

Hood named as new president of Texas Association of Rural Schools

[Editor's Note: The following article is by James Golsan and was published in the September 2020 issue of Texas School Business.]

New Texas Association of Rural Schools (TARS) President Dr. Aaron Hood knew early on he wanted a career in the education field. The son of two educators - his father was previously superintendent of Robert Lee ISD, a position the younger Hood now occupies - he planned on spending his professional life as a teacher and coach, but opportunity knocked early in his career. Hood's first principal position came to him at age 25; at 26, he followed in his father's footsteps and accepted the superintendent's position with Robert Lee ISD, a job he's held for the last 15 years.

While it might seem like Hood was all but born to serve as the district's superintendent, he says that while he always wanted to be an educator, he began his career ambivalent as to whether he wanted to work in a smaller district or a larger, more urban one. He says it was having children of his own that changed his mind.

that's what really changed my mind. At a smaller school, kids just have the opportunity to participate in more things, and I wanted that for my own kids."

Hood was familiar with Robert Lee ISD and the joys of West Texas small town life, but reaching the administrative ranks so young meant he had to grow quickly as a professional. Hood specifically credits early support from Bronte ISD Superintendent Alan Richey as a major early influence on his career as an education leader. He also cites early involvement with TARS with a portion of his development as an administrator.

"[Wall ISD Superintendent] Walter Hollick was kind of a mentor of mine and took me under his wing when I first became a superintendent, and he was the one who told me I needed to get involved with TARS," Hood says. "I was a 26-year-old superintendent and didn't really know what to do, so I signed up and started attending the meetings."

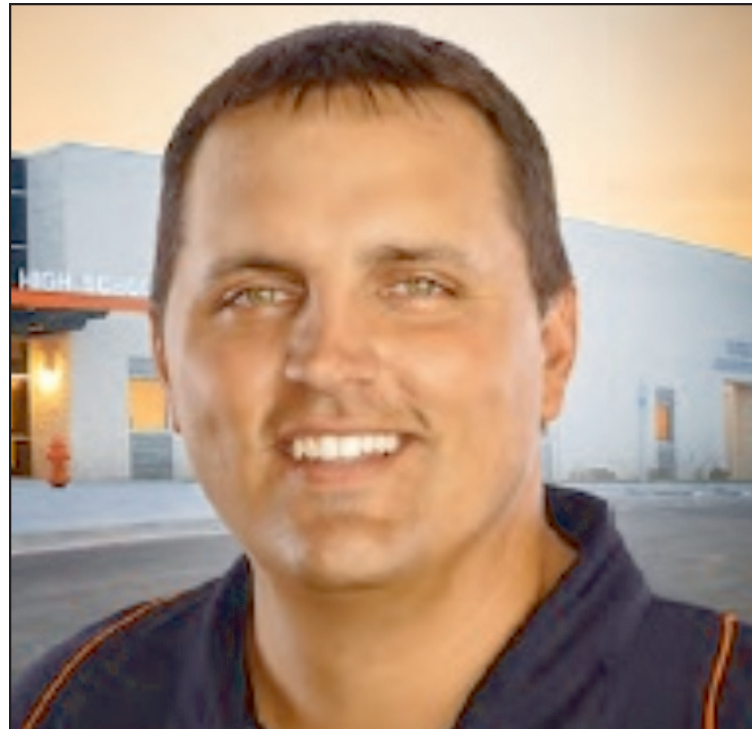
As he assumes the presidency at TARS, Hood sees a direct leadership mandate for himself: to advocate on behalf of Texas' rural schools as best he can.

"I really just see myself as a kid from West Texas who wants to do what's best for rural schools," he says, adding that those rural schools, be they larger, smaller, West Texan or in the Rio Grande Valley, face many of the same challenges. One he highlights as a longstanding issue that has become all the more important in a world still clawing through the COVID-19 pandemic is broadband access and connectivity for TARS constituents.

"This is an issue that's really come to the forefront, not just for our schools but in the broader rural community in industries like agriculture and oil and gas," Hood says, and adds that he hopes to spend his two-year TARS presidency term doing all he can to get broadband in place for more rural school districts.

"Some [technology challenges] are actually easier for smaller districts, like getting computers and tablets into the hands of students. The connectivity issue is just still a challenge."

Another issue Hood says TARS must advocate for on behalf of its constituents, particularly with the 87th Texas Legislature kicking off in January, is small school district consolidation, a process through which two or more small districts combine to form a single district covering a large swathe of land.



In an economic environment in which thousands of Texans, rural and urban alike, are facing employment challenges, Hood sees school consolidation as a potential problem in many rural Texas communities.

"We have the right to pick the size school district we want to be in, and in the case of rural districts, the school is often the heartbeat of the community. When the school goes away, the town dies with it." Hood says that the state senators and representatives who advocate on behalf of rural constituents do an excellent job, and he hopes to find allies from other parts of

the state who will keep the interests of rural schools at heart during what promises to be a challenging budget cycle for the entire Texas education system.

"The reality is that rural schools don't have as much representation as urban ones," he says, and adds that he will work with the Legislature to produce the best possible outcomes for Texas' rural schools when the 87th wraps up in May 2021. The 2020-21 school year is going to be a complicated, challenging time for Texas schools. In Aaron Hood, TARS has a leader who will go to the mat on their behalf any way he can.

BISD board meeting minutes told

May 11, 2020, Regular Meeting

The Bronte ISD Board of Trustees held a regularly scheduled board meeting on May 11, 2020. Those in attendance were board members Blake Braswell, Ashley Braswell, Jodie Arrott, John Seales, David McWright, Josh Schoenfield, Terry Queen, and administration members Tim Siler, Doug Kuhlmann, Jennifer Englert

7:03 pm with a prayer by Blake Braswell.

A quorum was established with six members present. Terry Queen arrived at 7:10 p.m.

There were no audience items.

The minutes were presented and read. A motion to approve as presented was made by Jodie

Arrott. She was seconded by Josh Schoenfield. David McWright abstained. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0. The motion passed.

A motion to approve the bill listing as presented was made by Josh Schoenfield and seconded by David McWright. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0. The motion passed.

Principal's Reports

Ms. Englert gave an update on elementary activities. Last week

was Teacher Appreciation week. Bahama Bucks came to the school parking lot so teachers, students, and citizens alike could enjoy snow cones. Online learning is seeing less

participation the last few weeks, and there are concerns that if distance learning has to continue next year, changes will need to be made to encourage participation.

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