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PUBLIC EDUCATION POSITIONS

Preamble

Historically, Congress has recognized the preeminent role of the states in education. NASBE believes that public education is a fundamental obligation of state government. Major policy and oversight responsibility is placed in constitutionally or statutorily created state boards of education, composed primarily of lay citizens. State boards have the primary responsibility for governing education, including career and technical education, for setting educational policy, goals, and priorities based on data and research, and for continuous improvement. While citizens who serve on state boards may be chosen because they are from a specific region or constituency, they should represent all students in the state. The charge to state boards is setting the long-term vision and direction that will make education meaningful for every student. Schools must be dynamic educational institutions that graduate students with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in the world. This requires a long-term commitment of time, energy, and resources.

State Boards of Education

While the role of state board members is often clearly defined by state constitutions or statutes, all state board members, regardless of how they are chosen, need to understand and respond to national issues affecting education in their states. The educationally effective governing structure for education within a state includes a state board of education that is a policy leader, with policies administered by a chief state school officer.

PART I: POSITIONS ON STATE GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATION

A. State Responsibility for Education and the Role of State Boards

The Tenth Amendment of the United State Constitution reserves to citizens of the states the powers not delegated to the federal government, thereby granting citizens of states primary responsibility for the governance of education. States have developed structures to plan, provide, and oversee the delivery of instructional services to children through state boards of education, which are charged with the general supervision of public schools. Compulsory attendance confers on educators an obligation to protect the welfare of their students and the integrity of the learning environment.

State boards should exercise all aspects of their leadership role: posing questions, convening constituents and other stakeholders, and authorizing policy in pursuit of equity and excellence for all students. Members of state boards of education should reflect the citizen’s voice in education, advocate for historically underserved students and communities, and exercise their granted authority to support high levels of achievement for all students.
B. State Partnerships

(i) State Government Collaboration
State boards of education lead the following efforts to engage state government partners in developing and providing coherent, coordinated, and efficient educational programs:

- promote ongoing, meaningful communication and cooperation among the state board of education, local school boards, state legislators, governor, and the state’s department of education;
- exercise policy leadership by collaborating with workforce agencies, postsecondary boards, which may include state boards of higher education, community college boards, and others, and military institutions to seek out and promote evidence-supported strategies that help prepare students for the postsecondary pathway of their choosing: education, military service, or employment;
- encourage broad cultural, ethnic, and gender representation in state agencies and on all state task forces, commissions, advisory boards, adoption committees, and working groups;
- empower meaningful student involvement in state education policymaking and encourage school districts and school councils to provide similar opportunities for students at the local level;
- facilitate consistent, tailored engagement strategies for state association, advocacy and civil rights groups, and community organizations to build relationships and dialogue with state government partners.

(ii) School Partnerships with Communities and Families
State boards of education leverage their leadership and policymaking roles in the following ways to promote the importance of school-community partnerships:

- facilitate and integrate ongoing engagement and input of community and family organizations into a framework for policy decision making;
- define and promote the specific roles of parents and other caretakers, businesses, faith communities, and other community, mental, and physical health organizations in fostering student success;
- develop and facilitate partnerships and support local collaborations that build connections to workforce development, higher education, families, and the community at large;
- support policies and programs to encourage parent involvement in all aspects of their children’s education, specific learning activities, volunteering in classrooms and school programs, and governance and advocacy in education;
- encourage and expand professional learning opportunities for educators and other school and district leaders to enhance family involvement and improve programs, resources, and tools to foster family and community involvement in education;
- pursue partnerships with the private sector, foundations, and other public agencies to achieve state-defined priorities.
(iii) Corporate Involvement in Schools
State boards of education ensure school-business relationships are ethical, contribute to high-quality education, and are structured in accordance with the following principles:

- schools and educators hold sponsored and donated materials to the same standards used for the selection and purchase of curriculum materials;
- the classroom is not used for access to a captive audience or selling for commercial purposes, thereby upholding public trust;
- programs of corporate involvement meet an identified education need, not a commercial motive, and are evaluated for educational effectiveness on an ongoing basis.

C. Funding
State boards of education should lead these efforts to initiate and enhance educational funding to provide an equitable and high-quality education for all students enrolled in public schools:

- coordinate with state legislators and all other citizens on the financial needs of public schools and account for the use made of state funds and the accomplishments of the public school system;
- advocate, in coalition with state policymakers, local districts, and other stakeholders, for consistent finance mechanisms that distribute education resources equitably across the state and help reduce funding disparities between districts;
- ensure the state education agency receives, administers, and accounts for all federal education funds;
- ensure that whenever state or federal mandates result in added costs to state agencies or local districts, the mandating authority should provide funding to defray such costs;
- set the highest priority on budget areas directly affecting student achievement in difficult economic times.

D. Professional Learning for State Board Members
State boards of education should devote attention and resources to their members’ professional learning, in the following ways:

- conduct an initial orientation and ongoing professional learning to better understand board member roles and responsibilities, to improve boardmanship skills, and to gain greater understanding of specific education issues;
- encourage members to take advantage of NASBE training programs, both by attending NASBE events and by bringing NASBE presenters to their states.

E. Strategic Planning and Policy Review Cycles
State boards of education should lead the design, implementation, and refinement of a vision and strategic plan for education in their state through the following activities:

- create a dynamic vision for state education, provide proactive leadership, and mobilize resources to achieve the vision;
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- engage in strategic planning to articulate clear goals and expectations for improved student learning outcomes aligned to rigorous student learning standards;
- create coherence in the education system by aligning goals and expectations at the state, district, school, classroom, and student level to rigorous student learning standards;
- seek out input and feedback on priorities for education from diverse stakeholders within the state;
- align board agendas, policy considerations, and administrative actions to the state-defined vision and goals for education;
- support professional learning resources for local boards, district administrators, school leaders, and teachers to empower their implementation of the state board’s strategic plan and align local policies to the state’s vision for education;
- set measurable goals to gauge improvements in academic achievement and equity that are ambitious and achievable over a state-defined number of years;
- engage in continuous improvement through a regular review of major policies’ alignment to the state strategic plan and by incorporating evaluation into all decisions as policies are created and after implementation.
PART II: POSITIONS ON EDUCATION POLICY

A. Well-Rounded Education
State boards of education should lead the development, empower the high-quality implementation, and continuously improve a well-rounded education program that encompasses the academic content standards, career and technical education, and integrated student supports that will enable students to graduate ready for college, careers, and civic life.

(i) Academic Content Standards
- adopt or encourage the adoption of rigorous and comprehensive college-, career-, and civic-ready academic content and achievement standards in content areas such as mathematics, English language arts, science, technology, social sciences, citizenship, fine arts, health, financial literacy, and world languages/cultures for all public schools;
- establish the expectation, consistent with current law, that the federal government should not require—directly or indirectly—the adoption of specific standards;
- commit to sustaining and improving standards in close partnership with institutions of higher education and workforce leaders, and recognizing relevant international benchmarks.

(ii) Content Standards Implementation
- ensure all students have access to a rigorous, standards-based education that requires them to engage in critical thinking, problem solving, and project-based learning, communicate effectively, and attain competencies that prepare them for college, meaningful employment, citizenship, and life;
- develop, adopt, and implement a statewide coordinated literacy strategy to ensure that all students can read proficiently and that teachers receive research-based preparation and professional learning to provide effective, content-based literacy instruction;
- empower local school districts to adopt curricula that foster broad knowledge and deeper learning for all students, expand opportunities for rigorous coursework, and access to dual enrollment and other advanced learning opportunities;
- ensure high school graduation requirements align with expectations for college and career readiness;
- encourage professional learning opportunities for educators that facilitate deeper learning instructional approaches and invest in tools and resources that support deeper learning approaches.

(iii) Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- expand opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous and relevant CTE, both at the high school level and in the middle grades;
- encourage and support the alignment and integration of high-quality CTE with other teaching and learning;
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- encourage state and local integration of CTE into dual enrollment programs and support expanding such programs to more low-income students;
- encourage greater stakeholder collaboration, including with industry and business, as a strategy for strengthening CTE and ensuring its relevance to students’ success after high school;
- support seamless transitions for students from high school to postsecondary education and beyond;
- invest in building the capacity of CTE educators and their school leaders.

(iv) Integrated Student Supports

- coordinate a well-aligned system of student supports and promote the development of safe, healthy, nurturing learning environments for all students;
- encourage the development of guidelines and resources for the teaching and learning of successful student behavior that provide a proactive, positive, skill-building approach;
- ensure that educators can meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body and support the development of relationships between schools and community and family organizations;
- strengthen and expand partnerships to improve coordination between high-quality extended-day and summer learning programs, agencies, and funding streams;
- promote civic engagement in schools by encouraging schools to work with community organizations to offer experiential opportunities that are relevant to students’ everyday lives and to academics, as well as encouraging experiential learning through extracurricular activities;
- develop recommendations and guidance that will improve outcomes for students in alternative education settings, homeless youth, adult education programs, and those who have experienced court support services, or have been part of the juvenile justice system;
- expand access to high-quality library-media specialists and a comprehensive library program with a wide variety of resources, including current digital learning tools;
- promote research-based practices in student personalized learning experiences.

B. Accountability, Accreditation, and School Improvement

State boards of education should lead the design, implementation, and improvement of a high-quality assessment, accreditation, and accountability system that fosters continuous progress toward state-defined goals through the following actions:

- implement and regularly review a balanced assessment system that provides actionable insight into student learning and mastery of state-defined academic content standards;
- investigate and pursue innovative forms of assessment that support instructional and administrative decision making;
- encourage transparency in informing parents and the public in a clear, concise manner about student, subgroup, school, and district performance on multiple measures;
- articulate state goals clearly and evaluate the effectiveness, fairness, and validity of the accountability and accreditation system, including measures and resulting interventions;
• establish clear roles and articulate shared responsibilities for each level of the education system, including schools, districts, and the state;
• invest in supports, professional learning, and resources to enable educators in schools and districts to meet state-defined goals and respond to accountability indicators with effective instructional and other intervention strategies;
• share and promote proven practices and evidence-based interventions that address the specific needs of schools;
• monitor all publicly funded schools to ensure adherence to uniform public transparency standards and address any unintended consequences of the accountability and accreditation system;
• support alignment of the accountability system with the process for school accreditation;
• encourage innovation, continuous improvement, and allow for customization to meet the unique needs of schools;
• review accountability and accreditation systems in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure it creates the conditions, supports, and incentives to improve opportunities and outcomes for all students;
• ensure regular monitoring of school districts’ adherence to state regulations and set expectations beyond compliance to foster continuous improvement and growth in learning.

C. Equity
State board members believe all children are capable of learning at high individual levels when supported by a receptive and nurturing community, quality instruction, and rigorous curricula. State boards of education should ensure equal protection and access to high-quality education for all students. State boards of education should relentlessly pursue education equity and excellence for all students, including those of different racial, ethnic, national origin, gender, socioeconomic, native language, and disability statuses by engaging in the following:

• striving for excellence without forsaking equity and striving for equity without forsaking excellence;
• advancing equity of access to high-quality teaching and safe learning environments for all students regardless of zip code or background;
• allocating resources to the students most in need to eliminate persistent disparities in opportunity and achievement between historically underserved students and their peers;
• encouraging public understanding of equity gaps and school success in addressing these gaps by reporting data by student groups in a manner that protects individual student privacy;
• developing a culturally competent education system that helps all students and school staff interact cohesively and constructively with individuals from diverse backgrounds;
• promoting the importance of diversity in preparing students, staff, and educators to become culturally competent and aware on a local, national, and global scale;
• removing policies or practices that allow persistent underachievement, stereotyping, and intolerance.
(i) Historically Underserved Students
- act as the advocate for historically underserved students by deliberatively and intentionally considering the impact of policy decisions on advancing educational equity for these students;
- analyze achievement and opportunity gaps with an intentional focus on deep data disaggregation to evaluate and improve policies;
- promote the implementation of effective English learner programming, and advance professional learning opportunities for English learners and general education teachers;
- ensure each child with a disability has access to a high-quality, free, appropriate education that prepares them for further education, employment, and independent life;
- foster efforts to support homeless youth’s access to a high-quality education that meets their needs;
- ensure students attending small schools and schools in sparsely populated areas have equitable access to high-quality educational programs and services, leveraging incentive programs to attract high-quality educators and digital learning tools to expand access to educational opportunities;
- support education programs that identify and address the individual needs and learning styles of all students, including those who are disabled, disadvantaged, migrant, gifted or talented, parenting or pregnant, minority or English learners.

(ii) Excellence for All Students
- support education policies and programs that advance excellence for each and every student;
- leverage high-quality academic standards and standards-based accountability as the basis of instruction for all students, thereby assuring policymakers, educators, and parents that no group of students is being left behind;
- advocate for the equitable distribution of resources to ensure that every student has access to an effective teacher and a high-quality learning environment;
- research and evaluate policies to ensure the timely identification of disparities, and accelerate efforts to enact remedies to problems stemming from disparities in exclusionary discipline and disengagement, such as the loss of instruction time;
- ensure that alternative schools and programs for at-risk students adhere to state standards, maintain rigorous programs for parent involvement, and provide ongoing professional development;
- establish policies to implement early warning systems for students at risk of dropping out of school, bolster successful intervention programs, and foster policies that vigorously seek out and encourage students who have dropped out to receive a high school degree.

D. Choice and Innovation
State boards of education should undertake the following to encourage innovation and foster high-quality education options to meet each student’s needs:
- encourage a range of school and district choice and options to meet the needs of all students within the state regulatory framework;
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- maintain oversight of all publicly funded schools and innovative alternatives to ensure adherence to uniform standards of fiscal and public accountability, equal access and opportunity, and alignment to high-quality, rigorous standards for teaching and learning;
- promote awareness of high-quality options available to local communities, and engage families and local communities in their design and evaluation;
- optimize each student's school experience by ensuring all alternatives and innovations address students’ diverse learning needs, including those of students with disabilities and English learners;
- comply with federal and state protections and civil rights statutes and regulations, including provisions regarding students with disabilities who are served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
- engage in rigorous evaluation of innovations and alternatives, removing ineffective models and working to scale proven, effective practices and models.

E. Digital Learning
State boards of education should lead the integration of digital learning tools in teaching and learning by the following means:
- establishing criteria or guidelines for the integration of digital learning tools and processes that ensure alignment to state standards and the state's vision for education;
- empowering teachers through customized professional learning and capacity building to integrate digital learning tools effectively into classroom instruction and learning;
- encouraging flexible use of a range of instructional and competency-based approaches and their differentiation to meet the individualized needs of all students, including access by students with disabilities;
- advancing policies and programs that prepare students for digital environment of post-secondary education and the workplace.

F. Educator Effectiveness
State boards of education should lead the following efforts to incentivize strategies and innovations to prepare, recruit, and retain high-quality teachers and other education leaders:
- encourage local boards and district administrators to foster innovation in recruitment and retention strategies and scale proven practices;
- collaborate with postsecondary institutions, districts, and schools to strengthen the preparation of aspiring teachers by focusing on high-quality, practice-based preparation grounded in student learning;
- advocate for and support the expansion of high-quality residency and proven induction strategies;
- develop and implement guidelines for relevant, engaging professional learning for teachers and other education leaders;
- support professional learning that is data-informed, research-based, extended in duration, relevant to state priority areas, and deeply connected to the day-to-day work of teaching and learning.