

We, the Media

If you learn anything from this issue of *The Standard*, it's just how integral student data are to education. Researchers need this information to evaluate what's working in education (and what's not). Teachers use it to improve their instructional practice. Parents use it to understand their child's performance in school. And policymakers can't make informed decisions without it. But state policymakers can learn from another valuable type of data: each other's policies and practices.

This month, NASBE is launching its State Policy Database, an online collection of regulations and practices that govern state education systems in all states and US territories. For years, NASBE members have regularly visited NASBE's Health Policy Database to learn about state policies on school nutrition, substance abuse, anaphylaxis protocols, and more. Our new State Policy Database expands to include other issue areas, starting with college, career, and civic readiness. Here, you'll find policies on state academic standards, student assessment requirements, and policies affecting educator effectiveness, such as professional program standards and licensure requirements. We will be incorporating policy areas such as education data privacy and school discipline as well.

What makes NASBE's database unique is its focus on issues that fall under the authority of state boards of education. It is built by state boards for state boards. NASBE's database comprises information drawn completely from public sources. Users can access actual policy with no firewalls to obstruct them. The database allows users to search, scan, and filter policies by state, topic, keyword, and implementing and adopting authority, making it much easier to find information about a specific state, compare a set

of states or issues, and verify who holds authority in a given issue area.

That last field of data will be especially useful as states plan for and implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As many of you know, ESSA shifts power back to the states on such things as school improvement, teacher evaluation, and state summative assessments. But few people know who in each state actually gets to make those decisions. In many cases, it is the state board of education.

Did you know, for example, that 31 state boards get to choose their state test? And 45 states boards adopt the state academic standards on which the assessments should be aligned. Both data points are drawn from NASBE's policy database. Access to information like this is important for anyone seeking greater understanding of education policymaking at the state level, and it is doubly important for state policymakers.

Some of the biggest policy decisions require states to balance multiple factors. Having a clear understanding of state laws and regulations governing the education system can help all policy actors—be it the state board, department of education, legislature, or governor—assess their role in the process and find ways to work collaboratively and efficiently to ensure all students receive a world-class education.

To access NASBE's State Policy Database, visit <http://statepolicies.nasbe.org/>. ■



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