more children of Hispanic origin entering the Texas public education system over the next two decades than any other demographic group, creating even greater demand for bilingual staff and educators.

Other ethnic and racial communities

are also growing quickly. For instance, Hispanics and Asians combined will represent about one-half of the total U.S. population growth every year for the next 50 years. When other ethnic and racial groups are factored into the equation, over the next 50 years the U.S. population will increase by approximately 130 million; just 10 percent of this increase will be in the traditionally defined “white” category.

- Changing family structure. All around us is a wider range of families and family structures that our parents could have only imagined a generation ago. While it is a given to say that the family structure has changed—two-thirds of American children do not come from a “traditional” household (two parents, one income provider)—there are several additional trends that pose new complexities, opportunities, and challenges for educators and administrators.

More Challenges Lurking

There are several changes that will affect family structures over the next decade and beyond. For instance, U.S. Census Bureau data indicate that “father-only” households have doubled between 1980 and 1999. Also, “mother-never married” households have grown from 3 percent to 9 percent of total family households in this time frame.

Simultaneously, two-parent households have declined 10 percent. As a result, the trend toward smaller families often translates into fewer adults in the household, not fewer children.

Further, while the number of divorced family households has remained constant nationally during the above time frame, Texas divorce rates are slightly higher than the national average, landing the state in the top 15 for divorces per 1,000 residents.

For many families undergoing change, grandparents are filling the void. Approximately 1.4 million chil-

21st CENTURY EDUCATION TRENDS			
SOCIAL	ENVIRONMENTAL	ECONOMIC	TECHNOLOGICAL
Demographic Profile	Physical Facilities	“Have” vs. “Have Not” Gap	Educational Technology Policy
Domesticity	Standards & Accountability	Funding Models	User Interface Technologies
	Curriculum, New Learning Models & Inclusion	Equity Funding	Instructional Design
	Human Resources	Technology Funding	Learning Environments
	Competition, Choices & Customer Satisfaction	Federal Funding	Infrastructure Technologies
			Administrative Management Technologies

Illustration A

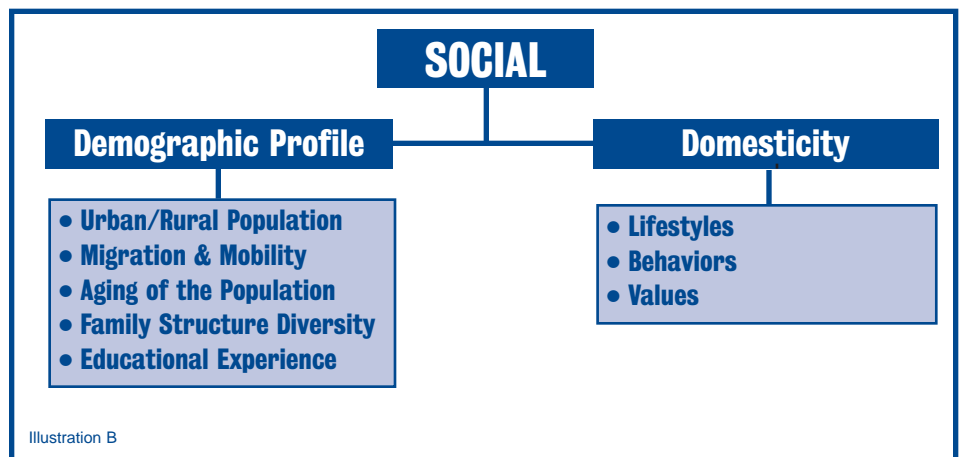


Illustration B

dren are living with grandparents without at least one parent present in the household. As the aging process becomes less debilitating, more grandparents are likely to be physically able to provide this support for their grandchildren.

Dual-income families have become the dominant family structure in American society, with approximately 70 percent of children having both parents employed. For children under the age of 6, both parents are employed in about 57 percent of families.

The combined effect of the above demographic profile changes of the Texas population poses a wide range of issues for public education. As the student population, family structure, and property owner profiles change, when coupled with the current and emerging population distribution and migration patterns, the Texas public education system will experience dramatic change over the next decade and beyond.

Scanning the Horizon

TASB’s 21st Century Education Project provides a wealth of insight



Texas Association of School Boards
P.O. Box 400
Austin, Texas 78767-0400

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into the future of public education in Texas. This article discussed just a small sample of the findings of this effort.

Some of the broader implications identified as a result of the research include the following:

- Technological changes will affect how and where public education is delivered.
- Academic standards and accountability will continue to grow in importance.
- Increased competition for human and other resources will affect a variety of management issues.
- New and different learning models are emerging to capitalize on the changing demographic patterns, emerging technology, and shifting values.

- Increased focus on Pre-K-through-16 education will require increasing levels of integration and coordination throughout the public education system.

These and a rising tide of additional changes are occurring within the context of an increasingly diverse social fabric that influences public education in the most fundamental ways.

As this sea of change emerges, it is critical that decision makers in education are able to identify, analyze, and craft strategies that meet their districts' needs based on how these forces affect them at the local level—both now and in the future.H

Lisa Sullivan, president of INFUSE, is a professional futurist and strategy consultant. INFUSE Corporation, founded in 1992 and based in Austin, develops and applies futures-oriented strategic thinking and planning processes that enable clients to

define, evaluate, and create their most preferred future. For more information, contact Sullivan by e-mail at Lisa@infuse.com or via telephone at 512-261-5431. For more information about INFUSE, visit the INFUSE Web Site at www.infuse.com.

For information about the TASB 21st Century Education Project, visit www.tasb.org/21stcentury.



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