



Strategic Planning
Texas Association of Rural Schools
TARS Officers and Regional Directors Planning Retreat
August 3, 2018 – August 4, 2018

The results noted in this document are a culmination of planning and input by the Officers and Directors of the Texas Association of Rural Schools. This document is to be used to guide TARS Leadership during the next Legislative session and in the coming operational year.

I. Past and Present Educator, School District Benefits—Insurance

- A. Educators are more concerned about the cost of health insurance benefits than anything else.
- B. Premiums for retired teachers are unaffordable for many of the long-time retired educators.

II. 300 square mile penalty

- A. Advocate for full funding and the continued support repealing the 300 square mile penalty.

III. Teacher Retirement System of Texas

- A. Changing the multiplier from 2.3 to something lower will force many people to retire before it takes effect.
 - 1. This needs to be addressed carefully.
 - 2. Why was lowering the rate of return necessary?
 - 3. TRS can pay out 30 years, but need to pay out 70 years to be actuarially sound? Is this a necessary standard?

IV. Protect District of Innovations (DOI)

- A. Helps school districts in trying to find teachers in a severe teacher shortage.
- B. Provides for more local control.

V. Compensation plan under consideration

- A. Needs to be a local decision, not a decision driven by the State of Texas unless the minimum teacher pay scale is increased and funded.
 - 1. Let local Boards of Education determine how to compensate and reward Teachers for extra work and assignments.
 - 2. Please do not let the State give seed money for one year and then the plan reverts to the school districts as an unfunded mandate in the future.
- C. Officers and Directors felt our schools would be better served if the State increased the State Minimum Salary Schedule to recruit more young people into education and funded that increase.
- D. Teacher benefits such as insurance costs should be improved.
- E. Improve the status of the teaching profession to recruit college students to pursue education as a career.
- F. Please know when an attempt to award teachers for exceeding expectations like was made through the old Career Ladder leads teachers to compete at the expense of each other instead of collaborating with each other for the best interest of the students.
- G. Is there a funding mechanism that could flow dollars to school districts much like the High School Allotment (with specific spending requirements that could be used to compensate teachers solely for working past the 8 hour day). In the rural school districts, the numbers of staff are low thus small numbers of staff must work multiple extra-curricular duties and perform afterschool tutoring because there are simply not enough people to perform all the duties.

VI. Service Centers

- A. Are invaluable to rural school districts.
- B. Some consider service centers a replacement of assistant superintendents.