



TEPSA Governance Task Force Recommendations

Background

In order to achieve Goal 3 of the 2017-2020 TEPSA Strategic Growth Plan, the association engaged Strategic Association Management (SAM) to guide staff and leadership through the process of addressing the goal's associated strategies.

Goal 3: Leadership, 2017-2020 TEPSA Strategic Growth Plan, is to **“Create structures and systems that increase meaningful engagement in TEPSA leadership.”**

Strategies:

- Examine and update board/governance structures, requirements and processes to increase member involvement and address regional challenges and changes in the field.
- Review and revise bylaws, as needed.

Methodology

In April, SAM met with TEPSA staff to plan a six-month research project culminating in a governance task force retreat and, if warranted, governance changes implemented with further SAM support. Research in preparation for the retreat included:

- **Three focus groups** during Summer Conference. The focus groups comprised current Executive Committee and Board members, emerging leaders and Past Presidents.
- **Three individual interviews** conducted during Summer Conference.
- **Six phone interviews** with past and emerging TEPSA leaders.
- **Meetings with TEPSA staff.**

Baseline Knowledge

Based on conversations with the TEPSA staff and staff-provided research, SAM entered the research phase of the project with the following baseline knowledge:

- **Sustainability is the goal.** TEPSA has been a vibrant, successful organization for 100 years, and leadership is proactively working to ensure TEPSA remains vibrant and successful for the next 100 years.
- **The principalship has changed.** Today's beginning principals might only be in a position for four to five years before moving to another role in the district.
- **Volunteerism has changed.** Changing realities and demands on time have changed the way people engage with nonprofit/volunteer roles. This is not unique to TEPSA.
- **TEPSA's paths to leadership might not be well-understood.** TEPSA Executive Committee members either advance to leadership through the TEPSA regional structure or TEPSA standing committees.

Themes Observed During Research

- **TEPSA members love TEPSA—and the TEPSA staff's personal touch is the difference maker when it comes to engagement.** *"What makes TEPSA special? One word: relationships. They take time to get to know not just the leaders, but to build strong relationships with everyone who goes to the conference."*
- **The initial appeal of TEPSA depends on size of district.** *"My original involvement was as an AP. I signed up for it because of the liability insurance. Everyone kept telling me that I needed it. I'm in a pretty large district. We already have PD. For me that was really the thing (the liability)."*
- **A sense of community and innovation keep members involved.** *"Principal is a very lonely position. When you come to Summer Conference in particular, you drink the Kool-Aid, and you're in. You see 2,000 other people doing the same work. I saw that it wasn't just me who was having a particular issue."*
- **The regional structure presents challenges.** *"We don't go to regional meetings because of distance/traffic, but you can't move up if you haven't been a regional president."*
- **Members appreciate the diversity of voices on the board.** *"We want to ensure the makeup of our organization is reflected in the leadership."*
- **Members discussed the pros and cons of the length of service.** *"It allows you to learn the organization. Everyone always think they know what a job is until they get into a job. You don't know what you don't know. Coming in at that level allows you to grow and learn the history. Allows you to know why decisions were made. So many organizations that don't have strong foundations go off on tangents." BUT "You have to be willing to commit six years of your professional life. The challenge is, as people move between districts, some districts are very supportive of TEPSA events, but the challenge is not every district is. The new superintendent might not think they should be leaving town during the week or spend district travel money."*

Task Force Retreat & Recommendations

During its September 30–October 1 retreat, the Governance Task Force participated in a series of exercises in which members identified existing challenges and opportunities within the current TEPSA governance structure. In culmination, the task force prepared the following recommendations to the TEPSA Board. Implementing these governance changes will necessitate a series of amendments to the TEPSA Bylaws and subsequent revisions of policies and procedures. *(If passed, these bylaws amendments would have a phased-in implementation date.)*

CHALLENGE: Task force determined it would be beneficial to balance the length of service with ensuring necessary leadership experience to serve TEPSA effectively.

SOLUTION: Change the composition of the Executive Committee to: President, President-Elect, Vice President (three-year progression elected annually) and two Members-at-Large (one elected annually).

- The office of Vice President becomes the first year of a three-year presidential progression: Vice President, President-Elect, President.
- One Member-at-Large is elected annually.
- The Immediate Past President role is eliminated from the progression and formal role on the EC.
- The NAESP Representative remains an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee.

In addition to these TEPSA Board-level changes, the task force recommends that:

- **Region boards consider aligning with the new TEPSA officer structure to have a three-year presidential progression (President, President-Elect and Vice President).** The President and President-Elect would attend TEPSA summer leadership training. Beyond the presidential progressions, regions may add any additional officer positions necessary to serve their membership.
- **Standing Committee terms transition from four-year staggered terms to two-year staggered terms with the option to serve a second term.**