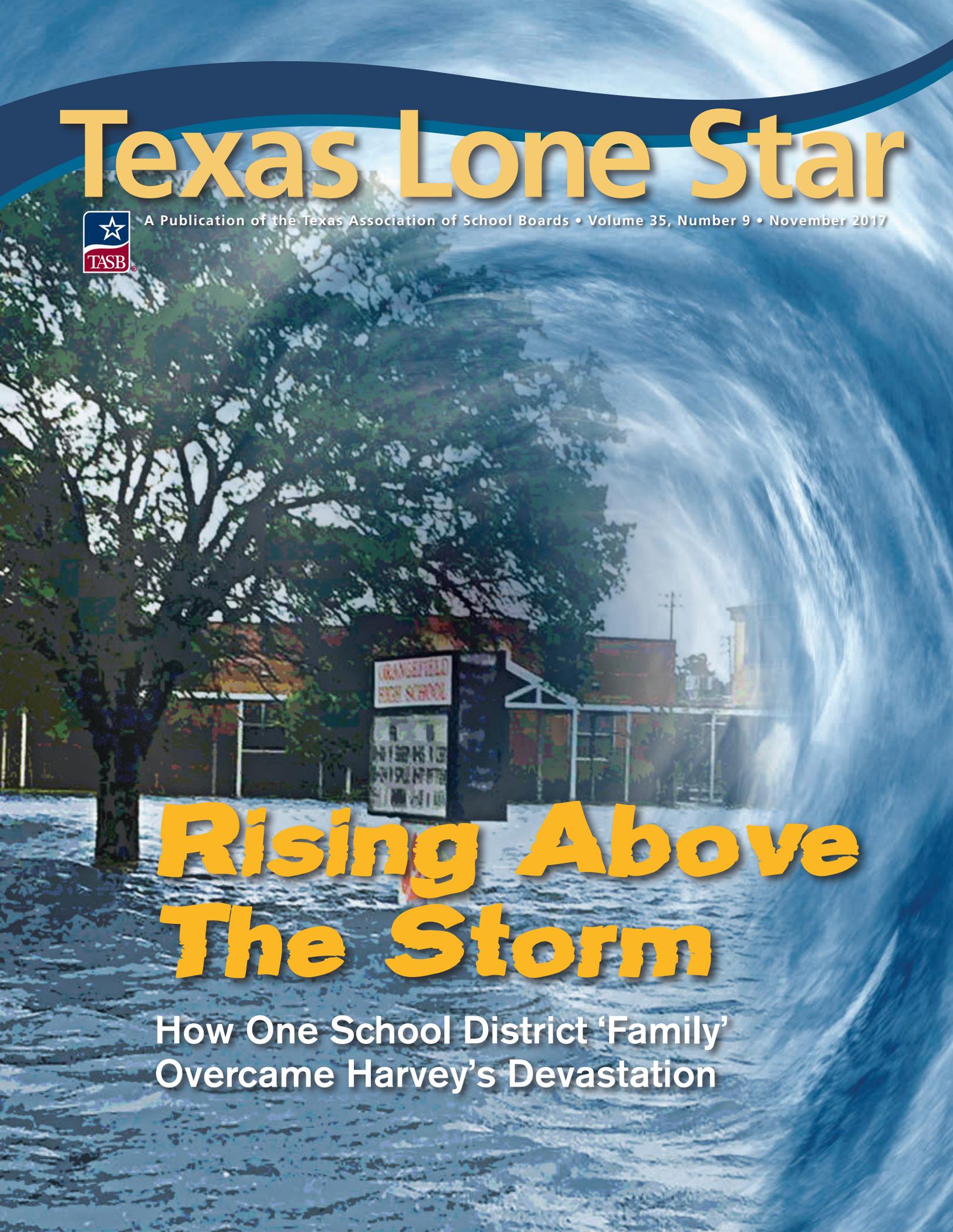


Texas Lone Star



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The background of the cover is a photograph of a school building, Granfield Elementary School, that has been severely flooded. The water is murky and turbulent, swirling around the building. A sign in the foreground reads 'GRANFIELD ELEM SCHOOL'. The sky is overcast and grey, suggesting a storm or heavy rain. The overall mood is one of devastation and resilience.

Rising Above The Storm

How One School District 'Family'
Overcame Harvey's Devastation

Urban Excellence

Lancaster ISD Board Named 2017 CUBE Award Winner

The Lancaster ISD Board was named one of three national winners of the 2017 CUBE Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence recently. The Lancaster ISD Board, along with the school boards from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee's Shelby County Schools, received the 2017 CUBE Award at the Council of Urban Boards of Education's (CUBE) 49th Annual Conference September 28-30 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

CUBE, administered by the National School Boards Association (NSBA), annually recognizes urban school boards that exhibit excellence in school board governance, academic improvement, educational equity, and community engagement.

"This year's CUBE Award winners have demonstrated strong leadership and measurable success in providing urban schoolchildren with the finest public education possible," NSBA Executive Director Thomas J. Gentzel said. "Their success is an inspirational example of how local school boards, as education leaders in their respective communities, can make a profound difference in the lives of America's schoolchildren."

Focus on Student Achievement

The Lancaster ISD Board was recognized for its work to recover from a period of troubled finances and leadership divisions seven years ago. As part of its turnover, the board invested in board training, prioritized financial management, and worked to align its actions with research on high-performing school boards.

The result has been a more effective academic program, with a greater emphasis on STEM education, a strong early education program, and successful efforts to raise student academic performance and participation in advanced placement courses.

"As a 'team of eight,' our primary focus is and has been student achievement," said Lancaster ISD Board President Ty G. Jones. "Through our STEM focus, we have fostered partnerships that have benefited



Photo courtesy of Lancaster ISD

Lancaster ISD Board members are (front row from left) Secretary LaRhonda Mays, Cynthia Corbin-Jarvis, Vice-President Robbie Johnson, Ellen Clark, (back row from left) Marion Hamilton, President Ty G. Jones, and Rhonda Davis-Crawford.

both our staff and students. Our staff has been exposed to professional development from our STEM partners, which has built their capacity—which, in turn, has increased the academic success of our students."

Examples of STEM opportunities Jones cited include students working with partners on such projects as real-world automotive repair and customization and airplane rebuilding.

"Groups of our students worked collaboratively with partners and repurposed an older automobile into a student-engineered, street-legal sports car, and more recently, our students rebuilt an airplane, which will be flown to provide humanitarian efforts around the globe. As trustees in Lancaster ISD, we are proud to provide our students with real-world opportunities."

Having been named the 2016 Outstanding School Board of Texas by the Texas Association of School Administrators last year and the 2016 National

Alliance of Black School Educators Board of the Year, the Lancaster ISD Board will use this additional honor to maintain its momentum for meaningful change, Jones noted.

"We will leverage the national recognition by the CUBE Annual Award for Urban Excellence to strengthen existing strategic partnerships and establish new ones to invest in the vision and mission of Lancaster ISD," Jones said. "We will also utilize this national recognition as a platform to highlight best practices and systems of the board, which has benefited the students and community of Lancaster."

'Showcase of Excellence'

"In presenting these excellence awards, CUBE is not only celebrating the success of these school boards but providing the nation with a showcase of excellence and achievement in urban school district management," Micah Ali, chair of the CUBE Steering Committee, said.

Each winning school district will receive a \$2,500 award to be used to help advance their goals, and their successful board practices will be featured in articles in the "Urban Advocate," CUBE's quarterly feature in NSBA's *American School Board Journal* magazine. The winning boards' practices will also be highlighted at future CUBE conferences.

"We will utilize the financial award to increase the capacity of our board and to increase opportunities for students," Jones said. "The board will use funds to purchase books for routine book studies identified during our annual 'team of eight' training, which will increase our capacity to intentionally govern and lead our thriving school district."

The other national winners—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Shelby County, Tennessee—were cited for providing a safe, supportive environment and expanding community engagement.

In Pittsburgh, the school board has been steadfast in its commitment to providing a safe and supportive school environment for immigrant and transgender students and protecting them from the divisive and sometimes frightening public debate surrounding these children.

The board also has worked to promote academic excellence by expanding STEM education, promoting computer literacy (particularly among girls and minority students), and seeking alternative disciplinary practices to reduce the

disproportionate suspension and expulsion of minority students.

In Shelby County Schools, which consolidated in 2013 with Memphis City Schools, the school board has expanded community engagement and literacy initiatives and implemented Key Performance Indicators to help the district leadership monitor the district's effectiveness in meeting the academic, social, and safety needs of students.

The CUBE Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence is supported by NSBA's corporate partner, Generation Ready. To learn more about CUBE and past award winners, visit CUBE's Website at nsba.org/services/council-urban-boards-education-cube.★

Twenty-six Texas Schools Named Blue Ribbon Award Winners

The US Department of Education announced September 28 that 26 Texas public schools have been awarded Blue Ribbon honors for 2017. The schools were nominated earlier this year for the honor by the Texas Education Agency.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools from Texas are:

- Whittier Elementary School, Amarillo ISD
- Banquete Elementary School, Banquete ISD
- Smithfield Elementary School, Birdville ISD
- Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy, Dallas ISD
- Dallas Environmental Science Academy, Dallas ISD
- Irma Lerma Rangel Women's Leadership School, Dallas ISD
- Austin Elementary School, Edinburg CISD
- Jefferson Elementary School, Edinburg CISD
- Green Elementary School, El Paso ISD
- Silva Health Magnet, El Paso ISD
- Austin Middle School, Galveston ISD
- Gunter Elementary School, Gunter ISD
- Eastwood Academy, Houston ISD
- Lyons Elementary School, Houston ISD
- Lawn Elementary School, Jim Ned CISD
- Crestview Elementary School, Judson ISD
- KIPP Shine Prep, KIPP Houston
- Jennie Reid Elementary School, La Porte ISD
- Hector J. Garcia Early College High School, Laredo ISD
- Rancho Verde Elementary School, Los Fresnos ISD
- Montgomery Intermediate School, Montgomery ISD
- Oakwood Elementary School, Oakwood ISD
- Travis Early College High School, San Antonio ISD

- Stanton-Smith Elementary School, Whitehouse ISD
- RF Hartman Elementary School, Wylie ISD
- Valle Verde Early College High School, Ysleta ISD

"A commitment to successful student outcomes can be witnessed every day on National Blue Ribbon campuses across Texas," said Commissioner of Education Mike Morath. "I congratulate this year's Blue Ribbon honorees, which represent the good work taking place in our Texas public schools."

All schools were selected as exemplary high-performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests. Each school has an economically disadvantaged population of 25 percent or greater.

The schools completed a rigorous application process through the US Department of Education. Schools that receive the award are recognized at the Blue Ribbon School conference in Washington, DC.

Founded in 1982, Blue Ribbon Schools is a US Department of Education program that recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students perform at very high levels.

For more information about the national Blue Ribbon Schools program, visit the US Department of Education's website at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html>.★