



Darwin Prater Spiller wants educators to be seen, supported, and celebrated

by Autumn Rhea Carpenter

“I choose to lead with positivity because it creates momentum. It builds trust. And most importantly, it reminds people that they matter, that the work matters, and that forward is always possible. DarWIN isn’t just a name — it’s a mindset.”

When Dr. Darwin Prater Spiller’s caterer playfully signed one of the cookies for his TABSE president-elect campaign event “DarWIN” predicting he would win, the nickname stuck. But not just for its cleverness — the play on words spoke to something deeper: the power of believing in possibility. This idea emulates Spiller’s approach to leadership and education.

Spiller’s career in education started in 1997 as a sixth-grade self-contained teacher at Stults Road Elementary in Richardson ISD, after earning a bachelor’s degree from Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma. Spiller grew up on the West side of Chicago in Cabrini-Green. He attended public schools and would “play school” as a favorite pastime and a way to avoid distractions that could have led him down a much different path. Spiller knew he wanted to be the kind of adult that he needed when he was younger. He wanted to be a source of consistency, encouragement, and opportunity for students — especially those navigating systems and circumstances that too often overlook their potential.

“Education gave me access, choice, and ultimately a voice. I chose this path because I believe every child deserves to be seen, heard, and empowered—and I wanted to be part of building that kind of future,” he says.

In 2000, Spiller was promoted to assistant principal at the same campus and served in that role for three years before being named

principal of Stults Road in 2003 where he remained for nine years and gained insight into instructional leadership, family engagement, and building strong campus cultures. In 2012 he joined Houston ISD as a school support officer and coached campus principals across a range of schools. He returned to Richardson ISD as the executive director of the Lake Highlands Learning Community where he led the community for seven years, supporting schools that served more than 10,500 students from pre-K through 12th grade.

In 2020, Spiller transitioned into his current role as executive director of Title IX compliance and investigations in Richardson ISD. This division was established to ensure that the district remains aligned with both federal and state regulations, while placing a strong focus on the safety, rights, and well-being of all students and staff. Spiller leads investigations, oversees the district’s grievance processes, supports the implementation of threat assessment protocols, and collaborates with multiple departments to provide training and build systems of accountability.

“This work is both complex and deeply meaningful. I’m proud to be part of a team that is committed to fostering safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments,” he says.

During his career journey, Spiller obtained a master’s degree from the University of Texas at Arlington and a doctorate from Dallas Baptist University.

Over a decade ago, Spiller joined TABSE and is a lifetime member. He has served in several roles in the organization including president of a local affiliate, commission chair, conference chair, president-elect, and now, TABSE president.

“We all have choices when it comes to where we devote our time and service, and I’ve chosen to give mine to TABSE because I believe in its mission and in the power of collective leadership,” Spiller says.

As president, Spiller’s focus centers around advancing literacy, driving strategic planning for long-term sustainability, and maintaining strong financial stability through intentional partnerships.

“These aren’t just buzzwords,” Spiller says. “They’re action items that require consistent work, clear vision, and collective accountability.”

One of Spiller’s core goals at TABSE is to ensure that every child — starting as early as pre-K — has access to a strong educational foundation that will serve them for life. Early childhood education lays the groundwork for future success, and it’s essential that students are met with high-quality instruction, developmentally appropriate learning, and caring, committed educators from the very beginning.

“I’ve always believed that if you’re not in the work, you’re in the way. TABSE is focused on solutions and positive outcomes for students, educators, and communities. That means we roll up our sleeves, collaborate, innovate, and push through challenges together,” he says. “There’s no room for negativity or empty criticism — we are outcome-driven people committed to progress. We need those who are ready to contribute, uplift, and act. Everyone else, respectfully, can step aside. This is a pivotal moment for education, and TABSE is leaning all the way in.”

Organizations such as TABSE are essential because they provide a space for educators to be seen, supported, and celebrated.

“In a time when teachers are being asked to do more with less — and when so many are leaving the profession — we need strong, intentional support systems in place to grow and retain the passionate educators who are shaping the future,” Spiller says. “TABSE offers that space. It’s not just about professional development; it’s about belonging, mentorship, leadership opportunities, and building a network of people who understand your journey and are committed to walking alongside you.”

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Texas Alliance of Black School Educators (TABSE)

Membership: TABSE is an organization dedicated to enhancing the education of all students and offering valuable professional services and strategies to institutions, agencies, and communities. It is committed to creating an environment in which students, particularly Black Students, can achieve academic excellence.

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